"Lügenpresse! Lying press!" Is the Press Lying?

A Content Analysis Study of the Bias of Journalistic Coverage about 'Pegida', the Movement Behind this Accusation

Markus Beiler & Johanna Kiesler

Abstract

The accusation "Lügenpresse!" [lying press] is a core feature of the right-wing populist protest movement, Pegida. The allegation has been heard at demonstrations in Germany since autumn 2014. It reflects dwindling confidence in journalism. This content analysis explores how those who are accused of lying report about those behind the accusation. In the four (German) national daily newspapers examined, the coverage of the infancy of the Pegida movement is distinctly negative (N = 360 articles). Even fact-focused formats contain comment. There are few complex frames setting out the root causes of the formation of Pegida. The *Lügenpresse* accusation is barely addressed at all.

1   Introduction

"Lügenpresse! Lügenpresse!" – Cries of "lying press!" have been heard at the Monday evening demonstrations in large cities in Germany since autumn 2014. The most significant city has been Dresden, the state capital of Saxony, where the Pegida movement came into being. Pegida stands for 'Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West (Occident)'. This faction is not only united by its concern about the ostensible 'Islamisation of the West' but also by a general anger about politics. It is also particularly united by a deep mistrust of the mass media (Patzelt & Klose, 2016, p. 110). What came about due to the impression of one-sided, biased coverage about important political issues is expressed in the aggressively worded slogans of Pegida supporters at the rallies. A clear accusation is chanted: the press is lying.

Mistrust of the press – the 'press' representing all mass media outlets – is a core feature of the Pegida movement. Dwindling confidence in the media is discussed publicly time and again and the accusation of one-sided or distorted coverage is nothing new – in fact, it is something of a constant in journalism research. Nevertheless, with Pegida, the accusations have mounted higher than ever before. The allegation of falsehood is a serious one. The accusation goes far beyond a mere loss of trust and it must therefore be examined.

After all, the allegation of lying is not just directed at anyone. It is directed at the mass media outlets, which are a vital part of the way that a democratic society functions. They are tasked with informing, checking and critiquing and with contributing to shaping opinions and decision-making. It is now precisely these entities, the mass media outlets, who are no longer trusted by Pegida demonstrators and against whom their serious allegations are directed – the very same outlets whose primary task is to ensure that societal problems are the subject of public. This means that to some extent, those who are sitting in the dock as the accused are also faced with the somewhat masochistic task of creating media coverage about the serious allegations against them.

The press is expected to provide balanced, objective coverage. Nevertheless, is it actually possible for mass media outlets to meet this requirement in their coverage if they themselves are the ones being accused of lying? Or should they be all the more rigorous in their pursuit of neutral coverage? It is doubtful whether these conflicting aims can be resolved, that is, whether it is possible to provide objective and balanced coverage about accusations that are being made about oneself. This problem is intensified by the general nature of the *Lügenpresse* accusation. Instead of being directed against individual media outlets, it addresses the media in gener-

al – the whole system. This means it is not possible for the sector's internal checks and balances to take effect.

It is against this background that this study addresses the question of how those accused of being the lying press report about their accusers. This study does not aim to fundamentally clarify the extent to which the accusations of distorted or one-sided mass media coverage are justifiable. That question will continue to occupy communication science researchers and can never be fully answered. The specific endeavour of this study is to analyse the contradictory situation as described above: how the accused mass media outlets report about Pegida and how they handle Pegida's accusations.

2 Theoretical background and state of research

The Pegida movement and the term Lügenpresse
The Pegida movement is one of the most visible signs of a return to increasing political polarisation in Germany and Europe (cf. Maurer & Beiler, 2017). Pegida is a right-wing populist protest movement, which "mobilises xenophobic and Islam-critical sentiments and expresses fundamental reservations about political and media elites" [translated from German] (Vorländer, Herold & Schäller, 2016, p. 137). Since 20 October 2014, it has been organising regular demonstrations called 'Abendspaziergänge' [evening strolls], which are generally on Mondays. The demonstrations are directed against the ostensible process of Islamisation and Germany's immigration and asylum policies. They also express general dissatisfaction with establishment politics and the media (Patzelt & Klose, 2016, p. 110).

The movement has its origins in a Facebook group, which was created by Lutz Bachmann. The group was used to organise the first demonstration, which was attended by around 350 people. Thereafter, there was steady growth in the number of participants. The Pegida rallies reached their peak size on 12 January 2015 with around 25,000 demonstrators (Forschungsgruppe 'Durchgezählt', 2017; Berger, Poppe & Schuh, 2016). Pegida was registered as an association (e.V.) on 19 December 2014. Similar groups developed in other cities across Germany. By 27 January 2015, shortly after Dresden's department of public prosecution began investigating Bachmann regarding suspected hate speech offences, the organisation's leadership had disbanded. Following this, the number of people attending the Monday evening demonstrations has fallen significantly.

It seems that the Pegida movement made the *Lügenpresse* accusation so publicly visible in the final quarter of 2014 that the jury of a linguistic initiative chose it as 'Unwort des Jahres' [non-word of the year]. The jury's reasoning was as follows:

> "The fact that the charged linguistic history of the expression may not to be known to the majority of the 'concerned citizens' who have been chanting it and writing it on placards since last year makes the expression a particularly perfidious tool in the hands of those who are purposefully using it."
>
> [Translated from German] (Sprachkritische Aktion, 2015)

The expression does indeed have a turbulent history and it has been used in a range of contexts in Germany since the mid-19th century. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's German dictionary contains a related term: 'Lügenblatt' [lying newspaper]. The meaning is cited from a newspaper article from 1871: "a newspaper that deliberately circulates falsehoods: it will be good if […] it is not possible to distribute any blatantly lying newspapers on the street" [translated from German] (Kompetenzzentrum, 2017). In this case, the term refers to an individual medium rather than the press as a whole. In the Duden online dictionary, the pejorative meaning of the compound noun *Lügenpresse* is emphasised with the following definition:

> "a catchword (originating in the 19th century) for media outlets, particularly newspapers and magazines, that are accused of being influenced by politics, ideology or economics, of concealing or falsifying information and by so doing, of manipulating public opinion"
>
> [translated from German] (Duden, 2017)

As early as 1695, Kaspar von Stieler associated the terms 'Lüge' [lie] and 'Presse' [press] in the first comprehensive account of the press as a whole (Stieler, 1969, p. 56f.). This shows that this topic has been occupying journalism scholars from the very beginning. Stieler mentions the accusation made against newspapers, namely that they are 'lügenhaft' [fraudulent] (ibid., p. 56), but he comes to their defence.

Following the lifting of press censorship in Germany during the failed March Revolution in 1848–49, Catholic-conservative circles used the word *Lügenpresse* as a way of polemicising the now strengthened press, which was influenced by liberal and democratic thinking (cf. Weber, 1848, pp. 794–811). At that time, the word was also used anti-Semitically, as a term for stirring up agitation against Jewish newspapers (see Schmolke, 1971).

During the First World War, *Lügenpresse* was used widely in German propaganda as a defamatory word to describe press coverage from neutral and enemy countries. The term was used by newspapers and intellectuals alike. Its use began as the result of reports published by foreign media about the German violation of Belgian neutrality and war atrocities committed against Belgian civilians (Heine, 2015). In 1914, the Protestant theologian and Church historian Adolf von Harnack

wrote the following: "A fourth major power has risen up against Germany: the international *Lügenpresse,* which is showering the world with lies against our glorious and highly moral army and is slandering everything that is German." [Translated from German] (cited in Nowak, 1996, p. 1444). Additional important texts include five volumes entitled 'Our enemies' campaign of lies' by Reinhold Anton, the first of which is called 'The lying press: German, English, French and Russian news in comparison' [titles translated from German] (Anton, 1914).

During the Weimar Republic after the First World War, the National Socialists used the term *Lügenpresse*. In 'Mein Kampf', Hitler accused the social democratic press of being a "concentrated solution of lies" [all quotations from this source are translated from German] (Hitler, 1943, p. 43). He accused it of being a "brutal daily press, shunning no villainy, employing every means of slander, lying with a virtuosity that would bend iron beams, […] in the name of this gospel of a new humanity!" (ibid.). Hitler also wrote about "Marxist lying newspapers" (ibid., p. 265), stating that "lying is just as much of a necessity [to them] as catching mice is for cats" (ibid.). Last but not least, during the rise of National Socialism, campaigning took place against the Jewish 'Journaille' [pejorative term for newspapers] (Schmitz-Berning, 1998, p. 326f.). While the domestic press was brought into line once Hitler was in power, Third Reich propaganda continued to use the term to describe the foreign press (e.g., in speeches by Goebbels, 1941; Hagemann, 1948).

During the Cold War, the GDR state propaganda used the word *Lügenpresse* to defame western and West German media (e.g., Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus, 1959, p. 56). The term was used in the official Socialist Unity Party (SED) newspaper *Neues Deutschland* until the early 1970s, often in conjunction with the words 'capitalist', 'bourgeois' or 'Bonn', which was the capital city of West Germany (Amendt, 2015). In turn, *Neues Deutschland* was described as *Lügenpresse* during the period of German reunification (Richter, 2010, p. 293). In the past, the term *Lügenpresse* has been used by more people and in more contexts than this short overview is able to convey. Since the early 2000s, the term has been in vogue again in Germany, particularly in neo-Nazi and radical right-wing scenes.

Dwindling confidence in journalism and distortions in media coverage

The *Lügenpresse* accusation, which has been made by Pegida since 2014, is the most extreme expression of the dwindling levels of trust in journalism – a lack of trust that is also evident among large swathes of the population (Dernbach, 2005, p. 150). Yet for journalism, trust plays a constitutive role. Journalism relies on the trust of its recipients for its very existence. After all, media products are credence goods, which, unlike search goods, cannot be evaluated prior to receipt (Altmeppen, 2003, p. 19). Although the trust of the recipients is a decisive success

factor in economic and journalistic terms, it also affects the entire 'institution' of journalism, which is an important pillar of democracy.

Trust in journalism, however, is precisely what is in short supply. Trust is more of a marginal factor in journalism research (e.g., Kohring, 2014; overview in Pürer, 2012). Donsbach, Rentsch, Schielicke and Degen (2009) produced the first and, so far, only comprehensive study about levels of trust in journalism in Germany. The study was based on the results of a representative poll of the German population. Although 61 % indicated that they 'somewhat value' journalists, this figure is low compared to the responses for other professions. On the topic of trust, only 35 % of respondents gave a positive response for journalists. "There is no other profession with such a large gap between reputation and trust" (ibid., p. 66). Overall, in the eyes of citizens, journalism "is not sufficiently fulfilling its societal role and is substantially failing to meet the expectations of the population" (ibid.).

The Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach [Allensbach Institute for Public Opinion Research] has been conducting regular representative studies about the prestige of various professions since 1966. Journalists are near the bottom of the ranking. Respondents are asked to name the five professions that they value most or for which they have the most respect. In 2013, the approval rating for journalists was just 13 % (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach, 2013, p. 2). Although the figures have varied from survey to survey, journalists have never exceeded a rating of 18 % (Pürer, 2012, p. 264).

One reason for the low levels of trust in journalism may be the perception among its recipients that the mass media produces a consistent and cumulative simplification of complex realities, which does not reflect the recipients' individual experiences. The resulting assumption is that the media coverage is distorted. The fact that dissatisfaction with the mass media was an element of the Pegida ideology from the beginning – and that the movement also reached wider swathes of the population with its demonstrations – may in part be due to the German media coverage of the events in Ukraine in spring 2014, which was perceived as being unbalanced (Krüger, 2016, p. 7ff.).

The accusation of distorted coverage, which has culminated again through Pegida, is a key issue in journalism research. It is a particularly important issue in research into news selection (overview in Beiler, 2013, pp. 121–136). When choosing news items, journalists are faced with the task of "simplifying an excessively complex selection and selecting relevant information to convey to their audience" [translated from German] (Eilders, 1999, p. 15). Targeted empirical research in this area has been taking place since the 1950s (Schulz, 1976, p. 11). According to Kepplingers' classification (1989b), the issue of distorted media reality is to be investigated using the news bias approach. This approach is one of three streams

in news selection research, alongside the gatekeeper approach and the news values theory. This classification, however, is prototypical and the de facto demarcation is unclear.

News bias research has traditionally been very heterogeneous, both in terms of content and methodology. "With the exception of a common focus on one-sidedness, objectivity and independence of coverage, to a large extent, news bias research is lacking a common theoretical concept" [translated from German] (Eilders, 1999, p. 18). There is also no date for its genesis (overview in Staab, 1990, pp. 27–40). It often focuses on the political characteristics of journalists and media companies and on the resulting bias of the coverage. An early example that epitomises this approach can be seen in the study by Klein und Maccoby (1954). For the US presidential election campaign of 1952, the study was able to show that newspapers whose publishers affiliated themselves with the Republican Party published more and more prominently-placed articles about the Republican candidate, Eisenhower. These articles also contained more opinion statements.

Kepplinger (1989b) defines three methodical approaches within news bias research. The first approach relies on experimental studies. These studies showed that journalists write news and comment pieces that are in line with the paper's editorial policy or their own political views (e.g., Kerrick, Anderson & Swales, 1964). The second approach, which combines questionnaires and content analysis, can show the links between the view of the journalist and the bias of the article (e.g., Flegel & Chaffee, 1971). The third relates content analysis to external reality indicators (e.g., Lang & Lang, 1953; Funkhouser, 1973).

Journalism research in Germany focuses on content analysis studies. Schönbach (1977) identified that, for some media outlets, the selection of news items followed the bias of the comment pieces. In 'The Opportune Witnesses' [translated from German], Hagen (1992) showed that selection of sources quoted in the articles reflected the editorial policies of the newspapers. In his theory of instrumental actualisation, Kepplinger (1984; 1989a) assumes that journalists make intentional selection decisions in order to ensure that the public is exposed to certain perspectives. Following on from this, the 'final or functional model' of news value theory proposed by Staab (1990) views news factors as being both the cause and the consequence of journalistic selection. According to these conceptualisations, reporting does not appear to correspond to the ideal of objectivity – and thus appears to violate the generally-agreed rules of the profession and the image that most journalists have of their role (Weischenberg, Malik & Scholl, 2006b, pp. 355f.).

The problem of objectivity (Donsbach, 1990; Bentele, 1988) is also a crucial aspect in research into journalistic quality (Beiler, 2013, p. 40ff.). Based on a model by Westerståhl (1983), Schatz und Schulz (1992) categorised objectivity into

two dimensions. The first of their dimensions is factuality or appropriateness. The focus here is on whether the media content and events correspond with the sub-aspects of accuracy and relevance (ibid., p. 703). The second of these dimensions is impartiality. The first aspect of this is fairness or balance (ibid., p. 703f.). Consideration should be given to every argument, position and stakeholder, particularly if the topic is controversial. The second sub-aspect here is neutrality, whereby the critical features include the distinction between news and opinion.

Research questions
The issue of objective journalistic coverage is particularly potent due to the situation at hand: a movement is directing an existential accusation at the mass media and the mass media is tasked with reporting about its own accuser. The following research questions are used to investigate the allegation:

1. What can be said about the type of content, the source selection and the bias of the coverage about Pegida?
2. How are the root causes of the formation of Pegida framed?
3. How is the *Lügenpresse* accusation handled?

The aim is to answer these research questions by comparing fact-focused coverage and opinion-focused coverage in order to give consideration to the main form of objectivity, i.e., the distinction between news and comment.

3   Method

In order to answer the research questions, a quantitative, standardised analysis of the content of (German) national daily newspapers was undertaken. This empirical data collection method is particularly well-suited because it serves to "describe the textual and formal features of the messages in a systematic way that is intersubjectively plausible" [translated from German] (Früh, 2011, p. 27). It can also be built on to provide the option of "an interpretive inference for situations not mentioned in the messages" (ibid.). In addition to the method's system, intersubjective plausibility is also important. The aim of intersubjective plausibility is for events to be largely understood and questioned in the same way across the board, thus creating common ground for the discussion of these events.

Daily newspapers were selected as research subjects because the most relevant issue is the coverage provided by those at whom the *Lügenpresse* accusation is most specifically and literally directed: the printed press. Due to the financial con-

siderations of this research, it was not possible to examine all of Germany's daily newspapers. The newspapers investigated were the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (*SZ*), the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*), the *tageszeitung* (*taz*) and *Bild*.

These important national daily newspapers are leading journalistic media outlets (Weischenberg, Malik & Scholl, 2006a, p. 134f.) Furthermore, *SZ* and *FAZ* can be considered as being quality newspapers (Jandura & Brosius, 2011, p. 195f.). As the most widely-read newspaper in Germany, the tabloid newspaper *Bild* plays a particularly important role. Thus the four selected daily newspapers span a broad political and journalistic spectrum (Pürer & Raabe, 2007, p. 413). This means that collectively, these newspapers can be said to be in a position of particular responsibility for public opinion.

The time period being examined corresponds with the infancy of Pegida and spans from 20 October 2014 to 27 January 2015. The first day of this period marks the day of the first demonstration in Dresden and the last day marks the disbanding of Pegida's original leadership group. After that date, the numbers at the rallies also fell significantly. During the investigation period, each Monday to Saturday edition of the relevant newspapers was examined.

The analysis units are editorial articles of all kinds from all sections of the newspaper. Letters to the editor, advertisements and press reviews were not included. Nor were images or caricatures with no text. For the sake of comparability, only the national editions were included – regional sections or editions were not analysed. The criteria for selecting the articles were certain terms used in connection with the movement, including 'Pegida', 'Lügenpresse', 'Abendland' [West/Occident], 'Patriotische Europäer' [patriotic Europeans] and 'Bachmann'. The kickers, headlines, subheads and first paragraphs of the articles were checked for these terms.

The codebook for the investigation was developed on the basis of numerous sections of test code. The following formal attributes were defined: medium, publication date, section, article title, article length and number of images in the article. The textual categories relate to characteristics including the type of article, the main reason for the article, the main content of the images, the main topic of the article, the bias of the article regarding Pegida, the roots of the Pegida movement and the handling of the *Lügenpresse* accusation. According to Holsti's method, the reliability of the variables used in this paper is at least 0.8.

4   Results

During the investigation period, there were 360 articles about Pegida in the four
national daily papers. The results mapped over time show that the newspapers
were late to begin reporting about the movement (Figure 1). Although the demon-
strations were held on a weekly basis from 20 October 2014, no reference is made
to them for over a month. It was not until 26 November 2014 that the first two
articles were published. Regular coverage only began from 11 December 2014, by
which point there were already around 10,000 people attending the rallies in Dres-
den. There was a high concentration of articles in January 2015. In some cases,
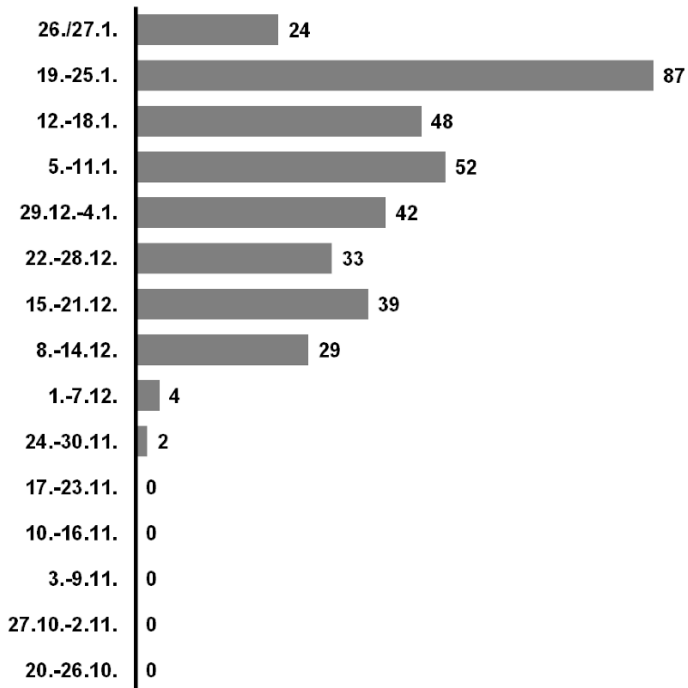there were up to nine articles mentioning Pegida in one edition.

Figure 1   *Distribution of articles in SZ, FAZ, taz and Bild during the infancy of the*
            Pegida movement, N = 360 articles
            Source: Own representation

Of the four daily newspapers, *taz* and *FAZ* wrote about the Pegida movement the most, with 125 and 121 articles respectively. In both cases, this equates to just over one third of the whole sample (35 % and 34 % respectively). There were 79 articles in *SZ* and 35 in *Bild* (22 % and 10 % respectively). Just under two thirds of the articles are featured in the politics section (65 %), more than one fifth are on the front page (22 %) and one tenth are in the feuilleton (11 %). *FAZ* is the newspaper that featured Pegida on its front page most frequently (31 % of the articles). For *Bild*, this figure is 23 % and for *SZ* and *taz* it is 22 % and 15 % respectively. In almost all the articles (86 %), Pegida is the main topic. In 7 %, Pegida is given roughly the same amount of coverage as another topic and in 8 %, Pegida is only a marginal topic.

At 100 lines, the average length of the articles was relatively long. The articles in *Bild* were significantly shorter than those in the other newspapers (80 lines compared to 99 in *SZ* and *FAZ* and 108 in *taz*). Around half of the articles (47 %) featured at least one image. As was to be expected, *Bild* featured the most (91 %). The newspaper with the fewest articles featuring at least one image was *FAZ* (28 %). In *SZ* and *taz*, the figures were 41 % and 58 % respectively. On average, there were three images per article in *Bild*, which is more than triple the overall average (0.8 images). This tabloid media outlet used visual language extensively.

Almost half of the images show demonstrations or activists (45 %): 34 % show Pegida rallies and supporters; 12 % show counter-demonstrations. 14 % of the images show politicians who are not affiliated with Pegida and 8 % feature other representatives from civil society institutions such as churches or universities. 9 % are caricatures and 16 % are pictures of the author. This means that the proportion of photos showing Pegida demonstrations and supporters is roughly equal to the proportion showing Pegida opponents, 'neutral' representatives of civil society and politicians from other parties.

It is apparent that a large proportion of the articles have an opinion-focused format. In total, they made up more than one third of the articles examined (37 %). In both *taz* and *FAZ*, the figure was more than four tenths (46 % and 44 % respectively). In *SZ* and *Bild* it was around three tenths (33 % and 29 % respectively). Thus at this general level, the four daily newspapers are thoroughly fulfilling their role of contributing to shaping public opinion. Overall, half of the articles (51 %) are news announcements and reports. In both *SZ* and *Bild*, they constitute around sixth tenths (61 % and 57 % respectively). The figure is 49 % in *FAZ* and 44 % in *taz*. 3 % of all the articles are reportages or features and 4 % are interviews.

The below analysis categorises the articles into fact-focused and opinion-focused formats. The news announcement/report and reportage/feature categories were merged together and classed as fact-focused formats to be compared with the opinion-focused formats (59 % to 41 %, N = 326). In *SZ*, the ratio of fact-focused

formats to opinion-focused formats was 71 % to 29 %. The ratio in *Bild* was 67 % to 33 %, in *FAZ* it was 56 % to 44 % and in *taz* it was 54 % to 46 %.

What can be said about the type of content, the source selection and the bias of the coverage about Pegida?

Table 1 shows which *type of content* is predominant in coverage about Pegida, i.e., whether it is factual events or comment that constitutes more than half of the volume. The proportion of comment articles is 46 % and thus somewhat higher than the proportion of opinion-focused formats (41 %). In keeping with this, the proportion of articles that focus on factual events is 54 %, which is somewhat lower than the proportion of fact-focused formats (59 %). Additional insight can be gained by inspecting the results more closely. Comment is the focus of 15 % of the opinion-focused articles, whereas 85 % of the fact-focused formats concentrated on facts and events. 91 % of fact-focused formats concentrated on comment, whereas 9 % focused on factual events. In *FAZ*, hardly any of the fact-focused articles contained any significant level of comment (5 %). For *SZ*, this figure is as high as 12 % and for both *taz* and *Bild*, the figure is one quarter.

Table 1 *Content of the general coverage about Pegida, categorised into fact-focused and opinion-focused formats, by newspaper (proportions in percent)*

Predominant content (more than 50 % of the volume)	SZ			FAZ			taz			Bild			Total		
	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total
Facts and events	88	0	63	95	20	62	75	2	41	75	10	53	85	9	54
Commentary	12	100	37	5	80	38	25	98	59	25	90	47	15	91	46
N	50	20	70	64	50	114	60	52	112	20	10	30	194	132	326

Source: Own representation

The selection of the *sources* (Table 2)[1] quoted or mentioned in an article can be considered as balanced in less than half of the articles (46 %). 53 % of the sources express a somewhat negative view of Pegida; 1 % express a somewhat positive view. With opinion-focused formats, there is in principle nothing to criticise about one-sided source selection. The proportion of negative sources in such formats

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1   The source selection was described using one of ten categories, which were re-assigned into three levels for the purposes of this evaluation.

is nearly as high as two thirds (63%), with 36% of the sources being somewhat balanced. With fact-focused formats, however, there is a demand for objectivity. It is noteworthy that only 52% of the fact-focused articles have a somewhat balanced selection of sources, whereas 47% of such articles predominantly feature sources whose views of Pegida are negative. Among the four newspapers, *FAZ* has by far the largest proportion of articles with a balanced selection of sources, both overall (61%) and for the fact-focused and opinion-focused formats (65% and 55% respectively). *Bild* has the lowest proportion (24% overall, 33% for opinion-focused and 19% for fact-focused articles). *SZ* and *taz* both feature a balanced selection of sources in half of the fact-focused articles (52% and 50% respectively).

Table 2 *Bias of the source selection and the general coverage about Pegida, categorised into fact-focused and opinion-focused formats, by newspaper (proportions in percent)*

	SZ			FAZ			taz			Bild			Total		
	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total
Source selection															
broadly balanced	48	32	43	65	55	61	50	22	37	19	33	24	52	36	46
predominantly negative	52	68	57	33	43	37	50	77	62	75	67	72	47	63	53
predominantly positive	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	2	1	6	0	4	1	2	1
Bias															
fairly neutral	42	0	30	64	32	51	33	12	23	13	0	8	44	16	33
somewhat negative	58	100	70	35	75	44	67	86	76	81	100	88	55	79	65
somewhat positive	0	0	0	2	11	6	0	2	1	6	0	4	1	5	3
N	48	19	67	63	44	107	58	51	109	16	9	25	185	123	308

Source: Own representation

Table 2 also shows the *general bias* of the stance regarding Pegida, as communicated in the article.[2] All in all, one third of the articles have a neutral stance. 65 % have a somewhat negative overall bias and 3 % have a somewhat positive overall bias. The bias is somewhat negative in as many as 79 % of the opinion-focused formats; it is somewhat positive in 5 % and neutral in 16 %. Only 44 % of the fact-focused formats can be described as neutral; 55 % are somewhat negative and 1 % are somewhat positive.

FAZ had by far the highest proportion of articles with a fairly neutral overall bias. The overall proportion was 51 % and for fact-focused formats, this figure was nearly two thirds (64 %). Furthermore, one third of the opinion-focused articles in *FAZ* were fairly neutral. *Bild* had the largest proportion of articles with a negative bias (88 % overall). In fact, all of its opinion-focused articles were somewhat negative, as were 81 % of the fact-focused articles. Three quarters (76 %) of all the articles in *taz* were somewhat negative, as were 86 % of the opinion-focused articles and 67 % of the fact-focused ones. Seven tenths of all of the *SZ* articles were somewhat negative. All of the opinion-focused formats and 58 % of the fact-focused formats were fairly negative.

In response to the first research question, it can be noted that even in the fact-focused formats, there is a significant volume of commentary in the coverage about Pegida. The source selection is not balanced and there is a clear negative bias in the coverage about Pegida. This may be because public opinion has quickly solidified into a negative stance on Pegida and because numerous politicians and representatives from civil society have made negative remarks. The one-sided source selection can also be interpreted as an expression of what Hagen (1992) calls 'opportune witnesses'.

How are the root causes of the formation of Pegida framed?

In order to answer the question about which root causes of the Pegida movement's existence are addressed in the coverage, the occurrences of a range of explanatory frames were recorded. Table 3 shows how frequently the individual frames occur (final column). In just over a quarter of the articles (27 %), Pegida supporters in general are accused of having a Nazi mindset. One fifth of the articles cite dissatisfaction with the government or those in government (21 %). These two frames are used most frequently. The next most frequent frame (14 %) is that Pegida supporters have an intolerant mindset i.e., that they do not accept other people's opinions or lifestyles.

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2   The overall bias was described using one of ten categories, which were re-assigned into three levels for the purposes of this evaluation. The indicators included the evaluative adjectives or descriptions as well as the sources.

Another important frame (totalling 13 %) is dissatisfaction with the media – such as an accusation that media coverage is incorrect, incomplete, one-sided or pro-government. 'Herd mentality' – the assumption that the supporters do not have their own opinion and merely follow others or go along for the ride – is an explanatory frame that occurs just as often. A lack of differentiation between Islam and Islamism is a frame that is present in 12 % of the articles. The same percentage of articles cite a general disenchantment or dissatisfaction with politics.

An additional explanatory frame is anger about the refugee policy, for example about accepting too many refugees, about asylum procedures taking too long or about unfair refugee distribution (11 %). In one tenth of the articles, reference is made to a lack of awareness among Pegida supporters. Both the absence of contact with other cultures and the fear of terrorism are suggested as an explanation in 9 % of the articles respectively. 8 % of the articles make reference to Pegida supporters seeing themselves as 'the people' or 'at the centre of society', suggesting that they therefore need to express themselves as 'normal citizens', whose concerns are to be taken seriously.

Pegida supporters are accused of stupidity or naivety in 7 % of the articles. An additional explanation offered is of Pegida supporters being dissatisfied with their own living conditions, which is also associated with a feeling of envy and being economically disadvantaged (6 %). Both disenchantment with the state and growing up and living in eastern Germany are also mentioned in 6 % of the articles respectively. Actual negative experiences with other cultures are only mentioned in 1 % of the articles.

A principal component analysis was performed in order to group the 17 individual explanatory frames. With an explained variance of 59 %, this generates six dimensions, each with an eigenvalue larger than 1 (KMO = 0.742).[3] The rotated component matrix has a simple structure and is easy to interpret (Table 3). There are four frames that contribute significantly to the first factor, which has an explained variance of 15 %. This factor can be described as relating to a general sense of dissatisfaction with the government, politics and the state. This factor also covers mistrust of the mass media: instances of the coverage referring to the feeling that the mass media is part of the 'system'. The second factor (explained variance of 10 %) groups together the frames that can be summarised by the description 'Intolerance and herd mentality'; there are four variables that particularly

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3   Originally, the content analysis identified 21 individual frames. Five frames were excluded from the analysis because the MSA values were too low. Also, these frames only occurred a few times. The variables included in the principal component analysis have MSA values of at least 0.6, although the values are generally significantly higher.

contribute to this factor. This heading also covers instances whereby the Pegida supporters are accused of having a Nazi mindset and of thinking that they are at the centre of society.

Table 3 *Root causes of the formation of Pegida: Principal component analysis (factor loadings of the rotated component matrix) and proportions*

	1. Dissatisfaction with politics	2. Intolerance and herd mentality	3. Fear of Islam and terrorism	4. Naivety and lack of awareness	5. A particularity of eastern Germany	6. Dissatisfaction with living conditions	Proportion in %
Nazi mindset		0.426					27
Dissatisfaction with the government	0.774						21
Intolerance		0.648					14
Dissatisfaction with media coverage	0.696						13
Herd mentality		0.755					13
A lack of differentiation between Islam and Islamism			0.771				12
Disenchantment with politics	0.716						12
Anger about the refugee policy			0.455				11
Lack of awareness				0.780			10
Absence of contact with other cultures					0.769		9
Fear of terrorism			0.759				9
Perceiving themselves as being at the centre of society and needing to express themselves		0.440					8
Stupidity/naivety				0.798			7
Dissatisfaction with own living conditions						0.711	6
Disenchantment with the state	0.668						6
Growing up/living in eastern Germany					0.764		6
Negative experiences with other cultures						0.573	1
Explained variance in %	15.2	9.9	9.0	8.8	8.5	7.2	--

N = 360 articles; varimax rotation with Kaiser normalisation; factor weightings smaller than |0.4| not shown; total explained variance: 58.6 %; Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = 0.742; Bartlett's test of sphericity (significance) = 0.000
Source: Own representation

The third dimension can be summarised with the description 'Fear of Islam and terrorism' (9 % explained variance). This dimension includes three more strongly loading individual frames, including anger about the refugee policy. The fourth factor combines the two frames that relate to 'Naivety and lack of awareness' (9 % explained variance). The fifth dimension views the formation of Pegida as 'A particularity of eastern Germany', characterised by the socialisation of eastern Germany and the absence of contact with other cultures (9 % explained variance). The sixth factor expresses 'Dissatisfaction with living conditions' and also includes negative experiences with other cultures (6 % of explained variance).

Table 4 shows how frequently these six dimensions for explaining the root causes are found in the coverage. If at least one of the individual frames that is assigned to one of the factors is mentioned in an article, it is recorded in this table. The most frequently occurring explanatory frame by a long way is 'Intolerance and herd mentality', which was identified in four tenths of all the articles (41 %). In second place is the dimension 'Dissatisfaction with politics' (27 %), followed by 'Fear of Islam and terrorism' (23 %). The categories 'Naivety and lack of awareness' and 'A particularity of eastern Germany' both made up more than one tenth (13 % and 12 % respectively). 'Dissatisfaction with living conditions' made up 5 %.

Table 4 *Dimensions of the root causes of the formation of Pegida, categorised into fact-focused and opinion-focused formats, by newspaper (proportions in percent)*

	SZ			FAZ			taz			Bild			Total		
	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total
Intolerance and herd mentality	36	55	41	41	28	35	48	51	50	25	40	30	40	42	41
Dissatisfaction with politics	24	30	26	27	36	31	25	33	29	10	10	10	24	32	27
Fear of Islam and terrorism	26	10	21	34	18	27	23	15	20	25	10	20	28	15	23
Naivety and lack of awareness	4	20	9	6	20	12	15	19	17	0	20	7	8	20	13
A particularity of eastern Germany	10	20	13	6	6	6	10	27	18	10	0	7	9	16	12
Dissatisfaction with living conditions	8	0	6	2	8	4	5	8	6	5	0	3	5	6	5
N	50	20	70	64	50	114	60	52	112	20	10	30	194	132	326

Source: Own representation

When breaking down the results according to the type of article, it becomes clear that three dimensions occur more frequently with opinion-focused formats than with fact-focused ones: 'Dissatisfaction with politics' (32 % compared to 24 %), 'Naivety and lack of awareness' (20 % compared to 8 %) and 'A particularity of eastern Germany' (16 % compared to 9 %). These are clearly the explanatory models that tend to be used more in opinion-focused articles – alongside the dimension of 'Intolerance and herd mentality', which is the most important factor throughout. The only explanatory model that occurs more frequently in fact-focused formats than in opinion-focused ones is 'Fear of Islam and terrorism' (28 % compared to 15 %). This may be because this topic is a widely discussed societal challenge.

The use of the six frames is relatively similar across the four newspapers, although some differences can be observed. For example, *taz* generally has a heavy emphasis on explanation. The dimensions of 'Intolerance and herd mentality', 'Naivety and lack of awareness' and 'A particularity of eastern Germany' occur significantly more often in *taz* than in the other newspapers. This may be an expression of the *taz*'s role as a left-wing alternative media outlet that sees itself as a critical, counter-public voice. By contrast, *Bild* places little emphasis on explanation. All of the dimensions occur the least in this newspaper. It is also striking that the dimension 'Dissatisfaction with politics', which was the second most frequent dimension overall, is comparatively infrequent in *Bild* (10 %). It remains unknown whether keeping criticism of the system to a minimum is something that is linked to the newspaper's own policy.

Despite these differences, it can be said that the four newspapers, which span a broad political and journalistic spectrum, consistently trace the root causes of Pegida back to a few dimensions and give fairly similar weightings to the importance of these dimensions. The explanatory frames can be described as being somewhat simple and negative. As well as commenting on general intolerance and a herd mentality, the media outlets are particularly addressing the loss of trust in the democratic system and thus the general sense of dissatisfaction with politics, those in government and the media.

How is the Lügenpresse accusation handled?

Pegida's accusation (*Lügenpresse*) is addressed directly in the papers analysed by this investigation. Table 5 shows how it is handled by the newspapers. In eight tenths of the articles, the accusation is not mentioned at all. In 8 %, the accusation is reported as a fact but no comment is made. In 7 %, the accusation is rejected as not applicable or presented in such a mocking way that it comes across as ridiculous. Only a very small proportion of the articles (5 %) feature a reasoned argument: 3 % refute the accusation and 2 % concede that the press has made mistakes.

Table 5 *Handling of the Lügenpresse accusation, categorised into fact-focused and opinion-focused formats, by newspaper (proportions in percent)*

The accusation is…	SZ			FAZ			taz			Bild			Total		
	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total	fact-focused	opinion-focused	total
…not addressed.	82	79	81	84	71	79	77	75	76	95	90	93	83	75	80
…mentioned but no comment is made.	6	0	4	9	6	8	15	8	12	0	0	0	9	5	8
…generally rejected or mocked without discussion.	6	11	7	5	12	8	8	10	9	0	0	0	6	10	7
…refuted or rejected in an argumentative way.	2	11	4	2	4	3	0	4	2	5	10	7	2	5	3
…conceded (in part) after discussion.	4	0	3	0	6	3	0	4	2	0	0	0	1	4	2
N	50	19	69	64	49	113	60	51	111	20	10	30	194	129	323

Source: Own representation

The results show little difference between the two types of article. In total, three quarters of the opinion-focused articles do not address the *Lügenpresse* accusation. The figure is 83 % for the fact-focused articles. In the cases where the accusation is addressed, the fact-focused articles tend to simply mention it, whereas the opinion-focused formats tend to completely reject it or take an argumentative approach. It is striking that *Bild* hardly addresses the accusation in any of its articles (7 %). The newspaper that addresses it the most is *taz*. *FAZ* concedes the accusation in 6 % of its opinion-focused articles and *taz* does so in 4 %.

Overall, it can be said that the way the *Lügenpresse* accusation is addressed exhibits little reasoned argumentation or complexity. Whether the accusation is justifiable or not, it is surprising that there is so little debate about such a significant accusation – an accusation that is indicative of a severe crisis of confidence and that has the potential to affect additional groups within the population, thus shaking one of the pillars of democratic society.

5   Summary

"Lügenpresse!" This accusation, which the right-wing populist movement Pegida is directing at journalism, was the focal point of this study. The aim was to analyse how the mass media outlets report about those making this sweeping accusation and how the accusation is handled in their coverage. The matter is potent for two reasons. Firstly, this accusation has distinct roots in National Socialism and is levied at an important pillar of democratic society. Secondly, it is precisely this column who has a duty to inform society about the accusation being made. The result is a significant challenge to balanced, objective reporting.

The content analysis of the four (German) national newspapers shows a high proportion of opinion-focused articles. There were also large volumes of comment in the fact-focused articles, despite the requirement that such articles are objective. This violates the requirement for a clear distinction between news and comment. Overall, source selection was one-sided. Sources critical of Pegida were in the clear majority. A significant negative bias was present in the coverage about Pegida. The explanatory frames about the root causes of the movement are relatively simple and negative. The main root causes mentioned are general intolerance and herd mentality, an overall sense of dissatisfaction with politics and the fear of Islam. In the newspapers analysed, volumes of coverage about the *Lügenpresse* accusation are low. The accusation is rarely the subject of reasoned discussion. Overall, the coverage is relatively consistent.

The results prompt debate about the objectivity of media coverage. The results by no means justify the accusatory description of *Lügenpresse* – not to mention the inappropriate nature of the term. In the coverage, the stance held regarding Pegida is clearly negative. This is not something to be criticised. In a democracy, the mass media is allowed to and indeed must play a role in shaping public opinion. What can be scrutinised, however, is whether the way the topic of Pegida was addressed made use of reasoned argumentation and complexity. The findings indicate that this kind of argumentation was in short supply.

There is also scope for scrutiny of the extent to which the distinction between news and comment was violated. The opinion-focused formats are the intended forum for comment. At a higher level, a question that is extremely relevant to society as a whole must be asked: Under what conditions is it permissible – and perhaps also a necessity for the survival of democracy – for the media to take a distinct stance, even in an objective reporting format? Does the mantra of Hanns Joachim Friedrichs, a former news TV anchor of the public-service broadcaster ARD, about not making yourself common with a cause, not even with a good one, still apply? And did it ever really apply universally?

If sweeping allegations of *Lügenpresse* are being directed at the mass media and at journalism, communication scholars should also be taking a stance (Beiler & Bigl, 2017, p. 20). After all, its task is to help (self-) enlighten society about the topics of media and public communication (DGPuK, 2013, p. 128). As an empirical and interdisciplinary social science, it is able to provide an intersubjective foundation for a fair and proper social debate.

This is all the more important in times such as these, when the freedom of the press – which is now taken for granted – is even under threat in established western democracies. This threat is not only coming from smaller political forces and those in the opposition. An adaptation of the term *Lügenpresse* was heard in January 2017 at Donald Trump's first press conference as President-elect of the USA. He declined to answer a question from a CNN reporter, saying, "Not you. [...] Your organization is terrible. [...] No, I'm not going to give you a question... You are fake news." (CNN, 2017). Half a year later, when in post as President, he posted a video on Twitter showing himself wrestling with a man whose face has been superimposed with the CNN logo (Trump, 2017).

Perfidiously and conversely, Trump's advisor Kellyanne Conway invented the term 'alternative facts' during a TV interview. She did so as she was trying to justify the false statements made by the White House press secretary Sean Spicer. During his first press conference, Sean Spicer had accused the media of deliberately downplaying the size of the crowds at Trump's inauguration ceremony. The information that was available contradicted his statements. Conway explained that Spicer had given alternative facts. This euphemistic term for lies was clarified by NBC presenter Chuck Todd in the interview: "Look, alternative facts are not facts. They're falsehoods." (NBC, 2017).

It is evident here that post-truth politicians themselves are resorting to lies (cf. Körtner, 2017, pp. 9–24). And in many cases, they are no longer making the effort to disguise their obvious falsehoods. They and their supporters are not interested in facts. What counts are opinions and perceived realities, neither of which are open to scrutiny. Post-truth (Keyes, 2004), however, is by no means a new phenomenon. Rather, it is seeing a renaissance. It dates back to antiquity. This pattern is even found in the Bible. In the trial scene of John's passion narrative, which does strike a somewhat philosophical tone, Pontius Pilate ends his discussion with Jesus, saying, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). In essence this is a surrender.

Those who inform citizens about the falsehoods of post-truth politicians are then simply accused by those politicians of being liars. Thus the mass media outlets that are defamed with the term *Lügenpresse* cannot make an effective impact – or at least not on those who support these post-truth politicians and who use social networks to create their own communication networks (Körtner, 2017, p. 12). This

also makes the necessary scholarly debate extremely difficult. After all, even facts that have been determined intersubjectively will not get through to people who perceive things differently anyway. This erodes the foundations of reason – the kind that is informed by fact-based, objective discussion: "La défaite de la pensée" (Finkielkraut, 1987). It endangers not only the freedom of the press but also democracy as a whole. If science becomes the next victim of post-truth logic, another of democracy's pillars may begin to wobble.

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