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THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORY IN POLITICS

A media analysis on how remembrance after a fascist past affects a society's view on far-right populism

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to analyse how the collective memory narrative of a country with a fascist past influences the way society views far-right populist parties today. I employ a comparative approach of Germany and Spain as two European countries that were ruled by fascist dictatorships in the 20th century resulting from internal political struggles rather than outside forces. By employing media as a proxy for society's views, I conduct a dictionary-based, automated sentiment analysis of conservative newspaper articles, to examine society's attitudes towards far-right populist parties. This relatively novel qualitative methodology allows the categorization of textual data according to negative, neutral, or positive attitudes. Through a keyword analysis I ensure that these attitudes are related to the fascist past and thus a result of the collective memory present in the country.

I find that, in a country with a collective responsibility, namely Germany, which is characterized by re-elaborating and making amends for the past, societal stigma towards the far-right populist party is high, leading to a mostly negative stance towards this party in relation to the fascist past.

In a country with a disputed collective memory, namely Spain, which is characterized by various narratives about the fascist past existing alongside each other, the stigma towards the far-right populist party is low, leading to a mostly neutral stance towards this party in relation to the fascist past. Through my findings and the definition of a new collective memory sub-type I contribute to the growing research on the connection between collective memory and far-right populism.

Keywords: collective memory, fascism, far-right populism, collective responsibility, disputed collective memory

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Introduction

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. This famous quote by Spanish philosopher Jorge Agustín Nicolás Ruiz de Santayana y Borrás, also known as George Santayana, is ironically often attributed to other historical figures, such as Winston Churchill or Edmund Burke. Although few might know who first wrote these words, all of us have heard them in our lifetime, often in relation to some political development that is deemed backwards by large parts of society, such as the rise of far-right populism.

But what truth lies in that statement? Do those that remember the past really build a safeguard against succumbing to political ideologies reminiscent of those that brought suffering and war at one time? And what about the countries that chose to forget what lies behind them and focus solely on the future? Are they more susceptible to politicians that present old ideas disguised as new solutions?

These deliberations led me to the research question I discuss in this master’s thesis:

How does the collective memory narrative of a country with a fascist past influence the way that country’s society views far-right populist parties today?

Collective memory refers to a set view of past events within a certain group of people (this could be a nation, a religion, a class etc.) which influences the identity and values of this group (Halbwachs 1992). It differs from history, because it is not a study of historical events, but rather a subjective shared idea, which can differ vastly between different groups when it comes to the same historical event (Halbwachs 1992). Two sub-types of collective memory will be of special importance in my research: *Collective responsibility*, which is defined by confronting one’s past and assuming responsibility for crimes committed in that past, and *disputed collective memory*, characterized by a lack of consensus when it comes to historical memory and the existence of many narratives, out of which none are taboo (Art 2006; Caramani and Manucci 2019).

Although an often-studied subject in the humanities, collective memory has not been employed much in political science and even less in the study of far-right populism (see under literature review). However, the research that has been conducted on this issue indicates, that collective memory does indeed influence the political performance of far-right populism and should thus be investigated further (Art 2006; Caramani and Manucci 2019; Manucci 2019).

I build on these works and add to the slowly growing research on the relationship between collective memory and far-right populist political performance.

The media is often considered to mirror and shape the opinions and values of society (Art 2006: 160; Bachleitner 2021: 68; Kligler-Vilenchik et al. 2014: 488), consequently I have chosen it as the subject for my analysis because it can best give an overview over how collective memory shapes how society views far-right populism.

Through a qualitative content analysis of mainstream conservative newspapers, I discern if there is a notable difference between Germany, as a country with a high degree of collective responsibility and Spain, a country with a disputed collective memory when it comes to societal stigma towards far-right populism. I limit my analysis to mainstream conservative newspapers because leftist media will tend to take a negative stance on far-right populism, regardless of the collective memory present in a country. The inclusion of Spain in my research is especially interesting, since it is a country with a disputed collective memory and a case of home-made fascism, which has not yet been studied regarding collective memories' influence on society's perception of far-right populism.

Both countries were ruled under 'home-made'¹ fascist dictatorships in the 20th century, both countries were deemed as being immune to far-right populism until 2013 when Vox was founded in Spain and the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, thus I believe that a comparative approach is justified and interesting.

My coding scheme is based on a list of keywords to identify newspaper articles in which the collective memory is thematized in relation to the far-right populist party. Once I have identified those articles, I employ a qualitative sentiment analysis to categorize them into taking a negative, neutral, or positive stance on the far-right populist party.

My research conducted in this master's thesis opens the door for further studies into the importance of collective memory for current day and future far-right populist politics.

Especially with far-right populists' recent electoral performance in Europe I believe it is important to explore every path that can lead us to better understand this phenomenon.

I structure my thesis as follows: first I give an overview of the previous research conducted on collective memory and far-right populism. In continuation I present the theoretical framework in which I conduct my research. After this I present my case countries: Germany and Spain.

¹ By 'home-made' fascist dictatorships I refer to the dictatorships being a result of internal political struggles in both countries and not being subjected to fascism from outside forces through an occupation or annexation.

For each of them I give an overview of their (relevant) past, the type of collective memory they fall under and the circumstances under which the far-right populist party emerged. Next, I describe my methodological approach. I explain my samples and my sampling dates for each country. Then I present my keywords and coding schemes.

I also describe the method of automated content analysis, for categorizing the individual newspaper articles according to how they report on the far-right populist parties and explain how I conduct this analysis for my research.

Subsequently, I report the results of my analysis. Furthermore, I discuss the findings by placing them in the larger theoretical context and compare them with previous research conducted on this subject. Here I also answer my research question and discuss possible pitfalls or weak points. In conclusion, I summarize my work and consider what my findings mean in the context of existing literature and how possible future research could build upon this thesis.

Previous research

Introduction

In the following chapter, I give an overview of the previous research conducted on the relationship between collective memory and how societies deal with far-right populism. I have chosen to focus my literature review on this narrow theme because the vastness of research conducted on both populism and collective memory makes a concise summary far too ambitious for the framework of this master's thesis.

Nonetheless at this point I want to give a short overview of the topic of collective memory, far-right populism, and fascism, which I believe is essential to understand the theoretical framework of both these concepts and thus the more specific approach I discuss in this literature review.

Memory can be understood as a process of finding a common representation of the past which ties an individual to a collective (Karlsson 2010: 46-47).

Bachleitner defines collective memory as “a process of remembering (that) happens collectively (...) within social frameworks” and “countries are the collective which remembers” (2021: 5). Furthermore, she argues that it presents in four ways within a country: “as a country's political strategy, as its public identity, in its international state behaviour, and finally, as underwriting its national value system” (Bachleitner 2021: 5). Along the same lines other scholars state that collective memory forms part of the identity and political culture of a country (T. Berger 2002: 80-81; Manucci 2022: 2).

Ahonen states that, after “severe conflict”, two categories of collective memory arise: “guilt and victimization” (2012: 14-15). This collective memory does not appear until after a first state of denial, followed by a period of silence and finally by dialogue, that shapes the final collective memory (Ahonen 2012: 16; Karlsson 2010: 47; Manucci 2019: 49). This waiting period is also emphasized by Bachleitner, who states that at least a decade must pass before a collective memory can be formed (2021: 39, 65). Art explains that this is due to a generational change, where the old elites (often complicit in the past) are absolved by a new generation which looks at the past from an outsider perspective (2006: 22).

Once established, collective memory impacts a country's value system and thus influences society's behavior. It is central to shaping what course of action is deemed correct in a country (Bachleitner 2021: 121, 47; Langenbacher et al. 2013: 3).

Collective memory applies to all forms of traumatic pasts any given country can experience

(Ahonen 2012: 14), but researchers have primarily focused on collective memory after a fascist past (see under findings).

In the Oxford Handbook of Populism, Roger Eatwell characterizes populism as a “thin” ideology, that sees itself as the defender of “the plain people”, is hostile against perceived corrupt elites and aims for a political system in which the will of the people prevails (2017: 364). Far-right populism does not “form a homogenous party group” (Betz 1993: 663), but there are some common characteristics such as combining the above-mentioned populist aspects with nationalism, xenophobia, nativism and the rejection of the current socio-cultural system (Betz 1993: 664; Kaltwasser 2017: 8; Mudde 2017: 37). The research on this type of populism has been well established in the past decades, partly due to the rise of far-right populist parties across Europe, owing in part to the emergence of identity politics triggered by “post-material values” and the end of the post-war economic prosperity (Kaltwasser 2017: 8). Eatwell describes fascism as an “utopian ideology” that aims at creating a “holistic nation” governed by a new elite that creates an authoritarian state that is neither capitalist nor communist (although far more anti-communist) and often emphasizes the need to restore traditional values (Eatwell 2017: 365, 71). Furthermore he notes that there are important similarities between fascism and far-right populism, like the importance of a charismatic leader and the rhetoric of following “the people’s will” (2017: 365, 80).

The similarity between fascism and far-right populism is also noted by Daniele Caramani and Luca Manucci of the University of Zurich, who analyze the relationship between a fascist past and far-right populism in their article “National past and populism: the re-elaboration of fascism and its impact on right-wing populism in Western Europe“ (2019: 1163).

It is important to note that researchers consistently emphasize how important the subject of collective memory is for Europe (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1163; Langenbacher et al. 2013: 3; Manucci 2019: 49; Zubrzycki and Wozny 2020: 187). For instance, some researchers note that the European Union frequently uses collective memory rhetoric for political aims, especially the memory surrounding WWII and the holocaust (Art 2010: 16; De Cesari et al. 2020: 4; Karlsson 2010: 40-41).

Furthermore, memory politics as a whole has gained importance, with the 1990s seeing a rise of so-called ‘politics of regret’ worldwide, where state representatives issue apologies and take responsibility for a variety of past crimes and mistakes (Art 2006: 17; Müller 2010: 27). As a next step, I look more closely at previous research on the interplay between collective

memory and far-right populism.

There has been some research on how far-right populists employ collective memory to their benefit or try to reshape a given collective memory to better fit their own agenda (Binder 2021; De Cesari et al. 2020; Hoffmann 2019; Wodak and Forchtner 2014). Much less work has been done on investigating the influence collective memory has on far-right parties' performance and their societal reception. In fact, there are only a handful of researchers that have studied this subject and they themselves express the need for more research being conducted in this field (Art 2006: 4; Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1178; Ferreira 2021: 131). These researchers mostly analyze the connection between the fascist past and WWII and the success of far-right populist parties in Europe (Art 2006, 2010; Caramani and Manucci 2019; Ferreira 2021). I give an overview of their approaches, their methods, and their findings in the following chapter.

Findings

Some researchers find that traditional explanatory factors for far-right populist success, such as attitudes towards immigration and unemployment do not fully explain the varying level of success of far-right populism in Europe (Art 2006: 160-61; Manucci 2019: 41). These researchers turn to the cultural opportunity structure present in a country to partly explain the success, or failure, of far-right populist parties. The literature indicates that long-term cultural elements, including the collective memory of a country, can explain the development of far-right populism when studied in conjunction with the traditional political opportunity structures (Art 2006: 196; De Cesari et al. 2020: 9; Manucci 2019: 43).

It is in the categorization (or lack of categorization) of the subtypes of collective memory that differences in the literature arise.

There has been very little research done on clearly defining different categories of collective memory. Caramani and Manucci (2019) are the first to describe four different types of collective memory that can arise after a fascist past: Heroisation, Culpabilisation (collective responsibility), Victimization and Cancellation.² As mentioned above, two of these are of

² Heroization is characterized as presenting "(...) the country as the hero taking full merit for fighting fascist and aggressive external regimes, implying the idea of having been on the right side. It stresses the country's role in maintaining liberal values and democratic institutions, and is solidly anchored in public opinion and official discourse.". Victimization is characterized as: "The country does not take responsibility for its own fascist and aggressive past (and role as perpetrator), or its association with such regimes, and plays the victim. It shifts the blame to outside forces of which it claims to be the victim. Rather than scrutinize its own role during fascist periods, it distorts the national experience in a positive light and negatively portrays external forces." These two

special interest to my research. Culpabilisation (collective responsibility), which is described as:

“The collective memory is based on taking responsibility for its authoritarian past. The country makes amends and compensates in various forms – symbolically and otherwise – through processes of internal, bottom-up support for the re-elaboration that are shared and have official character.” (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1164)

And cancellation, which is described as:

“A mainstream official narrative is weak. Various narratives may exist, but they are not prominent in the public sphere, so no narrative is really stigmatized. The main feature is not the divided nature of collective memory but the absence of it.” (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1165)

We will return to these two categories in the chapter on theoretical framework.

Ferreira (2021: 131) employed the collective memory categories designed by Caramani and Manucci to categorize Spanish politicians’ rhetorical strategies, finding that left-wing leaders employed heroization when it came to memory politics concerning the Spanish fascist regime, whilst right-wing leaders employed a collective memory of cancellation. In her article Ferreira deviates from Caramani and Manucci’s intended approach of classification (which is on the national level) and applies the collective memory categories to “competing political movements” (2021: 133). Nonetheless, she states that on the national level, “(...) the Spanish national strategy of re-elaboration of the past is cancellation” (Ferreira 2021: 133).

Although Caramani and Manucci (2019) were the first to clearly delineate and define these four categories of collective memory in one place, some of these subtypes had already been defined and studied.

Prior to Caramani and Manucci, David Art studied the influence of collective memory on far-right populism.

Art identifies three questions that help researchers categorize the type of collective memory present in each country: to what extent have government officials admitted the crimes of

sub-types of collective memory are not applicable to my case country and thus not of interest to my study. Daniele Caramani and Luca Manucci, 'National Past and Populism: The Re-Elaboration of Fascism and Its Impact on Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe', *West European Politics*, 42/6 (2019/09/19 2019), 1159-87 at 1164-65.

previous regimes, condemned them, and apologized for them? For how long has society debated the country's past regarding these crimes? Is there a consensus on one narrative on the country's past or are several narratives accepted? (Art 2010: 4). From this he draws two categories. A culture of contrition can arise, which equals the above-mentioned category of culpabilisation, and is characterized by one predominant narrative present within a society (Art 2010: 5). A state of polarized historical consciousness can also arise, which comes close, but does not completely overlap with the category of cancellation, since Art does emphasize the existence of a public debate about the fascist past in his definition but points out that various narratives exist (2010: 5).

Bachleitner also defines a category of collective memory that fits under Art's definition of polarized historical consciousness, although fails to give it a name (Bachleitner 2021: 38). This conveys the definition-debacle going on in the study of collective memory. As already stated, Caramani and Manucci are the first ones to clearly define four different categories of collective memory (2019). Most researchers had seen the concept rather as a binary, with culpabilisation and a modified form of cancellation being the categories most fitting to that binary. Although a collective memory of victimization, in which a society denies responsibility and constructs a role of victimhood of external fascism, has also been mentioned in collective memory literature (Ahonen 2012: 14-15; Bachleitner 2021: 63). In my study, I employ only two of the categories defined by Caramani and Manucci: culpabilisation and cancellation. Thus, I follow the lines of previous researchers such as Art, employing a binary categorization of collective memory in my study.

In the next section I look at the concrete findings pertaining to the influence collective memory has on far-right populist's political performance:

Although it appears under different names in different studies, the collective memory of collective responsibility is consistently found to have a blocking effect on the success of far-right populism, due to the stigmatization towards these movements in society (Art 2010: 15; Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1175).

When it comes to the collective memory of cancellation, researchers come to diverging conclusions. Caramani and Manucci (2019) find that a collective memory of cancellation has inconclusive effects on far-right populism, although it definitely does not block its success, while Art finds that the populist far-right benefits from conflicting views of the past and a polarized historical consciousness, both are defining aspects for cancellation (Art 2010: 15;

Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1176).

Furthermore, there are discrepancies between researchers, when it comes to the classification of a country's collective memory. Although Caramani and Manucci admit that several types of collective memory can exist in one country, they find that one will always dominate (2019: 1172). In the case of Austria, their classification of the country as presenting a collective memory of victimization is remarkably clear, with them noting that a second narrative is "uncertain or non-existent" (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1174). According to Caramani and Manucci, the Austrians see themselves as having been unwilling participants (victims) in the Nazi Regime, being invaded by Hitler's forces and subjected to an external fascist rule (2019: 1174). This is interesting because Art looks at the same case (Austria) and finds that the collective memory of victimization was the sole narrative until the 1980s after which a much more polarized debate regarding Austria's role during the Nazi regime emerged, which prevails until today (Art 2006: 21-22).

This partly illustrates the lack of consensus when it comes to definitions and classifications regarding collective memory as a subject in political science research, as also seen above. Nonetheless both Caramani and Manucci and Art reach the same conclusion for their case study on Austria: the country presents a much higher degree of far-right populism than a country with a collective memory of collective responsibility (in their research this country is Germany) (Art 2006: 5; Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1177).

Despite their different classification regarding Austria, both Art (2006) and Caramani and Manucci (2019) conclude that collective memory influences the performance of far-right populist parties.

Research on the relationship between collective memory and the success of far-right populism consistently shows that, in a country that stigmatizes and rejects its fascist past the far-right populist parties are less accepted and thus less successful than in a country that has not come to terms with its past (Art 2010: 8, 201; Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1177; Manucci 2019: 44; 2022: 1-5).

Ferreira's findings are of lesser interest in the context of this study, as she does not analyse the influence of collective memory on a national level and includes the category of heroization, which does not pertain to my cases. She concludes that the implementation of a heroization strategy by Spanish left-wing leaders did not reduce the cultural opportunity structure for right-wing populism (Ferreira 2021: 144). Nonetheless, her categorization of

Spain as a country with a collective memory of cancellation underlines and strengthens my own categorization of the country.

Subsequently I move on to the methodology employed in previous research:

The most common approach in the study of the influence of collective memory on far-right populism is a comparative analysis of European countries (Art 2006, 2010; Bachleitner 2021; Caramani and Manucci 2019). These comparative analyses are executed under different methodological approaches. For one, mixed method approaches are popular when it comes to investigating the connection between collective memory and far-right populism (Art 2006; Bachleitner 2021; Manucci 2022).

Both Art and Bachleitner identify public elites as one of the actors shaping and reproducing collective memory in society (Art 2006: 146; Bachleitner 2021: 38). Thus, both employ elite interviewing to analyse the importance of collective memory and find differences between countries (Art 2006: 45; Bachleitner 2021: 8).

When it comes to methodology, Caramani and Manucci stand alone with their approach of categorizing their case countries into a type of collective memory through an in-depth expert survey on available literature (2019: 1160).

A common methodological approach in this literature, that is also of special interest to me, is content analysis (Art 2006: 44; Bachleitner 2021: 8; Ferreira 2021: 136; Kligler-Vilenchik et al. 2014: 486; Manucci 2019: 61). While Manucci uses a semi-automated content analysis of party manifestos to measure the percentage of populist statements, the following studies employ content analysis of media, and are therefore especially relevant to my research.

Bachleitner specifically uses content analysis of newspaper articles to measure what collective memories were used in different countries when reporting on a certain topic (Germany/Austria, Eichmann trials) (2021: 85). She explains this approach by arguing that the media translates the public's mindset (Bachleitner 2021: 68).

Ferreira employs a "(...) qualitative content analysis of distinct textual and discursive elements (...)" on legislative documents, opinion articles and newspaper articles during the political debates on the Spanish Historical Memory Law in 2007 and 2021 (2021: 135-36).

Art uses quantitative content analysis of newspapers to count total column inches of articles related to the Nazi past between 1980-2000 in the newspaper *Die Zeit*, to locate the most intense public debate during that time (2006: 44). Furthermore he uses an interpretive methodology to analyse tabloids in Germany and Austria to compare the arguments employed

when writing about the Nazi past (Art 2006: 45).

Kligler-Vilenchik et al. employ a quantitative media content analysis based on a coding scheme list that consists of mentions pertaining to past events, counting the total times these keywords were mentioned in selected media in a given timeframe (2014: 489).

Both Art and Kligler-Vilenchik et al. find that the media does not only reflect the collective memory present in a society but also shapes it (2006: 30; 2014: 488). Furthermore, Art concludes that “(...) the reaction of the media is another variable that influences the success of right-wing populist parties (...)” (2006: 160).

It is safe to deduce that content analysis, especially of media, is an established methodological approach in research on collective memory and far-right populism.

Conclusion & research gap

Previous research on collective memory has been conducted almost exclusively in the humanities and has been neglected by political scientists (Langenbacher et al. 2013: 4). This means that there is still little understanding on how collective memory influences political systems and behavior.

Furthermore, on the relationship between collective memory and populism even less research has been done (see above), of which only a part seeks to understand the influence collective memory has on far-right populism.

Although there have been comparative studies regarding the influence of collective memory on far-right populism, these have been conducted between countries with very differing fascist legacies, with Germany and Italy being the only countries with a ‘home-made’ form of fascism (Art 2010; Caramani and Manucci 2019).

These authors themselves call for further research on the implications of collective memory on political-development, especially far-right populist parties’ success (Art 2006: 4; Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1178).

Caramani and Manucci call for a “(...) content analysis of a variety of primary sources” (2019: 1178) and Art calls for further research with other cases to test the hypothesis that media reactions influence the success of far-right populism (2006: 211).

Thus, I build on the existing research detailed in this chapter, use it to build a theoretical framework (next chapter) and employ this framework to conduct a qualitative content analysis of newspaper articles in my two case countries. The case of Germany has already been researched in this context (Art 2006; Bachleitner 2021; Caramani and Manucci 2019;

Manucci 2019). Although Ferreira looks at the interplay between collective memory and far-right populism in Spain, she does not do this on a national, societal level, but rather looks at specific political movements and how their utilization of collective memory affects the cultural-opportunity structure of far-right populism. My comparison between Spain and Germany makes for an interesting new approach that is right up the alley of what Art and Caramani and Manucci called for in the conclusions of their respective studies.

Theory

In this thesis, I look at how a country's collective memory shapes society's perception of far-right populism. I do not analyze how this collective memory is formed: similar to Caramani and Manucci's (2019: 1163) approach, I treat the formation of collective memory as a 'black box' process. Furthermore, the underlying causes of why a certain collective memory subtype emerges in each country is not the subject of this thesis. In the following chapter I will present the definitions and characteristics of the two collective memory subtypes which are of interest to my thesis. In the chapter on case countries, I will explain which collective memory subtypes are present in Germany and Spain, basing this classification on previous research and the definitions given below.

Based on the diverging definitions mentioned in the preceding section, I argue that Caramani and Manucci's classification of the collective memory of cancellation is applicable only to the cases in which fascism came from the outside, e.g. through a fascist invasion. Their examples of countries with a collective memory of cancellation were the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1174). These countries all have in common that they did not produce 'home-made' fascist regimes during the 20th century. They were either neutral in the face of fascism or occupied by fascist forces, thus it is more natural that a critical debate on this past is removed from the public sphere, as it is easy for these societies to claim having had nothing to do with the fascist past, being merely bystanders caught up in the mess. Thus it is understandable that in their study, Caramani and Manucci found that the countries falling under the collective memory of cancellation (Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden) were characterized by an absence of collective memory (2019: 1165).

I argue that, in cases of 'home-made' fascism, the characteristics of cancellation must be adapted to reflect instances where the public debate is defined by differing narratives, similar to what Art defined as 'polarized historical consciousness' (Art 2010: 5). While countries might be able to largely ignore past occurrences that were not directly caused by themselves, it would be much less likely for a country with a self-inflicted fascist dictatorship to lack any public discussion on the topic. For example, a decades-long fascist dictatorship which resulted from internal struggle, such as a civil war, can hardly be ignored by society, as it would constitute a significant part of the country's history with implications for many people's lives. The key is that this public discussion will take various forms if there is no clear consensus on

the moral category the dictatorship falls under. Some people might glorify the old fascist leader, some people might believe ‘things were not so bad’. On the other hand, some people might descend from victims of the fascist regime, their family members having been oppressed, adopting a clear stance against a glorification of the past. A large part of society might adopt a neutral position towards the past, not seeing themselves as directly affected and relativizing the crimes committed in said past, since an official historical reappraisal of these crimes would also be missing in a country with a disputed collective memory. My key argument is that in a country with a case of ‘home-made’ fascism that does not have a collective responsibility for its past, all these narratives can live alongside each other, with none of them having an official character or being adopted by state organs.

Furthermore, I believe, that within a comparative approach in collective memory research it is crucial to look at two case countries that have had a similar fascist past. The comparison between a country that was ruled under an external fascist regime through occupation and a country which produced a fascist dictatorship from the midst of its own political system, would be difficult, because the very nature of the past that is reflected in the collective memory of each country would be fundamentally different. Thus, I stress the importance of both Germany and Spain having the same baseline conditions of being ruled under a fascist dictatorship in the 20th century which stemmed from inside the country and was brought forward by a part of the countries society rather than being imported from the outside or established by external force. Naturally I am not implying that these two dictatorships were equal in terms of the committed atrocities and the ruthlessness of the regime, they are different in many ways, but they share characteristics that are important for this study.

Thus, for my research, I combine Arts and Caramani and Manucci’s definitions to form a new sub-type of collective memory applicable to countries with a past of ‘home-made’ fascism only. I define this sub-type of **disputed collective memory** as: *A mainstream official narrative is weak. Various narratives exist in the public sphere, and no narrative is officially stigmatized. The main feature is the disputed nature of collective memory, which is largely absent in governmental structures.*

This ‘disputed collective memory’ is a sub-type of the collective memory of cancellation developed by Caramani and Manucci. I have decided to alter it slightly by taking into account

Art's findings on disputed collective memory, because as stated above, I believe it fits the characteristics of case of Spain better.

The other sub-type that is relevant for my thesis is Caramani and Manucci's collective memory of culpabilisation: "The collective memory is based on taking responsibility for its authoritarian past. The country makes amends and compensates in various forms – symbolically and otherwise – through processes of internal, bottom-up support for the re-elaboration that are shared and have official character." (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1164)

Although I believe the category is excellently defined by Caramani and Manucci, I take issue with the term 'culpabilisation' or, also often used in collective memory research, 'collective guilt'.

The Nazis, their supporters and the people that stood by indifferently while the unspeakable crimes of the German fascist regime were committed were arguably guilty, although to different extents. The subsequent generations of Germans, that were not alive during the Nazi regime, cannot logically be accused of being guilty of the Holocaust and WWII. Thus, it has been proposed to rename the concept of 'collective guilt' into 'collective responsibility', emphasizing that Germans nowadays, although not guilty themselves, are still politically liable for the events of the past and must bear the consequences and responsibilities they bring (e. g. abstaining from ever having nuclear weapons in their arsenal) (Schoenborn 2020: 75).

Consequently, I will use the term collective responsibility when referring to the subcategory of collective guilt described by Caramani and Manucci under the term of culpabilisation.

As we have already seen, collective memory can influence the performance of far-right populist parties by shaping the cultural opportunity structure within a society (Art 2006: 196; De Cesari et al. 2020: 9; Manucci 2019: 43). The cultural opportunity structure refers to "(...) what is taboo or socially acceptable based on the re-elaboration of the past (...)" (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1161). In other words: the way collective memory shapes the cultural-opportunity structure of a country is by either creating a social stigma towards far-right populist sentiment or not.

The Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary defines stigma as "a strong lack of respect for a person or a group of people or a bad opinion of them because they have done something society does not approve of" (2022). Both Caramani & Manucci and Art have found that the

subtype of collective responsibility has a blocking effect on far-right populism, resulting from a widespread social stigma against this ideology (2010: 15; 2019: 1175). The subtype of cancellation does not have a clear effect on far-right populism's success according to Caramani & Manucci, but does not block it either (2019: 1176). Art argues that conflicting views of the past existing alongside each other within a society do benefit far-right populist parties (2006: 15).

Looking at how society reacts to far-right populist parties will reveal the level of societal stigma of far-right populism caused by the two subtypes of collective memory. Thus, the above-mentioned findings by Art and Manucci and Caramani regarding the cultural opportunity-structure created by each collective memory subtype form the theoretical framework of my analysis:

By employing media as a proxy for society (see under methodology), I look at what tone is used when reporting on far-right populism. This allows me to determine the level of social stigma towards far-right populism.

Media reporting on the far-right populist party with a negative tone would signal a high degree of social stigma against far-right populism. Whilst media reporting on the far-right populist party with a neutral or mixed tone would signal a low or non-existent degree of social stigma towards far-right populism.

The relationship between social stigma and media tone is not a unidirectional one. For example, a high degree of social stigma towards a given topic will influence mainstream media to report on this topic in a negative tone, which will in turn reinforce the high degree of social stigma towards that topic (see Fig. 1.1). The same goes for a low or non-existent social stigma towards a given topic (see Fig. 1.2).

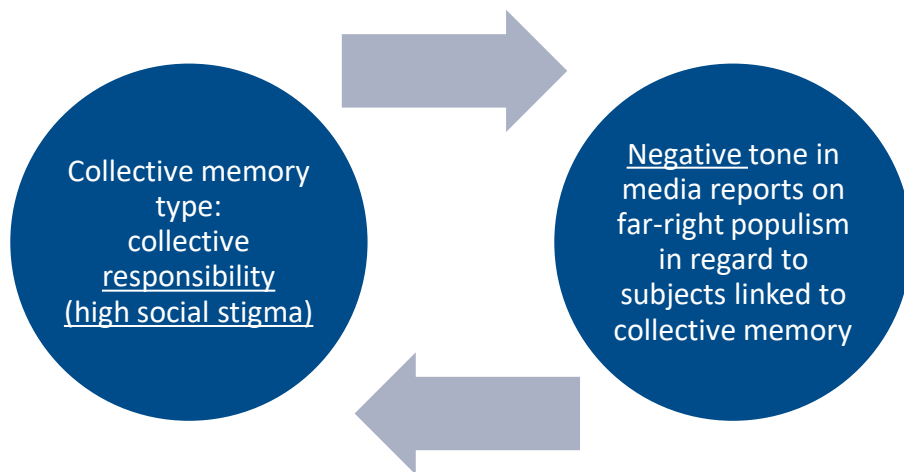


Fig. 1.1 How collective memory can affect the tone of media coverage on far-right populist parties in countries with a collective responsibility

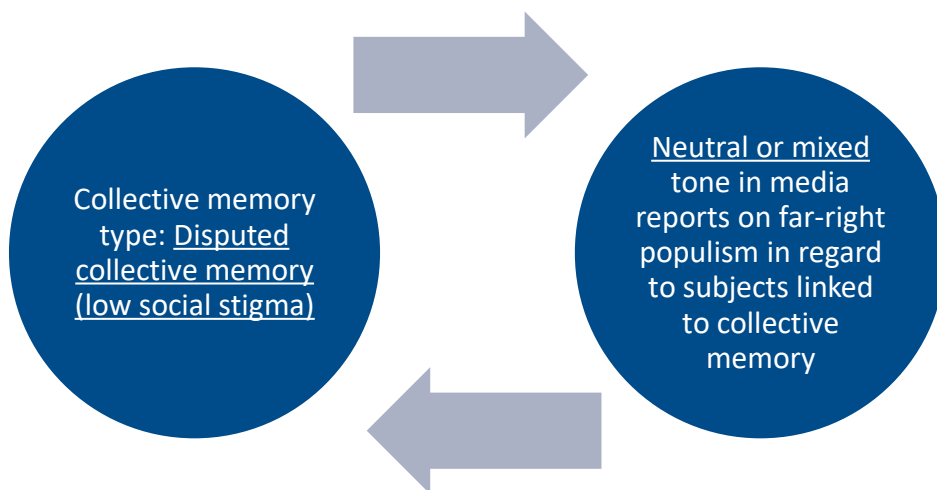


Fig. 1.2 How collective memory can affect the tone of media coverage on far-right populist parties in countries with a disputed collective memory

I anticipate two possible results from this theoretical framework:

1. In a society with a collective memory of collective responsibility, the social stigma towards far-right populism is high, leading to mainstream conservative media reporting about the far-right populist party in a mostly negative way on subjects linked to collective memory.

2. In a society with a disputed collective memory, the social stigma towards far-right populism is low, leading to the mainstream conservative media reporting about the far-right populist party in a neutral or mixed way on subjects linked to collective memory.

In accordance with Arts and Caramani and Manucci's findings, I expect very clear results on the analysis of the country with collective responsibility (i.e., Germany), akin to the above-mentioned blocking effect these authors find. The articles should almost exclusively report on far-right populist parties in a negative way when writing about subjects linked to collective memory. There might be a percentage of neutral articles, which should still be lower than the percentage of negative ones.

When it comes to the country with a disputed collective memory (i.e. Spain), I expect the results to be mixed and to find articles that report on far-right populism in positive and negative ways. Nonetheless I expect a clear prevalence of neutral sentiment towards far-right populism expressed by the media, in accordance with the findings of Caramani and Manucci delineated in the literature review.

In the next chapter, I present my two case countries and give a short overview of their fascist past and their far-right populist party. Furthermore, I categorize each country in a sub-type of collective memory, according to the definitions given in my theoretical framework. I also justify why I have chosen these two countries and base my decision on previous research.

Case selection

Germany

Throughout the literature Germany is presented as the foremost example of ‘mastering the past’ (Vergangenheitsbewältigung) (Art 2010: 4; Binder 2021: 199; Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1169; De Cesari et al. 2020: 3; Wittlinger 2012: 205). Furthermore, those who study Germany in the context of collective memory consistently categorize it as a prime example of collective responsibility, although using differing terms to describe the same concept (Art 2010: 7; Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1169; Zubrzycki and Wozny 2020: 180-81).

In accordance with the above mentioned ‘period of silence’ after a traumatic event, public debate about the atrocities of the Nazi regime did not take place in Germany until the 1960s, after which it took another 20 years to reach a societal consensus of collective responsibility accompanied with a (to this day) high degree of public debate about the past in politics and media and a consensus on the role of the past (Art 2006: 9; 2010: 4-5; Banke 2010: 165; S. Berger 2010: 132; Binder 2021: 187).

Furthermore, the German conservative party has already since the 1980s adopted “(...) a strict and comprehensive policy of ‘marginalization’ (Ausgrenzung) toward the far right” (Art 2010: 9).

For a long time it was said that Germany was immune to the success of far-right populism seen in the rest of Europe (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1159). This quickly changed in the second decade of the 21st century.

The *Alternative für Deutschland* (translates to “Alternative for Germany”, hereafter: AfD) was established in 2013 and initially focused mainly on anti-EU Politics. Fueled by events surrounding the 2015 refugee crisis, it quickly turned into an “islamophobic anti-immigration party” and moved to the far-right of the political spectrum, being the first party to the right of the Christian democrats (CDU/CSU) to have success in modern Germany (Kai Arzheimer 2019: 90; Binder 2021: 178-79). Its success quickly grew, cumulating in the 2017 national elections, in which the AfD came in third place and became the largest opposition party (the two strongest parties forming a coalition government) (Binder 2021: 189). By 2018 the AfD was present in all German state parliaments, although it remained isolated on the political spectrum (Kai Arzheimer 2019: 91). But the success was not permanent. In the 2021 national elections it was feared that the AfD would surpass its results from 2017 and come in as the second strongest party. In the end the party received 10.3 % of the votes and came in fifth

place showing a decline from 2017 (Bundeswahlleiter 2021).

Manucci and Caramani classify the AfD as a medium radical party (2019: 1170) but the continuous radicalization over the years has left no doubt that the party can be deemed far-right, with the German Office for Protection of the Constitution even launching an investigation into the party due to its “unconstitutional tendencies” (Kai Arzheimer 2019: 98). Germany is the most commonly studied country in research on the relation between collective memory and far-right populism (Art 2006, 2010; Bachleitner 2021; Caramani and Manucci 2019; Manucci 2019). It is clearly identified as a country with a collective memory of collective responsibility and the blocking effect this has on far-right populists’ success is established in previous research (see under literature review).

Furthermore, it has been studied using media content analysis and a theoretical framework for the analysis of collective memory mentions in media has been established (Art 2006; Bachleitner 2021).

Germany is an interesting case for comparison in this analysis, because my other case (Spain) has been studied and theorized to a much lesser extent. By including Germany and Spain, I create a good balance between well-known and mainly undiscovered territory when it comes to previous research and the ability to cross-reference findings.

Spain

After a bloody civil war in the 1930s, the fascist general Francisco Franco who had received military help from Nazi Germany and fascist Italy established a dictatorship that would span almost half a century (S. Berger 2010: 124). During the first years of his rule, he openly supported Hitler and Mussolini, even expressing a wish to join the Axis alliance in 1940 (2010: 124). The opposition against Franco was weak and mostly limited to the Provinces of Catalunya and the Basque Country, thus no democratic revolution emerged, as for example in Portugal (Núñez Seixas 2021: 1007).

After the death of Franco in November of 1975, Spain transitioned to democracy and entered a so-called “pact of silence”, passing a law of immunity that encompassed all crimes committed under said regime, including torture and murder (de Luna 2019: 46; Manucci 2020: 52). Most of the previous fascist elites stayed in power under the new democracy (Núñez Seixas 2021: 1007).

After an initial period of silence, in line with the above-mentioned theory on the formation of collective memory, a public debate on the crimes perpetrated by the Franco regime emerged

in the 1990s (S. Berger 2010: 129; Manucci 2020: 54). It was also during this time that the first movements formed to locate and exhume the approximately 30,000 victims that were murdered during the Franco regime and buried in mass graves (Bernecker and Brinkmann 2006: 292). Due to the absence of a historical commission, an official number of victims of the Spanish Civil War has never been established (Manucci 2020: 53). The fact that these investigations and exhumations are until today financed and carried out by private organizations and citizens' action groups underlines that the state shirks responsibility and follows a strategy of oblivion when it comes to the crimes perpetrated in the fascist past (Bernecker and Brinkmann 2006: 293).

This disregard of the victims of fascism becomes even more apparent when one considers the fact that the members of the 'Blue Division', a group of soldiers sent by Franco to help the Nazi forces on the eastern front, were exhumed and buried on the state's dime between 1997 and 2003 (the Spanish government also erected a monument in their honor close to St. Petersburg) (Bernecker and Brinkmann 2006: 300-01).

A disputed collective memory is amongst others characterized as allowing for various narratives, without any of them being prominent or stigmatized. Opinion polls in the year 2000 found that around half of Spaniards over the age of 45 characterized the Franco-Era as having good as well as negative aspects and only approximately half of those between the ages of 18 and 44 saw the Franquismo as a negative time-period (Bernecker and Brinkmann 2006: 303). This shows the Spanish ambivalence towards the "dark past" and the casual nature with which it is remembered. This is further supported by another study from 2000 showing that Spanish high-schoolers know surprisingly little about the fascist dictatorship, with a quarter not even knowing how Franco came to power (2006: 304).

Spain has two narratives regarding the fascist past: the conservative part of society relativizes and even downplays the crimes of the Franco regime, while the leftist part of society condemns it (Bernecker and Brinkmann 2006: 340; Núñez Seixas 2021: 1005). A political consensus is nowhere to be found making Spain an example of disputed collective memory. Just like Germany, Spain was considered to be immune to far-right populism whilst other European nations were battling with new, successful right-wing populist movements (Manucci 2020: 45).

This changed when the far-right populist party Vox was founded in 2013, which aims to uphold the values and heritage of the Franco regime (Núñez Seixas 2021: 1022). After having

rather little success in the first years of its existence, it received a significant boost after adopting the Catalan independence referendum in 2017 and the exhumation of the body of Francisco Franco in 2019 as their main political topics, receiving 15.09 % in the general elections in November 2019 and thus coming in third place (Manucci 2020: 47; Menéndez 2020: 694-702).

Although Spain as a country was not her subject of analysis, Ferreira did categorize the country as having a collective memory of cancellation (2021: 133), which is in line with my characterization, although I adapt the definition to better fit a country with home-made fascism and rename the category disputed collective memory.

Manucci states that “(...) Southern Europe offers interesting possibilities for studying the impact of collective memories on the social acceptability of populism” (2019: 174). He argues that Spain is an interesting case because its fascist regime lasted for so long and adds that, by now, enough time has passed to classify a type of collective memory to the country (Manucci 2019: 174). Thus, I include Spain in my study as a country that has been researched very little regarding the effect of collective memory on far-right populism and compare it to the above-mentioned relatively well-studied case of Germany.

Methodology

Since the scope of my thesis is limited, I need to employ a proxy to measure society's attitude towards the far-right populist parties.

Among the societal actors that reinforce and represent collective responsibility within a society, researchers put special emphasis on the role that politicians, journalists, and public figures play (Ahonen 2012: 18; Art 2006: 25; Bachleitner 2021: 38). But by far the one element most commonly defined as mirroring society's views, values and even shaping them, when it comes to collective memory, is the media (Art 2006: 160; Bachleitner 2021: 68; Kligler-Vilenchik et al. 2014: 488). Thus, in this thesis, I look at the way in which mainstream conservative media reacts to the new far-right populist parties to discern *if and how mainstream conservative media reactions to far-right populist parties are influenced by factors pertaining to collective memory after a fascist regime*.

I have chosen the conservative media because leftist might tend to take a critical approach towards far-right populism, regardless of the collective memory present in society. To measure the social stigma present in a society regarding far-right populism, I analyse if the media reports on these parties in a positive, negative or neutral way. To assure that this stigma is associated with the collective memory sub-type present in society, I only consider articles that talk about far-right populism while thematizing collective memory.

By logic, the collective memory of a country presents itself every time the past events upon which this collective memory is built are discussed. In this case it is a period of 'home-made' fascist dictatorship.

To identify the articles that thematize collective memory, it is thus not necessary to delineate different approaches according to the sub-type of collective memory of a given country. It is enough to identify the articles that include references to the fascist past, as these will logically present whichever collective memory is present in the respective country, given that the media (at least the mainstream one) is shown to mirror society regarding collective memory. For the identification of articles thematizing collective memory I base my methodological approach on a list of keywords employed by Art in his media analysis of collective memory debates in newspaper articles in Germany (Art 2006: 213). I thus employ an already tested technique, which strengthens my approach, given that the case of Spain has not been studied by means of such an analysis yet.

Furthermore, the importance that the media plays regarding far-right populist parties' role in society becomes clear in this little anecdote:

In 2018 the former head of the AfD Alexander Gauland gave a speech to the party's youth organization, in which he stated that Hitler and the Nazis were 'chicken shit' when it came to German history as a whole (Anonymous 2018).

The following medial outcry was so severe, that Gauland issued an apology two days later (Hoffmann 2019: 4).

What we see here is a strong example of how collective responsibility in a society is mirrored by the media and actively employed when dealing with far-right populism. Media analysis is thus useful in measuring the extent collective responsibility plays a role in society in regard to a given topic.

I limit my analysis to mainstream conservative media because they are closest to the far-right populist parties on a political and ideological spectrum. Leftist media outlets tend to take a negative stance on a far-right populist party regardless of the collective memory present in society.

Nonetheless, I use mainstream conservative newspapers, so that the results can be representative for conservative society in Germany and Spain.

In the following chapters I explain my samples, sampling dates and give an overview over the keywords and subsequent qualitative approach to classify the sentiment of the samples.

Samples & sampling dates

Art finds that, within media, newspapers have a unique way of contributing to the societal debate (Art 2006: 31). Thus, I choose this medium for my content analysis, since I believe it will approximate how the parts of society reading these newspapers think about the far-right populist parties.

My sample consists of articles by the two biggest mainstream conservative newspapers of each analyzed country: In Germany, these are the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) (euro|topics 2022; Feddersen 2019) and *Die Welt* (*deutschland.de* 2012); In Spain, these are *ABC* and *El Mundo* (Ferreira 2021: 136; Rodríguez 2013).

For *Die Welt*, I use the Digital Archiving System of Axel Springer SE (DIGAS) search engine, which gives access to full-version articles and allows to search by keywords and filter specific dates.

For *FAZ*, I use the "FAZ-Archiv", which also gives access to full articles, whilst allowing to

filter by keyword and date.

For *El Mundo*, I use their own archive “Hermeroteca” which allows you to view all articles published on a given day, reaching back to 2002.

For *ABC*, I use the “Archivo ABC” an online archive which allows the search by keyword and filter for specific dates.

My sampling dates are different for Germany and Spain.

Art recommends the study of public debates because it is during these times that the salience of ideologies in a society gets tested (2006: 28). When it comes to controversies discussed widely in a society it is easy to discover if there really is a consensus such as a collective responsibility. Simultaneously differences in opinion such as one would find in a disputed collective memory would come to light.

Furthermore, Art defines a public debate as “(...) an episode of concentrated public ideational contestation among political elites reported in the media on a particular subject of some controversy” (2006: 27).

I look at public debates surrounding the fascist past in Germany and Spain in the past years and analyze what the newspapers reported regarding the far-right populist parties in relation to these debates. This guarantees that the topic of collective memory is present and allows me to deduce in what way it influences the media’s reporting on Vox and AfD.

Having followed the most medialized debates surrounding the far-right populist parties in both Germany and Spain during the past years, I have identified three instances, where these parties have been at the center of media-attention due to subjects concerning the fascist past. For each of the public debates I look at the newspaper editions a few days before and after the debate was strongest, or only a few days after a controversial event led to the public debates. For Germany I analyze the newspaper editions surrounding the following events:

1. Björn Höcke (head of the AfD in Thuringia) calling the monument to the murdered Jews in Berlin a “Monument of shame” (“Denkmal der Schande”) in a speech to the party’s youth organization on 17th of January 2017 (Süddeutsche-Zeitung 2017)³. Timeframe: 18th to 20th of January 2017.

³ It is important to note that he was referring to the monument itself being a shame, thus trivializing the Holocaust. Süddeutsche-Zeitung, 'Die Höcke-Rede Von Dresden in Wortlaut-Auszügen', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 18.01.2017 2017.

2. The above-mentioned “Vogelschiss” (Chickenshit)-comment by the then head of AfD Alexander Gauland on the 2nd of June 2018 (Hoffmann 2019). Timeframe: 3rd to 5th of June 2018.

3. The decision by a German court that allows the German Office for Protection of the Constitution, to categorize the AfD as being a suspected case of right-wing, anti-constitutional extremism on the 8th of March of 2022 (Verwaltungsgericht-Köln 2022)⁴. Timeframe: 9th to 11th of March 2022.

For Spain, I analyze the newspaper editions surrounding the following events:

1. The approval of the exhumation of the body of former dictator Francisco Franco by the leftist government on 15th of February 2019 (Núñez Seixas 2021: 1005)⁵. Timeframe: 16th to 18th of February 2019.

2. The exhumation and relocation of the body of former dictator Francisco Franco on 24th of October 2019 (Núñez Seixas 2021: 1005). Timeframe: 24th to 26th of October 2019.

3. The parliamentary debate about the new law regarding historical remembrance of the fascist past (*Ley de la memoria democrática*, proposed by the left) on the 14th of October 2021 (Núñez Seixas 2021: 1006)⁶. Timeframe: 13th to 15th of October 2021.

It is noteworthy that Ferreira focused her media analysis on debates surrounding the law regarding historical remembrance whilst also mentioning the public debate surrounding the exhumation of Franco several times (Ferreira 2021: 135, 37, 38, 50). Thus, for Spain, the choice of public debates is reciprocated in previous research regarding collective memory and far-right populism.

⁴ The AfD had filed an objection to the decision of the German Office for Protection of the Constitution to categorize the AfD as being a suspected case of right-wing, anti-constitutional extremism. The court in Cologne overruled this objection, stating that there was indeed evidence of anti-constitutional efforts within the party. Verwaltungsgericht-Köln, 'Verwaltungsgericht Köln: Verfassungsschutz Darf Afd Als Verdachtsfall Einstufen', (Köln: Verwaltungsgericht Köln, 2022).

⁵ Previously the body of the former dictator was interred at the ‘valley of the fallen’, a huge mausoleum built for him during his lifetime, with the use of forced labor. During the construction around one dozen of these forced laborers died, due to the perilous working conditions. Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, 'Der „Krieg Der Erinnerung“ in Spanien', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 69/12 (2021).

⁶ The new law aims to officially recognize the victims of political persecution during the civil war and subsequent dictatorship. It also aims to condemn the coup of 1936 and the subsequent dictatorship under Francisco Franco. La Moncloa, 'Proyecto De Ley De Memoria Democrática', accessed 06.04.2022 .

Keywords & coding scheme

I limit the analysis to articles reporting on the far-right populist party whilst also thematizing collective memory to ensure that the sentiment expressed in the article is directly related to collective memory. An example could be a German newspaper article about the AfD party which also thematizes the crimes of the Nazis during WWII. To ensure that the subject of collective memory is present in the articles I analyse, I employ an extensive list of keywords pertaining to the fascist past of each country.

In the above-mentioned content analysis of collective memory-mentions in a German newspaper, Art (2006) employed a coding scheme pertaining to German collective memory. I use this coding scheme as a foundation for my keywords for Germany and Spain. When it comes to the coding scheme for Spain, I partly translate some keywords, such as ‘memory’, ‘past’, ‘dictatorship’ and find corresponding keywords in instances where a simple translation does not work. ‘Hitler’ thus becomes ‘Franco’, ‘National socialism’ becomes ‘Franquismo’ and ‘Fascism’, ‘WWII’ becomes ‘Civil War’ and so on.

After finding every article in the given timeframes that mentions the far-right populist party in question (AfD for Germany, Vox for Spain) I begin to code the articles according to the keywords.

This is done through the Atlas.ti software, a computer program designed for qualitative data analysis (Friese 2021). I chose an inductive approach, reading through each newspaper article and identifying further keywords pertaining to collective memory, thus expanding on my original keyword list. This is important, because new common themes arise and become clear when evaluating the material, so no potential mentions of collective memory are left unidentified. A table containing Art’s coding scheme, my initial keywords and the keywords found in the articles can be found in the Appendix along with an English translation (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1 and 2.2).

Subsequently I look at if these articles cover the parties in a positive, negative, or neutral way. I analyze all articles published during the above-mentioned timeframes that mention the far-right populist party along with one or more keywords pertaining to collective memory.

To detect that social stigma, I classify the articles into positive, negative, or neutral through qualitative sentiment analysis.

Sentiment analysis is a research technique, which is used in a variety of fields like social sciences, political science, marketing and economics (Thelwall 2016: 549-52). In its basic

form, sentiment analysis categorizes text into positive, neutral or negative attitude (Khoo and Johnkhan 2018: 491). Automated sentiment analysis can be done through a variety of methods, like manual coding, supervised machine learning techniques and dictionary-based approaches (Boukes et al. 2020: 85). I employ the latter for my analysis, because this approach does not require any training data and can be conducted on document level as well as sentence, phrase or word level (Taj et al. 2019: 3). Furthermore it has been frequently employed in the categorization of news articles before and is pretty straightforward, identifying positive and negative opinion words and calculating the polarity to classify the chosen text as either positive, neutral or negative (Chan et al. 2021: 4; Taj et al. 2019: 3-4). When employing the dictionary-based sentiment analysis, it is crucial to use the same program for all textual data included in the analysis to ensure consistency and replicability (Chan et al. 2021: 29).

Since varying article length can influence the outcome on sentiment scores (Chan et al. 2021: 28), I only analyze the sentences which mention the far-right populist party in the sentiment analysis. This also ensures that the detected sentiment is geared towards the 'AfD' or 'Vox' and not towards a possible other topic or entity that may be mentioned in the article.

After conducting a preliminary sentiment analysis with a random sample of my selected sentences using four different dictionary-based sentiment analysis programs, I found that the integrated sentiment analysis tool in the Atlas.ti produces by far the most accurate and consistent results.

The field of automated sentiment analysis has come a long way in the recent past, but it is not yet faultless and still falls short of manual coding in terms of accuracy (Luo et al. 2021; Sharma 2020). In the results section I will expand on the limitations of accuracy in automated sentiment analysis in my own study. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, automated sentiment analysis is a commonly used approach in textual analysis and shows overall reliable results (Luo et al. 2021; Sharma 2020).

Atlas.ti uses the natural language processing (NLP) engine SpaCy for its sentiment analysis (Friese 2021: 214). Currently the sentiment analysis in Atlas.ti is supported for textual data in English, Spanish, German and Portuguese (Friese 2021: 211). This means that, for my analysis, I do not need to translate the original textual data into English (as in most other sentiment analysis programs), which eliminates the caveat of diluting the original meaning through possible mistakes in translation. In his comparison between sentiment analysis on

machine-translated text and original-language text using SpaCy, Sharma found that the accuracy of SpaCy's original-language sentiment analysis is much higher (Sharma 2020: 495).

Furthermore, the sentiment analysis dictionary used for the analysis is the same for both languages, which ensures consistency (see above).

The SpaCy NLP tokenizes the textual data into meaningful parts, i. e. a sentence, and then uses pre-learned "(...) vocabulary for each language to assign a vector to a word" (Friese 2021: 215). The sentiment analysis itself is performed through the multilingual Lexicon-based sentiment analyzer TextBlob, which is also commonly used to conduct analysis' in Python (Luo et al. 2021; Saura et al. 2022).

The textual data gets categorized into negative, neutral, or positive sentiment and Atlas.ti gives the option to automatically apply the detected sentiment across the data corpus or to manually code each sentence. I choose the latter because it gives the researcher the opportunity to test the reliability of the sentiment analysis and discover possible mistakes or outliers.

In the following chapter I present the results of each step of my analysis.

Results

Articles

As mentioned above the first step of my analysis is finding all articles mentioning the far-right populist party during my selected timeframes, which correspond to public debates pertaining to collective memory.

In my selected conservative newspapers from Germany, I found a total of 188 articles that contain at least one mention of 'AfD' during my three selected timeframes (see fig. 3).

84 of those articles were published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and 104 in *die Welt*.

The timeframe corresponding to the public debate surrounding Gaulands "Chickenshit"-comment (see above) yielded the most articles (83), closely followed by the timeframe corresponding to the public debate surrounding Höckes "Monument of shame"-comment (see above), which yielded 78 articles.

During the timeframe which corresponds to the German court allowing the German Office for Protection of the Constitution, to categorize the AfD as being a suspected case of right-wing, anti-constitutional extremism, only 27 articles mentioning the AfD were published in both conservative newspapers in total.

The next step in my analysis consists of reading through all the above-mentioned articles and identifying those, which contain at least one keyword pertaining to collective memory. This leaves me with a total of 106 articles (see fig. 3), of which 43 were published in the *FAZ* and 63 were published in *die Welt*. In other words, 56.38 % of the initially collected articles include one or more keywords concerning collective memory.

After filtering out the articles which do not contain any keywords pertaining to collective memory, I am left with the exact same number of articles for the timeframe corresponding to the public debate about Höckes "Monument of shame"-comment, and that corresponding to Gaulands "Chickenshit"-comment, namely 45 articles for each timeframe.

16 articles are left for the timeframe regarding the German court decision about the categorization of the AfD as a suspected case of anti-constitutional extremism.

During my first step of the analysis of the conservative newspapers in Spain, I find a total of 162 articles containing at least one mention of 'Vox' during my three selected timeframes (see fig. 2). 75 of those articles were published in *El Mundo* and 87 in *ABC*.

The timeframe which yielded the most articles mentioning Vox corresponds to the public

debate surrounding the approval of the exhumation of the body of the former dictator Francisco Franco, with a total of 66 articles found.

Secondly, 51 articles contain at least one mention of 'Vox' during the timeframe of the public debate surrounding said exhumation and relocation of the remains of the former dictator.

Lastly, the timeframe corresponding to the public debate surrounding the parliamentary debate about the new law regarding historical remembrance of the fascist past yields a total of 45 articles containing one or more mentions of 'Vox'.

After identifying all articles containing at least one keyword pertaining to collective memory, a total of 60 articles from both *El Mundo* and *ABC* remained (see fig. 2) which corresponds to 37 % of the articles I analysed in the first step. Out of those 60 remaining articles 23 were published in *ABC* and 37 in *El Mundo*.

This further analysis results in the timeframe surrounding the exhumation and relocation of the body of Franco yielding the most articles (27) containing both a mention of 'Vox' and one or more keywords pertaining to collective memory.

The timeframe surrounding the approval of the exhumation yields only two articles less, coming in at 25 total articles published in *El Mundo* and *ABC* which meet the requirements of mentioning both Vox and collective memory keywords.

Again, the timeframe corresponding to the public debate surrounding the parliamentary debate about the new law regarding historical remembrance yields the least articles, this time being reduced drastically to only 8 articles.

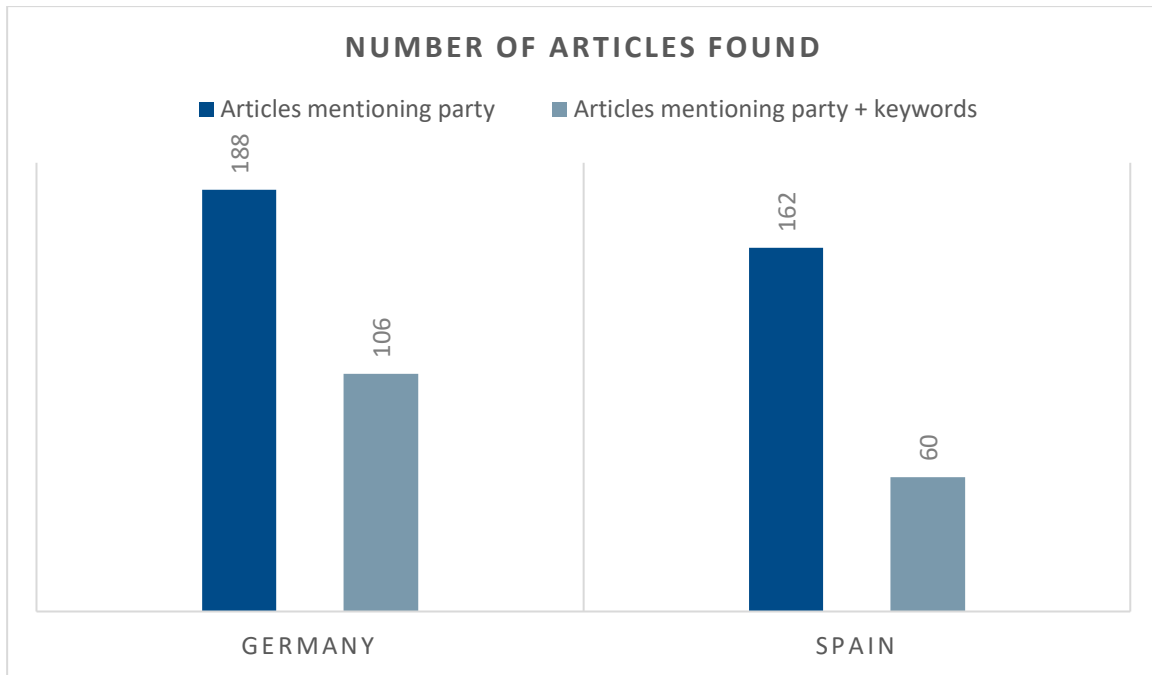


Fig. 2: Number of articles found for the given timeframes containing at least one mention of the far-right populist party and those additionally also containing at least one keyword pertaining to collective memory.

Keywords

In my partly inductive⁷ keyword analysis of the articles from the two German conservative newspapers, I identify a total of 39 keywords pertaining to collective memory. These keywords occur 1132 times in the 106 articles which present both a mention of the AfD and at least one keyword. A list of the keywords can be found in the Appendix 1.2.

Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of these keywords across the three public debates in Germany.

The most common keyword found is ‘Nazi’ (including: National socialism, Nazi-regime, Nazi-time and NS), which occurs a total of 223 times and is present in articles across all three selected timeframes.

The second-most common keyword is ‘history’, which occurs 124 times and only during the timeframes regarding Höckes “Monument of shame”-comment and Gaulands “Chickenshit”-comment.

This is followed by the keyword ‘Holocaust’ with a total of 118 occurrences spread across all

⁷ In the appendix I list which keywords were found through an inductive approach during my initial analysis of the newspaper articles.

three timeframes.

The five keywords: oblivious to history, liberation, totalitarian, unjust regime and tyranny share the last spot, each occurring only once in the articles included in my analysis.

When looking at the occurrence of keywords according to each timeframe, there are 445 instances of keywords pertaining to collective memory being used in the timeframe corresponding to Höckes “Monument of shame”-comment (18.-20.01.17). Those 445 keyword quotations consist of 32 of the 39 identified keywords pertaining to collective memory, with “Holocaust” being the most common keyword for this timeframe (86 quotations).

In the articles corresponding to the timeframe surrounding the public debate about Gaulands “Chickenshit”-comment, there are 629 instances of keywords, consisting of 32 keywords with ‘Nazi’ (including: National socialism, Nazi-regime, Nazi-time and NS) being the most common at 181 quotations.

Finally, the timeframe regarding the German court decision about the categorization of the AfD as a suspected case of anti-constitutional extremism has 58 instances of keywords occurrence. These instances consist of a total of 14 keywords with ‘democracy’ being the most common with 27 quotations.

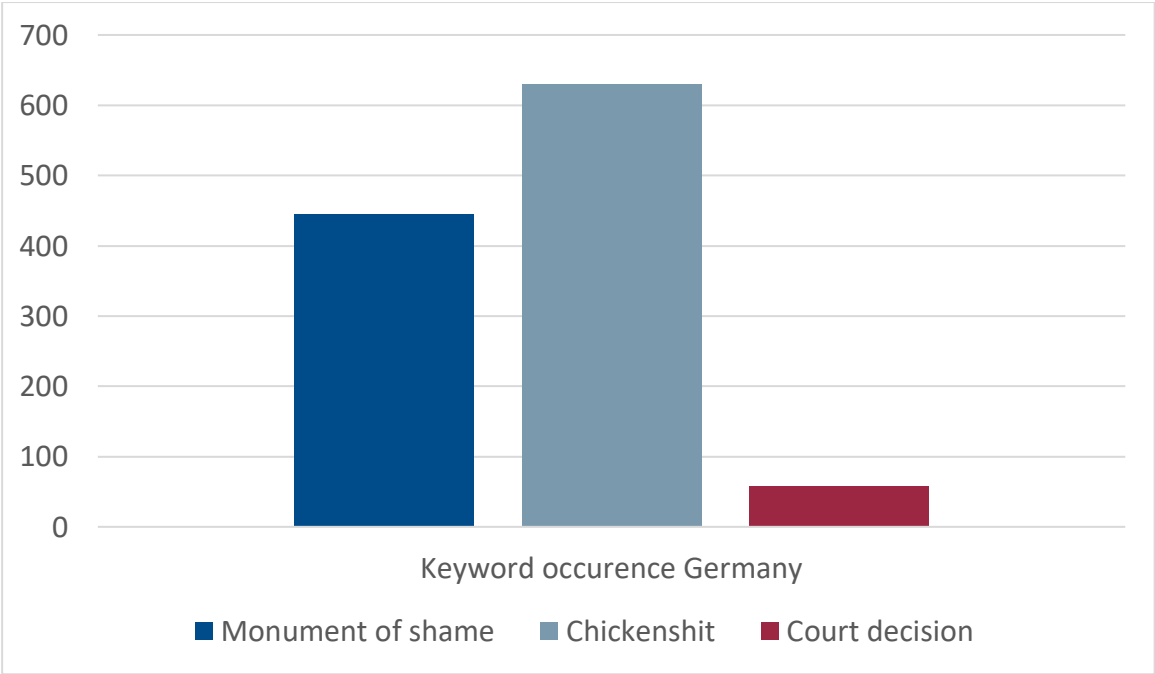


Fig. 3.1: Instances of keywords occurring across the three different timeframes in German conservative newspaper articles

Using the same approach with the articles from the two Spanish conservative newspapers, I identify a total of 59 keywords pertaining to collective memory. These keywords occur 919 times in the 60 articles which include both a mention of ‘Vox’ and at least one keyword. Figure 3.2 shows the distribution of these keywords across the three public debates in Spain. The most common keyword in my analysis of the Spanish newspapers is ‘Franco’ (including: Francisco Franco, Caudillo, Generalísimo), which occurs a total of 151 times, but only during the timeframes corresponding to the public debates surrounding both the approval of the exhumation and the actual exhumation and relocation of the remains of former dictator Franco.

The second-most common keyword in the Spanish conservative newspaper-articles is ‘exhumation’ (including: extraction, expulsion, taking out), occurring a total of 98 times, also limited to the two above-mentioned timeframes.

The keyword following in frequency is ‘Valle de los Caídos’ (the name of the memorial where the remains of Franco were buried previous to the exhumation), occurring 75 times, also only during the two above-mentioned timeframes.

The first keyword which occurs across all three timeframes in the analysis of Spanish conservative newspapers is ‘democracy’ which comes in fourth place (total of 63 instances). In terms of number of instances there are eleven keywords that share the last spot, being mentioned only once each in the 60 articles: tyrant, anti-Francoists, genocide, torturers, republican, 23-F⁸, shot, totalitarianism, Hitler, 1936, Second Republic.

The articles in the first timeframe, corresponding to the approval of the exhumation of the remains of former dictator Franco (16.-18.02.2019), show 65 instances of keywords pertaining to collective memory being used. Those 65 instances are composed out of 19 keywords with ‘democracy’ being the most common at 22 quotations.

The second timeframe, which corresponds to the public debate surrounding the event of the exhumation (24.-26.10.2019) presents 828 quotations of keywords pertaining to collective

⁸ 23-F refers to the attempted coup d’état on 23rd of February 1981 by Colonel Antonio Tejero with the goal to reinstate the fascist dictatorship and return Spain to the control of the military. Julio Martín Alarcón, ‘El 23-F No Fue Solo Un Golpe Militar: El Sumario Secreto Que Desvela La Trama Civil’, *El Confidencial*, 23.02.2021 2021.

memory. These quotations include 56 of the 59 keywords identified previously, with ‘Franco’ being the most common, occurring 143 times.

Lastly, the articles included in the timeframe surrounding the public discussion about the new law of historical remembrance of the fascist past (13.-15.10.21), show 26 occurrences of keywords, being composed of 13 of the keywords pertaining to collective memory, with the most common being ‘democracy’ (7 instances).

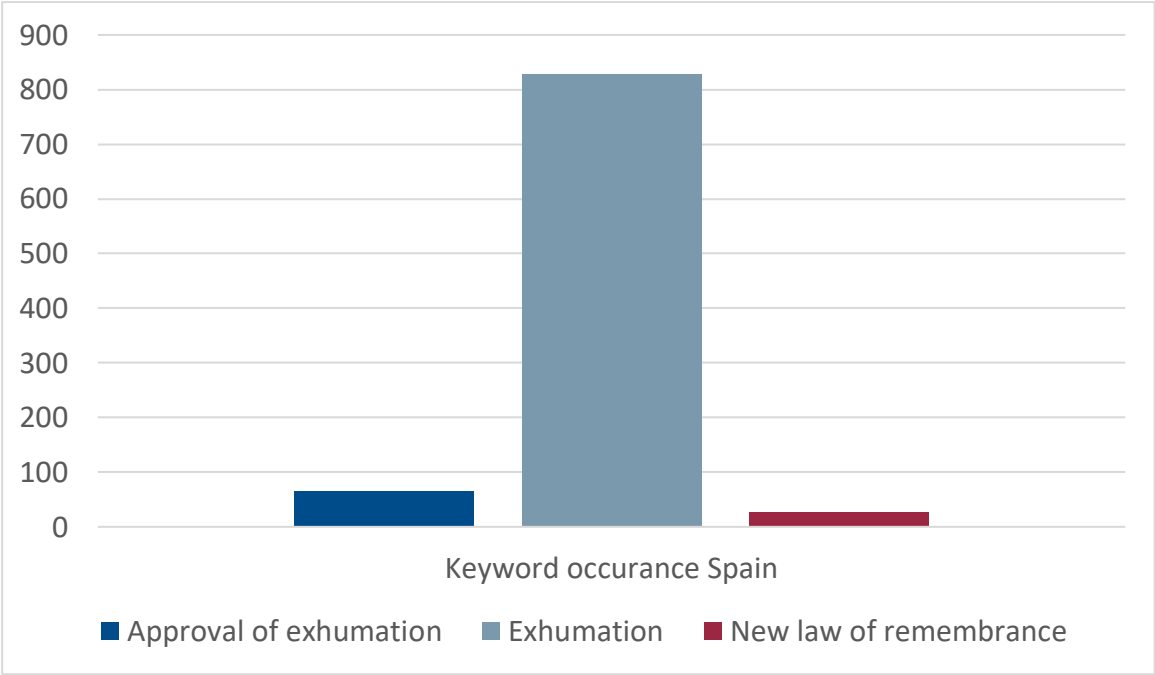


Fig. 3.2: Instances of keywords occurring across the three different timeframes in Spanish conservative newspaper articles

Sentiment Analysis

The next step of my analysis consists of identifying each sentence mentioning the far-right populist party, to ensure that the attitudes detected in the sentiment analysis are directed towards these parties, and not towards a different topic or entity that might be mentioned in the article.

The newspaper articles published during my selected timeframes in *FAZ* and *Die Welt*, which also included at least one keyword pertaining to collective memory, present 745 sentences in which the ‘AfD’ is mentioned.

Out of those 745 sentences, 583 are classified as showing a negative sentiment (78.26 %), 161 are classified as neutral (21.61 %) and one sentence is classified as presenting a positive

sentiment (0.13 %). Please view Figure 4.1 for a visual representation.

As I coded each of the sentences manually, I received an overview over the reliability of the sentiment scores, which in my opinion is consistent.

For example, one sentence classified as presenting a negative sentiment reads: “AfD leader Alexander Gauland has defended his highly controversial statement on the significance of National Socialism in German history.” (published in FAZ on the 3rd of June 2018). The term adjective “controversial” has a negative connotation and here it is preceded by the adverb “highly”, which strengthens the significance of the adjective. Thus, the classification of the sentence seems accurate.

The following is an example of a neutrally classified sentence: “The AfD immediately became the second-strongest force and largest opposition party.” (published in FAZ on the 19th of January 2017). The sentence merely conveys a number of facts in regard to the political performance of the AfD, which justifies a neutral classification.

Nonetheless there are a few examples of questionable results stemming from the sentiment analysis. For example the only sentence which is coded as presenting a positive sentence reads as follows in German: “In gut vier Monaten findet in Bayern die Landtagswahl statt, und die Frage, ob die CSU ihre absolute Mehrheit verteidigen kann, wird auch mit dem Abschneiden der AfD zu tun haben.“ (published in FAZ on the 5th of June 2018).

In English this means: „In just about four months, Bavaria will hold its state elections, and the question of whether the CSU can defend its absolute majority will also have to do with the performance of AfD.“

It appears that this is another example of a sentence stating mere facts in regard to political performance in an upcoming election, suggesting that it should be classified as neutral. Now the expression “In gut vier Monaten” in this context translates to “in just about four months”. The word “gut” however also means “good” in German, which could explain the classification as a sentence with a positive sentiment and would signify a mistake in the sentiment analysis software.

For the analysis of the German newspaper articles this is the most staggering example of a possible mistake in the sentiment analysis program. There are a few examples of neutral sentences, which could have also been classified as expressing a negative sentiment, but on an overall level no other extreme examples like the one mentioned above appeared during my manual coding.

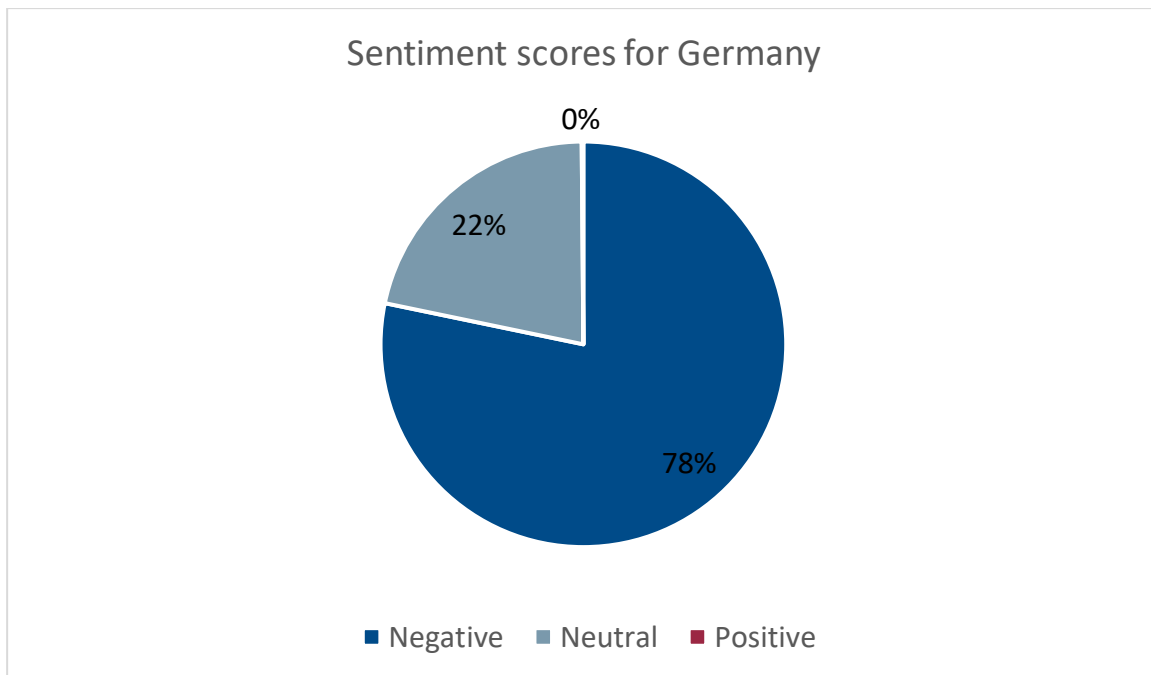


Fig 4.1: Percentage of sentiment scores for the analysis conducted on the German conservative newspapers.

The timeframe which included the most sentences mentioning the AfD (312 sentences) corresponds with the public debate surrounding Gauland's "Chickenshit"-comment (03.-05.06.18). As seen in figure 4.2, during this timeframe the distribution of sentiment scores is almost identical to the above-mentioned overall results. 243 sentences (77.88%) are classified as expressing a negative sentence, 68 as expressing a neutral sentiment (21.8 %) and one sentence is classified as a positive sentiment (0.32%).

The timeframe lasting from the 18th to the 20th of January 2017, which corresponds to Höcke's "Monument of shame"-comment, yields a total of 269 sentences mentioning the AfD. As shown in figure 4.2, 205 of those (76.21%) are classified as expressing a negative sentiment and the remaining 64 sentences are categorized as being neutral (23.79%).

Lastly, the timeframe corresponding to the German court decision allowing the categorization of the AfD as a suspected case of anti-constitutional extremism (09.-11.03.22) includes the least number of sentences mentioning the AfD, namely 164 in total.

It also presents the highest percentage of negative sentiment classification, out of the three timeframes, with 135 sentences equivalent to 82.32 %. The remaining 29 sentences are categorized as expressing a neutral sentiment (17.68 %). Again, refer to figure 4.2 for a visual representation.

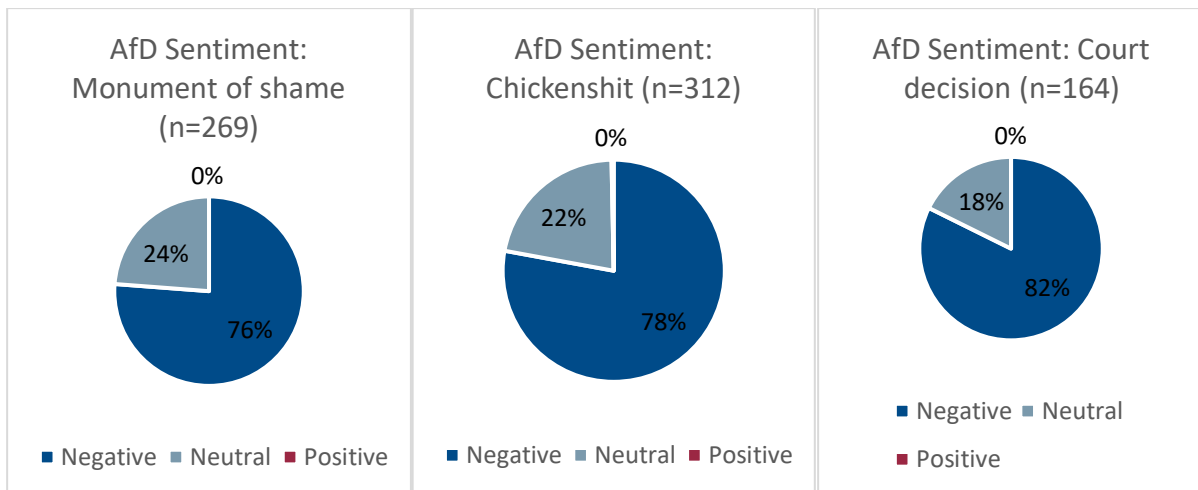


Fig. 4.2: Percentage of sentiment scores for the analysis conducted on the German conservative newspapers presented by timeframe.

In the 60 articles published in *ABC* and *El Mundo*, that contain at least one keyword pertaining to collective memory, the term ‘Vox’ is mentioned in a total of 203 sentences. As shown in figure 5.1, 78 of those sentences are classified as expressing a negative sentiment, which equivalates to 38.42 %. The number of sentences presenting a neutral sentiment is the highest, namely 115 which corresponds to 56.65 % of the total sentences. The percentage of sentences categorized as expressing a positive sentiment is 4,93 %, with a total of 10 sentences.

When it comes to the reliability of the sentiment analysis, my perception of the results for Spain are in line with that of the results for Germany.

An example of a sentence classified as negative is the following: “Something that sometimes is much worse, as shown by the poll taken by *Al Rojo Vivo*, is that 60% of Vox voters do not believe that Franco was a dictator” (published in *El Mundo* on the 26th of October 2019). The adjective “worse” is clearly an example of a word indicating a negative sentiment, and in this case being preceded by the emphasizing adverb “much”. In short, it seems appropriate to classify this sentence as presenting a negative sentiment.

The following sentence is an example of a classification as neutral sentiment: “Santiago Abascal, president of Vox, has already expressed himself on the social networks about the exhumation, reports Álvaro Carvajal.” (published in *El Mundo* on the 24th of October 2019). Here we have a mere fact being stated, which is that a politician has expressed himself about something, without specifying how or in which words he did so. This appears to correctly warrant a neutral classification.

When it comes to the categorization as positive sentiment, the following sentence serves as an example: “Vox maintains a more loyal, faithful and committed electorate than was sociologically attributed to it when Sánchez called for elections.” (published in ABC on the 25th of October 2019). The three adjectives “loyal”, “faithful” and “committed” imply a positive sentiment, making this classification arguably accurate.

Now similarly to my observation on the German sentiment analysis, I also find that some of the Spanish sentences which are classified as having a neutral sentiment, appear to be candidates for a negative classification.

The following sentence: “Vox does not mince words when it comes to polemics either.” (published in ABC on the 14th of October 2021). The noun polemic is defined as “an aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another”, which implies a negative sentiment (Merriam-Webster.com). But since sentiment dictionaries mainly rely on adjectives and adverbs for their classification, the above sentence presents as neutral, since it includes neither of those.

Nonetheless the majority of the sentiment analysis seems accurate, and I find no examples of staggering mistakes during the manual coding process.

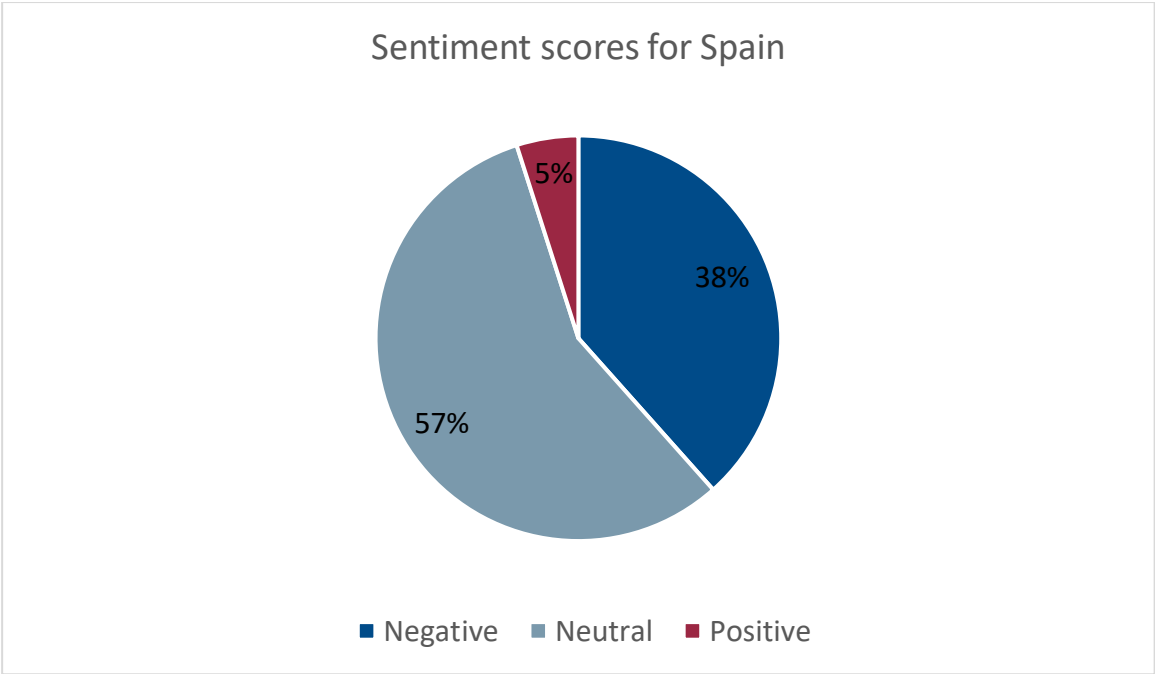


Fig. 5.1: Percentage of sentiment scores for the analysis conducted on the Spanish conservative newspapers.

Looking at the specific timeframes, the articles published between 24th and 26th of October 2019 (Exhumation and relocation of Francos remains) yield the most sentences mentioning ‘Vox’, that is 104, more than half of the total sentences analysed for the three timeframes. Out of those, 30 sentences are categorized as expressing a negative sentiment (28.85 %), 66 sentences are classified as neutral (64.46 %) and 8 sentences are classed as conveying a positive sentiment (7.69 %), as can be seen in figure 5.2.

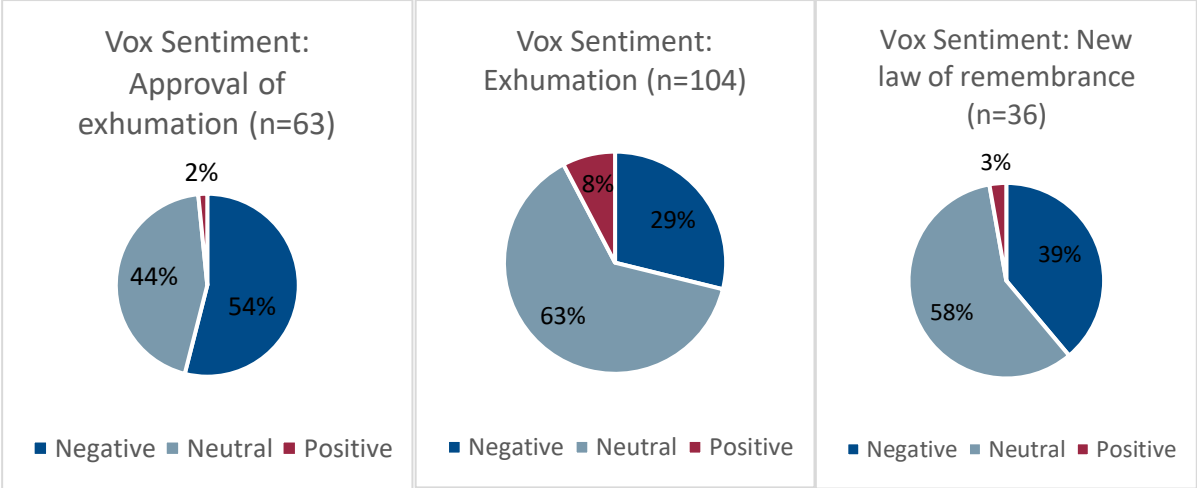


Fig. 5.2: Percentage of sentiment scores for the analysis conducted on the Spanish conservative newspapers presented by timeframe.

The timeframe which yields the second-most sentences including a mention of Vox is connected to the public discussion surrounding the approval of the exhumation of the remains of former dictator Franco (16.-18.02.2019), specifically 63 sentences.

Here the largest part of sentences is classified as expressing a negative sentiment, coming in at 53.97 % (34 total sentences). 28 sentences are categorized as presenting a neutral sentiment (44.44 %) and one sentence receives a classification as showing a positive sentiment (1.59 %). Please refer to figure 5.2 for visual representation.

Finally, the analysed articles published from the 13th to the 15th of October 2021 (during the parliamentary debate about the new law regarding historical remembrance of the fascist past) provide 36 sentences that include a mention of ‘Vox’.

Among these, the neutral sentiment is the most common, at 58.33 % equivalent to a total of 21 sentences. As presented in figure 6.2, 38.89 % of sentences are classified as expressing a negative sentiment (14 sentences) and the remaining 2.78 % are categorized as positive (1 sentence).

Discussion

Articles

The aim of this thesis is to examine how the collective memory narrative of a country with a fascist past influences the way society views far-right populist parties. To answer this research question, I looked at conservative newspaper articles in my two case countries, Germany and Spain, during public debates related to the fascist past and conducted a keyword search and sentiment analysis.

In the first step of the analysis, I identified all articles mentioning the far-right populist party during my selected dates. There is no relevant discrepancy between the number of articles found in the German newspapers and the Spanish newspapers (Germany: 188 articles, Spain: 162).

This implies that the far-right populist parties in both countries hold comparable importance in society when looking at media as a proxy for society's views (see methodological part for an explanation of how media can be considered a proxy for society's views).

The next step of my analysis was to filter out all articles containing at least one mention of keywords connected to the fascist past, which I consider as collective memory keywords. A bit over half of all articles found in the German newspapers included one or more collective memory keywords. For Spain the number of articles containing one or more of these keywords amounted to a little over one third.

The fact that over half of the German newspaper articles thematize collective memory is in line with previous studies' definition of collective responsibility: "*The collective memory is based on taking responsibility for its authoritarian past. The country makes amends and compensates in various forms – symbolically and otherwise – through processes of internal, bottom-up support for the re-elaboration that are shared and have official character.*"

(Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1164)

These "shared processes of support for the re-elaboration" translate into the subject of the past being widely discussed in society and thus also in the media, something that is confirmed through the high number of articles containing collective memory keywords in the analysis. When looking at the initial definition of the category of collective cancellation by Caramani and Manucci (2019) one would expect almost no mention of keywords pertaining to the fascist past, since "(T)he main feature is not the divided nature of collective memory but the absence of it." (2019: 1165)

Although it does not reach the amount of German newspaper articles thematizing the fascist past, a considerable number of the articles found in the initial analysis of Spanish conservative newspapers include at least one keyword pertaining to collective memory (37% of all articles). This finding indicates that, in the case of a country with home-made fascism which best fits under the category of collective cancellation, there is not necessarily an absence of collective memory. This supports my approach of adapting the category of collective cancellation to better fit the circumstances of such countries, namely into the category of disputed collective memory, which I define as: *A mainstream official narrative is weak. Various narratives exist in the public sphere, so no narrative is officially stigmatized. The main feature is the disputed nature of collective memory, which is largely absent in governmental structures.*

When looking at the different timeframes we see similar developments in both the German and the Spanish cases.

The two German timeframes surrounding public debates around AfD politicians' comments about the fascist past, namely Björn Höcke calling the Holocaust monument a "monument of shame" and Alexander Gauland saying the Nazis and their crimes were just "Chickenshit" in the overall German history, both yield the same number of articles (45).

For Spain, both timeframes concerning Franco's exhumation yield almost the same number of articles (27 and 25).

In both case countries, the timeframes which seem the most removed from the fascist past, namely the court decision in Germany to classify the AfD as a suspected case of anti-constitutional extremism and the parliamentary debate about the new law regarding historical memory in Spain, yield the fewest articles mentioning both the far-right populist party and a collective memory keyword (16 for Germany and 8 for Spain).

This indicates that, the more connected a public debate is to the fascist past, the more the media will report on the far-right populist party in connection with collective memory.

Future researchers could look at this phenomenon more closely and see if there are certain thematic trends when it comes to public discourse on far-right populism in connection to collective memory. Here it could be useful to consult a wider variety of media sources, to obtain a full view of reporting on collective memory and far-right populism, in order to identify trends and recurring themes.

Whereas the three German public debates are directly connected to the far-right populist party, the same is not the case for the public debates chosen for Spain. That is because there has not been a public debate in Spanish society in regard to comments made by Vox about the fascist past, although there have been several instances of Vox politicians praising former dictator Franco and the fascist branch of Franquismo (Bocanegra 2020). This also supports the theory that there is far less societal stigma surrounding the fascist past in Spain than there is in Germany. Two of the public debates, which were analyzed in this thesis for the case country of Germany, stemmed from comments made by AfD politician's directly in connection with the fascist past. The mere fact that a public debate arose from those comments shows that society is relatively united when it comes to the handling of the collective memory and how it should be addressed. Clearly the AfD politicians did not address the past in a way which society deemed acceptable, hence the public debate. In Spain no such reaction has been recorded in society as a whole, showing that this unity regarding how collective memory should be handled and addressed is not existent to the same degree as in Germany, a country with a collective responsibility.

Keywords

I identify 39 keywords pertaining to collective memory for Germany and 59 for Spain.

Although the dictionary used for the case of Spain contains more keywords than the one used for the analysis of Germany, the German case reveals more instances of the keywords being used (1132) than the Spanish case (919). However, this discrepancy is not staggering.

In my analysis of both German and Spanish newspaper articles, the most commonly used keyword is one that is clearly and directly linked to the fascist past. In the German articles, that is 'Nazi' (including: National socialism, Nazi-regime, Nazi-time and NS) and in the Spanish newspaper articles it is the name of the former fascist dictator himself: Franco. In the case of Spain, the two subsequent keywords in terms of frequency are also directly related to the dictator (Caudillo, Generalísimo)⁹.

This shows that references to the fascist past are not necessarily veiled but rather presented clearly in the articles included in my analysis, which indicates that collective memory is a present subject in both societies. Once again this indicates that the category of collective

⁹ Both were titles commonly used to refer to dictator Francisco Franco, indicating his high military and political status. Stanley G Payne, *The Franco Regime, 1936–1975* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2011) at 625.

cancellation defined by Caramani and Manucci, which is characterized by the absence of collective memory, is ill-fitted for cases where the fascist dictatorship emerged from within the country. Thus, I believe that the implementation of my own collective memory category (disputed collective memory) is justified and should be considered in future research.

A discrepancy between the countries becomes clear when looking at the distribution of keyword usage across the different timeframes.

In Germany the results are similar as those regarding the number of articles per timeframe, with the two timeframes surrounding the public debate about the comments made by AfD politicians presenting a significantly higher amount of keyword quotations (445 and 629) than the articles surrounding the public debate about the court decision (58 keyword quotations).

In the case of the Spanish newspaper articles, one timeframe starkly stands out against the others: 90 % of all keyword usages fall into the timeframe surrounding the exhumation of the remains of former dictator Franco. Another 7 % fall onto timeframe surrounding the approval of the exhumation and 3 % fall into the timeframe concerning the parliamentary debate regarding the new law of historic memory.

This shows that, although the topic of collective memory is present across all timeframes, the exhumation of the remains of the former dictator signifies a singular event when it comes to the intensity of collective memory debate in the country.

It indicates that, whilst in Germany the confrontation with the past is a more constant phenomenon, in Spain it is much less present, with the exception of special circumstances such as the exhumation of Franco.

This suggests that, in countries with a disputed collective memory, the societal debate about the fascist past is less pronounced than in those with a collective memory of collective responsibility, but it rises to the surface under special circumstances. Thus, Caramani and Manucci were not completely mistaken in their characterization of an “absence of collective memory” (2019: 1165) in cases of collective cancellation. There is indeed much less societal debate than in countries with collective responsibility, only that in countries that experienced a home-made fascist dictatorship there will inevitably be instances where the events of the past rise to the surface and become the subject of societal debate. An event such as the exhumation of the former dictator and the relocation of his remains will hardly be ignored by media and society, thus collective memory topics will naturally be present in these instances.

The above-mentioned findings for the German newspaper articles suggest that, in countries with a collective responsibility, working with the past is a strongly anchored process in society, which happens on a consistent basis. This is completely in line with both Caramani and Manucci's and Arts findings in their respective studies of a case country with a collective memory of collective responsibility. As already indicated in the name I have given the category, both Art and Caramani and Manucci find that these countries are defined by taking responsibility for the past, which results in a high degree of social stigma against far-right populism (Art 2006; Caramani and Manucci 2019). The key is that taking responsibility is a continuous process happening throughout society, which seems to be confirmed by my findings for the case country of Germany, where the collective memory topic is clearly and consistently present in the (conservative) media coverage of the public debates I analyzed. For my newly defined category of disputed collective memory, I would suggest more research to be conducted on the above-mentioned phenomenon of collective memory topics rising to the surface during singular events connected to the fascist past. For this research, certain countries in South America, such as Argentina and Chile, whose fascist dictatorships were heavily influenced by Falangism (Deutsch 1999), could be interesting cases to study.

Sentiment Analysis

When it comes to the main part of the analysis, the sentiment analysis, first discrepancies between the two case countries arise when identifying the object of analysis, namely sentences in the articles which contain a mention of the far-right populist party.

In the articles by FAZ and Die Welt, which are part of my analysis there are 745 sentences that mention the AfD.

In the articles from ABC and El Mundo, there are only 203 sentences which mention Vox. This translates to less than one third of the number of sentences mentioning the AfD in the German conservative newspapers.

This shows that, in the case of Germany, the far-right populist party is thematized much more frequently in connection with collective memory than in Spain.

This implies that, in a country with a collective responsibility, the issue of the fascist past is viewed by society as being much more interconnected with far-right populism than in a country with a disputed collective memory.

That seems in line with the theoretical definition given for collective responsibility: “(...) through processes of internal, bottom-up support for the re-elaboration that are shared (...)” (Caramani and Manucci 2019: 1164).

Media as a proxy for society participates in this process of re-elaboration of the past, which in this case entails thematizing the far-right populist party (AfD) in light of the re-elaboration of the Nazi-past. This is underlined by the number of articles mentioning the AfD alongside at least one keyword pertaining to collective memory, the most commonly used keyword being ‘Nazi’ (including: National socialism, Nazi-regime, Nazi-time and NS), the high number of instances the collective memory keywords are used and finally, the high number of sentences in these articles mentioning the AfD.

The results for Spain paint a different picture. The issue of the fascist past is indeed connected with the far-right populist party, but to a much lesser extent than in Germany. This is also in line with the definition given for disputed collective memory: “Various narratives exist in the public sphere, so no narrative is officially stigmatized.”

In this case, the public sphere is the mainstream conservative public represented by ABC and El Mundo and whilst an interrelation between the collective memory topic and the far-right populist party seems to be present, it is much less pronounced and remains inconsistent.

Firstly, a bit over one third of the articles that mention Vox also contain collective memory keywords. Secondly, over 90 % of those keywords fall into one single timeframe, namely when the remains of former dictator Franco are exhumated. Thirdly, in the articles which include keywords, the far-right populist party is only mentioned in a total of 203 sentences, less than a third of the sentences mentioning the AfD in the German newspaper articles.

All of this indicates that a disputed collective memory leads to society thematizing far-right populist parties in connection with collective memory to a much lesser extent than countries with a collective memory of collective responsibility.

When it comes to the results of the sentiment analysis itself, the large majority (78.26 %) of sentences mentioning the AfD are classified as presenting a negative sentiment. Almost all the remaining sentences are classified as neutral (21.61 %), with one single sentence being categorized as showing a positive sentiment, which most likely is due to a mistake in the sentiment analysis (see under results).

The overall results of the sentiment analysis of the German newspaper articles match the

results for the specific timeframes. In each of the three timeframes over three fourths of the sentences present a negative sentiment and the remaining sentences (with exception of the one outlier) are categorized as having a neutral sentiment.

The sentiment analysis provides consistent results over the course of the three public debates, indicating that both Arts and Caramani and Manucci's findings of collective responsibility leading to a high degree of social stigma towards far-right populism and thus having a blocking effect on the far-right populist party are reproduced in this analysis.

Considering the results of the sentiment analysis conducted on the articles published in FAZ and Die Welt, I see my first hypothesis confirmed:

In a society with a collective memory of collective responsibility, the social stigma towards far-right populism is high, leading to media reporting about the far-right populist party in a mostly negative way on subjects linked to collective memory.

Furthermore, this hypothesis is confirmed over the three separate timeframes, indicating that this is a consistent phenomenon in a country with a collective responsibility.

When it comes to the case country of Spain, the sentiment analysis shows that overall, a bit over half the sentences mentioning Vox are neutral. 38 % of the sentences are classified as having a negative sentiment and roughly 5 % present a positive sentiment.

These results are much more dispersed than those of the German analysis, nonetheless there is an overall prevalence of neutral sentiment towards the far-right populist party in articles mentioning collective memory keywords.

Interestingly, the sentiment analysis results vary significantly when looking at the three different timeframes.

The articles in the timeframe surrounding the exhumation of Franco, which contain 90 % of the total keyword mentions and also include over half the sentences mentioning Vox, present the highest percentage of both neutral (63 %) and positive sentiment (8%) out of the three timeframes and subsequently also presents the lowest percentage of sentences classified as having a negative sentiment (29 %).

This is interesting because, as seen above, this timeframe is by far the most significant when it comes to collective memory being thematized.

The timeframe surrounding the parliamentary debate about the exhumation is the only one that yields over 50 % of negative sentiment sentences. It also has the lowest percentage of positive sentiment sentences (2 %).

The timeframe surrounding the parliamentary debate about the new law of historical memory mimics the overall sentiment analysis results most closely, yielding 58 % neutral, 39 % negative and 3 % positive sentences.

This somewhat reproduces the inconsistent results Caramani and Manucci found in their study regarding “collective cancellation” (see under literature review).

The results are also in line with my second hypothesis: In a society with a disputed collective memory, the social stigma towards far-right populism is low, leading to the media reporting about the far-right populist party in a neutral or mixed way on subjects linked to collective memory.

Especially having in mind that the timeframe which is most connected to collective memory shows the highest prevalence of neutral sentiment, with over two thirds of the sentences mentioning Vox during that timeframe falling under that category.

Unlike in the case country with a collective responsibility, the country with a disputed collective memory does not seem to present a blocking effect towards far-right populism, when it comes to media reporting on issues connected with collective memory. Consequently, this also indicates that there is a very low degree of social stigma towards far-right populism in a country with a disputed collective memory, once again in stark contrast to the very high degree of social stigma present in a country with collective responsibility.

Summary and limitations

In summary, the analysis suggests that in a country with a collective responsibility (i.e. Germany), social stigma towards the far-right populist party is high, leading to a blocking effect shown in the example of media through a consistent majorly negative reporting on the far-right populist party when writing about topics connected to collective memory.

For the case country with a disputed collective memory (i.e. Spain), no such blocking effect can be found, with the media mostly reporting on the far-right populist party in a neutral way.

The results are inconsistent throughout the different analysed timeframes with the most significant timeframe regarding collective memory also being the most neutral one in Spain.

For both case countries, my findings are in line with those of Caramani and Manucci, with the exception of my new categorization of Spain as a case of home-made fascism with a disputed collective memory, because it does not completely fit into the category of collective cancellation.

Since I find that in this case country a societal debate about the fascist past does indeed exist, I recommend that further researchers add my category of disputed collective memory to the four categories defined by Caramani and Manucci and apply it to those countries that fall under the case of having had a home-made fascist regime but which otherwise comply with the characteristics of the “collective cancellation” category.

The field of sentiment analysis has come a long way to this day, but there is yet much improvement to be made until it is a completely reliable tool for measuring the attitudes expressed in written texts. It would be interesting to conduct the same analysis with a sentiment analysis software developed in 5 to 10 years and compare the results. The possible mistakes in the sentiment analysis I pointed out in my results section, with the starkest one being the wrongly classified positive sentence in the German conservative media analysis, could be a good reference point to see if sentiment analysis software has improved in 5 or 10 years’ time.

Furthermore, the extent of my analysis is limited, due to the scope of the thesis. I would suggest implementing the same analysis on a larger scale, maybe including more newspapers and more timeframes to improve the accuracy of the results. Other types of sources, such as parliamentary speeches by mainstream conservative politicians or opinion polls conducted on conservative-voting parts of the population could capture other aspects of society than the media and thus contribute to the results and increase reliability. Especially since what is written in the media is always filtered by journalists and editors and thus might not fully capture society’s views.

I believe this would be particularly interesting in the case country with a disputed collective memory, since the results of the analysis showed to be inconsistent, especially across the different timeframes.

Lastly it would be interesting to extend this analysis onto case countries that fall under the other collective memory categories, such as “victimization” or “heroization” and examine if and how the collective memory in these countries affects conservative media reporting on far-right populist parties

When it comes to the generalizability of my findings, I believe there are also countries outside of the European context, that would be interesting to study in this light, such as the above mentioned South American fascist dictatorships. My chosen methodology and theoretical context could be easily applied to other countries, due to the existence of print media across

the entire world and my new defined collective memory category taking into account cases of home-made fascism that do not fall under collective responsibility. Though the fact that many languages are not yet included in the sentiment dictionaries could hinder the application of this research to other case countries. Nonetheless, the South American countries I mentioned above, could be studied, since Spanish is included in the sentiment analysis software I employed and shows to produce reliable results.

In the European context, it would be interesting to test the findings on cases of home-made communist dictatorships. This would imply a similar study on mainstream leftist newspapers and left-wing populist parties or communist/socialist parties. Depending on the findings, one might discover similarities in the effect collective memory has on society's views in countries which experienced home-made fascist or communist dictatorships. Alternately, if differences in the findings become clear, it would be interesting to study the underlying causes and theorize them.

Conclusion

This thesis aims to contribute to the yet limited research conducted on the relationship between collective memory and far-right populism in Europe. I examine how the collective memory narrative of a country with a fascist past influences the way society views far-right populist parties. To answer this research question, I look at conservative newspaper articles in my two case countries, Germany and Spain, during public debates related to the fascist past and conduct a keyword search and sentiment analysis.

The choice of Germany is well established in the collective memory research. I include the case country of Spain because there is no noteworthy research to be found in this regard on a national level.

The methodological approach of sentiment analysis of conservative media has not been conducted in the field of collective memory research.

In conclusion I find that, in a country with a fascist past and a presentation of collective responsibility, the collective memory narrative leads to a high stigma towards far-right populism, which in turn leads to a mostly negative stance by society towards far-right populist parties.

On the other hand, I find that, in a country with a fascist past which has a disputed collective memory, the collective memory narrative leads to a low stigma towards far-right populism, translating into a mostly neutral stance by society towards far-right populist parties.

In both cases, the collective memory forms part of the public discussion and is interconnected to varying degrees with the far-right populist party. In the case of Spain, these findings contradict Caramani & Manucci`s (2019) definition of collective cancellation (the category that best fitted Spain). According to them, collective memory would not form part of the public discussion and would not be present in society. Thus, this reinforces my choice of defining a new sub-category of collective memory, namely disputed collective memory, which can be applied to countries with a case of home-made fascism which fit the characteristics of collective cancellation but do indeed thematize collective memory in the public discussion.

I choose to conduct a sentiment analysis of conservative newspaper articles, because the media is commonly employed in research as a proxy for society and when it comes to far-right populism the leftist newspapers would possibly by default hold a negative stance towards a far-right populist party. Furthermore, sentiment analysis offers a clear and

comprehensive tool to categorize large amounts of textual data according to attitudes, making the results easily interpretable.

For the case country with a collective responsibility (Germany), I expected to find a reinforcement of the findings by Caramani and Manucci (2019) and Art (2006), namely that it leads to a high degree of social stigma and thus a blocking effect towards far-right populism. This was ultimately in line with my findings.

For the case country with a disputed collective memory (Spain), I expected to find Caramani and Manucci's inconclusive results reciprocated. I found that there is no blocking effect towards far-right populism to be found. Furthermore, the results were inconsistent across the different timelines, backing up Caramani and Manucci's findings.

I believe that my thesis contributes to the growing field of collective memory research, by presenting new findings and offering a novel category for collective memory, that can be implemented in further research.

I recommend this new category of disputed collective memory to be implemented by researchers when studying a case country with a form of home-made fascism that otherwise falls under the category of collective cancellation (defined by Caramani and Manucci (2019)). Furthermore, I believe that more sentiment analysis should be conducted on different sources, such as political speeches and party manifestos, including case countries that fall under the two other categories of collective cancellation (victimization and heroization).

Since the sentiment analysis software is not yet completely reliable, I recommend repeating the analysis conducted in this study in 5 to 10 years' time.

My research looks to understand how the past of a country influences society's views on far-right populism. This directly influences the place these parties take in the political spectrum and can be an explanatory factor for their political performance. It is important to conduct research in this field, as it is imperative to understand the intricacies affecting political outcomes in a Europe that is rapidly changing and experiencing the rise of new political movements, namely far-right populist parties, which endanger democracy and the project of European unification.

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Appendix

1.1 Keywords by David Art

Anti-Semitismus, Auschwitz, Befreiung (liberation), Bewältigung (mastering, often of the past), Bitburg, Erinnerung (memory, commemoration), Fassbinder, Gedächtnis (memory, commemoration), Gedenken (remembrance), Gedenktag (day of remembrance), Geschichte (history), Goldhagen, Historikerstreit (Historian's Dispute), Hitler, Holocaust, Kriegsende (end of the war), Mahnmal (memorial), Mai 8, National Sozialismus, Niederlage (defeat), Normalität (normality), NS (abbreviation for National Socialism), NS-Prozess (trials of former Nazis), Revisionisten (revisionists), Schlussstrich (a line under the past), Vergangenheit (the past), Vergessen (forgetting), Versöhnung (reconciliation), Vertriebene (the German expellees after World War II), Waffen-SS, Walser, Wehrmacht, Wehrmachtausstellung

1.2 Keyword list for Germany

Initial keywords	Keywords found in the articles (partly through inductive approach) From most to least common	Initial keywords translated into English	Keywords found in the articles translated into English
<i>Anti-Semitismus, Auschwitz, Befreiung, Bewältigung, Demokratie, Erinnerung, Gedächtnis, Gedenken, Gedenktag, Geschichte, Hitler, Holocaust, Kollektivschuld, Konzentrationslager, Krieg, Mahnmal, Nationalsozialismus, Nazi, Niederlage, NS, NS-Prozess, Opfer, Revisionisten, Schuld, Verbrechen, Vergangenheit, Vergessen, Versöhnung, Waffen-</i>	<i>Nazis (Nationalsozialismus, Nazi-regime, NS, Nazizeit, NSDAP), Geschichte, Holocaust, Denkmal (Mahnmal), Juden, Demokratie, Bagatellisierung (Relativierung, Verharmlosung), Hitler, Krieg (zweiter Weltkrieg), Gedenken, Opfer, Verbrechen, Verantwortung, Erinnerungskultur, Antisemitisch, Völkermord (Massenmord), Ermordung, Schuld, Auschwitz, wehrhafte Demokratie, Faschismus, menschenfeindlich, Diktatur, Drittes Reich, Jahrestag, Gräueltat, Menschenwürde, Revision</i>	<i>Anti-Semitism, Auschwitz, liberation, mastering (often of the past), democracy, memory, commemoration, remembrance, day of remembrance, history, Hitler, Holocaust, collective guilt, concentration camp, war, memorial, national socialism, Nazi, NS (abbreviation for national socialism), trials against former Nazis, victims, revisionists, guilt,</i>	<i>Nazis (National Socialism, Nazi regime, NS, Nazi period, NSDAP), history, Holocaust, memorial, Jews, democracy, trivialization, Hitler, war (second world war), commemoration, victims, crime, responsibility, remembrance culture, anti-Semitic, genocide (mass murder), murder, guilt, Auschwitz,</i>

<i>SS, Wehrmacht, Zweiter Weltkrieg,</i>	<i>(Geschichtsrevisionisten), Bewältigungspolitik, Shoah, Demokratiefeinde, Vernichtung, KZ, Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung, geschichtsvergessen, Befreiung, totalitär, Unrechtsregime, Gewaltherrschaft</i>	<i>crimes, the past, reconciliation, Waffen-SS, Wehrmacht, second Word War</i>	<i>defensible democracy, fascism, misanthropic, dictatorship, Third Reich, anniversary, atrocity, human dignity, revision (historical revisionists), coping policy, Shoah, enemies of democracy, extermination, concentration camp, coming to terms with the past, forgetting history, liberation, totalitarian, unjust regime, tyranny</i>
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1.3 Keyword list for Spain

Initial keywords	Keywords found in the articles (partly through inductive approach) From most to least common	Initial keywords translated into English	Keywords found in the articles translated into English
<i>Amnistía, Asociación de Familiares Inhumados en el Valle de Los Caídos, asociaciones de víctimas, campo de concentración, conmemoración, crímenes, delitos, democracia, desaparecidos, dictadura, El Escorial (municipality where the valley of the fallen is located), El Valle de los Caídos, exhumación, extracción, fascismo,</i>	<i>Franco (Caudillo, Generalísimo), exhumación, Valle de los Caídos, democracia, restos, dictador, franquismo, Familia Franco, historia, pasado, Memoria histórica, Ley de memoria histórica, víctimas, traslado, basilica, tumba, Transición, Guerra Civil, 40 años, dictadura, fosas, exaltación, memoria, golpista, Falange, homenaje, reparación,</i>	<i>Amnesty, Association of Relatives Buried in the Valley of the Fallen, associations of victims, concentration camp, commemoration, crimes, crimes, democracy, disappeared, dictatorship, El Escorial (municipality where the valley of the fallen is located), El Valle de los Caídos, exhumation, extraction, fascism, Franco, Francisco</i>	<i>Franco (Caudillo, Generalísimo), exhumation, Valle de los Caídos, democracy, remains, dictator, Franco, Franco Family, history, past, Historical Memory, Historical Memory Law, victims, transfer, basilica, tomb, Transition, Civil War, 40 years, dictatorship, graves, exaltation, memory, coup, Falange, homage, reparation, coffin,</i>

<p><i>Franco, Francisco Franco, Fundación Francisco Franco, franquismo, Guerra Civil, impunidad, inmunidad, justicia, ley de amnistía, ley de Memoria Democrática, ley de Memoria Histórica, memoria, monumento, reparación, Republicanos, restos, transición, transición democrática, víctimas</i></p>	<p><i>féretro, Muertos, Tejero, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, justicia, entierro, banderas preconstitucionales, reconciliación, Fundación Franco, fascismo, 30.000, monumento, desaparecidos, apología, régimen Franquista, 78, bandera republicana, banderas franquistas, antifascistas, himno de la legión, Escorial, tirano, antifranquistas, genocida, torturadores, republicano, 23-F, fusilados, totalitarismo, Hitler, 1936, Segunda República</i></p>	<p><i>Franco, Francisco Franco Foundation, Francoism, Civil War, impunity, immunity, justice, amnesty law, Democratic Memory law, Historical Memory law, memory, monument, reparation, Republicans, remains, transition, democratic transition, victims</i></p>	<p><i>Dead, Tejero, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, justice, burial, preconstitutional flags, reconciliation, Franco Foundation, fascism, 30. 000, monument, disappeared, apology, Franco regime, 78, republican flag, Francoist flags, antifascists, legion hymn, Escorial, tyrant, anti-Franco, genocidal, torturers, republican, 23-F, shot, totalitarianism, Hitler, 1936, Second Republic</i></p>
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