

**A social movement institutionalized ?**

Right-wing activism, population opinion, and media in reunited Germany

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**A social movement institutionalised?  
Right-wing activism, population opinion and media in reunited Germany<sup>1</sup>.**

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**Abstract**

The recent waves of violence against foreigners in Germany, in particular against asylum hostels, have attained public and scientific attention. What are those activities standing for? *Collective episodes* of diffusely right-wing youths or the beginning of a stabilizing *social movement* of determined nationalists or even racists?

The paper, first, will try to answer this question by confronting a definition of social movements with empirical findings of recent literature. Second, the paper will try to trace and analyse elements of the social context structure that led to or perhaps calmed the waves of violence. Empirical components are data from the monthly reports on violence from the Federal German Police Office (BKA), public opinion polls of the nineties kept in the German Central Archive of Empirical Social Research (ZA, Cologne), and a content analysis of a German 'tabloid' newspaper.

The qualitative content analysis will help to reconstruct parts of the public discourse on the right of asylum, xenophobia/racism and right-wing violence, whereas the data from public opinion polls and violence reports are combined in a bivariate analysis in order to detect structures of quantitative correlation.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank my former colleagues at the Science Center Berlin (WZB), Research Unit "The Public and the Social Movement", for stimulating discussions. The WZB is the place, where the main work with that paper was done.

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## I. The social phenomena

Burning asylum hostels, screaming youth, applauding bystanders - that have been pictures of Germany spread by the media in the early nineties. The numbers of *crimes against foreigners* increased dramatically in 1991 and 1992. During the eighties the Federal Police (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA) counted only 200-300 crimes against foreigners per year. 1991 the figure rose to 2500, 1992 more than 6000 crimes are registered. As part of this sum, *violent attacks* hostile to foreigners count up to 500 in 1991 and to 1200 in 1992. In 1993, up to November, about 800 violent attacks were counted - a slight decrease, mainly caused by a smaller number of attacks against asylum hostels.

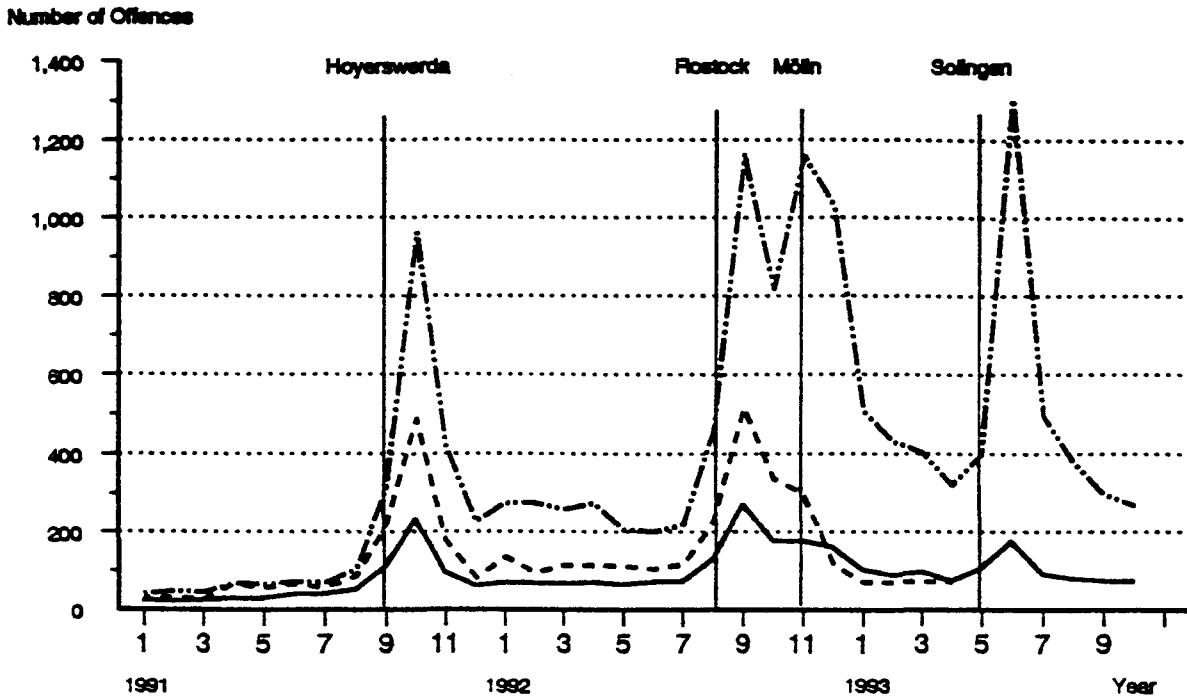
Behind this cumulated figures per year a differentiated structure can be detected on a lower level of aggregation. Figure 1 shows the rise and fall of violent attacks against foreigners. Basically, the curve of violence shows two characteristics in 1991 and 1992: (a) a drastic increase at two points of time (both in the second half of the years), and (b) an gradual increase of violence over time, because after the first two peaks a new, higher level of violence remains more or less stable.

- figure 1 about here -

The two peaks can be interpreted in coincidence with the anti-foreigner riots of Hoyerswerda (17.09.1991) and Rostock (22.-27.08.1992). At both places, situated in the former German Democratic Republic, hostels of asylum seeking people were attacked. In Rostock the riots lasted for several days. Both incidents were broadly covered in the media and therefor might have provoked further acts of violence. Nevertheless, there has been an upwardly oriented trend of violence even before Hoyerswerda (and even before Rostock). Therefor, the *critical events* might not have released the violence, but functioned as a kind of catalysor. The murder of Mölln (23.11.93), when an arson killed a Turkish women and two children, does not have a violence-increasing effect. However, the overall number of crimes increases - like it did after the two riots mentioned before. After the second murder in Solingen (29.5.93) both violent attacks and offences overall were rising again. The shock of murder seemed to have lost its impact.

Growing figures of asylum seeking people, the economic deprivation felt by the "East Germans", the growing number of "losers of the modernization process" in the West (Heitmeyer), all that leading to problems of lacking self esteem and the search for a scapegoat - these were some explanations for the outburst of violence. Some social science people saw it as *episodes of collective violence* having nothing to do with a growing reborn nazi-movement ( e.g. Merkl 1993 ),

**Figure 1:** Criminal Offences Hostile to Foreigners in Germany 1991 - 1993



- ..... Offences hostile to foreigners
- \_\_\_\_\_ of which: Explosives and arson attacks, or attacks against the person (does not include damage to property)  
Source: German Federal Investigation Agency (BKA)
- Acts of violence with an extreme right-wing motivation  
Source: Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution (BFV)

whereas others saw the violence in combination with other observations (growing right-wing organizations, establishing networks of right-wing groups and the formation of a common ideology) as the accomplished institutionalisation or at least the beginning of the formation of a *right-wing social movement* (Willems 1992, Jaschke 1993, Bergmann/Erb 1993). What do we experience? Is it actually a lasting social social movement or a more or less volatile social phenomenon? This paper will try to do two things: First, it will confront a broadly accepted definition of social movements with recent empirical findings. Second, applying the idea of political and social opportunity structure it will add some elements of explanations to the social phenomena observed.

## II. A definition of *social movements*

A leading German scholar in the field of collective action and social movements, pioneering the recently enormously growing empirical work in Germany in terms of theoretical and conceptual preparation, has developed a definition of social movements using historic and so called *new social movements* as empirical examples. This definition was not challenged fundamentally and survived as a kind of guideline for a lot of research, especially into new social movements on the left. Joachim Raschke defines a social movement "... as a mobilizing collective actor, which - with a certain continuity in time, on the basis of high symbolic integration and a low role specification, with the help of flexible forms of organization and action - tries to accomplish the goal of fundamental social change, to hinder it or even roll it back" (1987:77, translation Th.Oh.). Substituting Raschke's goal-specification of *fundamental social change* by *change of political system* or - more or less far reaching - *goals within an political system* social movements can be distinguished from political movements or even protest movements. Following Raschke's further line of argument there is an inherent tendency in the contemporary analysis of social movements to see social movements as a *rational* and *structured* phenomenon. Explicitly, they are not amorphic, unconnected episodes or encounters. Movements are self-organizing, well connected collective actors, equipped with the consciousness of a common endeavour; actions of which can be described as the outcome of a rational processes (Raschke 1987:17). Describing collective action as irrational behaviour, following mass psychology of LeBon or the collective behaviour-approach, is no longer relevant for the contemporary definition of a social movement (Nullmeier/ Raschke 1989).

### III. A social movement institutionalised ?

Confronting empirical findings or observations with the abovementioned definition makes it hardly possible to speak of an already established social movement. Even to argue in favour of an early phase of formation, and therefore forecasting a rise of a movement, seems to be weakly backed. I want to support my position by four points.

Firstly, compared to the mass mobilizations of the left libertarian social movements in the early eighties the *mobilization success* of the right-wing groups is small. There are not hundreds of thousands marching in demonstrations or being affiliated to right-wing organizations. In early 1993 the Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz) speaks of about 42.000 members in right-wing organizations. Right-wing goals and attitudes are not supported in public opinion polls as e.g. the demands of the ecology movements. Social places and contexts for successful socialisation and mobilisation are not going to be instrumentalised by right-wing groups. Universities, churches and other host organizations for left libertarian movements (Freemann 1983, Neidhardt 1985, Ohlemacher 1992, 1993) are not places of mobilization for a right movement. Auschwitz is still having its effect on the (semi-)public discussions. A further problem of mobilization seems to be the lack of a *central* mobilizing actor. Right-wing movements, compared to left wing movements, seem to be more dependant on a leader or a leading group (Neidhardt 1982:460). Right-wing networks are only organized to a small extent, although there are reports of increased organizing and networking in late 1993. A reason for that problem might be the rivalry between different groups, especially among their leaders - all of them competing for the overall leadership.

Secondly, there is *no common consciousness of a movement* acting as one collective actor, therefore there is no high *symbolic integration* visible. Another element of symbolic integration, a lifestyle or habitus, is also not at hand. There have been of course elements of such a habitus (e.g. shaved heads, special boots and jackets, white laces), but these have only been concentrated on a small, socially marginalized group of so-called skinheads. The majority of right-wingers is not easily decodable in terms of habitus or culture. The right-wing music scene, which is full of racist and nationalist (over)tones is also still marginal. The social resonance of artists sympathizing with right-wing goals is minimal compared to the sympathy artists that supported e.g. the peace movement in the eighties experienced in the wider public (supporters were recruited even among pop and folk singers).

Thirdly, the defining element of a *low role specification* within social movements can be interpreted as a balance between few social movement activists/entrepreneurs (having a special role by holding various posts in

organizations or just by symbolically integrating the movement), some enrolled members (some of them holding posts in organizations) and the overwhelming majority of non-member, but socially connected activists and supporters of the movement. The contemporary right-wing phenomena do not show such a profile of an interconnected balance of various elements. On the one hand side, the organizations have a well organized structure with a hierarchy of posts and ascribed roles. On the other hand, there are participants of collective actions (e.g. youth attacking asylum homes), who explicitly do not want to be instrumentalized by right-wing groups (Willems et al. 1993:39,48). Therefore, organized groups do not have socially well backed mobilization opportunities. Violence comes out of scenic contexts, that are not outspoken right-wing, which are even apolitical. Right-wing organizations and the social settings of presumably right-wing activities are neither socially connected nor do they share the same goals.

Fourthly, there is a *lack of a compact, convincing frame of ideology* on the right. Elaborate ideological concepts of the intellectual "new right" (Feit 1987) are not bridged to the potential activists. There are fragments of ideology floating around, which are hardly to combine. One problem seems to be the abovementioned rivalry among groups and their respective leaders, another the difficulty to interpret the Third Reich. There is a forceful drive either to reject or to defend what happened between 1933 and 1945. To have at least s.th. in common does not seem to be enough, the big goals have to be reached ("... das Ganze muß es sein."). Therefore, the goals of the youths attacking foreigners are not part of a right-wing ideology, they just pick up a few bits and pieces. Their aim is not to change the system (*political* movement), even sometimes not to drive the foreigners out of Germany (*protest* movement), they are more interested in self expression, "in going beyond the limits of everyday life" (Kühnel 1993:403). Volker Heins therefore calls the violence against foreigners a "parapolitical", a politically incomplete phenomenon.

Fifthly, the element of definition that refers to the rationality of a social movement is not very elaborated when looking at the presumably right-wing extremism. As far as the visible collective actions are concerned rationality is not the dominant factor. *Irrational behaviour*, supported by alcohol and group dynamics, seems to be more important (Willems et al. 1993:40,81). The dominance of emotion over rational thinking, and the lack of an rational actor being able to calculate with emotions are barriers against a spread of a right-wing movement.

In conclusion, applying the abovementioned definition of social movements, one can hardly speak of a right movement in contemporary Germany. Outbursts of collective actions may happen again, even a right-wing terrorism may come to life, however, the creation of a viable right-wing movement is not of high probability in the near future. Nevertheless, the reasons for the collective outbursts need to be

looked at in more detail. Therefore, the next chapter will focus on the political and social context structure of the increased violence against foreigners.

#### **IV. The political and social context structure of violence against foreigners**

Recently, social scientists have tried to put the violent outbursts into context, describing the escalation of violence as a broad process of social interaction. Borrowing from the concept of political opportunity structure (Tarrow 1983, 1991; Kriesi 1991) Willems tried to formulate hypotheses which should describe the interactions leading to increased anti-foreigner violence in the reunited Germany (1992:442). He points to four elements, as there are

- (a) the implementation of asylum laws, and the interaction between local residents and asylum seeking people;
- (b) the reaction of the political elite and the change of the political opportunity structure in favour of radical, anti-foreigner and nationalist minorities;
- (c) the weakness of control agencies (namely the police) and the changed cost and risk-calculations for violent acts; and
- (d) the change in opinion among the population and the experience of collective attention to stigmatised minorities.

Willems points to a dynamic scenario, including the following elements: At several localities, in various villages non-violent forms of protest against foreigners in general and asylum seeking people in special had already emerged, before violence actually occurred (a). Politicians had broken the taboo of racism by enclosing similar arguments into a frame of arguments against foreigners (b). Police was helpless, because it was disorganized and badly equipped (especially in the East of Germany); so violence could be successful - the asylum seeking people were finally deported to other places (c). Public opinion (locally and in the whole of the country) seemed to back the violent actors; the media gave them the feeling of "historic significance" (d). All of that was resulting in a more favorable opportunity structure for violent acts, as perceived by people prepared for violence. Other authors have stressed the role of the media (e.g. Kühnel 1993) and so called "copy cat riots" after violent events widely covered by the media (Willems, Würtz und Eckert 1993). The following analysis will focus on the public opinion as one element of the explanatory structure presented above. It will be operationalized as surveyed population opinion (as measured in public opinion polls) and the publicized opinion of the biggest German tabloid newspaper (the BILD-Zeitung). Both will be set in correlation with the monthly differentiated figures of violence, both in quantitative and in qualitative terms.



## V. Population opinion and violence against foreigners

The data necessary to form an empiric correlate to violence has to meet several conditions. First, it has to cover a relatively wide range in time. Secondly, questions and results must enable us to determine the mobilization potential for violence (or they should at least have a certain, plausible effect on the potential). Thirdly, the question(s) have to be asked in the same way over the various points in time. The only German public opinion poll that offers data that is appropriate for our purpose is the monthly POLITBAROMETER.

The POLITBAROMETER is carried out by the "Research Group Elections", a leading institute for opinion polls in Germany, located in Mannheim. The POLITBAROMETER is based on representative samples, split in East and West Samples, encompassing roughly 1000 people each. The data used here represents the cumulated data sets for 1991 and 1992, which were stored and made available by the Central Archive for Empirical Research, Cologne (Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung, Köln).

The only question that qualified for our purposes, following the abovementioned criteria, was the perception of the misuse of the German right of asylum: "Do you believe that most of the people applying for asylum misuse the German right of asylum? (Glauben Sie, daß die meisten Asylbewerber das deutsche Asylrecht mißbrauchen?)". The results are documented in Table 1. Obviously better applicable questions (like those asking for approval of violence, or support for right-wing activities) were not available for sufficient points in time, especially not for the time period before the critical events (i.e. the riots and murders mentioned above).

Table 1: Perceived misuse of asylum right 1991-1992

	West	East		West	East
<b>1991</b>			<b>1992</b>		
Jan			Jan	66.0	75.7
Feb			Feb	67.0	77.2
Mär			Mär	64.6	76.6
Apr			Apr	68.2	80.1
Mai			Mai	67.9	79.1
Jun			Jun		
Jul			Jul		
Aug			Aug		
Sep			Sep	73.6	86.4
Okt	68.3		Okt	76.5	86.9
Nov	67.2	79.3	Nov	73.0	88.0
Dez	62.6	77.4	Dez	66.3	85.5

Source: POLITBAROMETER 1991/92

Additionally, the question for the perceived misuse can only be seen as weakly coupled with the violence to foreigners, due to several reasons.

- (1) The question asks for the perception of an illegal behaviour only, it does not ask to judge that behaviour. Therefore, one can not conclude that the perception of misuse goes in hand with a negative attitude towards the misusing group of people.
- (2) Even if a negative attitude can be assumed, that does not necessarily imply the approval of violence, or the readiness for violent action.
- (3) The perception of misuse refers to asylum-seeking people as a special group, not to foreigners in general. The violence, however, is registered as violence against foreigners overall.
- (4) The reported differences in percentages over time are relatively small. Can one expect a potential violent actor to monitor population opinion in such a differentiated way that sHe registers such small changes? And will such changes really have an effect?

Therefore, the link between population opinion and violent acts can only be seen as a very loose one. Both factors are only weakly coupled. Nevertheless, the respective question of the polls can help to determine the widest mobilization

potential for violent acts. Additionally, one also has to bear in mind that there is a possible effect of the number of violent acts against foreigners on the percentage of people agreeing to this question. To bring some light into the correlation of violence and population opinion, the two data sets were combined in a plot, using the number of violent attacks against foreigners and the percentage of people perceiving a misuse of the right of asylum as determinants of the two axes.

Figure 2:  
Plot of population opinion (West) and violent attacks against foreigners

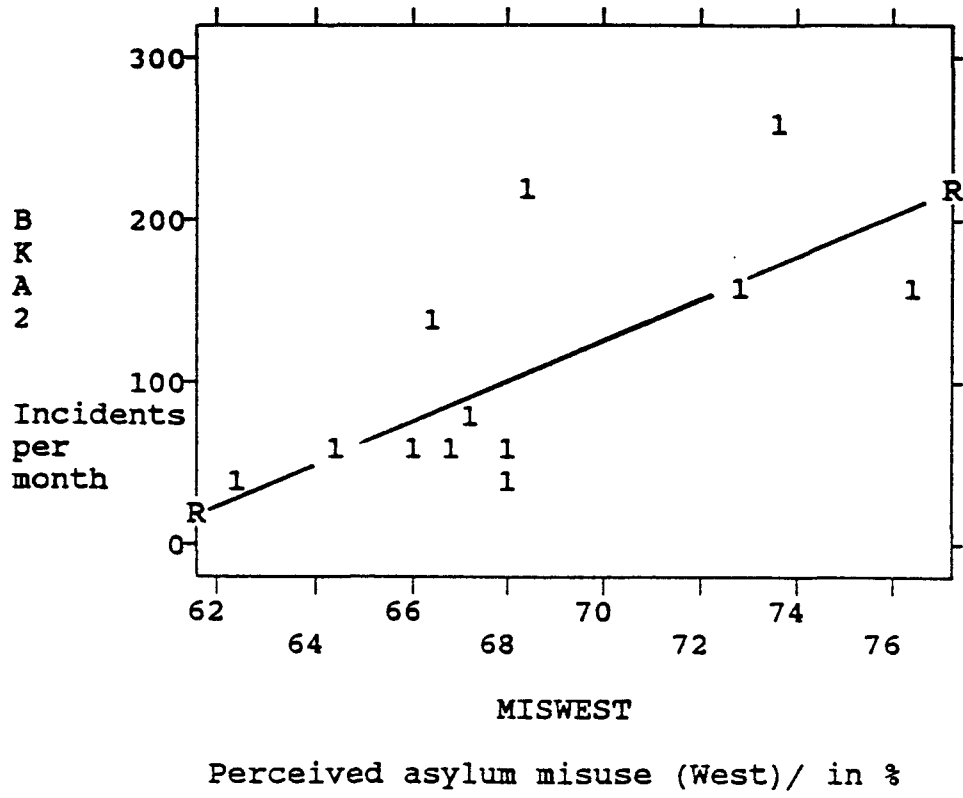
- about here -

Figure 3:  
Plot of population opinion (East) and violent attacks  
against foreigners

- about here -

The figures show a linear correlation between the two variables. The coefficients of correlation (0.68 and 0.88) indicate a high degree of covariation in the same direction, i.e. both social phenomena - as operationalized in the way shown above - increase and decrease at same points in time in more or less the same proportion. However, what is cause and what is effect? In order to speak of an causal relationship one has to assume - at least - an certain order on the time dimension: the cause has to precede the effect. Our data does not allow to identify when exactly the polling took place, what is highly important especially in months with critical events. Therefor, to check out the competing hypotheses I did analyse the data sets *asynchronously*. To test the hypothesis "violence influences population opinion" violence data of the month  $x$  (e.g. January) was combined with the opinion data for the month  $x+1$  (i.e. February). To test the hypothesis "population opinion influences violence" the data was put together *vice versa*. The results of the regression analysis are reported in table 2.

**Figure 2: Acts of Violence against Foreigners and Perceived Misuse of Asylum Laws (West)**



**Figure 3: Acts of Violence against Foreigners and Perceived Misuse of Asylum Laws (East)**

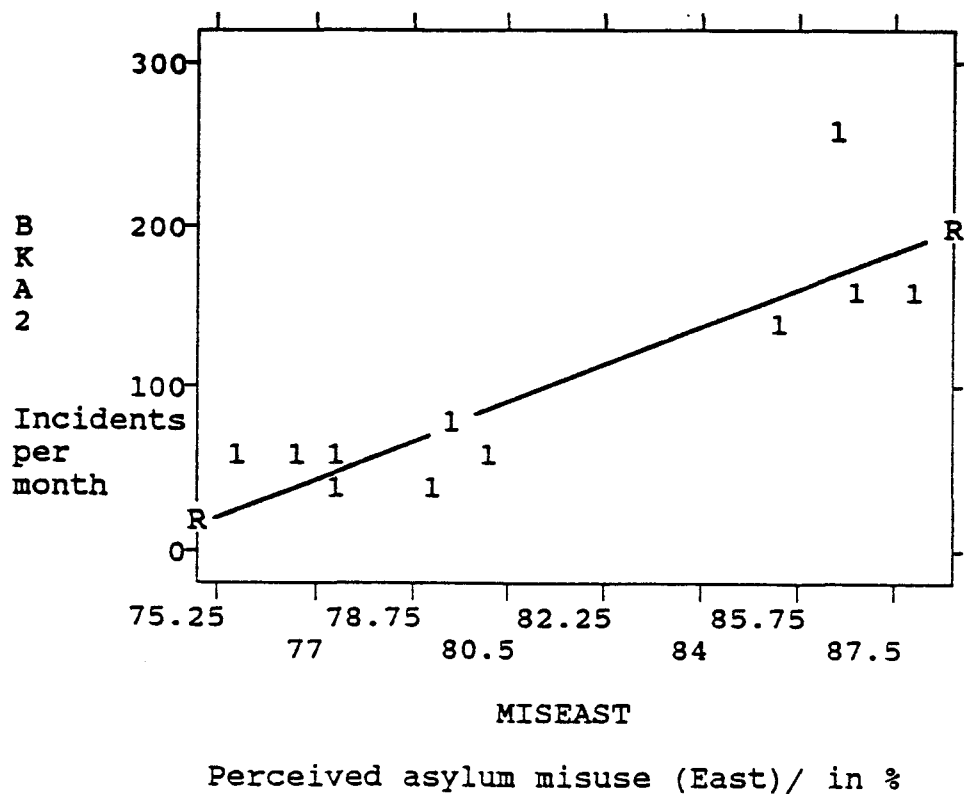


Table 2: Results of the regression analysis

		Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2
way of analysis	synchronous	asynchronous	asynchronous
causal factor	both	population opinion	violent acts
r West	0.676*	0.887**	0.597*
r Ost	0.879**	0.898**	0.683*

\*: significant on 5%-level

\*\* : significant on 1%-level

The results show an increase of the correlation coefficient (and the degree of significance) for the hypothesis "opinion influences violence", whereas the values go down for the competing hypothesis. How can these results be made plausible in conceptual and theoretical terms? The applied correlation coefficient indicates a *positive* correlation in the statistic sense, i.e. common increase and common decrease. A statistically positive effect of opinion on violence is plausible: Potential violent actors could feel supported by an increasing number of people being critical towards asylum seeking people, a lesser number could deter potential actors from violence. On the other hand, the effect of the number of violent acts cannot be expected to be one of pure positive covariation. Of course, an increasing number of violent activities might increase the percentage of people being critical to asylum seeking people. They might change their opinion towards a more critical view, or only come out with their true attitude (i.e. being in a phase of communication latency before, because they did not perceive their opinion as one of a widely shared "social desirability"). *Violent acts may be perceived as a sign of a changed social climate*. Nevertheless, a "too much" of violence may make people worry, a "too much" might make them reconsider their opinion - or only reduce their openness to answer questions in that field frankly. This process of reconsideration may be also an effect of a changed social climate - an again changing social desirability. In our case, the decline in the percentage of perceived asylum misuse may be an effect of the shock after the murder of Mölln. The "too much" of violence is therefor not to be identified or measured in quantitative, but in qualitative terms. This *counter*-element, this negative correlation embedded in the pair "violence influences opinion" may be an explanation for the lower correlation coefficient, compared to the other pair.

*In conclusion:* Violent acts and population opinion seem to interact by positively covarying at the same points in time. The effect of opinion on violence seems to be more that of a "pure" positive correlation (increase causes increase, decrease causes decrease), whereas the effect of violence on opinion includes elements of positive and negative correlation. A "too much" of violence (i.e. in qualitative terms) seems to decrease the critique towards foreigners - or at least the readiness to communicate it to an anonymous interviewer. This decrease may be explained by a changed social context structure, e.g. a change of the perceived social desirability of comments critical to foreigners. One of the intervening variables that may create or influence this perception is the media. The next chapter will focus on the potential influence of the biggest German tabloid paper, i.e. the news coverage of that paper referring to violence and foreigners in the second half of 1992.

## **VI. Population opinion, violence and the biggest German tabloid paper**

The BILD-newspaper is chosen as the media to be analysed, because of the number of copies sold and the closeness of the social profile of its readers to the social profile of the violent actors. In 1991 BILD sold 4.7 million copies a day (media-Perspektiven 1992:45). In West Germany BILD reached in 1990 roughly 18% of the population being older than 14 years - this percentage is gradually going down since the sixties (AWA 1990:A35). In East Germany BILD reached 9% of the same population group in 1991 (AWA 1991:93). Comparing BILD readers to the readers of the regional/local papers or the nationwide distributed quality papers, BILD readers end up in nearly every case having the lowest values referring to income, education, social and economic status and strength of personality (AWA 1990:A15, AWA 1991:101). BILD has among its readers an relatively high share of such with only a basic school training (Haupt- oder Volksschulabschluß) - in the West about 75%, in the East about 60% (AWA 1989:15, AWA 1991:123). Additionally, BILD holds a bigger share of people between 14 and 19 years, compared to the other papers (AWA 1989:11). The social structure of the readers of BILD therefore comes close to the social composition of violent actors, who were identified as being predominantly young, of modest income and low education (Willems et al. 1993:48f.).

The time span analysed was the second half of 1992, a time period with two critical events (Rostock and Mölln). The analysis had to focus on the special BILD-Issue for the Berlin-Region, because this was the only issue available in Berlin archives. The Berlin-Region of BILD comprises former East- and West-Berlin and the new federal *Land* of Brandenburg. In terms of violent attacks, Berlin as a *Land* is in the lower third of the state ranking, whereas Brandenburg ranks amongst the

highest. However, the curve of violence of the Berlin-Region corresponds quite well with the nationwide curve of violent acts.

Analysing BILD I used the method of "Headline analysis"<sup>2</sup>, as suggested and applied by Teun A. van Dijk (1988 a-c, 1991). The decision to concentrate on the headline as the unit of analysis is backed by the following arguments (1991:51ff):

- the headline is a subjective definition of the situation by the author of the article, which is going to influence the definition of the reader;
- the information of the headline is memorized best by the readers;
- some readers only consume the headline of an article.

The presented analysis does not reach the depth of van Dijk's analysis, as I will stick to the "headline" as unit of analysis and remain mainly descriptive and qualitative. It also includes some material from the articles themselves. The analysis is backed by 209 articles and commentaries from the time period between the first of July and the 31st of December 1992. The criteria to qualify for a registration were to touch the issues of asylum, foreigners, violence (against these groups) and right-wing extremism. Table 3 shows the distribution over time. It also differentiates the space of the articles, page one articles and commentaries.

Table 3:

Articles on asylum, foreigners, violence against these groups and right-wing extremism, by month (BILD-newspaper, second half of 1992)

	small	medium	big	commentary	including page one articles	total
July	3	0	3	1	1	7
August	9	12	7	2	8	30
September	17	16	2	4	20	39
October	11	9	1	3	10	24
November	13	22	17	4	24	56
December	23	17	8	5	22	53
						<b>209</b>

<sup>1</sup> van Dijk differentiates between "Headline" and "headline". Headline is the more encompassing unit of analysis, which exceeds the pure words of the headline. Scope and graphical structure of the headline are of interest, too (1988b:53).



The number of articles goes in line with the curve of violence in the second half of 1992. With the Rostock riots an increase is marked in August and September, in October the number declines. Unlike the violence the number of articles increases after the Mölln murder. All these observations are true for the number of articles overall, the articles on page 1 and the commentaries. However, this observation does not "clean a window", as the Germans say. What was published? Could it have had an influence on the population opinion and the violence? In the following I will suggest a way of how to interpret the BILD reports in the second half of 1992.

The reporting can be divided into two phases, before and after Mölln. The two phases can be characterized as such:

(1) BILD Before Mölln: Double Talk

*BILD condemns the violence against foreigners, but reports about foreigners in a way that is probably supporting already established fears and prejudices against foreigners in the wider public.* BILD speaks of a "flood" of asylum seeking people (e.g. 03.09., S. 1; 08.10., p.1) and possibly feeds the fear of the German population with several articles. On 15.07. BILD argues, that refugees from war zones might take away some Germans' workplace. On 27.08. a commentary supports the view that Rumanian people working for low wages create hostility against foreigners. There are also background reports on gypsies, which are implying that gypsies are thieves, have 'strange habits of hygiene' (17.09., p.2) and deliberately misuse the asylum law for economic reasons (16.11., p.2). Some articles also claim, that Germans are forced by local governments to take asylum seeking people into their flats, or even have to leave their flats (08.09., p.1: "Flat confiscated: Family has to house asylum seeking people"; 08.10., p.1: "German Tentants' Law: Pensioner has to leave - because of asylum seeking people"). In both cases the tentants live in council flats: The *family* was homeless before and is asked to offer the spare rooms. The *pensioner* lives in a spacious council flat and is offered another, smaller flat in exchange. On 14.11. Bild carries a headline on page 2: "Asylum seeking people at the dentist: We pay 900 millions". On 03.09. it claims "Accident with asylum seeking person - nobody pays" (p.2). All of these examples may strengthen fears and prejudices that can support a negative attitude towards foreigners and asylum seeking people. This attitude may be nourished by an BILD-initiated telephon-poll (12.09.). In this poll the right wing party of the *Republikaner* got a nearly 40%-support. Combined with reports on representative polls (12.09., p.1.: "Hate against foreigners in upcurrent", and 19.09., p.1.: "The fear of aliens") these articles on population opinion may have also supported or even created a negative attitude against foreigners. As far as the responsibility for the violence is concerned, BILD carries a simple picture: politicians are unable to solve the current problems, violent actors are new nazis, i.e. skinheads, only. The politicians are the group that is responsible for the unsolved problem connected to the "asylum

problem". In several articles (e.g. 27.08., p.1: "BILD-readers: 'The politicians do not do anything'", 23.09., p.1: "Asylum - as before: everybody against everybody") the politicians are personally attacked and made responsible for the violence against foreigners (see also 25.08., p.2). In articles on the Rostock riots the violence is latently justified by referring to the unable politicians. The actors, who carry out the violence, are according to BILD nazis, predominantly skinheads (e.g. 23.10, p.2: "That is how the new nazis are"). The normal population is not involved. However, the picture of the unable politicians could have supported the readiness of some people to try to solve the problem by own action.

## (2) After Mölln: Schock, counter-activities and "civil war"

BILD labels the murder of Mölln as the "Shame of Mölln" and produces the headline "These loonies destroy our country" (25.1., p.2). In the following, a possible economic boycott and a growing jewish emigration are reported (25.11., p.2; 26.11., p.2). BILD also reports on the counter activities (like candle chains, 07.12.; concerts against hate, 14.12.) and initiates an own small campaign (Prominent people say: "I condemn hate against foreigners"). Also sanctions against everyday racism are positively reported ("Beat the Bimbos" - fired" 05.12., p.1; "Jokes against Turkish people - fired" 17.12., p.1; "Hate against foreigners: Cola fires porter" 19.12., p.1). Besides this reporting on counter activities BILD does not feature any of the anti-foreigner articles anymore. Nevertheless, BILD creates a new scenario after Mölln, a scenario, which is also going to stimulate fear. A "civil war" between Turkish and German people is envisaged in headlines like: "Do the Turks in Germany actually arm themselves?" (03.12., p.2), and "Revenge for Mölln: Turks cut a halfmoon on a German's chest" (07.12., p.1). In a commentary a link is made to the possible economic boycott that threatens Germany (01.12., p.2). This change towards a less anti-foreigner publishing policy might have deterred people from anti-foreigner attitudes, from communicating such attitudes or even from violent acts.

Therefore, one might conclude that BILD could have supported the violence against foreigners by its ambivalent reporting on asylum seeking people and violence in the time before Mölln. Official condemnation accompanied by a "serving" of the perceived prejudice structure of the average reader, making politicians responsible for the problem and describing only skinheads as violent actors might have created a dangerous mixture. It could have tempted the reader not only to form or harden a negative attitude against foreigners, but also to think of own action as an appropriate means of reaction. After Mölln the reporting changed and might have deterred people from violence by being unambiguous now.

## VII. Conclusion

First, applying the definition of social movements by Raschke one can argue, that a right wing social movement is not at hand in reunited Germany. The arguments in short: The public discussion and the possible social places of mobilization are not in favour of right wing issues overall (university, church etc.). A right wing movement needs leadership, a central actor is not available at the moment. Ideology is not uniform enough to create a solid basis for a growing movement: Demands are too heterogeneous, competition among the groups is too big. There is no *we feeling* of a movement ("*Bewegung für sich*"), no identifiable habitus. Although the networks of right wing groups seem to have grown in the last year, most of the requisites of a successful mass-mobilization are missing.

Second, the violent acts against foreigners seem to be positively affected by population opinion. Analysing the changing perception of asylum misuse one can find positive correlation between the two factors. An increase of violence went hand in hand with a growing number of citizens perceiving misuse. High rising numbers, presumably as the result of a copying effect, can be observed after the riots of Hoyerswerda and Rostock. Also, before these riots an increase of violence is visible. However, there are effects measurable, that a "too much" of violence lowers the percentage of people perceiving (or openly communicating) a misuse of the right of asylum. This "too much" is probably not caused by a quantitative, but a qualitative factor: The murders of Mölln were perceived as a new, not tolerable form of violence. Therefore, violence and population opinion can be theoretically described as a spiral - increasing and decreasing together, as the two factors are intertwined.

Third, the measurable increase of violence and perception of misuse is possibly supported by the news coverage of the biggest German tabloid paper, the BILD-Zeitung. *Pre Mölln*, pre murder it published articles that could have supported prejudices against foreigners. Although officially condemning the arson and riots, a kind of understanding and latent justification of the violence could have been perceived by the readers. Additionally, the violent acts were labeled as acts of skinheads or new nazis. The "normal citizen" was excused and not made responsible - a kind of catharsian effect (or, i.o.w., the skinheads are the "identified patient", although it is the society which has the problem). *Post Mölln* the perceivable message changed: Counter activities were supported, anti-foreigner articles were not published any more.

Fourth, summing up point two and three there is a conceptually plausible and empirically identifiable effect of *social context structure* (in our case public opinion, operationalized as population opinion and media coverage) on *violence against foreigners*. Changes in the context structure can stimulate in both directions -

increasing and decreasing violence. Taking the media as a causal factor for population opinion, the question of responsibility of the media becomes more and more important in times of violence and assumed social movements.

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