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Supervisor: Annika Björkdahl
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Anti-Feminism and Anti-Genderism in German Right-Wing Populism

Fabienne Wehrle

Abstract

Many of the right-wing populist forces currently on the rise across the world have anti-feminist and anti-genderist agendas and narratives. This thesis investigates such narratives from an ontological security perspective by conducting a frame analysis. To build the theoretical framework, a gendered approach to ontological security theory that considers changing gender relations a trigger of ontological security is developed. In a case study focusing on Germany, programmes of the right-wing populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) are analysed in order to identify anti-feminist and anti-genderist frames. The AfD's narrative is based on an underlying frame in which the concepts of gender and nation become entangled. In this frame, the survival of the nation is presented as threatened by the supposed demographic demise of the 'native' population and women are assigned the role of 'natural' reproducers of the nation. Two main frames are based on this underlying gender-nation frame: the first rejects 'gender' as an ideology aimed at the destruction of the nation and the second seeks to re-establish traditional gender roles and family models to ensure the survival of the nation. The identified frames are then applied to and discussed in the context of recent parliamentary debates on abortion. The thesis holds that anti-feminist and anti-genderist narratives can serve as strategies to securitise subjectivity.

Key words: anti-feminism, anti-genderism, right-wing populism, ontological security theory, frame analysis

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List of Abbreviations

AfD	<i>Alternative für Deutschland</i> (Alternative for Germany)
CDU	<i>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i> (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)
CSU	<i>Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern</i> (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)
FDP	<i>Freie Demokratische Partei</i> (Free Democratic Party)
Jusos	<i>Arbeitsgemeinschaft der JungsozialistInnen in der SPD</i> (Working Group of Young Socialists in the SPD)
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (or: Queer) and Intersex
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
StGB	<i>Strafgesetzbuch</i> (German Criminal Code)
WHO	World Health Organization

1 Introduction

In many countries across the world, right-wing populist forces are on the rise. While in some countries, right-wing populist politicians and parties have been able to gain growing percentages of the vote, in others, they have managed to come into government (e.g. Brazil, Hungary, Poland, USA) (Oppenheim, 2019). Oftentimes overlooked, a common denominator of many of these right-wing populist forces is that they aim at upholding (heterosexual, white) male supremacy and subordinating women (ibid.). Seeking to return to a golden past, they want to re-establish traditional hierarchies and values, including those concerning gender roles and the family. Hence, they seek to revert feminist achievements and push women back into the private sphere. They loudly reject the notion that gender is a social construct and, thus, fluid and regularly attack LGBTQI+ rights.

This thesis investigates such phenomena of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism. Introducing the topic of this thesis to my personal environment, I was not seldom met with incomprehension and ignorance. ‘Antifeminism? Oh right, because that’s a thing now!’. As will be shown throughout the thesis, concerns about anti-feminism and anti-genderism should not be disregarded as yet another exaggeration of supposedly radical feminists. Rather, such concerns relate to social and political trends that can be traced across the world and that have real consequences, especially on the lives of women and members of the LGBTQI+ communities.

In some countries, such as in Germany as is shown in this thesis, right-wing populist oppositional parties are lobbying against gender-mainstreaming policies and attacking LGBTQI+ rights such as same-sex marriage, thereby shifting the discourse. Where right-wing populists have made it into government, their influence is naturally more noticeable. They seek to control women’s sexuality and lives by restricting reproductive rights, especially abortion rights. In the USA, for instance, 58 abortion restrictions – including 26 abortion bans – have been enacted in 19 states during the first six months of 2019 (Guttmacher Institute, 2019). In Alabama, a law was introduced that would make abortion – at all stages of the pregnancy and even in cases of rape and incest – punishable by 10 to 99 years imprisonment. After President Trump’s appointment of two conservative judges, supporters of the so-called Pro-Life movement are hoping for the Supreme Court to overturn its 1973 ‘Roe v. Wade’ decision that had led to a nationwide legalisation of abortion (Oppenheim, 2019). The right to abortion is an essential reproductive right and a central achievement of the feminist movement. Denying access to legal and safe abortions can be considered a form of gendered violence (Bromley, 2012, p. 201). The World Health Organization (WHO, n.d.) estimates that each year, around 47.000 women die from clandestine and unsafe abortions. Therefore, attacks on the right to abortion, are profoundly anti-feminist.

1.1 Purpose, Aim and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism. Departing from socio-constructivist assumptions, this thesis focuses on the anti-feminist and anti-genderist narratives of right-wing populist forces. Using the method of frame analysis, it looks at how anti-feminist and anti-genderist claims in these narratives are strategically framed to gain voter support. Seeking to illuminate where such claims originate and how they resonate with the audience, the thesis employs the lens of ontological security theory to identify and interpret the frames. This thesis does not only aim at investigating anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism but also at developing the theory of ontological security by applying it to these phenomena. It seeks to expand the theory by focusing on gender as a dimension of ontological (in)security and to help develop a gendered approach to ontological security theory. The thesis is trying to answer the following, overarching research question:

How can anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism be understood in terms of ontological security?

To narrow down the research field, I will conduct a case study on Germany and the right-wing populist political party *Alternative für Deutschland* ('Alternative for Germany', henceforth 'AfD'), while trying to generate generalisable results. The case study will be guided by the following sub-research questions:

In which ways can the AfD's narrative be understood as anti-feminist and / or anti-genderist?

How does the AfD frame its anti-feminist and / or anti-genderist arguments?

How can the theory of ontological security help us in furthering our understanding of the frames employed in the AfD's narrative?

1.2 Limitations

Being a case study, the findings of this thesis need to be read in the context of its case and are not simply generalisable to any case of anti-feminism and / or anti-genderism in right-wing populism. Furthermore, this thesis is naturally limited through its scope. Therefore, it cannot perform a comprehensive frame analysis of the AfD's narrative but must focus on specific types of communicating texts issued during a specific period of time. For instance, while it would be very interesting to analyse the social media postings of the party and its politicians, they cannot be included in this study. Instead this thesis focuses on the party programmes as the central place of the party's narrative in its writings and on parliamentary speeches as manifestations of its narrative in its utterances.

1.3 Positionality

For the sake of transparency and in the tradition of women's and gender studies, I would like to reflect on my positionality and acknowledge its importance in the research process. I consider myself a feminist researcher and have a particular interest in intersectionality and anti-racism. I follow a post-positivist approach to political science and a socio-constructivist ontology. Concerned by recent cutbacks on women's rights and shifts to perceivably more misogynist political discourses in many countries, I grew interested in backlashes to feminism and in anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism more specifically. After all, being a woman – albeit a white, privileged one – I am (potentially) personally affected by such trends. Hence, my positionality played an important role in my choice of topic but also influenced my choice of research design and the research process.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis begins by defining the key concepts of anti-feminism, anti-genderism and right-wing populism. Then, it reviews the existing literature on gender in right-wing populist narratives, femonationalism and gender-nationalism, anti-gender movements in Europe and anti-feminism and anti-genderism in Germany and in the AfD in order to delineate the research gap that this study is aiming to fill. Next, it introduces the concepts of ontological (in)security and of the securitisation of subjectivity and proposes a gendered approach to ontological security theory. In a method section, it outlines the case study, operationalises the method of frame analysis and motivates the choice of empirical material. The analysis is split into two parts: The first part of the analysis identifies anti-feminist and anti-genderist frames employed by the AfD. The second part discusses the identified frames in the context of a recent parliamentary debate. Due to the centrality of reproductive rights to feminism, recent developments worldwide and the particularities of the German abortion legislation, I have chosen the debate on abortion in the German federal parliament, the *Bundestag*, for this discussion. Finally, the conclusion summarises the findings of the analysis, tries to generalise from the results and suggests pathways for future research.

2 Key Concepts

‘Anti-feminism’ and ‘anti-genderism’ are the phenomena that this thesis investigates and should therefore be defined. Anti-feminism and anti-genderism cannot be understood without looking at what is meant by ‘feminism’ and ‘gender’. I therefore begin this section by providing some theoretical background on gender and feminism, before arriving at a definition of the terms anti-feminism and anti-genderism. Finally, I present a definition of right-wing populism, a concept which takes a central place in the design of this study.

2.1 Gender

Feminist theory differentiates between ‘sex’, as a biological category, and ‘gender’, as a social and cultural category. Sex refers to biological or bodily features, differentiating men and women on the basis of their sexual and reproductive organs (Bromley, 2012, p. 2). Gender, on the other hand, refers to the social construction of the binary categories of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity and femininity are categories that compose of characteristics and behaviours socially prescribed and attributed to being male or female (in the sense of the biological sex) and passed on through socialisation. The sets of attributes commonly associated with masculinity and femininity vary across time and space and are thus fluid and apt to change (Peterson and Runyan, 1993, p. 17). Whereas sex is often thought of as ‘real’ or ‘factic’, as ‘the material or corporeal ground upon which gender operates as an act of cultural inscription’ (Butler, 1990, p. 146), ‘gender serves as the cultural marker of biological sex’ (Mayer, 2000, p. 4) and ‘can be understood as a signification that an (already) sexually differentiated body assumes’ (Butler, 1990, p. 9). According to Butler (*ibid.*, pp. 146-147), gender is an ‘act’, socially produced and reproduced through the continuous repetition of gendered performances (‘performativity’).

Generally, biological males are expected to conform to the category of masculinity (and to the attributes associated with this category) while biological females are expected to conform to the category of femininity (Peterson and Runyan, 1993, p. 18). However, as gender is separate from sex, this is not automatically the case (Mayer, 2000, p. 4). Non-conformity to gender roles can be perceived as threatening because the dissolution of gender norms would have a destabilising effect on substantive identity (Butler, 1990, p. 146).

Masculinity and femininity are socially constructed as ‘two poles of a dichotomy’, associated with binary adjectives such as strong/weak, independent/dependent, aggressive/passive, logical/illogical, and rough/gentle

(Peterson and Runyan, 1993, p. 22). As Peterson and Runyan (*ibid.*, p. 18) note, a system of power is inherent in the social construction of gender because masculinity (with its attributed characteristics and domains) is typically valued more highly than femininity. Moreover, as male becomes the 'positive gender identity constructed over and against a negative 'other', the 'feminine'' (Delehanty and Steele, 2009, p. 529), female becomes defined by what is not male (Peterson and Runyan, 1993, p. 22), by a lack. While males become defined as the protectors (or 'just warriors'), females are defined as the protected (or 'beautiful souls') (Elshtain, [1987] 1995, p. 3). Thus, the public becomes the male sphere, while the private (the family) becomes the female sphere (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 72), with men seen as predominantly performing productive labour and women seen as predominantly performing reproductive labour (Peterson and Runyan, 1993, p. 24). From this, Delehanty and Steele (2009, p. 529) conclude that the social construction of gendered categories results in the subjugation, domination, and oppression of women. However, while men as a group generally benefit from the current societal gendered order, some men, especially those who do not fit the dominant model of masculinity (hegemonic masculinity), are also disadvantaged (Bromley, 2012, p. 156).

The gender inequalities that uphold the current social hierarchies are maintained through gender-based violence (e.g. sexual and domestic violence), structural discrimination (e.g. on the labour market) and psychological mechanisms (e.g. everyday sexism, victim blaming or stereotyping) (Peterson and Runyan, 1993, p. 18). Feminism seeks to dismantle this socially constructed gender hierarchy and end gender inequality (*ibid.*, p. 19).

2.2 Feminism

Feminism is 'both a theory and a movement to bring about social change based on that theory' (Bromley, 2012, p. 8). Feminism as a movement can be understood as both a result of and a protest against the current order (Eduards, 2002, p. 64). It seeks to transform the current systems of power (Bromley, 2012, p. 8), which are highly gendered and patriarchal. The term 'patriarchy' denotes 'hierarchical historical systems of rule and domination by men' (*ibid.*, p. 5).

Even though the system of gender relations has been changing as a result of the women's movement, women and men remain unequal. While women are no longer confined to the private sphere, they are now segregated and subordinated within the public sphere (Walby, 1997, p. 1). Moreover, depending on their position, women have been benefitting differently from women's emancipation. Intersectional feminism acknowledges the centrality of positionality to analysis (Bromley, 2012, p. 49) and considers race, class, sexuality, age, ability, and gender to be 'interlocking and interdependent sites of (possible) oppression that are simultaneously experienced rather than independently or sequentially experienced' (*ibid.*, p. 56).

2.3 Backlashes: Anti-Feminism and Anti-Genderism

The term anti-feminism denotes attitudes and actions directed against feminism and its accomplishments. Misogyny – the assumption of a general inferiority of women – certainly forms the base of and is often conflated with anti-feminism. However, only misogyny that is expressed in reaction to feminism and as resistance against feminism’s actual or alleged aims constitutes anti-feminism (Schmincke, 2018, pp. 28-29). Anti-genderism can be considered a current version of anti-feminism that can be observed in many countries (ibid.) and has emerged since the mid-2000s (ibid., p. 32). Anti-genderism is explicitly directed against ‘gender’ and thus fights against the critical questioning of the binary gender model (ibid., pp. 32-33).

Anti-feminism and anti-genderism are often understood as a conservative ‘backlash’ against the achievements of the women’s and LGBTQI+ rights movement (Kováts, 2017, p. 182). A backlash is an ‘aggressive and violent reaction to social changes that challenge the status quo’ of the allocation of power and privilege within society (Bromley, 2012, p. 33). Anti-feminism has existed for as long as feminism itself (Schmincke, 2018, p. 30). Throughout feminism’s history, the movement has been met with backlashes and resistance, with reinvestigations of the subordination of women (Walby, 1997, p. 156). Schmincke (2018, p. 28) regards such backlashes to feminism as responses to the dismantling of traditional structures, values and relationships that feminism has in common with other modern developments such as industrialisation, urbanisation, liberalisation and democratisation. According to Schmincke (2017, pp. 94; 101; 103), the emergence of anti-feminism and anti-genderism can be explained as a reaction to social change, with feminism and gender allegedly threatening for example the cultural hegemony of heteronormativity and of the heterosexual family. Consequently, anti-feminism and anti-genderism originate from a fear of change and loss of privileges, from a sense of threat. Yuval-Davis (1997, pp. 121-122) links anti-feminism to the crisis of modernity and the return to particularistic essentialist identities with the rise of religious and ethnic fundamentalisms. Social change brought about by feminism is not only opposed by those who benefit from the status quo and fear losing their power and privilege but also by those to whom the status quo offers familiarity and stability (Bromley, 2012, p. 8). Therefore, not all men are anti-feminists and there are also women who take on anti-feminist positions (Walby, 1997, p. 154). Prominent actors of anti-feminism are protagonists of the men’s rights movement, conservative journalists, Christian fundamentalist groups, and right-wing populist and extreme right movements and parties (Schmincke, 2018, p. 32).

Although anti-feminism is a heterogenous movement (Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012, p. 22), there are a number of claims that anti-feminists tend to make to discredit feminism. One central claim of modern anti-feminism is that gender equality has been achieved and that thus, feminism has become obsolete. Following this assumption, modern feminism is claimed to be feminism gone too far, with feminists wanting to put women above men or simply hating men

(Anderson, 2015, pp. xiv-xv). Such claims ignore that (1) women (especially poor women, women of colour and women living in developing countries) continue to be subordinated (ibid., p. 66) and that (2) feminism is not directed against individual men or all men but against the patriarchal system that continues to persist (ibid., pp. 61-62). Another claim of anti-feminism is that feminists incite a 'gender war' by pitting women against men, for instance by accusing men of committing gendered violence (Eduards, 2002, p. 118). This claim ignores that feminists seek to end the very bipolar gender oppositionality that would be reproduced in such a general opposition to men (Anderson, 2015, pp. 66-67). A third central claim of anti-feminism contains a classic victim-perpetrator reversal: arguing that feminism has gone too far in emancipating girls and women, boys and men are portrayed as the new victims of gender discrimination (Anderson, 2015, pp. 50; 75). However, as Anderson (ibid., chapter 4) demonstrates, this argument is baseless. Still, the loss of privilege through increasing equalisation is perceived as unjust and women who gain space in the public sphere are viewed as usurpers (ibid., p. 86). Another reversal takes place when anti-feminists blame feminism rather than persisting gender inequalities for women's problems (Walby, 1997, p. 157). Susan Faludi (1992) has collected numerous examples of such reversals to describe attacks on women's advancements in the USA. In her book 'Backlash - The Undeclared War Against Women', she illustrates how such arguments aim at pushing women back into their traditional roles and into the private sphere. By categorising traditional women as 'good' and non-traditional women as 'bad', offering protection to the first (benevolent sexism) and penalising the latter (hostile sexism), the current gendered order is kept in place (Anderson, 2015, pp. 128-129). However, anti-feminism does not only follow the strategy of reversing feminist achievements and returning women to the home but also that of exploiting women in the public sphere (Walby, 1997, p. 165).

2.4 Right-Wing Populism

To define the term 'right-wing populism', firstly, the concept of populism needs to be specified. Mudde (2004, p. 543) defines populism as

'an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people'.

Following this definition, populism is both anti-elitist and anti-pluralist. It is anti-elitist as it presents the political action of the elite as being opposed to the general will of the people. It is anti-pluralist due to its claim to sole representation of 'the people', rejecting diversity of opinions and minority protection. According to Mudde (2004, p. 544), populism is 'moralistic rather than programmatic'. Moreover, populism is defined as a 'thin-centred' ideology that, as such, can be easily combined with other ideologies, for instance with communism, socialism or

nationalism (ibid.). ‘The people’ populists claim to represent, is ‘neither real nor all-inclusive’ but a ‘mythical and constructed sub-set of the whole population’ (ibid., p. 546). Populists seek to emancipate ‘the people’ by making it aware of its alleged oppression (ibid.). Yet, they do not want to re-educate it, as the ‘consciousness of the people’ or ‘common sense’ is taken for the ‘basis of all good (politics)’ (ibid., p. 547). Finally, populists often attack the established parties, claiming to be a ‘new kind of party’ (ibid., p. 546).

Populisms of the right connect the thin-centred ideology of populism with the ideology of nativism, which is a specific type of nationalism¹ (Mudde, 2007, p. 18). Mudde (ibid., p. 19) defines nativism as

‘an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that nonnative [sic] elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state’.

Persons and ideas can be defined as (non-) native based on, for instance, their ethnicity, race or religion (ibid., p. 19). Right-wing populists, thus, distance themselves from and oppose both ‘the elite’ (vertical dimension) and ‘non-native’ elements (horizontal dimension), while claiming to be the sole legitimate representation of ‘the people’.

¹ ‘Nationalism’ can be defined as ‘a political doctrine that strives for the congruence of the cultural and the political unit, i.e. the nation and the state, respectively’ or, more simply put, a political doctrine that aims for a monocultural state (Mudde, 2007, p. 16).

3 Literature Review

In this section, I present previous research that has analysed right-wing populist narratives through a gender lens, introduced the concepts of femonationalism, gender-nationalism and homonationalism, and investigated anti-feminist and anti-genderist movements in Europe. Corresponding to the focus of this thesis, I also present findings on anti-feminism and anti-genderism in Germany and the AfD more specifically.

3.1 Right-Wing Populist Discourses Are Gendered

Kinnvall (2018, p. 536) notes that few studies have analysed the discourses of nationalism and populism through a gender lens, even though such discourses tend to gender spaces through their constructions of masculinity and femininity and thereby maintain the current order of power hierarchies. In the same vein, Sauer, Kuhar, Ajanović and Saarinen (2016, p. 104) find that ‘right-wing strategies aim at constructing a heteronormative gender and sexual order and a clear hierarchy between men and women in all spheres of social life’.

Wodak (2015, p. 151) agrees with Kinnvall (2018) on gendered discourses of right-wing populist parties being under-researched. She argues that as gender relations are changing, the extreme right-wing projects the fear they construct around this social change onto ‘fantasies and imaginaries of both empowered and independent white women as well as women symbolizing the ‘Other’, namely the veiled Muslim woman’ (Wodak, 2015, p. 153). Accordingly, discourses of the right demand the liberation of Muslim women while seeking to ‘govern and regulate women’s bodies and minds’ (ibid.).

3.2 Of Femonationalism and Gender-Nationalism

Farris (2017) has coined the term ‘femonationalism’ to designate the exploitation of feminist issues by nationalists (and neoliberals) for anti-Islam and anti-immigration campaigns and describe this presumed inconsistency of right-wing populist narratives on gender. Femonationalists advance their anti-Islam agendas in the name of women’s rights by framing Islam as an inherently misogynistic religion. Sexism and patriarchy are presented as a non-western problem, exclusive to the Muslim other (ibid., pp. 1-4). Employing colonialist representations and stereotypes, the Muslim man and woman are constructed as a binary of dangerous

oppressor and passive victim (ibid., p. 5). Femonationalist rhetoric moves the issue of women's rights from the category of general societal problems to that of non-western women's problems or of problems caused by Muslim / non-western men (ibid., p. 9). Similarly, Kinnvall (2015, pp. 522-523) has described how far right narratives employ references to the key value of gender equality as a tool to securitise² immigration and establish gendered boundaries, separating a modern 'us' from an oppressive, patriarchal, immigrant, Muslim 'them'.

In the same vein, Erel (2018, p. 176) writes about how current right-wing movements in Europe use narratives on gender and family to border the nation and demarcate 'a supposed national or European identity from stereotypical constructions of 'Muslim' families'. She emphasises that despite alluding to gender equality as a legitimisation for their anti-Muslim racism, many right-wing populists actively question achievements of the women's rights movement (ibid., p. 175). In right-wing rhetoric, the 'social order that makes the nation a 'homely' space' is not only presented as being challenged by multiculturalism but also by feminism, with both phenomena questioning white hegemonic masculinities and femininities (ibid., p. 173). Along with the traditional family that produced and maintained it, the 'golden past of social and cultural cohesion around a unified national identity' is deemed to be at threat (ibid., p. 174). Hence, by demonising and excluding the racialised immigrant family, right-wing rhetoric and policies target migrants' reproductive abilities (ibid., p. 173).

Hadj (2017, pp. 84-85) uses the term 'gender-nationalism' to describe the same phenomenon and argues that references to gender equality and women's rights have become a key instrument for boundary making and the legitimisation of exclusion in the nationalist repertoire. She links gender-nationalism to the emergence of 'Europeanised' national identities and accuses it of harming those it pretends to 'save', for example by restricting immigration and asylum regulations, especially family reunification (ibid., p. 87). The term 'homonationalism' is used to designate the instrumental defence of gay rights as a means to demonise the (Muslim) other (Winter, 2018, pp. 110-111).

3.3 Anti-Gender Movements in Europe

As Paternotte and Kuhar (2018, p. 7) note, there has been a 'rapid development of research on opposition to gender and sexual rights in Europe'. Often, such scholarship focuses on the manifestations of the phenomena of anti-feminism and

² Securitisation is a theoretical concept developed by the Copenhagen School centred around Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde and laid out in their 1998 book 'Security: A new framework for analysis'. According to the Copenhagen School, any public matter can theoretically be situated in any place on a spectrum going from non-politicised through politicised to securitised (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23). By securitising an issue, it is portrayed as an 'existential threat requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure' (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 24).

anti-genderism in various countries, such as for example in Finland (Keskinen, 2013), France (Harsin, 2018), Germany (Bitzan, 2017; Blum, 2015), Poland (Graff, 2014; Szelewa, 2014), Switzerland (Maihofer and Schutzbach, 2017) and the UK (Jordan, 2016).

In 2015, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies has published a report edited by Kováts and Põim on the position of conservative and far-right parties in anti-gender mobilisations in selected European countries (France, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). The findings of this report illustrate how ‘gender’ functions as a symbolic glue between different conservative and right-wing positions and groups. In her contribution to a volume on gender and far right politics in Europe, Kováts (2017, p. 185) concludes that the emergence of anti-gender movements is a symptom and a result of ‘deeper socio-economic, political and cultural crises of liberal democracy’. She traces the origin of anti-feminism’s defamatory key concept of ‘gender ideology’ back to the Vatican and the time after the Fourth UN Conference of Women that took place in Beijing in 1995 (ibid., p. 178). Through the notion of ‘gender ideology’, ‘gender’ is constructed as the enemy, as an ‘intrigue of lobbies’ that has supposedly infiltrated international organisations and ‘an ideology that threatens our children’ (ibid., p. 177).

In 2017, Kuhar and Paternotte published a volume in which, together with other authors, they investigate the phenomenon of anti-gender campaigns in a number of European countries (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Russia, Slovenia and Spain), trying to establish commonalities and differences between these campaigns. They argue that anti-gender mobilisations, that mostly emerged since the 2010s, constitute a transnationally circulating movement and identify a common theoretical framework centred around the key word of ‘gender ideology’ (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2017a, pp. 2-5). Anti-genderists use the term ‘gender ideology’ to discredit the struggle for women’s and LGBTIQ+ rights as well as the discipline of gender studies. They claim that society, mankind and especially children³ are threatened by ‘gender ideology’, an alleged conspiracy or new totalitarianism aimed at introducing social reforms (e.g. sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage and adoption, new reproductive technologies, sex education, gender mainstreaming, and protection against gender-based violence), reforms that allegedly favour deviant minorities and threaten the traditional family and current social order (ibid., pp. 5-7). Corrupt elites and international organisations (EU, UN) are claimed to be key actors in this conspiracy, undermining sovereignty and democratic principles (ibid.). Anti-genderists oppose the discipline of gender studies by declaring it to be ideological and contrasting it to the supposedly objective disciplines of the natural sciences (ibid.). They claim that as gender equality has already been reached, gender mainstreaming will lead to the

³ for an analysis of the image of the innocent child in anti-genderist narratives see Schmincke, 2017.

discrimination of men, the elimination of biological sex and the destruction of the family as an institution (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2017b, pp. 258-259).

Paternotte and Kuhar (2017a, pp. 13-15) find that the current rise of right-wing populism in Europe has reinforced anti-gender campaigns and present overlaps between right-wing populist and anti-genderist actors. They present commonalities between the two movements' discursive patterns and strategies: both emphasise common sense and us-versus-them dichotomies, blame corrupt elites and international organisations, claim to give a voice to the silent/silenced majority and rely on discursive tools such as victim-perpetrator reversal, scapegoating and fear-mongering (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2017a, p. 14). However, in a 2018 article, Paternotte and Kuhar (pp. 12-13) argue that despite right-wing populists being among the main drivers of anti-genderism and the commonalities between the two movements, anti-genderism and right-wing populism should not be conflated with each other but looked at as two separate phenomena to understand how they resonate, interact and mutually develop each other.

3.4 Anti-Feminism and Anti-Genderism in Germany

In her chapter in Kuhar and Paternotte's 2017 volume, Villa discusses anti-gender mobilisations in Germany. According to Villa (2017, p. 99), anti-genderism has become a 'common denominator' for a set of German conservative, (far) right-wing, and populist actors. She notes that a main trigger for anti-gender mobilisations in the country were educational reforms aimed at introducing liberal and plural sexual education to high school curricula (ibid, p. 101). With its rhetoric and claims, anti-genderism reinstalls a sense of certainty and social unambiguousness that some feel has been lost (ibid., p. 100). It reacts to paradigm shifts in the normative foundations of German policymaking by rejecting post-essential identities and the idea of gender being a social construct, (ibid., pp. 112-113). Anti-genderism in Germany portrays itself as the marginalised voice of the silent/silenced majority, representing common sense and combatting the ideological, irrational and elitist 'gender' (ibid., p. 113). Anti-genderism claims that gender is a totalitarian ideology, imposed by the elite ('them') on the normal people ('us') (ibid., p. 109). Moreover, anti-genderism claims that gender studies are non-scientific and an ideological threat to German academia, censoring research according to political correctness (ibid., pp. 111-112). Finally, anti-gender rhetoric plays on fears of an exaggerated political correctness and spreads moral panic regarding a supposed repression of traditional norms, opinions and choices (ibid., p. 106). Using the image of the innocent child as a focal point, anti-genderism accuses 'gender' of incitement to paedophilia⁴ and the sexualisation of children (ibid., pp. 110-111).

⁴ for an analysis of strategic allusions to paedophilia in anti-feminist and anti-genderist narratives see Kämpf, 2017.

Lenz (2018, p. 26) argues that within the German public debate, sexism and racism become entangled when – going against the facts – male migrants are portrayed as the sole perpetrators of sexualised violence. The trope of the dangerous and violent male ‘other’, that has been strengthened by the massive incident of sexual harassment on New Year’s Eve 2015/2016 in Cologne, allows to construct ‘indigenous’ gender relations as modern and superior and to legitimise the exclusion of and aggression against immigrants with claims to the protection of ‘our’ women (ibid.).

3.5 Anti-Feminism and Anti-Genderism in the AfD

Already in 2014, one year after the foundation of the AfD, Kemper (p. 45) speculated that the party might establish a strong anti-feminist position next to its Eurosceptic and anti-establishment stances in a report published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the foundation of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). In a 2016 report published by the same foundation, Kemper analyses AfD positions on gender and family in the states of Saxony and Thuringia and on the EU-level, as well as the party’s activities against sex education reforms, confirming his 2014 prognosis.

Villa (2017, p. 108) notes that with the electoral success of the AfD, anti-genderism has also become an issue in organised politics and parliaments. Furthermore, she presents personnel overlaps between the AfD and the anti-gender movement: high-profile AfD politician Beatrix von Storch, for instance, mobilises against reproductive rights as well as liberal and plural sexual education in schools and has founded the organisation ‘Zivile Koalition e.V.’ that advocates, amongst others, against same-sex marriage (ibid., pp. 107-108).

As Schmincke (2018, p. 33) maintains, the AfD combines their nationalist and racist positions with a rejection of gender studies and sexual education, the strengthening of heterosexual families and a family policy explicitly understood as population policy. Lang (2017, p. 174) notes that with this family policy, the AfD seeks to maintain the privileges of the traditional family over pluralist forms of the family, of ‘Germans’ over ‘non-Germans’, of heterosexual over homosexual partnerships and of men over women. She further finds that the discourse on ‘genderism’ – with its fights over discursive hegemony over terms such as family, marriage, sex and gender – has opened a gateway for the extreme right to influence societal debates (ibid., p. 167). ‘Gender’ has become the common enemy of and thus a ‘hinge’ between the extreme conservative and religious right with links into the bourgeois mainstream (ibid, p. 174).

This thesis contributes to the existing literature by analysing the current manifestations of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in German right-wing populism, more specifically in the narratives of the AfD. The innovation of my approach lies in the application of ontological security theory, which is conceptualised in the following section, to the analysis of these phenomena.

4 Theoretical Framework

As proposed above, this thesis investigates the phenomena of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism through an ontological security lens. Therefore, this section provides the theoretical base for the following analysis by introducing the concepts of ontological (in)security and the securitisation of subjectivity. In the final part of this section, seeking to develop a gendered approach to ontological security theory, I argue why this theory is suited to the analysis of the issues of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism and promises an insightful perspective.

4.1 The Concept of Ontological (In)Security

The term ‘ontological (in)security’ was first introduced by the psychoanalyst Ronald D. Laing in his work ‘The Divided Self’ (1960). According to Laing, an individual possesses a ‘firm core of ontological security’ when experiencing

‘his own being as real, alive, whole; as differentiated from the rest of the world in ordinary circumstances so clearly that his identity and autonomy are never in question; as a continuum in time; as having an inner consistency, substantiality, genuineness, and worth; as spatially coextensive with the body; and, usually, as having begun in or around birth and liable to extinction with death’ (ibid., p. 43).

More simply put, ontological security consists in having a ‘stable sense of being’ (Rossdale, 2015, p. 371).

Adaptions of ontological security theory in political science⁵ rely predominantly on Anthony Giddens’ (1991) more structural interpretation of the concept in the discipline of sociology, scaling ontological security from the individual to the societal level (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2017, p. 4). Giddens (1991, p. 47) defines ontological security as having “‘answers” to fundamental existential questions’. These fundamental questions concern existence itself, the relations between human life and the external world, the existence of other persons (as subjectivity is deduced from intersubjectivity) and self-identity (ibid., pp. 47-52). In other words, ontological security refers to a firm sense of knowing the world and one’s place in it. Self-identity is defined as ‘the self as reflexively understood

⁵ see e.g. Kinnvall (2004), Mitzen (2006), Steele (2008), Rumelili (2015).

by the person in terms of her or his biography' (ibid., p. 53). To provide self-identity with stability, the individual's biographical narrative must be continuously reproduced and confirmed through actions and occurrences (ibid., pp. 52-54).

Giddens furthermore suggests that ontological security relies on basic trust, a 'trust in the existential anchorings of reality' (1991, pp. 38). Following Giddens (ibid., pp. 36-40), such basic trust is developed in early childhood, as in establishing routines and habits in its relationship with its caregiver, the infant learns to confide in the reliability of other persons as well as in its environment. Basic trust enables individuals to go about in their day-to-day life by providing a 'protective cocoon' which allows the individuals to ignore potential threats to their physical or psychological security and, thus, to act (ibid.). When assumptions about the 'coherence, continuity and dependability' of the world are rattled, basic trust can be lost, triggering anxiety (ibid., p. 66). Giddens differentiates anxiety from fear, stressing that fear relates to concrete threats and referent objects, while anxiety describes a 'generalised state of emotions' (ibid., p. 43), threatening the sense of self-identity and orientation in the world, and thus, causing ontological insecurity (ibid., p. 45).

Loss of basic trust and, consequently, of ontological security, Giddens (ibid., p. 12) argues, are commonplace in what he refers to as the 'world of high modernity', a world so prone to risk that 'crisis', usually considered an exception, becomes a kind of permanent condition. 'Modernity', as defined by Giddens (ibid., pp. 1-5; 14-15), is characterised amongst others by the spread of industrialism, capitalism, the nation-state system and the development of mass communication. Modernity introduces radical change to day-to-day life as it restructures time and space, disembedding social relations from temporal and spatial constraints and globalising the influence of local events (ibid.).

Later on, Giddens' conceptualisations of ontological security were taken up by scholars of political science such as Catarina Kinnvall and Jennifer Mitzen. Kinnvall (2006, pp. 26; 34-35) proposes to look at security as a 'thick signifier', which means to investigate the power structures involved in security discourses and the structural reasons for an individual's sense of ontological insecurity. Summarising Giddens' elaborations, Kinnvall defines ontological security as 'a security of being, a sense of confidence and trust that the world is what it appears to be' (2004, p. 746). Accordingly, 'ontological (in)security is grounded in temporal and spatial emotional structures through which individuals, societies and states make sense of themselves and the world around them' (Kinnvall, 2017, p. 94). In her writings, Kinnvall largely replaces 'modernity' with 'globalisation' as the phenomenon deranging the former order of the world and triggering ontological insecurity. She defines 'globalisation' as 'increased movements of goods, services, technology, borders, ideas and people' (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 743). Kinnvall (ibid., pp. 742-743) argues that with globalisation, time and space have become de-territorialised, affecting ordinary citizens in their day-to-day life by globalising the effects of local events, and thus increasing feelings of insecurity and instability while undermining a sense of self-identity. The effects of globalising processes accompanied by neoliberal politics include the spread of

capitalism, policies of structural adjustment, privatisation, urbanisation, unemployment and migration (ibid.). Combined with the spread of democracy, resulting in the dissolution of traditional structures and hierarchies, the effects of globalisation trigger fears of ‘losing work, status, or other privileges’ (ibid., p. 742). As ontological security is resting on routines, ontological insecurity is assumed to be caused by the critical situations interrupting them (Kinnvall, 2017, p. 100). If trauma is ongoing, it can become a routine triggering a ‘state of permanent ontological insecurity’ (ibid., p. 101). In distinguishing them from the non-affected, trauma can generate a sense of belonging and community among the affected (ibid., p. 99). Mitzen (2006, p. 351) argues that a firm basic trust can enhance an individual’s capacity to deal with change while a rigid attachment to routines can increase the ontological insecurity caused by their disruption.

In order to suit the theory to the discipline of International Relations, Mitzen (2006) scaled up the concept of ontological security from the individual-level to the state-level. She proposes that states, too, engage in ontological security-seeking, which might conflict with their search for physical security (ibid., p. 342). According to this, states seek to protect the ontological security of their members in order to maintain the national group identity that derives from their routinised relationships to other groups (ibid., p. 352). Following a thick signifier approach, the state-level should not be neglected, especially considering the power inherent in the dialogical co-constitution of ontological security in the relationship between the individual and the state (Kinnvall, 2017, p. 96), as those in power have the ability to make a particular discourse ‘true’ (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 26). The level of analysis of this thesis, however, is located at the individual and societal level. The individual and societal level are closely intertwined as routines at the individual level constitute society, and society stabilises the individual’s self-identity (Mitzen, 2006, p. 348). Systems of meaning able to contain anxiety are socially and politically produced, while conversely, anxiety at the individual level is triggered by social and political ruptures. (Rumelili, 2015, p. 13). Ontological security theory, thus, understands individuals as ‘linked not only structurally, but also through their reasoning and perceptions, their scripts, schemas and heuristics, as well as through their emotional inter-subjectivity’ (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2017, pp. 5–6).

4.2 Securitising Subjectivity

When ontological security is threatened as the relationships and understandings it is based on are destabilised, anxiety, paralysis or violence can result. Thus, actors seek to preserve the continuity of their biographical narrative (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2017, p. 4) and protect their self-identity in a process of securitisation of subjectivity aimed at reconstructing their ontological security (Kinnvall, 2017, p. 91). In processes of securitisation, vague anxieties are contained through the establishment of objects of fear, representing ‘concrete threats that can be managed, attacked, and endured’ (Rumelili, 2015, p. 14). Moreover, anxiety or

ontological insecurity can be contained ‘through the construction and reproduction of stable systems of meaning and morality’ which include the construction of ‘narratives of self-identity and self/other distinction’ (Rumelili, 2015, p. 14). Consequently, individuals trying to maintain ontological security search for one stable identity by establishing certain characteristics in themselves and juxtaposing them to those of others (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 749).

Even if individuals are in search of one stable identity, this does not mean that such fixed identities exist. Rather, argues Kinnvall (2006, p. 34), identity should be seen as a ‘process of becoming’. Subsequently, an individual does not possess a core-self but its identity is to be understood as a dialogical self-narrative that is discursively produced and reproduced in its relationships with other people (ibid.). The resources an individual has at disposal for the construction of its identity depend on its situational power and cultural context (ibid., pp. 30–31). Kinnvall (2004, pp. 749-750) proposes that social identity theory based on Tajfel (1970, 1982) and self-categorisation theory developed by Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell (1987) lend themselves best to the conceptualisation of identity in relation to the securitisation of subjectivity. Social identity theory suggests that individuals favour their ingroup over outgroups, trying to improve the status of the ingroup, as this is where they derive their self-esteem from. Self-categorisation theory departs from the assumption that individuals categorise themselves in social groups emphasising their similarities with fellow group members while stressing their dissimilarities with members from other groups (Kinnvall, 2004, pp. 749–750). Both identity theories are in line with the concept of ‘othering’ as a strategy of identity-formation, that will be discussed in greater detail further below.

Individuals deal with uncertainties and threats by maintaining a set of routines on which their ontological security is based (Giddens, 1991, pp. 39; 44). Accordingly, as put by Kinnvall (2017, p. 96), confronted with the dislocating effects of modernity, individuals or groups seek past securities that can provide them with stable structures and a sense of ‘rootedness’. They attempt to reverse effects of modernisation and return to an ‘imagined past’ by using symbols and cultural points of reference in order to regain a sense of security (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 744; 2006, p. 26). Sensing an anxiety of meaninglessness, individuals seek certitude in systems of meaning which are anchored in tradition and authority (Rumelili, 2015, p. 12) and offer moral fixity in everyday life (Staniševski, 2011, p. 73). Religion and nationalism provide such firm systems of meaning and are hence powerful ‘identity-signifiers’. Both offer ‘security, stability and simple answers’ by conveying a sense of ‘truth’, providing trust in the world being what it appears to be (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 742). Religion and nationalism can cover the need for one stable identity and, thus, securitise subjectivity, by claiming to offer a monolithic and abstract identity (ibid., p. 758). Staniševski (2011, pp. 67-68) further argues that a sense of national identity improves ontological security by supplying a sense of order, continuity and solidarity, giving the individual the feeling of belonging to a greater self. An illusion of an inevitable common national destiny is constructed as myths, collective memories and old traditions are re-invoked (ibid., p. 67).

Both religion and nationalism offer ‘unity, security and inclusiveness’ by providing an essentialised image of the ‘other’, in juxtaposition to which the identity of the self can be constructed (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 79). ‘Othering’ is a strategy for securitising subjectivity as in identifying the other, we identify ourselves. In a process of ‘othering’, the stranger is turned into an enemy or an abject-other, rejected from the self. Self and other become essentialised as the cultural traits they are ascribed come to be considered their natural characteristics (ibid., pp. 55–56). In narratives of self and other, we introduce an us-vs-them dichotomy, trying to make sense of our position in the world by making claims to a unique identity (Kinnvall, 2017, p. 97). In order to sacralise the self, the other is systematically debased and dehumanised. Once the other is deprived of its humanity, any measure to keep up the boundaries between self and other is justifiable (Kinnvall, 2004, pp. 753–754). Consequently, as nationalism rests on a stable us-vs-them dichotomy, the illusion of national/cultural purity and exclusivity of membership, it calls for the exclusion of the foreign other, so that a stable sense of national identity can be upkept (Staniševski, 2011, pp. 68–69).

4.3 Securitising Subjectivity through Anti-Feminism

While building on scholars like Kinnvall, Mitzen, and Rumelili, I want to go beyond their development and applications of ontological security theory in my interpretation of the concept. Kinnvall (2017) has argued that much of the ontological security literature ignores the dimension of gender. Therefore, she applies a gender-informed approach to the theory to the governing of sexual and gender-based violence in India. She argues that globalisation should be viewed as ‘a particular kind of gendered space in which new forms of global femininities spawn suspicion and wariness towards women’s increasing physical independence’, threatening to disrupt the hierarchical organisation of society by questioning ‘assumptions about masculinity, femininity and privileges’ (ibid., p. 95). However, Kinnvall largely focuses on the gendering of space, while neglecting other elements at the intersection of gender and ontological security that I will introduce further below in this section. Moreover, I want to turn away from the tendency to conflate globalisation with a number of social and political trends of the 20th and 21st century but consider globalisation as the factor leading to the far spread of these trends. Hence, rather than considering increasing gender equality as an effect of globalisation, I want to look at it as part of the trend to liberalisation and democratisation of societies, diffused by globalisation. Finally, there is, to my knowledge, no publication explicitly discussing anti-feminism / anti-genderism as a strategy for the securitisation of subjectivity. By applying ontological security theory to the issue of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right wing populism, I thus aim to advance the development of the theory. In this section, I will present reasons for the suitability of ontological security theory to this phenomenon and conceptualise the theory for the purpose of this thesis.

One of the reasons for the suitability of ontological security theory to the analysis of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism is, that hierarchical gender structures have a close link to nationalism (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 757), which is an ideology right-wing populism is often associated with (see Mudde, 2007; Wodak, 2015) and, as pointed out above, a powerful strategy for the securitisation of subjectivity. Ideas of the nation are inherently related to gender. Often, the nation is presented as having an inside and, thus, likened to an idea of the family that is based on essentialist images of men as the protectors and women as the protected (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 72). In constructions of the nation, women have an ambivalent position, symbolising the boundaries and ‘honour’ of the national collectivity while being denied a subject position in it. Culturally produced gender roles serve to maintain this power hierarchy (Yuval-Davis, 1997, pp. 47; 67). According to such essentialised roles, civil society is divided into a public and a private sphere, with women being located in the latter and thus having no political say (*ibid.*, pp. 12–13). Through this division of roles and the attribution of dichotomous traits like rational/emotional and strong/weak to men and women, the structural subordination of women is made to appear natural (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 73). Such constructions of gendered roles also play an essential part in identity constructions of nationalist discourses. The stranger- or enemy-other is debased through the attribution of supposedly feminine traits such as weakness and irrationality, depriving it of its subject-quality (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 762). One’s own nation, on the contrary, is constructed along ‘hyper-masculine notions’ of authority, control, competitiveness, and aggressiveness (Kinnvall, 2015, pp. 525–526). Moreover, women play an essential role for maintaining the illusion of national purity and a common origin, which is fundamental to nationalism. They are considered the ‘natural’ biological and cultural reproducers of the nation, responsible for the survival and continuity of the nation, and are thus assigned the roles of child bearers and mothers. However, as only women of the ‘right’ ethnic and cultural origin are called upon to reproduce, women’s sexuality is to be controlled (Yuval-Davis, 1997, pp. 22–23; 26; 116).

I argue that another reason for the suitability of ontological security theory for this thesis is that feminist and egalitarian advancements can trigger ontological insecurity. Kinnvall (2018, p. 527), too, considers ‘changed gender relations’ as a factor potentially increasing insecurity. With the diffusion of democratic values such as equality and egalitarianism to many societies, their formerly prevailing power hierarchies have been put into question and delegitimised. Threatening the previous order and routines of the society, restructurings of hierarchy can have socially dislocating and disorienting effects on its members, creating ontological insecurity (Kinnvall, 2004, p. 743). Some members of society might feel, that the dissolution of traditional gender roles threatens their self-identity or biographical narrative by questioning their position in the world. What does it mean to be a man or a woman in the modern world? Or do such categories even continue to matter? Where they have previously felt pride in the integrity and value of their gendered self-identity, they might now feel shame (see Giddens, 1991, p. 66). Others might feel that with the increasing liberalisation and opening of society, previous anchors of moral fixity fall away, threatening to provoke chaos and

disorientation. Changed gender relations create feelings of ontological insecurity, especially with those who are at risk of losing previous privileges or who are particularly attached to the previous ordering of society according to gender roles and a clear masculinity-femininity dichotomy.

Conceptualising the theory of ontological security in relation to anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism, I hence argue that gender serves as a strong identity-signifier. If, in line with the above presented definition of anti-feminism and anti-genderism, we consider the phenomena to be a reaction to fear of change of the current hierarchical order and loss of privileges, they can be understood as a strategy of securitising subjectivity. Trying to re-establish the previous order, narratives of ontological security often make reference to a gendered imagined past (Kinnvall, 2017, p. 98). Gendered discourses of ontological security reconstruct a clear distinction between femininity and masculinity, usually presented as biological and therefore natural, and refer to traditional gender roles, representing norms and routines. By gendering space according to ‘assumptions about masculinity, femininity, and privilege’ the power hierarchies organising the social system are preserved (ibid., p. 95). According to Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 47), ‘any culturally perceived sign could become a boundary signifier to divide the world into “us” and “them”’. Consequently, gender can be considered such a cultural marker, utilised to categorise women as the other. More specifically, as a marginalised group within society, women categorise as ‘internal others’ (Kinnvall, 2006, p. 46). Feminists are turned into the enemy-other, debased and dehumanised. Simultaneously, right-wing anti-feminists claim to be the ‘true’ feminists and instrumentalise issues related to women’s rights whenever it appears opportune, for example when trying to delegitimise the immigrant-other.

To sum up, the lens of ontological security provides a powerful tool for explaining the opposition to feminism and gender policies in right-wing populism. Looking at anti-feminism and anti-genderism as strategies for the securitisation of subjectivity might help us in understanding the narratives of right-wing populism.

5 Method

In this section, I lay out the methodological framework for this thesis. First, I discuss the benefits of doing a case study and argue why the case chosen for this thesis – the AfD in Germany – is suitable for investigating the phenomena of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism. Then, I present theory on the concepts of frames and framing and their operationalisation for the method of frame analysis. Lastly, I present the empirical material that is studied in the analysis section.

5.1 Case Study Research

Aiming to develop the theory of ontological security and contribute to the existing literature on anti-feminism and anti-genderism, this thesis looks at the AfD's narrative as a case of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism. What is a case study, what are its benefits and why is the AfD an exemplary case of the phenomenon under investigation?

5.1.1 Definition and Benefits of Case Studies

Case studies are the adequate method of research when seeking to ‘understand social complex phenomena’ (Yin, 2009, p. 4) because they allow for a holistic and in-depth analysis of such phenomena (Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018, p. 2). They are especially suitable when trying to find answers to ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions (Yin, 2009, pp. 9–10) – as is the case in this thesis. For these reasons, case study research was chosen as a method to study the phenomena of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism from an ontological security perspective. There are different definitions of what a case study is, some focusing on specific techniques of data collection and analysis (see Yin 2009), while other definitions are broader, mainly prescribing that the object of a case study be a case (Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018, p. 3). For my research design, such a broader definition of case studies is more fitting. Gerring (2004, p. 342) defines a case study as ‘an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units’ with a unit being a ‘spatially bounded phenomenon [...] observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time’. Thus, a case study focuses on the in-depth study of one or a few cases from which generalisations for a larger number of cases will be drawn (Gerring, 2017, p. 28). A case is defined as ‘a spatially and temporally delimited

phenomenon of theoretical significance' (ibid., p. 27), a manifestation of the phenomenon under study. The sampling of cases is purposeful rather than random. Selected cases are supposed to be rich in information and able to serve the testing or development of theory (Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018, p. 5). When focusing on a single case, such a case should ideally be representative or typical for the larger number of cases of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2009, p. 48). However, there will likely remain uncertainty about the extent to which the chosen case represents the larger population of cases (Gerring, 2017, p. 30). A case study should hence discuss the commonalities and particularities of a case (Ebneyamini and Sadeghi Moghadam, 2018, p. 2).

5.1.2 The AfD – An Exemplary Case?

Until recently, Germany represented an exception to the success of radical right-wing populist parties in Western European countries. This changed with the emergence of the AfD, who is not the first far right-wing party in the Federal Republic of Germany but has been by far the most successful (Berning, 2017, p. 16). The window of opportunity for the establishment of a Eurosceptic right-wing populist party in Germany was opened by the euro and financial crisis (Decker, 2016, p. 2). The party was founded in February 2013 by a small intellectual elite connected to neo-liberal political movements. In its first campaign for the 2013 general elections, the AfD focused on a critical stance towards the Euro – leading some to call it a single-issue party – and missed the threshold of 5 % for entering the German federal parliament, the *Bundestag*, only by a small margin (Berning, 2017, p. 17; Blum, 2015, p. 43). In the European elections in 2014, the AfD won 7,1 % of the votes (Decker, 2016, p. 2) and thus gained seven seats in the European Parliament. Inner-party power struggles in 2015 led to the depart of former party leader Bernd Lucke and an ideological shift to the right. With the European refugee crisis in 2015, the AfD shifted its focus to issues of migration and began to adopt a more radical tone while seeking alliances with the far-right parties of other Western European countries (Berning, 2017, pp. 17–18). In the 2017 general elections, the AfD secured 12,6% of the votes, making it the third biggest group in the *Bundestag*. However, power struggles within the party have continued with then party leader Frauke Petry leaving the AfD one day after the elections (ibid., p. 18). The current *Bundesvorstand* (federal board) of the party, headed by Jörg Meuthen and Alexander Gauland, is composed of eleven men and two women – Alice Weidel and Beatrix von Storch (Alternative für Deutschland, n.d.).

Political scientists have categorised the AfD as a radical right-wing populist or far right-wing party (Berning, 2017, p. 16) and located it at the 'far-right end of Germany's political spectrum because of its nationalism, its stance against state support for sexual diversity and gender mainstreaming, and its market liberalism' (Salzborn, 2016, p. 55). While being market liberal, the AfD does not stand for a political liberalism but for the restriction of individual freedoms, as its immigration policies, stance on same-sex marriage and idealisation of traditional

family models show. The AfD demands freedom of opinion in its attacks on political correctness but at the same time questions the freedom of opinion of anti-AfD protesters and other opponents (ibid., p. 53). The AfD is populist and conceives of itself as being anti-establishment and representing the ‘real’ people or silent majority (Decker, 2016, pp. 4–5). With the conservative CDU shifting to the political centre on sociocultural matters, a gap has been opened that the AfD fills with its conservative stances on family and gender policies (ibid., p. 3). The AfD is linked to religious organisations and forums such as the fundamentalist Christian campaign network ‘Zivile Koalition e.V.’ that share the party’s positions on issues related to family and gender (Blum, 2015, pp. 41–42; Decker, 2016, p. 2). It’s communicative strategy consists of de-legitimising the media and putting itself in the position of the political martyr while waging ‘cultural wars’ against political correctness, gender policies and migration (Siri, 2018, p. 143).

To what extent can the AfD be considered a representative case for the phenomena of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism? Most importantly, the case chosen to be closely investigated in a case study needs to be a case of the phenomenon under study. As mentioned above, the AfD has been categorised as a radical right-wing populist party by political scientists (Berning, 2017, p. 16). It champions positions on family and gender that are – as will be demonstrated in the analysis – anti-feminist and anti-genderist. Therefore, the AfD represents a case of the phenomenon under study in this thesis. Furthermore, research has shown that AfD voters are motivated by anxiety, meaning ‘emotions of cultural alienation, the loss of a familiar social order and its moorings’ (Decker, 2016, p. 11), which implies that the voters feel ontologically insecure and thus, renders the case particularly well suited for the application of ontological security theory. Finally, the electorate of the AfD reflects the typical electorate of many of the radical right-wing parties active in other Western European countries (Berning, 2017, p. 19). From this, however, we cannot conclude with certainty that the AfD is a case that is representative of the larger population of right-wing populist movements. Hence, the results of this case study are not simply generalisable but need to be read in the context of the case.

5.2 Frame Analysis

Ontological security scholars have continuously stressed the power contained in narratives, as they affect how we perceive and consequently react to political realities (Andrews, Kinnvall and Monroe, 2015, p. 143). Narratives are ‘ontologically interrelated in a network of ideas embedded within a specific cultural and historical context’ that we tap into and reproduce or question in our communication (ibid., p. 141). Through struggles over political meaning, certain narratives become more dominant than others and thus, acquire the power to influence political behaviour (ibid., pp. 141-143). Narratives are especially powerful when they appeal to emotions and make symbolic references, like populist rhetoric often does (Kinnvall, 2018, p. 533). Understood as a tool for

making-sense of reality (Andrews et al., 2015, p. 142), the concept of narratives is highly compatible with the concept of frames as the definitions introduced further below will show. Therefore, frame analysis is employed in this thesis as a methodological device to identify the power contained in narratives, more specifically in communicating texts of the AfD. The method of frame analysis examines the ways in which ‘the transfer (or communication) of information from one location – such as speech, utterance, news report or novel’ – to a human consciousness exerts influence over the same (Entman, 1993, pp. 51–52). The concepts of frames and framing have been applied in psychology, linguistics and discourse analysis, communication and media studies and political science and policy studies (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 611).

Most recent conceptualisations of frames and framing are based on Erving Goffman’s ‘Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience’ (1974). In this book, Goffman defines frames as the ‘principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them’ (ibid., pp. 10–11). Individuals define situations according to such frames: they make sense of their experiences by applying their primary framework, thus investing occurrences with meaning (ibid., pp. 10; 21). Combined, the primary frameworks of a social group make up a central part of its culture (ibid., p. 27).

A research group around David Snow and Robert Benford took up Goffman’s concept of frames and operationalised it for their research on the communication of social movement organisations (see Snow, Burke Rochford Jr., Worden and Benford, 1986). Therefore, the method of frame analysis appears particularly well suited for the study of right-wing populism as a social movement and of the anti-feminist and anti-genderist elements (or frames) embedded in their communication. Snow and Benford (2000, p. 624) assume that social movement organisations strategically employ frames for different purposes such as recruitment, mobilisation and resource acquisition. This is done through frame alignment, the linkage of the individual’s and the social movement organisation’s frames. Snow et al. (1986, p. 464) distinguish between four different types of such frame alignment processes: frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation. Differentiating between ‘framing’ as a verb and ‘frame’ as a noun, the first describing a process and the latter its product (Snow, Benford, McCammon, Hewitt and Fitzgerald, 2014, p. 30), this thesis will focus largely on the product, on the frames that can be identified in text. Therefore, the different frame alignment processes distinguished by Snow et al. (1986, p. 464) will not be discussed here. Suffice it to state that framing processes are affected by their socio-cultural context, notably by the structure of political and cultural opportunity and the targeted audiences (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 628). In framing, movements do at the same time consume and produce cultural meanings (ibid., p. 629). Consequently, ideology can be considered a ‘cultural resource’ for framing, a facilitator as well as a constraint, with framing processes involving ‘the articulation and accenting or amplification of elements of existing beliefs and values, most of which are associated with existing ideologies’ (Snow and Benford, 2000, pp. 58–59).

The product of the framing activities of social movements are referred to as 'collective action frames' – 'action oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization' (Benford and Snow, , 2000, p. 614). According to Gamson (1992, pp. 7-8), collective action frames typically have three components: a claim of injustice, calls to agency and references to identity. In the identity component, a 'we' is defined and opposed to a 'they' that differs in interests and values (ibid.). Similarly, Benford and Snow (2000, p. 616) establish that framing can take the shape of 'boundary framing' or 'adversarial framing', differentiating good from evil, identifying the movement's protagonists and antagonists. The concepts of boundary and adversarial framing as well as of the identity-component in collective action frames line up with ideas of othering that play an essential part in the securitisation of subjectivity in ontological security theory. Framing can also be used for 'remedial ideological work', necessary when individuals or groups find their beliefs to fundamentally differ from the experiences they make in the world (Snow and Benford, 2000, p. 59). Translated into the terms of ontological security theory, this implies that framing can function to 'securitise subjectivity' and re-establish ontological security. Through framing and counter-framing, opposing social movements try to establish their version of reality while undermining their opponent's (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 626), seeking to attain discursive hegemony. Such framing contests, however, do not only take place between opposing movements but also within movements (ibid., p. 626). A frame's resonance with its audience, then, depends on its credibility and salience (ibid., p. 619).

Based on a literature review of different disciplines, Entman (1993) wants to offer a precise but universal understanding of the concepts of frame and framing. According to Entman, frames 'define problems', 'diagnose causes', 'make moral judgements', and/or 'suggest remedies' (ibid., p. 52). Clarifying the actual process of framing, Entman (ibid.) explains that 'to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text'. The salience of a piece of information can be increased for example by repetition or by association with culturally familiar symbols. A piece of information is more salient when it fits in with an individual's primary framework (ibid., p. 53). In this way, some pieces of information about a subject of communication are highlighted, making them 'more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences' (ibid.), while others are omitted (ibid., p. 54). The mere presence of a frame in a text does not mean that it will have an effect on the audience's thinking (ibid., p. 53). However, frames are more likely to influence the audience's reaction when the communicating text concerns issues that the audience is not particularly well informed on, such as is often the case with social and political matters (ibid., p. 56). Entman (ibid., pp. 52-53) identifies four locations of frames: the communicators (the ones who do framing), the text (which contains frames, marked e.g. by key words and stereotyped images), the receivers (who interpret text and events according to their primary frameworks) and the culture (the stock of primary frameworks and 'commonly invoked frames'). This thesis focuses on the analysis of text as a location of frames. Frames are primarily looked at as

characteristics of the discourse rather than strategies of ‘constructing and processing’ discourse (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p. 57). By analysing certain communicating texts of the AfD, I identify different frames employed in its narrative on women and gender and discuss, through an ontological security lens, how they serve to further the party’s anti-feminist and anti-genderist arguments.

5.3 Empirical Material

To perform a frame analysis, and thus investigate the ways in which actors exert power by establishing certain versions of perceived realities, one needs to look at the communicating texts of said actors. Therefore, I do not ‘go out into the field’ to do surveys or interviews but analyse the AfD’s ways of communicating with its audience and shifting the public discourse through its utterances and writings. The primary audience the AfD is trying to influence is the broader public and voters in particular. To ensure the feasibility of this case study, the vast empirical material covering the AfD’s external communication must be reduced according to specific criteria relating to form, medium, level of organisation and time. While it would be very interesting to look at different organisational levels of the AfD, such as municipal, regional and national, and cover every channel of communication used by the party, including all social media output, this would be a highly unrealistic project for a thesis. To reduce the available material, I concentrate on the party’s external communication at the national level and its more recent output. I include both writings (party programmes) and utterances (parliamentary speeches).

I begin my analysis by identifying frames in the party’s writings. More specifically, I analyse the AfD’s *Grundsatzprogramm* (manifesto) from 2016 as well as its programmes for the 2017 German parliamentary elections and the 2019 European elections. The manifesto and the programmes can be accessed through the party’s website. In order to identify the frames, I code this material, trying to find patterns in the argumentation. The coding process is both inductive and deductive, going back and forth between the text and assumptions based on findings from previous research and the theories of ontological security and framing. Amongst others, the following questions are applied to the material: To what extent are the AfD’s positions anti-feminist or anti-genderist? What gendered assumptions are these positions based on? How does the AfD argue for their anti-feminist and anti-genderist positions? How does the AfD employ anti-feminist and anti-genderist framings to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and/or suggest remedies? Where applicable, I illustrate the frames with AfD campaign posters to demonstrate the presence of anti-feminist and anti-genderist claims in the party’s visual imagery.

Once the anti-feminist and anti-genderist frames of the AfD are identified, I apply this framework to selected parliamentary speeches held by AfD politicians between the party’s entry of parliament in September 2017 until the end of March 2019. Protocols of parliamentary debates can be accessed through the *Bundestag*’s online services. To limit the material, I focus on *Bundestag* debates on the topic of

abortion (14th, 58th, 71st, 81st and 83rd session of the 19th *Bundestag*). As argued in the introduction, abortion is a particularly interesting site of anti-feminist and anti-genderist articulations for two main reasons: 1) reproductive rights have for a long time been at the centre of feminist struggles and 2) the right to abortion and other reproductive rights have increasingly come under attack during the latest wave of anti-feminism. As except for the manifesto, the chosen material is not available in English but only in German, I code the German texts and only translate the phrases that I directly quote to English.

6 Analysis

In this section, the findings of the framing analysis are presented and discussed. First, the different frames identified in the AfD's manifesto and programmes are analysed through the lens of ontological security theory. Finally, these frames are exemplified and scrutinised more closely in an analysis of the AfD's *Bundestag* speeches on abortion. All direct quotes from AfD programmes and speeches are my own translations.

6.1 Frames

All the frames identified as well as their sub-frames are interrelated and refer to common themes. The AfD's narrative on women and gender is a complex web of arguments with many explicit or implicit cross references between the different arguments or frames. The mind-map depicted below (figure 1) illustrates the AfD's different arguments relating to women and gender as well as the links (red lines) between them. As shown in the mind-map, the complex of gender and nation constitutes an underlying frame (pink), that all other frames (yellow) are built upon. In this section, this underlying frame is discussed first. Then, the other frames are presented, summarised under the over-arching frames 'Gender Ideology' vs. 'Common Sense' and 'Gender Roles and Family Models'. As is shown, the AfD conveys these frames by employing different communication strategies and tools, such as the construction of clear dichotomies, the identification of enemies/scapegoats and the appeal to emotions.

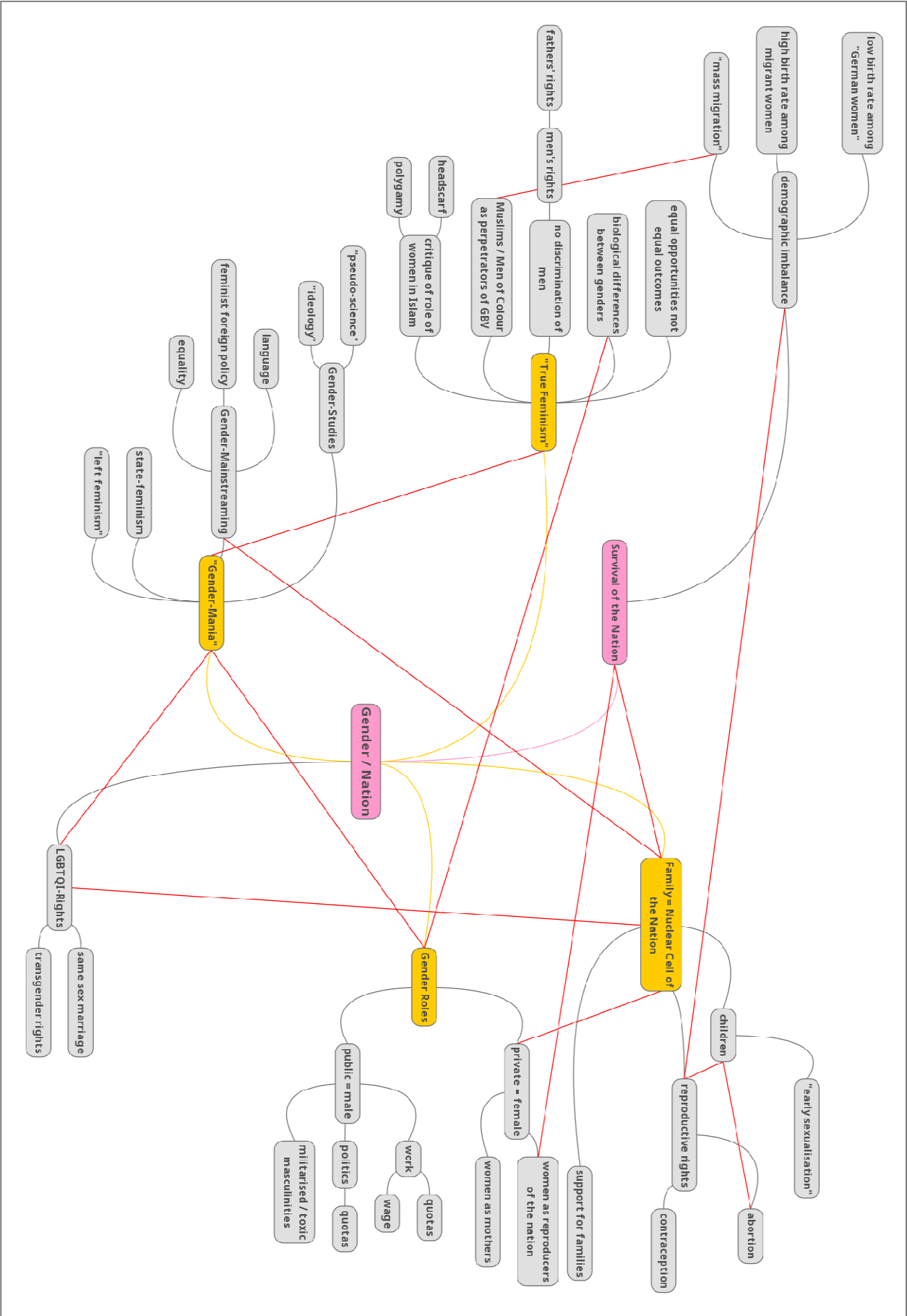


Figure 1: Own representation of frames and links between frames.

6.1.1 The Underlying Frame: Gender and Nation

In its programmes, the AfD raises concerns over the survival of the German nation, or more specifically over the ‘shrinkage of our ancestral population’ and the ‘trend to self-disposal’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 49). The AfD laments that the birth rate of 1.4 in Germany is ‘far below the stock-preserving level’, that every fifth woman today remains childless, and that around 100.000 abortions per year ‘are to be bemoaned’, while at the same time, the life expectancy is rising continuously (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 81). The party warns that if this flawed development will continue, the social security systems will come into financial imbalance (ibid., pp. 81-82). The AfD rejects ‘mass immigration’ as a solution to this problem, saying that it is ‘economically unsustainable’ and ‘conflict prone’. According to the AfD, the ethnic-cultural change in the demographic structure is reinforced by the fact that the birth rate among migrants (1.8) is notably higher than among ‘women of German origin’ (ibid., p. 82). Continued immigration would eventually lead to the erosion of ‘social cohesion, mutual trust and public security’ as well as to a further decline in the average level of education (ibid., p. 82). The following quote shows how this frame combines anti-elitism and traditional gender roles while bordering the nation by debasing and scapegoating the Muslim-other:

‘In order to counteract the effects of this striking demographic trend, the current governing parties are relying on continued mass immigration, decoupled from needs and qualifications, mainly from Islamic states. In recent years, it has become apparent that Muslim migrants in Germany in particular only achieve below-average levels of education and employment. That the birth rate among migrants with more than 1.8 children is significantly higher than among women of German origin, reinforces the ethnic-cultural change in the demographic structure.’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 82)

The AfD wants to bring this trend to a halt and preserve the German nation:

‘The aim of the AfD is self-preservation, not self-destruction, of our state and people. The future of Germany and Europe must be secured in the long term. We want to leave our descendants a country that is still recognisable as our Germany.’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, pp. 37-38)

‘We do not want to leave the land of our fathers and mothers to anyone who squanders or plunders this heritage, but to our descendants, to whom we have passed on our values.’ (ibid., p. 49).

The AfD thus demands the immediate closure of the borders (ibid., p. 38) and a ‘paradigm shift to a national population policy’ (ibid., p. 49), with an ‘activating family policy’ promoting an increased birth rate of the ‘native population’ (Alternative für Deutschland 2016, p. 81). Interestingly, this narrative of the survival of the nation and its people is also spun at a European level, with the

European people, culture and welfare supposedly at threat (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, pp. 65-66):

‘The consequences of the demographic decline are catastrophic for Europe: fewer and fewer young people have to earn pensions and health expenses for an increasing number of older people and have to pay the growing tax burden, which is eroding the social systems and making the indebtedness of public budgets unaffordable. Moreover, these few descendants find it more difficult to preserve Europe's rich and diverse culture and pass it on to future generations. The value creation potential of the European meritocracies threatens to collapse drastically due to the lack of descendants shaped by our culture of innovation and performance. Civilisations that lose their populations will one day disappear from history.’ (ibid., p. 66)

The AfD's narrative is based on the same interrelated conceptualisations of ‘gender’ and ‘nation’ that have been identified and analysed by Yuval-Davis (1997). Following these conceptualisations, women are responsible for the survival and continuity of the nation. Being the ‘natural’ biological and cultural reproducers of the nation, they need to fulfil their roles of child bearers and mothers, and their sexuality needs to be controlled (ibid., pp. 22-23; 26). Similarly, the AfD sees the survival of the nation threatened because women of ‘German origin’ reproduce too little, go childless or have abortions. To ensure the survival of the nation, they want to introduce an ‘activating family policy’ aimed at inciting German women to have more children, and ultimately – as will be seen below – control their sexuality.

This underlying frame of gender and nation fulfils all four of the ideal-typical functions of frames summarised by Entman (1993). It defines a problem (survival of the nation is at threat), diagnoses causes (mass migration and birth rates), makes moral judgements (the nation needs to be protected against self-destruction and foreign influx) and suggests remedies (stop migration and increase reproduction). By invoking ideas about the demise of the nation, the AfD draws a scenario of threat and doom and appeals to the emotion of fear. With the nation representing a basic structure that offers a firm identity and, thus, ontological stability, portraying the nation as being under threat allows the AfD to play on the ontological insecurity of its audience. Employing the underlying frame of gender and nation, the AfD seeks to appeal to the ontologically insecure voter in promising to preserve the nation (and its purity) and, ultimately, to securitise subjectivity. Moreover, the frame relies on the discursive strategy of othering (‘natives’ vs. ‘foreigners’) to reaffirm a sense of identity and restore ontological security. All the other frames that were identified in the analysis are ultimately based on this gender and nation frame as they rely on ideas of the survival of the nation and the role of women in this endeavour. The frame of gender and nation is also apparent in the visual imagery of the AfD campaigns. A campaign poster for the 2017 German parliamentary elections (figure 2) reads ‘New Germans? We make them ourselves!’ and shows a white pregnant woman holding her belly.



Figure 2: AfD campaign poster for the 2017 German parliamentary elections: ‚New Germans? We make them ourselves!‘ Available at: <https://www.afd.de/bundestagswahl-2017-plakatmotive-faltblaetter/> (Accessed: 3 August 2019).

6.1.2 ‘Gender-Ideology’ vs. Common Sense

The AfD closely links its critique of ‘gender’ to ideas of the survival of the nation. In their programme for the European elections 2019 for example, their demand for greater sensitisation for the ‘demographic crisis’ is directly followed by a call to stop funding gender research on a European level (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 66). The party defines ‘gender’ as an ‘ideology’ that marginalises the ‘natural’ differences between the genders and questions gender identity (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 53), an ideology that denies the biological differences between man and woman and that claims that gender is but a social construct (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, pp. 73-74), thereby counteracting traditional values and specific gender roles in families (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 109). According to the AfD, ‘gender-ideology’ is aimed at abolishing the ‘classical family’ as a life and role model. The party claims that ‘gender-ideology’ therefore conflicts with the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law, constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany) that protects marriage and family (understood in the classical sense) as the ‘state-supporting institution’ that produces the constitutive people or the bearers of sovereignty (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 53). Gender ideology is accused of ‘devaluating the family, that is indispensable for the survival of the society’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 74). Finally, ‘gender-ideology’ is presented as contradicting the scientific

findings of biology and developmental psychology as well as the practical everyday experience of many generations (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 53). On this basis, the AfD rejects gender-studies and gender-mainstreaming:

‘We therefore reject efforts at national and international level to implement this ideology through instruments such as gender studies, quota regulations, e.g. for women, propaganda campaigns such as “Equal Pay Day”, or “gender-neutral language”.’ (ibid.)

The AfD claims that gender research is not a serious science but is instead primarily politically motivated (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 103). Gender research, set in quotation marks by the AfD, supposedly follows the ideological assumption of a complete independence between sex (natural) and gender (social) and aims at the abolishment of the ‘natural gender polarity’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 54). The AfD therefore calls to defund gender studies, phase out current gender research projects, remove equal opportunities officers at universities and no longer fill gender professorships (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 103; Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 54) as ‘science must be free from ideological constraints’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 102).

In the same way that it rejects gender studies, the AfD rejects gender mainstreaming and thus calls for a withdrawal from the Treaty of Amsterdam that obliges all EU member states to gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming is dismissed as a ‘one-sided gender-specific promotion’ that is opposed to equality (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 73- 74). Gender-mainstreaming supposedly considers differences between the genders, for example in the choice of profession, as evidence of ‘alleged discrimination’ and thus calls for their elimination (ibid., 2019, p. 74). Consequently, according to the AfD, gender mainstreaming ‘propagates’ the ‘stigmatisation of traditional gender-roles’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 80). Moreover, gender mainstreaming is declared an enemy in the party’s fight against political correctness (see e.g. Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 75). The rejection of a supposedly exaggerated political correctness can be read as an attempt to securitise subjectivity. It is a response to a change of the discourse, where some feel that the things that could be said before cannot be said any longer without being sanctioned, i.e. called out as a racist / sexist / homophobic et cetera. The label racist / sexist / homophobic conflicting with their self-image, they sense ontological insecurity and reject political correctness as an attempt to limit freedom of expression, as a gag order imposed on them by a conspiracist elite.

The AfD’s rejection of gender mainstreaming includes the rejection of quotas, gender-sensitive language and gender ‘indoctrination’ in kindergartens and schools. The AfD generally opposes gender quotas at university or in the labour market by claiming that they are discouraging performance and unjust, bringing about other discriminations (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 110). Instead, the AfD demands that when filling vacancies, only the applicants’ professional qualifications should be taken into account (Alternative für

Deutschland, 2019, p. 74) and ignores that quotas normally only give privilege to female candidates in cases of equal qualification. The party rejects equality policies aimed at an equality of outcomes and underlines the constitutionally guaranteed equality of men and women to be understood as an equality of opportunities (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 110). The AfD claims to strive for an equality of opportunities but rejects the ‘stigmatisation of traditional gender roles’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 65). Furthermore, the AfD rejects attempts to make the German language more gender-sensitive. It rejects the ‘unnatural transformation of the German language’, thought to be a means of enforcing ‘gender ideology’ (ibid., p. 74):

‘The German language is being redesigned in an abstruse way so that gender dissolution can also be found in everyday language use. The AfD rejects the officially decreed gender-neutral word inventions as an intervention in the naturally grown culture and tradition of our language.’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, pp. 109-110)

The party looks with concern at how the German language is ‘gendered’ and strictly rejects politically correct requirements for language (ibid., p. 93), claiming that such requirements are opposed to the natural development of language and to freedom of expression (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 64). The same argument is made with reference to Europeanised values of freedom: ‘In a free Europe, there must be no state coercion to use a politically correct language’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 74).

Finally, the AfD implies that ‘political indoctrination’ is taking place in German schools, claiming that often, the uncritical adoption of ideological guidelines is promoted, rather than the formation of one’s own opinions (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 106). It calls for a halt to the ‘ideological manipulation’ through gender-mainstreaming (ibid., p. 107) and the ‘early sexualisation’ associated with gender-ideology (ibid., p. 108).

‘The classical understanding of the roles of men and women is to be systematically "corrected" by state-supported re-education programmes in kindergartens and schools. The AfD rejects this gender education as an intervention in the natural development of our children and in the parental right to education guaranteed by the Basic Law. The AfD also demands that early sexualisation in nurseries, kindergartens and schools should not be permitted and that the unsettlement of children with regard to their sexual identity should be stopped.’ (ibid., p. 109)

With the populist term ‘early sexualisation’, the AfD discredits education about homosexuality, transsexuality and alternative life and family models in kindergartens and schools. The party claims that a supposedly one-sided emphasis on homo- and transsexuality in class represents an ‘inadmissible interference in the natural development of our children and in the parental right to education guaranteed by the *Grundgesetz*’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 54). It

allegedly ‘makes children insecure with regard to their sexual identity’ and ‘violates their feelings of shame’ (ibid.). According to the AfD, this type of sex education represents a ‘state-sponsored re-education programme’ intended to ‘eliminate the established traditional family image’ (ibid.) and systematically correct classical gender roles (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 109). The party demands an immediate halt to the ‘ideological experiment of early sexualisation’ to protect children from becoming the ‘plaything of the sexual orientations of a noisy minority’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 54) and to prevent the traditional family image from being destroyed (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 107). By employing the image of the innocent, endangered child, the AfD invokes emotions and moral panic and seeks to appeal to the political mainstream.

By framing gender as an ideology, the AfD is able to delegitimise gender studies, gender mainstreaming, gender quotas, gender sensitive language and sexual education. As the assumption that gender is a social construct and therefore flexible questions the gender binary, it threatens the stable identities that a clear dichotomy of what it means to be a man or to be a woman used to provide. Therefore, the AfD seeks to securitise subjectivity by delegitimising this assumption as being ideological, as going against the findings of the natural sciences and against common sense and by reaffirming a clear gender dichotomy. Similarly, gender mainstreaming and quotas are attacked because they threaten (male) privilege and the current hierarchical social order by increasing women’s space in the public sphere. With language being an anchor of national identity and changes to language representing ontological instability, an ‘enforced’ gender-sensitive language is also rejected. Finally, pluralist sexual education is opposed as it questions heteronormativity and, thus, the fixity of sexual identity. The frame allows the AfD to employ anti-genderism to securitise subjectivity and, thus, appeal to voters who might feel ontologically insecure or otherwise threatened by the restructuring of social spaces and gender relations.

6.1.3 Gender Roles and Family Models

The AfD’s ideas about the survival of the nation are also closely linked to its ideas on gender roles and family models. As illustrated above, the AfD identifies the increasing numbers of unmarried persons, persons without children and of families with few children as the cause of a demographic crisis. The party wants to counteract these trends and ensure the survival of the nation through an ‘activating family policy’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 49; Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 102). The family, as the ‘nucleus of every society’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 65), needs to be protected, promoted and supported. The AfD proclaims the German *Leitkultur* (predominant national culture) while rejecting the ‘ideology of multiculturalism’, that ‘profoundly relativizes the values of the indigenous culture’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 92). The family model promoted by the AfD is based on the *Leitkultur*, that supposedly shapes the ‘relationship between the sexes and the behaviour of

parents towards their children' (ibid.). According to the AfD, cultural and regional traditions and established institutions need to be protected because they offer stability and fixation. Accordingly, marriage and family, the nucleuses of civil society and guarantors of social cohesion, rightfully enjoy the special protection of the state (ibid., p. 78), guaranteed in the *Grundgesetz*.

'The AfD attaches great importance to protecting established cultural and regional traditions and proven institutions. They give people stability and a bond. In particular, marriage and the family as nucleuses of civil society guarantee social cohesion grown over generations and therefore rightly enjoy the special protection of the state.' (ibid.)

The AfD proclaims the traditional model of the family in which father and mother take care of the children in permanent joint responsibility. While other forms of living together are to be tolerated, they are not to be equated with the marriage between a man and a woman or to be promoted (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 65). Family politics should be oriented towards the family consisting of father, mother and children (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 53). The AfD wants to protect the traditional family model against the alleged threat of gender-ideology and thus rejects attempts to extend the understanding of the word 'family' in the *Grundgesetz* to other communities, as this would supposedly deprive families of the special protection of the state (ibid.). To protect the traditional family against gender mainstreaming and individualism, the AfD wants to initiate a discussion on values in society (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 80). The party wants to make marriage and parenthood desirable again (ibid., p. 80) and encourage young people to start and maintain a family by offering education and support and removing barriers to founding a family. Furthermore, the AfD demands that 'recognised rules on partnership and family, housekeeping, the protection of life and parenting' should be an integral part of school curriculums (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 50).

While claiming to support single parents and acknowledging the particular risk of poverty to which they are exposed, the AfD rejects the model of single-parent families (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 86). The AfD laments that the number of single parents is increasing despite the life model being disadvantageous for all parties involved. The party demands that after a separation, it must be guaranteed for both parents to continue to participate equally in parental care (ibid.). It rejects attempts of organisations, the media or politics to 'propagate' single-parent families as a 'progressive or even desirable life model' and instead calls on the state to support families in situations of crisis (ibid., pp. 86-87). The AfD bemoans that although the decision to live as a single parent is a private matter, the community of solidarity is liable for the resulting indigence. In contrast to the other parties, which do not differentiate whether this life situation has come about fatefully, through one's own fault or on the basis of one's own decisions, the AfD demands that 'serious misconduct against marital solidarity' be taken into account in the divorce and wants to support only those single parents who do not exclude the other parent from the upbringing of the

children (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, pp. 50-51). Claiming that in many separated couples, the fathers suffer from family law provisions and limited contact with their children, the AfD wants to be the first party to fight for the rights of fathers and men (ibid., p. 51).

The AfD does not only see the family as the ‘value-giving basic social unit’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 80) threatened by ‘gender ideology’, gender mainstreaming, and alternative life models but also by the individualism and professional activity of the parents and especially the mothers. The party laments that because the ‘current family policy in Germany is determined by the political model of the full-time employed woman’, the number of infants taken care of and being raised outside of their families is rising steadily (ibid., p. 85). Hence, the AfD argues that it should be possible for parents to take care of children under the age of three at home and that care in nurseries and kindergartens should not be ‘one-sidedly favoured by the state’ (ibid.).

The AfD adheres to traditional gender roles: women belong in the private domain and should be foremostly mothers and carers while men belong in the public sphere where they work to sustain their families. The party claims that a misled feminism has led to a devaluation of women who conform to such traditional gender roles:

‘The economy wants women as a force of labour. A misunderstood feminism one-sidedly values women in working life, but not women who are “only” mothers and housewives.’ (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 80)

The AfD’s views on the role of women are reflected in their positions on reproductive rights – and particularly on abortion – with the party prioritising the rights of the unborn child over the rights of the pregnant woman. The AfD consistently talks of the ‘unborn’ or ‘unborn children’ rather than of ‘embryos’ and in this way emphasises its point of view that life and the protection of life begins with conception. In its manifesto, the party directly points out the number of abortions as one of the factors leading to the ‘demographic crisis’ in Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 81). Consequently, the AfD calls for a ‘welcome culture for new-born and unborn children’ and claims to stand for a ‘culture of life’ (ibid., p. 87). The term ‘welcome culture’ (*Willkommenskultur*) originally comes from the migration debate and refers to a welcoming and accepting climate for migrants. The AfD borrowed this term and reinterpreted it for their campaign against abortions. Even though the phrase implies that all new-born and unborn children are welcome, it is obvious that the care of the AfD foremostly extends to ‘German’ children and families. For instance, the party specifically calls on the ‘native’ population to reproduce (ibid., p. 81) and opposes any type of family reunification for refugees (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 41).

The party strongly emphasises the unborn child’s right to life and claims that ‘all too often, this right is subordinated to self-realisation or social fears about the future’ (ibid., p. 52), leading to abortions. Therefore, the party demands that abortions should be an ‘absolute exception’, limited to cases of criminological or

certain medical indications (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 67). In order to prevent abortions, the AfD calls on families, schools and the media to convey 'respect for life and a positive image of marriage and parenthood' and demands that the *Schwangerschaftskonfliktberatung* ('pregnancy conflict counselling', mandatory for women in Germany who want to have an abortion, further explained in chapter 6.2) should be aimed at protecting the unborn life (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 52). The AfD stresses that abortions can lead to feelings of guilt, psychosomatic troubles or depressive reactions for the affected women (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 68) but ignores the rights of pregnant women over their own bodies and to self-determination. Instead, the AfD opposes efforts to downplay abortions, alleged state efforts to promote abortions (ibid., 87) and 'all efforts to declare the killing of unborn a human right' (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 52). The party demands that adoptions – as the 'life-saving way out' – should be facilitated (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 68).

In line with its ideas about the survival of the nation and plans for an 'activating family policy', the AfD wants to 'financially and ideally' strengthen the family as the 'value-giving basic social unit' (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 83) and calls for a 'welcome culture for children' (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 52). To enable and encourage young people to have (more) children, the party proposes a set of measures to promote and support families. The AfD argues that while the entire society benefits from the indispensable service that families do by upbringing children, and thereby sustaining society and the social security system, it is only the families who must shoulder the (financial) burden (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, pp. 66-67; Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, pp. 52-53). The AfD wants to close this 'justice gap' (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 67) by ending the 'dramatic' financial discrimination of families vis-à-vis people without children (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 102). Therefore, it proposes the introduction of a tax system that takes into account the number of family members (*Familienplitting*) and demands that parents should have more benefits in the pension scheme (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, p. 75). The AfD wants to specifically promote and support families with multiple children (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, p. 73) while emphasising that the professional activity of both parents leads to an overstrain of such families (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 67). Instead of regarding children as 'career inhabiting ballast' (Alternative für Deutschland, 2016, pp. 80-81), their needs should come first and family and career must be compatible (ibid., pp. 85-86).

The AfD's proposed family policies are predominantly aimed at strengthening traditional families, i.e. married couples with children. While the party pledges to support single-parent families, it makes it clear that such alternative family models do not match its world views. LGBTQI+ people do not figure in the party programmes except for on two occasions: 1) when opposing education on sexual diversity in kindergartens and schools, and 2) when it comes to reproductive rights. The AfD rejects the idea of a 'right to have children' and opposes the legalisation of surrogacies and the promotion of adoption through

same-sex couples arguing that children are not ‘consumer goods’ or ‘means of complimenting one’s individual lifestyle’ and ‘satisfy needs’ in cases where it is not biologically possible for a couple to have children (Alternative für Deutschland, 2019, p. 68).

Through frames on gender roles and family models, the AfD seeks to re-establish traditional gender roles and the hegemony of the traditional family in order to securitise subjectivity. It presents changes to the former social order, for example the move of women from the private into the public sphere and the diversification of family models, as threats to society and, thus, plays on the audience’s ontological insecurity. Anti-feminist positions such as a push back of women into the role of women and housewives or attacks on reproductive rights such as abortion hence serve to securitise subjectivity. The AfD’s framing on gender roles and family models is also visible in the visual imagery of their campaigns. A campaign poster for the 2017 German parliamentary elections reads ‘Traditional? We like it.’ and shows a romanticising photo of a family consisting of mother, father and two children playing on a beach.



Figure 3: AfD campaign poster for the 2017 German parliamentary elections: ‘Traditional? We like it.’ Available at: <https://www.afd.de/bundestagswahl-2017-plakatmotive-faltblaetter/> (Accessed: 3 August 2019).

6.2 The Abortion Debate

Having identified the anti-feminist and anti-genderist frames in the AfD's narrative, I now apply them to the recent *Bundestag* debate on abortion. Before diving into the discussion, I provide some background information on the German abortion law, the debate which took place between February 2018 and February 2019, as well as the subsequent legislative amendment.

According to § 218 of the German Criminal Code (*Strafgesetzbuch*, StGB), abortions are generally illegal in Germany. § 218a (2) and (3) StGB specify that abortions on the basis of a medical or criminological indication are legal. § 218a (1) StGB establishes the so called *Beratungsregelung* (counselling regulation): an abortion goes unpunished during the first twelve weeks of the pregnancy if the pregnant woman has proven to the doctor that she has been counselled at least three days before the procedure. § 219 StGB specifies that the counselling must be provided by a recognised pregnancy counselling centre and should serve the 'protection of the unborn life' and encouragement of the woman to continue the pregnancy. The doctor who performs the abortion cannot be the advisor. Following § 219a StGB, the 'advertising' for abortions is punished with imprisonment or a fine.

Feminist groups criticise the regulations in the German Criminal Code for criminalising women who decide to have an abortion as well as the performing doctors. The *Bündnis für sexuelle Selbstbestimmung* ('Alliance for sexual Self-Determination') – an alliance of counselling centres, feminist and other political groups, trade unions, parties and individuals – for example, demands the abolition of §218 and §219a StGB and organises protests against the annual 'March for Life' in Berlin (*Bündnis für sexuelle Selbstbestimmung*, n.d.). The March for Life is an annual demonstration held in Berlin and organised by *Bundesverband Lebensrecht* ('Federal Association for the Right to Life') in which both conservative Christians and members of the AfD take part (van Laak, 2018).

In 2017, the conviction of doctor Kristina Hänel, who had provided information about abortions on her website, sparked a nation-wide debate (Zeit Online, 2017). In February 2018, the *Bundestag* debated three draft laws presented by the oppositional parties Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (green party), Die Linke (left party) and FDP (liberal party) (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018a). The drafts were debated again in a session in October 2018 (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018b) and in December 2018, the FDP requested that § 219a be immediately abolished (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018c). After reaching a compromise, the governing coalition of CDU/CSU (Christian parties) and SPD (social democratic party) proposed a bill that was passed by the *Bundestag* on February 21st, 2019 (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019b). The reform of § 219a StGB aimed at providing practitioners with more legal certainty and therefore introduced exceptions to the ban on advertising for abortions in § 219a (4) StGB (Zeit Online, 2019). Following the new version of the law, the advertising ban does not apply to doctors, hospitals or institutions pointing to the fact that they carry out abortions under the conditions of §218a (1) to (3) StGB or referring to information about

abortions provided by a responsible federal or state authority, a recognised pregnancy counselling centre or a medical association. However, the reform does not allow doctors to inform about the medical procedures they provide. Critics argue that the reform does not offer legal certainty to practitioners and hinders the right to sexual self-determination of women (Zeit Online, 2019). In June 2019, based on the reformed § 219a StGB, two Berlin doctors were convicted to a fine for having informed about offering medicinal abortions without narcosis on their website. According to the verdict, they would have only been allowed to state that they offer abortions, not what kind of procedures they offer (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 2019).

This section analyses AfD speeches in *Bundestag* debates on § 218 and § 219a StGB during the current parliamentary term, trying to identify the anti-feminist and anti-genderist frames found in the party's programmes and argue from an ontological security theory perspective. The topic of abortion touches on ontological security because it is a highly moral issue. Often, religious beliefs or personal values determine a person's attitude towards abortion. Both, a person's religious beliefs and personal values are determinants of a person's self-narrative and identity. Discussions on the liberalisation of abortion and corresponding legal reforms are manifestations of social change and, as such, can cause ontological insecurity, especially in people who feel that the right to abortion is opposed to their personal beliefs or values. Moreover, participants of the discourse can play on this ontological insecurity by emotionalising the debate and inciting moral panic, for example by invoking fears of an eventual moral decay of society. The speeches analysed were held by the AfD parliamentarians Volker Münz, Mariana Iris Harder-Kühnel, Jens Maier, Beatrix von Storch and Martin Reichardt during the 14th, 58th, 71st, 81st and 83rd sessions of the 19th *Bundestag*. In all of the five sessions, the parliamentarians discussed drafts on the abolition or reform of § 219a StGB. In the 71st session, on request of the AfD parliamentary group, the *Bundestag* additionally debated a resolution of the *Jusos* (youth organisation of the SPD) in which they had demanded the abolition of § 218 and §219 StGB.

The AfD generally rejects proposals to the softening or abolition of the advertising ban established in § 219a StGB. Harder-Kühnel claims that the softening or abolition of § 219a StGB would take an important regulation out of the 'delicate construction' of the paragraphs 218 and following of the Criminal Code, and, thus, eventually lead to a complete liberalisation of the abortion law (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018a, p. 1225). According to those claims, attempts of the 'leftgreens' to remove or reform § 219a StGB are based on a pseudo-problem constructed around the individual case of doctor Hänel (ibid., p. 1226) and serve as a means to re-awaken 'old left calls for the legalisation of abortions' (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019a, p. 9497). The AfD speakers do not see the freedom of information restricted by § 219a StGB and conclude from the number of abortions performed that information must clearly be available to the concerned women (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018a, p. 1226; 2019a, p. 9497). Moreover, the speakers declare that advertising and pure information cannot be discerned because the doctor economically benefits from carrying out an abortion

(Deutscher Bundestag, 2019b, p. 9743). Consequently, the AfD wants to preserve the ban to avoid the normalisation and commercialisation of abortions (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018a, p. 1226). Harder-Kühnel draws a crude image of what she thinks the annulment of § 219a StGB would lead to:

‘Where, dear comrades, should an annulment of § 219a without a substitution lead? Open advertising on television, internet and radio must then be expected. Where, dear FDP, does grossly offensive advertising begin? Is advertising for abortions at advertising pillars offensive or only if offering three abortions at the price of two? How disturbing it would be, if doctors of all people, who committed themselves to the protection of life, actively advertised measures for the killing of lives!’ (ibid.)

During the debate on a resolution of the *Jusos* that calls for the annulment of both § 218 and § 219a StGB, von Storch and Reichardt seek to discredit the *Jusos* – and by association the SPD – through claims that they want to legalise abortions until the ninth month of the pregnancy: ‘A viable, fully grown child may then also be killed one minute before birth’. (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018c, p. 8256). Von Storch defames the *Jusos* and the SPD by repeatedly calling them ‘baby murderers’ (ibid., p. 8257). Reichardt claims that the implementation of the *Juso* resolution would be a ‘cruelty and inhumanity that is unique in Germany’s post-war history’ and one of the greatest inhumanities in the entire history of mankind (ibid., p. 8265) and, thus, implicitly likens abortions to mass murder and genocide. The rhetoric of the AfD speakers in the abortion debate is a highly moralised rhetoric of life versus death. Abortions are consistently framed as ‘killing’ or ‘murder’ and equated with infanticide. Harder-Kühnel claims that the AfD stands for a ‘welcome culture for children’, a ‘culture of life’ and against the ‘commercialisation of killing’ associated with the lifting of the advertising ban (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018a, p. 1227).

Moreover, the AfD presents itself as the sole protector of the constitution and of unborn life. The speakers support their calls for maintaining the then legislation on abortion through references to the *Grundgesetz* and verdicts of the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* (Constitutional Court of the Federal Republic of Germany). Proclaiming the AfD to be the ‘party of the rule of law’, Harder-Kühnel (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018a, pp. 1225-1226), for instance, cites Article 1(1) (‘Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.’⁶) and Article 2(2) (‘Every person shall have the right to life and physical integrity’) of the *Grundgesetz*. Von Storch refers to a 1993 verdict of the *Bundesverfassungsgericht* which – based on the argumentation that the unborn life is a human life ‘from the outset’ and is therefore equipped with human dignity and a right to life – held that abortions are in general illegal

⁶ *Grundgesetz* quoted according to the English translation published by the *Bundestag*. ‘Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany’, available at: <https://www.btg-bestellservice.de/pdf/80201000.pdf> (Accessed: 3 August 2019).

(Deutscher Bundestag, 2019b, p. 9743). Von Storch argues that a liberalisation of the abortion law would mean a violation of the constitution, ‘an attack on the heart of the constitution’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018c, p. 8256). She even goes as far as to call on the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (the domestic intelligence service of the Federal Republic of Germany) to observe organisations that speak out in favour of the abolition of § 218 StGB (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019b, p. 9743). Furthermore, von Storch emphasises that abortion is a criminal offence which is exempt from punishment under certain conditions only (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018c, p. 8256). Consequently, she claims that the so called ‘advertising’ for abortions represents an incitement to a criminal offence, even if the offence is not legally prosecuted (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019b, p. 9743):

‘Because abortion is and must remain illegal, the ban on advertising for abortion must also remain in place. What is prohibited may not be advertised. Anyone who advertises a crime ends up being an instigator. This also applies if, exceptionally, the offence is not legally prosecuted.’ (ibid.)

With the other parties allegedly failing the constitutional obligation of the state to protect all life, including unborn life, von Storch maintains that the AfD is ‘the last defender of the unborn life’ in Germany (ibid., p. 9743). Maier argues that, as the protection of unborn life is non-negotiable for the AfD, the party rejects any intervention in the ‘overall concept of the protection of unborn life’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018c, p. 8351), meaning the set of legal regulations on abortion. The AfD emphasises the right to life of the unborn and gives it priority over the right of the woman to (sexual) self-determination, as exemplified in this emotionally charged quote by Reichardt:

‘People do not want a perverted right to self-determination that takes precedence over unborn life. They want a family minister who protects small hands, small arms, small legs and growing life’ (ibid., p. 8265).

By giving the right to life of the unborn priority over a woman’s right to sexual and bodily self-determination, the AfD implies a duty of pregnant women to carry their pregnancies to term. Consequently, women are degraded to incubators of unborn life and – in line with the gender and nation frame – to ‘natural’ reproducers of the nation.

The AfD deems calls for the liberalisation of the abortion law ‘ideologic’ and tries to position itself in contrast. Hence, Reichardt describes the public outrage against the *Juso* resolution as

‘a revolt of the decent, a revolt that shows that the time in which left-wing ideologues can reinterpret any form of perversion into social progress is coming to an end. It is a revolt of those who, unlike the *Jusos*, still have humanity and the will to defend and protect human rights in Germany. At the Federal Congress of the *Jusos*, the inhuman grimace of left-wing ideology that kills children and wants to babble about humanity everywhere has revealed itself’ (ibid., p. 8265).

Harder-Kühnel rejects the pro-choice slogan ‘my belly belongs to me’ and seeks to position the AfD as the true protectors of women’s rights by stating that ‘the freedom of women and their physical integrity are endangered in Germany and millionfold worldwide by completely different things’ and asking the other parties to deal with this ‘free of ideology’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018a, p. 1226). In this quote, Harder-Kühnel implies that liberal feminism and progressive politics – with their ‘perverted’, ‘ideologic’ claims and their openness towards the dangerous stranger-other – pose a threat to women and neglect their real needs. The frame of ‘gender-ideology’ vs. common sense reverberates in this argumentation: pro-choice positions are discredited by calling them ‘perverted’ and ‘ideologic’ and by claiming that they are detrimental to the best interest of women. By opposing themselves to such positions and claiming to rely on common sense as opposed to ideology, the AfD seeks to position itself as the ‘true’ feminist and protector of women’s freedom and physical safety.

Rather than loosening the legislation on abortion, the AfD wants the *Bundestag* to debate the question that it holds to be the most important: ‘Why are women in Germany forced to have abortions in the first place?’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018c, p. 8265). The AfD wants to encourage expectant parents and single women to have children by providing them with ‘any government assistance imaginable’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018a, p. 1227). By emphasising the role of the (preferably traditional) family as nucleus of the society and ascribing to women the roles of mothers and carers, the AfD speeches in the abortion debate correspond to the frame of gender roles and family models.

In their speeches, the AfD politicians seek to delegitimise the other parties with different allegations. Referring to the legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2017, the AfD accuses the CDU/CSU for betraying their Christian values and warns them against also compromising in the important question of abortion (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019b, p. 9742). Maier asks, whether the ‘C’ in the party’s acronym stands for the ‘crescent moon’ rather than Christianity (Deutscher Bundestag, 2018c, p. 8351). This vague reference to Islam is a reference to the stranger other and an attempt at building an us-versus-them dichotomy. By associating pro-choice positions with the stranger other, the AfD seeks to debase and demonise such positions while demarcating the borders of the nation. Pro-choice positions are further defamed through the equation of the legalisation of abortion with the aimed abortion of female fetuses in China and the Balkans:

‘In China and the Balkans, girls are aborted because fathers want a son and heir, because girls are worthless there. In Germany, the *Jusos* prioritise a woman’s right to self-determination perverted by the Left over unborn life. This is an attack on unborn life. I see no difference there to those fathers who want to abort their daughters in order to father a heir.’ (ibid., p. 8265)

Finally, reference is made to the legalisation of ninth-month abortions in the US-state New York: ‘We in Germany do not want such contempt for life’ (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019b, p. 9743), again trying to differentiate the self from the other

and claiming to speak for the people. As the AfD speakers differentiate themselves and the ‘German people’ from supposedly morally inferior others, gender relations become demarcation points of the nation’s borders and signifiers of belonging or exclusion.

To summarise, through its rhetoric, the AfD seeks to position itself as the ‘good guys’, a beacon of morality, while demonising the other parties. The party portrays itself as protecting unborn life, the constitution but also women’s rights and freedom against left ideologists, hypocritical Christian democrats and foreign influences. Just as throughout its entire narrative, the AfD draws a sharp distinction between us (the morally good common sensical people) and them (the morally bad ideological elite). While presenting themselves as the true defenders of women’s rights and freedom, the AfD attacks women’s reproductive rights and, thus, clearly drives an anti-feminist agenda. As illustrated above, frames of anti-feminism and anti-genderism identified in the analysis of the party programmes are also employed in the *Bundestag* debate on abortion. By employing anti-feminist and anti-genderist frames and utilising discursive strategies such as othering and an us-versus-them rhetoric, as well as by making consistent references to religious values and the *Grundgesetz* – both strong anchors of identity – the AfD’s discourse in the abortion debate seeks to securitise subjectivity. The AfD tries to gain voter support by using this highly moral issue and emotionalised debate to present itself as the voice of the people on which a perverted and deadly reform is to be imposed, as a moral authority in times of worrying social change.

Due to its limited scope, this discussion was only able to provide a glimpse into how the AfD’s anti-feminist and anti-genderist frames are at play and work to shift the discourse in the *Bundestag* while seeking to securitise subjectivity. Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to apply the frames to parliamentary debates on other women or gender related issues, such as quotas, same-sex marriage or the state of gender equality.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to investigate the phenomena of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism through an ontological security lens. By applying ontological security theory this thesis has contributed both to the development of the theory and to the research on said phenomena. It has argued that ontological security theory should take into account the category of gender by illustrating how issues relating to gender can influence an individual's or group's ontological security. By restructuring former gender hierarchies and dissolving traditional gender roles, feminism and equality policies threaten male privilege as well as a stable sense of self-identity and can, thus, trigger ontological insecurity in both men and women. Consequently, anti-feminism and anti-genderism can be interpreted as strategies to securitise subjectivity.

This gendered approach to ontological security theory was then applied to the phenomena of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism in a case study of the AfD in Germany. The AfD can be considered anti-feminist because it seeks to reverse achievements of the women's rights movement, for instance by attempting to re-establish traditional gender roles and withdrawing reproductive rights. It can be considered anti-genderist because it rejects the idea that gender is a social construct and discredits gender studies and gender mainstreaming as manifestations of an oppressive ideology and elitist conspiracy. The AfD frames their anti-feminist and anti-genderist claims by referring to the supposedly threatened survival of the nation that can only be prevented by an increased reproduction of the 'native' population. Based on this underlying gender-nation frame, other frames reject 'gender' as an ideology aimed at the destruction of the nation and seek to re-establish traditional gender roles and family models in order to protect the nation.

Applying an ontological security lens, the AfD's narrative on gender-related issues can be understood as seeking to securitise subjectivity. Playing on or instilling a fear of the demise of the nation and of a general moral decay caused by social transformations and changing gender relations in its audience, the AfD offers ontological security by proposing a return to simpler times, to a golden past in which gender identities, roles and hierarchies were clear-cut. This golden past is epitomised by the traditional family that is glorified as the nucleus and the essence of the nation. By constructing clear dichotomies of male/female and us/them, by identifying the stranger other as an external and the female other as an internal enemy, the AfD discursively seeks to securitise subjectivity. The findings of this study conform with the concepts of femonationalism and gender-nationalism presented above: the AfD presents itself as a defender of women's rights when trying to debase and exclude the stranger other, even though it drives an anti-feminist and anti-genderist agenda.

Returning to the research question of this thesis (*‘How can anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism be understood in terms of ontological security?’*), I will try to generalise the findings of this case study to the broader context of anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism. As illustrated in the introduction, anti-feminism and anti-genderism are not only figuring in German right-wing populism but in right-wing populism around the globe. Whereas the political influence of the AfD is somewhat limited due to its position as an oppositional party, right-wing populist leaders in some countries are already implementing their anti-feminist and anti-genderist agenda. As this thesis has demonstrated, anti-feminism and anti-genderism in right-wing populism can be understood as strategies to securitise subjectivity. By instilling or playing on ontological insecurity in their audiences, right-wing populist forces seek to gain voter support by offering a return to the former social order and hierarchy, and, thus, stability of identity. Anti-feminist and anti-genderist narratives draw on images of threat and doom. They present anchors of identity such as the nation, gender/sexual identity, the traditional family, or the social order as being threatened by a ‘misled’ feminism and a ‘perverted’ gender-ideology. Then, they seek to gain voter support through strategies of securitising subjectivity. Such strategies are, for instance, claims to reverse feminist achievements, the delegitimisation of theories of gender and the re-affirmation of the gender binary, traditional gender roles, and former gender relations and social hierarchies.

Analogue to their self-representation concerning other issues, in their anti-feminist and anti-genderist narratives, right-wing populists present themselves as representing the common people, as defending the majority against an oppressive minority politics imposed on them by a corrupt elite and as the last bastion of common sense and reason. This representation helps right-wing populists both in instilling ontological insecurity in their audience and in consequently securitising subjectivity. Moreover, right-wing populists present themselves as the true defenders of women’s rights and seek to conceal their anti-feminism by declaring the oppression of and violence against women to be the domain of the migrant other. In this way, right-wing populists claim to defend women’s freedom by excluding migrants and demanding a restriction of or halt to migration, even though they actively seek to reverse feminist achievements. Framed in this way, their anti-feminist and anti-genderist narrative fits perfectly into the right-wing populist narrative as a whole. As with other issues, immigrants are pointed out as the ones to blame and consequently, their exclusion is demanded and presented as the solution. Gender relations are constructed as a point of reference for the otherness and backwardness of the (Muslim) immigrant and as a legitimate justification for their ill-treatment and exclusion and, thus, serve as a tool to border the nation. In such a manner, attention is conveniently directed away from persisting structural inequalities and the white male as oppressor and perpetrator of gendered violence while right-wing populists can present themselves as true feminists and protectors of ‘their’ women’s freedom and physical safety.

Future research could focus on the ways in which right-wing populist anti-feminist and anti-genderist narratives resonate with their audience and test to what extent they are able to securitise subjectivity. For instance, it would be interesting

to ask what role anti-feminist and anti-genderist claims play in right-wing populist parties' voter support or in which ways such narratives are perceived by the audience. For a more comparative perspective, case studies in other European and non-European countries could be performed. It could also be interesting to reflect on how the ontological security aspect could be taken into account in the creation of counter-narratives to anti-feminist and anti-genderist narratives.

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