

# A Quantitative Discourse Analysis of German Right-Wing Weekly Junge Freiheit

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## Research Questions

- ▶ Which discursive themes appear in Junge Freiheit (JF) throughout the last two decades and how do they change?
- ▶ How are the themes which appear in JF linked to each other?

## Right-Wing Media against the Backdrop of the New Right’s Electoral Success

- ▶ Since 2013, Germany has seen unprecedented electoral successes of the populist far-right AfD party
- ▶ This development has gone hand in hand with the mainstreaming of far-right discourses in German and European publics (Storz 2015; Atton 2006)
- ▶ Yet, German right-wing politicians and media platforms also changed their rhetoric compared to the far-right of the late 20th century (Berbuir et al. 2014)
- ▶ This change is due to a shift in right-wing ideology, partly fueled by exogenous events such as 9/11, the Eurozone Crisis and high levels of conflict-related migration to Germany starting in 2015 (von Nordheim et al. 2019; Blassnig et al. 2019)

## A New Agenda

- ▶ Nativism, particularly Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment is now at the core of German far-right ideology while antisemitism is on the decline to win majority appeal (Mudde 2019)
- ▶ Anti-globalism and economic sovereignty have seen a concomitant rise in far-right political discourse, particularly since the AfD’s founding (Lewandowsky 2016)
- ▶ A further key new discourse is the “culture war” against the left and its alleged cultural and political supremacy at the expense of the “silent majority” (Kellershohn 2016)

## Data and Method

- ▶ Dataset of 58,205 articles from 1997–2019, collected with a custom-built scraper
- ▶ Removed articles with missing date information, reduced dimensionality by deleting stop words, non-letter characters and terms occurring in more than 20% or less than 1% of all articles, stemmed terms using Benoit et al. (2018)
- ▶ Applied structural topic modeling from Roberts et al. (2014) to identify dominant topics
- ▶ Selected number of topics by calculating semantic coherence and exclusivity, opted for a model with 25 to maximize both simultaneously

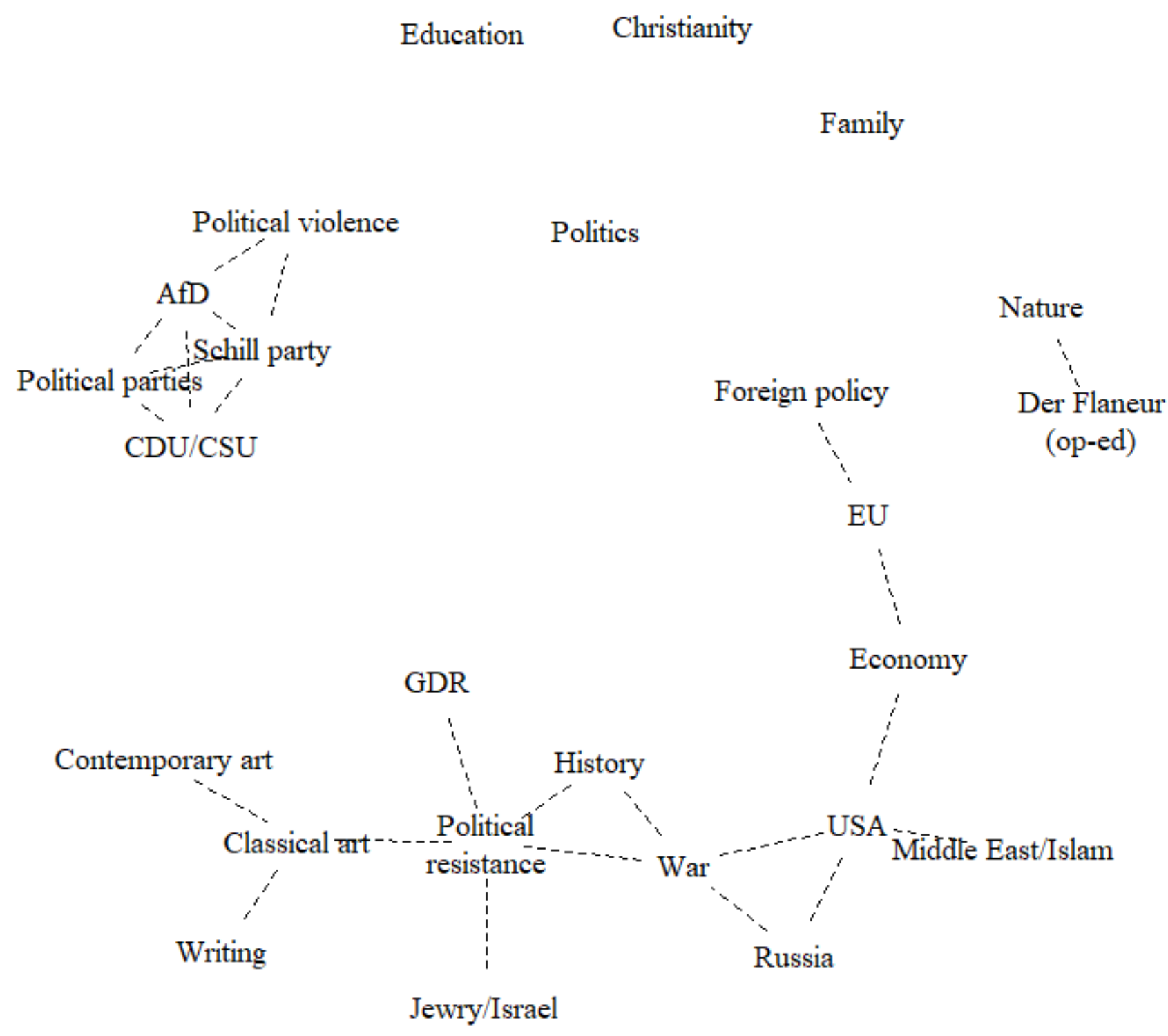
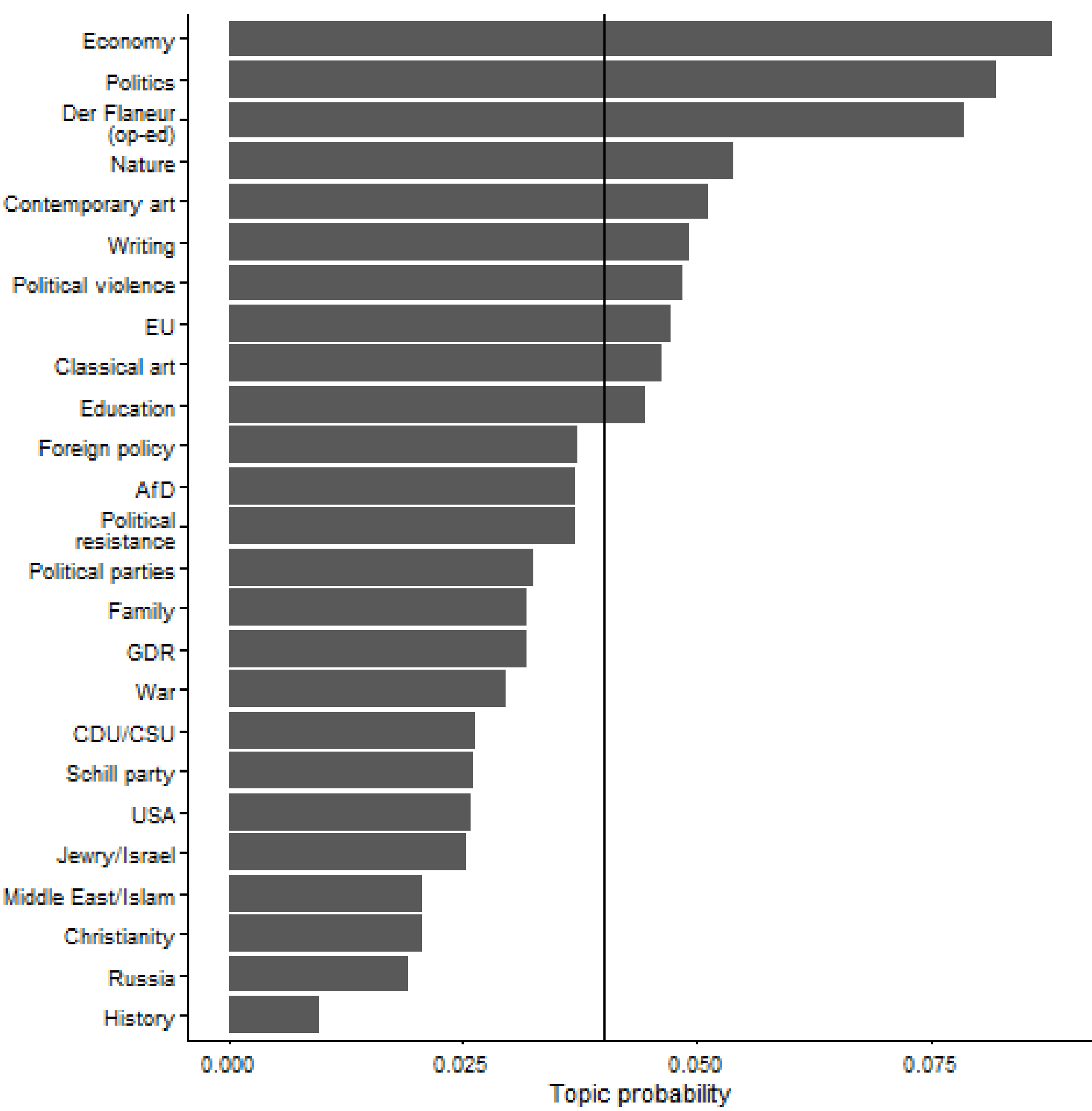
## Topics

Der Flaneur (op-ed)	Family	History	Political resistance	Foreign policy	Israel/Jewry	Political parties
internet	child	july	august	french	israel	green
house	woman	resistance	death	election	jew	spd
people	family	hitler	left	france	jewish	red
picture	parents	circle	standing	austria	crime	fdp
Russia	Economy	Schill party	CDU/CSU	Contemporary art	Classical art	
russia	million	hamburg	cdu	movie	opus	
russian	billion	saxony	merkel	music	century	
west	economy	bath	union	the	exhibition	
nato	money	federal state	csu	song	art	
Politics	GDR	AfD	Education	EU	Writing	
term	gdr	afd	school	eu	book	
think	polish	member	foreign countries	law	author	
people	pole	delegated	study	contract	jf	
democrati	west	chair	spoke	brussels	read	
Political violence	Nature	USA	Middle East/Islam	War	Christianity	
police	nature	us	islam	war	church	
link	animal	united states	turkish	soldier	christian	
npd	water	american	muslim	military	catholic	
violence	white	dollar	turkey	armed forces	believe	

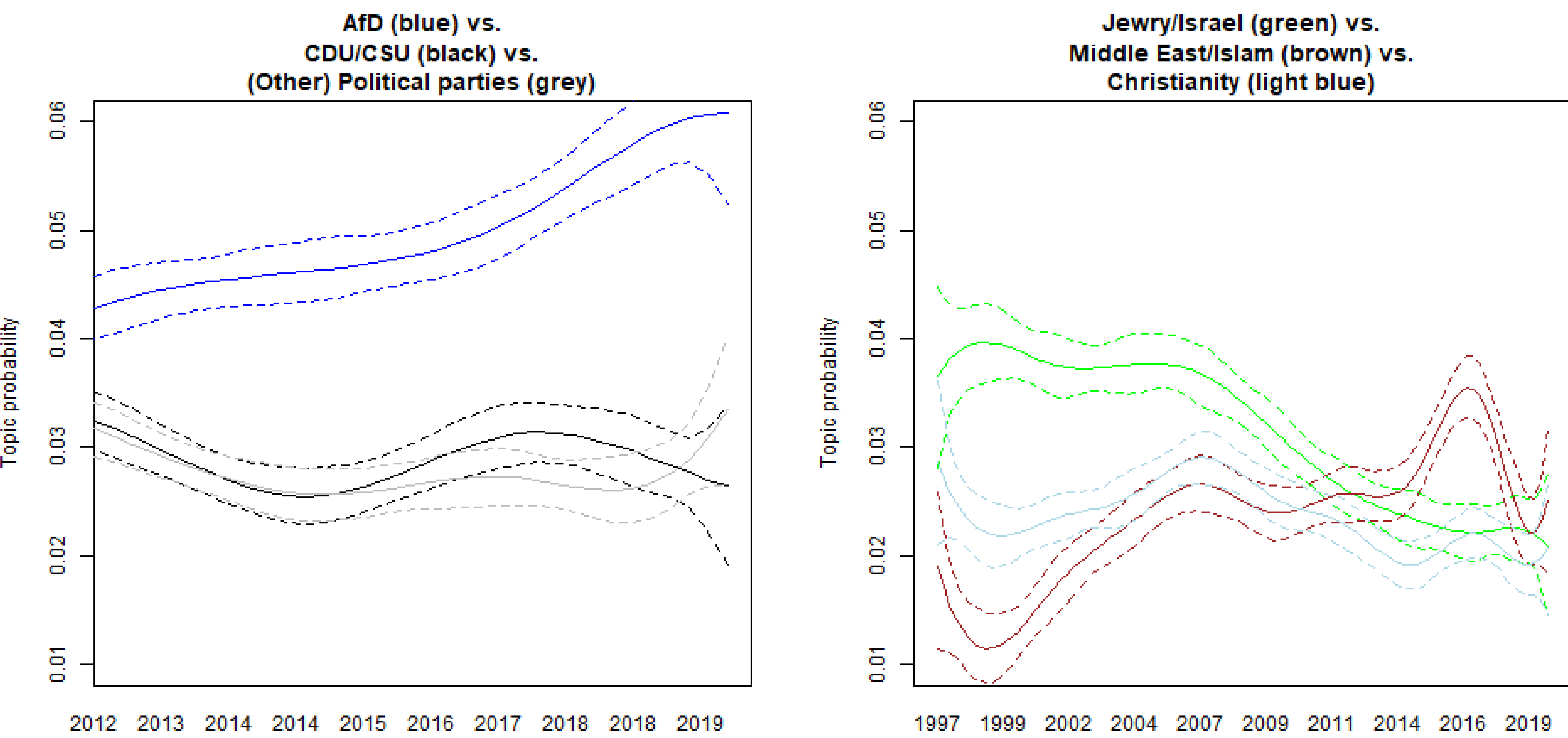
## Summary of Topics

- ▶ Several topics on political parties, mostly *CDU/CSU* and, since 2013, *AfD*
- ▶ Religion topics
  - ▶ *Israel*: Frequent criticism of Israel and downplay of Holocaust (e.g., “the Holocaust is used in Israeli propaganda against the Palestinians”)
  - ▶ *Islam*: Mainly related to jihadist terrorism or foreign policy, little about “Islamization”
  - ▶ *Christianity*: Mostly about the church in general (e.g., “German bishops have turned to Rome to clarify a central question of the Catholic faith”)
- ▶ *History* topic addresses conservative resistance against the Hitler regime
- ▶ *Political violence* focuses on the political left, while it downplays the right (e.g., “while the number of right-wing extremist attacks is stagnating, authorities register a significant increase in left-wing violence”)

## Frequency and Correlations of Topics



## Development of Topics over Time



## Conclusion

- ▶ From all parties AfD clearly dominates the JF since its foundation, corresponds to AfD party whip Alexander Gauland: “if you want to understand the AfD, you need to read Junge Freiheit”
- ▶ Christianity becomes less relevant over time, Islam slightly more, yet mostly driven by certain events (wars or terror attacks)
- ▶ Interestingly, less focus on “culture war” issues than expected