

Likes for Antisemitism: The Alternative für Deutschland and Its Posts on Facebook

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Abstract

The *Alternative für Deutschland's* (AfD) entry into the German *Bundestag* in September 2017 represented a shift in post-1945 German political tradition and the social acceptance of a party from the far right. During the election campaign, the AfD relied heavily on the social media mostly using Facebook to spread its agenda. This research on the AfD's attitude toward National Socialism, the Holocaust and antisemitism on Facebook shows that the party utilizes antisemitic stereotypes to defame political opponents and that further, the AfD instrumentalizes events from the Third Reich to elevate perceived positive aspects and strives to rehabilitate certain facets of National Socialism. The article first shows how the AfD uses Facebook to spread its unfiltered political views. Then, three case studies posted by the AfD will be analyzed. Additionally, the comments under the Facebook posts are taken into account to show how their followers perceive antisemitic posts made by AfD officials.

Keywords antisemitism, social media, Alternative für Deutschland, German politics

INTRODUCTION

On August 12, 2019, it was made public that a member of a group of AfD followers would be charged for incitement of the people and disturbance of the dead. He is accused of denying the existence of gas chambers and the relativization of Nazi crimes during a visit to the former Sachsenhausen concentration camp. At the time of the visit, the man was an official guest of Fraction Leader and Member of Parliament Alice Weidel.¹ This incident presents an opportunity to look back at similar events to trace how the AfD became what it is today: a party openly shunned and criticized by the Jewish community, despite all its efforts to present itself as “a natural political home” for Jewish people.²

Germany's *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) was founded as a response to the Euro Crisis

but only became a successful party during the so-called Refugee Crisis in 2015. The AfD was elected to the German parliament (*Bundestag*) with 12.6% of the vote, thus far exceeding the 5% electoral threshold. Such a high result represented a breach in Germany's post-World War II political history, considering perceptions of the AfD that range from populist to radical right-wing. The success of the AfD has sparked a public debate about national identity, national pride, racism, the normalization of antisemitism and the memory of the Holocaust in Germany. During the election campaign, the AfD relied heavily on social media, especially Facebook, to spread its agenda. While political parties' official statements and publications adhere to a certain standard, such as conforming to the constitution, Facebook

offers the possibility for politicians to share their opinion in an unrestrained way. But, unlike in other platforms such as traditional interviews, where a given opinion could result in critical questions or responses, the AfD has full control of their content on Facebook. Thus, Facebook is a useful tool to examine the more uncensored attitudes of the AfD towards the memory of the Holocaust, National Socialism and antisemitism. For this research, Facebook posts from the AfD’s official Facebook account and the public profiles of senior figures of the party will serve as the primary sources. The analysis of these case studies shows enduring antisemitism within the AfD, the importance of social media as a tool of disseminating such ideologies, and that German society at large continues to struggle with the remains of National Socialism. Additionally, both social media and the AfD have contributed to a normalization of antisemitic transgressions. In its gravest consequence, antisemitism has manifested in real-life physical violence, as in the recent assault on a synagogue on Yom Kippur in Halle, Germany, in which two people were murdered in the course of the attack.

Primary Sources

The data was collected between January and mid-September 2017, prior to the elections in Germany. The four cases chosen offer a rich historical context for my analysis. These comprise two caricatures from AfD leaders’ official Facebook profiles: one posted by Frauke Petry, speaker of the AfD at that time, and another posted by Björn Höcke, chairman of the AfD fraction in Thuringia’s state parliament (*Landtag*).

Höcke’s post is interesting due to his past as a history teacher and, thus, the expected familiarity with the history of visual antisemitism. The scandal of this meme lies within the fact that despite his assumed knowledge, he chose to post it, and it remains on his Facebook account to this day. Höcke is a radical agitator in the AfD who repeatedly draws attention to himself through scandals. In the years 2016 and 2017, he tried to participate in the memorial service for the victims of the Holocaust in the memorial of the Buchenwald concentration camp, even though he had been officially banned

TABLE 1. Characteristics of primary data sources.

Name	Position	Date	Post	Reactions (former Likes)	Comments	Shares	Views*
Björn Höcke	Chairman of the AfD fraction of the Thuringia state parliament	22.02.2017	Meme / Caricature	981	485	425	-
Frauke Petry	Former speaker of the AfD; left the party in 2017	01.04.2017	Meme / Caricature	3,038	413	1,085	-
Beatrix von Storch	Member of the German parliament	20.07.2017	Vlog	572	92	346	14,592
Alexander Gauland	Co-Leader of the AfD; Member of the German parliament	09.09.2017	Video	151	38	164	9,646

Source: Author’s own compilation.

before. Additionally, in 2016, the sociologist Andreas Kemper conducted a language analysis of Höcke's speeches and publications and found that Björn Höcke has written extreme right-wing articles with ethnonationalist and antisemitic content under the pseudonym Ludolf Ladig.³ Just ten days before the International Holocaust Memorial Day, on January 17, 2017, Höcke provoked a media outcry with a speech that he gave in Dresden. In his speech, he referred to the "Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe" in Berlin as a memorial of shame. He continued by saying that Germany's culture of memory is a "stupid coping culture" that needs a 180-degree turnaround of its politics of memory of the Holocaust and National Socialism. He further called for a lively culture of memory, which above all focuses on the great achievements of German ancestors.⁴

While Björn Höcke and his extreme faction have gradually radicalized the AfD, Frauke Petry stood for the moderate wing of the party. Because of their seeming differences, their posts are essential for this analysis as both still opted to publish a caricature that featured antisemitic stereotypes. In an interview for the Israeli news in 2016, Petry rejected the claim that the AfD is particularly attractive to people with antisemitic tendencies and vowed that Germany has a specific responsibility in handling antisemitism. Further, she stated that when antisemitism appears within the AfD, it is dealt with accordingly and described her unsuccessful pursuit to connect to the Jewish population in Germany and Israel.⁵ During her tenure, she was actively involved in attempts to remove Höcke from the AfD for his antisemitic antics and ultimately indicated the radical right-wing tendencies of the party as her reason to leave it. All of these factors contrast with her Facebook post which contains a caricature with antisemitic features and thus make it an interesting case study. Although she has since left the AfD, Frauke Petry's tenure as AfD Chairwoman falls into

the timeframe of the research and thus her post remains significant.

This article also presents analysis of a video blog (vlog) posted by Beatrix von Storch, Member of the *Bundestag*, on her official AfD profile. Von Storch's positions regarding National Socialism are particularly valuable for this analysis since she is the AfD's Commissioner for Antisemitism. Von Storch is regarded as a socially conservative Christian activist who opposes legal equality for same-sex couples as well as abortion rights and religious freedom for Muslims. From her point of view, Muslims and Islam are the sole source of antisemitism, so to her the AfD is the only German party that has precise positions against antisemitism, accomplished vis-à-vis their anti-Islam agenda.

The last example to be analysed below is a speech given by Alexander Gauland, chairman of the AfD in Brandenburg's *Landtag* and Member of the *Bundestag* and thus a senior figure, representing the viewpoints of the AfD. Gauland, a former CDU member, plays a significant role in the party's radicalization, with connections to Germany's far-right members and organization. Although he does not have an active social media account on his own, he is regularly featured in posts from the profile of the AfD in the German parliament and the post which is subject of this analysis was derived official Facebook profile of *der Flügel*, a radical wing within the AfD.

All four representatives are popular figures within the AfD and well-known in the general public and media. Thus, their output sheds light not only on their agenda but on what has become acceptable in public discourse and German society after the Holocaust. Therefore, this article presents analysis of these cases in both their historical and direct context, paying specific attention to language and linguistic devices, as well as to their treatment of themes such as the Holocaust, National Socialism, and antisemitism.

The AfD on Facebook

The AfD is the most successful political party on social media in Germany. The official AfD profiles have high numbers of followers, but they also mobilize the most users on the social networks.⁶ A study from Hohenheim University about the use of social media by political parties and candidates in the 2017 election campaign in Germany has shown that 62.2% of the participants got their political information from social media. These social media users actively noticed AfD content and perceived the appearance of AfD politicians as particularly strong, rating the strength of the AfD's social media impact at 55,1%, making it the second strongest party, only narrowly behind the CDU/CSU (58,4%).⁷ Research by Trevor Davis from the George Washington University (2019) indicates that the AfD is "Germany's first Facebook party," which has a much higher output than any other German party on Facebook, reminiscent of the level of the final stage of US presidential campaigns.⁸ Moreover, his study suggests that around 80,000 Facebook accounts that have frenetically disseminated and liked AfD content are social bots and not real humans that have been employed to boost the party's visibility on the social network.⁹ Another study conducted between 2013 and 2015 has shown that AfD supporters in particular perceive the content on their newsfeed on Facebook as very homogeneous.¹⁰ The social media appearance of the AfD is generally characterized by its distinguishing design. More than 75% of their contributions were posts with similar structure: a quote, a picture of the quoted person, and the AfD logo that has high recognition value. Further, the AfD was a trendsetter in posting short videos online in which they spread their message, a tactic they have used quite extensively.

On Facebook, the AfD is connected to the New Right, indicted by ties to the far-right initiative *Ein Prozent*, the extreme-right *Compact* magazine, the PEGIDA movement

and the Identitarian movement¹¹ that are under observation by the police for the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The connection is visible when they share and like each other's content, for example when the Facebook profile of *Ein Prozent* shares content from the AfD Saxony-Anhalt.¹² The AfD is profiting from its alliance with right-wing radicals and was able to increase their followers after the founder, Bernd Lucke, left the party.¹³ Several AfD politicians have been reported or have already been sentenced to pay a fine for incitement of the people on Facebook. One AfD politician from Saarland was sentenced after baiting against refugees.¹⁴

In cooperation with researchers of political language the *Financial Times* conducted research to detect words and phrases closely associated with the ideological language of National Socialism in the Facebook posts of the AfD. They found that between May 2015 and 2016, there was a 1,100% increase in the use of terminology such as *Volksverräter* ("traitor to the people") in the posts of the AfD.¹⁵ This clearly indicates the increasing radicalization of the party as expressed on Facebook.

In addition to the AfD's widespread use of Facebook, party officials also have accounts on Twitter, Instagram and the English-language free speech social network Gab, which is used extensively by radical right-wing extremists, white supremacists, Neo-Nazis, and the alt-right.¹⁶ Gab was made infamous following a mass shooting at a synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania after which it was found that the shooter openly posted his violently antisemitic intentions. Although the AfD's Gab accounts have been largely inactive, the mere existence of these profiles paired with the party's recent meeting and collaboration with personalities associated with the alt-right, such as Milo Yiannopoulos and Steve Bannon, are further indications of the direction in which the party is headed.¹⁷

To provide additional evidence demonstrating the radical turn in the direction of the party, I will now shift focus to some specific examples of how the AfD propagates its antisemitic agenda on social media.

Björn Höcke and Frauke Petry: Caricatures with Stereotypical Anti-Jewish Attributes

Although the antisemitic caricatures of Jews from *Der Stürmer*, an antisemitic newspaper published in Germany from 1923 until 1945, belong to the cultural memory of the Holocaust in Germany, such depictions have a much longer tradition.¹⁸ Since the Middle Ages, discriminatory depictions of Jews have existed in the form of basalt reliefs.¹⁹ These representations were religiously motivated and implied the Jews were the Antichrist, marking the beginning of the association of alleged physiognomic attributes of Jews as a mirror of inner qualities, namely, wickedness or malignancy.²⁰ Through the nationalization and militarization of the German empire, caricatures of deformed “Jewish” bodies appeared, which implied the Jews were unfit for military service (*Wehrunfähigkeit*).²¹ With the invention of the Jewish race by the anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840), arose the assumption of a particular shape/distinctiveness of the nasal bone of Jews. By comparing the shape of the skull and the angle of the face, the allegedly Jewish head was compared with that of Africans and, in accordance the prevailing racial theory at the time, equated with primates.²²

Soon these stereotypical Jewish physiognomic representations and the negative internal values they implied were portrayed in connection with enemy images such as liberals, social democrats, or communists. In the nineteenth century, anti-Jewish caricatures depicted physiognomic and professional stereotypes, such as financiers or bankers, which expanded the stereotype of the *Finanzjudentum* (the belief that Jews rule the global financial market).²³ Constantly repeated physiognomic stereotypes include an oversized, hooked nose; thick lips; big ears and black hair

or curls.²⁴ The existing literature on antisemitic caricatures refer to such stereotypical depictions as *visiotypes*. Among the stereotypical depictions of professional groups are the finance and economic sector but also the fields of medicine and law.²⁵ Further, Jews in caricatures were associated with capitalism, liberalism, and the domination of the stock market and the press; and they were equated with social democrats.²⁶ “Jewish” attributes are used to criticize contemporary society and provide grounds for political agitation.²⁷

In the caricatures of *Der Stürmer*, Jews were blamed for all political, economic, and social grievances. *Der Stürmer* newspaper was an important propaganda material used by the National Socialists and had printed anti-Jewish caricatures on the title page since 1925. The caricatures illustrated by Phillip “Fips” Ruprecht resorted to the stereotypical physiognomic representations of racial theory. The hooked nose and the beaded lips were, by constant repetition in the publications, soon depicted and ultimately perceived as substantially Jewish. Anti-Jewish portrayals from the centuries-old image repertoire of the Jewish assassination of Jesus, the medieval myth of ritual murder and the Jewish usurer up to the NS-era notion of the *Verjudung*²⁸ of culture and politics were all portrayed in *Der Stürmer*.²⁹

The physiognomic stereotypes were complemented with simple recriminations and explanations about how the world works. For example, in many *Stürmer* caricatures, Jews were accused of sexual crimes and, thus because of racial defilement, a threat to the German people. A continuously repeated motif was also that of the Jew as a sub-human and as the personified devil and, due to the so-called “Jewish internationalism,” a Jewish world conspiracy was declared.³⁰

The AfD’s experience with posting caricatures on Facebook spans back to as early as 2014 with an antisemitic depiction of the British Jewish banker, Baron Jacob Rothschild, posted on Facebook by former state parliamentarian of Brandenburg, Jan-Ulrich Weiss. The post

showed a photograph of Baron Rothschild next to a caricature. The text, which repeats common conspiracy theory tropes around the Rothschild family, said that the Rothschilds own every bank, finance both parties of every war, and control the media and government. Although recently removed from office after conviction on unrelated charges, Weiss was then acquitted by the Federal Court of Arbitration (*Bundesschiedsgericht*) and also cleared of the indictment of popular incitement because of a lack of clear antisemitic content. The court's decision is difficult to understand because the text, which refers to the idea of the Jewish world conspiracy, is prototypically antisemitic.³¹ Although further incidents have also remained largely unpenalized, this was ultimately just the beginning of the AfD's experience with posting antisemitic caricatures on Facebook.

On the official website of the AfD, there is a category for caricatures. The images caricature politicians like Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union), Horst Seehofer (Christian Social Union), Christian Lindner (Free Democratic Party), and Martin Schulz. As the only Social Democrat, Schulz is clearly marked with anti-Jewish attributes.³²

The following two examples, based on posts by Petry and Höcke, are particularly interesting

because they concern Martin Schulz, who is not Jewish. They illustrate how the AfD uses antisemitic stereotypes to defame their political opponents.

On 22 January 2017, Björn Höcke posted a meme that includes text and a caricature that is supposed to depict the then-chancellor candidate of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Martin Schulz.³³ The meme is mainly done in red, it being the color of the Social Democrats, and shows Martin Schulz's head on a bottle. The accompanying text describes in a sarcastic way that despite his lack of qualifications for the *Privatwirtschaft* ("private sector/economy"), Schulz is still the chancellor candidate of the SPD. The word *Privatwirtschaft* stands out in the text because it is highlighted in bold letters.

Martin Schulz's head is altered with antisemitic stereotypical attributes. He is portrayed with exaggerated thick lips and a hooked nose. The caricature only exaggerates features on Schulz that are associated with antisemitic depictions, such as the nose and the lips, and thus, the caricature is subtle and covertly antisemitic. The wine bottle, which refers to Schulz as a recovered alcoholic, dehumanizes him by replacing his body with an object.

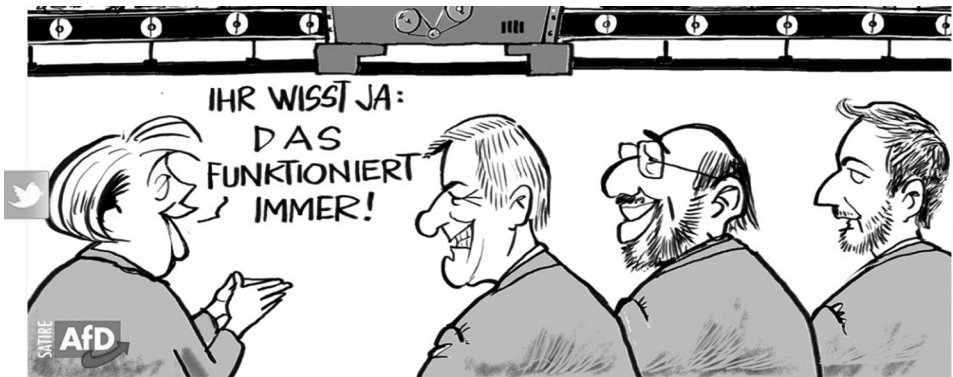


FIGURE 1. AfD Facebook post of a meme caricaturizing political opponent, Social Democrat Martin Schulz, with stereotypical antisemitic features.



FIGURE 2. Bjorn Höcke's Facebook post of a meme representing political opponent, Martin Schulz, with stereotypical Jewish physical attributes.

Although the caricature does not have a manifestly antisemitic purpose, it implicitly applies anti-Jewish attributes to Schulz's face. Because these are associated with inner values, such as a malicious character, this post relies on a concept that comes from the tradition of antisemitic caricatures.³⁴ Thus, the image seeks to discredit Schulz by implicitly associating him with negative stereotypes of Jews.

The standardized pictorial representation of Jews, which has been impressed in the visual

memory of the Germans, especially during the time of National Socialism, ensures their recognizability and can therefore also be applied to non-Jews.³⁵ Further, that Martin Schulz is caricatured with antisemitic stereotypes also springs from the reversal of the tradition of equating Jews and Social Democrats in the nineteenth century.³⁶

Although the caricature's accompanying text is quite sarcastic, the word *Privatwirtschaft* stands out. Especially in connection with words such

as “economy”, antisemitic cartoons point to their historical tradition. The word *Wirtschaft* is a trigger word, since antisemitic ideology has always suggested that Jews are either the ruler and the beneficiary of the economy or responsible for the economic crisis.³⁷

By posting this caricature, Höcke instrumentalizes antisemitic stereotypes, such as the hooked nose, thick lips and the trigger word *Wirtschaft* to defame the SPD chancellor candidate. It might be expected that such a post would lead to a public outcry against antisemitism or even for the deletion of the meme, however, this post encouraged quite a different response.

Interestingly, the majority of the 241 comments below Höcke’s post are negative reactions towards the ridicule of Schulz’s recovery from alcohol addiction and his lack of *Abitur* and university degree. Some commenters call Höcke a history distorter (*Geschichtsverfälscher*) and a liar and refer to the fact that he is a history teacher. Others call Höcke inhuman and one commenter calls him “Göbbels-like” (*Göbbelsverschnitt*), and thus they demonstrate their refusal to accept the image. Although the majority of the commenters take issue with the text and not the depiction of Schulz, two comments refer to the caricature itself and express that it resembles those from *Der Stürmer*, an antisemitic tabloid from the World War II period. Commenter 1 asks whether the caricaturist was “dug out from *Der Stürmer*,”³⁸ and Commenter 2 says that the caricaturist’s grandfather probably worked for *Der Stürmer* and is thus referring to the tradition of anti-Jewish stereotypes.³⁹ Another remark from Commenter 3 writes that Julius Streicher, the publisher of *Der Stürmer*, would have been proud of Björn Höcke.⁴⁰ Still another commenter wonders what the features in the caricature remind him/her of.⁴¹ It is not possible to understand from this comment whether it criticizes or supports the caricature and the underlying message, however, it does draw attention to its connection to anti-Jewish stereotypes. Even the commenters who

attest that the caricature bears a resemblance to those from *Der Stürmer* accept the stereotypical depiction to a certain extent—for example, they do not ask for its removal.

The overall lack of outrage against the antisemitic depiction might result from internalization of the hooked nose as a typically Jewish attribute into common knowledge. Thus, through the constant repetition of anti-Jewish depictions throughout history they have been memorized and are now regarded as “normal.”⁴² Further, the changes to Schulz’s face are subtle but by only exaggerating features that are in line with antisemitic stereotypes and by also exaggerating them in the tradition of antisemitic images, the negative intention becomes clear. However, because the aim of the caricature and the accompanying text is to attack Schulz’s personality, the stereotypical physical depiction does not play a prominent role in the comments.

Frauke Petry, then party leader of the AfD (*Parteivorsitzende*), also posted a caricature on April 1, 2017.⁴³ After the election on September 24, 2017, Petry left the AfD and established the conservative party *Die blaue Partei*, the Blue Party.⁴⁴ Despite that she is no longer officially associated with the AfD, it is worth looking into Petry’s post above all because she set the tone for what was acceptable during her time as the party’s leader.

The caricature depicts the then SPD chancellor candidate, Martin Schulz, blowing bubbles. There are five bubbles, each containing words: “more,” “more salary,” “more pension,” “more subsidies,” “more justice.” There is another bubble that already burst which says: “more SPD voters.” The repetition of the word “more” emphasizes excess and thus is portraying Schulz as unrealistic, fleeting, and greedy. One of the peculiarities of Facebook is its fast pace when providing information. Thus, users have the habit to just scroll through the information provided in their Facebook feed. Because this caricature comes with a rather long text, it can be assumed that the majority of followers disregard the text and focus on the



FIGURE 3. Frauke Petry's Facebook post of a meme depicting political opponent, Martin Schulz, with stereotypical antisemitic attributes.

picture. Also, in order to read the complete text accompanying images, readers are often required to open the whole post by clicking on “show more”—therefore it is not automatic that the text will be read in full or given equal priority to the image.

If the caricature stands alone, it shows Martin Schulz with the antisemitic stereotypes like the hooked nose and thick lips, dressed in a suit and blowing bubbles. It then appears as if he wishes all the things in the bubbles, such as more salary, more pension and subsidies, for himself. According to the caricature, the bubbles symbolize the unsubstantial nature of his claims—promises unfulfilled, which depict him as a liar. The accompanying text discusses how the “populist” Schulz gives “promises of salvation” (*Heilsversprechen*) although those are just the “social-populist bubbles of the SPD”, referring to the bubbles in the caricature.

The comments under Petry's post differ drastically from those under Höcke's, although both

show Martin Schulz with antisemitic stereotypes. Almost every comment agrees with the caricature and further shares a range of negative opinions about Schulz, suggesting for example that he is a liar or a traitor. Several comments associate Schulz with a world conspiracy that rules the economy.

For example, Commenter 5 replies with an image that shows a worker and his manager. While liquid, as a metaphor for money, is flowing out of a pipe into the mouth of the management, only a few drops fall into the mouth of the worker, who sits under the pipe. The pipe is labeled “profit” and the water drops are called “salary.” The manager sitting at the end of the pipe, receiving the profit is depicted with a hooked nose, huge mouth and his head disproportional to his body.⁴⁵ Commenter 6 implies that Schulz is part of a financial conspiracy including the European Union (*Brüssel*) and a Jewish investment banking firm.⁴⁶ Commenter 7 posts a meme and declares that Germany is not

a democracy and that the Jewish investment banker and philanthropist George Soros has decided that Schulz will become the next chancellor.⁴⁷ Commenter 8 advises everyone to not believe one word that Schulz is saying and posts a meme with Schulz's face and a quote that says that the new Germany only exists for the sake of Israel.⁴⁸ Although this is a real quote which derives from an essay written by Avraham Burg for the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*,⁴⁹ it is taken out of its original context and is instrumentalized here to insinuate that because of its Nazi past, Schulz deliberately indebts Germany to the state of Israel.

The examples have shown that although Petry and Höcke belong to two different wings within the AfD, both instrumentalize antisemitic stereotypes to defame political opponents. Further, the two examples show that the visual language of antisemitic stereotypes has been internalized so that on the one hand, they can be successfully put to work, and on the other hand, they are being recognized. The reception of the caricatures by the commenters has shown, with three exceptions where commenters have responded negatively by pointing out its resemblance to caricatures from *Der Stürmer*, that stereotypical antisemitic depictions are widely accepted, and their use is normalized.

Beatrix von Storch: The Stauffenberg Plot

Although there were many different types of resistance within German society against the Nazi regime, such as Jewish Communists (*Baumgruppe*) and groups within the Protestant and the Catholic Church (*Bekennende Kirche* and *Martin Niemeier*), youth movements (*Edelweisspiraten*) and student movements (*Die Weiße Rose*), as well as conservative elites (*Kreisauer Kreis*) and military resistance (*Beck-Goerdeler Gruppe*), it was still a minority of the population.⁵⁰ All attempts to resist the Nazi regime failed because they never gained popular support from the German people, and most

members of the resistance were brutally persecuted, tortured and murdered.

One resistance attempt that has become part of the culture of the memory of the Holocaust in Germany is the Stauffenberg plot, a military attempt to overthrow the National Socialist regime. Among the main driving forces of the coup attempt on July 20, 1944 were General Olbricht, Major General Tresckow and Colonel Schenk von Stauffenberg. Tresckow, a conservative officer, was from the outset an opponent of Hitler for moral reasons, and under his influence, Stauffenberg joined the resistance in 1941.⁵¹ Tresckow was convinced that Hitler's assassination had to be carried out even without a chance for his death and a political change but as an act of conscience and as a sign of resistance to the world, which influenced Stauffenberg to eventually carry out the assassination attempt.⁵² Although the conspirators' attitude towards the persecution of the Jews remains unclear, their actions were nevertheless for ethical reasons, motivated to preserve the moral identity of the army.⁵³ The ideal of a resistance out of conscience has also been picked up and used by Beatrix von Storch.

On July 20, 2017, the Memorial Day of the Stauffenberg Plot, von Storch uploaded a vlog on her official AfD profile page on Facebook which has been widely viewed, liked, and shared. While all the mainstream parties posted or published something on the Holocaust Memorial Day in 2017, the AfD did not mention it. Thus, it was surprising that despite the AfD's point of view that there is an exaggerated focus on National Socialism in Germany, not only Storch but several AfD members on Facebook shared their thoughts about the Stauffenberg plot. For example, Thomas Rudy, member of the AfD in Thuringia's *Landtag*, posted a meme which shows a portrait of Stauffenberg with the accompanying words "The real Antifascism didn't have coloured hair."⁵⁴

In her speech in the vlog, von Storch is insinuating that the AfD is a resistance movement against the current German government,

comparable with the Stauffenberg plot against the Nazi regime. This viewpoint is common for the AfD, and their stance as a political resistance against the “establishment” is not only manifested in their program but also serves as the main motivation for AfD voters.

The AfD’s resistance perspective is highlighted in a speech from Beatrix von Storch, in which she compares the Stauffenberg plot with other events of the German freedom tradition, such as Liberal Revolution of 1848, the Workers’ Revolt of 1953, and the Freedom Revolution of 1989. Von Storch points out that the Stauffenberg plot was a revolt of conscience against Nazi tyranny and that the lesson that can be learned from it must be protected and defended by every generation. The following is a transcript of the two-minute speech posted on Facebook:

The 20th of July, the day of the Stauffenberg plot is a special date in our history. It is an important day in our German freedom tradition. In addition to the events of July 20, 1944, the great events of this freedom tradition were the liberal revolution of 1848, the 1953 workers’ revolt in the GDR, and the freedom revolution of 1989. On July 20, 1944, the conspirators around Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg had dared a rebel of conscience. Their attempt to eliminate the National Socialist tyranny has failed. But their sacrifice was not in vain. They have set a signal. They have left us a long-lasting message for all times. Never again should violence and terror triumph over democracy and freedom in Germany. Never again should freedom of expression and civil rights be suppressed in Germany. Never again should we blindly follow a political leadership and put the state above our conscience. Yes, we can learn from our history. We can learn that we must have the courage to use our own mind as the great enlightenment philosopher Emanuel Kant said. That we are guided by the spirit of freedom and not by the worship of power. That we should be free citizens and not

submissive subjects. We need civic sense and not blind obedience. This is the message of the men of the 20th of July and that is the lore of our German freedom tradition. Freedom is a precious commodity, and each generation is recalled to nurse it, to preserve it, and to defend it.⁵⁵

Von Storch gives her speech in front of an image of the courtyard of the Bendlerblock, the site where Stauffenberg and his followers were executed, and which today serves as the “German Resistance Memorial Center”. The image is not coincidental—the AfD has continuously claimed to be a victim of discrimination and baiting from the media and the left. For example, Alice Weidel left a TV debate with representatives of other parties in the middle of a discussion because she felt she was treated unfairly and also the Berliner AfD filed a legal complaint against the justice senator because they felt discriminated against.⁵⁶

Von Storch uses the pronouns “we” and “us” throughout her speech without specifying who she is addressing and thus is implying that she specifically speaks to AfD sympathizers and not “we, the Germans”. This intentional ambiguity serves to divide “us” from “them” and unify that “us” around the AfD’s message. The inclusive “we” also makes her more relatable, making the intended audience feel like they are “part of it.”

Von Storch makes use of language that resembles that of a resistance movement against a dictatorship. Several phrases closely resemble wordings that were used in the leaflets of the White Rose: “*Blindings folgt es [das Volk] seinen Verführern . . .*”⁵⁷ (“Blind, they [the people] follow their seducers”), “*Geistesfreiheit*” (“the spirit of freedom”), “. . . *die persönliche Freiheit, das kostbarste Gut . . .*”⁵⁸ (“the personal freedom, the most precious commodity”).

In her speech von Storch does not provide any historical context around the plot except for the reference to the *nationalsozialistische Gewaltherrschaft* (“National Socialist tyranny”) and the date of the coup, July 20, 1944. She does

not mention World War II, the racial ideology that was crucial in making National Socialism tyrannical, nor the Holocaust. She does not mention other resistance movements or the victims of National Socialism and the Holocaust, as is traditional on the memorial day of July 20 in Germany. If von Storch's speech would have aimed to commemorate the resistance against the Nazi regime, she would have mentioned other movements, such as the famous White Rose and with it, she would have referred to the victims of the Holocaust because in their leaflets, the members of the White Rose mentioned the murder of the Jews. Instead of referring to the historical events around the Stauffenberg plot or other resistance movements, von Storch is integrating the plot into the German freedom tradition, which consists of events in which German people revolted against the political system, and subsequently successfully created change within the country. Without the historical context of the Holocaust and its victims but with reference to former revolts, it appears as if the Germans had been the victims of National Socialism.

Von Storch urges her listeners, the inclusive "we," to never again let violence and terror triumph over democracy and freedom and to never again allow freedom of speech and civil rights to be suppressed and a political leadership followed blindly. With that, von Storch is insinuating a comparison with the current situation and government in Germany as manifested in the AfD party program: violence and terror from refugees and Muslims taking over, the lack of freedom of speech in Germany, and German citizens as silent followers of a political elite and oligarchy.⁵⁹ Subsequently, she is equating the resistance against a dictatorship with the resistance against a democracy. This equation is common for the AfD, also on their social media accounts. In January 2017 the Berlin state court forbade a meme that had been posted on the Facebook profile of the AfD district Nürnberg-Süd/Schwabach due to copyright infringement. The meme depicted Sophie Scholl and was headlined "*Sophie Scholl würde*

AfD wählen" ("Sophie Scholl would vote AfD"). The text in the meme was a famous quote from Sophie Scholl in which she says that there is nothing more dishonorable than to be ruled by a dark clique without resistance.⁶⁰

Seeing the AfD's political opposition as a resistance equal to the resistance against the Nazi regime is mitigating its exceptional status in German history. Not mentioning the Holocaust and thus not putting the Stauffenberg plot into its historical context allows von Storch to insinuate that the current government is undemocratic and that the AfD is a resistance against it. This relativization and distortion of facts is reflected in the comments below her Facebook post. All these posts and her speech co-opt German heroes that resisted NS to the political purposes of the AfD. By claiming the AfD is in the same freedom tradition and that these historical heroes would support the AfD today, they are manipulating societal understanding of these figures to increase support for their political agenda.

In the comment section below her post some commenters express their feeling that Germany currently has tendencies of a dictatorship⁶¹ or even is a dictatorship.⁶² Another commenter asks whether von Storch is insinuating that Germany is currently a dictatorship.⁶³ Commenter 4 replies to Commenter 3 that indeed, Germany is a dictatorship⁶⁴ and controlled by Brussels (the European Union), or that there is less freedom in Germany now than in 1944.⁶⁵ Commenter 5 agrees and writes "We need more Stauffenbergs, or we have to show courage ourselves."⁶⁶ Commenter 6 expresses outrage that von Storch is not referring to Stauffenberg as a traitor.⁶⁷ Commenter 7 addresses von Storch directly and says that the time has come to "join" Stauffenberg and to "overthrow the Chancellor."⁶⁸ Some more comments follow, which express understanding that von Storch is referring to the current German government in her speech and also express the wish for a violent act, as in the Stauffenberg plot, to overthrow it.

The comments show that the language of resistance that von Storch employs by instrumentalizing the Stauffenberg plot is inciting. The commenters share the AfD's viewpoint that the current German government needs to be opposed with resistance and in reference to Stauffenberg, even with violent resistance.

With this case study, I have shown how Beatrix von Storch narrates the Stauffenberg plot, neglecting the historical context of different resistance movements and the Holocaust. When she talks about what lessons can be learned from the plot she is talking to an exclusive group and employing language that resembles the resistance against National Socialism, equating it to the current democratic political system in Germany. The AfD's stance as a resistance against an imagined dictatorship is also reflected in the comments below her post.

While von Storch's vlog exemplifies the instrumentalization of the Stauffenberg plot, the next case study focuses on the legend of the clean *Wehrmacht* and how it is intertwined with German national identity in a speech by Alexander Gauland that was published on Facebook by the extreme right wing of the AfD.

Alexander Gauland: Speech at the Kyffhäuser

Between 1935 and 1945, approximately twenty million German men served in the *Wehrmacht*. Because a father or son in almost every family had been drafted, the *Wehrmacht* had the character of a "people's army" in the German collective memory.⁶⁹

In the war against the Soviet Union, the *Wehrmacht* leadership revoked central points of martial and international law that Germany once ratified. This led to a war of destruction, marked by war crimes against the civilian population at the hands of the *Wehrmacht*.⁷⁰ There is a lot of documentary evidence of such war crimes: photographs of shootings or hangings taken by soldiers and also letters from the front in which soldiers depict the scope of the crimes.⁷¹ Further, although the official *Wehrmacht* records from

the front are "clean," the *Einsatztruppen* reports describe the willingness of the *Wehrmacht* to cooperate in war crimes such as shootings of Soviet commissars and commanders, killing prisoners of war and providing support for or directly participating in the murder of Jews.⁷² Only a few months after the military command of the *Wehrmacht* announced its "honourable defeat"⁷³ on May 9, 1945, leading generals released a memorandum stating its role in World War II. They created an image of the "clean *Wehrmacht*" by declaring that the persecution and murder of the Jews had taken place under the *Reichsführer SS* alone; that the soldiers themselves, despite participating in war crimes, were detached from NS ideology, and thus able to maintain a degree of innocence.⁷⁴ In the 1960s and 1970s, historians' critical examination of the role of the *Wehrmacht* showed a contradictory image compared to its "clean" legend in the collective memory of the Germans. The results of the historical research evoked no response in the public sphere, but veterans' organizations protested against the "defamation" of the *Wehrmacht* institution and the reputation of its soldiers.⁷⁵ Widely publicized discussions on the legend of the clean *Wehrmacht* were brought to the public through the *Historikerstreit* (1986–87), Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, in 1996, and the travelling exhibition *War of Annihilation—The Crimes of the Wehrmacht Between 1941–1944*, launched in 1995 by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, which showed the *Wehrmacht's* involvement in acts of killing outside of regular warfare in Eastern Europe. The positive image of the *Wehrmacht* that had been created in several stages was challenged by the vast photographic evidence demonstrated in the exhibition, which around 900,000 people visited.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, an attempt to revive a positive image of the *Wehrmacht* was made by Alexander Gauland on September 2, 2017. Gauland gave a speech at the 3rd annual Kyffhäuser meeting of the radical wing of the AfD, called *der Flügel*.

The Kyffhäuser in Thuringia is a monument to German nationalism and today serves not only as a tourist attraction but also as a famous meeting point for right-wing nationalists. The video of the speech was posted on the Facebook page of *der Flügel* and widely disseminated. *Der Flügel* is the radical right-wing fraction of the AfD, initiated by Björn Höcke (chairman of the AfD in Thuringia's state parliament), André Poggenburg (chairman of the AfD in Saxony-Anhalt's parliament), and Hans-Thomas Tillschneider (member of the AfD in Saxony-Anhalt's parliament).⁷⁷ Tillschneider is also the founder of the *Patriotische Plattform*, which recently came under the attention of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution due to extreme right-wing positions and its connection to the Identitarian movement, which is already under observation by state security.⁷⁸ Among the speakers at the meeting were those mentioned above and also Jörg Meuthen and Alexander Gauland, the focus of this analysis. The meeting at the Kyffhäuser is a closed event for AfD members only and especially those who are close to *der Flügel* or the Erfurter Resolution.

In his speech, Gauland states that Germans can be proud of the accomplishments of the soldiers of both World Wars, and he mitigates the time of National Socialism and the Holocaust by using euphemisms. After Gauland's statements became public, he reiterated in press conferences and interviews that 95% of *Wehrmacht* soldiers had not been involved in war crimes and that he was only repeating what Francois Mitterrand, French President at the time, said in May 1995 in his 50th anniversary speech.⁷⁹ While Mitterrand spoke in his speech of his personal experience with German soldiers during WWII and the speech itself had a different context,⁸⁰ Gauland shifts the blame to the criminal system and exonerates the *Wehrmacht* soldiers and thus continues repeating the myth of the clean *Wehrmacht*.

The trivialization of National Socialism or a positive identification with the *Wehrmacht* can be found in several social media outlets

or interviews with the AfD. Alice Weidel, for instance, posted a video of an interview which she gave to the online magazine *Vice*. When she was asked how she explains National Socialism to her children she replied that her children know that Hitler was the worst because in the card game *Tyrannen-Quartett* which she plays with them, Hitler is the highest card.⁸¹ During the latest *Bundeswehr* scandal in which the Ministry of Defense von der Leyen considered renaming army bases after generals of the *Wehrmacht*, the *Patriotische Plattform* posted a meme on its website and on Facebook depicting a *Wehrmacht* soldier on a horse and written next to it "*Schlagkraft statt Vielfalt, wir stehen zu unsere Truppe*" ("Impact instead of diversity, we stand with our troops").⁸² The accompanying text describes how the *Wehrmachtausstellung* ("Wehrmacht exhibition") singled out specific war crimes in order to discredit the entire *Wehrmacht*.

Gauland himself has stated in an interview with the German daily newspaper *Zeit* in April 2016, that Germans do not defend their identity as much as other nations because of Auschwitz, that Auschwitz as a symbol has destroyed a lot in the German people and that Hitler has broken the backbone of the Germans. He continues by saying that while the British and the French confidently show national pride, Germans have to ask whether they are allowed to do that.⁸³ These themes are reflected in his speech on Facebook, which will serve as the main subject of analysis.

The following is an excerpt of the most relevant quotes from Gauland's 18-minute speech⁸⁴ posted on Facebook:

. . . To our historical memory belong, Stauffenberg and Rommel, Mars-la-Tour, Sedan, Cambrai and the slaughterhouse of Verdun. . . Who cleans up our history, destroys our identity. Yes, we have dealt with the crimes of the twelve years. . . No nation has so clearly cleaned up with a false past as that of Germany. Those twelve years do not have to be held

against us. They no longer affect our identities today, and that is what we are talking about. If the French are rightly proud of their emperor, and the British of Nelson and Churchill, we have the right to be proud of the achievements of German soldiers in two world wars. . . .⁸⁵

In his speech, Gauland equates the battlefields of World War I (namely Mars-la-Tour, Sedan, Cambrai, Verdun) with the achievements Stauffenberg and Erwin Rommel, both famous *Wehrmacht* generals in World War II. Moreover, owing to the omission of the Holocaust and the reference to Stauffenberg and Rommel as representatives of the resistance against Hitler, Gauland is inflating apparently positive aspects of the time of National Socialism. That next to Stauffenberg, the AfD also considers Rommel as a part of the resistance becomes visible in a blog entry on the *Patriotische Plattform*, initiated by Gauland's Co-speaker Hans-Thomas Tillschneider, which states that Rommel died because of his resistance against Hitler.⁸⁶ Although Rommel had been accused of plotting against Hitler and was subsequently forced to take his own life, there was always a myth about Rommel and his alliance with Hitler, which has been widely debated among historians. Due to conflicting information, Rommel was suspected of belonging to the resistance and subsequently sentenced to death. He accepted the option offered to kill himself. Soon after his death, there were still contradictory statements about Rommel's membership in the resistance. Especially his wife spoke out against belonging to the resistance because she wanted to protect Rommel's legacy from being overshadowed by betrayal of the *Führer*.⁸⁷ In the course of the rehabilitation of the *Wehrmacht*, Rommel became a symbol of the "better military tradition" and was associated with the resistance. *Wehrmacht* generals, who wrote about Rommel, created an image of him as a sharp leader and resistance fighter.⁸⁸ This image changed in the 1980s when historians began to debate the role of the *Wehrmacht* in the Holocaust, in which

Rommel was perceived by some as a war criminal. Although Rommel indeed opposed Hitler in a field report asking him to end the war, he had also been a convinced National Socialist.⁸⁹ Rommel exemplifies not only the ambiguousness of the military resistance but also of how Germans dealt with their Nazi past.

Although the AfD claims that German history is confined to the time of National Socialism, as manifested in their party program, Gauland says that to not acknowledge the achievements of the *Wehrmacht* means to clean history and thus destroy German identity, which is a contradiction. With the phrase *Geschichte säubern* ("cleaning history") he is using ideological language that was coined by the Nazis. The word *säubern* is inappropriate in the context of history and resembles the euphemistic language of Third Reich in which *säubern* and *Säuberungsaktion* referred to a purge, meaning the deportation or murder of unwanted persons, such as political opponents and Jews.⁹⁰

Gauland's depiction of National Socialism and the Holocaust as *Verbrechen dieser 12 Jahre* ("crimes of those twelve years") is a concealing narrative aimed to trivialize historical facts. By not stating what those crimes were and who was committing them, he is concealing the Holocaust and, even more so, he is leaving it open to interpretation from his audience as to what those crimes might have been. The use of euphemisms such as *Hitlererei* and *Hitlerismus* instead of direct references to National Socialism and the Holocaust is common for Gauland and serves as a form of both trivialization and rejection by holding only Hitler responsible.⁹¹ Although Gauland talks about *falsche Vergangenheit* ("wrong past"), it lacks any historical context.

Through the use of the euphemistic mitigation "those twelve years," the true historical context vanishes and allows viewers to interpret the *Wehrmacht* positively.⁹² Furthermore, Gauland tries to adapt the historical facts to his interpretation in order to justify the pride for *Wehrmacht* soldiers and to portray himself as

a victim.⁹³ The idea of the Germans as victims here can be seen in the expression that Germany is reproached with National Socialism and the Holocaust, “*Man muss uns diese 12 Jahre nicht mehr vorhalten*” (“One does not have to reproach us with those twelve years”) and forced to accept them as part of their national identity: “*Sie betreffen unsere Identität nicht mehr und wir sprechen das auch aus*” (“They no longer affect our identity and we also express that”). By saying that “those twelve years” do not affect the German identity anymore, Gauland expresses a wish to put an end to the contemporary memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust, thus reigniting the debate of the *Historikerstreit* in the 1980s. Gauland counters this imagined reproach of collective guilt by interpreting the *Wehrmacht* as the collective innocent when he expresses that Germans have the right to be proud of the achievements of the soldiers of both World Wars.⁹⁴ Despite the fact that Germany lost both wars, he also disregards the *Wehrmacht*’s involvement in war crimes and the Holocaust. Furthermore, aware that being proud of *Wehrmacht* soldiers is a breach of the German collective memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust, he states that the AfD is not afraid of expressing such pride. By expressing pride for *Wehrmacht* soldiers who committed horrendous crimes, Gauland is not only undermining years of research and public education about the crimes of the *Wehrmacht*, but he is further ridiculing its victims. Implicitly, with the exoneration of the *Wehrmacht*, and thus with the ideology of National Socialism and the Holocaust, Gauland is expressing antisemitic attitudes.⁹⁵ By using euphemisms Gauland is trivializing National Socialism and the Holocaust, which subsequently results in the rehabilitation of National Socialism via the *Wehrmacht*.⁹⁶

There are several commenters that thank Gauland for his great speech. Two other commenters reacted to the video by posting links to websites that educate about the crimes of the *Wehrmacht*.⁹⁷ Commenter 3 writes that a deep

gratitude for the sacrifice and fortitude of the World War soldiers is self-evident.⁹⁸ Commenter 4 expresses outrage about the fact that the “AfD wants to be proud of two offensive wars, millions of dead people and concentration camps while at the same time disregarding any sense of responsibility, awareness of history, and a consciousness of the extraordinary guilt.”⁹⁹ Commenter 5 also posts a link to an online article about a book by the historian Sönkel Neitzel in which he, together with social psychologist, Harald Welzer, analyzed conversations between *Wehrmacht* soldiers that describe the rape and murder of civilians.¹⁰⁰ In a reaction to this comment, Commenter 6 writes that the blame is always on the evil Germans, although the soldiers of the allies had also raped many German women during the “liberation” but no one is talking about that.¹⁰¹ To sum up, by thanking Gauland for his speech, people indirectly agree with the content of it without referring to any special details. Only 5 of 42 commenters disagree with Gauland’s speech by opposing his image of the *Wehrmacht* with historical facts about their crimes.

Based on this Facebook post one can see that Gauland marginalized the time of National Socialism with the example of the *Wehrmacht* and equated it with other events in German history. He rehabilitates the *Wehrmacht* by omitting the historical context of the Holocaust. Contrary to this, Gauland states that National Socialism no longer belongs to German identity. I will now turn to the conclusions drawn from the findings in my analysis.

CONCLUSION

The present study sought to examine the AfD’s attitude towards National Socialism, the Holocaust and antisemitism by analyzing Facebook posts of its senior political figures. Unlike every other party in the German parliament, the AfD does not reference the importance of combating antisemitism in their party program, nor does it present guidelines about

how to deal with antisemitism within the party despite that it has been an internal problem since its inception. On the contrary, analysis of the Facebook posts by Frauke Petry and Björn Höcke depicting caricatures of Martin Schulz has shown that the AfD utilizes antisemitic stereotypes to defame their political opponents. The comments under the caricatures show a tendency to reproduce antisemitism which is accepted by administration of the AfD Facebook profile. With it, the AfD takes part in the acceptance and normalization of antisemitism in political and social discourse.

The AfD has a conflicting relationship towards the Holocaust and National Socialism. The party seeks to disregard the cultural memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust and argues that it has a disproportionate position in Germany's education and remembrance tradition, as manifested in the party program. The AfD instrumentalizes events of National Socialism to elevate perceived positive aspects, such as the resistance against the Nazi regime by the conspirators around Stauffenberg, as presented by Beatrix von Storch. Further, by framing the Stauffenberg plot outside of its historical context and by concealing the Holocaust, such examples insinuate that the AfD is a resistance movement against a regime, namely the current German government. This political posturing by the AfD not only undermines the democratic system in Germany but also has an inciting effect, as the comments under the post by von Storch reflect. Since von Storch's post is about a violent attempt to overturn the government in 1944, which some commenters suggested should also occur now, the inciting effect should not be underestimated in a country where verbal and physical attacks against refugees, migrants, Muslims, Jews, and politicians are daily news.

Even when the time of National Socialism is the topic, the concealment of the Holocaust is symptomatic for the AfD and as such it remains markedly invisible in all areas: from the party program and public speeches to Facebook posts.

References to the Holocaust as the mass murder of European Jews are the exception. The case study of Gauland's speech exemplifies how the AfD tries to rehabilitate aspects of National Socialism, here the *Wehrmacht*, by comparing it to other events in German history and excluding the Holocaust. By expressing pride for the *Wehrmacht*, the victims of the Holocaust are indirectly ignored. This not only testifies to an inability to empathize with the victims of the Holocaust but repeatedly violates the dignity of those who were murdered. This deliberate indirectness has antisemitic tendencies and comes close to the definition in German law that prosecutes the downplaying of acts committed under the National Socialist regime and the violation of the dignity of the victims by approving, glorifying, or justifying National Socialist rule.

While this study focuses on posts by senior figures of the AfD, the research phase on Facebook has shown that trivialization and rehabilitation of National Socialism and the Holocaust, as well as antisemitism as a singular phenomenon, increase in profiles and groups at lower ranks in the hierarchy of the AfD. It not only increases in occurrence but also in its bluntness and severity. Thus, research is needed to give an insight into how the attitude towards National Socialism, the Holocaust and antisemitism differs between the local groups of the AfD on Facebook and how this reflects on education about the Holocaust throughout the German states. Further, research about the commenters could shed light on how the AfD's attitude towards National Socialism, the Holocaust and antisemitism is received.

Facebook teaches political parties how to improve the circulation of their agenda—disregarding its content and thus, giving them a lot of power to influence societal discourse. In this analysis specifically, Facebook greatly empowers the AfD to shape the cultural memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Thus, this phenomenon begs for interdisciplinary academic workshops and committees which support and advise social media providers and

governments on how to deal with antisemitism, the rehabilitation of National Socialism and the trivialization of the Holocaust. Due to the high impact that social media has on politics and society today, the findings from this research underline the necessity for monitoring and restriction. Although in 2017 Germany initiated laws called *NetzDG* that regulate freedom of speech online to combat hate speech, monitoring the vast amount of content on Facebook seems an impossible task. Thus, the German government needs to hold Facebook accountable and demand strategies from the company itself, particularly restrictions regarding the use of social bots that, for example, artificially create likes for posts with content that trivializes

National Socialism, thus implying its acceptance. Because of the freedom that Facebook gives its users and the major role it plays in shaping societal discourse about the memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust, researchers on antisemitism must pay attention and integrate it into their scholarship.

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- 28 The word *verjudet* means "dominated by Jews" or "under Jewish influence" and was a common antisemitic slogan to depict the SPD and other political parties or institutions in the late nineteenth century. See Karl-Heinz Brackmann and Renate Birkenhauer, *NS-Deutsch: "Selbstverständliche" Begriffe und Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Straelen: Straelener Manuskripte Verlag, 1988), 190.

- 29 Carl Eric Linsler, "Stürmer-Karikaturen," in *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Literatur, Film, Theater, Kunst* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 478.
- 30 Waibl-Stockner, *Die Juden sind unser Unglück*, 253; Linsler, *Stürmer-Karikaturen*, 477–80.
- 31 Armin Pfahl-Traughber, "Die AfD und der Antisemitismus. Eine Analyse zu Positionen, Skandalen und Verhaltensweisen," *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 25 (2016): 279–282.
- 32 "Alternative Karikaturen," Alternative für Deutschland, accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.afd.de/karikaturen/>.
- 33 Björn Höcke, no title, February 22, 2017, accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/Bjoern.Hoecke.AfD/posts/1842331419341469:0>.
- 34 Cp. Pfahl-Traughber, *Die AfD und der Antisemitismus*, 272.
- 35 Gräfe, *Judenfeindliche Karikaturen im 19. Jahrhundert*, 219.
- 36 In the eyes of the antisemites, Social Democratic parties were *verjudete Parteien*. See: Karl-Heinz Brackmann and Renate Birkenhauer, *NS-Deutsch*, 190.
- 37 Dan Diner, *Verschwörung*, 272–77.
- 38 Commenter 1: "Wo haben Sie denn den Karikaturisten ausgegraben, beim Stürmer? BTW: Als jemand der noch keinen einzigen Euro (sorry Reichsmark gibts nicht mehr) in seinem Berufsleben verdient hat, der nicht aus dem Steuersäckel kam, wäre ich an Ihrer Stelle etwas vorsichtiger mit Verweisen auf Erfolge in der Privatwirtschaft."
- 39 Commenter 2: "Tja. Immer, wenn ich denke, tiefer kann selbst so ein Mensch wie Björn Höcke nicht mehr sinken, dann gehen Sie hin und beweisen mir das Gegenteil. Ich wette, der Opa des Karikaturisten, dem wir diese geschmacklose Gemeinheit verdanken, hat schon für den 'Stürmer' gezeichnet. Absolut widerlich."
- 40 Commenter 3: "Julius Streicher wäre stolz auf Höcke. Allen anderen bleibt nur fremschämen."
- 41 Commenter 4: "An was erinnern mich nur diese Züge?"
- 42 Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, *Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Ergebnisse der empirischen Forschung von 1946–1989* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1991), 114–35.
- 43 Dr. Frauke Petry, "Die sozialpopulistischen Seifenblasen der SPD," April 1, 2017, accessed September 11, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/Dr.Frauke.Petry/photos/a.782724038446912.1073741828.782456275140355/1425382060847770/?type=3&theater>.
- 44 Rebecca Staudenmeier, "Ex-AfD chief Frauke Petry unveils new conservative 'Blue Party,'" Deutsche Welle, October 13, 2017, accessed September 11, 2019: <https://www.dw.com/en/ex-afd-chief-frauke-petry-unveils-new-conservative-blue-party/a-40938707>.
- 45 Commenter 5: "Das ist so und bleibt so! Und wer das ändern will . . ."
- 46 Commenter 6: "Das hat er von Goldman & Sachs in Brüssel gelernt!"
- 47 Commenter 7: "Picture."
- 48 Commenter 8: "Picture."
- 49 Avraham Burg, "Say a big 'Thank you' to Martin Schulz," HAARETZ, February 14, 2014, accessed September 13, 2019, <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.574332>.
- 50 Peter Steinbach and Johannes Tuchel, eds., *Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus*, vol. 323 of *Schriftenreihe der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1994); Gerd R. Ueberschär, *Für ein anderes Deutschland: Der deutsche Widerstand gegen den NS-Staat 1933–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 2006).
- 51 Hans Mommsen, *Alternatives to Hitler: German Resistance under the Third Reich* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2003), 403.
- 52 Klaus-Jürgen Müller, "Über den 'militärischen' Widerstand," in Steinbach and Tuchel, *Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus*, 279.
- 53 Mommsen, *Alternatives to Hitler*, 406.
- 54 Thomas Rudy, "20. Juli 1944," July 20, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/thomas.rudy.afd/photos/a.669719703135816.1073741828.655170387924081/1359788394128940/?type=3&theater>.
- 55 Der 20. Juli, der Tag des Stauffenberg Attentates ist in unserer Geschichte ein besonderes Datum. Es ist ein wichtiger Tag in unserer deutschen Freiheitstradition. Die großen Ereignisse dieser Freiheitstradition waren neben den Ereignissen des 20. Juli 1944 die liberale Revolution von 1848, der Arbeiteraufstand in der DDR von 1953 und die freiheitliche Revolution von 1989. Am 20. Juli 1944 haben die Verschwörer um Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg

einen Aufstand des Gewissens gewagt. Ihr Versuch, die nationalsozialistische Gewaltherrschaft zu beseitigen ist gescheitert. Doch ihr Opfer war dennoch nicht für umsonst.

Sie haben ein Zeichen gesetzt. Sie haben uns für alle Zeit eine dauerhafte Botschaft hinterlassen. Niemals wieder dürfen in Deutschland Gewalt und Terror über Demokratie und Freiheit triumphieren. Niemals wieder dürfen in Deutschland Meinungsfreiheit und Bürgerechte unterdrückt werden. Niemals wieder dürfen wir blind einer politischen Führung folgen und den Staat über unser Gewissen stellen. Ja, wir können aus unserer Geschichte lernen. Wir können lernen, dass wir den Mut haben müssen, uns unseres eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen, wie der große Aufklärungsphilosoph Emanuel Kant sagte. Das wir uns vom Geist der Freiheit leiten lassen und nicht von der Anbetung der Macht. Das wir freie Bürger sein sollen und keine willfährigen Untertanen. Das wir Bürgersinn brauchen und keinen Kadavergehorsam. Das ist die Botschaft der Männer des 20. Juli und das ist die Überlieferung unserer deutschen Freiheitstradition. Freiheit ist ein kostbares Gut und jede Generation ist erneuert dazu aufgerufen sie zu pflegen, sie zu bewahren und sie zu verteidigen.

- 56 Alice Weidel, "Stellungnahme zur Sendung 'Wie geht's, Deutschland?'," September 5, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/aliceweidel/posts/1680477248630170:0>; "Vorwurf: Diskriminierung von Kandidaten: AfD reicht Klage gegen Justizsenator Behrendt ein," *RBB24*, May 19, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/wahl/bundestag/beitraege/afd-reicht-organklage-gegen-justizsenator-ein.html>.
- 57 "Fünftes Flugblatt der Weißen Rose verfasst von Kurt Huber nach einem Entwurf von Hans Scholl Januar 1943," Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, Bundesarchiv, R 3018/NJ 1704, Bd. 32, accessed September 13, 2019, http://www.gdwberlin.de/fileadmin/bilder/publ/begleitmaterialien/Faksimiles_PDFs_deutsch/FS_15.5_DE_2_Aufl-RZ-web.pdf.
- 58 "Sechstes Flugblatt der Weißen Rose verfasst von Kurt Huber, Februar 1943," Gedenkstätte Deutscher Widerstand, Bundesarchiv R 3018/NJ 1704, Bd. 32, accessed September 13, 2019, http://www.gdw-berlin.de/fileadmin/bilder/publ/begleitmaterialien/Faksimiles_PDFs_deutsch/FS_15.6_DE_2_Aufl-RZ-web.pdf.
- 59 "Heimlicher Souverän in Deutschland ist eine kleine, machtvolle politische Oligarchie, die sich in den bestehenden politischen Parteien ausgebildet hat. Sie hat die Fehlentwicklungen der letzten Jahrzehnte zu verantworten. Es hat sich eine politische Klasse herausgebildet, deren vordringliches Interesse ihrer Macht, ihrem Status und ihrem materiellen Wohlergehen gilt. Diese Oligarchie hat die Schalthebel der staatlichen Macht, der politischen Bildung und des informationellen und medialen Einflusses auf die Bevölkerung in Händen." *Programm für Deutschland: Wahlprogramm der Alternative für Deutschland für die Wahl zum Deutschen Bundestag am 24. September 2017*, Alternative für Deutschland, 8, accessed September 13, 2019, https://www.afd.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/111/2017/06/2017-06-01_AfD-Bundestagswahlprogramm_Onlinefassung.pdf.
- 60 Jenny Kallenbrunnen, "AfD darf ihr umstrittenes Sophie-Scholl-Werbeplakat nicht mehr nutzen," *Stern*, January 26, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/afd-wahlplakat-mit-sophie-scholl-wird-durch-gericht-verboden-7300312.html>.
- 61 Commenter 1: "Und am 20. Juli 2017 muss man feststellen, dass wir hinsichtlich Freiheit für den angeblichen Souverän (dt. Volk) in der Geschichte der BR Deutschland einen historischen Tiefststand 'erreicht' haben. 'Rechtsstaatlichkeit' und 'Demokratie' liegen in Trümmern."
- 62 Commenter 2: "... eine Diktatur aus Brüssel."
- 63 Commenter 3: "Also leben wir laut ihrer Meinung in einer Diktatur? Oder wie kann man das verstehen?"
- 64 Commenter 4: "... ja (commenter 3) richtig erkannt ... eine verkappte diktatur ist das system das diese stasifratze hier einleitet ... und 80% der bürger sind noch dümmer und gehorsamer als je zuvor!"
- 65 Commenter 5: "Das Problem besteht darin, dass Deutschland jetzt weniger frei ist als 1944."
- 66 Commenter 6: "Wir brauchen ein paar Stauffenberg's, oder selber MUT beweisen."
- 67 Commenter 7: "Liebe verehrte Frau v.Storch, nun, es mag sein, dass Sie diesen Tag, als einen besondern Tag 'der Geschichte dieses Landes' herausstellen möchten, bedenken Sie aber 1). dass sich das Deutsche Reich im Krieg befand und die Gesetze damit eine besondere Bedeutung hatten. 2). dass sich—auch in keinem anderen kriegführenden Land dieser Welt—'erlauben durfte', im Sinne des Feindes zu agieren, hier in diesem Moment nicht von Verrat zu sprechen, entzieht sich meiner derzeitigen Vorstellung von Vaterlandstreue. Nun, man mag über die politische Einstellung der damaligen Regierungspartei—aus heutiger Sicht—unterschiedlicher Meinung, aber während des Krieges, im Sinne des feindes zu agieren, halte ich schon für sehr grenzwertig! Zumal, die Politiker des

- Dritten Reiches—was hinsichtlich der vielen inzwischen freigegebenen Dokumente offensichtlich ist—viele Schritte unternommen hatten, einen Krieg zu vermeiden.“
- 68 Commenter 8: “Dann wird es Zeit Frau Beatrix von Storch, dass Sie sich dem Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg anschließen und die Kanzlerin stürzen!”
- 69 Wolfram Wette and Deborah Lucas Schneider, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 202.
- 70 Christopher R. Browning and Jürgen Matthäus, *The Origins Of The Final Solution: the Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 213–243.
- 71 Wette and Schneider, *The Wehrmacht, 198–99*; Browning and Matthäus, *The Origins Of The Final Solution*, 265.
- 72 Wette and Schneider, *The Wehrmacht*, 219.
- 73 *Ibid.*, 204; *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941–1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002), 639.
- 74 Wette and Schneider, *The Wehrmacht*, 208.
- 75 *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht*, 681.
- 76 Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past* (London: Routledge, 2004), 120–42.
- 77 Hajo Funke, *Von Wutbürgern und Brandstiftern* (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2016), 69.
- 78 “Patriotische Plattform: Verfassungsschutz nimmt AfD-Gruppe ins Visier,” *Spiegel Online*, June 2, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afd-verfassungsschutz-nimmt-patriotische-plattform-ins-visier-a-1150411.html>.
- 79 Cornelia Barthelme, “AfD Spitzenkandidat Alexander Gauland: ‘Seid nicht zu empfindlich,’” *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, September 21, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <http://www.fnp.de/nachrichten/politik/AfD-Spitzenkandidat-Alexander-Gauland-Seid-nicht-zu-empfindlich;art673,2774181?mobileVersion=no>.
- 80 Francois Mitterrand, “Zum 50. Jahrestag des Endes des Zweiten Weltkrieges—Staatsakt in Berlin am 8. Mai 1995—Ansprache des französischen Staatspräsidenten,” *Die Bundesregierung*, May 12, 1995, accessed September 13, 2019, https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Bulletin/1990-1999/1995/38-95_Mitterrand.html.
- 81 “Wie erklären Sie Ihren Kindern den Nationalsozialismus? Wieso setzen Sie sich nicht für andere Homosexuelle ein? 10 Fragen an Alice Weidel, AfD,” *AfD Greiz-Altenburg*, September 17, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/afdgrzabg/posts/964418233697601>.
- 82 “Schlagkraft statt Vielfalt—wir stehen zu unserer Truppe,” *Patriotische Plattform*, May 15, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://patriotische-plattform.de/blog/2017/05/15/schlagkraft-statt-vielfalt-wir-stehen-zu-unserer-truppe/>.
- 83 Bern Ulrich and Matthias Geis, “Hitler hat den Deutschen das Rückgrat gebrochen,” *Zeit Online*, April 28, 2016, accessed September 15, 2019, <http://www.zeit.de/2016/17/alexander-gauland-afd-cdu-konservatismus>.
- 84 “Die Rede des stellv. Bundessprechers der AfD und Vorsitzenden der AfD-Fraktion im Brandenburgischen Landtag Dr. Alexander Gauland anlässlich des 3. Kyffhäusertreffens des Flügels am 2. September 2017,” *Der Flügel*, September 9, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/derfluegel/videos/2047521268811569/>.
- 85 “. . . Zu unserer historischen Erinnerung gehören Stauffenberg und Rommel, Mars-la-Tour, Sedan, Cambrai und das Schlachthaus von Verdun. . . . Liebe Freunde, wer Geschichte säubert, zerstört unsere Identität. Ja, wir haben uns mit den Verbrechen der 12 Jahre auseinandergesetzt. . . . Kein Volk hat so deutlich mit einer falschen Vergangenheit aufgeräumt wie das Deutsche. Man muss uns diese 12 Jahre nicht mehr vorhalten. Sie betreffen unsere Identität heute nicht mehr und das sprechen wir auch aus. Wenn die Franzosen zu Recht stolz auf ihren Kaiser sind, und die Briten auf Nelson und Churchill, haben wir das Recht, stolz zu sein, auf die Leistungen deutscher Soldaten in zwei Weltkriegen. . . .”
- 86 “Schlagkraft statt Vielfalt: Wir stehen zu unserer Truppe,” *Patriotische Plattform*, May 15, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, <https://patriotische-plattform.de/blog/2017/05/15/schlagkraft-statt-vielfalt-wir-stehen-zu-unserer-truppe/>.
- 87 Ralf Georg Reuth, *Rommel: The End of a Legend* (London: Haus Publishing, 2005), 64.
- 88 *Ibid.*, 65.
- 89 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 90 Brackmann and Birkenhauer, *NS-Deutsch*, 166.
- 91 Jung und Naiv, “Kein Schamgefühl: Gauland (AfD) über Hitlers Verbrechen an die Deutschen,” *Bundespressekonferenz* May 8, 2017, accessed September 13, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_7LZNeV_cc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_7LZNeV_cc;); Alexander Gauland, “Die Rückkehr der Geschichte: Leugnen schafft Kulturunterschiede nicht aus der Welt,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, April 4, 2006,

- accessed September 13, 2019, <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/meinung/die-rueckkehr-der-geschichte/701320.html>.
- 92 Samuel Salzborn, "Von der offenen zur geschlossenen Gesellschaft: Die AfD und die Renaissance des deutschen Opfermythos im rechten Diskurs," in *AfD & FPÖ: Antisemitismus, völkischer Nationalismus und Geschlechterbilder, Interdisziplinäre Antisemitismusforschung*, vol.7, ed. Stephan Grigat (Baden-Baden: Noms Verlag, 2017), 36.
- 93 Rainer Becker, "Sprachliche Kontinuität von Menschenfeindlichkeit: Von der Sprache des Nationalsozialismus bis zur Sprache der gesellschaftlichen Mitte heute," in *Freilegungen: Spiegelungen der NS-Verfolgung und ihre Konsequenzen*, Jahrbuch des International Tracing Service 4 (2015): 250.
- 94 Samuel Salzborn, "Von der offenen zur geschlossenen Gesellschaft," 36.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Lars Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild: Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004), 280.
- 97 Commenter 1: "https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verbrechen_der_Wehrmacht"; Commenter 2: "<http://www.zukunft-braucht-erinnerung.de/systematische-verbrechen-der-wehrmacht>."
- 98 Commenter 3: "Für mich ist die Dankbarkeit für die gebrachten Opfer und die Ehrfurcht vor der Tapferkeit unserer Weltkriegssoldaten eine Selbstverständlichkeit."
- 99 Commenter 4: "Was für ein ekelhaftes Arschloch der braune Greis. Will sich die Vergangenheit nicht mehr vorhalten lassen, weil diese seine Identität nicht prägt, aber stolz auf die 'Leistungen' deutscher Soldaten in beiden Weltkriegen will er dann doch sein dürfen?! Und die anderen Vollidioten jodeln und jubeln wie im Rausch! Die AfD will also endlich auf zwei Angriffskriege, auf über 60 Millionen Tote, auf KZ-Lager, auf tausendfach ermordete Kinder und und und stolz sein dürfen?! Mit Verantwortung, Geschichtsbewusstsein oder Bewusstsein für die Schwere der damaligen Schuld soll man den AfDlern nicht mehr kommen?? Irgendwie widerspricht er sich selbst, nur merkt das vor lauter Stolz weder er noch seine minderbemittelten Fans. Und ganz nebenbei erfährt man auch, dass dieser Haufen sich mehr um Geschichtsverdrehung als um die Gestaltung der Zukunft dieses Landes und aller darin lebenden Menschen kümmern will.. Entlarvend, mal wieder, nur wird es die blindwütigen Fans der braunen Truppe nicht kümmern. Umso wichtiger sind die Vernünftigen und Anständigen."
- 100 Commenter 5: "Auf solche Soldaten ist Gauland stolz: <https://amp.n-tv.de/.../Die-Plaudereien-der-Wehrmachts-soldaten...>."
- 101 Commenter 6: "Und genau das haben auch die Siegermächte bei unserer 'Befreiung' getan. So viele deutsche Frauen wurden vergewaltigt—von alliierten Soldaten. Über diese Opfer spricht heute keiner, denn böse sind ja nur die Deutschen."

