

## EXTENDED PAPER

**Öffentliche Meinung im Deutschland des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts**

**Public Opinion in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany  
Empirical Results and Considerations of Interpretations**

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### Öffentliche Meinung im Deutschland des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts Empirische Erhebung und Interpretationserwägungen

#### Public Opinion in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany Empirical Results and Considerations of Interpretations

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**Abstract:** The scope of this paper is twofold: On the one hand, it offers an empirical based insight into the developments of public opinion in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, it reflects theoretically on problems concerning the interpretation of historical sources related to public opinion (theory). The article concentrates on German history between 1866 and 1945, a period serviced by a huge amount of historical sources and archival material. The starting point of 1866 marks the beginning of German unification while 1945 marks the end of this era. For the empirical insight into developments in public opinion, the findings presented here indicate that public opinion was deeply influenced by a set of socio economic variables. This paper assesses variables of intervening impact such as trust, tradition, information costs and external costs, while the article also considers the measurability of media impact on public opinion in the past. Furthermore, the paper offers explanations for the interdependence of public opinion and election results. For the theoretical considerations of interpretational problems, this article reflects the fabrication both of public opinion and of public opinion sources. Furthermore, it tries to isolate ingredients of frames in public opinion theory. In doing so it forwards a new notion, namely that “public mood” is derived from the historical sources. The paper also tries to integrate the public mood concept in public opinion theory. The empirical findings share with the theoretical framing the fact that both the theory and reality of public opinion can sometimes be easily explained, as sometimes they provide strange loops of interwoven causes and consequences.

**Keywords:** public opinion; public mood; theory; methods; decision making costs; Germany; 19<sup>th</sup> century; 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Zusammenfassung:** In dem Aufsatz geht es um zweierlei: Einerseits um eine quellengestützte, empirische Erhebung zu den Entwicklungen der öffentlichen Meinung in Deutschland im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, andererseits um theoretische Überlegungen zu Begriff und Quellen der öffentlichen Meinung. Der Beitrag konzentriert sich auf die Zeit zwischen Norddeutschem Bund/kleindeutschem Kaiserreich und der NS-Zeit. Für diese Zeit sind äußerst umfangreiche, einschlägige archivalische Quellen überliefert. Zu den empirischen Ergebnissen: Die Interpretation der Quellen spricht dafür, dass die öffentliche Meinung ganz maßgeblich durch diverse sozioökonomische Variablen beeinflusst wurde. Intervenierende

render Einfluss kommt darüber hinaus Faktoren wie Vertrauen, Tradition, Informationskosten und externen Kosten zu. Darüber hinaus werden Überlegungen zur Messbarkeit des Medieneinflusses auf die öffentliche Meinung angestellt. Nicht zuletzt präsentiert der Aufsatz Erklärungen für den Zusammenhang von öffentlicher Meinung und Wahlverhalten im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Zu den theoretischen Überlegungen: Der Artikel liefert einen doppelten Beitrag zu Herstellung und Beeinflussung öffentlicher Meinung einerseits und zu Herstellung und Entstehung der Quellen zur öffentlichen Meinung andererseits. Es werden Ideenpartikel unterschiedlicher Frames öffentlicher Meinung isoliert und – in Konsequenz der historischen Quellen – mit dem Ausdruck „öffentliche Stimmung“ ein quellenbasiertes Alternativkonzept zu herkömmlichen Theorien öffentlicher Meinung vorgeschlagen. Dabei stellt sich heraus, dass – wie im Framing-Konzept generell – in Theorie und Empirie öffentlicher Meinung Wechselwirkungen zwischen den verschiedenen Variablen bisweilen recht einfach und plausibel erklärlich sind, bisweilen sich aber als seltsame Schleifen interdependenter Ursachen und Folgen präsentieren.

**Schlagwörter:** öffentliche Meinung; öffentliche Stimmung; Theorie; Methoden; Entscheidungsfindungskosten; Deutschland; 19. und 20. Jahrhundert

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Preliminary remarks

In 1866 a revolution from the top began, and the year marks the start of Germany's unification that led to contemporary Germany.<sup>1</sup> In 1866 Prussia won a victory over Austria and the Austrian parts of old Germany left the German Federation. The Prussian Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck founded the "Northern German Federation" as a substitute. Five years later in 1871 the "Deutsches Reich" was unified following the war between the Empire of France and an alliance of German states under Prussian leadership.

Germany's unification resolved the "German question" that had lasted since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and which had been a major issue of the Revolution of 1848. In hindsight "democrats" and "conservatives" might have wondered why "their parties" had failed in 1848: at first the restoration regimes had been overthrown easily in March 1848. The momentum of the public had overwhelmed the old powers, and this momentum had put the conservative partisans in a kind of shock that endured for at least the rest of the century. Prevention of revolution was a main objective of the conservatives since then. Therefore, on the one hand they were interested in monitoring the public. On the other hand, some "modern" and farsighted conservatives started to ponder counter measures, and one such counter measure was the process of unification.

In contrast and because of the backlash of the reaction in late 1848 and 1849, liberal democrats were fixed in a state of shock. Considerations of their own

1 Some historians highlight 1864, the prelude in the German-Danish War. But this war did not change the constitution of the German Federation.



shortcomings laid stress on mistakes in the management of power. The parliament in Frankfurt, for instance, did not achieve command over military forces. Liberals, democrats and early socialists had disputed over matters of constitution and in doing so they had missed many opportunities to consolidate the revolution. Therefore, many of them discarded the slogan “liberty [has to come] before unity” (after some years of reflection). Instead of this, they turned the slogan upside down. They hoped that liberty and civil rights might come quite automatically, once unity had been achieved. Furthermore, disappointment at the slow pace of rational public deliberation became more widespread. The image of parliamentary politicians was darkened by the stain of endless, useless talking with no successful decision making at the end of it. Therefore, for the public the top down approach became an attractive attitude after 1866/71 instead of bottom up politics. At last, a majority of the public converted to this top down approach, when Bismarck demonstrated successful, straightforward, robust and pragmatic politics.

Many historians after 1945 reflected upon the “way from Bismarck to Hitler”. Whether or not this way was straight or curved is irrelevant for this paper. 1945 marked the end of World War II, of Nazi tyranny over Europe, of the holocaust and of united Germany for half a century, and, therefore, that year marks a limit for my research that is clearly defined. However, the historical sources provide us with another argument for the chosen termination: After 1945 research on public opinion saw a paradigmatic shift. Up to that point, narrative public opinion reports were the methods of choice. Though even the research of opinion polls starts in Germany in the Weimar Era, it remained in *status nascendi*. Since World War II – inspired by Gallup and driven by research for the Anglo-American Occupying Powers – public opinion research, based on questionnaires, is dominant.

While quantification is preferred by social scientists, historians have ambivalently discussed socio-metrical methods for some decades. Statistical time series of hard facts (socio-economic parameters, voting results etc.) are well accepted and widely used by them. However, converting soft human parameters into statistical data (individual attitudes, motives, predispositions etc.; aggregated popularity, public opinion etc.) is disputed. Nevertheless, ever since and whenever, for example at a DHI-Conference in London, April 2010, some historians ask for objectification, others contradict and simply reject the possibility of popularity measurements; they neglect the objectification of soft factors (cf. Forsbach, 2010). This is an attempt at such an objectification, and some of the empirical findings of this paper are as follows:

- The decisive years were the decade between 1914 and 1923 (beginning with World War I and ending with hyper inflation). Then, the Germans at first lost confidence in the old system (especially in politicians and the leading military figures of the Empire); later, they lost confidence in the new system, i.e. democracy, too (cf. chapter 2.1).
- From 1929 a World Economic Crisis accelerated the diminishment of confidence. Because of a double loss of trust, democracy was not perceived as a competent problem solver any more. On the other hand, going back to mon-

archy was only an option for a small minority. Hitler seemed to offer a possible third way out of crisis (cf. chapter 2.2).

- Public opinion was predominantly exposed to the impact of socio-economic developments. Real wages and GNP meant a positive impact; unemployment rates showed a negative correlation with developments in public opinion. All three indicators are meant as a proxy for a set of diverse socio-economic circumstances (cf. chapter 2.2).
- The proxy is linked with the perception of cohorts and the stereotypes produced by the urban-rural cleavage. Cohorts are structures in time, and the urban-rural cleavage creates structures in space. Both show the establishment of public opinion in a continuity of space and time (cf. chapter 2.2).
- The paper considers the possibility of objectifying the media's impact on public opinion. However, any direct impact measurement still remains impossible. Nevertheless, an indirect approach regarding the obtrusiveness of the public agenda provides a plausibility measure for high and for low chances of media impact (cf. chapter 2.3).
- Furthermore, the paper tries to identify information costs and sets them in relation to external costs. It can be shown that public opinion declined while information costs and external costs rose (cf. chapter 2.3).
- Additionally, the paper provides a hint towards answering the question of why the Germans fought on until total destruction and unconditional surrender in World War II: because public opinion was in decline in the second half of the war and because Hitler's November revolution syndrome did not lessen the grip of the regime on the people (cf. chapter 2.3).
- The model of public opinion, presented here, gives us some understanding of the crucial shifts in Germany's political culture of that era. Public opinion explains the results of elections in the "Reich" between 1871 and 1932. The worse the public opinion, the more the opposition parties won at elections, and vice versa: The better the public opinion, the more the parties supporting government won (cf. chapter 2.4).

Furthermore, this paper is based on certain theoretical considerations:

- The interpretations depend on the reliability of the sources. Therefore, the paper provides a history and theory of V-Men. They started as vigilant-men in the Metternich era; in the Bismarck era another meaning was added: V-Men were regarded as trustworthy men, both for the people and the civil service. Both meanings were equally important in World War I. Afterwards, the original meaning, of confidential agents of the secret services and the political police, became predominant again (cf. chapter 3.1).
- In communication science findings have to be based on theory. From now on I will not refer to the notion "public opinion" but to a complementary concept: "public mood". The notion is derived from the sources. It provides an emotional concept of public opinion; one of its central components is confidence. However, the public mood concept will have to be integrated into the vast amount of theories on public opinion. Its theoretical framing is related to a phase space concept of public opinion (cf. chapter 3.2).

- The model of the public mood is not totally emotional. Therefore, it is linked to a rational choice model: the “calculus of consent” concept. With respect to this model it is possible to take into account individual and general interests, the costs of decision making, information and external costs. The concept itself will first be explained prior to focusing on considerations of sources, methods and the notion of the “public mood”.

Buchanan and Tullock (1992) created a “calculus of consent” concept of constitutional decision making, with Buchanan winning the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for his findings in rational choice theory.<sup>2</sup> The utility-maximizing model is driven by the interests of the individuals involved. Buchanan and Tullock rejected any “emergence of a mystic general will”. They did not use the notion “rational” in a strict sense but in a comparative sense: rational people try to maximize their utility function. That means that individuals choose more rather than less, better rather than worse, and for one’s own interest rather than those of others. Nevertheless, Buchanan and Tullock (1992, p. 298) conceded: “We know, of course, that in the economic as well as the political relationship, individuals are not entirely rational, they are not well informed, and they do not follow self-interest in all circumstances.”

External costs, decision-making costs and information costs are key notions of the “calculus of consent”. Buchanan and Tullock used the term “external costs” to refer to costs put on individuals against their will by force and coercion. The more individuals are involved in the decision making process, the less it is possible to levy external costs onto the citizens. The less that individuals are involved, the more that external costs may be imposed on them. On the other hand, the more individuals are involved in the decision making process, the more decision making costs will rise. Information costs are part of the decision making costs. They summarize costs of media, communication and of all kind of information seeking and dissemination costs. Information costs depend on the number of involved individuals, on media expansion, on the influence of propaganda and pressure groups. Buchanan and Tullock emphasized the importance of cross lagged developments of information and decision making costs on the one hand and external costs on the other. They compared zero sum games with positive sum games in economy and politics.<sup>3</sup>

The article is divided into two parts. Chapter 2 presents my interpretations and findings, nevertheless, where appropriate I will also add some remarks on special interpretation problems. In Chapter 3 I will offer more general reflections on the sources, causes and consequences, and blind spots of the public monitoring research. The chapter will generalize problems concerning the interpretation of the historical sources, a discussion that involves accounting for the interests of the authors of the sources, circumstances of the fabrication of the files, special aspects of involved institutions, feedback processes, the availability of complementary

2 Though Buchanan’s rational choice considerations were covered mainly in the book “calculus of consent” by Buchanan and Tullock in 1962, the latter went away empty-handed.

3 For the findings cf. chapter 2.3.

sources, etc. Lastly, I will add an appendix concerning the model of public opinion I have used. This is necessary both because the model is not in use in communication science, and because many models of public opinion tend to simplify the “phase space” of the public. For most of this paper I will adhere to a different notion than that of public opinion, namely, the notion of “public mood”. The use of this notion is promoted by the sources, and it is this topic that will be explained next.

## 1.2 Published opinion, public opinion and public mood: methods and sources

The reconstruction of public opinion in historical context is difficult. In Germany prior to 1945 there are no public opinion polls to refer to. There are a number of press histories, but there is no prolonged content analysis. The content analyses which do exist, for example, one by Wilke (1984), focus on different research questions to the ones presented here, while in terms of method, they operate using randomized test dates and hence lack the uninterrupted continuity necessary for comparative analyses based on public opinion records. Some research provides us with content analyses of press coverage of historical events, for example Rosenberger’s analysis (1998) on the international crisis prior to 1914, and more recently we have Jürgen Wilke’s analysis of press instructions in 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany (2007).

On the other hand, there are a huge amount of historical sources prior to 1945 comparable with modern concepts of public opinion that have been widely neglected, at least in communication research. When they have not been neglected, the sources have not been analyzed objectively. Even historians try to avoid the sources, because they know the interpretation problems only too well. This is an attempt to reconstruct public opinion through the interpretation of a huge pile of sensitive historical sources: The administration watched the people, monitored its thoughts and its political and proto political statements.

Many reports had the headline “öffentliche Stimmung betreffend” (on the public mood), and so avoided the label “reports on public opinion” because in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Germany, public opinion was mostly identified with the press. The reports, therefore, did not offer a clear concept of public opinion because that was not their purpose, but instead we have to accept their somewhat diffuse notions. The public mood is to some extent equivalent to Rousseau’s “volonté de tous”, or “vox populi” and to the public opinion polls of our own day. However, the sources lacked the exactness of today’s polls. Nevertheless, they tried to reason about causes that might have influenced the public. The reports also tried to identify public interests in the area observed; they tried to recognize impact factors on the public mood; they observed conventions and public discussions in bars to get some feeling for the attitude of the people. It was not uncommon for the public mood to be seen to be profoundly linked with the confidence of the people: at the beginning trust in monarchy, at the end confidence in Hitler. The public mood was not the outcome of a rational discourse, even when – at least to some extent – manifest interests like economic interests often showed a measurable impact on public attitudes.

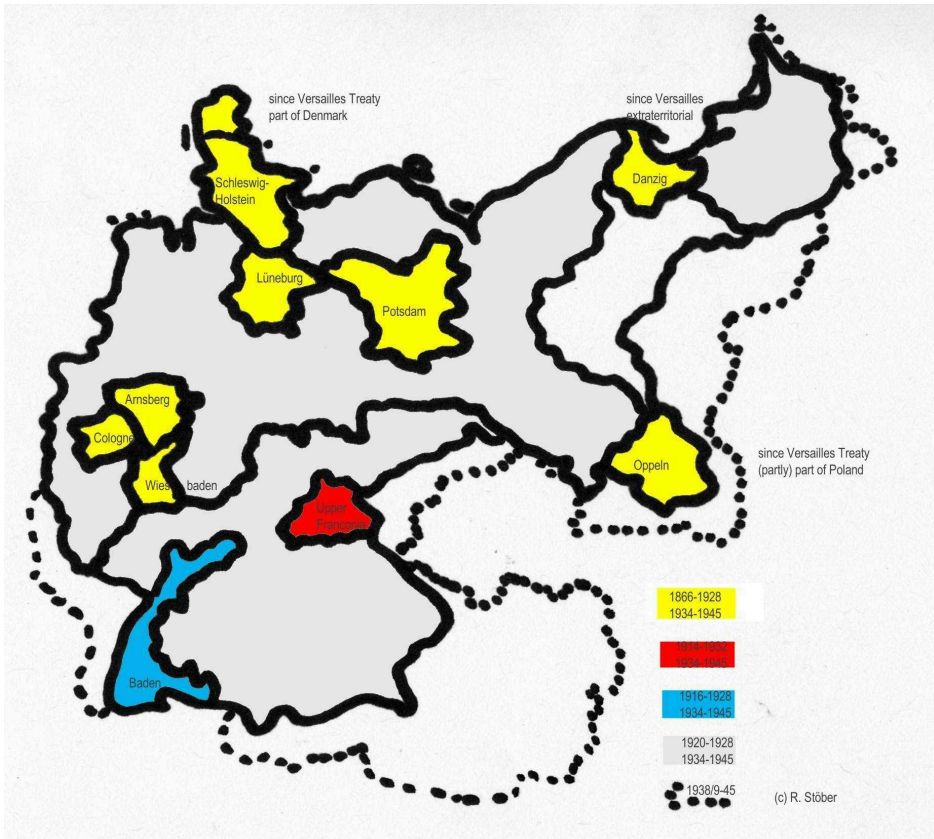
The lower echelons of the state's administration staff reported the sentiments of the people to the higher administration in response to the state authorities' interest in preventing upheaval and revolution. Needless to say, the reports differed widely in exactness, regularity, length, detail and method, as some relied, for instance, on the use of quotations from input material or statistics, while others displayed greater party bias. Anyway, all reports took note of two items: the public's mood and the issues most concerning the public (i.e. most obtrusive agenda). The tradition of making these reports continued after World War II (Kutsch, 1993), but opinion polls soon became the main method of research on public opinion, while in the GDR such reports continued for much longer.

At first, I will survey the reports listed in table 1: Some sources are partly published (No. 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9); some are available exclusively in state archives (No. 4, 5, 7). Some include samples (No. 1, 4, 5), others represent the whole population of interest (No. 2-3, 6-9). The selections in No. 1, 4 and 5 represent a quota sample. The Prussian reports (No. 1) were selected from districts representing Prussia as a whole and for this purpose the main characteristics of the districts have been compared with the whole state (on results of political voting, data on economy, traditions and religion). The average difference over all (53 characteristics) was +/- 3.4 percent, which provides an approximate fit. The districts contain the following locations: In the west: Cologne and Arnsberg, in the south west: Wiesbaden, in the north-west: Lüneburg/ Hanover, in the north: Schleswig, in the east: Danzig, in the south east: Oppeln in Upper Silesia, and finally in the centre: Berlin and Potsdam. No. 4 and 5 were selected because of the density of sources. Fortunately (in terms of religion, economy and voting patterns), Upper Franconia is far more similar to the rest of Germany than to Bavaria as a whole. Every second source (No. 2, 6, 7, 8) is similar to secret service material.

Table 1: Sources on the public mood

No.	name (area)	time	provenience	n	N	source of reports	frequency
1	Immediatszeitungsberichte (Prussia)	1866-1918	civil authorities	1578	ca. 6904	reports of district chief executives	Quarterly
2	Berliner Polizeipräsident (Berlin)	1914-1918	political police	104	104	Police agents, informants, local police	Irregularly
3	Generalkommando (Baden)	1916-1918	military authorities	26	26	Informants	Irregularly
4	Regierungspräsident (Upper Franconia)	1914-1928	civil authorities	507	ca. 4056	Oberfranken Bezirksämter (reports of district chief executives)	Weekly/ half monthly
5	Bezirksämter (Upper Franconia)	1914-1931	civil authorities	15418	more than 120000	informants, local police	Weekly/ half monthly
6	Reichskommissar (Germany)	1920-1928	political police	105	105	Police agents, informants	Irregularly
7	Gestapo (Germany)	1934-1936	political police	390	390	Police agents, informants	Monthly
8	Sopade (Germany)	1934-1940	political party	69	69	informants	Monthly
9	SD-Berichte (Germany)	1939-1945	party-political police	444	444	Police agents, informants	Irregularly

Figure 1: sources on the public mood in Germany (1866-1945)



Unfortunately, the reports either seldom provide evidence, or are not systematic in doing so, of the media's impact on the public's mood. Therefore, they must be compared with external data especially due to the lack of convenient media content analysis. Both sources are scarcely comparable: The party press of that era was far more inhomogeneous than the sources for assessing the public mood. Even Nazi press instructions did not create a total homogeneity (Rössler & Pohl, 2010). The periodicity of both sources also did not match: The coverage provided by the press ranged from daily to quarterly. Only some sources on the public mood (mainly in war time) reported every two or three days. In such cases of short term monitoring, media impact might be discovered directly.

Due to the character of the reports they were initially assessed using textual criticism. That means, I had to work like a historian: I had to consider the interests of the author of the sources, especially their career orientated motives. The reports offered interpretations of the public situation: they did not note "manifest content" as demanded by Berelson. Therefore, a plain content analysis would not have worked. In particular, the situation within the monitoring institution was



relevant for my interpretation, and I will describe the institutions involved in chapter 3.1.

Reliance on explicit readings may have been misleading, and so at times it was necessary to read “between the lines”. For example, for the Nazi era two controversial sources are available: Gestapo reports (table 1, No. 7) and the “green reports” of the Sopade (table 1, No. 8). Both sources presented similar findings, but both were also biased in specific directions: the Sopade darkened its reports, the Gestapo brightened theirs up. The “green reports” of the Social Democratic Party in exile (Behnken, 1980 [table 1, No. 8]) provide us with contrasting views. Therefore, from the opposite point of view all the aforementioned arguments are true once again. The authors of the “green reports” were patriots who wanted to give testimony about the “other Germany”, i.e. a Germany of moral integrity and democracy. Their wishful thinking looked for every small hint of a breakdown in Hitler’s tyranny. At least in Hitler’s first years of dictatorship the “green reports” exaggerated every sign in favor of a short term collapse of the regime.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the reading of one source was compared with information from the other sources. That is the standard procedure of textual criticism. When there was no chance of correcting my interpretation by reference to similar sources from other origins I resorted to diaries and other documents including the findings of historians into consideration. However, corrections of this kind were used only when I had reasonable doubts.

Nevertheless, even the comparison of different sources can reach a dead end. For example, the “green reports” often noted German sympathy with the Jews, while the Nazi reports recorded the opposite: The Germans did approve of the anti Jewish policy of the regime. The amount of anti-Semitism in the Nazi era cannot be objectified. For example the public support for the anti-Jewish terror in the Reichspogromnacht (Kristallnacht) is controversially debated even now (Deusing, 2008), while, for obvious reasons, the Final Solution was nearly a taboo to the public. This does not mean that the Germans did not know anything about the holocaust. However, at most the German atrocities and crimes were mentioned only indirectly. Some rare examples can be cited; the SD reported the following at 4/19/1943 after the discovery of the Katyn massacre: “Some intellectuals and Christians declared: ‘The Germans are not entitled to criticism because they eliminated many more Poles and Jews than the Soviets.’” (Boberach, 1984 [table 1: No. 9], Vol. 13, p. 5145) After the Russians had invaded Eastern Prussia, Goebbels exploited atrocities against German civilians. Sometimes the brutality propaganda backfired. For instance, the SD reported at 11/6/1944: “Have we not slaughtered Jews in their thousands? Don’t soldiers tell over and again that Jews in Poland had to dig their own graves? And what did we do with the Jews who were in the concentration Camp in Alsace? The Jews are also human beings. By acting in this way, we have shown the enemy what they might do to us in the event of their victory. (numerous quotes from all classes)”. (Jäckel & Kulka, 2004, p. 546) It is worth mentioning that the quote from 1943 spoke about

4 It is almost the same with the leftist social democratic group “Neu Beginnen” (cf. Stöver, 1996).



“some intellectuals and Christians” while at the end of 1944 the SD stated: “numerous quotes from all classes”. That may indicate that many more Germans than the number that admitted this after 1945, did know something even before the end of war. At least I am personally convinced that every German who wanted to know something about the killing of the Jews, could know something. For the most part, however, most Germans were concerned with their daily needs and plight.<sup>5</sup>

Another standard procedure of textual criticism depends on the interpretation of different indicators. For example many sources on the Nazi era – autobiographies, the “green reports” and even Gestapo and SD-reports – reported political jokes, rumors and the usage of the “Deutscher Gruß” (German greeting, i.e. “Heil Hitler”). Because the “German greeting” was a public action and an outward sign of inward attitudes, it was mentioned by many sources, especially in ego documents when the authors looked for indicators of the public mood. Tendencies and quantities of all three have helped with the interpretation of the public mood. However, tendencies and quantities have had to be considered with care. The sources did not provide a continuous and equal flow of data on these topics. Neither Sopade nor the Gestapo and SD informants counted the number of “German greetings” in normal times, but they did notice obvious reductions. For example, a Nazi party member in Wuppertal who greeted 51 times with “Heil Hitler” after a bombing raid on his hometown, received only two appropriate responses. The rest of his fellow citizens greeted him in return with “good morning”, as the party member resentfully reported (Boberach, 1984 [table 1: No. 9], Vol. 14, p. 5356). So, while the mentioning of the “German greeting” provides no chance for any quantization it may yet serve as a control indicator for the reliability of the general truthfulness of the given source.

From the point of view of textual criticism it is almost the same with jokes and rumors, as these provide helpful control indicators. Jokes and rumors did have a substitute function (Dröge, 1970, p. 213), in that they both were substitutes for freedom in communication: rumors were a substitute for the lack of information, while political jokes were a substitute for freedom of comment. Rumors and political jokes were also used – or even approved – by the regime. For example the “green reports” reported on a cabaret in Düsseldorf that a master of ceremonies had told political jokes endlessly. The public had applauded fervently. At last, the master of ceremonies put an end to this with the remark: “Thank you ladies and gentlemen that you have had the courage to applaud my aggressive jokes. However, you do not need to worry; I’ll tell you: all my jokes were officially authorized [by the Gestapo].” That remark cooled the temper down “like an ice cold shower” (Behnken 1980 [table 1: No. 8], Vol. 5, p. 144). So, there is a fair chance of arriving at reliable results by using the method of textual criticism.

The findings of the textual criticism were converted into content analysis values. Only the most obvious contents were aggregated in a content analysis. Every

5 Nota bene: The chief of the Nazi Party secret service SD, Otto Ohlendorf, in 1941 asked for a transfer to the eastern front because he wanted to engage himself in the liquidation of the Jews. In 1951 he was one of the last war criminals hanged.

single report is one coding unit. By reason of the reports' interest their monitoring concentrated on two items: mood and issues. Furthermore, formal features were noted: date, provenience, area and length. Through recoding, related items were added: categories of the political, economical and religious character of the area and the obtrusiveness of the main issue. The term obtrusiveness has been chosen with respect to some agenda setting analysis (Erbring et al., 1980). I will use it as a proxy for influences of real world's issues. Obtrusiveness serves as a value for the significance of these issues for the individual and for the public; it is an assumption which is attributed to the issues because there is no possibility to check in hindsight the individual's involvement and interests or collective attributions to the importance of issues with questionnaires. The value of some issues changed over time; therefore obtrusiveness is a tenuous but necessary objectification by means of content analysis. The obtrusiveness value was categorized according to low, medium and high tendencies, where a low level of obtrusiveness was afforded to issues like foreign policy, medium level of obtrusiveness to domestic policy issues like tax legislation, and a high level of obtrusiveness to issues like unemployment. Reports with "low" obtrusiveness were coded = 0, "medium" = 1 and "high" = 2.

All reports concentrated on the consequences of the public mood for the state authorities. A positive public mood was coded = +1, indifferent or not decidable = 0, low or negative = -1. A positive public mood was coded when the people's discussions were in favor of the state authorities, leading politicians, and the political and economical system. A negative public mood was coded when it was the other way around; in neither case was a zero coded. In doubt or when there appeared no clear arguments for positive or negative values a zero was coded.

Despite their ordinal scales the arithmetic mean was calculated (normally per annum), an approach which may be questioned, but it enables a comparison of the reports with external data. For now, some problems can be highlighted in advance: For obvious reasons, there are topics which definitely cannot be discussed on an aggregated level: the anti-Jewish policy and the reactions of the public. Neither match the quantitative approach. Furthermore, low values of the public mood in the 1870s are not comparable with the low values during the years of inflation, or World Wars I or II. Nevertheless, short-term interests are more relevant to the public than long-term comparisons. It is, therefore, as the people's interest varies from year to year that the public's mood becomes comparable.

After proving the plausibility of the reports, and after they had been compared with other original sources, they had to be compared with external data. The next figure serves as an example for later comparisons, and stands for an overview of the period in question. However, it provides a zero sum idealization based on Buchanan's and Tullock's theory. In theory external costs and information costs always develop in the opposite direction.

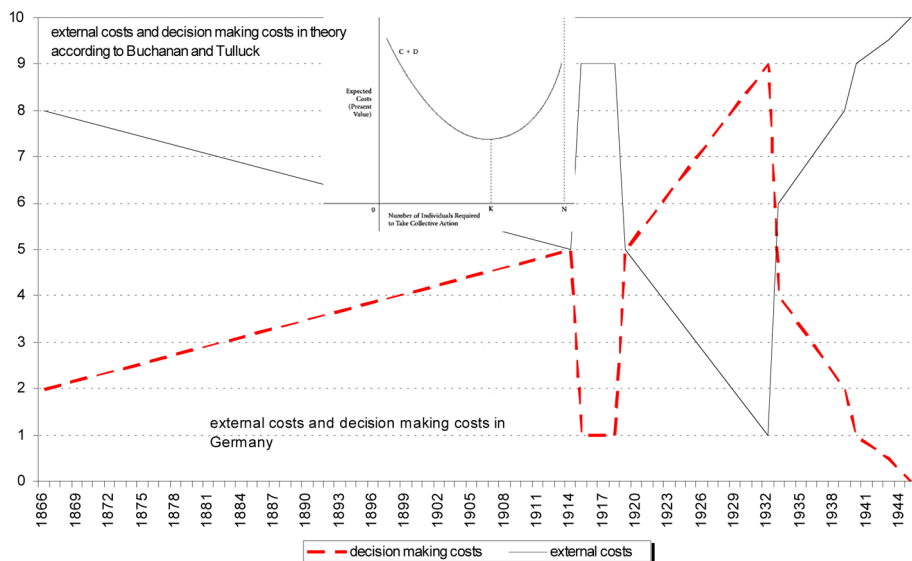
Let us, in brief and with a knowing neglect of historical complexity, assume that one could objectify both information costs and external costs. Information costs in Germany rose significantly before World War I. Media circulation and information dissemination rose, in consequence mediatization of society won in-

fluence. The propaganda monopoly of the administration dwindled – it had never existed in a strict sense; influence of parties and pressure groups on political communication gained weight. In World War I a reverse process – at first sight – took place. Under the “Burgfrieden” policy party politics became less important, and the number and total circulation of newspapers decreased. Propaganda was strengthened by press instructions, censorship and centralized news agency reports. In the Weimar era information costs rose again: new media (radio and – a little bit older – film), innovative press titles, rising circulation enforced mediatisation. Culture critics of that time opposed the Americanization of the media; they pejoratively mentioned “asphalt journalism”, pressure group policy and corruption of the press. In the Nazi era, again, it was seemingly the other way around: with respect to rumors we will see later that it was not so simple. Due to the rise or decline of the number of decision makers, decision making costs in a stricter sense meandered similarly: they rose before World War I, reduced in the Great War, and rose again after 1919. The common swearword “Schwatzbude” (twaddle shack) for the “Reichstag” expressed discontent with daily politics’ slowness and hardship. After 1933 its use declined in a hurry. The external costs developed in the opposite direction, almost for the same reasons.

The next figure provides – both against the theoretical assumptions of Buchanan and Tullock<sup>6</sup> and in contrast to the findings presented later (cf. chapter 2.3) – the assumption that external costs and information costs might add up to a zero sum game. The figure shows a perfect statistical correlation but provides no explanation. External costs might depend on decision making costs and vice versa. However, as just mentioned, both costs depended on a set of changing variables. Therefore, each of the later figures will have to be presented with an interpretation of causes and consequences.

6 The figure inside the figure presents the product of decision making costs and external costs as Buchanan and Tullock added them up. The product becomes extremely high both on the left hand and on the right hand side. On the left hand side only a few people are involved in decision making and, therefore, the external costs (i.e. costs levied by coercion) rise towards its extreme. On the right hand side many people are involved and, therefore, the decision making costs rise towards its extreme. The optimum lies somewhere in the middle. It is obvious that external costs and decision making costs do not add up to a zero sum game (refer to the figure inside the figure). The idealization in Figure 2 simulates a zero sum game, because here I want to prevent misinterpretations: up to now, there is no chance of taking external costs, information costs and decision making costs into objective considerations. Nevertheless, though a quasi-mathematical objectification might fail in the present, the decision making model provides us with an interesting perspective on presumable reasoning and weighting of problems by the Germans during wartime.

Figure 2: external and decision making costs in Germany, a zero sum idealization



In most figures of this paper one part is based on the aggregated data of the public mood. The other one is based on divergent external data. (External costs and decision making costs will turn up again later as such external data.) The external data serves as a proxy for an even greater number of mainly political and socio-economic circumstances. Normally, the independent variable is presented on the left hand side, on the prime axis of scale; the dependent variable is presented on the right hand side, on the secondary axis of scale. This procedure is void when there is just one axis of scale or when there are more than two items presented in the figure.

With regard to a comparison with external data, and as a start, it can be assumed that short-term movements of the “public mood” reacted with the impact of the economy, the media, propaganda and other factors. It can also be assumed that they do have consequences for people’s actions, including voting. To check this let us start at the beginning of the 20th century. US-diplomat George F. Kennan described World War I as “the great seminal catastrophe of this century”.

## 2. Results: the years between 1866 and 1945, years of continuity and disruption

### 2.1 Tide is changing: 1914 to 1923 as decisive years

Recollections of the war are influenced more by myth than facts. Rather than the stereotypical view that a general feeling of euphoria greeted the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914, the German people felt very uncertain about the future. A reflection of this was the fact that in July/August 1914 there was a considerable run on banks as, in particular, small savers took their money home. When news

of war spread, Bavarian reports on the public mood mentioned panic among the people, with holiday makers leaving resorts to hurry home. Only the young generation seemed really happy and can be said to have been euphoric; perhaps they were so because they were naïve and lacked imagination, but the older generations, while patriotic, showed no signs of euphoria.

Any remaining excitement diminished in the first winter of the war, especially when food became more and more expensive. German inflation is usually regarded as a post-war phenomenon, but it started during the war as market prices rose. At this early stage the state authorities declared price freezes on daily goods, but this did not have the effect desired by the authorities or the people, as the goods left on the open market were then sold on the black market. Therefore, it was as a result of the price freeze that goods became unaffordable. Nevertheless, the people felt that the bureaucracy was too incompetent to stop the merchants' own "profit-making". Even worse, they thought that the authorities cooperated with (Jewish) profit-makers. From 1916/17 on, in rural areas starving urban people went on "Hamster-Fahrten" (bartering trips for food), which local policemen were unable to stop. Such trips were recognized as another sign of the government's incompetence, while from the perspective of city dwellers it was felt that the authorities did not want to distribute reasonably priced food. But the effect was much the same, with the people in the towns and cities even more dissatisfied than the rural population.

After the Great War Germany's leading generals, von Hindenburg and Ludendorff, explained the military disaster like this: If the home front would have not surrendered first, the army would not have been defeated later. The slogan became popular in a Reichstag's audit that investigated the terms and conditions of the breakdown in 1918. It was called "Dolchstoß" (a stab in the back). Opponents of this theory spoke about the "Dolchstoß-legend".<sup>7</sup> The "Dolchstoß" slogan was a false one. In the last two years of the war, private and public discussions – i.e. in streets, pubs, market-places, on trains and so on – showed a very different picture. Every spring since 1915 the overt propaganda in the press, by official orators, priests, teachers and other opinion leaders, had expressed that the months of efforts to come would be the last ones needed before the final victory. In the first years of the Great War the authorities had been pretty successful with this propaganda-strategy, but their predictions never came true: the prospects of peace dwindled every autumn with the approach of a new winter of war and with the people increasingly suffering from malnutrition.

Up to this point the scenario matches the "Dolchstoß" explanation. However, the sources show some important shifts in the public mood in 1917/18. The District Chiefs, their agents and informants listened eagerly to these conversations, and what they had heard, did not suit them. The negative comments were not started by civilians, but rather it was the soldiers on vacation or on standby in the "Stellvertretenden Generalkommandos" (deputy general commands behind the front) who disseminated rumors of military ineffectiveness. The "destructive"

7 After 1945 the renaming became standard, but between 1919 and 1945 the "Dolchstoß" was far more popular.

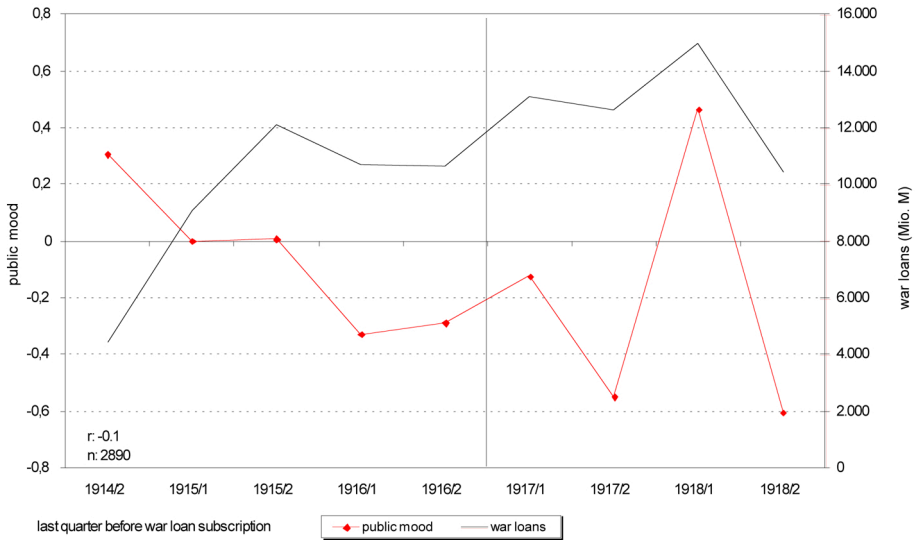
talks usually began like this: Their own heroic efforts had been in vain because the western allies had deployed overwhelming masses of military material and troops. The soldiers overtly discussed the prospects of war. They declared that everything was a fraud. The “fat cats” were interested in the prolongation of the war, so a common saying went. The “big wigs”, i.e. the high finance and industrial bosses and last but not least, the Jews, will have made large profits in every day and month of the war’s duration. Therefore the soldiers urged the civilians not to fund war loans any more, as these would just lead to a further prolongation of slaughter in Belgium and France. The home front picked up on these talks. On the other hand the civilians confronted the soldiers on vacation with stories of starvation and misery. Thus, soldiers and the people on the home front mutually strengthened their discontent with the ongoing war. The public mood thus gained momentum.

These “destructive talks” started in 1916 and became more and more frequent in 1917 when soldiers and the home front for the first time propagated clandestinely for an unconditional surrender. The effects of the talks through the grapevine can be illustrated by a comparison of the amount of war loans with the average valuation of the public mood: Figure 3 shows the public mood in the last quarters prior to the subscription. At first sight it offers little explanation at all (Pearson’s  $r$ : -0.1). A closer look at the reports, however, reveals a remarkable change in the second half of the Great War. In the first years of war the public mood did not have any effect on the war loans. Despite the decline of the arithmetic mean of the public mood, the subscriptions rose from the first war loan to the third; the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> war loans stagnated. In contrast the last four war loans rose and declined in parallel with the public mood.<sup>8</sup>

The bureaucracy made inquiries as to whether or not the public mood was in favor of the war loans. Generally, their predictions proved pretty exact. But how can the change in the midst of war be explained? Why did the public attitude towards war loans differ from the general public mood until 1916? Why did the public mood develop parallel with the subscription of war loans since 1917? The answers lies in the credibility of the authorities: In the beginning there was an overwhelming confidence in the justice of the German cause, and the German propaganda seemed very trustworthy. While confidence in the justice of the German cause remained undiminished confidence in the “last efforts-propaganda” and the trust in the authorities declined. Therefore, the ups and downs of the public mood were not able to be compensated for by propaganda. The public, integrated by the public mood, started to act collectively.

8 One might suggest that war loans were part of external costs (in Buchanan’s and Tullock’s sense) but war loans were subscribed by the public without coercion. Therefore, war loans do not properly fit into the external costs concept. Nota bene: the war loans were not levied by coercion, therefore they cannot serve as a proxy for external costs.

Figure 3: Public mood and war loans (1914-1918)



Sources: Table 1, No. 2, 3, 5; Bente, 1926, p. 134.

Presumably, public discontent would not have led to a swift moral breakdown in early autumn 1918, but in the twelve months before war's end the public mood oscillated constantly up and down: First the Kaiser's army had defeated the troops of the Tsar. Then the German Empire had dictated a Carthaginian peace treaty to the Russians in Brest-Litowsk. In spring 1918 the western German troops, enlarged by the victorious armies of the east, stormed the trenches in Flanders and France. With "St. Michael's offensive" Germany seemed to win a final victory. This enlarged the public's euphoria after the Brest treaty. Even the rumors and defeatism of the soldiers stopped. The slogan of the unconditional surrender was muted.

In early summer the "St. Michael's offensive" slowed down, and the Allies started counter attacks. In August 1918 their offensive gained more and more momentum. Reports on the public mood regarded the emperor as the main obstacle to reaching fair peace terms. The talks were promoted by Wilson's peace treaty proposals. The Germans hoped that introducing democracy would fix all problems: the war, the hatred of the Allies, starvation and misery. Thus, the increasing discontent of soldiers and civilians had undermined the authorities. The returning defeated armies supplied the revolution with the necessary critical mass, until finally it swept away the old authorities. For a short time the public mood brightened after armistice and the revolution, but soon after Armistice Day, Wilson's peace proposals were discarded by the English and French governments and the public mood darkened again.

The November Revolution was in the main a movement of a discontented people. A collective actor opposed the old order and lacked a common positive goal that was accepted by the majority. So the party factions went extreme: The radi-



cal revolutionaries of the Spartacus movement propagated a radical change of order, property and society. Their putsch in Berlin failed; they prevailed for a short time in Munich. Moderate revolutionaries – the right wing social democrats and trade unionists – preferred a parliamentary system with moderate social improvements: for example, the eight hour working day. Liberal and the catholic Center Party suggested a parliamentary system; some of them did not even oppose a parliamentary monarchy. Rightist conservatives remained in a state of shock. Radical rightists soon regarded the revolutionaries as (Jewish) “November criminals”. So there was no alliance with positive perspectives; there was just a negative one that had overthrown the old order.

During the war problems had been ascribed to the “big wigs”: to the Kaiser, by 1918 even to Hindenburg, and in some parts of Germany such as in Bavaria to the Prussian military. In the last weeks of war Hindenburg, the Kaiser, his entourage and important men of the war administration (military and civil) left office and denied their previous responsibilities. Soon after the war this was all forgotten. The disaster was attributed almost immediately to the revolutionaries and the democrats in general. The democratic politicians had to face the music. After Hindenburg and others had rejected their personal responsibility for the war’s outcome almost everybody seemed to forget his own support of the unconditional surrender slogan – at least in public. It was far more convenient for everyone to repeat the lie of the Dolchstoß than to remember his own defeatism at the end of war. The reports on the public mood reveal this very clearly. The “Versailles”-Treaty, the “Kriegsschuldlüge” (concerning German guilt at the outbreak of the war) and the reparations, were regarded as the main causes of Germany’s troubles. Furthermore, the democratic government and its “indulgence” against the Allies undermined the people’s trust in state authorities. It was like a backlash against their overwhelming confidence in the authorities’ propaganda at the beginning of the war. German Inflation 1920-23 increased the negative effects. Inflation did not just shatter the public’s trust in the currency, but in combination with Versailles it diminished the acceptance of democracy. That meant the second moral bankruptcy of state authorities within five years.

Furthermore, it is very likely that the stereotype of the Jewish profit maker revived in the years of inflation, strengthened anti-Semitism and supported the rise of the Nazi party. However, I do regard the anti-Semitism as a dead end for any objectification and quantification. Every ego document up to Klemperer (1995) and Kellner (2011) provides us with such a huge amount of divergent information that any generalization is nearly impossible. Therefore, this would be a different and complex story (cf. Bankier, 1992; Longerich, 2006).

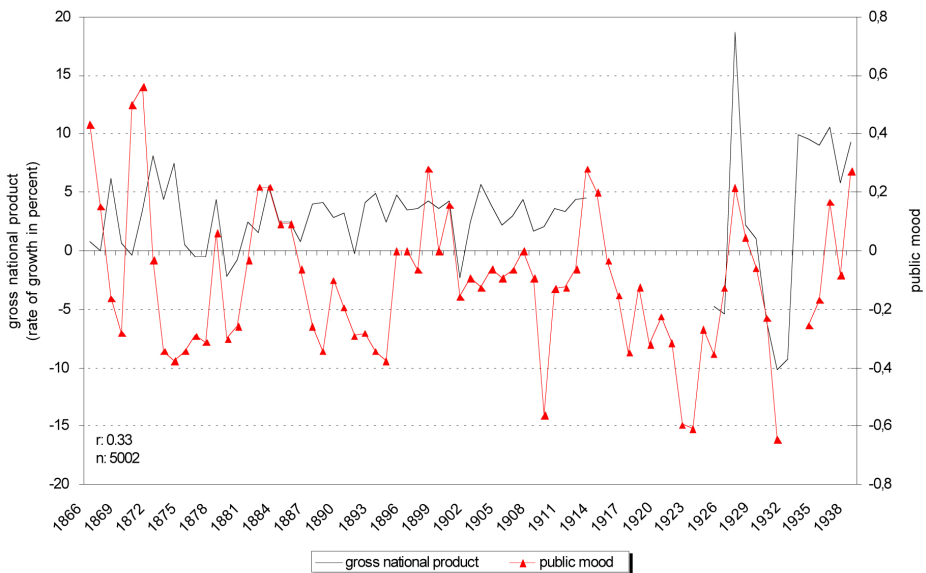
## 2.2 Impacts on the public mood I: effects of issues related to economy and living circumstances?

It is time to take into account a broader view of the years before and after the turning years. I will start with 1866 because in that year the nucleus of today’s Germany was formed: the Northern German Federation. Its predominant state



was Prussia. An important source for the development of Prussia's public mood was called "Immediatszeitungsberichte" (direct reports to the king). These reports took especial note of criminal statistics, economic developments and the public mood. It is obvious to suggest a correlation between economy and the public mood, but more difficult to assess how this can be proven. Firstly, we have to look at the correlation between economic growth and the developments in the public mood (Figure 4). The first hypothesis will be: Public mood and economic growth showed parallel movements. When the economic growth was in decline the arithmetic means of the public mood also declined. When the economy grew the reports showed the public mood getting better. In fact, a time series analysis of the years between 1866 and 1938 reveals a positive correlation ( $r: 0.33$ ).

**Figure 4: Growths of GNP and the public mood (1866-1938)**



Sources: Table 1, No. 1-8 [No. 5 from May 1928 to 1931]; Hoffmann 1965, pp. 26, 451-2.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, there are no GNP data available for the years of the Great War, the inflationary period and World War II. However, the correlation is disturbed at the beginning: The gross national product rate of growth differed from the public mood because of the annexation of Hanover and Hesse after 1866, the Franco-Prussian War in 1870/71 and the "Kulturkampf" (conflict between the Catholics and state authorities). Due to the annexation, the people of Hanover and Hesse were extremely discontented for some years despite the fact of economic recovery in the late 1860s. Although a small economy crisis occurred in the Franco-Prus-

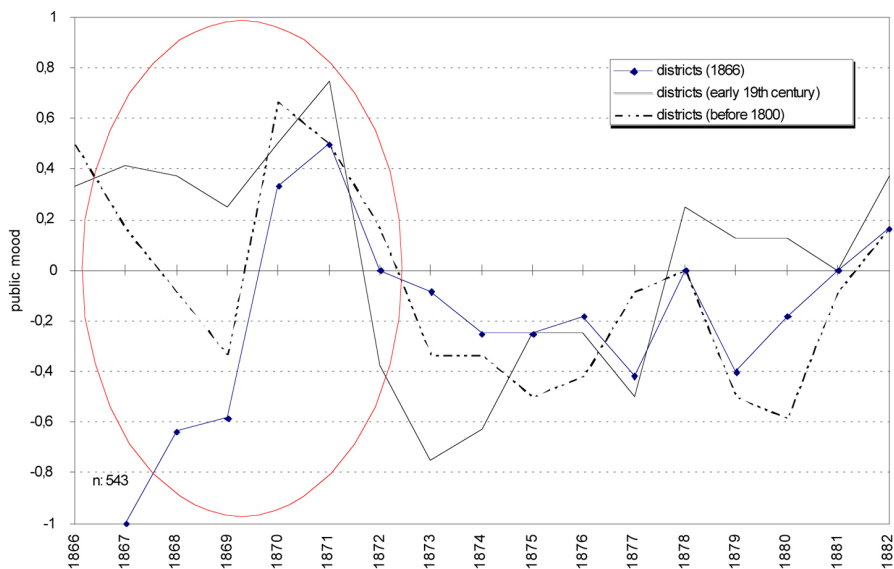
<sup>9</sup> The data of the public mood before 1914 is based on Prussia, the external data is based on the Empire. That is due to the lack of external Prussian data. That is the same in figures 7 and 8.

sian War, the German public was in state of euphoria about the achievement of unification. Directly after the war a post-war bubble on the one side and a deep internal conflict on the other had an impact on the public mood.

The post-war bubble is called “Gründerzeit” (period of promoterism), and it started with French reparation money. The internal conflict is mentioned as “Kulturkampf” (culture struggle); it refers to domestic policies – mainly in Prussia and Baden – in relation to secularity, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and the rise of the Catholic Center Party. The “Kulturkampf” was enacted from 1871 on by Otto von Bismarck, and the conflict deeply disturbed the people in Catholic areas.

The conflict-laden years after the annexation of Hanover and Hesse and the deeply rooted disturbances of domestic peace by the “Kulturkampf,” can be illustrated by the next two figures. They show the people of the different districts in divergent states of activity. At least when regarding the extreme negative public mood values, the public seemed to behave as a collective actor. Furthermore, the public mood in the years of crisis condensed to a liquid or an almost solid state, as Tönnies (1922) has named the different quasi-physical states of public opinion topics.

**Figure 5: the public mood of districts divided by tradition (1866-1882)**



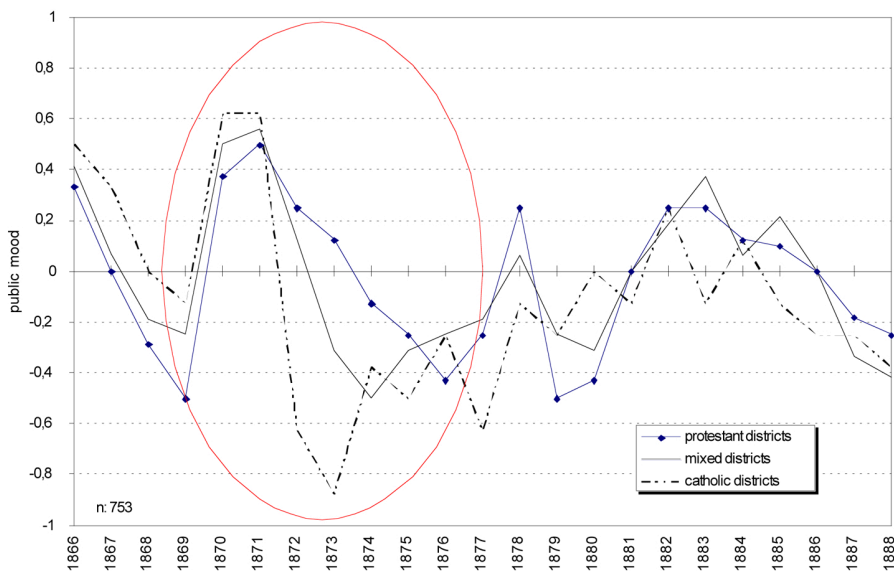
Sources: Table 1, No. 1.

The red encircled curves provide us with some insight into the important intervening variables of tradition and religion. Both appear with the correlation of economic factors and public mood. To begin with the impact of tradition: The districts can be class-divided into those which belonged to Prussia since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The “before 1800”-districts were Berlin-Potsdam, Oppeln and Danzig (in

rank of their belonging to Prussia). After Napoleon's wars Prussia integrated Cologne and Arnsberg: the "early-19<sup>th</sup> century districts". The last districts annexed by Prussia were Wiesbaden, Lüneburg/ Hanover and Schleswig: the districts of 1866. Before the Franco-Prussian War the public mood in the districts of 1866 was far more negative than in the older districts as the people of the annexed districts did not want to belong to Prussia. A negative proverb – expressing the external costs – said: "Pay taxes, become soldier, keep quiet and be a Prussian." In contrast, the gap between the curves closed in the years of the Franco-Prussian War. The people of the annexed districts were as discontented as before about their Prussification. However, these negative sentiments were equalized and turned into a positive by the euphoria over German unification. The effect of unity was lost pretty soon and the curves of the districts went astray again, and here we have the impact of differences in matters of religion.

So the next figure separates the districts according to their predominant confessions. There were protestant districts: Berlin-Potsdam, Lüneburg and Schleswig. Predominant catholic districts were Cologne and Oppeln. The districts of Arnsberg, Danzig, Wiesbaden and the province of Hanover were religiously mixed. While there were no significant differences in the curves of the districts before and during the Franco-Prussian War, the gap between the curve of the Catholic districts and the other districts widened with the beginning of the "Kulturkampf". From the middle of the 1870s onwards the gap closed again. That was due to the eighteen seventies crash: from then on, the differences due to religious class division became marginal again.

**Figure 6: the public mood of districts divided by confession (1866-1888)**



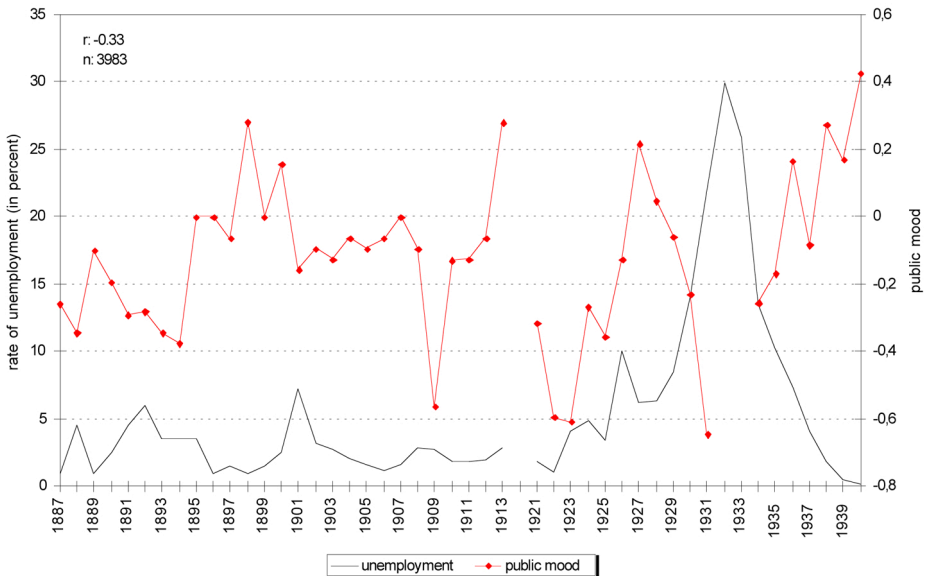
Sources: Table 1, No. 1.

The last two figures have indicated that the public mood was always subdued by different and intertwined influences. Many topics were on the agenda. Therefore, the public mood cannot be explained by the economy alone. Nevertheless, in a broader sense of economy both the annexation and the Kulturkampf could be mentioned as external costs. Later I will return to this point. However, even in a strict sense of economy the first hypothesis is, by and large, verified by Figure 4.

A comparison of the developments of the public mood with unemployment rates may act as a test (cf. Figure 7). In contrast to the 1<sup>st</sup> hypothesis, the 2<sup>nd</sup> will be a negative one: The public mood and the rate of unemployment show opposite movements. While the unemployment rate was in decline, the arithmetic means of the public mood were improving. While the unemployment rate rose, the reports indicated the public mood as in decline. In fact, a time series analysis of the years between 1887 and 1940 reveals a negative correlation ( $r: -0.33$ ). There is no data available earlier than 1887 and also unemployment data is lacking for the Great War. During the years of inflation the unemployment rate was lower than immediately afterwards. Nevertheless, the public mood was very low because of inflation, because of the “Ruhrkampf” (struggle with the occupying powers at Rhine and Ruhr) and because of the agony of the republic at the brink of civil war.

It might be suggested that the rate of unemployment should have changed in advance to changes in the public mood. That is right in theory because it would show the proper sequence of causes and consequences, but again the problems are related to the sources. The external data refers to yearly averages without specifying an exact date. The means of the public mood are an aggregate of reports from throughout the same year. In fact, this is a problem for the interpretation, but it is a rather minor one, because in both time series no measuring point is independent from the measuring point before. This argument, *mutatis mutandis*, is the same as for other time series referring to external data, especially when they are related to the economy.

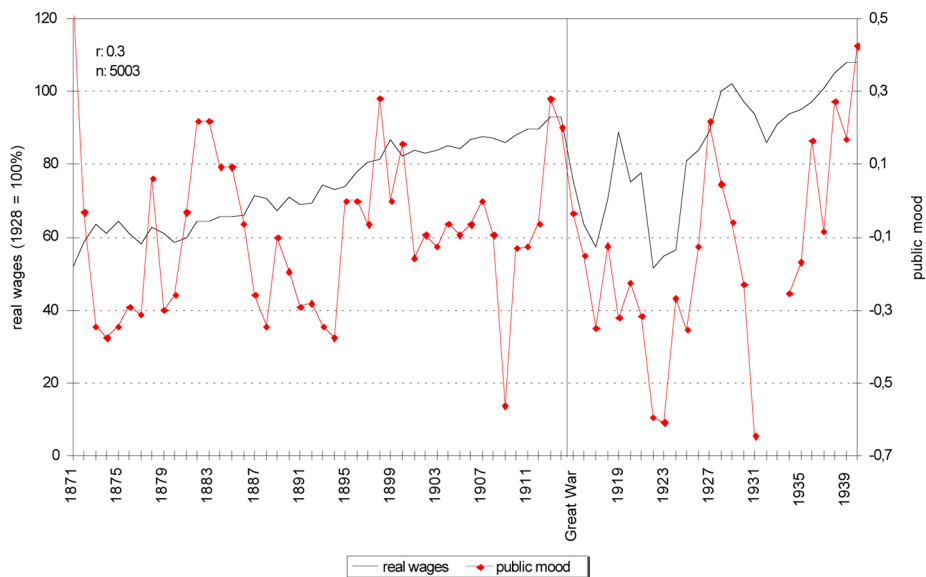
Figure 7: Unemployment and the public mood (1887-1939)



Sources: Table 1, No. 1, 4-9 [No. 5 from May 1928 to 1931]; Kuczynski, 1995, Vol. 5, p. 91.

A third comparison concerning economic data analyzes the correlation of real earnings and the public mood (Figure 8). Like the 1<sup>st</sup> hypothesis the 3<sup>rd</sup> one suggests parallel movements, and indeed: A long time series from 1871 onwards shows a positive correlation ( $r: +0.3$ ). When the real wages (i.e. nominal wages adjusted with inflation rates) rose, so did the public mood and vice versa. A closer look at the data reveals a clear distinction between the years before and after 1914. In empire's peacetime, real wages were rising constantly but the public mood went up and down; there is no correlation at all ( $r: +0.04$ ). After 1919, the rise or decline of real wages produced a clear correlation with the public mood ( $r: +0.63$ ). Here again we have the problem of the measuring points in the time series and the interpretation of causes and effects. The previous considerations can be applied here too.

Figure 8: Real wages and the public mood (1871-1940)



Sources: Table 1, No. 1-9 [No. 5 from May 1928 to 1931]; Desai, 1968, pp. 112, 117; Petzina et al., 1978, pp. 98-9.

All three tested hypothesis by themselves prove a medium correlation between the public mood and the economic factor. Together they prove a strong correlation: A multi factor regression analysis of the public mood as dependent variable with the independent economic variables shows at a highly significant confidence level the adjusted  $r^2$  at 0.46. This helps to explain the importance of the trigger factor of Hitler's rise: the World Economic Crisis.

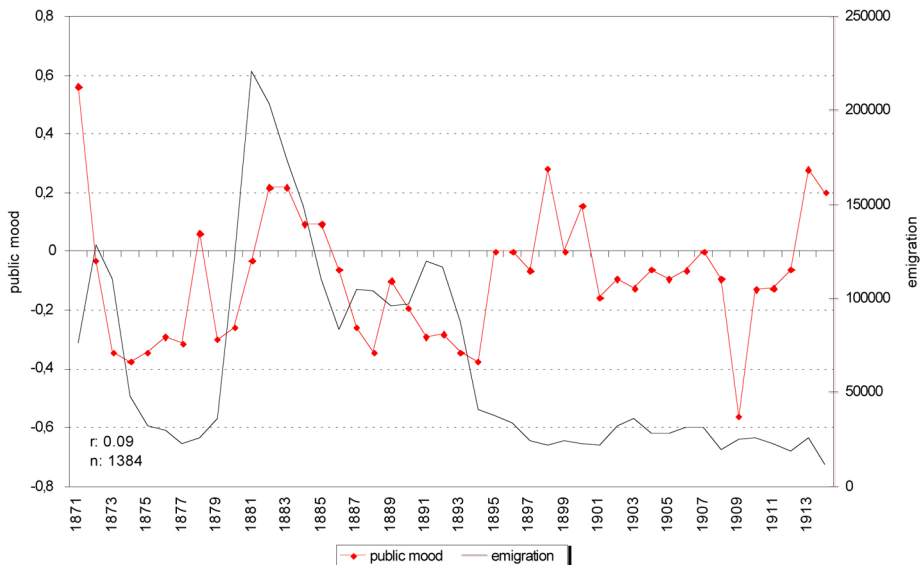
The three hypotheses provide us with a proxy for a set of socio-economic circumstances; they represent a set of more complex variables which are not available for historical investigations: i.e. indicators that have an impact on contentedness (with the individual and political situation), happiness and well being. This resembles Easterlin's research of the relation of income and happiness and other research studies dealing with a number of countries in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Easterlin conducted his research at the individual level (Easterlin, 1973, 2001); my research at a level of higher aggregation reproduces similar questions.

Easterlin found out that individuals with higher incomes are more likely to report higher grades of happiness. Aspirations change over one's life time cycle. The changes of aspirations have effects on expectations, hopes and fears. Happiness, well being and the evaluation of one's own socio-economic circumstances always depend on a mixture of *ex ante* expectations and *ex post* experiences. Everyone is part of a cohort; cohorts always share similar experiences they have won under comparable circumstances. Despite all the individual divergences, it is very likely that every cohort developed similar attitudes and perception frames.

Similar experiences, attitudes and world outlooks may be assumed for the cohort of German unification and the eighteen seventies crash, for the cohort of the boom before World War I, for the cohort of the Great War and hyper inflation and last but not least for the cohort of the Nazi Era and World War II. Unfortunately, it is not possible to find traces in our sources “on the public mood” that allow an objectification of these cohorts. The only objectification lies in the socio-economic trends indicated by Figure 4 to Figure 8: After 1914 the amplitudes of GNP-growth and unemployment rates are much bigger; the development of the real wages was a steady one before 1914; afterwards it oscillated, too. We have to consider that the years before 1914 meant four decades of peace; they were years of tremendous technical progress, of rapid urbanization, decrease of emigration and of other secular trends.

For example, cohorts with similar experiences tended to emigrate or to stay in Germany. Before 1914, due to long term economic progress, emigration declined. However, there is only a very weak correlation observable between public mood and emigration. One might argue that negative values of the public mood may have led to rising emigration and vice versa. In contrast rising emigration could have an increasing effect on the public mood: When the discontented leave the country, the public mood should rise. Perhaps both interpretations are partly true. However, here we have findings that cannot be explained by statistical correlations.

Figure 9: emigration and the public mood (1871-1914)



Sources: Table 1, No. 1; Hohorst et al. 1978, p. 38.

There is yet another factor which is closely related to the economic situation, and which had a strong impact on the public mood: the cleavages between urban and rural areas. As indicated in chapter 2.1 its impact was tremendous in years of crisis. The rural-urban cleavage was strong and generally rising between 1866 and 1945. The rapid urbanization in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> and first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century enforced both cleavage and stereotypes. Even in the 1870s and 1880s Bismarck fought a “war of the countryside against the cities”, as Eduard Lasker, one of his liberal opponents, put it. The reports on the public mood reveal stereotypes as instruments for reducing the complexity of circumstances, as Walter Lippmann (1922) has observed. Therefore, they did not refer to an objective reality but to an image of this reality. They thus referred to a truth of their own: the perception of stereotypes and urban-rural cleavage were objectives and instruments of public politics.

The urban-rural cleavage construes similarities in space, just as cohorts build structures in time. Differences in space and time are constituents of the public mood. The cleavage expressed itself in hetero and auto stereotypes: inhabitant of rural areas were considered to be slowly moving, slowly thinking, conservative or even reactionary and religious people. Modern city dwellers were perceived to be quicker, hyperactive, nervous, progressive or even revolutionary, and far less religious. Both countryside and city dwellers attributed to the other ones the notion “Kriegsgewinnler” (wartime profiteer). Both sides thought in times of crisis, the other ones do not work properly, just make profit and were favored generally by the political administration.

The most obvious *true* discrepancy between the countryside and congested areas lies in differences in communication. In rural areas farmers and their servants worked on farms and fields from spring to autumn. Especially in summer, newspaper subscriptions were cancelled. As early as the wintertime rural people had leisure time; they read newspapers; winter was the high time for political agitation.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, daily needs in the cities were most urgent at the end of winter and beginning of spring. Unemployment rates rose; strikes and political agitation were on the agenda. Due to their different interests the obtrusive political issues differed between cities and the countryside: mercantile and industrial areas preferred trade agreements with tariff reduction; rural areas preferred tariff protection on agricultural products.

Massive urbanization caused rural depopulation. Many people migrated into cities in order to earn more money. Before the mechanization of farming took place, this had threatened the rural economy as farmers did not find enough cheap farm workers any more. Therefore, they complained about “Leutenot” (need for people), and in reports from before World War I such complaints occur regularly. It is obvious that the *Immediatszeitungsberichte* lobbied politicians con-

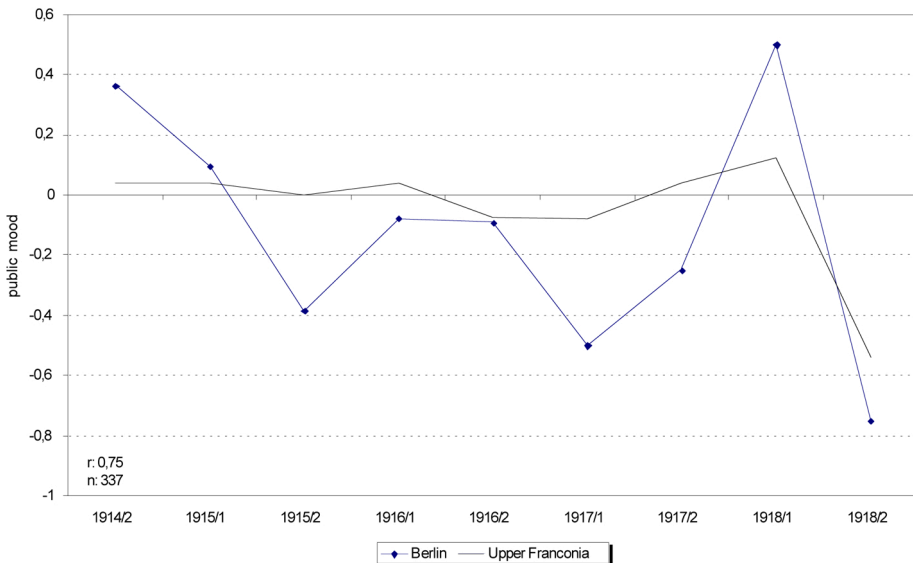
10 Furthermore, the average length of the monitoring reports in rural areas (before 1914) for the third quarter was slightly shorter than those of the other three quarters (3.2 pages versus 3.3 pages). Unfortunately, the average length of the monitoring reports in industrial areas (before 1914) for the first quarter was also shorter than those of the other three quarters (4.1 pages versus 4.5 pages). Therefore, the average length of the reports is no reliable indicator for the intensity of debates in the different districts.



cerning this issue on behalf of the farmers. On the one hand, this distorted the reliability of the reports on public mood with respect to quantification: the loudest complaints did not refer to a majority of complainants. On the other hand, the lobby politics of the “Bund der Landwirte” (farmers’ association) and other agrarian pressure groups agitated farmers and farm workers, reflecting the fact that the pressure groups definitely had a deep influence on published opinion and public mood in rural areas.

All in all, differences in living circumstances, economy, labor and earnings, caused a deep and increasing gap between the countryside and the cities. The complaints in normal times rose in times of crisis, as we have seen in chapter 2.1. The stereotypical perception that each had of the other was based on cultural clichés, material interests and political typecasting. It would be easy to prove cleavage related stereotypes with numerous quotes, nevertheless, it is difficult to objectify this in terms of quantification. However, a comparison of Berlin and Upper Franconia in World War I may be interpreted as an indicator for differences in political temperament. On the one hand, it might show that rural people reacted much more slowly to changes in warfare. On the other hand, Figure 10 might just show that urban people were exposed more directly to material needs. However, it has to be noted that Upper Franconia was not totally rural but also had some industrial areas.

**Figure 10: public mood in a city and in a rural area  
(Berlin and Upper Franconia, 1914-1918)**



Sources: Table 1, No. 2, 4.

### 2.3 Impacts on the public mood II: effects of mediatization and decision making costs?

As mentioned before, there are strong indicators for the assumption that 1914 was a turning point in history: the cohorts socialized before and after developed very different perceptions of the state of public affairs. The years afterwards were years of war, revolution, disruption and many uncertainties. This may have added a more pessimistic perception, while Ogburn's cultural lag theory deeply reflected these uncertainties (Ogburn, 1930).

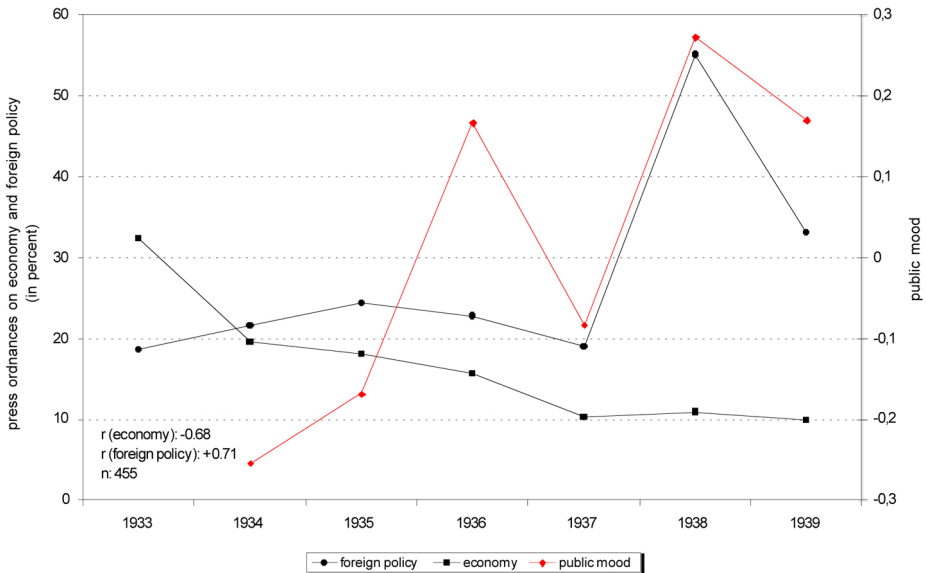
The decades since middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were also years of increasing mediatization: Even the most obtrusive economic agenda was covered and commented on by the press and other media. The rising circulation of the press and the dawn of new media (film and radio) should also have had an impact on the "public mood". Therefore a question is still unsolved: How can a relationship be measured between the public mood and media coverage? For example, there is a vast quantity of media that is almost completely ignored by press historians: booklets and brochures. The first results of a rough content analysis of brochure titles from 1850 to 1945 ( $n = 12049$ ) show that the high tide of the "German question" occurred in the 1850s and 1860s: up to 10 percent of all brochure titles in those decades. A short revival occurred after the Versailles Treaty in the 1920s: 2.3 percent of all brochure titles in that decade. It was one of the main agendas of public opinion in those decades, a fact that is unsurprising. But in which direction can the influence be assumed? Did the public's agenda encourage nationalist authors to write on the German question? Or did the booklets influence the public mood? Presumably its positive feedback processes created a strange loop.

Another means of checking for media impact may be provided by press instructions: Jürgen Wilke has analyzed media instructions on economy related topics, on foreign policy related topics and others. He measured the frequencies of the instructions, not their tendencies. The absolute number of press instructions increased continuously during pre-war Nazi era. At the same time the media coverage decreased absolutely, because the number of newspapers and their total circulation lessened. The Ministry of Propaganda wanted positive coverage by the media – i.e. positive for the regime. The press and other media were considered an instrument to "lead the people" and the press was led by the instructions. Therefore presumably, during the dictatorship press ordinances and media coverage were almost equivalent: The tenor of both was in favor of the regime. Furthermore, the Nazi press instructions had to be obeyed more or less literally. At least after the "Gleichschaltung" the press in general followed the instructions from Goebbels's ministry obediently. Most journalists opposed the regime neither actively nor even passively. Nevertheless, the press was not homogeneous. Goebbels wanted the press to play like an orchestra: performing one symphony containing different instruments. Here the symphony referred to the general effect; while different instruments referred to the media and many other kinds of propaganda efforts.

Unfortunately, Figure 11 does not show media impact: The economic item negatively correlates with the public mood ( $r: -0.68$ ). The foreign policy item posi-

tively correlates with the public mood ( $r: 0.71$ ). World War I press instructions do not correlate or correlate weakly with the public mood (economy,  $r: 0$ ; foreign policy,  $r: -0.2$ ). Assuming that all correlations indicate media impact, the results are confusing: media coverage cannot procure a positive, negative and a non impact simultaneously.

**Figure 11: Pre war press instructions and the public mood (1933-August 1939)**



Sources: Table 1, No. 7-8; Wilke, 2007, pp. 143,153,166.

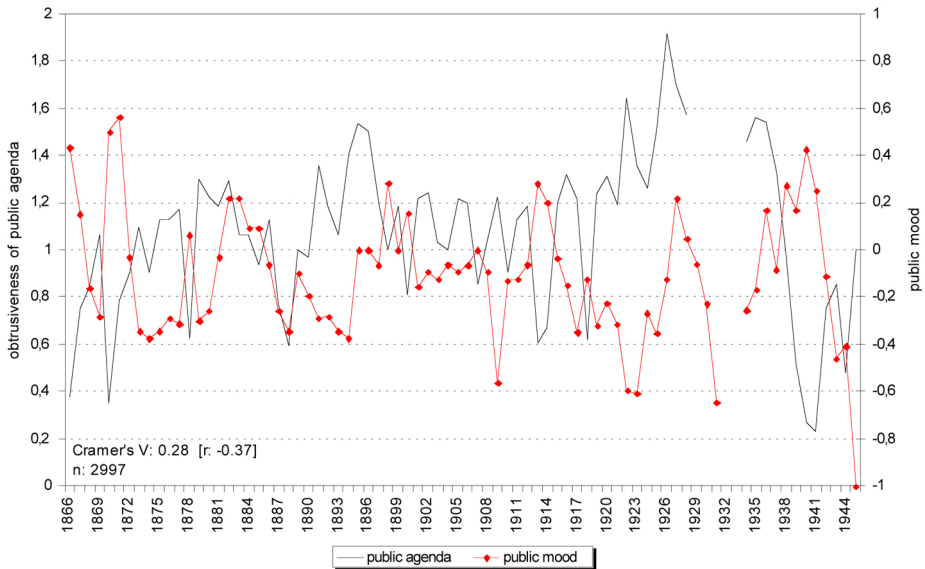
If there is any explanation at all it shows public opinion to be a strange loop of the public mood interwoven with sometimes even contradicting impact factors: we cannot discriminate clearly between causes and consequences: On the one hand, the propaganda machinery pitched up parallel to Hitler's aggressive and dynamic foreign policy. His alleged successes culminated with the "Anschluss" of Austria in spring 1938. Many Germans were appreciative of it, even Hitler's opponents. All in all the Ministry of Propaganda "sold" foreign policy very easily to the Germans in those years. On the other hand, because of Hitler's debt funded economic recovery program, Germany quickly left the economic crisis behind. The economy recovered much quicker than in other countries, especially in the US. It depended, at least partly, on the speedy Nazi rearmament program. Both, the debt policy in general and the rearmament in particular, gave early hints at Hitler's real aims: to wage war on Germany's European neighbors. In the years before 1939 the Germans became more and more frightened by the prospects of war. Every major political crisis produced weeks of hysteria, but each time Hitler maintained control, the outbreak of war was postponed and Germany's relief was tangible; Hitler won respect, and the number of his admirers increased: "What a

man, the Führer” even former opponents admitted. This two step procedure occurred for the last time in autumn 1938 during the Munich crisis (cf. Behnken, 1980, Vol. 5, pp. 913-52). Parallel with the Nazi dynamics in foreign affairs and Germany’s economic recovery Goebbels took less and less care of economic press instructions, and the public mood took less notice of economic problems.

Goebbels was well aware that the rising values of the public mood depended on the economic recovery. He could reduce economy related instructions, and in contrast to the early years of the regime he saw no more need for stimulating the public mood. Instead of this the ordinances celebrated Hitler’s foreign policy achievements. The instructions on foreign affairs (and related media coverage) seemingly had a positive impact on the public mood. On the other hand, the decreasing fear of unemployment allowed a reduction in economic press instructions. However, the public did not connect the debt funded policy with prospects of war. If the majority in Germany would have had more economic expertise, they might have judged Hitler’s economic and foreign policy more pessimistically. Therefore, the example gives evidence of the complexity and nature of the public mood: It is dependent on external factors. Additionally, it has to be noted that Hitler’s reputation steadily rose, until he nearly reached the status of a demigod in the summer of 1940 after the German victory over France. From there it went down bit by bit, until by the end of the war it was nearly in tatters. The example seems to prove that there is no media impact on the public mood, but that would be an incorrect interpretation. It also proves that the historical sources don’t allow inferences like this. While, furthermore it has to be noted that a content analysis of press instructions cannot substitute representative media samples.

However, there is a chance to estimate the range of possibilities of the media’s impact. The reports provide data of the obtrusiveness of the public’s agenda. All in all there is a correlation of obtrusiveness with the public mood (Cramer’s V: 0.28). Figure 12 suggests an arithmetical correlation of both values. As Pearson’s  $r$  in brackets indicates [ $r$ : -0.37] the visualization exaggerates slightly. Cramer’s correlation based on frequencies and the figure based on arithmetic means, both reveal the same pattern: The more obtrusive the public’s agenda, the more the public mood was in decline. Of course that does not prove media impact, but rather hints at times when the perspectives for media impact were good. Furthermore, the difference between Cramer’s V and  $r$  may serve as an indicator for further adjustments of the arithmetical means in the other figures.

Figure 12: obtrusiveness and public mood (1866-1945)



Sources: Table 1, No. 1-4, 6-9.

When I introduced obtrusiveness (cf. chapter 1.2) an implicit relativity and changeability of this notion was noted. I will try to explain this with respect to military issues: air raids, war in the Western and Eastern European Theater, etc. For example the air raid topic changed in importance and relevance during the years of World War II. In the beginning aerial warfare was of little to no consequence for the Germans at home. During the “Phoney War” aerial warfare was more or less reduced to reconnaissance. Then it meant tactical assistance on the Western Theater in France. After that the “Blitz” began. None of these sub-issues had direct importance for the Germans at home. Therefore, the issue of “aerial warfare” had little obtrusiveness. This changed in 1941, however, when British and American bombing squadrons began to attack German cities more and more frequently. They started in the North and West, at Rhine and Ruhr. Parallel with the range extension of the bomber and protection fighter squadrons the Allies carried aerial warfare deeper and deeper into the “Reich”. In the last year of the war they struck targets day and night almost everywhere – small towns, railway stations, bridges and even refugee tracks on country roads.

Parallel with the bombings, jokes about Hermann Göring, Chief of the German Airforce, became more and more aggressive. At the beginning of the war he was nicknamed “Hermann Meier”, because he had boasted that if any Allied airplanes were to intrude into German airspace he wanted to be called “Meier”. From 1942/3 on he was referred to as “Tengelman” because he had his “Nieder-

lagen” in every city – like the warehouse chain Tengelmänn.<sup>11</sup> Propaganda sometimes backfired, too. Goebbels had given the order that the media, especially radio, had to disseminate easy listening entertainment for the diversion of the people. After a heavy air raid on Essen the SD reported at 3/18/1943: “They [the inhabitants of Essen] were still completely under shock from the heavy attack. The Cologne-based radio channel broadcasted the hit ‘I’m dancing with you into heaven’ about an hour after the heavy bombing. Listeners, who had seen that many people in the Ruhr area again had lost their lives and had lost their entire belongings, regarded the broadcast like cast scorn.” (Boberach, 1984 [table 1: No. 9], Vol. 13, p. 4970)

The US-Bombing Surveys, in part based on questionnaires after the war, summed up this effect: “Bombing appreciably affected the German will to resist. Its main psychological effects were defeatism, fear, hopelessness, fatalism, and apathy. It did little to stiffen resistance through the arousing of aggressive emotions of hate and anger. War weariness, willingness to surrender, loss of hope in a German victory, distrust of leaders, feelings of disunity, and demoralizing fear were all more common among bombed than among unbombed people.” (D’Olier & Alexander, 1976 [1945], Vol. 1 [2], pp. 95-6) Of course, the Bombing Surveys are tendentious like the SD reports. Even after the war the military had to legitimize the civilian casualties. Therefore, measurement of moral impact was useful. Nevertheless, the effects of aerial warfare cannot be denied: they were small at the beginning, rising in the middle, tremendous at the end of the war.

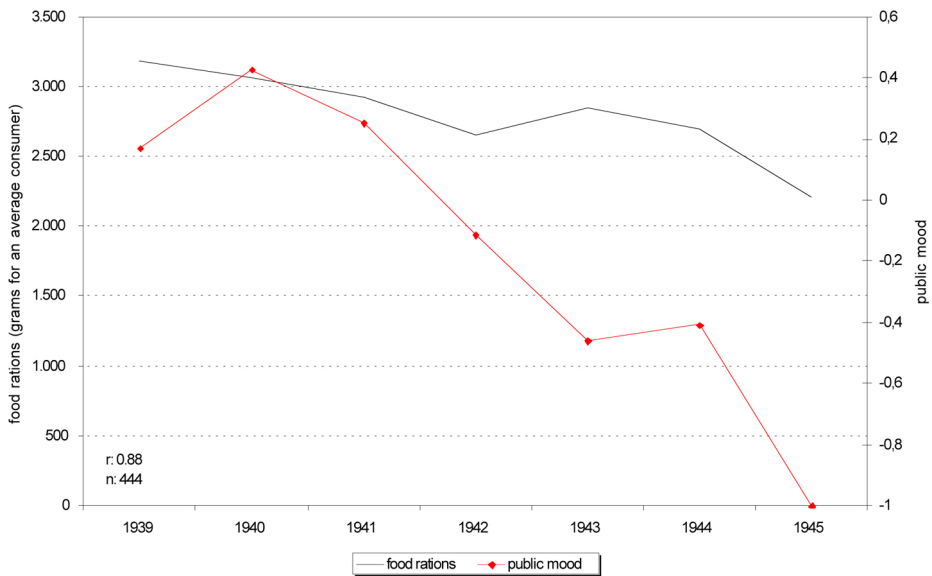
Therefore, from 1939 to 1941 most reports concerning aerial warfare were coded with low obtrusiveness and some with medium obtrusiveness. From then on, the issue became more and more relevant for the Germans at home and more than ever reports on this issue showed high obtrusiveness values. A similar change can be noted for other items: In the beginning, land warfare on the Western and Eastern front was literally far away from ordinary Germans. As long as the casualty toll was pretty low so was the general sense of involvement – this is relatively speaking and despite the fears of mothers and fathers, brides, wives and so on for their children, bridegrooms, husbands, etc. At last, when in 1944 the front reached Germany, the sources concerned with the land warfare issue reported medium or high obtrusiveness. Therefore, obtrusiveness is a content analysis attribution to issues. It is linked with an estimation of individual involvement, interest and general relevance. Because of this link with individual and general interest, the “calculus of consent”-concept by Buchanan and Tullock (1992) has to be taken into consideration again.

The development of food rations in World War II may serve as a first example of external costs which can also be calculated properly. Food rations are external

11 In former times, the German word “Niederlage” had two different meanings: defeat and chain stores. Göring was probably the most popular Nazi. Hitler’s popularity was expressed as veneration, Göring was “folksy”. Therefore, the latter was the subject of many good humored jokes; most of them making fun of his corpulence or of his preferences for fantastic uniforms. One such prewar jokes was: “A fish merchant at a market place shouted, ‘Herrings, Herrings, fat as Görings.’ A policeman told him not to repeat this anymore. So the next day the fish merchant exclaims loudly: ‘Herrings, herrings, fat as yesterday.’”

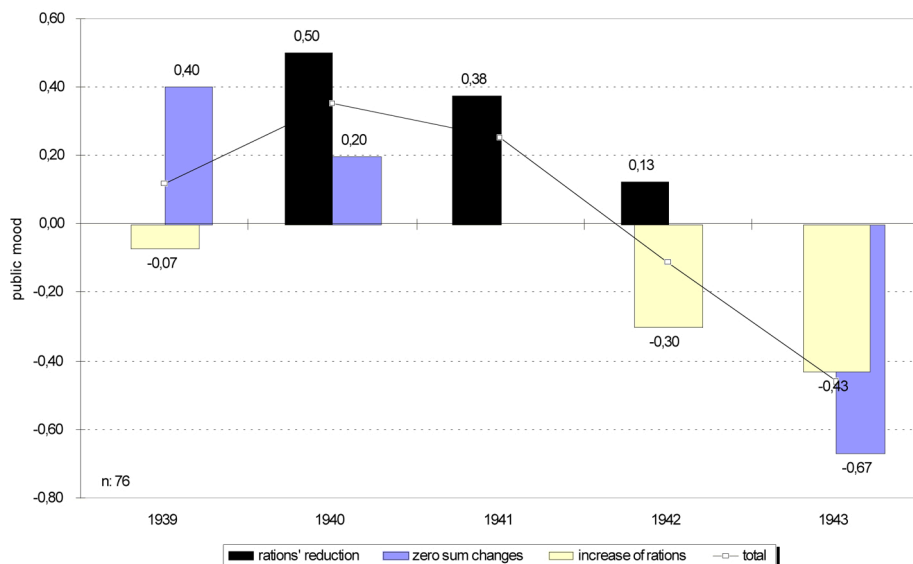
costs because no one would choose a reduction of one's individual nutrition voluntarily. Food rations presented the costs of the war very explicitly and provided everyone with a direct insight in the current state of affairs. On the contrary, one might argue that the increase or decrease of food rations cannot serve as a proxy for external costs, because the imposition of a decrease imposes rising external costs to the individual and the increase imposes rising collective external costs. The latter sooner or later might be raised by the individual citizen. Nevertheless, an increase meant a reduction of external costs for every German because the food supply during wartime was supported by the exploitation of occupied European neighbors (cf. Aly, 2005).

**Figure 13: food rations (= external costs) and public mood (1939-1945)**



Sources: Table 1, No. 9; Buchheim, 2010, p. 307.

**Figure 14: public mood in month after the increase or reduction of food rations (= external costs) (1939-1943)<sup>12</sup>**



Sources: Table 1, No. 9; Buchheim, 2010, p. 307.

Figure 13 adds together all types of food (bread, fat, meat) without differentiating. It seems to indicate a strong impact on the public mood, but that is misleading as Figure 14 shows clearly. The public mood at certain measuring points was more negative after an increase of food rations and more positive after its decrease. That is against all reasonable expectations. However, the public mood – in the months after significant changes of food rations – did not change because of the decreases or increases but despite them. Other issues concerning the war were more important than food rations, nevertheless the sources reported a brightening of the public mood after increases and a darkening after decreases, but the effects always only lasted for a few days; they did not last for a long enough time to become relevant on the aggregated level.

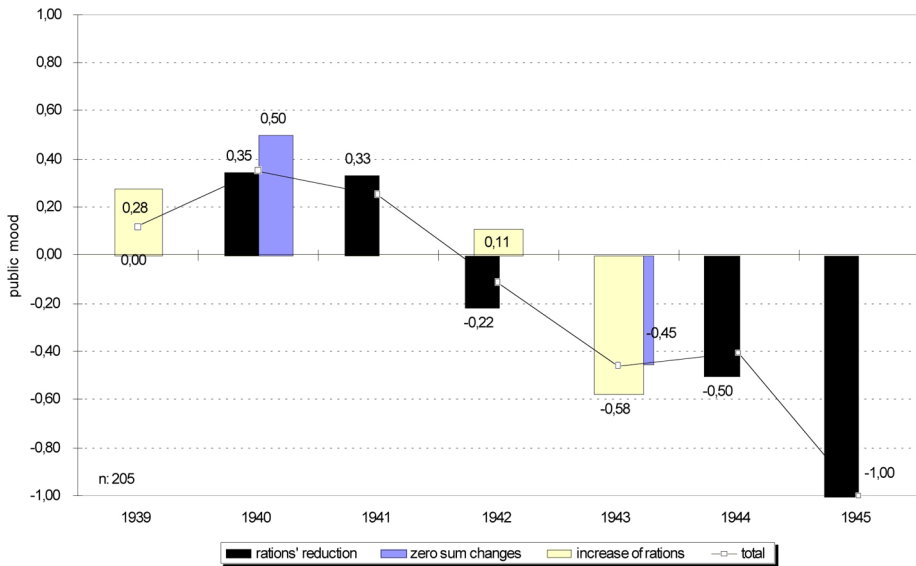
Furthermore, food rations can be perceived as an instrument of propaganda. Therefore, it might be interesting to look for correlations, in which the variable *public mood* is independent and variable *food rations* is dependent. This perspective is legitimate because Hitler's fear of a reprise of the November Revolution is well documented. In many respects both he and the Nazi Party tried politically to avoid unacceptable demands from the Germans. On the contrary, their politics tried to satisfy at least the most urgent necessities. The impact of this political approach even affected the military strategy, as many historians argue that the con-

12 Figure 14 is limited to 1943, because there are no reports on month after changes of food rations in 1944 and 1945.



cept of the “Blitzkrieg” was brought into effect to avoid greater demands (= external costs) from the Germans.

**Figure 15: public mood in most recent quarter before increase or reduction of food rations (= external costs) (1939-1945)**



Sources: Table 1, No. 9; Buchheim, 2010, p. 307.

However, Figure 15 does not provide us with a more convincing interpretation than Figure 14. Sometimes the aggregated data does not fit with the reasonable expectations: in 1939 and 1942 the public mood in the most recent quarter before a reduction of food rations was worse than in the most recent quarter before an increase. In 1940 it was worse than in the most recent quarter before a zero sum change. Only in 1943 does it prove to be as anticipated: the public mood in the most recent quarter before an increase of food rations was worse than in the most recent quarter before a zero sum change. Because there is just one measuring point (of decrease) in the years 1941, 1944 and 1945 there are no chances for comparisons. Furthermore it has to be noted that the possibilities of increasing food rations diminished in the last years of the war because of the decrease of political margins. Even if the regime would have liked to make positive propaganda efforts by increasing food rations, the Nazi Party no longer had enough resources. Nevertheless, even the emergency food distribution at the end of World War II was far from the near famine-like plight experienced in the last years of World War I.

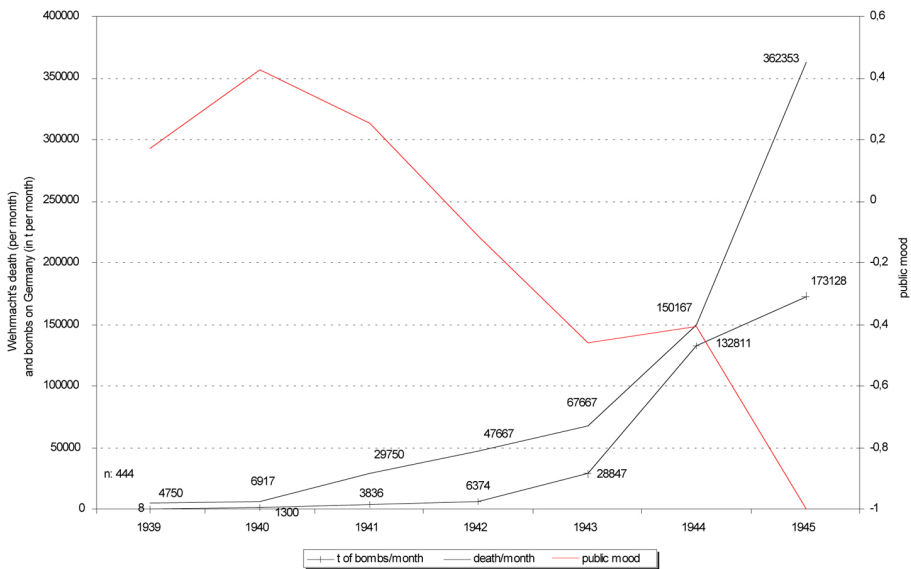
We have to consider that some external costs like food rations had less importance than other external costs imposed on the Germans: especially the death toll caused by the killing of relatives and friends at the front and the loss of housing

and belongings caused by the bombing raids. Figure 16 refers to the most obvious parts of the external costs: it refers to the casualties of the “Wehrmacht” (armed forces) and to the monthly bombing tonnage (as a proxy both for the destruction of properties and casualties on the home front). It is rather difficult to sum up the total number for both indicators. The bombing tonnage is based on the “Strategic Bombing Survey” by the US Air Force, and while the specific figures may be slightly incorrect, they are correct in the general trend. The next figure, on the one hand, shows the average number of combat caused casualties from 1939 on until the end of World War II. This number rose from nearly 6400 deaths per month at the beginning of the war until more than 362000 dead soldiers per month in 1945. To make a comparison: the German armed forces lost more than 100000 soldiers in the 16 months of 1939 and 1940. That number is nearly twice as high as the total figure of casualties of the US armed forces in Vietnam (1961-1975). Nevertheless, the public mood in 1939 and 1940 was pretty good. Beginning with the attack of the Soviet Union, the death toll rose steadily, and the public mood went down in parallel. The development of the total bombing tonnage also rose during the war. As mentioned above, casualties and destruction of properties caused by aerial warfare were easily observable by the Germans.

There is an even more horrific proxy of the external costs imposed on the Germans: the decline of an average soldier’s survival time. That means the average years left to any recruit of a specific year, who died due to combat and serious wounds during war or shortly after. Recruits recruited in 1939, who were killed in action later, lived on average 4.1 years until they died. By 1942 this ratio had dropped to 1.8 years. Recruits from the last recruitments in 1945, who were killed in action, lived on for only five weeks (Overmans, 1999, p. 250). Bernhard Wicki’s film “Die Brücke” (the bridge) enacted this senseless and bloody slaughter of young soldiers who were nearly kids.

It is not necessary to assume that contemporary Germans had exact knowledge of the death toll at the front or the damage and casualties on the home front. Neither is it necessary to assume that they knew exactly how long young recruits might have to live after recruitment day. Nevertheless, the Germans were pretty well informed about the general trends. Therefore, the total average number of deaths per month meant that more and more families had to suffer from the loss of relatives. The increase of the bombing tonnage caused more and more damage and casualties on the home front. The decline of the average survival time added fear, distress and despair, especially to mothers. While they may have hoped in the first months of the war, that their sons might have a fair chance of survival, that hope became in vain at the end of the war: the recruiting of a young man was almost equivalent to a death penalty. All three indicators showed a rise in the external costs. Furthermore, the rise in the external costs were parallel to a rise of information costs. During wartime many families listened to the BBC just to get information about Prisoners of War. Every POW named by Allied radio stations meant that this one could not be killed in action any more. However, listening to the BBC and Radio Moscow in itself imposed external costs on the radio audience because “black listening” was punished by death in many thousand cases.

**Figure 16: public mood, toll of the “Wehrmacht” and Bombs on Germany (= external costs) (1939-1945)**



Sources: Table 1, No. 9; Overmans, 1999, p. 239; D'Olier & Alexander, 1947, Vol. 2a, p. 11.

Propaganda was only partly able to stem the decline in public mood. It dropped particularly in the winter quarter years when the supply situation grew worse, the armed forces were on the defensive after the attack on the Soviet Union and the death toll rose. When the “Wehrmacht” went on the offensive in the spring or summer and the supply situation improved at the same time, then the public mood improved again. However, each year it was successively lower in comparison with the previous year. Furthermore, the mean of all rumors noted in the SD-reports were significantly more negative than the public mood in general. The arithmetic mean of rumors was up to two years ahead of the development in public mood – at least until 1943. Therefore, as Figure 17 shows, we can acknowledge them as an early indicators of developments in the public mood. It is worth mentioning that in 1942 Martin Bormann, Hitler’s secretary and probably the most powerful (behind Hitler) Nazi Grandee in the second half of the war, issued a sharp directive against rumor dissemination, while Goebbels tried to dry out rumors concerning bombing casualties by more overt media coverage of the aerial warfare over Germany. Clearly rumors had some value as an early indicator.

Even more importantly, rumors indicated information costs. The Nazi propaganda was not as restrictive as one might assume, but nevertheless, the German people did not trust the Nazi media completely. As long as Hitler’s armies had overwhelming success, the confidence was pretty good. However, even in the first years of the war the Germans wanted more information than Nazi media pro-

vided them with, with the result that deficits in information policy were compensated by rumors, as the SD reports often noted. Many Germans tried every means to get the information they needed. After bombing attacks the telephone network broke down regularly. As we know from “ego documents” – the edited diaries of Kellner (2011) and Klemperer (1995) are just the two most famous examples in recent years – information gathering and dissemination of rumors went hand in hand. These information costs went up during wartime. The ratio of rumors per report clearly indicates that from the most recent quarter to the attack at the Soviet Union (1941) and during the massive increase of aerial warfare (1943) the dissemination of rumors rose significantly. It rose even more before and after the landing in Normandy (1944).

Figure 17: public mood and rumors (= information costs) (1939-1945)



Sources: Table 1, No. 9.

Rumors fulfill a “substitute” function, filling in for the free flow of information just as political jokes were substitutes for the freedom of commentary. But this substitution was expensive. Rumors did not provide information as reliable as overt media coverage would have done. For example the rumors about Operation Gomorrha – the air raids on Hamburg in July 1943 – mentioned more and more casualties the further away from Hamburg the rumors spread. In Western Germany the reported death toll was as high as 50000, in Southern Germany up to 150000 dead were reported, in Silesia the number was up to 350000 (Süß, 2011, p. 88).

Therefore, information costs of rumors were twofold: they arose from inexactness and from ineffective information gathering and dissemination. Furthermore,

they were linked with external costs, because the Germans fought until the bitter end for two and a half long years after Stalingrad and the first heavy air raids of 1942-43. They did not fight on merely because a sufficient number of fanatic National Socialists wanted the fight to continue until the bitter end. The majority of the Germans were fervent nationalists enough to remain loyal after the first major defeats. Many of them suspected a Carthaginian peace. The Casablanca formula of “unconditional surrender” and Goebbels’ anti-Morgenthau propaganda worked. In addition, rumors about the crimes of the dirty war circulated: “Comfort yourselves at wartime, peacetime will become bitter” was often heard in the last year of the war. As mentioned above (cf. chapter 1.2) and as the last quote might indicate, some obscure knowledge might have contributed to the fight until the end attitude because of their fear of revenge.

Nevertheless, the public mood did not provide a complete explanation as to why the Germans fought on. With respect to the aggregated values, the war should have ended in the summer of 1944: after Stalingrad (January 1943), the heavy bombing (since 1943) and after the Normandy landing (June 1944), when a situation almost similar to autumn 1918 had been reached. War-weariness had again become the general attitude, but this time the war continued. In his most recent – and very impressive – narrative, Ian Kershaw has explained the reason the slaughter lasted until 1945 using the idea of “charismatic leadership”: “Paradoxically, it was by this time charismatic rule without charisma.” (Kershaw, 2011, p. 400) At first sight, this explanation may seem a little bit disappointing. Unfortunately, our sources also cannot provide a better explanation. Obviously, the continuity of the war until its bitter end was caused mainly by the structures of power and by the bureaucratic grip on the Germans. However, the soft factor public mood had an indirect impact: Because of Hitler’s November neurosis the steady decline of public mood values might have led to a strengthening of the regime. The negative monitoring reports encouraged propaganda efforts and strengthened coercion and the grip of power. Therefore, the public mood produced a self destroying prophecy.

Propaganda was a powerful tool for creating and maintaining a long-lasting loyalty to National Socialism among the Germans. Even if the propaganda machinery did not work perfectly, Goebbels still counted on the additional spreading of rumors during the last year of war. For example, rumors about new, miraculous weapons circulated successfully for a while. Therefore, in the last years sometimes the arithmetic means of the rumors were more positive than the reports on public mood.

The link between information costs and external costs indicates that the idealization of Figure 2 in some part is incorrect. As Buchanan and Tullock suggested, decision-making costs and external costs do not add up to a zero sum game. Even when considering that information costs are just a small part of decision-making costs, and even when considering the monopoly in decision making by the Nazi dictatorship reduced decision-making costs in its strict sense, we have to calculate with rising information costs and – far more than that – with extreme increases in external costs. With regard to this the Nazi tyranny was one of the costliest “adventures” a people was ever voluntarily subjected to. As a saying in 1933 went –

at the last “free” Reichstag election: “Nur die allerdümsten Kälber wählen ihren Metzger selber” (“Only the dumbest calves in town choose the butcher of their own”).

## 2.4 Impacts of the public mood: effects on voting?

Another question remains: Did the public mood have an impact on the political process? At least there is some evidence of influence on voting. The Reichstag elections between 1871 and 1932 provide us with data (Figure 18) showing a negative correlation of the public mood and a positive correlation of obtrusiveness with the cumulated voting of the “system opposing parties”: The better the values of the public mood were (in the last four quarters before an election), the smaller the number of voters who voted for parties that stood in clear opposition towards the political system. The lesser the values of obtrusiveness, the smaller the number of voters voting for these parties.

No one should confuse these system-opposing parties with an opposition in a parliamentary sense. The German empire did not have a parliamentary opposition, because its administration did not depend on the Reichstag’s majority. Some parties opposed the political system as such: Social Democrats, leftist Liberals, Catholic Centre Party, Polish, Danish and Alsatian separatists. For this reason, Bismarck named them “Reichsfeinde” (enemies of the state). Their combined results rose when the public mood declined and vice versa.<sup>13</sup> However, the data does not match at three elections terms: 1881, 1887 and 1893. For 1893 there is no explanation, but 1881 and 1887 can be explained due to misleading reports on the public mood and propaganda efforts. In 1881 Bismarck was deceived by the reports of his own popularity, and the landslide defeat of the conservative parties put him in a state of shock. Shortly afterwards he and his Prussian minister for the interior, von Puttkamer, started a “new press organization” through which they tried to improve public opinion. In 1887 the discrepancy between election results and the public mood can be explained by propaganda efforts in the “Septennats-Wahlen” (seven year military budget campaign).

After World War I the perspective turned upside down: Center Party, Liberals and SPD (the former “Reichsfeinde”) founded the democratic “Weimar coalition”. The extreme conservatives (at least in the beginning and at Weimar’s end) were enemies of the state and democracy; the Communists and the Nazi party were others. The reports on the public mood and on obtrusiveness as independent variables were combined in a multi factor regression analysis with the voting results as dependent variable. This reveals at a highly significant confidence level the adjusted  $r^2$  at 0.41: The reports show voting results of the opposition up to 41 percent. Once more the shift upside down shows the importance of the years after 1914. It is noteworthy – as the sources indicate – that Hitler got his chance because the old and the democratic authorities became morally bankrupt in these years.

13 In contrast to figures 4, 7 and 8, figure 18 shows election results (before 1912) based on Prussia.

Figure 18: public mood and voting (1871-1932/3)



Sources: Table 1, No. 1, 4-6 [No. 5 from May 1928 to 1931]; Ritter, 1980, pp. 38-42; Petzina et al., 1978, p. 174.

The “social question” was an important issue for almost every political party. Bismarck had some important advisers from the wing of the social conservatives. The social insurance policies in the 1880s were founded decades before. The social issue for the Center Party is linked with names like Bishop Ketteler, Adolf Kolping and other social reformers. For the social democrats and (after 1919) the communists, the importance of social issues do not need to be explained. Even liberal parties were sensitive towards the social question as their “Gewerkvereine”, the so called “yellow trade unions” indicate. The social question is a proxy for many obtrusive headlines which were very important in election campaigns: unemployment, development of income and – in general – living circumstances. Therefore, it is no surprise that the obtrusiveness of issues had an impact on the election polls. The Nazis won elections during the World Economic Crisis last but not least because of their name: a combined appeal to nationalism and socialism. It is not farfetched to regard them as the real heirs, in a negative sense, not only of the November Revolution but also of the revolution of 1848.

The Nazis did not dare to call for free elections after 1933, for obvious reasons, but from time to time they called for plebiscites (1934, 1935, 1936 and 1938). The results ranged from 89.9 percent in 1934 (combination of chancellorship and presidency) up to 99.1 percent in 1938 (Austria’s “Anschluss”). Political jokes made commentaries on the “overwhelming results”. For example they asked: “Why did Hitler not achieve 100 percent? Answer: Otherwise the Gestapo would likely lose its job.” Another joke reported that Goebbels was very upset: “Thieves had broken into the Ministry of Propaganda. They had stolen every election result up to 1940.” (cf. Behnken, 1980, Vol. 3, pp. 434, 456-7) Because there were no free elections – even the 1933 election was only semi-free – com-



parisons like Figure 18 remain impossible. Nevertheless – and despite the political jokes –, there is no doubt that Hitler would have won free elections from 1936 on. An election after victory over France in the summer of 1940 might have produced the consent of two thirds or three quarters of the Germans. However, this is speculation even when the speculation is based on sources on the public mood. Therefore, it is time to consider the validity of the sources in more detail.

### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1 The sources of the public mood: considerations on theory and empiricism

Some explanations have to be given. They refer to:

- processes of public monitoring in the institutions,
- problems concerning information gathering by external informants.

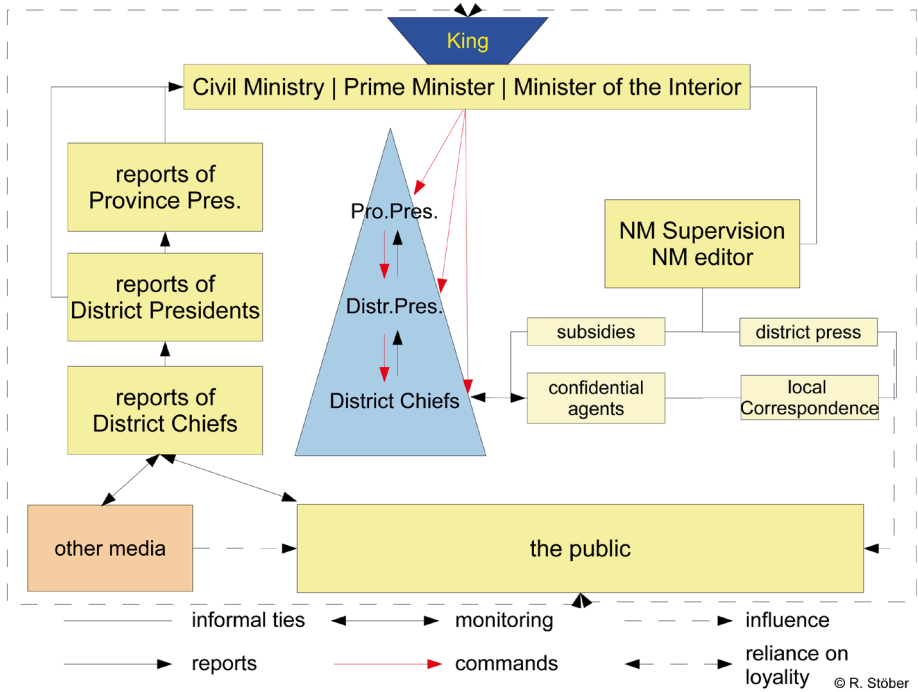
A major problem is connected with shortcuts between the monitoring of the “public mood” and influences on media coverage and propaganda. The most obvious similarity of all the sources on the public mood is their purpose. Since the great revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, Germany’s governments were obsessed by the fear of social and political revolution. Therefore, conservative governments were deeply interested in the prevention of upheaval. It is not necessary to discuss anti-revolutionary politics in detail, however, it is worth mentioning that information gathering was just the first step in a policy of prevention.

One might suggest that the administration was bound to get correct news in every respect. Objective information gathering was indeed a central purpose prescribed by ordinances for the informants. However, the bearer of bad news is pretty likely to be taken for the cause of the mischief himself. Therefore, from the 1860s to the 1940s a mechanism of inner administration feedback was, now and then, reported: When the news was becoming too bad – from the point of view of the head of the administration – the administration chiefs admonished the lower information gathering levels to report more optimistic and positive news. Sometimes harsh consequences were announced for cases of repeated “defeatism”.

In the case of the Prussian immediate reports, the monitoring of the public can be described like this: on a district level the “Landräte” (District Chiefs) collected news from informers, confidential agents and local policemen. The information was reported regularly to the next higher level of administration: to the “Regierungspräsidenten” (District Presidents). The staff of the District President cumulated the incoming information, enriched it with statistics and other administration material and sent the report “direct” to the Civil Ministry of the King. Another copy was sent up to the next administrative level: to the “Oberpräsidenten” (Province Presidents). The staff of the Province Presidents once more aggregated the incoming news and pursued like the District Presidents’ staff had operated once before. The reports of the Province Presidents also were submitted direct to the Civil Ministry of the King.



Figure 19: public monitoring and published opinion fabrication, part I





An order of the King on 8/26/1867 declared: “The periodical news reports shall have to report on these topics: state of the district and its civil service, on related and other important items, on success [in politics] and need for further legislation. [News shall be reported] with respect to the intellectual or material interests [and welfare] of the people. [News shall be reported] on these items when they are related with the public mood. The reports shall have a double focus: about the past and into the future. The District Presidents shall report once every quarter. The Presidents are free to select the relevant issues for their monitoring. Concerning the formal standards, the topics must have a headline. *Four topics always have to be reported [literally: shall never be omitted]: agriculture, public investments, public mood and military affairs.*” The mandatory items in italics had been added later, perhaps due to the intervention of the King himself. The draft of the order was signed in the Babelsberg Castle, summer residence of Wilhelm. In 1913 a further marginal was added: “changed to half year reports at 3/12/1913”.<sup>14</sup>

For obvious reasons sources like this cannot be handed over to a coding staff that communication researchers usually use in content analysis. Up to 1914 the overwhelming majority of the sources were handwritten. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the quota of typewriter scripts rose steadily, but even in the Nazi era handwritten reports are often preserved in archives.

There is a redundancy in the system that to some extent provided correct information but that could not hinder distortions completely. First of all, from the point of information policy the District Presidents, not their seniors (the Province Presidents), were in the most favorable position. The District Presidents were able to oppress inconvenient news more effectively than the Province Presidents because the reports of the latter could be compared with the lower ones. On the other hand, commands were executed top-down from Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, Province Presidents, District Presidents to District Chiefs. The hierarchy prevented too many negative monitoring reports because of the career oriented thinking of the bureaucrats – an issue I will soon come back to. Therefore, administration and monitoring realities produced some kind of paradox: everyone was interested in a realistic description of the public mood, provided that it was not too negative. Only slightly pointed, the reports were more or less correct in normal times, but they may have been inadequate for the situation the reports were intended for: the prevention of crisis.

This feedback may seem strange enough but there is another loop which in itself is even more paradoxical. At times there existed a network of “Vertrauensmänner” (V-Men: literally confidential men, confidential agents) at the heart of the monitoring system, especially during the Bismarck era, in World War I and in the Nazi era. The confidential agents were opinion leaders “avant la lettre”. After the landslide election of 1881 the Prussian Minister of the Interior von Puttkamer introduced a system which was in some aspects a prototype for subsequent efforts to monitor and fabricate the public mood at the same time. On the one

14 Order of the Prussian King Wilhelm I at 8/26/1867, in: GStA, I. HA Rep 89, GehZivkab, No. 15746, fol. 50.

hand, the confidential agents had to collect information about the public mood. On the other hand, they were integrated in the local press system. In theory, they organized local networks which would gather input material for the local press. Furthermore, the confidential agents played a key role in distribution of subsidies for the district newspapers.

One might argue that this feedback undermined the objectivity of the monitoring reports. But, firstly, even a manipulated public mood acquired a reality of its own. Secondly, the system was restricted by financial shortcomings. After 1894 it was abandoned because the “Reptilian Fonds” (i.e. black money cash box) went dry. Thirdly, the system worked much better in theory than in practice. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the same people and instances were involved in fabrication *and* monitoring of the public mood. Therefore, it is a strange feedback loop, and for this reason I chose the method described above (chapter 1.2): first textual criticism and then converting the findings into content analysis values. Similar findings can be observed in World War I and in the Nazi era.

The interpretation depends foremost on the interest and bias of the reports and on mechanisms of benevolent behavior. As indicated above, the state authorities were interested in the prevention of any uprising. The authors of the reports were bureaucrats who wanted to promote their careers, or at least they did not want to destroy them. Most of the bureaucrats were more or less overt partisans of the parties of order: Many of them were patriotic and conservative to the bone. They mixed up wishful thinking with empirical observations on the public mood – especially during wartime – an approach which dominated every level of aggregation. Every police official watched out for what the District Chief might want to hear. Every District Chief tried to anticipate the reactions of his District President. Every District President eagerly listened through the grapevine of higher administration to find out whether and from where the political wind might blow for the next months.

Thinking in terms of one’s personal career was very common because the different administration levels marked the normal “cursus honorum”. Every District Chief wanted to be promoted to District President; District Presidents wanted to become Province Presidents (in Prussia). In other German states, such as Bavaria, the province administration level did not exist. Nevertheless, many high level civil servants wanted to make a career in politics. A model of this career path is offered by Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg: 1886 he became District Chief in Oberbarnim county (Brandenburg), 1896 he was promoted to District President of Bromberg (Posen), two years later he became President of the Province Brandenburg, 1909 he was appointed Chancellor of the Reich.

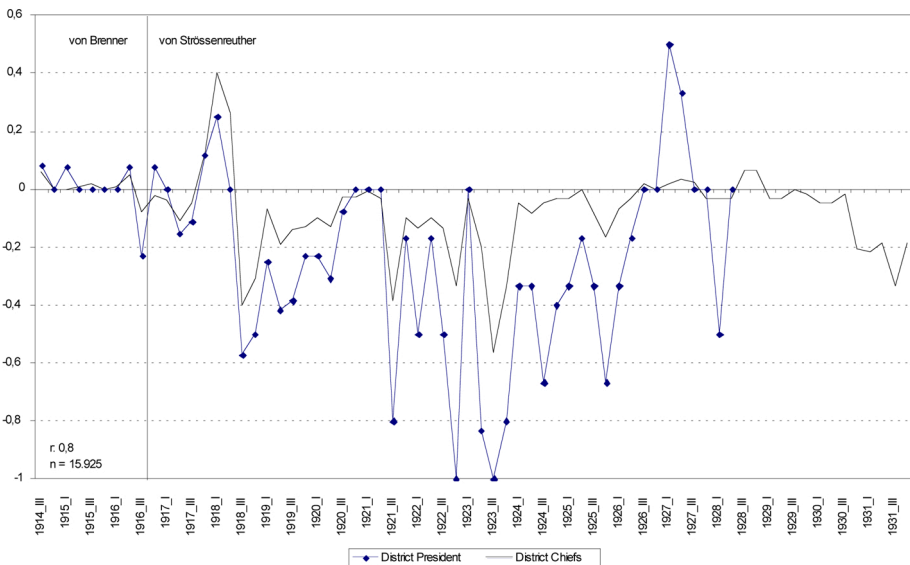
One should neither overestimate nor underestimate the impact of career aspirations in the fabrication of the reports. Due to redundancies (as seen above), some control feedbacks hindered massive manipulation of the reports. Furthermore, report fabrication was an irrelevant bureaucratic activity. The normal administration action was much more important: effectiveness or ineffectiveness in administration promoted or hindered one’s own career.

Nevertheless, the interpretation of the sources had to take into account that the reports did not merely report; the files also indirectly gave testimony on the

reporter. Therefore, District Presidents, etc. showed that they were eagerly fulfilling their administration duties; especially when they took a close look at political dissenters. Furthermore, they wanted to prove that the population of the district was more or less loyal. When the credibility of such assertions might be put in doubt (for example during the Kulturkampf), the District President at least wanted to prove that there was a strong faction of loyal elements in his district. When even this was not credible (for example at the strike of Ruhr workers in 1899), the District President tried to prove that his administration had been able to guarantee the stability of public order in his district.

Therefore, let us look closer at different administration levels. On every level the input of the lower level had to be aggregated. For example in Upper Franconia the District Presidents between World War I and the end of the Weimar Era condensed the reports from the District Chiefs and concentrated on more positive or more negative aspects.

**Figure 21: reports in Upper Franconia (1914-1931)**

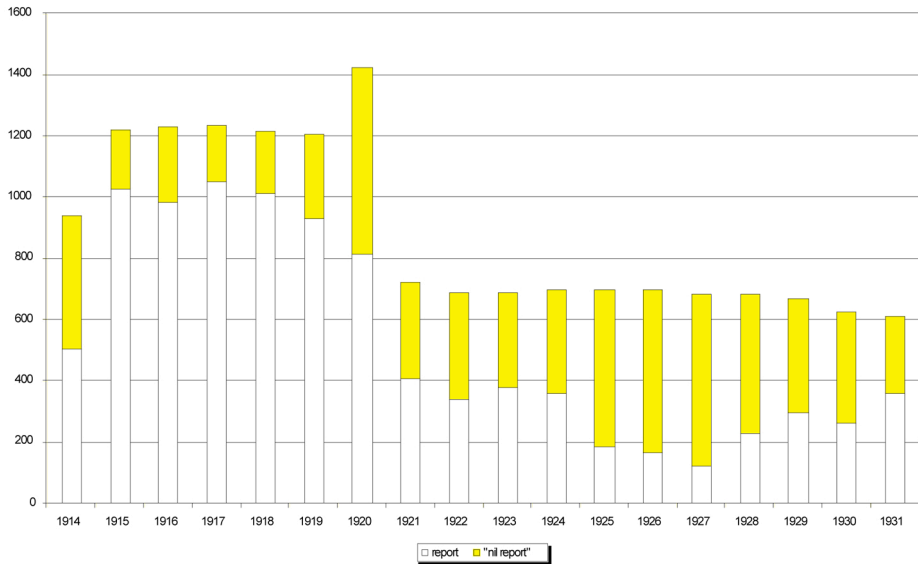


Sources: Table 1, No. 4-5.

The reports seem to exaggerate the original input but actually they do not. The perception shown in Figure 21 depends merely on the fact that the District Chiefs often omitted reporting on the public mood: they noted laconically that “nothing happened/nil report”. Figure 22 shows how many reports did not mention anything about the public mood. In wartime the proportion of “nil reports” oscillated at 20 per cent. In the early years of the Weimar Republic, the years of inflation, Ruhr and other crises, the percentage of reports decreased to 50 per cent. After the stabilization of democracy and economy – in the so-called golden years of the

Weimar Era – the staff was not as eager as before: the “nil reports” rose to more than 80 per cent. In the years after 1928 the “nil reports” significantly decreased again: this clearly indicates the increasing impact of the World Economy Crisis.

**Figure 22: local district reports in Upper Franconia (1914-1931)**



Sources: Table 1, No. 5.

The last considerations dealt with the civil service as a monitoring institution. During and after the Metternich era in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the political police monitored opponents and the public: so-called “Vigilantenberichte” (reports of vigilant men) reported on the public and on literary circles as the “Young Germany” (Adler, 1977). Political police departments have a long tradition that is connected with the secret service up to the “Verfassungsschutz” (service for the protection of the constitution) in present times. After the revolution of 1848 the political police was coordinated by the “Polizeiverein deutscher Staaten” (Police Association of German States) (cf. Beck & Schmidt, 1993). For some cities – as Hamburg (Evans, 1988) or Berlin (Matterna & Schreckenbach, 1987; table 1, No. 2) – monitoring reports have been edited in extracts. The President of Berlin’s political police in the Kaiserreich simultaneously was District President in Berlin. Furthermore, the political police of Berlin formed the nucleus of the political police both in Prussia and the Reich during the Weimar era (cf. Ritter, 1979; table 1, No. 6). The Gestapo inherited both, the “Reichskommissariat” and the Prussian political police (cf. Klein, 1986; Ribbe, 1988; table 1, No. 7). From the multiple

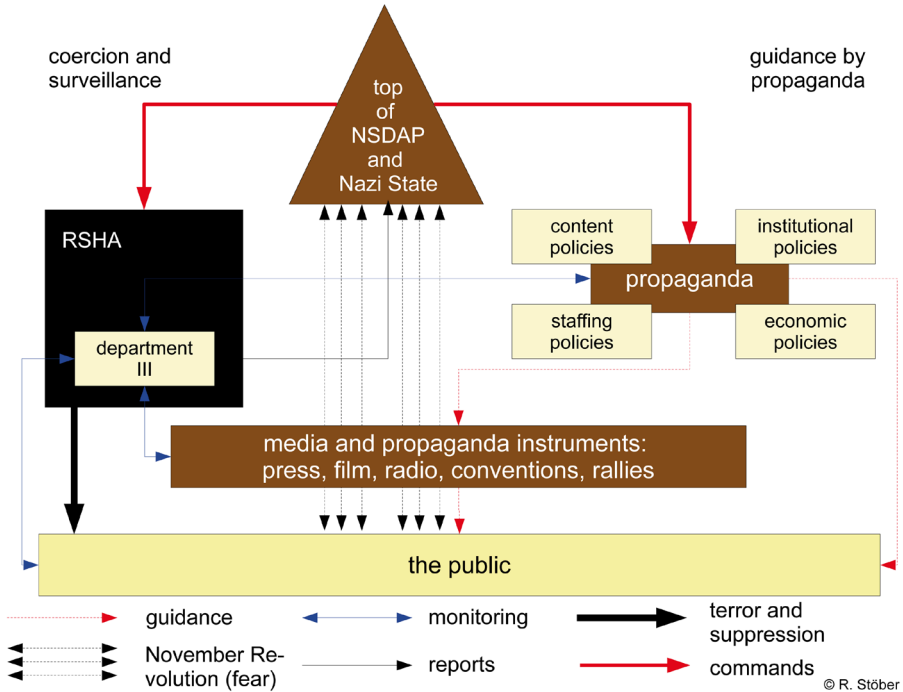
15 The frequency of the reports was reduced in 1921: from semi-monthly to monthly. In 1914 only wartime reports (July to December) were included.

traditions and interrelations, it seems obvious that the monitoring of the public was similar to that of the civil services. However, some differences may be worth mentioning, especially those related to the purpose of the monitoring and the status of the informants.

The Nazi reports were fabricated in the “Reichssicherheitshauptamt” (RSHA), an institution founded in 1939 as a headquarter institution of criminal police, political police (Gestapo) and SS-Organizations like the SD. The RSHA was deeply involved in the Holocaust; but it also executed the monitoring and suppression of the German public. The intertwined feedbacks are demonstrated in the next figure. The main actors are the RSHA, Hitler, Goebbels and other leading Nazi politicians, the Ministry of propaganda, the media and the public. The darts seem to indicate that the public was subjected to many different kinds of influence, guidance and oppression. On the one hand that is true. On the other side, a major motive behind many of the measures carried out by the Nazi administration, from food distribution up to the concept of the “Blitzkrieg,” can be traced to Hitler’s fear of a reenactment of the November Revolution (of 1918). His domestic policies – at least partly – were driven by his concern to avert such a historical repeat. Therefore, the six top-down darts in the center of the next figure point into both directions. Hitler’s regime would never have made it to its bitter end without substantial support by a great number of Germans. The support was greatest after victory in the Western Campaign in the summer of 1940; from then on it declined slowly. However, even in the last months of World War II the number of convinced Nazis was big enough to levy coercion onto other Germans.



Figure 23: public monitoring and published opinion fabrication, Part II



Obviously, the RSHA and the Ministry of Propaganda were subjected to the commands of the leading Nazi politicians. Their competences were never defined clearly, and many politicians competed for the same political issues. For example in propaganda affairs a permanent struggle for influence was enacted between Goebbels, Ribbentrop, Amann, Dietrich and others. Hitler's power, not least, relied on his status as a "supremus arbiter": in case of competence conflicts between the grandees, Hitler decided the issue in the last instance. A special department of the RSHA (III) undertook the monitoring of the public and the media. At the same time department IV (with the Gestapo) executed the coercion. The feedback of the reports influenced the fabrication of the published opinion.<sup>16</sup> The reports of department III were read by Goebbels and other chief propagandists. On the one hand, they tried to react and optimize their propaganda efforts. On the other hand, they complained about negative reports (especially after 1943) and asked for more positive reports on the public mood. Therefore, the reports from Gestapo and SD tried to unravel the enigma of public opinion, a mystery that resulted from the suppression of opinion in the public by the same organizations.

Another problem is related to the informants: Did they tell the truth? What was the focus of their original reports? What was the status of the informants? In

16 For the complexity of the propaganda machinery compare Sösemann (2011).



fact, there were two kinds of very different V-Men. As mentioned above “Vigilanten” (literally: vigilant men, i.e. confidential agents, undercover informants) were agents of the political police. Since the “Vormärz”, the period before the Revolution of 1848, they monitored suspected journalists, authors and conventions. In the Bismarck era opinion leaders were named V-Men, too. They were called V-Men because authorities put their trust in them. The authorities perceived the “Vertrauensmänner” as being highly esteemed and trusted by the people. In 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany these confidential men were “propaganda staff”: they had to influence the public by giving assistance to local correspondences. Their news gathering purpose was mainly related with the local press, and they did not primarily have to collect information for the civil service and the District Chiefs. Parallel with this kind of V-Men the other sort (the undercover informants) remained in use, with agents of the political police monitoring suspected parties, especially workers and social democrats.<sup>17</sup>

In World War I the tasks of the V-Men were widened. On the one hand, the “Vertrauensmänner” especially in rural areas worked pretty successfully during the first years of the war. Their success dwindled in 1917/18 however. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that they remained much more trustworthy than similar influence agents in the cities. The rural “Vertrauensmänner” operated in public and gave interpretations of press reporting. They tried to influence conventions in a patriotic way; the opinion leaders were deeply rooted in rural society, with many teachers, priests and reverends, judges, important landowners, aristocrats and all kinds of local dignitaries fulfilling their duty as V-Men. They were leaders by tradition and their influence on the public mood was large due to the trust people had in them.

On the other hand, the District Chiefs – themselves local dignitaries – trusted their peers. Therefore, the “Vertrauensmänner” also became a source for news about the public mood. Again, the above mentioned paradox can be observed here: there is a shortcut and feedback loop in monitoring and fabricating the public mood. In contrast, the V-Men in the big cities stayed as undercover informants because they primarily monitored the working class. Their influence on the public mood in the cities was pretty low because socialist circles had opinion leaders of their own. This gap between the influence of the V-Men in rural and industrial areas might have widened the urban-rural cleavage in wartime, but after the war, in the Weimar era, the V-Men (as opinion leaders) fell out of use. For the most part, the V-Men (as undercover informants) were now restricted to monitoring extremist parties.

In the Nazi era much Gestapo and SD information relied on denunciation informers. Others relied on undercover informants. Informers merely reported violations of law or ethics or behavior they regarded as violations of laws and ethics. In hindsight they were regarded as unmoral people, but during the Nazi era it can be assumed that none of them had a bad conscience. Informers were not interested in the complete range of the public’s agenda nor did they overlook it. They

17 Richard Evans has edited some of the 20 000 Hamburg reports (Evans, 1988).

informed the Gestapo and SD irregularly. Individual informers did not deliver information constantly. Nevertheless, informers as a whole produced a constant flow of information. More than half of all Gestapo reports were based on denunciation (cf. Gellately, 1988). Some crime prosecutions, such as cases of “Schwarzhören” (black listening to Allied radio stations) or of “Schwarzschlachten” (secret slaughter), relied almost completely on denunciation. During World War II the Nazis gradually enlarged the forbidden sphere thus increasing the opportunities for denunciation in these areas. Paradoxically, even some Gestapo agents and even Hitler himself were reported to have despised informers. Nevertheless, no other behavior by the ordinary German contributed more to the stability of the Nazi regime. Because of denunciation the Nazi secret service staff remained small until last years of the war. In comparison with the GDR Stasi staff and in relation to the total population, the Stasi relied on a staff that was at least fifteen times bigger than the Nazi staff. In reverse argument is that the popularity of the Nazi regime was far greater than that of the GDR. (On the other hand, one might argue that the paranoia of the GDR regime was bigger.)

Other information was collected by V-Men (as undercover informants). These were recruited from people regarded as suspects by the Gestapo and SD: i.e. Communists, Socialists, Centrists and Liberals (table 1: No. 7 and 9). Some of them were recruited using blackmail, others earned money for their treachery or a third part may have benefited from food ration cards or privileges of various kinds. However, it can be assumed that all of them undertook their information gathering partly free and partly under pressure. During the Nazi era the number and area of the suspects also widened. Undercover informants were ubiquitously present: in residential areas, in industrial plants and of course in the army. Again the range of reports grew. An instruction for the undercover agents noted in October 1940: “Each V-Man has to eavesdrop everywhere: in his family, at his friends and acquaintances, especially at his workplace. Each V-Man should try to seek every opportunity for detecting unobtrusively all effects of major foreign and domestic politics on the actual public mood and atmosphere. Additionally, conversations of fellow folks on the trains (worker trains), on trams, in shops, at hairdressers, at newsstands, on regulatory agencies (food and warrant, employment services, town halls, etc.), at markets, in bars, workplaces canteens are useful. The conversations reveal information in abundance to which too little attention is often paid.” (Boberach, 1984 [table 1: No. 9], Vol. 1, p. 17)

Therefore, information both from informers and undercover informants had their blind spots. The thematic scope of the informers at first was marginal, but their survey area was Germany as a whole. With the undercover informants it was the other way around. Their survey area at first was restricted to “enemies” of the Nazi state and their thematic scope was wide from the start. Year by year the scope of denunciation widened because more and more every day actions were criminalized: for example “Schwarzhören” or “Schwarzschlachten” during the war. The survey area of the undercover informants also widened, because of the regime’s rising paranoia. To compensate deficits from both informers and informants the Gestapo and SD staff undertook reconnaissance themselves. Therefore, at the input level the information can be regarded as not as bad. On the

contrary one might argue that everyone – informers, informants and secret service staff – had interests and wishful thinking of their own and that this might have interfered with straight news gathering every now and then.

To summarize the reliability of the informants: for obvious reasons the reliability of the V-Men as dignitaries can be regarded as higher than that of the V-Men as undercover informants. The dignitaries in World War I reported on public matters. The reports sometimes might have been false and some of them may have had blind spots (due to patriotic reasons) but there was no voluntarily false reporting. In contrast, the reports of undercover informants were gathered in clandestine operations. These V-Men are themselves somewhat suspicious even today, as the recent exposure of forms of reconnaissance of rightist terror groups in Germany has shown. These V-Men are open to doubt because they must themselves be deeply involved in the organizations they observe. Nevertheless, I regard the information gathered by undercover informants in the Nazi era as much more reliable than those of a similar form of monitoring in the Weimar democracy and in democracy in general. This is due to the fact that the Gestapo and the SD were much more ruthless and brutal with punishments when they did suspect the V-Men of having given bad information. Furthermore, the monitoring of the public mood did not solely depend on these somehow dubious sources. Nevertheless, it has to be left to the method of textual criticism to deal with doubts on the reliability of each file.

### 3.2 Considerations on a theory of the public mood

I will conclude this paper with some considerations on the theory of the public mood. All in all, the monitoring staff (Nazi and Socialist partisans, administration staff, political police, “Vertrauensmänner” and others) sampled information about the public and the media under the influence of the public, the media, personal needs, individual desires and aspirations. Sometimes the monitoring staff was involved in propaganda and press reporting. But because it is not easy to answer the questions about the causes and the consequences, I have used the notion of the “strange loop”.

I have derived this notion from Douglas Hofstadter (Hofstadter, 2007), who, as a cognitive scientist, coined the phrase “strange loop” to describe a process that creates and stabilizes the emergent epiphenomena of mind and personality. The human brain, in Hofstadter’s view, produces consciousness in a never ending loop of neuronal interactions, depending on personal memories. The strange loop stabilizes everyone’s mind without a clear distinction of causes and consequences. That does not mean that Hofstadter neglects the sequence of causes and consequences, but he argues that causes have consequences and the consequences themselves are causes for other consequences.

A similar loop is well known in public opinion research and is referred to as the arena concept (cf. Gerhards & Neidhardt, 1991), whereby cycles of interfering input, throughput and output loops create an emergent phenomenon. Published opinion and public opinion, agenda building and agenda setting, media coverage, propaganda input, monitoring of the people, political action and so on,

interfere with one another. In the arena concept, it is just as difficult to isolate causes from consequences as it is in Hofstadter's strange loop concept. The public mood concept can be perceived as blurring causes and consequences because it also mixes interfering input, throughput and output loops. Sometimes this encourages self fulfilling prophecies, sometimes self-destroying prophecies. However and even more importantly, both loops depend on "memories". In contrast to any individual memory its collective counterpart depends on traditions, collective history and institutionalized remembrance of the past, such as national holidays, national anthems, national myths, national heroes and so on.

Nevertheless, there is a major difference between both models. While the emergent epiphenomenon "mind" is an entity beyond doubt in the neuronal-cognitive model, "public opinion" or "public mood" is not an entity such as Rousseau's "common will". Here I thoroughly agree with Buchanan and Tullock. Whether or not the public mood is recognized as an emergent epiphenomenon is a matter of perception, firstly. Secondly, it is a matter of its momentum. Only when public mood was perceived as an entity might it come into being (passively). Even then it was merely a canvas for the fear of the authorities for upheaval and revolution. Only when individuals gathered for collective action did observers attribute a certain momentum to the public mood; when a certain momentum was attributed to the public mood, the seizure of power was becoming easier for the public. However, the attributed momentum had to be bigger than the perception of the authorities' (remaining) power. Just then the authorities might have retreated; then the revolution might have won its first decisive victory.

However, the theory of public mood is not a theory of revolution, even when the sources on the public mood deal more or less explicitly with the prevention of a revolution. The notion "revolution" may serve as a proxy for other outstanding moments, maybe of crisis and distress, maybe of collective joy and hysteria. In these outstanding moments the epiphenomenon of public mood can be observed most clearly. In these moments it is almost similar to a collective entity, but in normal times all sorts of collective sentiments, moods and actions are merely a matter of perception. It can thus be perceived through a divergent array of looking glasses.

This seems to be very similar to the perception of theories of public opinion. There are so many theories of public opinion that scholars just agree to disagree: Many authors have dealt with the question of public opinion's nature, trying to identify its subject, location, topic, mode and purpose. Naturally, the scientists, philosophers and theorists came to different conclusions. For example many of them perceived public opinion as a phenomenon led by the elite. Some preferred the political elite, others the intellectuals. Some authors neglected the relevance of the elite. They perceived public opinion as dominated by the masses. Concerning the topic of public opinion some theorists only took into account political and economical issues. Others, for example Walter Lippmann (1922), argued that public opinion might deal with every topic as long as it is relevant for the public. At the same time Ferdinand Tönnies (1922) analyzed three different quasi-physical states of public opinion: a solid state, a liquid state and a gaseous state. It is neither possible nor necessary to discuss in more depth here the theoretical per-

spective as this has been done elsewhere (Stöber, 2009). Table 2 presents an abstract (nevertheless incomplete) of the literature on the public and public opinion from early modern times until the present, showing the particle of ideas which can be found in numerous public opinion frames (or theories).

**Table 2: dimensions of the public and public opinion (mentioned in literature)**

<i>main dimensions</i>	<i>sub dimensions of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> order</i>
positioning/ location (where?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extent of the public               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ on local basis</li> <li>◦ on nation wide basis</li> </ul> </li> <li>• reality/ concreteness of public space               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ virtual / without a concrete space</li> <li>◦ specific meeting locations</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
bearing institution/ actor (who?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• determination by quantity               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ of few members</li> <li>◦ of many participants</li> </ul> </li> <li>• determination by quality               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ by power (of the mighty ones)</li> <li>◦ by knowledge (of intellectuals)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>representation of the public</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>directly</i></li> <li>◦ <i>indirectly</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
topic (what?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ specific contents (especially politics and economics)</li> <li>◦ unspecific (all kind of issues)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• (physical) states               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ solid state of public opinion</li> <li>◦ liquid state of public opinion</li> <li>◦ gaseous state of public opinion</li> </ul> </li> <li>• momentum               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ strength of the public</li> <li>◦ weakness of the public</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
mode (how?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• degrees of freedom               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ deliberative (unregulated discourse)</li> <li>◦ authoritative and normative (prescriptive leadership)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• decision making               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ rational discourse on right or wrong</li> <li>◦ emotional evaluation of good and evil</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>functional context</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>cybernetic mass media context</i></li> <li>◦ <i>context of social psychology</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
purpose (why?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• justification               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ forth estate</li> <li>◦ agenda-setting</li> <li>◦ evaluation of the agenda</li> </ul> </li> <li>• projection               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ on the sphere of power and politics</li> <li>◦ on society</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Public opinion unfolds between five dimensions with some 30 sub-dimensions. In theory every sub-dimension might be combined with any other. Therefore, each dimension can be taken as a product of its sub-dimension – for example, the mode (how?) produces eight variations ( $2 * 2 * 2$ ). This resembles the mathematician Henry Poincaré's concept of the “phase space” of a deterministic system: the total number of possible states of a given system is determined by the combination of all of its singular states multiplied with its degrees of freedom. It is apparent that neither public opinion nor its theories are deterministic. Nevertheless, the theoretical discourse resembles the phase space concept because almost every author or theorist of public opinion has described his or her own theory. The dimensions and sub-dimensions thus multiply to thousands of possible definitions of public opinion.<sup>18</sup>

However, the variety of theories is not so divergent. The thousands of potential definitions might be reduced to five combinations of frames: to a) the disintegrative approach of a multitude of public opinions, b) the *nomos* concept: public opinion as an expression of customs and habits, c) the social-psychological and socio-integrative model of public opinion, d) the authoritarian concept of public leading, and finally, e) a deliberative concept of public opinion. In communication science literature these five concepts are often reduced even further. The somewhat self-sufficient field of communication science in the main prefers two of the aforementioned concepts: the deliberative concept by Jürgen Habermas and the “spiral of silence” by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. A sixth model, the “public mood” model, has been widely neglected by communication scholars.

The *disintegrative concept* of a multitude of public opinions is different to the “Public Opinion”. Tönnies (1922), Lippmann (1922), Noelle-Neumann (1993) and others used to write Public Opinion with capital letters because they wanted to make a difference to the disintegrative concept. At its extreme, the existence of public opinion is negated (cf. Habermas, 1991). A more moderate perception of the manifold of public opinions regards them as precursors to the “Public Opinion” (Tönnies, 1922). The disintegrative concept regards the public as a forum open to many citizens, whether they meet virtually or in town halls. The discourse on opinions is disseminated mainly via media. The topics of the public opinions mostly refer to politics – other topics are possible. The mode of the disintegrative concept is deliberative or cybernetic. Thus a purpose of public opinion either does not exist or it lies in itself.

In the *nomos model* public opinion (established by Rousseau) is based on traditions and customs. It is placed in the proximity of religion and legislation and the people are seen to be more an object than a subject of public opinion. Public opinion's purpose is the preservation of tradition and cultural identity. Its issues are related to ethical and moral values. The public serves as a general symbol. The

18 The deconstruction of public and public opinion in dimensions and sub-dimensions provides us with a maximum number of theories. The product of the products of the dimensions and sub-dimensions creates a phase space of  $4 * 8 * 12 * 8 * 6 = 18432$  variations. The figure explains why scholars just agree to disagree on the phenomena. But some sub-dimension (in *italics*) have to be ruled out because they are indirect multiple references on the same phenomenon. Therefore, the maximum number has to be reduced to 4608 variations ( $= 4 * 4 * 18 * 4 * 6$ ).

media do not play a dominant role. Rousseau was the most prominent representative of the *nomos* concept, and, for the most part, the concept is perceived as a variation of the next model:

In the *social-integrative concept*, unlike in the aforementioned concept, every member of a given society plays two roles. On the one hand, everyone is object to the Public Opinion. On the other hand, everyone is an active agent in the public. Public Opinion's purpose is "social integration". Every topic might be set on the agenda, provided it is morally charged. The media plays an important role in articulation and guidance of the public; its role is central for an emergence of Public Opinion. The mode is social psychological, and the model was developed according to the *nomos* concept. Its most prominent representative was Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann. Gustave Le Bon's (1896) variation resembles the authoritarian and conformist model.

The *authoritarian model* is in part similar to the aforementioned socially-integrative concept. The public is perceived as an amplifier or a sounding board; the media are used for propaganda purposes. The mode of the public opinion is authoritative. Due to coercion and oppression a free public opinion does not exist. The purpose of various measurements is to suppress an independent public opinion; a pseudo-public opinion serves as its substitute. The authoritarian functionaries of the dictatorial system are its opinion leaders. Hitler and Goebbels were its most important "theorists". The authoritarian model is opposite to that which follows:

The *deliberative concept* of public is aimed at one purpose: political action and participation in society. The actor in public opinion is the elite. Nevertheless, every citizen may take part in discourse. The mode is deliberative; the decision making process is democratic. A theoretical problem arises from the combination of decisions by a "better argument" with decisions by majority. Political topics are predominant; economic, cultural, social and other issues, when combined with political interests, can be set on the agenda. The media plays a double role: as forums for political parties and as politically independent actors (fourth estate). The public emerges in both, in real places and virtual assemblies.

The *emotional concept of the public mood* was popular in times before the invention of public opinion polls. Sometimes it was called the public mood, sometimes the "general mood", sometimes the "general state (of public affairs)". The notions were used in both the singular and plural. The masses and the common people were both actors of and subject to the public mood. Its mode was more emotional than rational. However, rational decision making – in combination with predominant political and economic interests – also can be observed. Rational choice, as in Buchanan's and Tullock's usage of the notion, is not restricted to decisions based on the intellect: a notion with its somehow less clear connotation of "making sense". Very often even emotional decisions were making sense. For the public mood model the published discourse was not unimportant. The issues of the public mood, in principle, were unlimited. Every topic might have been set on the agenda: from natural disasters to crop failure, from economic interests to politics and pre-political scandals. In the public mood concept the public space obviously contrasted to the private sphere, but in the Nazi era the pri-



vate sphere moved into the range of investigation. At least partly, the public mood concept can be regarded as a forerunner of the social-integrative concept.

The various concepts of public opinion are frames for public opinion research. Like frames in the framing concept they can be perceived as instruments of analysis, and like them public opinion theories are constructions which have to reduce the complexity of the world. However, while normally the framing concept tries to identify ad hoc frames, public opinion theories have been formulated in hindsight. That is especially true of the public mood concept. Despite instructions for V-Men there was never a consistent and complete “theory” of the public mood, and its theory has had to be reconstructed from historical sources. Nevertheless, the monitoring staff produced more or less reliable perceptions of the public, its mood, sentiments and attitudes.

#### 4. Final remarks

This study set out to determine influences of and influences on the “public mood”. Its purpose was to achieve some form of objectification. The results shown above might be discussed controversially, and, therefore, I have openly discussed methods, sources and theories of public opinion research: the method employed here is the interpretation of an interpretation: it is more than a subjective view of problematical sources in historical archives; it is less than a content analysis that is for 100 percent inter coder reliable; it is the combination of content analysis with methods of textual criticism. Historians may say: how naïve to use the method of content analysis on sources that are so difficult.<sup>19</sup> Social scientists may argue: it is against all the rules to neglect the scale level; furthermore, the method is not objective in every way. And both might argue that the causes (the external data) ought to precede the consequences (the public mood).

Of course there are limits for the validity of comparisons and the reliability of the reconstructions. Once more Easterlin’s findings can here be recalled. As Easterlin found out, intra national findings for any given country cannot be reproduced in international comparisons with similar distinctness. This is called the Easterlin paradox. Its space based incommensurability cannot be disputed. According to the Easterlin paradox, critics might argue that there is no possibility of comparing German territories far from one another because they were very divergent. Nevertheless, a comparison provides us with reliable results because the divergence is ruled out by means of statistical aggregation. However, I do agree with potential critics who may argue that values of the public’s opinion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are incomparable with those of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Like the space based incommensurability of the Easterlin paradox, public mood is time based incomparable. Therefore no reader should make the mistake of misreading the public mood values for absolute data: for example, to say that the public mood in 1940 might have been more or less positive in absolute terms than those of 1870 would

19 Götz Aly claimed that some interpretations of mine (Stöber, 1998) concerning the Nazi Era were naïve (Aly, 2006, p. 13, 128); nevertheless he promoted a very similar view on the sources and their meaning (Aly, 2005, pp. 48-51, 63, 80-5, 202-6, 336-7).



be the wrong interpretation. Only a comparison of values in direct neighborhood to one another is reliable.

Furthermore, the contemporary monitoring staff might only partly observe this constructed relativity. It can be assumed that they realized a similar construct in years of crisis and distress, maybe of collective joy and hysteria: in the wars of 1870/71, 1914-18, 1939-45, in the Revolution of 1919, in the years of hyper inflation, in the years of the World Economic Crisis. In those cases the sources on the public mood were pretty clear, but in normal times they were far more ambivalent. The monitoring staff reported news *and* interpretations of their own. Therefore, the findings presented here are neither more nor less than interpretations of interpretations, and, furthermore, the objectifications in this paper may sometimes seem to be a little synthetic. In this way they are open for further discussions.

However, the data is not small at all and at the very least the frequency values presented in this paper are highly significant at  $\alpha$  0.01. The material is almost unknown, and it has never been used before for the construction of a long time series of the public mood. Compared with external data my findings obtain plausible results and helpful arguments for a better understanding of public opinion in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, the findings can be tested:

- If anyone can prove that the public is insensitive to emotional arguments, the considerations based on sentiments and the public mood may be refuted.
- If anyone can reject the relevance of the notions of confidence and trust in public affairs, then the administration's reliance on confidential agents was wrong: the confidential agents could neither influence the public nor could they report correctly.
- If we can observe that a majority of individuals behaved regardless of individual interests, then a keystone of the argument is weakened.
- If anyone can prove that external costs are irrelevant for the formation of public attitudes, then rational considerations should be ruled out from public opinion forming.
- If anybody can prove the irrelevance of domestic issues and the superior importance of foreign affairs in general, the assumptions based on a stratification of obtrusiveness are wrong.
- If anyone can prove that the people will more easily reach agreement on a concrete and positive objective than on diffuse feelings of discontent, then the explanation of the voting results still remain true. However, because the explanations are based on the false assumption that "Reichsfeinde" and system opponents do form a relevant political category, the voting result explanations are also irrelevant.
- If anyone can present a compact and complex narrative that accomodates the double purpose of objectification in general *and* a closer look at the details, this would be a significant breakthrough in the writing of such a history.
- If anyone can prove that content analysis without any knowledge about or sensibility towards possible distortions of historical sources provides better results than an interpretation based on textual criticism and conversion into aggregated data, then my method – as an interpretation of an interpretation – is unnecessarily complex.

## 5. Literature and Sources

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[table 1, No. 1]
- I. HA, Rep. 90P [Lageberichte (Gestapo)], No. 1-12, 14.  
[table 1, No. 7]

#### *Brandenburgisches Landeshauptarchiv Potsdam*

Rep 2 A I P [Regierung Potsdam] No. 745, 748, 795.  
[table 1, No. 1]

#### *Staatarchiv Bamberg*

K3 PräReg No. 831, fol. XVIII-XXIV.  
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