



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Frame evolution: The case of the German PEGIDA movement**

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### **Citation**

Wies, N. (2022). *Frame evolution: The case of the German PEGIDA movement*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3378327>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

30.05.2022

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Second reader: Dr. M. S. Spirova

**Bachelor's thesis**

**Frame evolution: The case of the German PEGIDA movement**

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S2474883

**Word Count: 7999**

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## **1. Introduction**

The German anti-immigrant movement PEGIDA, created in 2014, may be one of the most controversial social movements of our time. Not only has it reportedly led to a polarisation of the German public, but also the characterisation of the movement has become a contested subject in the academic sphere (Connolly, 2015b). At the same time, however, scholars have agreed on one salient theme within the movement: framing by PEGIDA. Although prior research on framing by PEGIDA has been substantial in terms of quantity, it presents clear limitations. Rather than investigating the big picture, scholars studying PEGIDA framing have solely focused on narrow frames and limited their research temporally to framing in 2014/2015. Accordingly, this paper will focus on one aspect that has been unaccounted for: frame evolution. Consequently, we will try to answer the following research question: How has framing by PEGIDA evolved over time? Building upon some of the specific frames utilized by previous research, this paper will employ a single case study on framing by PEGIDA, focusing on the years 2015 and 2018.

## **2. Literature review**

Previous research focusing on framing by the German PEGIDA movement, PEGIDA being an acronym for ‘Patriotic Citizens against the Islamization of the Occident’, has been substantial in terms of quantity. However, despite the wide array on different topics within PEGIDA framing, ultimately, prior exploration has remained widely one-dimensional on the following grounds: the narrowness of the themes and the limitation of the temporal dimension.

Firstly, past research on PEGIDA has been diverse in the range of the specific topics emphasised, which has led the different papers to become narrow, focusing only on these distinct themes rather than the big picture. For example, the use of memory, i.e., the inclusion of historical references within framing, is a salient theme. Accordingly, PEGIDA makes use of mnemonic symbols to cast themselves or their opposition in a certain light (Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020; Volk, 2022). One instance of this is the appropriation of the phrase “Wir sind das Volk” during rallies, a slogan, which was used by protestors during the original Monday demonstrations in 1989 and directed at the government of the German Democratic Republic (Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020). By making historical references such as these, PEGIDA is then able to frame itself as a disempowered group justifiably resisting a totalitarian dictatorship (Volk, 2022). Although this theme and the corresponding argument are compelling, they unfortunately do not allow for general, overarching implications about

framing by PEGIDA as the use of memory presumably only constitutes a fraction of framing by the movement.

Similarly, in terms of temporal space, hardly any papers on PEGIDA framing thematise any year other than 2014 and 2015. On one hand it makes sense; the years 2014 and 2015 were the peak of the movement, during which they attracted up to 25,000 participants (Asgharpourmasouleh, Fattahzadeh, Mayerhoffer & Jan Lorenz, 2020). On the other hand, these years were the beginning of PEGIDA and cannot be taken as an accurate representation for the movement's framing as a whole. Relevant research solely focusing on framing during one point in time require then that the movement is static, which is rarely the case as there is evidence that if social movements do not adapt, they tend to disappear (Ajala, 2021).

Nam (2021) presents one of the two rare examples of research taking into account evolved framing by PEGIDA as they investigate framing in the context of the refugee crisis, the climate change crisis, and the Covid-19 pandemic. However, this is solely done on framing regarding identity formation, being then again one of the papers which only emphasise narrow framing themes. Similarly, Bitschnau, Lichtenstein and Fähnrich (2021) conduct a qualitative content analysis, investigating PEGIDA framing from 2014 to 2016 in the context of the refugee crisis and ultimately identify two master frames, namely *Fears of Islamization* and *Perils of Asylum*. Although the authors detect a change in framing within the evolution of the *Perils of Asylum* master frame, the article's data unfortunately does not exceed the year of 2016, making it unsuitable to discover a long-term evolution.

As frame evolution within the PEGIDA movement has yet to be properly addressed by relevant research, the following research question can be formulated: How has framing by PEGIDA evolved over time?

### **3. Theoretical framework**

In the literature review, we were able to identify a gap when it comes to the research on framing by the PEGIDA movement. In the past, scholars have mostly investigated narrow topics within framing as well as limited their research to the first years of PEGIDA, which has made it hard to account for a potential frame evolution. Especially because Bitschnau, Lichtenstein and Fähnrich (2021) were able to detect a change in PEGIDA framing within two years of the movement, I hypothesise that PEGIDA has undergone a frame evolution.

### ***3.1 What is framing?***

Generally, framing refers to the ways humans communicate and socially construct the reality surrounding them (Tannen, 2009). Accordingly, framing used by a social actor helps attribute meaning and interpretations to events that said social actors find themselves in (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Framing, however, does not just refer to individual perceptions of the world. In the context of social movements, collective action frames are not only meant to offer a certain perspective of distinct events, but they primarily also aim to increase support for a movement's cause (Benford & Snow, 2000). More than that, though, via framing social movements hope to inspire and guide action in the form of mobilisation within the movement. Likewise, framing can also help movement leaders justify and legitimise certain tactics and approaches as the necessary response. Even though competent leadership is vital in a social movement as a whole, and has an undeniably crucial role within frame alignment, framing is not just an assimilation of individual perceptions and views, that other people might adopt, it is a product of "negotiating shared meaning" (Benford & Snow, 2000; Morris & Staggenborg, 2004). Thus, there needs to be a consensus on the perceived reality if there is to be a certain collective action.

Usually, collective action frames exhibit three core framing tasks: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing (Benford & Snow, 2000). Diagnostic framing is essentially constructing the perceived reality. Here, problematic social conditions are highlighted as well as who is seen as responsible for these grievances. Prognostic framing delineates the necessary response to alleviate the outlined unfavourable conditions. Motivational framing provides the motivation and urge to act upon this potential response. As this theory to collective action framing is part of a wider social movement literature and has been frequently used by many different scholars, it makes sense to follow this paradigm in the analysis.

### ***3.2 Frame evolution***

As we have established, social movements need to adapt if they want to survive (Ajala, 2021). This includes tactical innovation, for example, but it can also be manifested through frame evolution. Scholars on frame evolution have identified four types of fundamental changes within framing: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation (Benford & Snow, 2000).

Frame bridging denotes the connection of two separate but ideologically harmonious existing frames regarding a certain issue (Benford & Snow, 2000). This frame-bridging can

happen on an organisational level, like e.g., between two social movement organisations, which are more or less fighting for the same cause, or on an individual one. One example of this were the West German activists opposing the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, who managed to bridge their frames with those of peace, ecology, women's, neighbourhood, and labour movement groups and joined forces in their mobilisation against the aforementioned institutions.

Frame amplification refers to the “idealization, embellishment, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs” (Benford & Snow, 2000). Since a frame needs to appeal to a potential adherent of a social movement, certain movements amplify existing cultural values and beliefs in order to legitimise their cause. An example of this were the white separatists in the 90s, who wanted to move away from the stigma of white supremacy by using terms such as “love”, “pride”, and “heritage-preservation”.

Frame extension delineates the process of expanding beyond the primary interests and objective of the social movement in order to address grievances that are salient for new potential constituents and gain access to an “untapped market” (Benford & Snow, 2000). This, however, has been proven to lead to disputes within a movement and can ultimately be the cause for a social movement's decline.

Frame transformation is the transformation of old understandings or the generation of new ones (Benford & Snow, 2000). The most salient example of this was a Black feminist collective's attempt to subvert traditional perspectives and myths regarding rape by making use of data via FBI statistics and social science research, through which they gained empirical credibility to their cause.

As I hypothesise that there has indeed been a frame evolution within PEGIDA, I will be employing these different frame alignment processes to refer to any potential change within PEGIDA framing.

### ***3.3 PEGIDA framing literature***

Although PEGIDA framing has been investigated in static terms rather than dynamic ones, literature on this aspect is not sparse. By considering prior research on PEGIDA framing and covering themes that have been identified through this process, I am able to build upon earlier discovery of salient frames in the PEGIDA context.

a. *Fear of Islamisation and Perils of Asylum*

Seeing as anti-immigration and anti-Islam sentiments have been at the forefront of the PEGIDA movement since its very beginning, it is unsurprising that Islamophobia and xenophobia have become central themes in PEGIDA framing (Connolly, 2015a). In relevant literature, both of these themes have been referred to as master frames (Bitschnau, Lichtenstein & Fähnrich, 2021). Master frames are catch-all, generic frames, from which more specific collective action frames might originate (Benford & Snow, 2000).

The researched *Fear of Islamisation* master frame includes five more specific frames: *Cultural Inferiority*, *Historical Antagonism*, *Unwillingness to Integrate*, *Dangers of Infiltration*, and *Terrorism and Violence* (Bitschnau et al., 2021). As cultural concerns are one of the Leitmotifs of the PEGIDA movement, it makes sense that cultures pertaining to Muslim values are seen as inferior in comparison to European beliefs and values. The narrative of this *Cultural Inferiority* frame presents Islam as primitive by highlighting how certain minorities like women or LGBTQ+ individuals are treated in Islamic countries. The next frame of *Historical Antagonism* follows the same idea. This theme underlines the historical incompatibility between Christian and Muslim values, again building on the idea that Christian societies have progressed into secularism and civilisations, while Islamic countries have been stuck in the barbaric past. The presumption is that whenever Christian and Muslim beliefs meet, there will be an inevitable big clash. The following frames of *Unwillingness to Integrate* and *Dangers of Infiltration* are connected in the sense where they contradict each other. In a first instance, PEGIDA leaders lament the fact that Muslims are not willing to assimilate themselves to European culture. By immigrating, Muslims only import their own values, which is bound to put “real” Germans in danger by bringing in a culture of sharia law and honour killings. In the eyes of PEGIDA, efforts to promote integration are in vain as they are first and foremost seemingly loyal to their Muslim values and culture. Ironically enough though, at the same time, according to the *Dangers of Infiltration* frame, PEGIDA does not want Muslims to integrate because they believe that even the most successful assimilation is only done under the pretence of infiltrating German institutions. These “moles” are thus placed in schools, political parties and media channels in order to prepare for the inevitable Islamic takeover. Last but certainly not least, Muslims are connected to *Terrorism and Violence*. In the context of this frame, PEGIDA leaders link violence as an aspect that stands in the centre of Islam and the Quran. Moreover, direct instances of terrorism by jihadists are mentioned in order to affirm this theory of inevitable violence.

The *Perils of Asylum* master frame includes five different particular frames as well: *Asylum Seekers as Economic Burden*, *Asylum Seekers as Security Threat*, *Asylum Seekers as Cultural Danger*, *Asylum Seekers and Political Elites*, and *Asylum Seekers in the Media* (Bitschnau et al., 2021). First, in the *Asylum Seekers as Economic Burden* frame, the financial support for asylum seekers is often contrasted with economic grievances of the German people. This narrative pushes the idea that refugees are undeserving of economic support, not only because there are Germans who need financial support just as much, but also because they simply have not earned it. Under the *Asylum Seekers as Security Threat* frame, Islamic terrorists enter Europe under the pretence of the refugee crisis by posing as Syrian asylum seekers, thereby gaining easy access to the very continent they want to ultimately destroy; the political elite is naïve not to think of this possibility. *Asylum Seekers as Cultural Danger* meanwhile addresses the idea that the presence and increase of asylum seekers in Germany poses a real and imminent threat to the face of German society. By allowing refugees to enter, they are changing the “ontological essence of Germanness” and thus the nation. Lastly, the last two frames focus on the elite. The media as well as political leaders, who support the open asylum laws and policies are found to be benefit from it. Either they want to replace their electorate, which has become too sceptical of them, or alternatively they might work out a strategy to cut the salaries of low-skilled natives. In one way or another the elite is displaying treasonous behaviour, and Germans end up being the ones losing out.

#### *b. Collective memory*

Another master frame that is crucial within PEGIDA research is the theme of *Collective Memory* (Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020). This includes, e.g., the frame *Democratic Resistance against Leftist Dictatorship*, as well as other frames referencing German history (Volk, 2022). Corresponding frames heavily rely on evoking historical references of courageous German citizens who have in the past resisted dictatorship, essentially not only drawing a comparison between the current government and past German dictatorships, but also by underlining German heroism, motivating the addressees to act. Be it Eastern Germany during the 1989 protests against the socialist dictatorship, or the German resistance during the Third Reich; what is crucial is addressing a collective memory of heroism and resistance, and preferably successfully linking historical events and contemporary grievances. A good example of this is PEGIDA’s referencing of Monday demonstrations, which has been replicated from the original Monday demonstrations under the East German socialist regime (Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020). By referencing past oppression, PEGIDA leaders aim to

make a case for a present state of affairs which is just as repressive as the socialist dictatorship. This is because, according to the frame *Democratic Resistance against Leftist Dictatorship*, right now there is also a leftist-totalitarian dictatorship in process, which needs to be challenged.

#### 4. Methods

In order to potentially identify a frame evolution within PEGIDA, this paper will make use of a single case study, framing by PEGIDA being the dependent variable investigated. Recalling that framing is essentially socially constructing and conveying a perceived reality, the dependent variable will be divided into three general parts: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing (Benford & Snow, 2000). Again, diagnostic framing refers to perceived grievances as well as identifying and constructing the enemy responsible for said grievances, prognostic framing outlines the response needed in order to alleviate the current undesirable conditions, and motivational framing is used in order to inspire addressees to act according to the necessary measures highlighted through the prognostic framing. Moreover, prior research has also outlined several master frames, which will help guide my analysis section: *Perils of Asylum*, *Fear of Islamization*, and *Collective Memory* (Bitschnau et al., 2021, Richardson-Little & Merrill, 2020).

Since this paper is attempting to thematise a frame evolution, it is necessary to analyse framing from two different points in time and compare them. Thus, I have chosen 2015 and 2018 as the two years being investigated. First, since PEGIDA was only formed in October of 2014, 2015 is the first full year of PEGIDA activity. Moreover, 2015 can be seen as a crucial year for the movement, as they experienced an all-time high on January 12 with 25,000 protestors (Asgharpourmasouleh et al., 2020). 2018, meanwhile, was rather turbulent for PEGIDA. Not only were they experiencing a decline in the movement, which might be reflected during their frame articulation, but it was also the year of the violent Chemnitz protests (Deutsche Welle, 2018b). Lastly, 2018 was the second to last year without Covid-19 measures, which would go on to limit the freedom of assembly, thus limiting PEGIDA demonstrations. In between the distinct years of interest to our paper are three years, enough to account for a potential frame evolution as proven by Bitschnau, Lichtenstein, and Fähnrich (2021), who were able to identify a change in PEGIDA framing with only a two-year time difference.

In terms of data collection, 11 speeches for 2015 and 11 speeches for 2018 will be analysed, hence 22 speeches in total. This number was chosen due to reasons of accessibility, as 2015

did not have as many easily obtainable speeches as 2018, as well as due to feasibility concerns, since I had to watch all of them in their entirety. As the speeches are all exclusively made in German, I have translated the excerpts used in the analysis into English. One aspect to the data collection process, which might seem like a limitation, is that for the two different years some of the speakers may vary. Considering that two crucial PEGIDA speakers, Tatjana Festerling and Kathrin Oertel, left the movement after – or for the latter even during – 2015, it was impossible to both have the quantity in terms of speeches and the same speakers doing them. Nonetheless, even though different speakers might frame differently, all of the speakers but one (Dutch politician Geert Wilders) were recurring within PEGIDA framing, meaning that they were given a platform repeatedly and approved by other PEGIDA leaders to partake in the framing process. Hence, a change in PEGIDA speakers should not interfere with the analysis as we are merely interested in how framing changes, not why. In 2015, the speakers were Lutz Bachmann, Siegfried Däbritz, Götz Kubitschek, Tatjana Festerling, Kathrin Oertel, and Geert Wilders. In 2018, the speakers were Lutz Bachmann, Siegfried Däbritz, Götz Kubitschek, Wolfgang Taufkirch, Jürgen Elsässer, as well as AfD politicians Björn Höcke and Andre Poggenburg.

For the most part, the speeches were held at PEGIDA rallies in Dresden, however certain speeches were held by central and permanent PEGIDA leaders like Bachmann or Däbritz at other protests, like e.g. Bachmann at a PEGIDA rally in Munich. Since these speeches are done by speakers representing PEGIDA, they are still relevant for this paper, regardless of whether they are strictly done in Dresden.

The data collection process happened exclusively over the video-sharing platform YouTube, onto which all of the analysed speeches had been previously uploaded. Although the videos have all been uploaded online with a date and acceptable quality, most were taken from PEGIDA participants and uploaded privately, rather than done so by PEGIDA officials, which explains the unconventional channel names in the references. Some videos were, however, also uploaded by official accounts, such as the AfD Thüringen did for Höcke's first speech at PEGIDA, or like it is the case for the PEGIDA livestream (AfD Thüringen, 2018; PEGIDA live, 2018).

## 5. Analysis

As this paper's research question is interested in a potential frame evolution within PEGIDA framing and theorises that there has indeed been one, it is necessary to compare framing from at least two different years. First, we will look at framing in 2015, and then 2018. Primarily, however, it is necessary to present a small background on PEGIDA as a movement. The movement finds its beginning in October 2014, when Lutz Bachmann, who has been one of the most crucial PEGIDA leaders throughout the years, forms a Facebook group of the identical name (Popp & Wassermann, 2015). A few days after, the first Monday demonstration happens in Dresden, this of course being reminiscent of the Monday demonstrations against the German Democratic Republic. The Islamophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments, however, resonate not only within Germany, so that soon several copies of the Dresden-originating movement spring up all over the country – e.g., LEGIDA in Leipzig –, but also across Western Europe, as there are soon offshoots in England, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and Austria (Berntzen & Weisskircher, 2015). The opposition's judgement is harsh, and they cannot escape the stigma of the Nazi label, despite constant reiteration that they do not ascribe themselves to a Nazi ideology. This has however been relatively unsuccessful, especially as, despite the typical PEGIDA supporter being ordinary, middle class, well educated, employed with above-average income men, neo-Nazis have been reported to participate in the movement (Pfeifer, 2015; Salzborn, 2016)

### 5.1 PEGIDA in 2015

2015 was a defining year for PEGIDA. Not only did PEGIDA reach its peak in movement participation right at the beginning of the year on 12 January with an estimated 25,000 participants but it was also the year of the “refugee crisis”, which PEGIDA was then able to instrumentalise for their cause (Asgharpourmasouleh et al., 2020; Salzborn, 2016).

#### *a. Diagnostic framing*

Diagnostic framing identifies the present, frequently undesirable conditions for the target demographic (Benford & Snow, 2000). Not only does this include perceived grievances, like an unfavourable economic situation, but the identification of the responsible actor(s) for said grievances as well. PEGIDA's framed grievances in 2015 can be divided into three categories: culture, economics, and security.

On 13 April, Geert Wilders, a Dutch politician and right-wing populist, addresses cultural concerns at a PEGIDA rally: “Our own culture is the best culture. And immigrants

need to accept our values and not vice versa” (PVVpers, 2015). Although this statement also implies a certain normative standard about how it should be, this excerpt highlights how PEGIDA views the present conditions in German society, making use of the *Unwillingness to Integrate* frame and perpetuating the belief that (Muslim) immigrants do not attempt cultural assimilation, instead imposing their own values upon natives. During the same speech Wilders goes on to say: “We want that our own Judaeo-Christian culture remains the leading culture in our country.” One vital aspect of this statement is the determination of Western culture as a Judaeo-Christian one, reinforcing the idea of a *Historical Antagonism* between Christianity and Judaism, and Islam. Accordingly, values pertaining to either side are inherently incompatible to its ideological counterpart. This antagonism is also especially relevant to the frame *Cultural Inferiority*, which is used in the following excerpt: “In the last decades, Europe has been confronted with burkas, honour killings, female genital mutilation, polygamy, and the killing of apostates.” Not only does this framing incite sentiments of *Unwillingness to Integrate* and *Historical Antagonism*, but this statement is also meant to show how barbaric and unmoral Muslim values and culture are, which is why it cannot be allowed to dominate Western countries.

The frame *Asylum Seekers as Economic Burden* is frequently used to highlight economic grievances of Germans. On 1 June, Tatjana Festerling, PEGIDA leader as well as a candidate to the mayoral elections in Dresden, states: “Every day, fathers and mothers work hard but barely make ends meet because taxes empty their pockets. And surprisedly, they take notice of what the government is willing to use that money for” (WOMENinISLAM1, 2015). Earlier, on 9 March, Festerling claims: “The fight against the political right and the migration industry are great for the job market, that keeps requiring to be fed so that state funds flow” (DresdenAktuell, 2015b). During the same speech, Festerling further identifies where Germans’ tax money is going towards: “We are unfortunately not the ones for whom the checks flutter into the wallets, the smartphones into the pockets [...]” These quotes all taken together promote the idea that asylum seekers are undeserving of the financial support they receive, as well as the belief that it should rather be invested in a manner, from which hardworking Germans would benefit.

One of the most salient themes within PEGIDA framing are concerns about security. During the rally on 12 January, Kathrin Oertel declares: “The extreme religious Islam has brought a declaration of war in the form of terror to Europe” (TAG24 News, 2015). In his speech on 13 April, Wilders claims that “not all Muslims are terrorists but most of the terrorists are Muslims” (PVVpers, 2015). These two statements employ a *Terrorism and Violence* frame;

they both convey the idea that there is an inherent link between terrorism and the religion of Islam. However, more than just make vague insinuations about how violence is inherent to Islam, PEGIDA speakers also recount specific terrorist attacks, which were presumedly the work of radical Islamists. Along those same lines, Siegfried Däbritz says on 16 November: “The attacks in Paris, London, Bali, Madrid, Moscow, Beslan, Mumbai et cetera are connected to the religion of peace” (Hubert Staller, 2015a). It is of course immediately understood, that in this context ‘religion of peace’ is meant in an ironic manner, indicating that the opposite is true, i.e. that Islam is a religion of war, to which the use of violence is inherent and essential. Lastly, in an attempt to frame *Asylum Seekers as Security Threat*, Festerling claims the following on 16 November as well: “[...] Every alleged refugee can move uncontrolledly with anything in their backpack through Europe. It is even possible to use cars in order to move an entire weapons storage with Kalashnikovs, hand grenades and explosives across the entirety of Europe” (Hubert Staller, 2015b). By declaring that any terrorist could use the asylum networks to gain entry to Europe, Festerling casts doubt on the entirety of refugees since “anyone” could be a terrorist, thereby framing the refugee crisis as one that is imminently endangering European citizens.

As for identifying the culprits responsible for the abovementioned grievances, there are three main camps: muslims and/or asylum seekers – terms which are frequently used interchangeably –, the elite, and the media. One salient recurring argument is that, behind the scenes, these different actors are all colluding with each other in order to benefit from the current system, which hurts ordinary Germans, as much as possible.

In his speech on 13 April, Wilders explains the tendency to conflate asylum seekers with Muslims: “Nearly two-thirds of these asylum seekers originate from Islamic countries” (PVVpers, 2015). Consequently then, prejudices about Muslims also need to be taken into the context of asylum seekers, and vice versa. Wilders goes on to say the following statements: “Free yourselves of the manacles of Islam! Leave Islam and choose freedom” and “We are worried because we have read the Quran.” The politician equates Islam with imprisonment, hence portraying Muslims as prisoners of their religion. By mentioning the Quran and indirectly implicating its violent passages, Wilders aims to illustrate an inherent link between Islam and violence, making again use of the *Terrorism and Violence* frame. Accordingly, any individual with an affiliation to Islam, including moderate Muslims, are brought into a context of violence, affirming for PEGIDA that they pose a danger to European civilisation.

“Our enemies are sitting in the political parties”, says Festerling on 1 June (WOMENinISLAM1, 2015). Earlier on 9 March, Festerling declares: “Because they don’t like

what PEGIDA does, the Green Party supports Antifa. They do everything in order to limit us PEGIDA supporters in our freedom of opinion” (DresdenAktuell, 2015b). Not only do PEGIDA speakers – or in this case Festerling – outright designate the political elite as the enemy, but the Green Party is even thought to be attempting to silence PEGIDA in a show of dictatorship. The next excerpt again from Festerling on 1 June makes use of the *Asylum Seekers and the Elite* frame: “The independent peoples of Europe can live self-sufficiently and probably that’s why they are supposed to be subjugated and replaced” (WOMENinISLAM1, 2015). Following Festerling’s logic, the political elite is thought to be directly benefitting from the refugee crisis, aiming to replace their electorate in order to subjugate the German population.

The media, meanwhile, is often referred to as the “Lügenpresse” (“lying press”). It is perceived to be extremely biased against PEGIDA, as Kubitschek says on 2 March: “[...] There is not a single newspaper nor TV channel, that supports PEGIDA” (Einigkeit Recht Freiheit, 2015b). More than that, though, the media is presumably also conspiring with the political elite as Festerling voices the following on 1 June: “The Greens try to force upon us the new moral standard and because they can’t do it alone, they need the socialists from the Left Party and their minions in the media” (WOMENinISLAM1, 2015). This confirms that the frames of *Political Elite and Asylum Seekers* and *Asylum Seekers in the Media* are deeply intertwined, both actors supposedly colluding with each other in order to install and justify a system, which does not only benefit refugees, but also primarily themselves.

### *b. Prognostic framing*

Prognostic framing essentially emphasises the response needed to alleviate some – or all – of the present grievances (Benford & Snow, 2000). There are essentially two broad directions for prognostic framing: politics and protest.

One instance of the former is Tatjana Festerling’s candidacy for the mayoral elections in Dresden; accordingly she says on the 1 June: “The risk of voting for me would be minimal” (WOMENinISLAM1, 2015). Moreover, Bachmann announces PEGIDA’s future political ambitions on 20 July: “PEGIDA will [...] remain a social movement as well as participate as an electoral union in the big state election” (Buntes Bayern, 2015). This signals to PEGIDA supporters of course who to vote for when the time comes.

A second outlined response is the continuation of their protest. Kubitschek says on 13 April: “It is a fertile, good uneasiness and I ask you to spread even more fertile uneasiness” (Einigkeit Recht Freiheit, 2015c). Uneasiness in this context is the challenge they pose to the political elite and their supporters. PEGIDA adherents are to continue going to the PEGIDA

Monday demonstrations, thus voicing their opposition to the leaders of Germany. “Manifest your courage and your conviction and sweep others along”, says Kubitschek during the same speech. They are not only supposed to actively engage themselves in the protests but also inspire other individuals’ participation, so that the demonstrations get bigger and an even greater challenge to the current government.

### *c. Motivational framing*

Motivational framing essentially engages framing, which aims to inspire the necessary response outlined in the prognostic framing (Benford & Snow, 2000). There are two motivational frames: *Collective Memory* and PEGIDA’s success.

First, PEGIDA speakers aim to motivate supporters by reminiscing about Germany’s past heroes. In one instance, Kubitschek declares on 13 April: “This special courage has always had its place in German history” (Einigkeit Recht Freiheit, 2015c). He then goes on to talk about the May Uprising, which happened in Dresden, the city of PEGIDA and relating it to the current situation: “[...] but we as well need to dare something and sacrifice a lot. It’s about our homeland and that is worth all of our effort.” Just as German heroes have done it before their time during the May Uprising, the German resistance in the Third Reich, or the East German population toward the end of the 80s, PEGIDA supporters need to oppose their government now, if they want to preserve the German legacy, which so many patriots have fought for.

The PEGIDA crowd is also being motivated by the idea that PEGIDA works. One instance of this is highlighted by Bachmann on 9 March: “Suddenly the Canadian immigration model is openly contemplated” (DresdenAktuell, 2015a). Despite the SPD’s contempt for PEGIDA, SPD being one of the political parties in the coalition government, they still consider solutions that the social movement has supported and voiced time and again, implying that PEGIDA has indeed been heard and seen by the political elite. Bachmann also states in the same speech: “We grow in German cities and throughout Europe.” Not only have they been heard by political leaders but compatriots as well as fellow Europeans resonate with their message, making the movement that much stronger and more efficient in exerting pressure on the political sphere.

## **5.2 PEGIDA in 2018**

PEGIDA has undergone several changes in 2018 compared to three years prior. Notably, not only have previously central PEGIDA leaders, like Tatjana Festerling who had been heavily supported by PEGIDA during her mayoral candidacy, left the movement in 2018, but there is

now also a new category of speakers: AfD politicians. Moreover, compared to 2015, participation within the movement took a big dent, the movement only attaining approximately 4,000-5,000 protestors on its fourth anniversary (Deutsche Welle, 2018b). Chemnitz was probably the most defining moment of 2018 for the far-right scene. After a German was fatally stabbed by what was presumed to be two immigrants, unrest and violence broke out in Chemnitz (Deutsche Welle, 2018a). Spread out over the next three days, and despite the little power they had, PEGIDA called to further protests. During these protests, the far-right scene was allegedly engaging in a manhunt and attacking individuals with an apparent migration background as well as using clear Nazi symbols like the Nazi salute (Hill, 2018). Ultimately, 18 people were injured (Deutsche Welle, 2018a).

#### *a. Diagnostic framing*

Much of PEGIDA's diagnostic framing in 2018 follows the same patterns as in 2015. There is, once again, clear evidence of cultural, economic and security contexts. More than that, though, there is also a rights-based dimension, which focuses on the unlawfulness of the grievances from an international law perspective. However, let us first dive into the already known categories.

Andre Poggenburg, an AfD politician, says in a speech on 7 May the following about the "extremist Islam": "It clearly wants to conquer the culture and the political sphere; it wants to replicate the conditions, that we only know from countries, from which they allegedly flee" (Nachrichten, 2018a). By alluding to the quality of life in Islamic countries and stating that asylum seekers want to bring these conditions to Germany, Poggenburg then not only commits to a *Cultural Inferiority* frame, but also evokes the frame of *Asylum Seekers as Cultural Danger*. Since refugees are then scheming to subdue "the German population with the help of an extremist Islam, which bases itself on the Sharia", asylum seekers are implicated in the *Unwillingness to Integrate* and the *Dangers of Infiltration* frames. A further instance, which confirms the salience of the *Asylum Seekers as Cultural Danger* frame is this excerpt out of Jürgen Elsässer's speech on the same PEGIDA rally: "[...] that among the male new-borns, the name 'Mohammed' has in the meantime become the most frequent one" (Nachrichten, 2018b). The move away from traditionally German baby names and the increase of new-borns, which are born to non-German parents, confirms for PEGIDA both directly the idea that Muslims are putting German culture in danger by increasingly making "real" Germans a minority, as well as indirectly the fear of the *Dangers of Infiltration*, furthering the belief that the infiltration is already happening.

In 2018, the economic dimension is just as important as in 2015. On 17 March, Wolfgang Taufkirch says: “And finally the refugee crisis, for which once again more taxes are being senselessly used, which are urgently needed elsewhere” (Petrosilius 1, 2018). This, of course, follows the typical argumentation for the *Asylum Seekers as Economic Burden* frame. This excerpt does not only support the belief that refugees are undeserving of the funding they “senselessly” receive by the German state, but also that it comes at the cost of Germans, seeing as there are other parts in Germany, which require funding as well. In a later speech by Taufkirch on 7 May, he reiterates this standpoint again with the example of the 3.6 million euros, which the city of Dresden needed to do some construction work: “And that is, by the way, exactly the sum, which the city of Dresden spends in order to care for asylum seekers” (Nachrichten, 2018d). By putting the state-sponsored funding of asylum seekers in the context of the “better”, more “German-benefitting” investment of taxes in city infrastructures, it is shown, first of all, just how much money it is, as well as implicating that financing of this dimension could really increase the quality of life of Germans in Dresden if it was used elsewhere.

Contrary to PEGIDA framing concerning security issues in 2015, 2018 does not make use of narrative revolving the bigger terrorist attacks that happened during or prior to 2018. Instead, they highlight smaller instances of violence perpetrated by presumed refugees in Germany, essentially bringing the theme of security closer to home for PEGIDA adherents. Siegfried Däbritz says in a speech on 7 May: “After it came again to multiple sexual harassment and riots by [...] men groups at a big event [...] in Nordrhein-Westfalistan” (Nachrichten, 2018c). Here, Däbritz then refers to a specific event, where participants engaged in violence, simultaneously referring to the federal state of Nordrhein-Westfalen as “Nordrhein-Westfalistan”, with the addition of the “stan”, painting a likeness to majority Muslim countries such as Pakistan or Afghanistan. Thereby he insinuates not only that the federal state is “overrun” by Muslims but also that the perpetrators were presumed Muslim refugees. This *Asylum Seekers as Security Threat* frame is also again implied on 3 September when Taufkirch refers to the murder that sparked the Chemnitz protests: “In Chemnitz, the presumed perpetrator was an asylum seeker, who had been arrested multiple times” (PEGIDA live, 2018). Chemnitz then becomes another instance, where refugees have perpetrated violence against Germans.

A new perspective on PEGIDA’s concerns regarding immigration is grounded in legal implications. On 7 May, Poggenburg draws on the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights declaration on populations transfer and the implantation of

settlers: “Practices and policies having the purpose or effect of changing the demographic composition of the region in which a national, ethnic, linguistic, or other minority or an indigenous population is residing, whether by deportation, displacement, and/or the implantation of settlers, or a combination thereof, are unlawful” (Nachrichten, 2018a). By framing the current situation in Germany as a breach of international law, PEGIDA speakers highlight the righteous nature of their anti-immigration cause. Similarly, during the same speech, legal context has also been used by Poggenburg in order to frame Islam as something, that is inherently at odds with the German legal system: “Islam does not only go against our core values, but it clearly breaks a multitude of our laws.” Though in a perspective, which highlights the legal context, Poggenburg evokes the frame *Historical Antagonism* in order to portray Islam as a religion that is fundamentally incompatible with Western society. This frame of a legal narrative culminates in Höcke’s speech on 14 May: “Germans are humans, and human rights is the right of domicile, and the right of domicile is human rights. And politics that robs people of their home is a crime against humanity” (AfD Thüringen, 2018).

In terms of identifying and characterising the culprits to blame for the current state of affairs, much is the same as in 2015. In order to blame Muslims for the conditions, PEGIDA leaders again evoke the following frames: *Asylum Seekers as Security Threat* and *Terrorism and Violence*. To the statement of Robert Habeck, a politician from the Green Party, during which he says Islam was a colourful community, Poggenburg says: “Maybe he means the black and blue of a woman after the man has occupied himself with her” (Nachrichten, 2018a). Not only is there an inherent connection with violence, but there is also no chance of separating Muslims from their belief. During the same speech Poggenburg states: “I have never heard that a Muslim abnegates the Sharia.” This perpetuates again the idea that there are no moderate Muslims, and that Muslims are inherently guided by the Sharia first and foremost.

The elite is described in a manner that reminds one of the conspiracy allegations in 2015. “The still reigning political and mediatic establishment is part of a closed transatlantic elite”, states Höcke in his speech on 14 May (AfD Thüringen, 2018). Similar to 2015, then the elite is thought to be colluding among each other as well as with the media; now, however, it is even supposed to be conspiring with its international counterparts. “Do we want to get prescribed how to live by the totalitarian dictatorship of small, international cliques, multinationals and supranational organisations?”, asks Höcke towards the end of his speech, to which the crowd responds with “no”. Even though, in 2015, there were talks of a “migration industry”, it is noticeable that only in 2018 economic actors like multinationals are implicated in the conspiracy of elite dictatorship.

### *b. Prognostic framing*

First, PEGIDA speakers generally voice a call to action to contentious politics tactics. Of course, since PEGIDA is and has remained a social movement, calls to showing up to protests as well as encouraging participants to inspire other individuals to join the movement are salient. “All onto the street, especially in Western Germany”, says Bachmann on February 3 (Samuel Inayat-Chisti, 2018). During the same speech Bachmann continues saying: “Use social media, use our own web blogs, use your own websites, spread our message there.” Bachmann also voices the latter statement in order to encourage PEGIDA adherents to boycott the “lying press”: “Springer with his *Bild* newspaper used to have 4 million prints, now they are about to tip under 2 million. So, we are doing everything right.”

As to be expected with the close collaboration between PEGIDA and AfD, PEGIDA participants are encouraged to go voting, as Däbritz says on 7 May: “Get yourself together, put your cross for your city, your municipality, on the right spot” (Nachrichten, 2018c). Due to the inclusion of the AfD, it is of course no secret, which political party PEGIDA supporters are supposed to vote for. More than that, though, PEGIDA supporters are asked to participate in politics themselves, as Däbritz states during the same speech: “[...] Go into yourself [...] and justify your preparedness to become active and take on responsibility in your city, in your municipality”.

To the concern of immigration, there is only one clear answer about what has to be done: mass deportation. Directly addressing, Seehofer, who is the chef of the federal police, Elsässer states on 7 May: “And then we want to see how your federal policemen bring the illegals to the airplanes and get them a safe flight home” (Nachrichten, 2018b). Shortly thereafter, he continues to talk about the possibility of an upper limit when it comes to immigration: “We need an upper limit in the minus area, minus 180,000, 220,000 visitors.” An important topic within PEGIDA framing in 2018 was also a refugee from Togo, who was supposed to be deported because he engaged in violent conflict but had gotten a German lawyer with a migration background: “Please deport the Togolese, and the lawyer as well.” Despite the lawyer being German, Elsässer demands his deportation as well.

### *c. Motivational framing*

Like in 2015, much of the motivational framing happens in the dimension of collective memory. By remembering heroes of past times which fought for a democratic Germany, the fight of today is often brought into a historical context, which justifies and inspires the actions laid out in the prognostic framing. On 17 March, Taufkirch says: “It does not only have to do

with the future of our children, but also the legacy of our ancestors, which fought for a better homeland here in the East in 1989 [...]” (Petrosilius 1, 2018). Accordingly, their fight is not only defined by the protection of themselves and their future, but also the preservation of the legacy of their ancestors who have fought for their country before them.

Another motif within motivational framing is the idea that it is the moral and right thing to do. Björn Höcke says on 14 May: “The resistance against that is not just allowed, it is a moral duty” (AfD Thüringen, 2018). The idea that the outlined response must be done out of righteousness and duty is also supported by the following excerpt by Poggenburg on 7 May: “We stand for that out of responsibility and love” (Nachrichten, 2018a). Protecting Germany from the current conditions is thus not only the right thing to do, but by doing it you can also show your patriotic love for your country. He continues: “And we don’t want more or less than fight for unity and justice and freedom.” These last three concepts are taken out of the context of the German national anthem, evoking again patriotic sentiments and indicating that they are not only fighting for themselves but for the entirety of the German nation.

### ***5.3 2015 and 2018 compared***

Although there could certainly be made an argument for the case that PEGIDA framing has been a subject to the concept of frame bridging, the phenomenon, in which two separate but compatible frames are merged, due to the affiliation with the AfD, there is not enough evidence to argue this. However, there is a lot of evidence in favour of a frame amplification, which has resulted from this legal perspective only visible in 2018. By making the “issue” surrounding immigration one of international law and human rights, and adjusting their language accordingly, PEGIDA speakers were not only able to denounce the German government as unlawful, but also attempted to appeal to a wider public, which cherishes human rights and, for example, acknowledges Palestine’s right for self-determination as valid. Moreover, slight changes within PEGIDA framing can be found as well; presumably due to the inclusion of AfD politicians as recurring speakers, the movement has become more insistent on the importance of participating in the democratic process and voting for the AfD. Another dimension, which has transformed is the subject of immigration. Although in 2015, PEGIDA speakers were already in favour of laws limiting the number of asylum seekers gaining access to Germany, notably only in 2018, they advocated for mass deportation, of not only “illegal” asylum seekers, but also individuals who have followed all of the necessary procedures, going as far as to want to deport a German citizen with a migration background.

## **6. Conclusion**

This paper attempts to answer the following research question: How has framing by PEGIDA evolved over time? Due to prior research finding a change in PEGIDA framing, I hypothesised that there had indeed been some sort of frame evolution.

Evidence points to a frame amplification within PEGIDA due to the incorporation of a human rights-based legal approach during diagnostic framing, which attempts to legitimise their purpose by implicating the immigration and asylum policies in place as a breach of international law.

Several implications can be made. First, as had already been exemplified during prior research on PEGIDA framing, framing can undergo a change within three (or two) years (Bitschnau et al., 2021). Moreover, as is to be generally expected, social movement framing gets more political in the dimension of prognostic framing, as leaders want to make sure that supporters vote for the “correct” party, the one that they are affiliated with.

As for limitations, since this paper was solely interested in the identification and characterisation of a potential frame evolution, the results do not account for the more compelling question thematising the causes for frame evolution. Of course, one might hypothesise that, considering that AfD politicians were the ones committed to framing grounded in international law, their inclusion into the movement was a leading cause for the frame evolution found within PEGIDA. To make that claim, however, further research seems necessary. Moreover, due to feasibility reasons, I only collected data from 2015 and 2018, which does end up pointing towards a frame evolution; nevertheless more research is needed in order to confirm that this is indeed the case.

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