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## Trabajo Fin de Grado

# Vaccine or not vaccine, that is the question

A comparative study of the German media  
frames in the debate on mandatory covid  
vaccines

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*“How little do they see what really is, who frame their hasty judgment upon that which seems.”*

Robert Southey

## 1. Introduction

While lockdown is long over, the worst of Covid-19 has passed and the restrictions, such as quarantine and obligatory masks as well as mandatory testing via corona rapid tests, have been lifted, the memories of it have not yet faded and there are issues that we have not quite managed to put behind us. Covid-19, with all its implications and consequences, is still a highly relevant and often discussed topic, not only in the mediatic sphere but in public opinion as well.

Now, with several controversies affecting pharma industries and their marketed vaccines, it seems like vaccination, specifically covid-19 vaccines, are back being the center of numerous debates. Once vaccines --and their potential to possibly bringing the spread of covid-19 to a halt and protecting the vaccinated from the virus-- were introduced, they were placed in the center of public discourse in Germany. Numerous campaigns were launched by the Government, public institutions, organizations and independent media, informing about the need, availability and effectivity of diverse vaccines, including astra-zeneca, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson, calling several population groups to get vaccinated in order to be protected and protect others against the virus. In such an environment of fear and uncertainty, special communication efforts and new regulations had to be implemented to effectively communicate with and influence the public. Vaccination, which seemed to be the best-possible solution to fight the disease and minimize the damages caused by this never-before-seen health emergency.

Now, as already mentioned, it seems that once again vaccines are on the spotlight. With growing skepticism and criticism towards the rapid commercialization of the covid-19 vaccines and the doubts and fears expressed due to an arguably insufficient testing of the drug, more and more are denouncing, demanding and accusing, not only directed at the pharma industries, but the Government and international organizations themselves. Moreover, the accusations do not only regard the commercialization and distribution of vaccines, that are arguably ineffective or even harmful, but the critics and doubts are being raised because of supposed corruption in the trade of several goods sold and bought for the prevention and reduction of contagion, including face masks, rapid tests and vaccines themselves.

Thus, this topic is not **only highly relevant, but also scarcely studied**. Overall, research about covid-19 has been conducted, but mainly in the fields of health, psychology, and sociology. Thus, the main factors that motivated the choice of the topic for the present bachelor thesis lie in its potential relevance and importance, not only in the present but also for future research and investigation, in addition to the controversial aspects and unexplored events surrounding the issue of vaccination and the media's implication in its reception and perception by society, specifically German citizens.

## 2. State of the art

In the following paragraphs, relevant information and related studies will be thoroughly discussed, in order to establish a coherent context that will allow for a profound comprehension of the object of the present study. Furthermore, once the state of the art is presented, we can proceed with the selection and development of a theoretical framework.

### 2.1 Covid-19 in Germany: main regulations and policies

First and foremost, an overview of the Covid-19 evolution in Germany will be presented, putting a strong emphasis on the regulations and policies that were implemented by the German Government, especially those related to or regarding the covid vaccine. That will help establish the context of the debate on mandatory covid vaccination and will serve to explain the main agents, as well as the subsequent principal narratives and arguments involved in the vaccination campaign. Also, the narrowing down to the specific time period of the vaccination issue will serve to justify the time frame that is chosen further on to analyze the messages and framing in mainstream and alternative media and why that specific period of time was most relevant to this study.

The first case of covid-19 in Germany was registered on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January in 2020. At that time, a general optimistic spirit defined the attitude of the general public. No one expected yet what was about to happen, and everyone was confident in the rapid response and control of the virus. However, a few months later, the 11<sup>th</sup> March of 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially declared the global spread of the Covid-19 as a pandemic. From then on, this unprecedented event, demanded action and response of governments all over the world and cooperation of several institutions and policymakers on national and international levels. Therefore, new policies had to be developed and strict regulations needed to be implemented to control the virus and contain its spread, in order to reduce the number of cases and to reach stable levels of hospitalizations...all in all, to “get back to normal” as soon as possible. What measures did the German Government take to that extent, what steps did they follow to reach their goals?

On 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2020, the EU member states began with the distributions of the first Covid-19 vaccines. By February of the following year, the former German Health Minister Jens Spahn recognized the success of the vaccines, stating that “almost all the residents of care homes had

received the vaccine. The risk of contracting the Corona virus has been significantly reduced for our elderly citizens” during an official press conference (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, 2024). In the following months, several vaccination campaigns were developed to inform and motivate the German citizens to get vaccinated. For instance, on the week from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of September, several regions, associations and organizations, private initiatives and volunteers came together under the slogan #HierWirdGeimpft (vaccination is carried out here) to call for the vaccination all over Germany. Moreover, former Health Minister Jens Spahn and later on the current Health Minister Karl Lauterbach, developed strict measures such as mandatory testing or vaccination passports, to control the spread of the virus, reduce the number of cases of infection and motivate or arguably compel the German citizens to get vaccinated.

One of the most debated measures was the rule of 2g and 3g, known as 2G- and 3G norms (in German, 2G und 3G-Regel. According to these norms, either only people that were vaccinated and those who previously were tested and resulted negative were allowed in certain spaces (2g) or the two before mentioned cases and, in addition, those who had recovered from the virus could enter. Therefore, the “G” represents the German words for vaccinated, tested and recovered (geimpft, getestet und genesen). Each word marks a condition, which was required to enter certain indoor spaces. Thus, 2 “g” stands for geimpft and genesen: vaccinated and recovered (from covid), while 3 gs contain the same requirements, but also allowing for tested individuals to enter the space. The 2G rule was intended to reduce contact between vaccinated and unvaccinated people in places with a high risk of infection, thereby achieving three goals: Firstly, to reduce the number of new infections. Secondly, to protect unvaccinated people from infection because they have a higher risk of severe disease progression and hospitalization. Thirdly, to motivate unvaccinated people to get vaccinated. These precise norms stirred the debate and provoked anger and dissatisfaction in the public opinion. Some would consider it the best and only possible solution to fight covid and bring back “normality”, then again, some would rather perceive it as a threat to freedom and criticized it for excessive control and surveillance of the citizens.



Infographic explaining the 2g, 2g+, 3g and 3g+ rules. Developed by the German Federal Center for Health Education (BZgA) and published on the website [infektionsschutz.de](https://www.infektionsschutz.de) (BZgA, 2021).

## 2.2 Key terms and definitions

In the following section, the most relevant terms and key actors in the context of covid-19 will be presented together with their respective definitions or English translation in the case of German terminology, if necessary.

Term	Definition or explanation
Querdenker	The literal translation of this term would be the following: diagonal thinker or cross-thinker. In the context of covid, it stands for the members and followers of the “Querdenken” movement that had its origin in Stuttgart in form of protests against the regulations and restrictions imposed by the Government to contain the pandemic. Today, the movement has spread and reached a national level, gaining followers all across

	Germany.
Corona-Leugner	In English, negationist. Term used to refer to an individual that denies or refutes the existence or dangers of the Covid-19 virus and/or pandemic (Duden). A common perceived characteristic of a “Corona-Leugner” is a loss of trust in the State and institutions. In addition, they are recognized by their expressed criticism and skepticism towards the regulations imposed by the state “elites” (Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2021).
Covidiot	Neologism created during the Covid-19 pandemic to define someone who behaves in a stupid way that risks spreading the infectious disease Covid-19 (Cambridge dictionary).
Conspiracy theory	“A belief that an event or situation is the result of a secret plan made by powerful people” definition by Cambridge dictionary. The Britannica goes on to say that a conspiracy theory is an attempt to explain said event or situation. Thus, conspiracy theories increase in prevalence in periods of widespread anxiety, uncertainty, or hardship, as during wars and economic depressions and in the aftermath of natural disasters like tsunamis, earthquakes and pandemics. This suggests that conspiratorial thinking is driven by a strong human desire to make sense of social forces that are self-relevant, important and threatening. According to Steven Pinker and his entry in Britannica about rationality, conspiracy theories and many



	<p>other manifestations of public irrationality, such as fake news or science denial, may be tactics to express loyalty or to avoid ostracism from one's tribe or political faction.</p>
<p>Plandemic</p>	<p>Term formed out of the combination of two words: plan and pandemic. One of the main narratives that were part of the conspiracy theories surrounding covid-19, used to suggest that the pandemic was planned and the virus purposefully created. Furthermore, this theory defends the idea that a group of elitists set out to control the world and reduce the global population and employed the virus and the consequent authoritarian regulations as the means to their end. Recurrent word in alternative media and "Querdenker" circles.</p>
<p>Infodemic</p>	<p>As COVID-19 swept across the globe, information about how to stay safe and how to identify symptoms became vital. However, especially in the first phases of the pandemic, the amount of false, not validated and partially true information on the media was huge. The inappropriate use of information on various media may have contributed to political polarization in response to COVID-19 epidemiological control measures. There was also a proliferation of systematic reviews of COVID-19-related evidence, not all of which was robustly conducted (Orr, 2022). Researchers have pointed out a few primary challenges of communicating with the public about COVID-19.</p>

	<p>First, social media platforms that prioritize engagement over accuracy and allow fringe opinions to thrive without correction create an information ecology that is difficult to understand. Second, as fast-moving science and politics intertwine during the pandemic, making decisions related to combatting misinformation becomes complicated by a volatile political environment and frequently changing scientific information.</p>
<p>The great reset</p>	<p>As stated in the International Journal of Communication, “The Great Reset” is a conspiracy theory that has become popular among people resisting public health recommendations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The name comes from the 2021 theme of the World Economic Forum’s annual summit and claims that global elites have manipulated the course of the pandemic to implement various forms of economic and social control.</p>
<p>Zweiklassengesellschaft</p>	<p>Two-tier society. Term that defines a conspiracy theory that warns about a future new order. It describes the social divide into two classes, one higher than the other. In the context of covid, it was used to refer to the phenomenon of division and polarization caused by the implementation of several policies, precisely: the covid passport and the 2g and 3g norms which led to exclusion of certain members of society.</p>

World Health Organization (WHO)	Founded in 1948, the World Health Organization is the United Nations agency that connects nations, partners and people to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable by leading global efforts to expand universal health coverage and directing and coordinating the world's response to health emergencies.
Ständige Impfkommision (STIKO)	The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) is an independent, voluntary body of experts that develops vaccination recommendations for the population in Germany. It is guided by the criteria of evidence-based medicine and considers both the individual benefits for vaccinated persons and the benefits for the population as a whole. Its work is coordinated by the STIKO office in the Vaccination Prevention Department of the Robert Koch Institute and is supported, for example, by systematic analyses of the specialist literature. The aim is to optimally adapt the vaccination recommendations to new vaccine developments and findings from research. In addition to recommendations on standard vaccinations, STIKO also makes recommendations on indication vaccinations for special epidemiological situations or risks for certain groups of people. These also include vaccinations due to occupational or work-related risks as well as travel vaccinations.
Robert Koch Institut (RKI)	According to their website, the RKI is a federal

	<p>institute and division of the Federal Ministry of Health. The RKI is a central institution of the country in the field of disease surveillance and prevention, and therefore also essential in the field of applied and policy-oriented biomedical investigation and research. The core mission of the RKI includes tasks such as the recognition, prevention, and control of diseases, above all those diseases that are infectious. Moreover, the RKI is responsible for the general statutory duty to compile and elaborate scientific information and findings as a basis for healthcare policies. The RKI advises the competent federal ministries, especially the Federal Ministry of Health (Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, BMG) and is involved in the development of rules and standards. In addition, it informs and guides the broader public. In sight of the recognition and discovery of health risks and dangers, the RKI adopts a central “antenna-function”, in the sense of an early warning system. (RKI, s.f.)</p>
Karl Lauterbach	<p>Member of the German Bundestag since 2005, on leave as Head of the Institute for Health Economics and Clinical Epidemiology at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Cologne; 2009 to 2013 Health Policy Spokesman for the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag; 2013 to 2019 Deputy Chairman of the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag; Federal</p>

	<p>Minister of Health since December 2021. Centre of attention and often discussed person in negationist telegram groups, where he was harshly criticized for his decisions. On telegram and “Querdenker” protests we can find slogans, such as, “Lauterbach muss weg” (Lauterbach has to go) that constituted open petitions or repeated demands, repeatedly expressed in corona protests to urge the German Health Minister to resign.</p>
<p>Telegram</p>	<p>Telegram is a messenger service that was founded in 2013 by Russian tech entrepreneur Pavel Durov. The service is designed to enable secure communication without being monitored by governments, especially in authoritarian states. The service is now also used by extremists and conspiracy mystics. (al., 2021)</p>

### 2.3 Alternative and mainstream media: towards a definition

With the increasing digitalization and greater interconnectivity, alternative media are gaining momentum, growing not only in size, but also in importance. Even though they were already popular before, it was especially within the context of the pandemic, that the use and subscriptions to alternative media were on the rise...but, what are the so-called “alternative media” and how do they differ from the traditional mainstream media?

Alternative media is an umbrella term that englobes all the various media channels that are considered to be different from the established mainstream media. Thus, one of the most fundamental characteristics of alternative media is that they are situated outside of the mainstream, and hence are said to articulate a “social order different from and often opposed to the dominant” (Hamilton, 2000). So much so, that various scholars have urged that definitions of alternative media must stress the ideological opposition or challenge to mainstream media. Therefore, alternative

media are created and stand in explicit opposition to mainstream media (Downmunt, 2007). Consequently, its function is to offer a diverse perspective including information generally not shown or censored in mainstream media, even (ideologically) challenging or questioning the ideas presented in the mainstream. In fact, Atton, a leading scholar in the field of alternative media research, offers an additional definition of alternative media; in his words, it is a “range of media projects, interventions and networks that work against, or seek to develop different forms of, the dominant, expected (and broadly accepted) ways of “doing” media” (Atton, 2004). Moreover, Atton argues that alternative media should be fundamentally grounded in the cultural forms of an independent media outlet. Additionally, they should ideally possess some of the following attributes: a reliance upon modern, evolving technology; de-professionalized organizational norms and roles; horizontal communication patterns; cultural or political radical content; innovative and independent distribution practices; and a compelling aesthetic form (Atton, *Alternative Media*, 2002).

Since they are independent platforms, alternative media do not feel controlled by government guidelines, nor do they have to attain to bureaucratic processes or corporate responsibilities that otherwise constrain mainstream media. Accordingly, the journalists that participate and contribute to the content distributed on alternative media feel “generally outside of corporate media influence” (Albert, 2006). Therefore, the “alternative” journalists, who generally consist of individuals or groups of people that have previously been marginalized or excluded by the mainstream media, perceive the alternative media as an independent platform that allows for unlimited freedom of expression and thus offers the opportunity to challenge, “at least implicitly, actual concentrations of media power” (Curran, 2003). Accordingly, alternative media are defined in opposition to mainstream media; in fact, several researchers argue that alternative media should be defined by its level of subversion from the mainstream (Downing, 2001). At the most fundamental core, alternative media facilitate democratic participation and cultural disruption while the mainstream press avoids such social critique (Makagon, 2000). Mainstream media are arguably controlled by the government and constrained by commercial flows, meaning that they are, to a certain degree, “locked within a hegemonic world view that does not allow for investigative enquiry. This argument would suggest that mainstream media are trapped within entrenched norms and values that predispose a certain perspective of the world, whereas alternative media, free from such ideological and structural constraints, report issues in a manifestly different manner than their mainstream opposition”.

This precise freedom which is argued to be enjoyed by alternative media outlets is what

ultimately allows for the “unhinged” and uncensored content, so characteristic of these media forms, to be produced, published, and proliferated. Therefore, situated outside of the mainstream, alternative media have always been regarded as distinctively different from it, articulating a social order opposed to the dominant and thus serving as a vehicle for content diversity, contributing to the challenge of the status quo and the critique of social norms and power structures, as well as influencing social change. In fact, Couldry argues that these challenges are intrinsic to the purpose of alternative media (Couldry, 2003). Moreover, these type of media platforms have been said to have the capacity for “transforming spectators into active participants of everyday dealings affecting their lives” (Tracy, 2007). That is why and how the social change is influenced and activated in the first place: through participation and implication on alternative media platforms. Users become active participants, not only in replying to posted content, but also in producing it themselves, becoming citizen journalists.

As a consequence, social and political movements have traditionally made great effort to forge alliances with alternative media. As a matter of fact, alternative media often view their role as “one of educating and mobilizing the masses in the service of the cause or movement” (Hamilton, 2000) One of the most notorious examples that reflects this social function and impact of alternative media is the case of the Arab Spring. Under authoritarian regimes and in undemocratic societies, alternative platforms opposed to the established mainstream media, which is controlled by the government and guided by its agenda, serve as a valuable option, useful to escape the official state propaganda, to learn about other perspectives, thus, in order to get closer to the actual truth and objective reality. Concretely, during the Arab spring back in 2011, independent alternative media made it possible to access reliable information, as an escape to the misinformation spread by the authoritarian regimes and as a catalyst contributing to the organization of social protest movements and mobilization in form of popular uprisings.

To sum it up, alternative media refers to any media platform that stands outside of the mainstream media and declares itself as opposed to it, in criticizing its content and offering ideologically different perspectives than the dominant narrative, without any type of constrains or censorship. In fact, its main purpose is to question and oppose the dominant ideology. Furthermore, alternative media are considered to be a “shelter” for the exiled, for those who are excluded from the mainstream processes. Therefore, it has been frequently argued that alternative media offer an independent platform for groups and individuals that have been marginalized by corporate, mainstream media (Atton, Alternative Media, 2002). In fact, one definition of alternative media puts

that point of exclusion at the center of its defined meaning, and it goes as follows: “alternative media is best conceptualized as simply the media produced by the socially, culturally and politically excluded” (Dowmunt, 2007). For instance, most of the telegram channels that were skeptical towards the existence of the corona virus and critical of measures -- specifically the vaccination—imposed against it, were created and led by journalists that had previously worked for well-known press channels. Ken Jebsen had been working for *rbb*, Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg, before he opened his channel on telegram, Boris Reitschuster had been employed as a journalist in *FOCUS*, Julian Reichelt had been the former head of the newspaper *BILD* before he was dismissed, and Anselm Lenz used to work for *TAZ* (Die Tageszeitung), a German newspaper with a left or left-liberal political orientation, before he started writing content for the controversial paper “Demokratischer Widerstand”.

Notwithstanding, alternative media have also been studied and analyzed from different points of view, especially in relation to covid. Within that context, alternative media have been described rather differently, being mainly associated with fake news, the spread of unreliable information, the rise of extremist groups and controverse political views and, lastly, they have been perceived as the birthplace of covid-related conspiracy theories. Because of too little or even absolutely no control of (mis)information on these alternative media platforms, propaganda could easily flow and grow through several channels. Because of several phenomena, including echo-chambers and the spiral of silence (which will be further explained later), conspiracy theories could rapidly spread and foster inside of negationist circles. Ultimately, all these factors lead to the so-called infodemic and, arguably, to the polarization of society. However, covid-19 is not the first event that draws attention to the negative effects of alternative media; the dangers of independent and radical content platforms have been analyzed before, most notably in the context of the 2016 presidential US elections and during Brexit to discover whether and how false information can influence on, and even predict or subsequently analyze, voters’ decision-taking. Especially the social media platforms twitter (now X) and Telegram have been linked to the uncontrolled stream of fake news and false information.

### 3. Theoretical framework

In the following paragraphs, a sum of theories that will help establish a framework for the present bachelor thesis will be presented in order to then use them as a theoretical basis for the analysis and comparison of the frames employed by the German media, alternative and mainstream, during the



vaccination debate.

### 3.1 Mass media and propaganda theories

The critical communication theories, mainly developed during the 1940s and, thus, generally associated with the Frankfurt School, supposedly serve as a reflective challenge to unjust situations. In other words, these theories were designed to critique how language and the mass media perpetuate unjust differences in power. Thus, mass media are assigned a role of manipulative instrument of control and cultural degradation, indoctrinating and alienating from reality, hence, preventing any profound change. According to Adorno, member of the Frankfurt School, capitalism had corrupted the media into a "culture industry" which turned the population into a passive, distracted and politically apathetic mass.

Furthermore, mass media are considered to be under the domination of powerful elites, who so thoroughly control and supervise the content that appears on the media that they have little trouble imposing their truth on society. To put it in the words of Paul Lazarsfeld, "big business finances the production and distribution of mass media [...] he who pays the piper generally calls the tune" (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948). As a matter of fact, according to the theory of the hypodermic needle (also referred to as the magic bullet theory), media not only has a powerful effect on people, but it can also have a direct impact on them. That being the case, it can directly influence the minds of the people, changing their views of the social world and transforming their ways of thinking and also, what is more, even their ways of acting.

Harold Lasswell, famous for his model of communication, argues that if human action is influenced by manipulating representations, that technique can be described as propaganda in the broadest sense. In addition, he states that the power of propaganda lies, rather than in an effective appeal of the message, in the vulnerable state of mind of the people. Facts can be difficult to discern and relate to the public, particularly in a context in which the news are driven by politicians and other interested parties who selectively offer some pieces of information while suppressing others. Consequently, if people are vulnerable to mass media it is principally due to a lack of protection.

All in all, it can be said that these theories all part have the same central argument in common and share one main hypothesis as they recognize the undeniable impact of mass media in society as a political instrument and vehicle for capitalistic power structures, influencing public opinion, affecting and changing people's perspectives, perceptions and knowledge, as well as, their decision-making and taking.

### 3.2 Agenda-setting and framing

The agenda-setting and framing theory have often been considered the same, but there is one main difference that stands out: while agenda-setting consists of selecting specific information in order to control what the public thinks about, what topics should receive the most attention and which news are a priority, framing rather focuses on the way people perceive that information and how they should think about and interpret a certain topic. As a consequence to agenda-setting, “those problems that receive prominent attention on the news become the problems that the viewing public regards as the most important” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Communication media, in deciding what information is worth publishing and which is not, decides what can be considered relevant news and what is not. Thus, they signal to the reader what is important and also, by default, what is not. Even though it is not always intended, the frames applied are usually in service of the political and ideological elites that dominate the public sphere and therefore try to portray their view of the events and issues at hand. Moreover, drawing attention to some aspects at the expense of others will undeniably influence on the public’s way of thinking and is unavoidably connected to second order agenda-setting, which is essentially what we refer to as framing.

The term framing was firstly used and hence coined by Bateson in 1955, with the aim to analyze the processes by which individuals interpret the messages they receive as they are being processed by them. Bateson’s objective was to explain why we are capable of focusing on some aspects, while ignoring others that are present in the same message (Bateson, 1972). Later, the term frame would evolve and receive definitions among diverse fields, including Communication and Media Studies, Sociology and Political Science, Discourse analysis and Psychology. All these definitions of frame seem to have evolved from the sociological definition set out by Goffman in 1974, that explains frames as “principles of organization which govern events, at least social ones, and our subjective involvement in them” (Goffman, 1974). Specifically, Goffman makes a reference to communicative frames, which consist of communicative strategies that prompt particular patterns of thinking. In short, framing explores the idea that how information is presented can affect the way that they are perceived.

In contrast, Lakoff would focus on the so-called cognitive frames and how language, specifically metaphors, shape the way we think and therefore the way we live, as suggested by the title of his book *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, M., 1980). Therefore, Lakoff defends the position that “the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a

matter of metaphors” (Lakoff & Johnson, M., 1980). Thus, the different definitions of the terms “frame” and “framing” reflect a clear distinction between two levels of impact and influence of frames, on the one side, the cognitive and, on the other, the communicative. While communicative framings refer to the way the message is constructed and produced according to the wished effect and the reality that media want the public to perceive, cognitive frames emphasize cognitive biases and selective exposure that the public follows. In other words, while communicative frames rather focus on the message and its possible effect, cognitive frames analyze implicit biases that are present in the minds of the people and might be reinforced or activated by the framed messages. A frame always works on these two levels: first, a selective presentation and, secondly, a limited interpretation. On the one hand, media construct powerful images of reality for the public, but on the other hand, the public draws upon these frames and contextualizes them against pre-existing schemas.

Accordingly, framing, as defined by Entman in 1993, means selecting a few aspects of one perceived reality and making them prominent to stand out in a text in such a manner that one determined perspective, a specific causal interpretation to a problem, or a certain moral evaluation is promoted (Entman, 1993). More specifically, Entman defines four layers or elements of a frame: “a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item describe” (Entman, 1993). Ultimately, media dictate how the public should interpret the events happening around them, which entails the following two key factors that constitute framing: selection and prominence. Moreover, Gitlin later argued that framing is characterized by the processes of interpretation, emphasis and exclusion, applied by those who oversee the media to design and communicate their messages in order to organize and promote their reality of choice (Gitlin, 1980). Therefore, frames are not only ways in which news are presented, but also the result of the journalists’ ideologies and also a consequence of the position of the media platforms that they work for. That makes frames “patterns of interpretations” (Brüggemann, 2014). In the political dimension, frames constitute narratives and contribute to the process through which we give meaning to the political events that happen in the world around us.

Moreover, media frames are the structure of information and the selection of a restricted number of attributes that are thematically related to include them in media agenda (McCombs, 1997). They provide meaning, emphasize areas of importance and organize the narrative of each story. Narratives that are built through storytelling techniques, that include personalizing or dramatizing the presented information. As a consequence, framing is not merely a technique to

organize and make sense of often complicated information. Framing consists of more than a mere simplification of the message to facilitate its comprehension, it is a form of manipulation; information is distorted and twisted with the goal to shape the audience's perception of a concept and to form their opinion. People use sets of expectations and assimilated, internalized biases to make sense of their world. Media contributes to those expectations. Media, thus, set frames when establishing a perspective, by suggesting which lense the public should see through, proposing only a limited view, to see merely a fragment of reality, consequently shaping public opinion and even behavior. As Gamson and Modigliani put it, frames solicit an implicit response to a specific issue and organize everyday reality (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). At the same time, depending on how the information is framed, people will respond differently to it, meaning that, we react differently to a choice depending on how it is presented (Plous, 1993).

This discovery leads us to the concept of framing as it appears in behavioral theories in the field of psychology. Here, the frames used to express loss versus gain receive are especially prominent and serve as a highly useful basis to analyze communicative strategies applied during the vaccination debate. People tend to avoid risk when a positive frame is presented but seek risks when a negative frame is presented" (Tversky, 1981). Generally, though, people will try to avoid risk, which is a well-stated fact known as "loss aversion": the idea that the pain that could be felt because of a loss is greater than the equivalent potential pleasure of a gain. Therefore, people will tend to be cautious and seek protection and security, avoiding danger and the risks and losses it may entail. Concretely in health matters, this idea becomes essential in the consideration of frames and conception of messages that aim to influence people's behavior and decision-taking.

Overall, this idea is applicable to messages intended to promote health (Salovey, 1997). For example, with respect to sunscreen use, a gain-framed message is "Don't expose yourself to the sun, and you won't risk becoming sick," and a loss-framed message is "Don't protect yourself from the sun, and you won't help yourself stay healthy." Behavioral economics has shown that using gain-loss frames to communicate information impacts decision making, risk perception and behavioral intention (Kahneman, 20003).

In the context of communication regarding health, research has shown that gain-framed messages emphasize the benefits that can be obtained by adopting the promoted behavior. Meanwhile, loss-framed messages try to persuade by emphasizing the negative consequences or costs that not adopting the recommended behavior will cause (Salovey, 1997). In other words, even though the messages may be equivalent factually, the framing of the message can influence an

individual's willingness to incur risk either to encourage a desirable outcome or avoid an outcome that is unwanted.

### 3.3 Spiral of silence, eco-chambers and polarization

Originally proposed by German political scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974 the theory of spiral of silence, anchored in social psychology, explains how sways in public opinion may come about, especially in morally and emotionally laden debates. Noelle-Neumann shows through this theory the societal consequences of agenda-setting. The media, in presenting only one dominant tendency and showing merely one side of the story, initiates a spiraling process. This process leads to one dominating majority and another muted minority, constituting an ignored side which cannot affect political decision-making. That being the case, the spiral of silence only allows for two options to exist: either people proclaim their views, or they swallow them. People, especially if they are conscious and aware of the fact that they constitute the minority, will keep quiet out of fear of rejection and isolation. At the same time, if someone perceives themselves as part of the strong majority, they will feel confident enough to speak up. As a consequence, this then reinforces the spiral because the minority will feel less comfortable to voice their opinion.

Moreover, mass media has an effect on this process, especially in dictating the acceptable majority and forming public opinion, supporting and representing one main dominant side. Thus, media has a cumulative effect: once the spiral of silence is initiated, the media influence will increase. As a result, silence leads to more silence. Hence, for a change to happen and for a movement to gain pace, the alternative must be voiced by a sufficiently large group and to be voiced, that group must perceive that their opinion can be said without fear of isolation. However, people tend to remain silent when they feel that their views are in opposition to the dominant position on a subject. If people deem that voicing their own opinion will lead to negative consequences even beyond mere isolation (such as the loss of job or status). People refrain from expressing their standpoint if it is socially sanctioned, while they openly express it if their opinion meets public approval. The closer an individual feels their opinion resides to the held majority opinion, the more likely they are to be willing to voice it in public discourse. People who feel public support express their opinion loud and clear. Notwithstanding, an important variable of this theory is that the opinion must have a distinct moral component to trigger the spiral of silence. The more controversial, the more resistance to voicing opinion due to the higher exposure risked when daring to say what one thinks.

Now, with the internet and the surge of digital media that allow for interaction and dialogue with and between the public, social media limit the theory of the spiral of silence since it allows for

the silent minority to find support and avoid judgement in exposing themselves to a selected group that shares their opinion. This phenomenon is often referred to as “the silent majority” and can be considered a result of eco-chambers. Eco-chambers, defined as an environment where a person only encounters information or opinions that reflect and reinforce their own, challenge the spiraling effects and reduce the fears felt by the minority. Basically, they refer to situations where “users consume content and engage in discourse that predominantly supports the same point of view that users hold and believe themselves” (Boutyline & Willer, 2017).

The term is a metaphor based on the acoustic echo chamber in which sounds reverberate, reflecting the ways in which the same messages are repeated over and over through several social media platforms. These eco-chambers are fueled in part by confirmation bias, a tendency to favor into anything that reinforces existing beliefs. So to say, eco-chambers happen as a consequence of selective exposure, meaning that people don’t read the whole spectrum of opinion but instead choose to expose themselves only to those media that represent their beliefs and opinion, as explained by Lazarsfeld. Thus, as a result of the people exposing themselves to the frames of choice, to the information they want to perceive because it confirms their position and perception, also known as “confirmation bias”. In addition, the individuals those are victims of confirmation bias give more weightage to evidence to support their beliefs rather than undervaluing the evidence that can disprove it (Westerwick & et al., 2017). Accordingly, eco-chambers and confirmation bias have been oftentimes linked to social media induced polarization. To be precise, these phenomena have been studied in the context of covid-19, where participants are highly susceptible to developing echo chambers through confirmation bias (Boutyline & Willer, 2017). Therefore, while social media and the eco-chambers that can be created in them can minimize or even cancel the spiral of silence, they can enhance polarization, in creating separate and parallel realities that separate and divide people. However, it can be argued that, if controversial opinions are expressed in an environment where the majority opposes that ideology, then the consequent public rejection and social isolation will be even more extreme, resulting in the “cancelling” or even censoring of the individual that dared to express their standpoint.

#### 4. Research goals and questions

Now, almost four years after the pandemic, is it possible to determine whether and to what degree messages sent out by mainstream and alternative media in Germany during the vaccination debate were framed, and if so, how and to what degree? What strategies and objectives were behind each

certain frame? Which agendas were set and how do the imposed frames reflect those agendas? How do the messages and the narratives that the frames contain reflect them? What were the agents on both type of media platforms trying to obtain, what could have been the desired impact and effect on the public?

In other words, what framing strategies were employed to achieve what goals? What contrasts can be noted in the different discourses about the same event, depending on the media that produces the message? Did the different frames influence and cause different behaviors and perceptions related to covid-19 and the effectiveness of a vaccination against it? If so, how did those perceptions differ? Can any correlation between the communication and the resulting behavior be established in this specific case? Thus, can media have direct effects on people? Can it control the masses, change their perception of reality and even impact people's behavior?

Moreover, based on Noelle-Neumann's theory of the spiral of silence, could it be argued that the "Querdenker" groups created on telegram constitute a silent minority? Can a certain level of silencing be observed on part of the mainstream and official media? Did the anti-vaccination channels on telegram create the echo-chambers effect, thus, giving rise to a loud minority or "silent majority"? If so, did it, to some degree, contribute to the polarization of German society?

Therefore, the present study aims to contrast and confirm or deny the following three hypothesis and the objectives of the present study is to answer the question and to contrast the hypothesis:

1. Media framing influences public's attitudes and perception and behavior regarding vaccination policies
2. Fear and uncertainty mediate the relationship between media framing and the public's attitudes and perceptions towards the covid-19 vaccine and the need for a mandatory vaccination
3. Mainstream and alternative media outlets differ in their framing of vaccination policies and their implications

## 5. Methodology

Through a profound documentation and research, a series of news in form of texts, either newspaper articles published in established German press media, or telegram posts spread on various negationist channels will be assessed and compared. Thus, the methodology will consist of a qualitative analysis which includes a thorough comparison of framed messages, presented in mainstream and alternative media, through a discourse analysis of the chosen texts and a qualitative

study on the basis of the afore mentioned communication theories and research observations. Since the main purpose is to assess if and how the information related to the covid-19 vaccines has been framed and whether those frames differ in alternative and mainstream media, a series of media outlets, those platforms that people accessed to stay updated on relevant events linked to covid-19, have been selected on the condition that they fit into the category of mainstream or alternative, in fulfilling the characteristics that define them.

Consequently, for alternative media two German-speaking and two German based telegram channels, hence four in total, have been selected as the object of analysis, among them, the channels created and led by the ex-journalists who were previously mentioned. In that way, a certain degree of seriousness can be assured, since, firstly, the messages are not produced by any bots or uneducated random individuals, and secondly, because, as former journalists who had been working for established mainstream media, they will redact messages that most probably reflect a journalistic style. Then, the media outlets that fall under the category of “mainstream” and will hence serve as counterpart to the alternative platforms, are established and well-known German press outlets. Therefore, for the analysis of mainstream, articles covered by the following press outlets have been chosen: *Die Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Der Spiegel*...

A comparison of the frames built will allow to detect the differences and similarities between the media outlets and will also reveal which agendas were set and followed. In other words, analyzing and contrasting the news will not only help to discover the frames and narratives created, but will help decipher the eventual intentions of media agents, in revealing what information stands out and what aspects were hidden or received less importance. Therefore, the comparison will help to determine what images the different frames evoke and the consequences of the spread of messages packaged and presented in those specific frames.

Notwithstanding, the messages and the surrounding frames can only be studied from a communicative perspective, thus, a cognitive analysis cannot be applied. The psychological effects and processes in the mind of each receptor, the way the messages might change their perception and how the messages might influence in their decisions, specifically, how they may motivate or demotivate to get vaccinated, can only be assumed or deduced based on previous research in the field or interpretations of the message and the narratives it contains. However, to be able to empirically state or prove the specific and certain impact of the frames, a psychological experiment or questionnaire would have to be conducted. Thus, the analysis will be limited to a communicative level, which consequently means that no actual proof of a spiral of silence or polarization can be



provided. To be precise, in Lasswell's communication model, the communication process will be limited to the sender, code, message and channel, while the receiver cannot be determined.

Since this is a study conducted in the field of communication theory, the frames will be interpreted from a communicative point of view, linguistically and pragmatically. Moreover, this thesis reflects an interpretative approach, not only observing the what, but also the why of the phenomenon. Discovering the multiple meanings that emerge and truths and perspectives that are represented and exploring the goals and aimed results. Therefore, the research is focused on meaning and intention.

## 6. Analysis

For the analysis a total of 4 messages-- in this case news either in form of an article or as a telegram message-- containing information related to the covid-19 vaccination and whether it should be mandatory, as well as the subsequent consequences and its moral implications, have been selected. The total messages are equally divided into two groups, with one that represents the mainstream and the other made out of information published in alternative media, which for the purpose of the present study has been condensed to Telegram. In the following chapter, the respective frames and takes on the issue of the mandatory vaccination will be thoroughly studied, analyzed and subsequently compared.

Therefore, on the one side we have a selection of articles, specifically columns and opinion articles, published in what we have defined as mainstream media, in other words, established media and well-known German press outlets: *Der Spiegel*, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The articles chosen as the object of the analysis have all appeared in the online format, which means that they were published on the digital version of *Der Spiegel* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. On the other side, we have three messages posted on three different Telegram channels, all three of them being led by ex-journalists, living in Germany hence witnessing the social and political context: Boris Reitschuster, and Ken Jebesen.

The aspects that were considered in order to determine the choice of articles, or rather, strictly speaking, messages, do not only regard source and content; the period of time during which those said messages were published was an important factor that was considered as well. All the information that will be studied and compared and has been selected for that purpose was published in the end of the year 2021, specifically from the months of August to November, for several reasons that will be enumerated and explained in the following paragraph.

First of all, the debate around what measures, laws and norms could and should be developed and implemented on a national level was often discussed and strongly debated in the span of those months, not only in the political sphere, but also on a societal level, relevant in and for public opinion. The more measures were being discussed, the more relevant did the topic of covid-19 become, above all the option and possibility of imposing mandatory covid-19 vaccinations. For instance, since the 1<sup>st</sup> of August it became official by law that everyone from the age of 12 and above must present a current test certificate when entering the Federal Republic of Germany, unless they had been vaccinated or they had recovered. The obligation to present proof of one of the 3 Gs (vaccinated, recovered or tested) was part of the new entry regulation that had been passed by the German cabinet.

In addition, as already mentioned in the chapter of the state of the art, an especially persuasive campaign to convince the German citizenship to get vaccinated against covid-19 was led in the week from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Roughly a week later, German Health Minister Jens Spahn welcomed the decision of the Conference of Health Ministers (Gesundheitsministerkonferenz, in other words, GMK), according to which non-vaccinated persons who have had the opportunity to be vaccinated against coronavirus will no longer receive a wage refund in the event of an officially ordered quarantine from 1<sup>st</sup> November. Then, in the month of November and December and especially during the days upcoming to the Christmas holidays, the German Government, its official sources and health experts strongly advised to get the booster doses of the covid-19 vaccines, launching several offensive vaccination campaigns to avoid an increase in case numbers and a higher incidence rate before the winter holidays.

Particularly in sight of a possible fifth wave and considering the spread of the new SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant, highly contagious but arguably and considerably less harmful than its previous versions, especially the German Minister of Health Jens Spahn insisted on getting vaccinated. In his exact words, stated during a federal press conference “Wir erleben gerade vor allem eine Pandemie der Ungeimpften – und die ist massiv. Die Infektionszahlen steigen. Zur Wahrheit gehört: auf den Intensivstationen würden deutlich weniger COVID-19-Patienten liegen, wenn alle, die es könnten, sich auch impfen lassen würden“, in English: we are currently witnessing above all a pandemic of the unvaccinated – and it is massive. The cases of infections are rising. Truth is, there would be significantly fewer covid-19 cases in the intensive care units if everyone that could, would get vaccinated. Thus, not only were the numbers high and would most probably increase, but also the intensive care stations and hospitals were insufficiently equipped and already burdened and over their capacity.

Consequently, a collective effort was urgently required-- in other words, more people had to get vaccinated and eventually even stricter measures would need to be taken, which in turn led to more protests. Moreover, the prolonged nature of the pandemic made people become optimistic and biased of their chances of contracting the virus, which, according to studies, would lower their acceptance of vaccines and even make them hesitant or reinforce their decision of being vaccinated against covid-19. Therefore, to sum it up, the time frame from August to November 2021 was chosen because of the aforementioned reasons: the debate around the laws that the German Government had implemented or was going to implement, the urgent need of stabilizing the national health service which translated into the mobilization of all German citizens to get vaccinated or/and get the respective booster, and because a possible mandatory covid-19 vaccination was a highly debated and relevant issue, not only in the political sphere, but also on a public dimension.

Thus, public interest and numerous political debates during that period of time unavoidably and naturally led to the topic being covered in many press outlets and across a variety of social media channels, in which users and journalists exposed their views, opinions and moral evaluations. Journalists themselves reveal their biases and perceptions, especially through columns and opinion articles, which is the format chosen to study the mainstream press content. Either passively, subconsciously interpreting the issue following own biases and perspective or even simply as a consequence of having had accessed and retrieved limited information, or actively as an intent to apply and implement own interpretations and frames and share those with audience. Therefore, in columns and opinion articles we can find certain similarities to telegram publications, namely a strong personal, and less objective perspective.

Notwithstanding, undoubtedly, it cannot be denied that there are still many differences between both media, all of them mentioned in the section of theoretical framework of the present bachelor thesis. This being clear, now we can proceed to the analysis and comparison of the six different messages that will be exposed in chronological order.

## 6.1 Framing in mainstream media

The first commentary, article and object of the analysis, was published in the online version of German newspaper, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* with the title "Gerechtigkeit für Geimpfte" on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August. The following opinion article was written by Werner Bartens, German doctor, historian and scientific journalist, specialized in the medical field. In his comment, he exposes his views on

restrictions, in particular 2g and 3g norms introduced as an intent to motivate or pressure those who were not vaccinated yet, and additionally he presents his arguments in favor of the covid-19 vaccination and all measures that lead to it and favor those who have it. This main idea is essentially summarized in the article's title: justice for the vaccinated.

In his article, Werner's perception of the unvaccinated and his opinion about the 2g and 3g measures are clearly stated. The author divides society in two clearly differentiated groups: the vaccinated majority and the unvaccinated minority, each with their respective characteristics and attributes. According to Werner, the majority has to suffer because a minority is too comfortable to protect itself and others and, what is more, because a minority is too inert to inform itself and to listen to the information about the covid-19 vaccination. To cite him literally: "vielmehr geht es nicht an, dass die geimpfte Mehrheit darunter leidet, wenn eine Minderheit zu bequem ist und es hinauszögert, sich und andere zu schützen. Ernsthaft". Thus, he claims that it is unacceptable that the vaccinated majority is suffering because of the minority's comfort, as they delay protecting themselves and others. In addition, he expresses his confusion about the unwillingness to get vaccinated, especially since there is enough information available and the vaccines are effective, more than they are harmful.

In any case, the positive effects of the vaccines and their benefits prevail over the possible harms that they could eventually entail. As the author puts it, "man kann sich nun wahrlich nicht über einen Mangel an Aufklärung über die verschiedenen Vakzine, ihre Schutzwirkung und mögliche Nebenwirkungen im vergangenen halben Jahr beklagen. In den Medien wird täglich darüber berichtet, in Talkshows debattiert, im Bekanntenkreis die Einstellung des anderen erkundet". Paraphrasing him in English: there is enough information about vaccines, their benefits and side effects...it was discussed daily in the media.

Consequently, he states that it is right to apply stricter rules, specifically and only for the unvaccinated part of the population in Germany. In particular, owners of bars and restaurants as well as event organizers have the right and arguably even obligation to impose their house rules in order to ensure the control of the virus and the protection of all citizens, or, at least, the protection of those that have sought it and hence taken the pertinent measures. "Insofern ist es richtig, wenn Veranstalter und Gastwirte von ihrem Hausrecht Gebrauch machen und künftig nur noch die Geimpften einlassen", which equates to "therefore it is right if event organizers and bar owners make use of their 'domestic authority' and from now on only allow the vaccinated to enter their premises" in English. As a matter of fact, the version of the title that appears on the link of the TAZ, "restrictions

for the unvaccinated mean justice for the vaccinated”, reflects the essence of the article and epitomizes the author’s opinion. Ultimately, after all, the refusal of some to get vaccinated brings about the prolongation or implementation of new restrictions for others.

Therefore, the frame of the article contains a narrative of the vaccinated are assigned with the role of victims, the unvaccinated are villains and, thus, the bar owners and all those who apply, could or want to apply stricter norms in their spaces are the heroes, in helping the victims receive justice and enjoy their well-deserved freedom. Seemingly a very simplifying storytelling technique, proves to be highly effective to convince the readers, in appealing directly to the emotions as it presents an unjust situation that aims to evoke feelings of frustration and deception of the unvaccinated and presents a clear scapegoat, the unvaccinated, that they can blame. Moreover, in dividing society into two groups, the ones that are responsible and deserve justice, and the ones that triggered and lead to the suffering of the people that act in a responsible manner, the author creates a sense of union and community caused by an “us versus them narrative”. To put it in a different way, Werner establishes an in-group, on the one side, and an out-group, on the other hand.

In addition, the following table contains the framing characteristics that were detected in the present article, as set and defined by Entman:

Entman’s framing characteristics	Framing in the article
Definition of problem	The problem consists of the application and, even worse, prolongation of the restrictions because of the unvaccinated’s unwillingness to get the covid-19 vaccines. Said regulations are applied to all citizens and all citizens have had to follow them, regardless of their vaccination status; in other words, vaccinated and unvaccinated have had to follow the same regulations and measures.
Causal interpretation	The part of the population in Germany that still is not vaccinated against covid-19 is too lazy. That is the only possible way to explain it since there is more than enough information available

	<p>and more than enough good reasons to get vaccinated.</p>
<p>Moral evaluation</p>	<p>The majority can under no circumstances suffer the consequences that should be dealt with only by those who constitute the minority that has voluntarily decided to not protect themselves and others, to not access and trust all the available information about the covid-19 vaccines, choosing to be lazy and leading to the elongation and implementation of restrictions, instead. This situation is unfair, those who chose to be vaccinated did it for the benefit and protection of society and to stop the spread of the virus, thus, their good deed is not being recognized by the Government and they are not contributing to the prolonging of the pandemic situation and, subsequently, should not be blamed for it. Applying the same measures and restrictions for everyone means punishing the good and accepting the bad.</p>
<p>Proposed solution</p>	<p>To obtain justice for the vaccinated, thus, not letting the unvaccinated get away with their lazy, indecisive and irresponsible behavior with the majority having to pay the consequences, restrictions only for the minority that is not vaccinated should be implemented, meaning 2g or 3g. Therefore, bars and restaurants need a restricted entry, not for the unvaccinated. To summarize, as the author puts it, who does not want to hear will have to feel. In times of a</p>

	<p>pandemic this means that those who avoid the vaccines, will have to assume the consequences. They will be excluded.</p>
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The next article was published in the German press outlet DER SPIEGEL, in digital format. The column “Coronavirus: Geimpft und gelackmeiert” (Coronavirus: vaccinated and conned), that will be studied in the following paragraph, was published in the German press outlet *Der Spiegel*, appearing on its digital newspaper on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November 2021. Its author, Nikolaus Blome, had been editor in chief and head of policy for *Bild* until October 2019, until he started working for *Der Spiegel*.

Similarly to the previous article, the present text urges for the introduction of stricter rules and suggests applying a higher pressure on the unvaccinated, not only on a governmental, but also on a societal level, to mobilize the remaining unvaccinated to change their status and finally get the vaccine. It is presented as the remaining, and only, solution that will lead the way out of the pandemic, back to the normality where freedom and safety could be enjoyed. Again, a similar narrative can be detected, a story within the frame in which the vaccinated are the victims, even if they should be the heroes, and the unvaccinated are the villains who put their own interests first. Again, a clear division is presented through an opposition of the vaccinated and unvaccinated.

Moreover, regarding the frames that were detected, the following can be determined:

Entman’s framing characteristics	Framing in the article
Definition of problem	A vaccinated majority, hoping to receive some kind of compensation for their civil and responsible and to finally enjoy their personal freedom to the fullest extent, is frustrated and angry because the pandemic situation is not improving.
Causal interpretation	The frustration and deception felt by the vaccinated is directed towards the Government in their unorganized and unproportional response to the pandemic, and also towards the unvaccinated that are the main reason for the

	endlessness of the state of emergency. Because they have to follow the same measures as the not vaccinated, there is no advancements and positive evolution, neither is there any sight of end of lockdown and return to normality.
Moral evaluation	The current state of the issue is anything but fair. It is not acceptable that a lockdown or other measures are applied generally and that the ones that actually help and contribute to the control of the virus and the end of the pandemic have to suffer the consequences that should only be paid by the unvaccinated. The anger and frustration on part of the vaccinated population is understandable.
Proposed solution	Applying societal and governmental controlled pressure to push the voluntarily unvaccinated to get the vaccines. These measures include, not only a mandatory vaccination, but specific restrictions, such as the 2g and 3g rules. Society and State both have the right and even obligation to apply the norms previously mentioned.

## 6.2 Framing in alternative media

Messages published on two telegram channels that share and spread information which reflects the “Querdenker” position and perception will be analyzed in the following paragraphs. Firstly, one message shared on Ken Jepsen’s channel “Aufklärung und Information” which up to date is followed by a total of 146.473 members and, secondly, a message posted on Boris Reitschuster’s channel “reitschuster.de”, with 238.945 subscriptions.

Ken Jepsen, founder and administrator of the telegram channel “Enlightenment and Information” (Aufklärung und Information) was a former radio host who used to work for the German *rbb* (*Rundfunk Berlin Brandenburg*), presenting the internet journalism portal known as KenFM. On



the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2021, Ken Jebsen posted a message on his telegram channel to inform his subscribers about the FDA’s ban of a third dose of the vaccine produced by BioNTech/Pfizer in the United States of America.

In his message, he states that the reason for said prohibition lies in the risks that the vaccines pose, in causing more deaths than giving protection. As the author puts it: “Grund dafür ist, dass die Impfung mehr Menschen tötet, als sie schützt”, in English: the reason for [the ban] is that the vaccine kills more people than it protects them. Germany has not revealed that information even though, according to him, all “rulers” are aware of it. Consequently, in order to go through with the initial plan, the German citizens are still being urged to get a third dose of the vaccine in question. Lastly, it is important to mention that the message ends with the phrase “Willkommen im besten Deutschland aller Zeiten”, a statement expressed ironically to imply that Germany is in the worst state it has ever been, in the political, economic and social regard.

Therefore, in the narrative that he uses to create his aimed frame, the German Government and all the “rulers” that are part of the covid conspiracy and contribute to it is described as a totalitarian regime that will take unethical actions such as hiding information, consequently putting all citizens in danger. Moreover, he makes no differentiation between the vaccinated or unvaccinated, at least concerning the role they represent; hence, both are considered victims of the “rulers” foul play. Notwithstanding, some (the vaccinated) will additionally suffer the consequences of the “dangerous vaccines”.

Following Entman’s framing model, the present frame has been determined:

Entman’s framing characteristics	Framing in the article
Definition of problem	There is a certain type of censorship that exists in Germany and prevents its citizens of being aware of important information concerning the covid-19 vaccines. In other words, the German media and Government officials are purposefully hiding information about the risks that the vaccines pose and about their withdrawal from the market. The “rulers” have access to all information but decide to censor it and remain silent because they want everything

	under control, according to their plans and goals.
Causal interpretation	According to Jebesen, the fact that the German Government hides information and the media do not cover everything – for example, that the FDA has forbidden a third dose of BioNTech/Pfizer’s vaccines—is because they do not want.
Moral evaluation	He classifies the absence of information as censorship imposed by the German Government, which wants to remain in control in the information and does so by avoiding any information that questions the effectiveness and harmfulness of the vaccines being spread in the media. With the aim to follow their “perfidious” plan, the so-called “rulers” ignore possible risks and recommend and even urge German citizens to get vaccinated for a third time, not considering losses. With his last sentence, “welcome to the best Germany of all times”, he alludes to the past and implies that the described situation is arguably worse than it has been in the past, regarding unlawful and unethical actions that the authoritarian Government takes to reach their goals and to control the masses.
Proposed solution	Not explicitly stated, but implied. To avoid being retrieved of important information and to have access to relevant data, especially to the information that would warn about vaccines and the apparent dangers and harm they can

	<p>cause, it is necessary that citizens inform themselves through different ways and on platforms that offer the whole truth, that is to say, platforms like his that offer enlightenment and information (“Aufklärung und Information”).</p>
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Moreover, we have Boris Reitschuster’s post shared with the members of his channel on the 10<sup>th</sup> August of 2021. Boris Reitschuster was a former journalist, concretely the Russia correspondent, for Focus. However, in 2015 he decided to resign, naming “different views” as the main reason that motivated his decision. The selected content was posted in form of a telegram message containing a link that leads to a published article appearing on the personal website of the author, reitschuster.de. Since both messages are directly linked and part of the same post, in the present bachelor thesis they are considered the same and will be analyzed as one.

First and foremost, the message that Reitschuster posted on telegram presents the title of the linked article “Niemand hat die Absicht, eine Impfpflicht zu errichten” and adds a short comment that introduces the content that will be discussed in the article. In that comment, the author describes the 10<sup>th</sup> of August as a “dark day for the German constitution, for freedom and for democracy in Germany”, arguing that the Government promotes a “totalitarianism of vaccines” with lies. Lastly, he adds the link that leads to his commentary that discusses the conference of German prime ministers on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August.

He starts off by criticizing the Government for its undemocratic policies, which he deems as undemocratic. The title itself is an allusion to the German Democratic Republic, the DDR. Specifically, it imitates a quote by Walter Ulbricht denying any plans to build a wall dividing Germany, which ultimately happened only two weeks later. He himself gave orders for the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Therefore, the current Government is compared to the communist regime in the DDR. Freedom and other rights are given or taken not guided by the German Constitution, but according to the vaccination status, thus, depending on what the Government dictates. Not only is the 10<sup>th</sup> of August a dark day for the constitution, freedom and democracy in Germany. And also, for the media since the journalists are biased and favor and support the Government’s position. Moreover, he goes on to say that what the government dictates often does not reflect what it has announced. He argues that the government, specifically Bavaria’s prime minister, is not being honest when claiming that it

does not want to implement mandatory vaccinations, that each citizen can decide freely.

In addition, the State pressures, discriminates and stigmatizes its citizens when it speaks of voluntariness while debating mandatory vaccinations and introducing restrictions, i.e. the 2g and 3g norms. Moreover, he claims that the government lies when it claims that two doses would be sufficient to escape the endless pandemic cycle, while advertising the booster doses. Thus, they are not only lying but deceiving the public. Arguably, according to Reitschuster, they manipulate and select only the information that they consider necessary to promote their views and policies. Lastly, he implicitly describes them as hypocritical since they do not respect the values they declared to defend, including a resolution in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of the European Union (Nr. 2361) that states that the unvaccinated should not be discriminated, regardless of the reasons that led to their choice.

Again, anger and frustration are an emotion that is strongly present in the article, constituting the Leitmotiv of the covid-19 vaccination issue and management. Again, the main agents are the German Government, that implements the respective rules and regulations, and its citizens, who have to follow the norms and live with the restrictions. And, again, there is someone to blame, someone to direct the emotions at—in this article, the scapegoat is the State.

Once the content has been established and the main arguments were detected, we can proceed with the study of the frames, as always, applying Entman’s framing model.

Entman’s framing characteristics	Framing in the article
Definition of problem	The State is poorly managing the pandemic situation, proceeding to take measures and develop policies that are undemocratic and unconstitutional because they do not respect the right of freedom and lead to the discrimination of the unvaccinated part of the population.
Causal interpretation	According to the author, the State lies and deceives to better implement their own plans and keep the control. In implementing restrictions that only apply to the unvaccinated, they polarize and divide society (besides of

	acting unlawful) and help to pressure them more easily into getting vaccinated.
Moral evaluation	As already said, Boris Reitschuster claims the German Government is being everything, but undemocratic. Taking any measure, regardless of what the Constitution states, to reach higher rates of vaccinations. Moreover, not only are the actions they take unethical and, definitely, unlawful, but also the way in which they communicate their policies to the public, changing the narrative, manipulating the facts, openly lying and changing their statements. Thus, the 10 <sup>th</sup> of August was a dark day, not only for democracy, but also for the media.
Proposed solution	Calling out the totalitarian German Government for its unethical practices, seeking information in alternative media to escape the lies and manipulation by hands of the State and reading and supporting journalists that are critical of German State propaganda, are the solutions that Boris Reitschuster proposes as a possible solution to the deception tactics and discrimination campaigns of the State and the mainstream media that are complicit.

### 6.3 Comparison of the frames created in mainstream and alternative media

Meanwhile all frames reflect the topic and define the essence of the issue as an unorganized and ineffective management of the Government, implementing unproportional measures, being undemocratic and, especially, prolonging restrictions, alternative and mainstream frames differ in the moral evaluation and proposed solutions. While the mainstream urges for mandatory vaccination, or at least, stricter regulations only for the unvaccinated, the alternative media warn

about the covid-19 vaccines and question their safety.

Another main difference lies in the opinion about the considered outgroup, in how each “side” perceives “the other”. According to the content published in the alternative media, the vaccinated are not even considered as the opposing side; instead, the Government is the scapegoat and one of its many strategies that undermine the democratic values of the German society is the polarization of the citizens into two divided groups, vaccinated and unvaccinated. In contrast, the mainstream represents a more divided society, since it is no longer the German Government that is being blamed, but the unvaccinated themselves become the scapegoat in voluntarily and egoistically preferring to put themselves but, above all, others in danger.

In fact, oftentimes the unvaccinated are painted as “the minority”, either brainwashed by the fake news and conspiracy theories that they absorb or consciously and egoistically deciding not to get vaccinated. One thing that they do have in common as well, is that they, mainstream and alternative, often present the insufficient knowledge and trust in the content and information each, vaccinated and unvaccinated, read as an argument to try and understand and justify their behavior. In fact, the name of the chat by Ken Jebsen that was employed to select a message for the analysis reflects that each side will consider itself as better informed, while claiming that the other side is being manipulated or lied to.

Moreover, with regards to the analysis of echo-chambers and spiral of silence, the following can be concluded: while mainstream media inform about several topics and the columns that are published are written by several journalists with different personal views (still, all within the ideological position of the press outlet), the telegram chats that were analyzed presented solely and exclusively criticism towards the government, generally and mostly connected to the pandemic. Seeing the number of members of the chat and creating a chat where the information published constantly reinforces the member’s opinion reverses the possible effects of the spiral of silence and, instead, creates a feeling of belonging and reassurance, thus, while being the minority, on telegram it does not seem like it.

All in all, the differences in frames and the narratives that those contain are created because of a distinct perception of threat and because of considering different gains and losses when contemplating reasons for or against the mandatory vaccination or the covid-19 vaccines in general. On the one hand, the mainstream articles focused on the benefits of the vaccines and their essential character to fight the virus, as well as, controlling its spread and reducing the contagion cases, thus, protecting others and avoiding more deaths. On the other hand, the alternative content attributed

death as a consequence of the vaccines themselves, claiming that they are not safe. Therefore, considering the vaccine as a much higher threat than the virus itself.

## 7. Conclusion

The comparison of mainstream and alternative media narratives reveals distinct frames and interpretations of societal issues, particularly regarding vaccination and the respective responses of the German Government, such as, specific and targeted norms restrictions to mobilize the remaining unvaccinated to change their vaccination status.

In spite of certain differences in narrative and frame, such as the role that each agent plays and the degree of responsibility that each of them present, both mainstream and alternative media narratives demonstrate a clear frustration towards perceived problems, often seeking a scapegoat to hold responsible. This dichotomy between hero and villain narratives underscores differing perceptions of loss and gain that are determined according to perceived threat and felt fear, shaping the respective blame placed on various actors. Therefore, even though both mainstream and alternative media articles present the same recurrent narratives, in which the same agents appear, the main difference lies in the perception and responsibility attributed to those agents. Consequently, while both vaccinated and unvaccinated feel fear, anger and frustration and build the narrative within that frame, they do not direct those emotions in the same way. While in alternative media, the State was the main scapegoat, in the articles published in the mainstream press, the blame was constantly put on the unvaccinated.

The reason for this difference lies in the perceived loss and gain, in other words, in whether the covid-19 vaccines are considered effective or not, and whether they are perceived as a bigger threat and harm than the virus itself. Subsequently, if the covid-19 vaccine would be considered as the solution to the pandemic and as the only way to stop the spread of the virus, and if that virus was perceived to be more deadly than the vaccine itself, then the article will present arguments that lean towards a mandatory vaccination. Thus, mainstream media frames vaccination as a solution or integral part of addressing the COVID-19 crisis, emphasizing the importance of collective action and solidarity.

In contrast, alternative media frames vaccination as potentially dangerous, portraying it as part of a larger conspiracy or loss of personal freedom. The portrayal of heroes and villains varies significantly, with mainstream media often aligning with government narratives and against the

“Querdenker”, while alternative media positions itself as a voice against perceived manipulation, corruption and loss of democratic values.

The analysis and comparison of the articles has shown the undeniable impact that fear and uncertainty has on human thinking, decision-taking and behavior, as well as, on media structures and communication flows. Therefore, fear and uncertainty play a significant role in shaping public opinion and behavior, with both mainstream and alternative media exploiting these emotions to construct their respective narratives and promote their perceptions. Moreover, fear and uncertainty, an arguably fatal combination that oftentimes lead to irrational conclusions and naïve views, promote the desperate demand for information—the more reassuring, the better—and the consequent surge of misinformation and fake news, in other words, to an infodemic. Then, even though both sides will present data, which later might prove to be wrong or unexact, alternative media often accuses mainstream sources of spreading misinformation and propaganda, while mainstream media criticizes alternative sources for promoting conspiracy theories and endangering public health.

Moreover, the comparison certainly reveals distinct framing strategies employed by each media type, from topic selection and definition of the issue to a causal interpretation, to moral evaluation and recommended solutions. Mainstream media tends to prioritize official sources and studies, while alternative media emphasizes dissenting voices and skepticism towards authority. Sensationalism and polarization further contribute to the divergent narratives presented by both media types, perpetuating societal divisions and the spiral of silence.

Overall, the comparison underscores the profound impact of media framing on public perception and behavior, highlighting the need for a critical analysis and media literacy in navigating contemporary discourse. In addition, it reveals how fear and uncertainty can influence on the way information is written, spread and received. Thus, the present thesis shows that frames undeniably influence on the ways issues and events are interpreted and perceived and determine how these issues will be remembered and studied in the future, once they are but past and become history. Therefore, to conclude, it is worth mentioning the following idea: our history is what we make it, thus, covid-19 will be remembered differently depending on the perceptions and views, internal biases and attitudes and media that we consumed...be it as it may, time will tell how the pandemic will be perceived in the future. Until then, good night and good luck.



## 8. Annex

### 1. Gerechtigkeit für Geimpfte (Süddeutsche Zeitung)

#### Corona: Gerechtigkeit für Geimpfte

**Die Mehrheit darf nicht darunter leiden, wenn eine Minderheit zu träge ist, sich mit dem Thema Impfung zu beschäftigen. Insofern handeln Gastwirte und Veranstalter richtig, wenn sie nur noch Geimpfte einlassen.**

Seit Monaten gibt es kaum noch ein anderes Thema. Trotzdem müssten sie sich das erst noch überlegen mit der Impfung, sagen etliche Mitbürger. Ernsthaft? Man kann sich nun wahrlich nicht über einen Mangel an Aufklärung über die verschiedenen Vakzine, ihre Schutzwirkung und mögliche Nebenwirkungen im vergangenen halben Jahr beklagen. In den Medien wird täglich darüber berichtet, in Talkshows debattiert, im Bekanntenkreis die Einstellung des anderen erkundet.

Wie hältst du es mit der Impfung, ist geradezu die aktuelle Gretchenfrage geworden. Ein ganzes Land hat zuvor schon einen Crashkurs in wissenschaftlicher Nachhilfe durchgemacht, von den - durchweg hohen - Prozentangaben zur Wirksamkeit der Impfstoffe erfahren, konnte sich über seltene Komplikationen im Nanobereich informieren und durfte einsehen, dass der Nutzen der Impfung einen möglichen Schaden bei Weitem überwiegt. Erst mal überlegen und noch ein bisschen abwarten - ernsthaft?

Wer nicht hören will, muss fühlen - das heißt in Zeiten der Pandemie: Wer dem Thema Impfung ausweicht, muss leider draußen bleiben. Einen Impfwang gibt es in diesem Land nicht, soll es auch nicht geben, die Aufforderung, sich mit dieser gesellschaftlich so relevanten Frage auseinanderzusetzen und Stellung zu beziehen, hingegen schon.

Die Weigerung der einen, sich impfen zu lassen, bringt schließlich verlängerte oder neue Einschränkungen für die anderen mit sich. Insofern ist es richtig, wenn Veranstalter und Gastwirte von ihrem Hausrecht Gebrauch machen und künftig nur noch die Geimpften einlassen; Ausnahmen für Kinder und jene wenigen, die sich aus medizinischen Gründen tatsächlich nicht impfen lassen können, eingeschlossen. Übrigens ersetzen Tests nicht die Spritze. Sie bieten nicht die gleiche Sicherheit wie Impfungen, darüber sollte Armin "Hin und Her" Laschet nicht nonchalant hinweggehen.

Anreize funktionieren manchmal ganz einfach. Eine aufs Porzellan gemalte Fliege im Pissoir oder ein Fußballtor an zentraler Stelle eben dort verbessern die Hygiene auf Männertoiletten ungemein. Um sich impfen zu lassen, reicht derzeit für manche Zaudernde die Aussicht auf eine Bratwurst oder einen Burger. So tief verankert kann die Skepsis also kaum sein. Offenbar benötigen andere als Denkanstoß, um die eigene Trägheit zu überwinden, die versperrte Tür zum Restaurant, Konzert oder Flugzeug. Das ist keine Benachteiligung für Ungeimpfte. Vielmehr geht es nicht an, dass die geimpfte Mehrheit darunter leidet, wenn eine Minderheit zu bequem ist und es hinauszögert, sich und andere zu schützen. Ernsthaft.

### 2. Coronavirus: Geimpft und gelackmeiert (Der Spiegel)

Hin und wieder schaue ich in die Kommentare unter den Kolumnen hier, das ist mitunter sehr interessant. Vor zwei Wochen etwa ging es darum, ob Geimpfte de facto nun zu »Geiseln« der

(freiwillig) Ungeimpften würden, [knapp 8000 Kommentare](#), der leider schon gewohnte Geifereifer aus dem Eck der Impfgegner oder gar Querdenker, aber zum ersten Mal auch sichtbar: eine sprachlich kaum gebremste Wut der Geimpften auf die Ungeimpften. Heiliger Bimmbam, dachte ich mir, wenn jetzt auch noch die Mehrheit im Land den Verstand verliert, stehen schwarze Weihnachten ins Haus.

Freilich muss auch der Kummer gewohnte Konservative einräumen: Zumindest haben die Leute Grund, stinksauer auf die politischen Staatsversager in Bund und Ländern zu sein. Ich würde noch gelten lassen, dass manch' eine Warnung vor dem Ausmaß der nächsten Coronawelle nicht sofort ernst genommen wurde, weil mitunter Modellierer das Wort erhoben, die ihre Mathematik als Extremsportart betreiben.

Außerdem hatten wir Wahlkampf und eine Jahrhundertflut, welche viel Aufmerksamkeit verlangten. Dennoch gibt es keine, absolut keine Entschuldigung dafür, dass die 15 bis 25 Millionen kalenderfest absehbaren Boosterimpfungen so schlecht vorbereitet wurden, die Impfzentren geschlossen und die Hausärzte vergrätzt sind.

Ebenso absolut keine Erklärung gibt es, warum – bereits halb begraben unter der Coronawelle – die Ampelparteien weite Teile des Eingriffs-Instrumentariums für obsolet erklären wollten, vom Auslaufen aller Einschränkungen im nächsten März schwärmten und Kritik daran nieselnd-naseweis auf Juristisch zu beantworten beliebten.

Kurzum: Die Verantwortlichen stoßen mit voller Wucht jene zwei Drittel der Bevölkerung vor den Kopf, die sie durch die 18 Monate seit Pandemiebeginn getragen haben. Dieselben Planlos-Politiker lassen es geschehen, dass bald Tag für Tag aus freiwillig Geimpften unfreiwillig Ungeimpfte werden könnten, weil sie ihre Boosterimpfung nicht rechtzeitig erhalten.

Man kann ahnen, was das alles mit der geimpften Mehrheit macht, die sich im besten Sinne bürgerlich zeigte: pflichtbewusst und pflichterfüllend, verantwortungsbereit und sicherlich auch mit festem Blick auf die ausgelobte Belohnung. »Impfen ist der Weg aus der Pandemie«, für jeden einzelnen und für alle zusammen, wie oft haben wir diesen Satz gehört und wie fest haben wir ihn geglaubt?

Wenn wir aber alle gleichermaßen wieder in den Lockdown müssen, klingt der Satz wie Hohn – noch dazu wie der Hohn der Impfgegner, was es doppelt bitter macht. Die gesamtgesellschaftliche Erzählung von, ja, Erlösung, von der Freiheit und Wiederaushändigung des alten Lebens, sie zerfällt. Die individuelle Impfdividende wird zu Asche, 2G zu »geimpft und gelackmeiert«. Back to square one also, versprochen, gebrochen, verar...t.

Die (freiwillig) Ungeimpften sind daran nicht allein schuld, gewiss nicht. Aber sie sind der mit Abstand überflüssigste Teil des Problems, und so bläst ihnen die Mehrheit immer stärker ins Gesicht: Eine allgemeine Impfpflicht wollten laut [RTL-Umfrage im Juni](#) nur 22 Prozent der Befragten, [Mitte November waren es 64 Prozent](#). Heißt: Anfangs waren auch viele Geimpfte gegen eine allgemeine Impfpflicht, heute (rechnerisch) so gut wie keiner mehr von ihnen. Stabil blieb indes die fast totale Ablehnung gegen Prämien als Impfanreiz, 87 bis 90 Prozent der Befragten zwischen August und November. Man hat den Impfzögerern nie etwas gegönnt, jetzt wünscht man ihnen die allgemeine Impfpflicht an den Hals.

Nächstes Beispiel: Wenn demnächst 3G am Arbeitsplatz gilt, werden die einen am Werkstor oder Büroeingang ganz normal hineingehen und ihren Impfausweis vorzeigen, die anderen aber sich testen lassen (müssen), weil sie ungeimpft sind. »Impf-Outing« am Arbeitsplatz nannte das eine kluge Kollegin dieser Tage. Und ich dachte unwillkürlich an: Zwangs-Outing.

Seit Dezember vergangenen Jahres ([Kolumne: Impfpflicht, was denn sonst?](#)) spreche ich mich für sozialen oder staatlich kontrollierten Druck auf freiwillig Ungeimpfte aus, um sie zur Impfung zu

bewegen. Staat und Gesellschaft haben im Einzelfall das Recht, einer mehrheitlich gefassten Norm breite Geltung zu verschaffen, in einer manifesten Pandemie haben sie meines Erachtens sogar die Pflicht dazu.

Trotzdem ist es nicht gelungen, und man sieht mit großem Kummer, wie es die Gutmütigen sind, die darüber jetzt irre werden oder verzweifeln – und nicht die Störrischen.

[Coronavirus: Geimpft und gelackmeiert - Kolumne - DER SPIEGEL](#)

2. [Ken Jebsen \(Aufklärung und Information\)](#)

20 novembre 2021

Die amerikanische  
Arzneimittelbehörde FDA hat eine  
Drittimpfung mit dem Impfstoff von  
BioNTech/Pfizer verboten ⚠️

Grund dafür ist, dass die **Impfung**  
mehr Menschen tötet, als sie  
schützt 💀 ✨

In der BRD interessiert so etwas aber  
niemanden. Man darf ganz sicher  
davon ausgehen, dass die  
Herrschenden ganz genau darüber  
Bescheid wissen. Aber sie ignorieren  
diese Informationen, weil sie nicht zu  
ihrem perfiden Plan passen. Also  
werden die Bürger genötigt, sich  
auch noch den dritten Schuss von  
BioNTech/Pfizer setzen zu lassen,  
ohne Rücksicht auf Verluste.

Willkommen im besten Deutschland  
aller Zeiten!

Kostenlos abonnieren: [t.me/  
kenjebesen](https://t.me/kenjebesen)

👁️ 131,8K 03:00

#### 4. Niemand hat die Absicht, eine Impfpflicht zu errichten (Reitschuster.de)

So viel Zynismus ist eigentlich in Demokratien nicht üblich: Die im Grundgesetz nicht vorgesehene Ministerpräsidentenkonferenz mit der Kanzlerin setzt maßgebliche heilige Prinzipien des Grundgesetzes außer Kraft bzw. zementiert deren Ausschaltung. Freiheiten werden in Deutschland künftig an den Impfstatus gekoppelt; die eigentlich unveräußerlichen Grundrechte sind nun zu etwas geworden, was die Politik mehr oder weniger nach Belieben vergibt – oder eben einschränkt. Während Nachbarländer wie die Niederlande oder Großbritannien auf Normalisierung setzen und Dänemark ab dem 1. Oktober die Corona-Maßnahmen außer Kraft setzt, zieht Deutschland die Daumenschrauben weiter an. Auf die Frage, ob das Virus hierzulande gefährlicher sei als in den freiheitlicheren Ländern, hatte die Bundesregierung am Montag auf der Bundespressekonferenz keine Antwort außer Spott ([siehe hier](#)).

Ich kann mich nicht erinnern, dass innerhalb von demokratischen Systemen derart dreist, ja herausfordernd gelogen wurde. „Wir wollen keine Impfpflicht, jeder entscheidet selbst, ob er sich impfen lässt oder nicht“, sagte Bayerns Ministerpräsident – und erzählte davor und danach lange und ausführlich, wie Nicht-Geimpfte künftig diskriminiert, schikaniert und faktisch stigmatisiert werden sollen. Für einen normalen Alltag müssen sie bald tief in die Tasche greifen und sich ständig in der Nase bohren lassen. Nennen wir die Dinge beim Namen: Der Staat erpresst seine Bürger. Und betrügt dabei: Denn offiziell spricht er von Freiwilligkeit. Niemand werde zum Impfen gedrängt werden, hieß es wieder und wieder. Dabei geschieht genau das Gegenteil.

Die Pressekonferenz war ein regelrechtes Feuerwerk von Lug und Betrug. „Wir werden auf Dauer uns der Debatte über 2 G nicht versperren können“, kündigte Ministerpräsident Söder dann an. Und weiter: „Wenn private Veranstalter sagen, Zugang nur mit 2 G, dann hat der Staat keine Handhabe, dagegen etwas zu machen.“ Der [Gouverneur von Florida](#) hat genau das Gegenteil bewiesen – dort ist es verboten, den Zugang zu Einrichtungen vom Impfstatus abhängig zu machen.

Weiter kündigte Söder an: „Der Schülerausweis wird im Grunde genommen auch ein Testzertifikat werden, weil mit dem Schülerausweis man nachweist, dass man mehrfach geimpft ist, äh, getestet ist.“ Ein Freudscher Versprecher? Wenn nicht ausreichend geimpft werde, könne es zu weiteren Mutationen kommen, behauptete der CSU-Chef. Noch im Winter warnte RKI-Chef Lothar Wieler, dass Impfen zu Mutationen führen werde. Später sagte er ganz das Gegenteil. Söder meinte heute: „Mit

zwei kleinen Piks können wir aus dieser Endlosschleife herauskommen.“ Auch das ist wieder gelogen, denn auch Wieler gab schon zu, dass es durchaus möglich ist, dass Geimpfte regelmäßig neu geimpft werden müssen. Bereits jetzt werden Booster-Impfungen für bereits zweifach Geimpfte vorbereitet.

Die Liste solcher Widersprüche, Ungenauigkeiten und Lügen ließe sich lange fortsetzen. Was hat es etwa mit den „Innenräumen“ auf sich, für die besonders strenge Regeln gelten sollen. Jeder Lebensmittelladen ist ein „Innenraum“, jede Apotheke. Handelt es sich hier nur um eine ungenaue Formulierung oder wieder einmal um eine gezielte Nebelkerze?

Wann war je eine Regierung so losgelöst von der Realität und so fixiert auf eine einzige wissenschaftliche Sichtweise, unter völligem Ausschluss anderer Sichtweisen? Wie etwa der, die in Schweden, Dänemark und Florida den Ton angeben. „Lieber vorher, lieber dämpfend und präventiv“, rechtfertigte Söder die weitreichenden Einschränkungen. So, als ob das Grundgesetz einen „präventiven Grundrechtsentzug“ vorsehen würde.

Faktisch erpresst unser Staat seine Bürger. Er sagt ihnen: „Entweder, ihr lasst Euch impfen, oder wir schikanieren euch bis zum Umfallen.“ Besonders wenig Chancen, sich dem Druck zu widersetzen, haben sozial Schwache (und nicht nur die): Sobald die Tests wie angekündigt ab 11. Oktober nicht mehr kostenlos sind, haben sie die Wahl, entweder auf eine Teilnahme am sozialen Leben weitgehend zu verzichten oder sich impfen zu lassen.

Völlig ignoriert werden von den Verantwortlichen neue Erkenntnisse aus den USA, nach denen sehr viel dafür spricht, dass auch Geimpfte weiter ansteckend bleiben ([nachzulesen hier](#)). Dieses Wegsehen der Regierungen lässt eigentlich nur einen Schluss zu: Dass wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse, die nicht zum Kurs des neuen Impf-Totalitarismus passen, einfach nicht erwünscht sind und deshalb schlicht ignoriert werden.

Der 10. August ist ein weiterer schwarzer Tag für das Grundgesetz, für die Freiheit und für die Demokratie in Deutschland. Und auch für die Medien. Nach der Pressekonferenz kamen wie in einer Dauerschleife wieder nur die üblichen „unverdächtigen“ Journalisten zu Wort, die sich akribisch hüteten, wirklich kritische Fragen zu stellen, und sich damit selbst zu Stichwortgebern degradierten.

PS: In Resolution Nr. 2361 der Parlamentarischen Versammlung des Europarates zum Impfen heißt

~~es in Punkt 7.3.2:~~ Die Versammlung fordert die Mitgliedstaaten der EU nachdringlich auf, sicherzustellen, „dass niemand diskriminiert wird, weil er nicht geimpft wurde, wegen Gesundheitsrisiken oder weil er nicht geimpft werden will.“ Die Bundesregierung und die Länderregierungen treten diese Resolution der Parlamentarischen Versammlung mit Füßen.

<https://reitschuster.de/post/niemand-hat-die-absicht-eine-impfpflicht-zu-errichten/>

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