

The Mythologisation of the Migrant Issue in the Federal Republic of Germany as a Result of the 2015 European Migrant Crisis and Its Effect on Changes in German Migration Policy

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SUMMARY

This article deals with the process of mythologisation of the migrant issue in the Federal Republic of Germany during the period 2014–2018. The research started with the fundamental question of how selected German media represented the immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries who came to Germany during and immediately after the 2015 migrant crisis. The media content on migration and extremism was selected from the available online archives of the following German newspapers: *Berliner Morgenpost*, *Deutsche Welle*, *Die Zeit*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and *Freie Presse*. Using the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as the research model, three master signifiers were selected from the analysed articles: immigrants, German jihadists, and German far-right extremists. Further analysis suggested that myths were the most influential type of signification and a dominant way of dealing with the critical situation caused by the 2015 migrant crisis. As a result of that situation, the following myths were produced: the open-door myth, the myth of Islamisation and the new myth of the East. In the analysed material, references to historical German myths, like the border myth and the stab in the back myth, were also recorded. This research aimed to determine the relation between of the process of mythologisation during and immediately after the emergence of the 2015 migrant crisis and the changes in German migration policy. Furthermore, the role of hegemonic discourse was explored, especially in situations where it was used to alleviate cultural conflict and social polarisation in times of crisis.

KEY WORDS: German far-right, migrant crisis, mythologisation, discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, theory of structuration of Anthony Giddens

AIM AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The characteristics of migration in the 21st century are at least two-fold: its global scale, as well as the social and economic consequences it causes in receiving societies, largely due to the fact that immigrants come from economically, socially and culturally remote areas in relation to the recipient state (Haas, Castles and Miller, 2019: 16).

The growing anti-immigrant sentiment and Islamophobia in Germany during the investigated period (2014–2018) made an impact on the increasing politicisation of the migrant issue. Two main challenges came to the fore: the capability of the nation-state to effectively maintain and govern international migration, and the issue of consequences resulting from the increased ethnic diversity in societies of the receiving states (Haas, Castles and Miller, 2019: 16).

The migration patterns to Germany during the investigated period was affected by three factors: wars in the Arab world, the need of the German economy for labour and the issue of culture in terms of preserving German identity, or what it meant to be German in an encounter with people who belonged to different aesthetic, cognitive and moral circles.

The research aimed to investigate how selected German media signified Muslim immigrants who came to Germany during and immediately after the 2015 migrant crisis, covering the period from 2014 to 2018. Furthermore, it also aimed to determine the relation between of the mythologisation process during the investigated period and the changes in German migration policy and to investigate how the hegemonic discourse was used to alleviate cultural tensions and social polarisation in times of crisis.

Relying on the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe and the theory of structuration of Anthony Giddens, as well as on the tropes related to German collective imaginary, such as the spirit of the nation, culture and the way of life, it was argued that the migration crisis of 2015, seen as a critical situation, had a huge impact on the rise of nationalism and religious extremism, and consequently on changes in German migration policy.

As mentioned above, for the purpose of analysis, two approaches were used: the theory of structuration of Anthony Giddens and the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

In order to explain the social and political consequences of the crisis caused by the 2015 migration crisis, Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration was

used. This theory also helped in understanding what preconditions had influenced the emergence of the mythologisation process, establishment of the dominant discourse, and changes in German migration policy, as shown by the following sequence: event → response → critical situation → ontological insecurity → mythologisation → hegemonic discourse → changes in migration policy. The sequence indicates the importance of the concepts of ontological (in)security, identity and myth in times of crisis (critical situation).

Regarding the above-mentioned concepts, psychiatrist Ronald D. Laing was the first to use the concept of ontological (in)security, which he interpreted as a strong sense of identity (Laing, 2010: 44), while for Anthony Giddens it referred to the state of order, continuity and stable emotions. In order to acquire the state of ontological security agents develop a cognitive “cocoon”, which gives them confidence that their cognitive world, and thus their personal biography, will be reproduced (Giddens, 1984: 102).

According to the theory of structuration¹, agency/agents and structure are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. Giddens (1984: 102) emphasises their equal importance in the process of interaction through which they can influence either the transformation or change of the social system or help in its reproduction.

For Giddens, a structure is a set of rules and resources, both constraining and enabling, out of time and space, and marked by the “absence of the subject”. The structure is not external to actors but stored in their memory traces, which Giddens divides into three types: signification, legitimation, and dominance. In this research, two memory traces were dealt with: signification (coding of meaning in a discursive practice) and dominance in the form of hegemonic discourse.

A system, which is reproduced or transformed in the process of structuration, is a network of patterns in social relations within space-time and, as such, differs from structure, although it contains some of its features. Structuration refers to the conditions that govern the reproduction or transformation of structures, and therefore the transformation or reproduction of systems (Giddens, 1979: 66).

The theory of structuration helped in understanding the causes and consequences of the state of ontological insecurity, especially the change brought

¹ The theory of structuration was developed by Anthony Giddens in a series of books that began with *New Rules of Sociological Method* (1976), continued through his *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979) and culminated in *The Construction of Society* (1984).

about by a critical situation, often manifested by the strengthening of nationalism, right-wing movements and parties, religious fundamentalism and xenophobia. Such a course of events encourages discussions on identity and the production of myths.

In order to explain the dual role of the myth (Barthes, 1972: 113): as a semiological (communication system containing the intention of its creator) and an ideological system (in terms of ideology in German historical myths and myths created after 2015), the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe was used. It also provided valuable insights into the role of hegemony in times of social polarisation. Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory was presented in their book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), in which the authors combine post-Marxist social thought, post-structuralist concepts and post-Saussurean linguistics.

In the Marxist sense, the authors rely on Althusser's concept of the ideological state apparatus and the Gramscian concept of hegemony. They criticise the strict Marxist division between the material-economic base and the superstructure, where the base entirely determines the superstructure, and take Gramsci's argument that dominant classes within a society use discursive practices in the superstructure to produce public consent for the unequal distribution of wealth and power, which he describes as hegemony (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 32; Hall et al., 1996: 600). However, what distinguishes Laclau and Mouffe from Gramsci is their understanding of hegemonic struggle which does not occur in the domain of a class only, but in various domains of social life.

In terms of post-structuralist concepts, Laclau and Mouffe used Althusser's concept of interpellation, according to which individuals are drawn into a certain subject position by ideology via superstructural institutions like, for example, the educational system, the media and the family. They imported the concept of interpellation into Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, which describes a subject as fundamentally fragmented or "split", and interpellated by many contingent, and possibly competing or contradicting discourses (Rear and Jones, 2013: 385). From Derrida they took the concept of deconstruction in order to reveal the relations of power and knowledge in Foucault's sense.

In regard to post-structural linguistics, Laclau and Mouffe replaced the concept of structure with the concept of discourse, which serves as a mediator of all social phenomena. A discourse is composed of language signs (signifiers and signifieds) whose position is always subject to negotiation. There-

fore, language signs are responsible for the contingency of discourses since their formation depends on the temporary and partial fixation of meaning (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 38–39) in the process of articulation when a temporary closure is established (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 110, cf. Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 27–28). This is done by the *exclusion* of all other possibilities that are contained in the *field of discursivity*, which is a reservoir of a surplus of meaning, containing all the excluded meanings from a particular discourse (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 26–27). When discourses acquire the stage of hegemony, they reach the status of “common sense” and their intrinsic contingency is forgotten.

Notwithstanding its temporary objectivity, every hegemonic order is challenged by counter-hegemonic practices which attempt to disarticulate it in order to install another form of hegemony. When two or more antagonistic discourses compete for hegemony within a specific terrain, their struggle can be temporarily resolved through hegemonic interventions (re-articulation, naturalisation and stabilisation of floating signifiers).

The use of the discourse theory assumes the following: the assumption of hegemony as the domination of a certain perspective and linguistic sign as a battlefield in which the ideological struggle for the fixation of meaning takes place and occurs in the processes of articulation and contingency. The theory aims to uncover the processes of construction of “objective” reality and to explore *how* this reality is created so that it appears objective and natural (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 33).

Regarding the aim of the research, the analysis suggested that myths were a dominant type of representation. In terms of this research, a myth is understood as a system of communication, and a message containing the intention of its creator. Furthermore, a myth is a valuable indicator of political change. It is produced in the process of mythologisation as a way of ideological management of collective consciousness and is important for the construction of social reality, creation and maintenance of social solidarity, identity, behaviour and creation of public policies.

ANALYSIS

The process of mythologisation of the migrant issue in the Federal Republic of Germany was analysed on media content from the selected German media: *Deutsche Welle*, *Die Zeit*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Berliner Morgenpost*, and *Freie Presse*. The analysis covered the period from 2014 to 2018.

The media were selected for the research because they could affect the creation of public opinion (Kosho, 2016; Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017) and, consequently, could have an impact on policy-making (Koch-Baumgarten and Voltmer, 2010). Therefore, the interaction between the media, citizens and politicians cannot be ignored. The media are inseparable from the audience they address, while politicians are sensitive to public mood.

It was assumed that media play an important role in the mythologisation process because they often rely on mythical discourse (Mouffe, 2018) in a way that they sequence and combine certain expressions, transform images into messages, express them in codes, and chain them into a temporarily stable narrative. By constant repetition of certain statements over a period of time in the media, such statements reach the status of a myth. As a value system, the myth is intended to convince community members that the system it advocates is desirable and necessary for the good of the nation. Therefore, it is considered to be “common sense”, natural and the only possible one.

In choosing the media, the following criteria were used: broadcast area (worldwide, national, regional), political alignment, and whether the newspaper addresses predominantly East German or West German readership. According to these criteria, *Deutsche Welle* is an international German public media service, published in 30 world languages, founded in 1953, presenting the political orientation of the current German government; *Die Zeit* is a weekly national paper, founded in 1946, liberal-left; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is a daily, national newspaper, founded in 1949, centre-right (liberal conservatism); *Berliner Morgenpost* is a daily regional newspaper, founded in 1898, centre-right; and *Freie Presse* is a daily, regional newspaper, founded in 1963, political alignment undeclared.

For the purpose of the analysis, publicly available archives of the above-mentioned newspapers were used. The selection of articles was based on two topics: migration and extremism, and the defined time frame (from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018).

The model of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse analysis was applied (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 111–115; Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 50) and it consists of four basic levels:

1. detection of key signifiers which are responsible for the organisation of discourse (nodal points, master signifiers and myths);

2. detection of chains of equivalence, where key signifiers are invested with meaning;
3. detection of concepts concerning identity: group formation, identity and representation;
4. detection of concepts for conflict analysis: floating signifiers, antagonism and hegemony.

According to the research model employed, nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 111) are privileged signs around which all other signs are grouped and, in relation to them, acquire a meaning that is partially fixed. Therefore, their role is to stabilise a web of meanings, thus determining the domain of discourse.

Since this paper deals with the process of the mythologisation of the migrant issue, the concept of migration was chosen as a nodal point. First, 35 out of a total of 89 articles containing the word *migration* were retrieved from the online archives of the selected German media during the particular time frame. After carefully reading 35 articles and identifying key expressions in relation to the research question, the word *extremism* appeared to be widely exploited in the analysed articles and appeared in combination with the word migration. Therefore, the search was performed once more, and the articles including the keywords *migration* and *extremism* were withdrawn from the online archives of the selected media and defined as nodal points.

Master signifiers were identified from the coding manual that was created after the coding and categorisation were completed. Codes bearing identity that were frequently repeated in articles were *immigrants*, *German jihadists*, and *German far-right extremists*, therefore, they were taken as master signifiers. The above-mentioned signifiers were invested with meaning in the chains of equivalence. In code description, immigrants are defined as people who came to Germany from Africa and Asia during and after the 2015 migration crisis, and are of the Islamic faith. German jihadists are people of immigrant origin who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany and who were born or have spent most of their lives in Germany. German far-right extremists are ethnic Germans, members or sympathisers of parliamentary far-right parties and extra-parliamentary far-right parties and movements.

In terms of the third key signifier, the myth, after the research was conducted, three new myths were identified: the open-door myth; the myth

of Islamisation and the new myth of the East. Their emergence was not a surprise due to frequent public debates on German identity. According to Laclau (1990 in Rear and Jones, 2013), myths appear in social situations when (a) certain event(s) cannot be integrated into the existing discourses. In order to stabilise such events, the dislocated elements are sutured into a new structure (Laclau, 1990: 61) through their re-articulation. The role of the myth, as a complex type of a floating signifier, is to construct society as a totality with a fully sutured identity.

The table 1 below shows the key signifiers.

Table 1. Key signifiers

Nodal points (organise discourse)	Master signifiers (organise identity)	Myths (organise social space)
1. Migration	1. Immigrants	New myths (after 2015):
2. Extremism	2. German jihadists	1. the “open-door” myth
	3. German far-right extremists	2. the myth of Islamisation
		3. the new myth of the East

In the second step, chains of equivalence were detected because of their role in the formation of individual and group identities, as well as myths. Chains of equivalence contain subject positions which are appropriated by a subject at the moment when he/she is recognised in the interpellation of a certain ideology or a certain type of belonging. They are established when different individual/group subject positions are chained together based on their common interest and form the opposition in relation to the excluded chain of equivalence, which is pushed back to the field of discursivity² where all the excluded possibilities are stored (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 111). In an attempt to simultaneously organise the same social space, the excluded chain of equivalence threatens the existence of the hegemonic chain due to the contingency of language signs as their building blocks. Therefore, discourse is always constituted in relation to what it excludes (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

Considering that the chains of equivalence contain subject positions from which individual and group identities could be read, the subject positions found in the analysed material were coded and categorised into four groups:

² The field of discursivity is a reservoir for the “surplus of meaning” produced by the articulatory practice – that is, the meanings that each sign has, or has had, in other discourses, but which are excluded by the specific discourse in order to create a unity of meaning (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 26–27).

government representatives, opposition, experts and media. They were further subcategorised into federal- or local-level politicians and politicians belonging to the position and the opposition. Experts were subcategorised according to the frequency of their occurrence in the analysed articles. The same applies to the media commentators and journalists that were cited in the analysed articles.

A tabular overview of the second step is presented in table 2.

Table 2. Division of the researched subject positions according to categories within the chains of equivalence

Subject positions by categories	Division of categories
Government officials	Federal-level politicians Local-level politicians
Representatives of the opposition	Left/right political opposition Parliamentary/extra-parliamentary opposition
Experts	Psychologists / sociologists Political scientists Legal experts Islamologists Security experts
Media	Journalists and commentators of the analysed media

The third step is closely linked to the second because the concepts related to identity, such as subject positions and individual and group identities, are contained in the chains of equivalence. In this step, individual and group identities were coded, bearing in mind their dependence on subject positions, which are understood as positions of the individual in the social structure. Identity is formed when an individual responds to or takes an offered subject position (Althusser's concept of interpellation) according to his/her way of thinking, which is ideological in nature (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 115). However, each person makes up a set of variable positions that are constructed in different, sometimes contradictory discourses, and therefore can never establish a unique homogeneous identity.

In the fourth step, antagonism and hegemony were detected. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 136), there are two conditions of hegemonic articulation: the presence of antagonistic forces and the instability of the frontiers which separate them. Antagonism in society arises when two different iden-

tities place opposing demands on the same event or activity within a common domain and therefore inevitably block each other (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 47). This type of collision is resolved by hegemonic interventions, which are achieved in three ways: by re-articulation of discourse, achieving dominance through the naturalisation of a particular perspective, or stabilising floating signifiers into an unambiguous array of meanings. In order to spot such interventions, Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction was used to unmask the structures that are taken for granted (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 48). Hegemony is best understood as the organisation of consent – the processes through which subordinated forms of consciousness are constructed without recourse to violence or coercion (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002: 32). It is established through the production of meaning, as a key instrument for the stabilisation of power relations. By creating a hegemonic discourse, power relations become naturalised and so much part of common sense that they cannot be questioned (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002).

In the case of this particular research, the model provided insights into how hegemonic discourse was used for a dual purpose: framing immigrants as the Other and mitigating cultural conflict in times of crisis.

RESULTS

Media Analysis for 2014

The year 2014 was marked by constant migrant pressures on the external EU borders (Greece and Italy) and deteriorating conditions in refugee camps in Turkey and Lebanon. The news of newcomers knocking on the door of the European Union sparked a debate about whether migration is good for Germany and whether an upper limit for the admission of immigrants should be set annually and what that limit should be. Such debates have raised some identity issues, such as who is German and what German means.

Moreover, the problem of uncontrolled migration raised concerns about the possible polarisation of society, especially among the far-right. Nevertheless, German business circles emphasised the need of the German economy for additional manpower and suggested immigration as a potential solution.

For the purpose of analysis, 89 articles from the five selected media were read and coded. After coding and categorising the selected content, the coding manual was created. Codes bearing identity that were frequently

repeated in articles were: *immigrants*, *German jihadists* and *German far-right extremists*, and they were identified as master signifiers.

The following table 3 shows the ways in which the master signifier *immigrant* was invested with meaning in 2014, and how this investment enabled the emergence of the open-door myth in 2015.

Table 3. The master signifier *immigrant* – filling with meaning in 2014

Public policy domain	Master signifier: immigrant	Antagonism	Hegemony
Economic	Immigrants as a need: 1. to fill vacancies; 2. for technological progress.	Labour needs vs intolerance towards admission of immigrants from non-European countries.	A call for a “welcoming culture” when it comes to the foreign workforce by the business sector.
Social	Immigrants as: 1. a need to maintain the German welfare state; 2. a cost and parasites: a fiscal burden for local communities; immigrants abuse the German social system, most of them being unskilled; 3. victims of a rigid distribution system among German federal states.	Immigrants as a need vs immigrants as parasites, vs immigrants as a burden, vs immigrants as victims.	1. A scoring system for future immigrants based on professional qualifications, age, health status, language skills and financial status is proposed. 2. Prevention of social system abuse. 3. A fair distribution of immigrants, both at the German and the EU level.
Health	Immigrants as a burden.	Helping people in need vs health system overload.	Hiring the additional medical staff.
Security	Immigrants as a security threat.	Reception and assistance to refugees vs radicalisation of society (the threat of foreign religious wars on German soil).	1. Prevent the uncontrolled arrival of refugees. 2. Prevent the spread of fear among ordinary citizens. 3. Prevent potentially dangerous behaviour of the far-right.

Public policy domain	Master signifier: immigrant	Antagonism	Hegemony
Culture	Immigrants as the Other.	Ordinary citizens vs politicians in relation to understanding migrations; political slogans vs situation on the ground (people of different skin colour, women wearing niqab and hijab).	1. Integration is mandatory, quality integration courses should be ensured. 2. Immigrants should respect German culture (<i>Leitkultur</i>).

With the pressure on the external borders of the EU due to the war in Syria and the arrival of people belonging to different cultural and religious circles, a section of German society disseminated narratives on population replacement and instigated a fear of Muslims. The German security system was faced with the threat of political polarisation and subsequent radicalisation. The analysed articles reported on German jihadists, as German citizens of Muslim descent who participated in the war in Syria and, therefore, posed a security threat to German society. Since the danger of terrorism was often linked to Muslims, the myth of Islamisation gained more and more importance in German public space and in the analysed media.

The master signifier *German jihadists* was perceived by the selected media as a disruptive factor in German society and as a threat to the existing system (democracy and the functioning of German institutions).

Table 4. The master signifier *German jihadists* – filling with meaning in 2014

Chaining of discourses (German jihadists)	Identity (German jihadists)	Antagonism	Hegemony
<p><i>Security discourse:</i> German jihadists are a security threat: 1. Upon return from the Syrian war they have practical military experience and are further radicalised. 2. Security situation in Germany is compared to “barrels of gunpowder”. 3. The question is not whether, but when a terrorist attack will occur in Germany.</p> <p><i>Expert discourse:</i> Germany needs social dialogue and successful integration: 1. The Islamic Caliphate usually attracts those who failed to fit into German society, but still need a sense of belonging and a life purpose. 2. The role of faith in the decision to join a radical organisation is not crucial, but the need for recognition. 3. Social dialogue and balanced rhetoric on the part of public actors are needed, only a minor part of Muslims in Germany are radical.</p>	<p><i>Individual identity:</i> 1. mentally unstable persons, angry, resentful, often from dysfunctional families, lacking a father figure, lacking ambition; 2. dangerous: violent, brutal, ready for assassinations and terrorist attacks; 3. as members of the Salafist³ groups they become more religious than their parents and feel like winners (gain “respect” because people are scared of them).</p> <p><i>Group identity:</i> 1. perceive themselves as preachers of a “joyful message” for true believers, the others will experience a “life full of horror”; 2. they want violence to be generally acceptable; 3. enjoy when people are afraid of them; 4. want to create parallel institutions in Germany and their own Sharia police (Knipp, 2014); 5. they are so-called Ramadan Muslims or “occasional believers”.</p>	<p><i>Security discourse:</i> 1. German jihadists are definitely ready to perform the terrorist act, but the question is when. 2. Because of a small percentage of jihadists, it would be counter-productive to condemn the whole Muslim community in Germany.</p> <p><i>Expert discourse:</i> 1. The inner tension at the core of the Islamist movement: retrograde ideology and modern propaganda using modern technologies. 2. Legal experts claim that the existing legislation related to foreigners is appropriate vs policymakers who, under the pressure of populists, require stricter rules and faster deportations. 3. Jihadists, as former losers from the margins of society, become winners with life purpose and mission. 4. Muslim women promote “political Islam” at public gatherings with inscriptions “Islam. is.in.” At the same gatherings, women are separated from men.</p>	<p><i>Security discourse:</i> 1. Hate speech and the spread of a poisoned atmosphere are absolutely unacceptable; politicians should be careful in making statements because dramatisation and social suspicion contribute to radicalisation. 2. Germany must manage the immigration process according to its needs and interests. 3. Immigrants should be required to respect German values, culture and way of life. 4. The vast majority of Muslims respect the Basic Law, one minor part causes fear among German citizens. 5. Preventive measures and de-radicalisation: Hayat counselling centre, at the same time an export product (German know-how).</p>

³ According to Schenk (2014) Salafists are fundamentalist Muslims who aspire to the state of God, they place Sharia, the Islamic legal system above the Basic Law (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany). According to the Office for the Protection of the Constitutional Order, there are about 6,000 of them in Germany (out of almost 5 million Muslims). They are divided into several groups: purists, political groups, and terrorist jihadist groups. Purists engage in a pious life. Political groups, of which there are the most, strive to create conditions for the establishment of the Islamic State with the help of missionary work, but without the use of violence. Terrorist jihadist groups use violence as a form of political struggle.

Media Analysis for 2015

With the arrival of over a million refugees and immigrants in 2015, two conflicting types of discourse dominated the analysed media: one praising the welcoming culture and the willingness of German society to help those in need, and the other, attacking the chancellor and the federal government for implementing the so-called open-door policy. With its constant repetition in public, the phrase “open door” reached the status of a myth.

The analysed articles have shown that in 2015, at a practical level, Germany could not cope with so many refugees and immigrants in such a short time because it lacked capacity, especially in the area of accommodation and health care. Besides, the chancellor and the government lacked public and media support to curb the well-known *German Angst* in time. *German Angst* refers to “the fear of losing things that had hitherto been taken for granted”. To prevent further social polarisation, the German federal government took measures in the direction of securitisation of the migrant issue.

The master signifier *immigrant* was filled with meaning in a similar way as was presented in Table 3. In comparison to 2014, the difference regarding economic policy domain was that immigrants were not only perceived as a need but also as a threat to domestic workers in competition for vacancies. Immigrant workers were not seen as guest workers, but as workers who came to stay. The need for foreign labour was acknowledged in the analysed media, but cultural and security challenges were also mentioned, as well as the issue of potential political rights of immigrants. The analysed media reported on the impression that only low skilled immigrants came to Germany.

On the other hand, within their hegemonic discourse, the authorities pointed out that Germany should manage migration according to the needs of its labour market, taking into account the potential reduction in labour costs and the future automation of production.

In terms of social policy domain, immigrants were seen solely as a burden for local communities in terms of accommodation, provision of funds for their stay, and as a problem to the health care system.

In 2015 immigrants were perceived not only as a security threat but also as potential terrorists. Therefore, resistance to the open-door policy was very much present among a part of the ruling elite in Germany and the EU, in contrast to those praising the chancellor’s courage and humanity.

In 2015 the need to finalise the new Act on Immigration was a part of the hegemonic discourse together with the need to set an annual ceiling for the admission of new immigrants, and effective border controls.

In terms of culture, in 2015 immigrants were signified as the other, the same as in the previous year. Within their hegemonic discourse, the authorities proposed a public debate on the desirable type of immigration (culturally closest to Germany). Nevertheless, cultural difference was a hot topic for the ruling coalition. With the arrival of people belonging to different cultural, religious, moral, and aesthetic circles, two questions arose: whether newcomers would become so numerous over time that they would reduce Germans to a national minority, and whether they would impose their religion and sharia laws on Germany. These were the issues addressed by the far-right and supported by the groups of anxious citizens which, with their constant repetition in media, reached the status of a myth (the myth of Islamisation which became a new racial myth).

In order to prevent the future Islamisation of Germany, the far-right took concrete measures in the form of physical attacks on refugees and visible minorities, as well as arsons in refugee accommodation centres. According to the analysed media, those attacks were led by football hooligans, particularly the HoGeSa group ("Hooligans Against Salafists"). The attacks were qualified as politically motivated acts of violence based on the image of an enemy, which was not the case before the 2015 migrant crisis.

The year 2015 was marked by public protests, such as those between confronting groups like Pegida (an acronym for Patriotic Citizens Against the Islamisation of the Occident) and Gepida (an acronym for Annoyed Residents Protest Against the Intolerance of Dresden Outsiders). Amidst such a polarisation of society, the ruling coalition found itself under severe strain and had to speed up the process of integration and fight against the Islamic fundamentalism represented by the so-called "Lego-Islam".

The table 5 below shows the antagonism between the so-called ordinary citizens and German far-right extremists regarding religion, as well as the difference between Islam as a religion, and Islam as a fundamentalist project.

Table 5. Antagonism between Germans regarding religion, and antagonism between the two types of Islam

Antagonism regarding religion	Islam	“Lego-Islam”
<p><i>Master signifiers:</i> A) ethnic Germans: 1. they do not pay much attention to religion; 2. they want religion to be practiced discreetly; 3. the traumatic experiences in German history like the Thirty Years’ War of 1648, the period of German dualism and <i>Kulturkampf</i>, all marked by clashes between Catholics and Protestants, influenced the present German attitude towards religion.</p> <p>B) German far-right extremists: 1. Christianity is the only acceptable religion in Germany; 2. advocate for racial purity and social Darwinism.</p>	<p>1. Islam is a universalist religion that respects the pluralism of values and religious beliefs, recognises the others, but also wants to be recognised. 2. So far Turkish Islam has been dominant in Germany, because of 4 million Turks in Germany and about 2,400 mosques. 3. Today the situation is changing with the arrival of Iraqis and Syrians. 4. The heterogeneity of Muslims becomes more visible (linguistically, ethnically and religiously).</p>	<p>1. “Lego-Islam” is a version used by the Islamic State that arbitrarily uses parts of the Qur’an and combines them to create its own ideology. 2. Its spread was affected by the collapse of secular regimes that failed to ensure progress and justice for their citizens. 3. Islamist movements linked anti-imperialist rhetoric with the religious one, thus presenting themselves as an alternative. 4. Today it is presented by the Saudi version of Islam, called Wahhabism (Salafism). 5. It preaches strict gender segregation. 6. Intolerance towards members of other faiths. 7. Terrorism on a global scale.</p>

Media analysis for 2016

According to the analysed articles, Angela Merkel’s coalition partner CSU demanded stricter immigration laws and even required priority admission for Christian refugees, as well as a ceiling for the annual reception of refugees that should not exceed 200,000 individuals. The CSU also demanded the establishment of transit zones at borders, simpler and faster deportations, the abolition of dual citizenship, and a ban on wearing burqas and niqabs in public. The agreement between Turkey and the EU was basically accepted by the CSU and the parliamentary majority, but visa liberalisation was criticised.

Regarding the violence committed by the far-right in Germany and the rise of xenophobia, 2016 was the first time that xenophobia was presented as

harmful to business. Moreover, additional pressure was exerted on the ruling coalition to preserve public order and social stability, and bring politically motivated crime, driven by extremist ideologies, under greater scrutiny.

In terms of security, in 2016, an increase in physical attacks on immigrants was recorded, as well as damaging property and setting fires in immigrant detention centres. Most of the perpetrators were not caught (mostly right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis who were “off the radar of the police”). The growing fear among citizens due to social polarisation was recorded, which was mostly instigated by far-right rallies.

Within the hegemonic discourse, the authorities stressed their intention to reduce xenophobia and to hold politicians accountable for their statements and conduct in public.

Regarding culture, the antagonism between the welcoming culture and demands for border closures was very strong in 2016. Within the hegemonic discourse, the need for integration was stressed, as well as respect for German culture as a precondition for integration. In 2016 the new Integration Act came into force, clearly defining the rights and obligations of immigrants.

In terms of the myth of Islamisation, German jihadists were perceived by German far-right extremists as a security threat (terrorists and potential terrorists), a cultural threat (a threat to German culture, religion, the way of life), and an institutional threat (parallel societies, institutions, campaign against democracy and the rule of law). Therefore, the German far-right demanded restrictions on Islam religious practice, a ban on minarets and muezzins, a ban on wearing niqabs and hijabs in public, surveillance of religious teachers in mosques and control of the sources of funding.

The official political discourse was that Islamic fundamentalists received a lot of attention in the media, although there were a large number of Muslim associations and individuals who respected the Basic Law and democracy.

Within the 2016 hegemonic discourse, the authorities pointed out their intention to bring the surviving fighters of the Islamic State to justice; to exert pressure on the scene that sympathises with terror; to urge Muslims to stop sympathising with those who preach hatred and expel them from the mosques; to reject the idea of parallel societies; to accept the leading culture as a prerequisite for harmony in a pluralistic society; to respect the Basic

Law. The authorities committed themselves to preventing abuse of the right to asylum.

In terms of the new myth of the East, the selected articles reported on the East German support for the far-right parties and movements, especially in former industrial parts, where social and individual upheavals took place. Many factories in the East collapsed, people lost their jobs and an entire generation was lost. East German citizens felt “occupied” by the West because they were expected to erase their past and fully embrace the Western way of life. Although much was invested in infrastructure in the East, the economic situation was poor, unemployment was rising, and the wage and pension gap between East and West Germany continued to exist. People in the East felt deprived and abandoned by the politicians and “their” chancellor.

The press articles in 2016 portrayed East Germans as the Other, but at that time the Other was not outside German borders, as was in the old myth of the East (Liulevicius, 2009: 60), but within them. In the analysed articles, East Germans were portrayed as xenophobes, prone to a homogeneous society, distrustful of democracy, and people “with the Berlin Wall still in their minds”. Their role as victims was knowingly exploited by the far-right (AfD, Pegida, and IB) who accused the federal government, together with the lying media (*Lügenpresse*), of dysfunctional state management and began to spread racial theories more openly, which resulted in more frequent violence and attacks on refugee centres.

Media analysis for 2017

Since the very beginning of the migrant crisis in 2015, the European Union has been at a crossroads between two irreconcilable goals: humanitarian and security. In 2017, the security aspect won (strict controls at external borders, faster and easier deportations, “safe countries of origin”, agreements with third countries aimed at preventing migration to Europe).

Notwithstanding the constant image of the EU as a victim, the real refugee caretakers (Höppner, 2017) have been the developing countries in the global South, such as Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of South Sudan. The situation on the ground also showed that 90 percent of refugees stayed in the neighbouring countries because they simply lacked financial resources to travel to more distant destinations (like Europe).

Nevertheless, the German far-right continued to portray Germany and Europe as victims of a global conspiracy, as shown in the table 6 below.

Table 6. Media representation of the master signifier *German far-right extremists* in 2017

Discursive practices related to German far-right extremists	Identity: German far-right extremists	Antagonism	Hegemony
<p>Discursive practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. use hate speech against immigrants (siege, occupation of territory, Germans as minority in their own country); 2. target their enemies: the German government, the Left, the Greens, NGOs, lying press, immigrants – Muslims; 3. homogenise membership and sympathisers using meta language in slogans and banners targeting emotions; 4. call experts in law and media to join them. <p>Physical action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. physical attacks on immigrants and visible minorities; 2. destruction of property; 3. arson. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They present themselves as the only ones who protect German culture and way of life. 2. They are a clan that values brotherhood and demands loyalty. 3. They believe that Germany is a victim of a global conspiracy manifested in population replacement. 4. They believe that Muslims aim to occupy Europe and Germany. 5. They see immigrants as cheaters and insincere individuals who even convert to Christianity in order to stay in Germany. 6. Only ethnic Germans have the right to German citizenship. 7. They want a revision of the Nazi period. 8. They target their enemies: immigrants, the Left, liberals, NGOs, and the Greens. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From the 2015 migrant crisis, two antagonistic goals fight for primacy in Germany: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>humanitarian</i> (saving human lives) vs b) <i>security</i> (stopping migration to avoid political turmoil in the society). 2. Germany nurtures the image of a victim in relation to the immigrant burden vs the reality in which the global South takes care of the greatest number of refugees, as the official data suggest that 90 percent of refugees stay in the neighbourhood because of the lack of money for traveling to more distant destinations (like Europe). 	<p>Security takes precedence in terms of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a reduced number of attacks on refugee centres; 2. a reduced number of asylum seekers; 3. an increased number of deportations; 4. the concept of a “safe country of origin” is widely exploited.

Media reports in 2017 showed that German far-right parties and organisations presented themselves as the only defenders of German identity and culture. For them, the problem was not only political Islam but also the culture of remembrance and the erection of Holocaust monuments. They started to present their revisionist views of the Nazi period more often than before. The German far-right claimed at that time that, if necessary, it would defend freedoms by authoritarian means, too.

In 2017 the covered media reported that some German citizens of Muslim origin expressed their fear that political Islam could spread and that their social position would deteriorate. Moreover, the German far-right blamed them collectively, implying their hatred of Western culture.

The authorities stated within their hegemonic discourse that Saudi-Wahhabi Islam was responsible for the rise of intolerance, fanaticism and terrorism in the world because of its intention to spread globally, even by means of terrorism. It was not a conflict between Christianity and Islam, but between secularism and fundamentalism.

Media analysis for 2018

Regarding the migration issue, three topics dominated the analysed media in 2018:

1. UN Global Compact on safe, orderly and legal migration (known as the Marrakesh Agreement);
2. Action Plan for Integration;
3. annual upper limit for the admission of immigrants.

The UN Global Compact calls for the fight against human trafficking, the exploitation of cheap labour and discrimination, especially in the Asian and African countries that care for the largest number of refugees. According to the analysed articles, the Marrakesh Agreement was most severely attacked by the far-right for allegedly surrendering sovereignty by opening the borders and allowing “the flood” of foreigners to enter the country.

Nevertheless, according to hegemonic discourse, the Marrakesh Agreement was assessed as an appropriate instrument for reducing illegal migration, slavery, exploitation and forced labour without compromising state sovereignty.

The second major topic in 2018 was the adoption of the Action Plan for Integration into German society, which was divided into five phases:

- a) launching language courses and educational programmes in the countries of origin of immigrants;
- b) establishing a system for diploma recognition;
- c) upon arrival in Germany, providing immigrants with easier access to the labour market and faster integration into the local environment;
- d) enabling faster recruitment of professionals based on achievements in their home countries;

e) enabling faster employment based on achievements in other spheres of life, such as sports and culture.

Regarding the third topic, German political parties reached an agreement on an upper admission limit for immigrants which was estimated at 185,000 individuals per year, as this was the number that the German social and economic system could manage. On top of that, it was decided to regularly inform German citizens of the exact number of refugees and immigrants in their society.

Regarding the myth of Islamisation, the analysed articles reported that too much attention was given to immigration as a topic of medium importance. The issue was artificially pushed to the forefront by parties like the AfD, and also by a part of the media because both groups (journalists and populists) used simple solutions to resolve complex issues and exaggerate conflicts with personalised and emotionally charged stories.

Furthermore, as claimed in the analysed articles, some 30 years ago violent behaviour towards immigrants in Germany was not considered a serious crime or a politically motivated act based on the image of an enemy, which contributed to the present radicalisation of a part of the Muslim community. Being treated as second-class citizens, some members of the Muslim community turned to foreign allies such as Turkish president Erdoğan. He was seen as a powerful man who gave German Turks a voice. A Turk in Germany was no longer just a “small” worker or an immigrant who was looked down upon.

In 2018, the covered media reported on demonstrations against immigration in some eastern German cities like Cottbus. Clashes between the far-right and the left-liberal groups awakened the old myth of the East, but with new protagonists. The analysed German media portrayed the East as a “case”, as the “Other”, this time within the German borders. East German federal states were portrayed as a dark part of Germany or its shadow.

The analysed articles reported on Nazi symbols in East German schools (on classroom walls, clothing items, Hitler’s greetings on school trips, racist curses during breaks).

At the same time, there were also reports on a deradicalisation programme called “Strong Teachers – Strong Students” in nine vocational schools in East Germany. Some teachers left the programme because they experienced hostility from their colleagues and shaming from their students.

Table 7. Social and political differences between East and West Germany (as represented in the analysed media)

Discourses presented in the analysed media	Identity	Antagonism	Hegemony
<p>1. Different political experiences between the two parts of Germany.</p> <p>2. Complete domination of the West.</p> <p>3. Everything coming from the East is bad.</p> <p>4. Painful adjustments of East Germans to the Western way of life.</p> <p>5. Destruction of the economy in East Germany.</p> <p>6. Individual and collective shocks in East Germany.</p> <p>7. The West has perceived the East as a foreign body and its shadow.</p> <p>8. The feeling of abandonment, alienation, otherness and betrayed hopes prevail among East Germans.</p> <p>9. Deeply buried fears have come to the surface after being addressed by the AfD and Pegida.</p> <p>10. East Germans behave as victims who were stabbed in the back by the federal government, “their” chancellor and now by immigrants.</p> <p>11. Therefore, they have to take matters into their own hands.</p>	<p>East Germans: victims who were stabbed in the back:</p> <p>1. betrayed hopes and expectations, hurt pride and helplessness;</p> <p>2. they believe that the German government cares more about refugees and foreigners than about its own citizens.</p> <p>East Germans of immigrant origin:</p> <p>1. they experience threats on a daily basis;</p> <p>2. find justification for such behaviour, because everyone lives hard;</p> <p>3. they want to integrate and establish a dialogue with ethnic Germans;</p> <p>4. all attempts by authorities to establish a dialogue up to that time failed.</p>	<p>Polarisation of society</p> <p>1. Right-wing extremists at Chemnitz and Köthen rallies saluting Hitler and carrying banners with slogans “Germany to the Germans”.</p> <p>vs</p> <p>2. Left-wing rallies (SPD, Die Linke, Greens, and left-wing autonomous movements) with banners “Heart instead of hatred”.</p> <p>3. Right-wing extremists believe that demonstrations are “legitimate” if the state is not able to protect its own citizens. People must protect themselves from the “deadly” wave of immigrants who will stab the locals in the back.</p> <p>vs</p> <p>4. Liberal-left groups believe that it is dangerous to deny another person the right to exist. They hold accountable the CSU policy that gave “wind in the back” to the AfD. Therefore, liberal-left groups launched the initiative “#let’sgoout – Together against the politics of fear”.</p>	<p>1. The riots in Chemnitz raised the question of danger for German democracy due to growing polarisation taking place on the street and on the Internet.</p> <p>2. The problem is the reintroduction of Nazi symbols in public space and physical attacks on visible minorities, as well as the spread of hatred.</p> <p>3. Demonstrations revealed cracks in the system and “leakage” of information from the police and judicial system.</p>

CONCLUSION

Drawing on Anthony Giddens’ theory of structuration, this research has confirmed the validity of the sequence: event → response → critical situa-

tion → ontological insecurity → mythologisation → hegemonic discourse → changes in migration policy. The sequence explains the causes and consequences of mythologisation as a process in which the use of the “mythical language” serves as a precursor of future political change. In order to understand that sequence, the meaning of its constituent parts is explained below.

The event in the above sequence refers to the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the war in Syria. The response refers to the German federal government’s decision to open the border with Austria for Syrian refugees at the end of August 2015. The arrival of over a million refugees and immigrants to Germany in 2015 provoked the emergence of a critical situation which manifested itself in the overstrain of the German social and health care system. Further analysis of the selected German media implied the following reasons for the emergence of the critical situation: the German federal government did not establish the upper limit for the admission of Syrian refugees who entered Germany at that time, did not clearly define the time of their stay in Germany, and did not anticipate the potential breaking point of the German social system.

Under the change brought by the critical situation, the state of ontological insecurity⁴ appeared in German society, causing fear about the future. Ontological insecurity provoked questions about German identity and manifested itself in the form of extremism, xenophobia, religious fundamentalism, and the production of myths.

German society found itself divided over whether to welcome refugees and immigrants or to ban their access to Germany. In the camp advocating the ban on access, new chains of equivalence were formed that enabled the formation of two predominant myths as a result of the 2015 migrant crisis: the open-door myth and the myth of Islamisation.

The analysis suggested that mythologisation was the dominant reaction and the way of dealing with the above-mentioned critical situation. Notwithstanding the intention of the myths to create a unified point of view, they stimulated further polarisation of German society.

After the pressure, especially from the far-right, the authorities imposed a specific type of hegemonic discourse in order to find a common ground for

⁴ The state of ontological security in the subject creates a sense of order and continuity in relation to the environment, gives meaning to life, provides conditions for positive and stable emotions, and avoids chaos and anxiety. To achieve this, agents (subjects) resort to routine and develop a cognitive “cocoon” that gives them confidence that their cognitive world, and thus their personal biography, will be reproduced (Giddens, 1984: 102).

the antagonistic worldviews and maintain a sense of ontological insecurity within the acceptable boundaries. The established hegemony resulted in changes in the domain of German asylum and migration policy.

Following the course of the events from 2014 to 2018, the conducted investigation showed a gradual securitisation of the migration issue.

The table 8 below shows the effect of the migrant issue on immigration and border control management, social polarisation, economy and religion.

Table 8. Migrant issue from the perspective of the following domains, in the analysed articles from 2014 to 2018

Issues / year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Migrants on borders	Uncontrolled migration, pressure on the external EU borders	Welcoming culture vs border closures, immigrants as protagonists of population replacement theory, physical attacks on immigrants, property destruction, arson	Racist-motivated physical violence against immigrants, priority reception for Christian refugees, annual ceiling, no more than 200,000 individuals	Humanitarian approach vs security	Far-right protests in East Germany against immigration, upper annual limit of reception: 185,000. Integration; agreements with third countries.
Social division	Social polarisation, German jihadists seen as a security threat, deradicalisation (Hayat counselling centre)	Pegida rallies against immigration, citizens' rallies against Pegida	East Germans as the Other, East Germans felt "occupied" and forced to erase their past. German jihadists: security, cultural and institutional threat. The far-right openly expresses racial views.	The far-right: instead of physical, discursive violence (hate speech, slogans, targeting emotions, naming the enemy, revisionist view of the Nazi period)	The far-right: the only true defender of the German nation. Muslim citizens are against the spread of political Islam. The second generation of immigrants: demands dignity and recognition. Nazi symbols in public space.

Issues / year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Economy	The need for additional labour, scoring system for immigrant abilities	Immigrants as a need and a threat in terms of domestic labour	The far-right violence and xenophobia are harmful to business.		Recruitment of professionals based on achievements in their home country.
Religion	German jihadists – true believers and “preachers of the joyful message”	Islam (religion) vs “Lego-Islam” (fundamentalist project)	Immigrants would impose sharia law.	Not a conflict between Christianity and Islam, but between secularism and fundamentalism.	

The research of the selected German media within a given time frame indicated that the process of mythologisation had greatly influenced the public image of the migrant issue, the way it was presented in the selected media, and the reaction of politicians who accepted it as a political will of at least one section of the society. The interaction of three actors (citizens, media and politicians) affected the changes in German migration policy.

Despite the function of the myth to create a unified worldview, it actually encouraged further social polarisation in Germany. The authorities did not have much choice but to impose a specific type of hegemonic discourse in order to alleviate cultural conflict, preserve social balance and unhindered functioning of institutions.

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APPENDIX

The list of analysed media articles – listed chronologically by publication date and source

Berliner Morgenpost

1. Abel, A. Mehr Flüchtlinge in Berlin – Ausgaben verdoppeln sich, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 24 March 2014, <https://www.morgenpost.de/berlin-aktuell/article126108639/Mehr-Fluechtlinge-in-Berlin-Ausgaben-verdoppeln-sich.html> (15 June 2019).
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Mitologizacija migrantskoga pitanja u Saveznoj Republici Njemačkoj kao posljedica migrantske krize iz 2015. i njen učinak na promjene u njemačkoj migracijskoj politici

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SAŽETAK

Ovaj se članak bavi procesom mitologizacije migrantskoga pitanja u Saveznoj Republici Njemačkoj od 2014. do 2018. Polazi od pitanja na koji se način u odabranim njemačkim medijima označavalo imigrante iz pretežito muslimanskih zemalja koji su došli u Saveznu Republiku Njemačku tijekom i neposredno nakon izbijanja migrantske krize 2015. Analiza je provedena na medijskom sadržaju na temu migracija i ekstremizma s dostupnih *online* arhiva sljedećih njemačkih glasila: *Berliner Morgenpost*, *Deutsche Welle*, *Die Zeit*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* i *Freie Presse*. Upotrebom diskurzivne teorije Ernesta Laclaua i Chantal Mouffe kao istraživačkog modela, u analiziranim člancima izdvojeni su sljedeći glavni označitelji: imigranti, njemački džihadisti i njemački krajnje desni ekstremisti. Daljnja je analiza pokazala da su mitovi bili najutjecajniji oblik označavanja, a mitologizacija dominantni način djelovanja u kritičnoj situaciji koju je uzrokovala migrantska kriza iz 2015. Kao rezultat navedene situacije proizvedeni su sljedeći mitovi: mit o otvorenim vratima, mit o islamizaciji Njemačke i novi mit o istoku. U analiziranom materijalu pronađene su poveznice s poznatim povijesnim njemačkim mitovima poput mita o granici i mita o nožu u leđa. Cilj istraživanja bio je odrediti ulogu procesa mitologizacije, pod utjecajem migrantske krize iz 2015., u promjenama njemačke migracijske politike te način upotrebe hegemonijskog diskursa u cilju ublažavanja kulturnog konflikta i smanjenja društvene polarizacije u vrijeme krize.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: njemačka krajnja desnica, migrantska kriza, mitologizacija, teorija diskursa Laclaua i Mouffe, Giddensova teorija strukturacije

