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## Dealing with the “devil of the past”. Attention to the far right in the German press (1987-2004)

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**Abstract:** This contribution aims to give a detailed description and analysis of the variations in newspaper coverage of the far right in Germany over a period of almost twenty years. The analysis is based on a systematic quantitative content analysis on three German newspapers that each serve a different audience, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Bild*. A total of 1621 articles divided over nine time slots between 1986 and 2004 was analysed. The analysis showed that German newspapers’ portrayal was relatively unambiguous. The three newspapers had a limited focus on the deviating aspects of the far right: their xenophobic and exclusionist standpoints, their role as actors in legal conflict, their racist violence, and the bad relationships with other parties. This was very clear in 1989, 1994 and 2004. Contrary to the Dutch press, the German press did not show a trend towards a more open and diverse portrayal. The most significant difference between the newspapers is the amount of attention to the far right, which is much bigger in the quality press, and the visibility, which is bigger in *Bild*. A more sensational depiction expected in *Bild* was found in the data to a limited extent only.

**Keywords:** Germany · newspapers · media attention · far right · content analysis

### Der Umgang mit den Dämonen der Vergangenheit. Berichterstattung über Rechtsextreme in der deutschen Presse (1987-2004)

**Zusammenfassung:** In diesem Beitrag untersuchen wir, wie deutsche Tageszeitungen in den letzten zwanzig Jahren über Rechtsradikalismus berichtet haben. Dies geschieht mit einer systematisch-quantitativen Inhaltsanalyse der *Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung*, der *Süddeutschen Zeitung* und der *Bild-Zeitung*. Insgesamt wurden 1621 Berichte aus neun Perioden zwischen 1986 und 2004 analysiert. Die Analyse zeigt, dass die Berichterstattung über Rechtsradikalismus in deutschen Zeitungen relativ einheitlich war. Die Zeitungen beschränkten sich hauptsächlich auf abweichende Aspekte des Rechtsradikalismus: die fremdenfeindlichen Standpunkte, die rechtsradikalen Akteure in juristischen Konflikten, die fremdenfeindliche Gewalt und die schlechten Beziehungen der Rechtsradikalen zu anderen Parteien. In den Jahren 1989, 1994 und 2004 war dies deutlicher zu sehen als in den anderen Jahren. Im Gegensatz zu niederländischen Zeitungen ist in deutschen Zeitungen keine Entwicklung hin zu einer offenen und vielfältigen Berichterstattung über diese Themen erkennbar. SZ und FAZ berichteten ausführlicher als die *Bild-Zeitung*.

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Erwartet wurde, dass die *Bild-Zeitung* mehr sensationell aufgemachte Berichte veröffentlichte, zum Beispiel über fremdenfeindliche Gewalt. Dies wurde allerdings nur teilweise bestätigt.

**Schlagwörter:** Deutschland · Zeitungen · Berichterstattung · rechtsradikale Parteien · Inhaltsanalyse

Germany has a precarious relationship with its past. As the Nazi past was examined critically in Germany, a culture of contrition developed in the post-war period (Art 2007: 338). Therefore, the far right and its actions are exceptionally sensitive subjects in German public debate (Betz 1990: 46; Koopmans 2001: 71). Every now and then, this sensitivity surfaces in the heat of debate on current affairs. One such occasion was when journalists found out that, within the ranks of the army, there were quite a few members of far-right parties. This mere fact was all over the news headlines. Another case occurred when the radical right “Republikaner” suddenly surpassed the five percent threshold in the European elections and Germany’s largest newspaper opened with a page-wide headline asking “Are you a Nazi Mr Schönhuber?”<sup>1</sup> This quote suggests a linkage between Germany’s contemporary far right and Germany’s darkest past.

Quite some research has been done on the success and failure of far-right parties (e. g. Kitschelt 1997; Lubbers 2001; Coffé 2005; Rydgren 2004; 2005), but the role of the media in this has hardly been investigated. The few exceptions are rooted in agenda-setting theory and therefore concentrated on the relationship between the amount of attention paid to the far right and the number of far-right voters (Lubbers/Scheepers 2001; Walgrave/De Swert 2004; Boomgaarden/Vliegenthart 2007). Lubbers and Scheepers’s study (2001) shows a relationship between the amount of newspaper coverage for the far right and far-right voting in Germany. However, their study did not include an assessment of the content of this coverage and was limited to only one newspaper, the *Tageszeitung*.

For the German context, no study on the coverage of the far right is available, let alone a longitudinal study that compares different kinds of newspapers. The few studies on the (media and the) far right in Germany mostly concern the wave of far-right violence in the early nineties (Brosius/Esser 1996; Ohlemacher 1996; Koopmans 2001; Klein/Simon 2003; Scheufele 2006). In this contribution we present the results of a comprehensive longitudinal content analysis, focussing on the way newspapers paid attention to the far right. Our research questions are:

1. How do German newspapers report on the far right?
2. Does coverage of the far right change over time between 1987 and 2004?
3. Are there any differences between coverage of the far right in quality newspapers and popular newspapers?

### 1. Four aspects of media attention to the far right

Within the realm of studies on political news, there are several approaches to assessing newspaper content. Our focus is on the portrayal of a specific type of actor *within* the

1 *Bild* 17 June 1989, front page, „Sind Sie ein Nazi, Herr Schönhuber?“

news.<sup>2</sup> We combine communication science theory of media messages and sociological and political science research on the far right to develop a model of the relevant aspects of media attention to the far right. We distinguish four aspects of media attention to the far right.

### 1.1 Volume attention and formal attention

The first is *volume attention*, which is the mere count of articles within a time frame. Koopmans and Olzak (2004) showed that visibility, resonance and legitimation of a political entity in the media influence public opinion on the subject (using the early nineties' increase of far-right violence in Germany as a case). Visibility and prominence together form the second aspect, *formal attention*. Indicators of this are front page appearance of the far right, its visibility in the headlines and level of prominence of far-right actors in the articles.

### 1.2 Substantial attention

Far-right voting increases when voters evaluate the respective parties as 'normal' democratic parties, instead of, for example, 'too extreme', 'undemocratic', or 'unreliable' (Brug et al. 2005). This suggests we should focus, as the third aspect, on the portrayal of the far right itself in media coverage. This aspect is called *substantial attention*. We consider four indicators of substantial attention. Firstly, we ask whether the far right is represented passively (far-right actor only named or mentioned in the article) or actively (far-right actor paraphrased or cited in the article<sup>3</sup>). For similar indicators see Scholten/Ruigrok (2006) and Ter Wal (2004). A low level of active representation suggests a greater distance between journalist (and reader) and the subject. The actor is 'not involved' but only 'talked about' in cases of passive representation.

A second indicator consists of the roles in which far-right actors make it into the news. This can be in 'normal' or positive roles, such as participant in political actuality (parliamentary debates) and party conferences; or more negative ones like in law suits or litigation (as when a far-right politician is charged with racism), or in forms of extra-parliamentary activity. Six different roles have been distinguished: role in elections, role in political actuality, role in law suits or litigation, role in extra-parliamentary activity, role in normal party-internal situations (such as party conferences, or a chairman election) and role in negative party-internal situations (such as fraud and scandals).

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2 We did not set out to measure the use of news genres, or shifts in attention to party programmes to horse race news (see Kleinnijenhuis et al. 2007). Nor did we choose to study the use of generic news frames (Vreese 2005; Gorp 2007). All of these approaches are occupied too much with the news genre itself.

3 In the codebook we distinguished active representation into paraphrases and quotes. This distinction might be problematic in terms of validity. Research has shown that journalists present their sources not always 100% accurate, but deviate for stylistic reasons (Rennen 2000: 298-299). Citations might not always be citations for example. Therefore, we limited the categories of representation in the analysis into passive and active. Despite the stylistic decisions of journalists, this remains a relevant and valid distinction to make.

The third indicator of substantial attention is the presence of stigmatising associations with the Nazis and (their) anti-Semitism, or associations with extremist (violent) groups (such as neo-Nazis, or skinheads). The presence of such associations contributes to a negative image of the far right. Therefore, we assume that such associations function as disqualifiers in electoral competition (Donselaar/Rodrigues 2003: 62).

The fourth and last indicator of substantial attention is the presence of far-right ideological standpoints. The ideology of the far right is heterogeneous and varies between parties as well as over time (within parties and movements). Still, most authors agree on the following general ideological standpoints as integral parts of far-right ideology: (1) anti-democratic attitudes, (2) anti-progressive attitudes, (3) populism and anti-establishment standpoints, (4) nationalism, (5) xenophobic and exclusionist attitudes, (6) strict law and order attitudes and (7) emphasis on traditional values (Kitschelt 1997: 29-32; Mudde 1998: 274; Ignazi 2006: 20; Fennema 2003: 482-486; Coffé 2005: 45-47).

### 1.3 Support attention

*Support attention* considers the way the far right or their standpoints are evaluated by non-far-right stakeholders such as other politicians, civil organisations and governments and thus measures legitimation of far-right actors and their distance (as depicted in the media) from other political parties (Koopmans/Olzak 2004: 223; Brug et al. 2005: 546, 561). Support attention is measured in two ways. First we analysed the proportion of coverage containing favourable or unfavourable attitudes of stakeholders towards the far right or towards their ideological standpoints. The second indicator is the occurrence of debates among stakeholders on how to deal with the far right. In general, the far right is not considered to be a ‘normal democratic party’. Moreover, among politicians and political debaters, civic organisations as well as activists, there is a debate on how to fight the far right in the most effective way. Such debates, whatever strategy is under discussion (from criminalisation to a so-called ‘cordon sanitaire’ or even violent measures, or the opposite: inclusion in the ‘normal political community’), indicate that the far right receives a special treatment because neither socialist, liberal or confessional parties are subject to such debates.

## 2. Comparative Analyses

Using the model of four aspects of media attention to the far right, we are able to provide a detailed overview of the way in which German newspapers covered the far right (RQ1). In addition, we set out to analyse this comparatively both over time (RQ2) and between newspapers (RQ3). Below we elaborate on both comparative questions.

### 2.1 Longitudinal changes

Our research period is between 1987 to 2004. We took 1987 as a starting point because it was the first election year after the mid-eighties reformation of the far right (Mudde 1998). Varying electoral results (with 1989 as a peak success for the far-right “Republi-

kaner”) and several events (such as the 1994 wave of far-right violence) probably had a temporary influence on the way the newspapers covered the far right. We are firstly concerned with the question whether more permanent changes have occurred during the research period, as this seems to be the case in other contexts (Walgrave/De Swert 2004; Schafraad et al. forthcoming). We have no reasons to expect change in particular directions, therefore change is investigated as a research question rather than as test of particular hypotheses.

## 2.2 Differences between newspapers

A problem in most studies on media coverage of the far right in German-speaking countries is that they are limited to one specific kind of newspaper, mostly the popular press (e. g. Ohlemacher 1996; Plasser/Ulram 2003). Hence comparison of different papers was often impossible. In our study we will empirically compare quality and popular newspapers. In doing so, we will improve the understanding of similarities and differences between popular and quality press coverage of the far right.

Research on political news showed that popular newspapers pay less attention to politics and political parties than quality papers (Scholten/Ruigrok 2006: 10, 24). Therefore, we can expect a higher level of *formal attention* in quality newspapers. Previous research suggested two differences in *substantial attention* between the coverage in popular and quality press. A first difference is that the popular press will focus on sensational aspects of the far right, such as internal power struggles, shocking quotes from party leaders, violence, etc. (Ohlemacher 1996: 156ff.; Plasser/Ulram 2003: 27-29; Steward et al. 2003: 225). Quality papers, by contrast, are relatively more interested in the background of far-right politics and the reasons why people support these parties and activists (Steward et al. 2003: 225). The second difference is the higher level of attention to crime and immigration issues in popular newspapers that would lead to a focus on only two far-right standpoints: xenophobic/exclusionist and law and order standpoints (Ohlemacher 1996: 156; Steward et al. 2003: 225; Walgrave/De Swert 2004: 489). By contrast, we expect to find a more diverse range of far-right standpoints in the quality newspapers. All this leads to the following hypotheses:

- H1 Quality newspapers pay more *volume* and *formal attention* to the far right than popular newspapers do.
- H2 *Substantial attention* in popular newspapers is limited to sensational roles of the far right (law suits and litigation, extra-parliamentary violence and negative internal) and xenophobic/exclusionist and law and order standpoints.
- H3 *Substantial attention* in quality newspapers is broader in focus with regard to both the roles in which the far right is portrayed and far-right standpoints.

Three German national daily newspapers were used for this study: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ, progressive/liberal), *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ, conservative/liberal) and *Bild-Zeitung* (popular, we used the Hamburg edition) (Ward 2005: 67). These newspapers were selected because they all belong to the most widespread newspapers in the country and all three more or less cater to a distinct readership (Ward 2005). Moreover, it gives us the opportunity to not only compare three individual titles but

also the popular (or even tabloid) press (*Bild*) and quality press (FAZ and SZ). The title selection took place within the context of our broader research project, which compares newspapers cross-nationally.

### 3. Data and method

#### 3.1 Design

Data were collected from the national and European election campaign periods, two months before and one month after the election date. All articles from the news sections that contained one or more far-right actor(s), or references to the far right in any sense were included in the research. In this way, the corpus is considered to cover the entire campaign period as well as the reactions to and effects of the electoral results. By choosing periods around elections, we expected to include periods with the most intense coverage of the far right, and which are the most likely to include changes in the newspaper coverage of the far right, because changes in political situations are most likely to occur around elections. Drawing the samples from complete periods also avoids the bias of fragmentation, which may result from randomly drawn samples (Wester/Van Selm 2006: 128).

#### 3.2 Sample

The electronic data source Lexis Nexis Academic (LNA) was used for data collection of SZ and FAZ articles from respectively 1994 and 1991 and after. Older articles and all *Bild* articles had to be retrieved from micro film.<sup>4</sup>

All relevant articles were drawn from these sources using a key word list and data collection protocol developed previously for this purpose, taking historical, sociological and political science reviews into account (Schafraad et al. 2006: 462). The use of this instrument allows for a structured, relevant, reproducible collection of all relevant material.

For each newspaper we gathered and analysed all relevant coverage. As a general rule we drew a random sample from a sub-universe (title/year) in case it contained more than 200 articles, using Moriss's formula for small population sampling.<sup>5</sup> Out of the 1999 relevant articles that were found, a total of 1621 articles was analysed. The distribution over the three titles in the sample corresponds with the complete corpus. The SZ share is the largest ( $n = 859$ ). The FAZ sample consists of 657 articles. In *Bild* no more than 105 articles were found, which were all included in the sample. This small  $n$  is sometimes problematic when comparing newspapers. In the German electoral agenda, there are no overlaps in the three months periods around elections,

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4 All micro films were kindly made available by the Institut für Zeitungsforschung in Dortmund.

5 <http://uregina.ca/~morrisev/Sociology/Sampling%20from%20small%20populations.htm>. We added 10% to the calculated minimum size to secure a sufficient sample size in case of missing values and other fall out of data.

except for one week in 1994.<sup>6</sup> This means there were no reasons to exclude any election year, or merge data collection periods that have too much overlap. For the German study we therefore have nine separate measure points throughout the time period 1986-2004.

### 3.3 Recording

Three well-trained (near) native coders and the first author coded the newspaper articles. Reliability of the coding was calculated twice, shortly after the coders received training and after the coding work was all done. After the first calculations the coders received an extra training to deal with complicated issues found in the raw material. A three-fold reliability calculation was used, including percentage of agreement (or Holsti's test), Scott's  $\pi$  and Krippendorff's *alpha* (Krippendorff 2004; Scott 1954; Wester/Van Selm 2006). This procedure was chosen because some of the variables had a strong deviation from a normal distribution, while the formulas assume a more or less normal distribution, which is an issue content analysts have not yet developed a proper solution for, although it often occurs. (Neuendorf 2002: 151). By applying our three-fold procedure, however, we argue to have dealt with each of the weaknesses of the separate techniques. Ten percent of the data was coded twice. Reliability was calculated for each variable. Most variables had a sufficient (%agreement >.9,  $\pi$  between .67 and .80), or good ( $\pi$  >.80) reliability score on all three measures. None were problematic.

## 4. Results: characteristics, trends and differences between newspapers

The way the German newspapers portrayed the far right is unfolded in three steps. First, we will look at the formal attention, or visibility of the far right in the news. Substantial attention, or the way far-right actors and standpoints are covered is the second step. Last, we will look at non-far-right actors' attitudes towards the far right in the coverage, which we have called support attention. For every indicator we will first present the general picture, then describe the longitudinal variation in the portrayal and conclude with differences between the three newspapers.

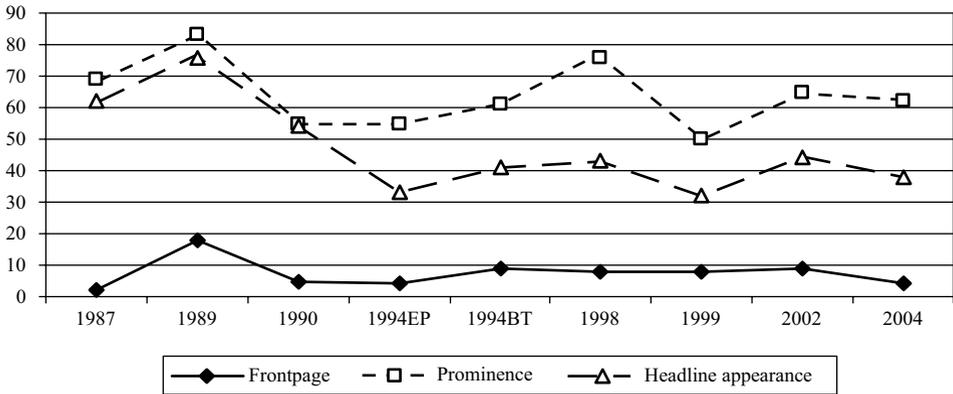
### 4.1 Volume and formal attention

*Volume attention* fluctuated throughout the research period. It was at its lowest point in 1987 and peaked in 1994 (Appendix 1). Generally, SZ paid most attention to the far right. *Formal attention* was measured on three different variables: share of front page coverage, percentage of coverage with far right in headlines and prominence.

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6 This is only true for the two kinds of election that we used to base our research periods on. In several occasions local or regional elections were held shortly before BT or EP elections, or even on the same day, which was sometimes reflected in the topics of the articles.

**Figure 1:** Percentage of far right coverage on frontpage, with prominent far-right actors and far right in the headlines<sup>7</sup>



*Position of the article in the newspaper*

The first indicator of formal attention is the percentage of the coverage of the far right published on the front page. A mere 8% of the coverage made it onto the front pages. In 1987 the figure is only 2%, while in 1989 (a year of success for the “Republikaner”) a peak was reached at 18% (see Figure 1). In 1990, the front page share of far-right coverage dropped again to 5% and then went up a little, to 8% – a level on which it more or less remained until 2004. *If* the far right makes it into the columns of *Bild*, it apparently is considered front-page news more often (24%) than in FAZ (11%) and SZ (4%) (Appendix 2).

*Prominence and headline appearance of the far right in the coverage*

In 66% of the coverage, the far right featured in a prominent role. The far right was mentioned in the headlines in 46% of the coverage. Figure 1 below shows that the longitudinal trends for prominence and headline appearance follow a similar line, starting from a relatively high level in 1987, reaching a peak in 1989 (prominence 83%, headline appearance 76%) and then levelling out 15% to 20% lower than the 1987 level (69% and 62% of the coverage, respectively). The only exception may be the percentage of the coverage with a prominent role for the far right in 1998, which shows a second peak at 76%. In the 2000s the percentage returns to the level of the early and mid-nineties.

Between FAZ and SZ, there is little difference in the share of coverage with the far right in a prominent role (62% and 68%). In the *Bild* coverage, this is 80%, which is significantly higher (Appendix 2).

For headline appearance, there is a similar difference between the three newspapers as for front page appearance. 73% of the *Bild* coverage has far right references or na-

<sup>7</sup> All reported differences were tested for significance at a level of  $p < .05$  (Chi-square).

mes in the headlines, while the respective percentage is 53% for SZ and 29% for FAZ coverage (Appendix 2).

## 4.2 Substantial attention

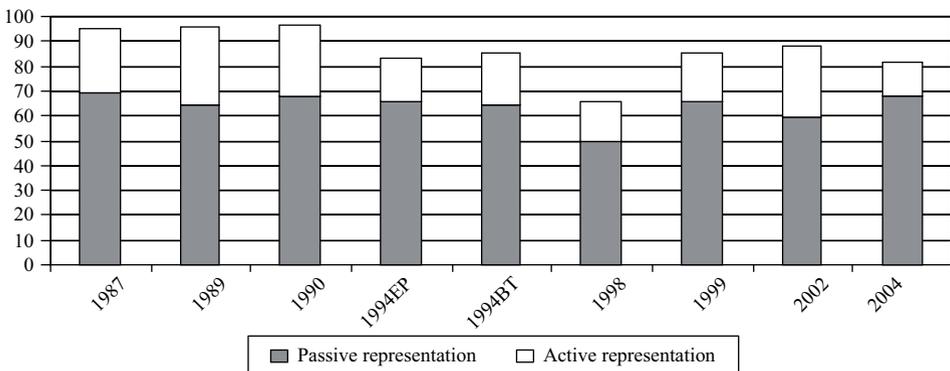
### *Representation of far-right actors*

Figure 2 shows the distribution of passive and active representation in all election years. An unexpected high percentage of the coverage of the far right did not contain any representation of far-right actors (16%) (Appendix 3). In these articles, the far right only features as a general phenomenon without calling a far-right actor by name. In 62% of the coverage, there is only passive representation of far-right actors, which means their own opinion is not covered in these articles. The remaining 21% of the coverage contains active representation.

As shown in Figure 2, the share of coverage without any representation is especially large in 1998 (34%). Most of this coverage is about ‘far-right incidents’ (“rechtsextreme Vorfälle”), as they are often called in the coverage, in the German army. It is quite remarkable that precisely this issue was widely reported on without calling names of either the far-right army personnel, or the organisations they are members of. The passive representation of far-right actors over the years did not change much. The share of the coverage with active representation varied much more. It was relatively high (32%) in 1989 and as small as 14% in 2004. There is no clear pattern of increasing or decreasing active representation. A high level of active representation did not relate to a certain kind of election, electoral success, extensive coverage, or over representation of certain parties (see also Appendix 3).

The data showed a significantly higher percentage of *Bild* coverage with active representation (35%, vs 18% FAZ and 23% SZ). This may have to do with the higher level of personalisation in popular newspapers, as Plasser and Ulram suggest (2003: 27). While passive representation was equally present in all three newspapers, the percentage of coverage without any specific far-right actor is much higher in FAZ and SZ (both 17%) (see Appendix 4).

**Figure 2:** Representation of far-right actors (in percentages)



**Table 1:** Percentage of coverage with far right in role in elections

Election year	1987	1989	1990	1994EP	1994BT	1998	1999	2002	2004	Total
<i>n</i>	42	200	65	303	302	262	145	189	113	1621
Role in elections	43	61	<b>63</b>	36	29	17	<b>45</b>	21	<b>16</b>	34
No role in elections	57	39	37	64	71	83	55	79	84	66
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Election news and other roles of the far right*

The data were collected in a rather long period around election day. Consequently, an overview of the percentage of the coverage that mentions a role of the far right in the elections (possibly besides other roles) is given in Table 1. A little more than a third of the coverage showed a far-right actor (or several of them) in a role in the elections (34%). In the late eighties, the percentage was relatively high, peaking in 1990 with 63%. After 1990, it

**Table 2:** The far right in situated roles (in percentages)

Election year	1987	1989	1990	1994EP	1994BT	1998	1999	2002	2004	Total
<i>n</i>	42	200	65	303	302	262	145	189	113	1621
In political actuality	2	3	3	6	3	3	6	<b>16</b>	4	5
In legal conflict	<b>36</b>	<b>5</b>	12	17	18	16	11	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	17
Extra-parliamentary violence	12	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	11	11	13	14
Extra-parliamentary confrontation w. opponents	<b>10</b>	6	2	4	3	3	1	3	5	4
Extra-parliamentary in peaceful situations	12	4	6	4	5	<b>19</b>	10	10	4	8
In normal internal situations	12	<b>17</b>	5	7	8	11	8	7	4	9
In negative internal situations	2	8	<b>18</b>	6	4	2	1	3	1	4

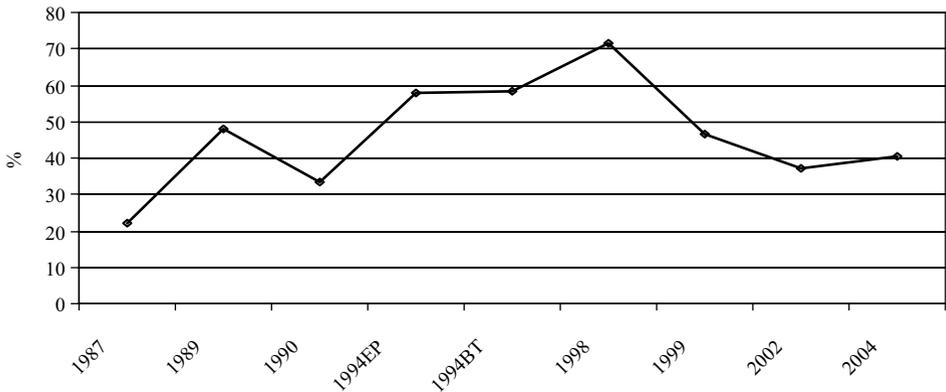
dropped to less than half of that with an all-time low in 2004 (16%) and a temporary increase in 1999 (45%). No differences between newspapers were found in this respect.

In Table 2, we present the relative amount of the coverage in which the far right featured in other than election-related roles. A far-right actor can feature in more than one role. Hence each row in the table should be read as if it was a single table. In about half of the coverage, the far right was portrayed in one of these roles. The far right featured most frequently in legal conflict (17%) and in extra-parliamentary violence (14%).

This means, the far right is portrayed relatively often in situations where they are suspected to have violated the law (often in cases of racism) as well as in situations where far-right actors used violence (against immigrants, or buildings that host asylum seekers). In the 1994EP election period, all newspapers paid a lot of attention to the court case of the four neo-Nazis who were suspected (and finally sentenced in 1995) of having assaulted an immigrants' home in Solingen using Molotov cocktails. The infamous assault left five people dead. In many similar cases, the far-right actors featured in both roles because they were charged with racist violence in court. Most notably, far-right actors only featured in roles in political actuality in 5% of the coverage. However, it is not very common that far-right parties are covered in this role (Fennema/Van der Brug 2006; Schafraad et al. forthcoming). The main reason in this case is their absence in the national parliament. In 8% of the coverage, the far right featured in peaceful extra-parliamentary activity and in 9% in normal internal situations such as party conferences.

Over time, there were a number of changes in the attention paid to the far right in certain roles. Attention to the far right in roles in political actuality is quite constant, except for the short period (2002) when Schill was member of the Hamburg government and a candidate for the Bundestag (16%). His controversial speech in the Bundestag on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2002, is widely covered. The share of article showing far-right actors in a role in legal conflict was relatively high in 1987 (36%), then decreased to 5% in 1989. In 2002 (26%) and 2004 (32%), the percentage increased significantly again. Attention to the far right as actors of extra-parliamentary violence is quite stable. Exceptions are 1989 (6%) and 1990 (8%). The long stretched peak during the mid-nineties (18 – 15 – 18%) might have started with the infamous 'Solingen' court case. In 2004, the attention to far-right violence increased a little again (13%). Coverage of the far right in direct confrontation with their opponents (often anti-fascist activists) is relatively high in 1987 (10%), but remains quite constantly below 5% from 1990 onwards. Peaceful extra-parliamentary activity of the far right generally received a little more attention, although in the early nineties it was equally low. In 1998, it increased strongly to 19% of the coverage. Extra-parliamentary activity of the far right *in general* was covered most intensively in 1998 (40%), whereas attention for the far right in electoral and political actuality (both parliamentary) roles was at an all-time low in that year (20%). Attention to the developments within far-right (party) organisations was at its peak in 1989 (17%). Negative roles within far-right organisations peaked in 1990 (18%), while in that year, there was relatively little attention to other roles. After that, the attention to the far right in this role decreased to a few percents of the coverage.

As expected, *Bild* paid relatively more attention to the far right in sensational roles, such as a role in extra-parliamentary violence (25% vs FAZ 12% and SZ 14%, see Appendix 5). More surprising is that it also covered the far right in political actuality (13%) more than FAZ (6%) and SZ (4%). This unexpected high percentage of roles in political

**Figure 3:** Percentage of the coverage including stigmatisation of far-right actors

Coverage including any extra-parliamentary far-right actor (such as neo-Nazis, or activist groups such as Wiking Jugend or Skinheads Sächsische Schweiz) was left out of the analysis, because their relation to violence or Nazism is more likely to be factual instead of a journalist’s textual association and thus not stigmatisation in the suggestive sense. This graph might underestimate actual figures somewhat, but it avoids taking the representation of extra-parliamentary actors for stigmatising associations.

actuality turned out to be concentrated in 2002, which is probably due to the precarious interest of *Bild* in the activities of Ronald Schill (even his favourite snack bar is news).

### *Stigmatising the far right*

Stigmatising associations with the Nazis or extremism were the third aspect of substantial attention in this study. We assumed that the presence of such associations leads the reader in a negative direction when considering the far right. It was expected that stigmatisation disqualifies a far-right actor from being considered a normal democratic political party, or full member of the democratic party system. A small majority of the coverage contained stigmatisation of a far-right actor (52%).

Over time (Fig. 3), there was a first peak in 1989 (48%), and then again in the mid-nineties, reaching its top in 1998 (71%). A new increase of stigmatising associations seems to have started in the European election year 2004.

Interestingly, *Bild* coverage contained relatively few stigmatising associations. Whereas 51% of FAZ and 55% of SZ coverage contain such associations them, only 31% of *Bild* coverage does (see Appendix 6).

### *Far-right ideological standpoints*

An important last aspect of substantial attention is the presence of genuine far-right ideological standpoints. The presence of each of seven standpoints was checked in the coverage. A first indicator of the attention to far-right ideology is the total share of the coverage containing any of these standpoints, and how much of it contained none at all. In 38% of the coverage, one or more of the far-right standpoints were present (see Ap-

pendix 7). This level remained the same throughout the research period, although there are three election years in which it dropped below 25% before it returned to the average percentage in the following year. The years with relatively little coverage referring to far-right standpoints are: 1987 (24%), 1990 (22%), 1999 (25%).

Table 3 shows the presence of the seven far-right standpoints. Some, such as anti-progressive standpoints (1%), law & order standpoints (1%), and standpoints emphasising traditional values (2%), hardly featured in the coverage at all. Most prominent were xenophobic/exclusionist standpoints (28%) and nationalist standpoints (11%). Anti-establishment or populist standpoints (4%) and anti-democratic standpoints (5%) did not receive much attention, but were generally present in each period.

For some of the far-right standpoints the attention did vary over the years, while others were ignored almost completely. Anti-establishment or populist standpoints came to the fore in 1989 and in the period of the 1994 Bundestag elections. Coverage including nationalist standpoints never dropped to a very low level, except in 2002 (2%), while it peaked in 1989 with 22%. Xenophobic or exclusionist standpoints are continuously present in about 20-30% of the coverage, except in 1987 (12%) and peaking during the European Parliament elections in 1994 (36%). Coverage of other far-right standpoints remained low in the entire research period, except for three small peaks of coverage with anti-democratic standpoints in (again) 1989, 1994 (EP) and 2004 (all at 7%).

**Table 3:** Presence of far-right ideological standpoints (in percentages)

Election year	1987	1989	1990	1994EP	1994BT	1998	1999	2002	2004	Total
<i>n</i>	42	200	65	303	302	262	145	189	113	1621
Anti-progressive	0	2	3	1	1	0	1	2	1	1
Anti-democratic	2	7	0	7	2	5	4	4	7	5
Anti-establishment/ populist*	5	9	0	4	6	3	3	2	1	4
Nationalist*	14	22	6	10	13	10	10	2	8	11
Xenophobic or Exclusionist*	12	29	17	36	31	27	18	30	27	28
Law & order	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	3	1	1
Traditional values	2	2	2	1	2	4	1	0	0	2

\*)  $p < 0,05$

Most far-right standpoints featured equally in the three newspapers. There are some differences, though. First, *Bild* coverage contained fewer articles that mention anti-democratic and anti-establishment/populist standpoints than FAZ and *SZ*. *Bild* contained almost none, whereas about 5% of the FAZ and *SZ* coverage mentioned these standpoints. Contrary, *Bild* coverage is the only one that contained law and order standpoints with 4% (see Appendix 8). Although all newspapers contained a lot of xenophobic or exclusionist standpoints (between 26% and 35%), *Bild* mentioned these most (in 35% of its coverage).

### 4.3 Support attention

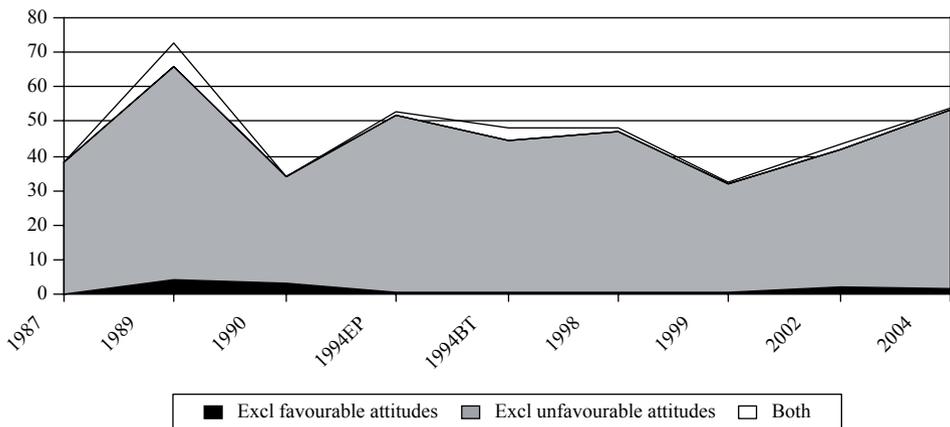
The fourth aspect, support attention, refers to the (de-)legitimation of the far right and its standpoints by non-far-right actors. It is measured in two ways. First, we look at the relative amount of coverage that contains exclusively favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards the far right or their ideological standpoints. A second indicator is the attention to public debate and discussion among non-far-right actors about the way one should deal with the far right.

#### *Non-far-right actors’ attitudes towards the far right*

Exactly half of the coverage contained explicit non-far-right actors’ attitudes towards the far right, or to far-right standpoints. Almost all of these attitudes are unfavourable to the far right (46%) (see Appendix 9). Far-right actors did not receive much approval in the coverage. Hence their isolation seemed strong.

Figure 4 shows that the share of favourable attitudes as well as the share of the coverage that contains both favourable and unfavourable attitudes were practically negligible throughout. This does not mean nothing has changed at all. The percentage of the coverage containing exclusively unfavourable attitudes went up and down quite a bit. It peaked three times in the research period. Firstly it did so in 1989 (+24% to 62%). Then there was a longer period from the EP election in 1994 until 1998 (+20% to 50%)

**Figure 4:** Non-far-right actors’ attitudes towards the far right (in percentages)



with a high percentage of the coverage containing exclusively unfavourable attitudes towards the far right. Lastly, in 2004 it peaked again with 51% of the coverage (+11%). Surprisingly, there are no differences between the newspapers (see Appendix 10).

*Dealing with the far right as a topic in the coverage*

Thirteen percent of the coverage contained debates on the right way to deal with the far right. This means it is an issue among non-far-right actors that made it into the newspapers from time to time. Often, this coverage was tied to political or legal agendas, for example when the newspapers discussed the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of the attempt to ban the NPD in 2002. As shown in Figure 5, there was relatively more coverage of such debates in the “Republikaner”’ successful year of 1989 (19%) and the EP election period of 1994 (21%). Except for 1990, the debate was always on the media agenda. Here too, there were no significant differences found between the newspapers (see Appendix 11).

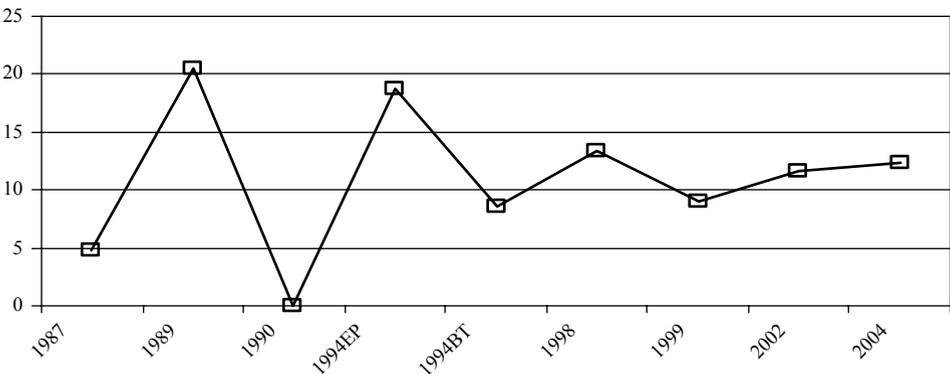
**5. Conclusions and discussion**

Following the logic of the four aspects of media attention, we unravelled the contents of three German newspapers in order to see how the media covered the far right between 1987 and 2004. In this section we summarize the answers to the research questions and discuss the surplus value of our approach.

5.1 General conclusions

Most studies on media attention measure the *volume* of attention, and some also measure *formal attention* indicators (i. e. Lubbers/Scheepers 2001; Walgrave/De Swert 2004; Boomgaarden/Vliegenthart 2007). For this study we developed an instrument that adds indicators of substantial and support attention. These two aspects of media attention to the far right were based on sociological, historical and political science research on the

**Figure 5:** Percentage of coverage containing debate on howto deal with the far right



far right. We added them because several previous studies suggest that the contents of the coverage matters, and using state of the art literature, we were able to explicate relevant aspects of media attention to the far right. As this study showed interesting findings about the coverage of the far right in German newspapers, this proves to be a relevant approach, which delivers more thorough information than traditional media research/agenda-setting research that only includes volume and formal attention measures.

Concerning research question 1, this study shows a general picture of a limited focus on stereotypical aspects of the far right: roles in legal conflict and extra-parliamentary violence, nationalist and especially xenophobic/exclusionist standpoints, a lot of stigmatising associations, only unfavourable attitudes of non-far-right actors and a low level of active representation. Taken together, this suggests a German press that deals with the far right as if it were a ‘devil from the past’. The far right is covered from a distance. Even though the far right is not ignored in itself, the coverage is, as the Belgians would have it, to be described as a ‘cordon sanitaire in the press’. The far right was not excluded from the media, but reported on in an excluding fashion. The German culture of contrition (Art 2007: 338) materialized in the ‘undemocratic outsider’ media image of the far right.

## 5.2 Longitudinal patterns

In answer to research question 2, we found no trends that gradually developed in a certain direction. Instead, there seems to be little difference between the far right coverage in 1987 and 2004. As we concluded above, during the entire research period the coverage of the far right was almost exclusively focused on the unfavourable aspects of the far right. Far-right actors in ‘unnatural’ roles for political actors (violent behaviour, defendant in court) drew much more media attention than their ‘normal’ political performance did. This was not only the case in 1987 and 2004, but throughout the entire research period. It thus looks like a *consistent* ‘cordon sanitaire in the press’. The absence of a consistent development towards a different media image does not mean there was no fluctuation at all in the levels of attention that different aspects received.

Besides a growing volume, the most relevant variance in the coverage consists of two different patterns that both strengthen our conclusion. These patterns concern two combinations of indicators of substantial and support attention that develop simultaneously (see Appendixes 12 and 13). At times when there are events that provide the news mechanism to emphasise, for example, the violent character of the far right, or the immorality of their standpoints, these patterns peaked. In fact the events serve as amplifiers of the already existing media image of the far right. Apparently, certain events draw so much newspaper attention that this puts these unfavourable aspects (their violent character and the immorality of their standpoints) under the magnifying glass and so reconfirms the image of an undemocratic outsiders’ movement (see Ohlemacher 1996 and Brosius/Esser 1996 for a similar argument about the media hype around the early nineties wave of racist violence in Germany).

### 5.3 Differences and similarities between newspapers

The three newspapers in our German study have quite distinctive characteristics. These leave their mark especially on the volume and formal attention aspects. More interesting therefore is the extent to which there are differences in *substantial* and *support attention*.

In the introduction we formulated three hypotheses. We expected (H1) the quality papers FAZ and SZ to pay more volume and formal attention to the far right than the popular *Bild*. In terms of volume attention, the hypothesis is confirmed. FAZ (794) and SZ (1100) contained 8 to 10 times more articles than *Bild* (105). However, in terms of formal attention the situation is the exact opposite. If *Bild* paid attention to the far right, it was more visible with higher percentages of front page coverage, headline appearance and prominence of far-right actors in the coverage. H1 is confirmed only for the first part.

We expected (H2) *Bild* to focus on the far right in roles of legal conflict and extra-parliamentary violence and confrontation, as well as on xenophobic/exclusionist and law and order standpoints. *Bild* did not cover the far right in legal conflict more than FAZ and SZ did. But it paid more attention to the far right as actors in extra-parliamentary violence than FAZ and SZ did. Its coverage contained more law and order standpoints, but not more xenophobic/exclusionist standpoints.

At the same time, FAZ and SZ were expected to pay attention – relatively speaking – to a wider range of situated roles and standpoints (H3). FAZ and SZ did not cover the far right in a much wider range of roles. But FAZ and SZ did pay significantly more attention to a wider range of far-right standpoints, although this difference is relatively small.

So, we have to conclude that hypothesis 2 is confirmed and hypotheses 1 and 3 received mixed support from the data. Apparently, differences between the newspapers are either on a more formal dimension, or more subtle: on a semantic level (or frame use), as was also concluded by Ohlemacher's study, based on a qualitative study of *Bild* content (1996). We, however, found only small substantial differences between quality and popular newspapers, which means all three newspapers present a similar media image of the far right. Differences are limited to accents in the 'undemocratic outsider' image. The image of the far right in *Bild* is more straightforward, while in SZ and FAZ, there is more attention to nuances.

### 5.4 Discussion

Based on historical and political characteristics of the far right, we developed a model to systematically analyse media attention to this political camp. Using this model, we were able to show that eminent German newspapers provided a rather consistent 'undemocratic outsider' media image of the far right. The model offers possibilities to analyse huge amounts of media contents in detail and comparatively. This enables us to increase our understanding of the relationship between media attention to the far right and the popularity of the far right in greater detail.

We were able to demonstrate that the tone and volume of the German coverage did not correlate to levels of far-right voting or systematically relate to particular events, which suggests that the relationship between media attention and the popularity of the far right is not easily explained. Our findings show that including substantial and sup-

port attention indicators in future agenda-setting research on the coverage of the far right may produce valuable results.

Furthermore, we have for the first time systematically analysed differences between quality and popular newspapers. Although our results cannot be generalised due to the limited number of quality and popular newspapers, they suggest that we will find significant differences between quality and popular newspapers in a future comparative design.

As the model of the four aspects of media attention for the far right can be used to analyse great amounts of media content, it allows to develop and use a multitude of comparative research designs, a possibility that we hope to explore in the near future.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1

Frequencies of articles per title in each election year per newspaper and average number of articles per day, per year and per newspaper

Election year	Newspaper	FAZ	SZ	Bild	Total
1987	<i>N</i>	8	32	2	42
	<i>x per day</i>	0,10	0,43	0,03	<b>0,19</b>
1989 EP	<i>N</i>	67	114	19	200
	<i>x per day</i>	0,89	1,52	0,25	0,89
1990	<i>N</i>	13	48	4	65
	<i>x per day</i>	<b>0,17</b>	0,64	0,05	0,29
1994 EP	<i>N</i>	217	203	25	442
	<i>x per day</i>	<b>2,89</b>	2,71	0,33	1,95
1994	<i>N</i>	187	274	14	479
	<i>x per day</i>	2,49	<b>3,65</b>	0,19	<b>2,11</b>
1998	<i>N</i>	118	197	9	324
	<i>x per day</i>	1,57	2,63	0,12	1,44
1999 EP	<i>N</i>	59	85	1	145
	<i>x per day</i>	0,79	1,13	0,01	0,64
2002	<i>N</i>	62	102	25	189
	<i>x per day</i>	0,83	1,36	0,33	0,84
2004 EP	<i>N</i>	62	45	6	113
	<i>x per day</i>	<b>0,83</b>	<b>0,60</b>	0,08	0,51
Corpus	<i>N</i>	794	1100	105	1999
	<i>x per day</i>	1,18	1,63	0,16	0,99

## Appendix 2

Percentages of articles per newspaper on the front page, with the far right in headlines, or as a prominent actor

Newspaper	FAZ	SZ	Bild	Total
<i>n</i>	657	859	105	1621
Front page appearance	11	4	24	8
Headline appearance	29	53	73	45
Prominent actor	62	68	80	66

## Appendix 3

Representation of the far right over time (in percentages)

Election year	1987	1989	1990	1994EP	1994BT	1998	1999	2002	2004	Total
<i>n</i>	42	200	65	303	302	262	145	189	113	1621
Passive	69	64	68	66	64	50	66	59	70	62
Active	26	32	29	16	21	16	21	30	13	22
None	5	4	3	18	15	34	14	11	17	16
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

## Appendix 4

Representation in three newspapers (in percentages)

Newspaper	FAZ	SZ	Bild	Total
<i>n</i>	657	859	105	1621
Passive representation	65	61	63	62
Active representation	18	23	35	22
None/no actor	17	17	2	16
Total	100	100	100	100

## Appendix 5

Coverage with the far right in specific roles in three newspapers

Newspaper	FAZ	SZ	Bild	Total
<i>n</i>	657	859	105	1621
In elections	33	34	31	24
In political actuality*	6	4	<b>13</b>	5
In legal conflict	17	17	21	17
In extra-parliamentary violence*	12	14	<b>25</b>	14
In extra-parliamentary confrontation*	4	3	<b>10</b>	4
In extra-parliamentary peaceful sit.	8	9	6	8
In normal internal situations	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	4	9
In negative internal situations	4	4	4	4

\*)  $p < 0,05$



Appendix 10

Percentage of the coverage with non-far-right actor's attitudes\*

Newspaper	FAZ	SZ	Bild	Total
<i>n</i>	657	859	105	1621
Favourable attitudes	1	1	3	1
Unfavourable attitudes	46	46	49	46
Both	2	2	4	2
None	51	51	45	50
Total	100	100	100	100

\*) The chi-square test (Fisher's Exact) shows a too high *p* value (*p* =.518). The found differences can therefore not be viewed as significantly different.

Appendix 11

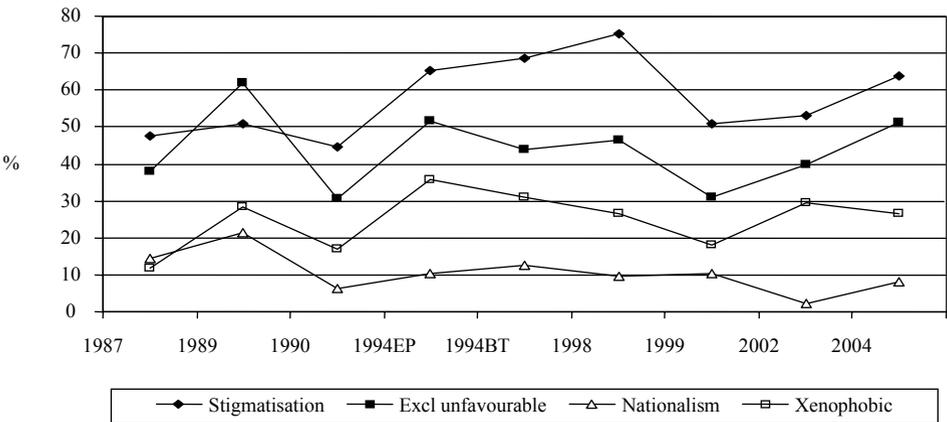
Percentage of the coverage with debate on dealing with the far right\*

Newspaper	FAZ	SZ	Bild	Total
<i>n</i>	657	859	105	1621
No debate	86	88	90	87
Including debate on dealing with the far right	14	12	10	13
Total	100	100	100	100

\*) The chi-square test showed a too high *p* value (*p* =.496) for the complete table. Between the two extremes the difference has also been found insignificant (*p* =.326).

Appendix 12

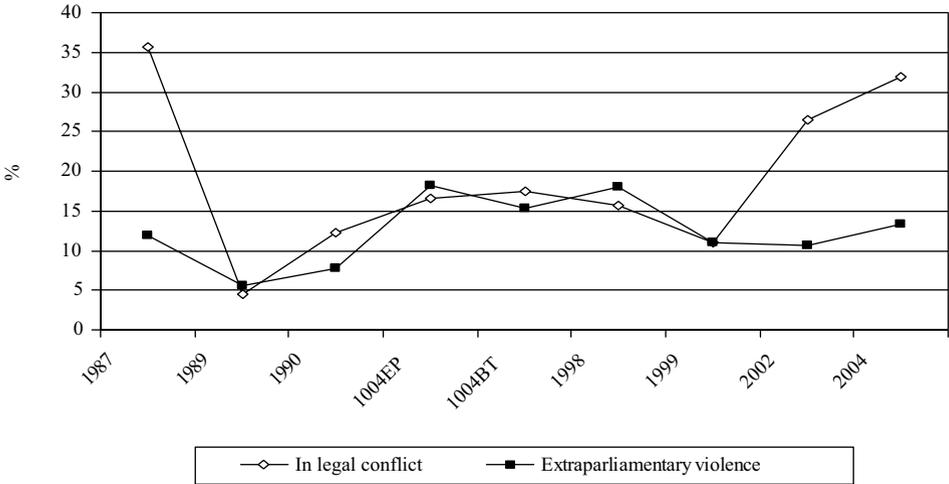
Pattern one: Four indicators throughout time



The four indicators stigmatising associations, nationalist standpoints, xenophobic/exclusionist standpoints and NFRA unfavourable attitudes follow one pattern simultaneously. This means that the far right made the news with their nationalist and xenophobic standpoints, which brings about stigmatising associations and provokes explicit unfavourable attitudes from non-far-right actors more often in 1989, 1994-1998 and 2004.

Appendix 13

Pattern two: roles in extra-parliamentary violence, or far right in legal conflict



In 1994, a significant amount of attention went out to the Solingen court case, which had become a key-event (Green et al. 2001: 496).<sup>8</sup> Most coverage with roles in legal conflict and extra-parliamentary violence in the first peak concerns single articles on smaller but similar events. Apparently, one example event made a whole series of smaller events more news-worthy. In 2002, there was one media event that helps to explain the increase of the share of coverage with the far right in a role in legal conflict, namely the attempt to prohibit the NPD in court. Events that contain the exemplary aspects of the unacceptability of the far right cause an overemphasis of media attention on similar events.

<sup>8</sup> We analysed which media events the coverage was about in each of the peak years, based on the titles of the articles.