

Unrecognized Potential: Media Framing of Hitler's Rise to Power, 1930-1933

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Abstract

In an effort to understand how Americans regarded Adolph Hitler's influence in Germany and beyond as he navigated the country's political landscape, and ultimately established the Third Reich, this research examines his portrayal in American media in the early 1930s. The research uses media framing theory to assess newspaper coverage of Hitler published in The New York Times, The Christian Science Monitor, and The Washington Post between 1930 and 1933. An analysis of more than 400 articles revealed "credible" frames that focused on his persuasive appeal, popular support, and political clout.

I. Introduction

In 1930, Adolph Hitler had been absent from American media coverage for nearly five years. Following his release from prison in 1924, he received only brief and infrequent mentions in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*, papers that had carried hundreds of articles about him when he tried and failed to overthrow the Bavarian government the previous year. But in 1930, just three years before he would be appointed chancellor, Hitler once again attracted the attention of the American press as his popularity rose amid the most devastating economic downturn in history. This research examines Hitler's portrayal in American media in the early 1930s in an effort to understand how Americans regarded his influence in Germany and beyond as he navigated the country's shifting political landscape and ultimately established the Third Reich.

This research uses media framing theory to evaluate coverage of Hitler published in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Christian Science Monitor* between January 1930 and April 1933. Nearly 3,500 articles appearing in the three papers contained at least brief mentions of Hitler, but far less offered substantial information about the perceived scope of his political influence. An analysis of more than 400 articles revealed "credible" frames that focused on his persuasive appeal, popular support, and political clout. It also revealed "non-credible" frames that undermined his perceived influence by emphasizing his nonpolitical background, his Austrian heritage, and the idea that his party's relative popularity within Germany would fade before he could effect any lasting change. The majority of articles published prior to his appointment as chancellor in January 1933 contained non-credible frames, a trend that continued throughout his first month in office. But after the Nationalist bloc earned a slim majority in the Reichstag following the elections held in early March 1933, the number of articles containing credible frames increased, suggesting

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that he was consistently framed as a credible power only after it was suspected that Germany's system of parliamentary democracy would soon end.

II. Background

Hitler entered politics at the end of 1918 after recovering from the injuries he incurred while serving in the Bavarian List Regiment during World War I. His success in the German army and, later, German politics, would have been somewhat unforeseeable during his childhood and early adolescence, which he spent in a small Austrian town across the Bavarian border. There, he was exposed to Georg Ritter von Schönerer's ideology of pan-German nationalism and embraced the idea that the two countries should unite and become one Reich.¹ But his Austrian citizenship would prove a contentious issue as he rose to power in Germany, and many American journalists drew attention to the discrepancy between his background and his politics in ways that often framed him as a non-credible power.

At sixteen, his political inclinations began to take shape. He developed a love of Germany and a hatred of Austria-Hungary, where Germans were outnumbered four to one by other nationalities. He spent his time studying politics while pursuing his goal of becoming an artist, but the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts rejected him twice, and he failed to make a living by selling rather crude paintings and drawings upon moving to Vienna in 1908.² Much like his non-German citizenship, his brief and unsuccessful career as an artist constituted a key component of the non-credible frame and continued to appear in news coverage through the beginning of 1933.

In Vienna, Hitler was poor and unsuccessful by most standards, but his time there was nonetheless of critical importance to his political success. While there, he studied closely the successes and failures of Austria's three major political parties and learned to inculcate the masses using propaganda and what he called "spiritual and physical terror," a tactic meant to coerce a populace into mental and physical submission by exploiting human weakness.³ In addition to the frenzy of Austrian politics, Vienna also exposed Hitler to extreme anti-Semitism, a sentiment he quickly internalized. In 1913, he packed his few belongings and took his ideas to Germany, and American journalists noted his nationalistic, anti-Semitic leanings when he entered politics five years later. Descriptions of his expert use of propaganda and immense oratorical skills, which he further developed after leaving Austria, often appeared in articles that framed him as a credible power.

Hitler's skill at rallying the masses with propaganda and oratory did not develop until after World War I and the revolution that followed it, two events that greatly influenced his political and racial ideas and rendered much of Germany fertile ground for extremism.⁴ The political climate in Bavaria proved especially contentious — the right and left, both vying for influence, competed for control over the state. Hitler began attending courses in "political insurrection" taught by the German army, and during one lecture, he spouted an anti-Semitic tirade that earned him a job as an educational officer with the army in 1919.⁵ It became his responsibility to generate support for the anti-Republican movement while honing his oratorical skills.⁶ In September of that year, he was ordered to assess the influence of the German Workers' Party, a small reactionary group that became the National Socialist German Workers' Party (later shortened to "Nazi") in summer 1920. There, Hitler verbally attacked a professor who suggested Bavaria should secede and form a South German nation with Austria, and the party leaders invited Hitler to join their movement and develop the party's propaganda and nationalist and anti-Semitic ideology. Within a few years of joining, he became well known in nationalist circles as the "German Mussolini," a catchphrase that often appeared, in various forms, in American news coverage of Hitler's political activity. Articles that contained frames that supported his credibility generally likened his political wherewithal with that of Mussolini, while those that contained non-credible frames often described him as a "would-be Mussolini" or a man who was attempting to imitate the Italian fascist leader.

1 William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), 6; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 27-37, 51.

2 Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (New York: Knopf, 1922), 7-10, 20.

3 Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 31-33, 36-37, 42; Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 22-23.

4 Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 47.

5 Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 35.

6 Ibid.

The party grew in influence, and Hitler became its de facto leader in 1921 amid the political and economic turbulence that followed the German Revolution and the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, with its war guilt clause and 132-billion-mark reparations bill. Party membership increased from about 1,100 in June 1920 to about 20,000 in early 1923, the year Hitler tried and failed to overthrow the Bavarian government.⁷ Though unsuccessful, his attempted coup and subsequent trial for treason earned him a considerable amount of coverage in *The Times*, *The Post*, and *The Monitor* in 1923 and 1924, when he was convicted of high treason and sentenced to five years in prison. Prior to his trial in 1924, the credible frame was slightly more prevalent than the non-credible frame, but after his conviction in the spring of that year, the non-credible frame dominated coverage, for reports often presented Hitler's failure to overthrow the Bavarian government as evidence of his lack of political skill and frequently emphasized his Austrian heritage and his artistic background as proof of his supposed incompetence.⁸ The amount of coverage he received dropped precipitously after he was released from prison at the end of 1924, and when he reemerged in the U.S. press at the end of the decade, many articles contained the same non-credible frame components that appeared frequently after his trial.

Hitler's reappearance in American media in 1930 coincided with the devolution of Germany's political and economic stability, which invigorated the Nazi party and heightened his popular support. The Great Depression left Germany reeling; the flight of foreign capital and rising unemployment rates undermined the consensus of Republican forces that had sustained the country's nascent parliamentary democracy during the golden years of the Weimar Republic.⁹ Hitler again attracted the attention of foreign correspondents as they scrambled to cover the resurgence of extremist groups in Germany and whether the polarization of the Reichstag would result in the repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles. Between 1930 and 1933, a succession of three conservative German chancellors — Heinrich Brüning, Franz von Papen, and Kurt von Schleicher — ceded certain government responsibilities to Hitler in an attempt to harness his appeal to the masses and control his radical impulses, thereby increasing his prominence on Germany's political stage.¹⁰

Such concessions, coupled with the Nazis' growing representation in the Reichstag, emboldened Hitler to demand his appointment as chancellor twice in 1932. Though President Paul von Hindenberg refused to acquiesce, he ultimately agreed to the appointment in January 1933 following Schleicher's resignation from the post. A new cabinet, deliberately formed to include only two Nazi members in addition to Hitler, was installed in an effort to check the new chancellor's dictatorial aspirations. But the plan, which Papen devised with the intention to keep governmental power in the hands of the conservatives, proved woefully shortsighted. Within days of his appointment, Hitler set in motion a plan to dissolve the Reichstag and hold new elections in which the Nazis could gain a majority. The elections, held March 5, 1933, didn't give the Nazi party a decisive majority in parliament, but a bill passed March 23 proved conducive to that aim. The Enabling Act drained the Reichstag of its legislative and diplomatic power and gave it instead to the Reich cabinet for four years.¹¹ With this, Hitler legally gained absolute control over the government and began laying the groundwork for the establishment of his single-party totalitarian state, a shift the American press covered extensively.

Several scholars have examined media coverage of Hitler's rise and the formation of the Third Reich, particularly in relation to coming of the Holocaust. Andrew Henson, in his comparison of American and British news coverage of the Nazi Party between 1922 and 1933, concluded that the Western press failed to recognize its true strength and influence in the years preceding Hitler's appointment as chancellor.¹² Gary Klein, who examined how the internal dynamics of *The New York Times* affected its coverage of Hitler's first two months in office, asserted that the paper failed, by the standards of the time, to provide an accurate picture of what was happening in Germany.¹³ Deborah Lipstadt, in her seminal study of the coming of the Holocaust in the American press, argued that the failure of the press to accurately assess and convey the

7 Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*, 80.

8 Katherine Blunt, "Yesterday's News: Media Framing of Hitler's Early Years, 1923-1929" (paper presented at the American Journalism Historians Association annual meeting, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 9-12, 2014).

9 Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 136-138.

10 Ibid., 185-187.

11 Ibid., 198.

12 Andrew Henson, "Before the Seizure Of Power: American and British Press Coverage of National Socialism, 1922 to 1933" (Master's thesis, Clemson University, 2007), 165-167.

13 Gary Klein, "When the News Doesn't Fit: The New York Times and Hitler's First Two Months in Office, February/March 1933," *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly* 78 (2001), 128.

plight of European Jews, combined with Americans' disbelief of the atrocities that did make the papers and the Allied governments' interest in downplaying such reports, ultimately fostered a widespread sentiment of indifference as the Nazi regime exterminated millions.¹⁴ Finally, Leff's analysis of *The Times'* coverage of the Holocaust between 1939 and 1945 concluded that the paper's internal dynamics, as well as the supposed incompetency of its European correspondents, resulted in inadequate coverage of one of the most significant tragedies of the twentieth century.¹⁵

These studies frequently attempted to gauge the accuracy of news coverage stemming from Germany, as well as the beliefs and motives of the journalists delivering the reports, in an effort to determine whether the American press could have done more to warn the public about the dangers of the Nazi regime. Each scholar took into account, to various degrees, the challenges of reporting from Germany as the Nazis gained power and the effects of widespread anti-Semitism on U.S. press coverage, and each provided useful context for this study. But the conditions in which foreign correspondents in Germany lived and worked render it enormously difficult to impute their motives, beliefs, and sympathies at the time of reporting, and the accuracy of a news article can be determined only in hindsight. This methodological analysis of Hitler's appearance in the American press seeks not to assess why the media made certain decisions while reporting on his rise and how they could have done better, but rather what they did report and how their coverage may have influenced public opinion. In order to situate this study in historical context, several factors must be understood, including the limited availability of information to American journalists in Germany in the 1930s, the pervasiveness of American anti-Semitism amid reports of atrocities against Jews, and how that sentiment might have affected *The New York Times'* editorial decisions.

As Hitler rose to power, it became increasingly difficult for foreign correspondents to gauge and then convey the state of the country to their readers at home. In the early 1930s, the political landscape in Germany became harder to navigate, and some of the first reports of Hitler's intentions for Germany were met with skepticism from newspaper editors and readers alike.¹⁶ The situation grew more complicated as the Nazis tightened their control over the media, and the German authorities frequently denied the accuracy of foreign correspondents' reports. Reporters accused of publishing false or unapproved information faced the threat of imprisonment or expulsion from the country, a prospect that inevitably affected whether their articles conveyed the extent of their knowledge or suspicions.

Reporters who successfully avoided the wrath of the regime found the newsgathering process immensely difficult. Louis Lochner, who was appointed chief of the AP bureau in Berlin in 1928, wrote a number of letters to his children explaining the challenges and frustrations he faced while trying to deliver the facts. "I don't suppose anyone in America can realize what it means to go through a revolution — and that is what the present upheaval in Germany is," he wrote in April 1933. "One must establish entirely new connections, adopt new methods of treating the news, get acquainted with new laws — and cool one's heels for hours while the new men are getting organized."¹⁷ Two months later, Lochner found it increasingly challenging to circumvent the propaganda dispensed by the administration. "You have no idea how difficult it is to get news nowadays," he wrote in June 1933. "One must establish connections with all sorts of people, because the official news sources are so one-sided, and often there is something that the German papers simply aren't allowed to print."¹⁸ The restricted availability of information, coupled with the constant threat of expulsion for writing pieces unfavorable to the regime, undoubtedly affected the correspondents' ability channel the full extent of their observations into their dispatches.

News reports regarding Hitler himself generally stemmed from speeches he delivered publicly, information released by the administration, and reporters' observations of his behavior at rallies and other events. Foreign correspondents were often placed near him at mass meetings, and during the Nuremberg rallies, Hitler requested that the press cars be placed between his car and his advisors' car.¹⁹ Beyond that, access to Hitler was largely restricted. He didn't grant many private interviews, and when he did, he avoided

14 Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 278.

15 Leff, *Buried by the Times*,

16 Deborah Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933-1945* (New York: The Free Press, 1986) 15-16.

17 Louis Lochner, "Round Robins from Berlin: Louis P. Lochner's Letters to his Children, 1932-1941," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 50 (1967) 294.

18 *Ibid.*, 302.

19 Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 27.

answering the interviewers' questions by making speeches similar to those he made at public meetings and rallies.²⁰ Hans Von Kaltenborn, a CBS Radio correspondent, secured his first extended interview with Hitler in August 1932 through Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstaengl, Hitler's foreign press chief and Kaltenborn's classmate at Harvard. Hanfstaengl relished his power to keep reporters waiting in the hope of gaining access to Hitler, who continually postponed personal interviews until he grew tired of resisting the requests of his foreign press chief.²¹ Kaltenborn estimated that only about twelve foreign reporters had been granted access to Hitler in the years prior his interview, which he and Lochner conducted together. The men asked Hitler a series of questions, including some regarding his perspective on Jews and whether his political aspirations aligned with those of Mussolini, a comparison that appeared in both credible and non-credible frames. Hitler responded as though delivering a speech and often failed to fully answer the questions at hand.²² Upon arriving in Paris several days later, Kaltenborn found a message from Lochner that read, "Hanfstaengl very anxious that you should cable nothing to America regarding Hitler's comment on Jews."²³ Kaltenborn suspected that Hitler issued the request himself, for Hanfstaengl had been present throughout the interview and hadn't raised objections during that portion of the conversation.²⁴ Such anecdotes demonstrate the difficulty of gleaning information from a man with a strong aversion to interviews and an inability to converse in a casual manner. They also reveal Hitler's desire to control information involving himself and his party.

Despite Hitler's supposed desire to retract his comments on German Jews, he made no secret of his anti-Semitism while delivering speeches to the public, and the violence the Nazi party inflicted upon Jews even before Hitler assumed power was the subject of numerous reports from Berlin. But how Americans would have regarded such reports was likely influenced by the degree to which anti-Semitism pervaded the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. American anti-Semitism remained less vitriolic than European anti-Semitism until the end of the 1800s, but during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the racial and socio-economic bases of anti-Jewish sentiment in the United States became much more pronounced. Government officials, scientists, the media, and the general public adopted the belief that Jews were a separate race with distinct mental and physical characteristics.²⁵ America's Christian underpinnings, which had long played a role in fostering anti-Semitic sentiments, influenced the shift, as did the large influx of European Jewish immigrants who entered the country after 1890.²⁶

The tide of American anti-Semitism rose dramatically during the Depression. As widespread instability called into question the efficacy of economic liberalism, the hatred associated with the Jewish stereotype intensified.²⁷ The number of Jews who held federal government positions increased under Roosevelt, giving way to conspiracy theories that Jews were running the government and influenced the president to implement the New Deal, which then had many opponents.²⁸ Such beliefs only fueled the rise of anti-Semitism in the 1930s, and by the end of the decade, a series of public opinion polls shed some light on the depth of anti-Jewish sentiment in America. In 1938, at least 50 percent of Americans had a low opinion of Jews, 45 percent thought they were less honest than Gentiles in business, 24 percent thought they held too many government jobs, and fully 35 percent believed European Jews were responsible for the violence and oppression they were facing.²⁹ Though the three papers included in this analysis ran wire stories by the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* that delivered at least some information about the persecution of Jews in Germany, most of their coverage focused on whether the instability of the German government would affect its ability to repay its war debts or upset the stability of Western Europe. Even if these papers had given more space to the plight of Jews in Germany, it is unlikely these reports would have substantially altered the perspectives of the many Americans who thought little of Jews or professed indifference on the matter.

Such widespread animosity toward Jews somewhat influenced the nature of coverage published in *The Times*, which provided the most information on Hitler and his party since he emerged on the political

20 H. V. Kaltenborn, "An Interview with Hitler," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 50 (1967) 283.

21 Ibid., 283-284.

22 Ibid., 286-287.

23 Ibid., 290.

24 Ibid.

25 Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 58.

26 Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 59.

27 Quoted in Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 108.

28 Ibid., 109.

29 Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 127.

scene in 1923. *The Times*, founded in 1851, became known as an objective, trustworthy news source only after Adolph Ochs, the son of Jewish-German immigrants, purchased it in 1896. Acutely aware of the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in America, Ochs did not want *The Times* to be perceived as a Jewish newspaper and kept a close eye on the editorials and letters to the editor printed in the paper, especially those regarding Hitler's rise.³⁰ Ochs remained *The Times*' publisher until his death in 1935, though he occupied the role only nominally during his last two years. He oversaw the appointment of reporters to the paper's Berlin bureau as Hitler began to mold his National Socialist party in the 1920s and ultimately made Guido Enderis, a Milwaukee-born journalist who covered World War I for the Associated Press, the bureau chief in 1930.³¹ In 1933, Ochs ceded the majority of his responsibilities to his son-in-law, Arthur Hayes Sulzberger, also a Jew. Sulzberger shared his father-in-law's desire to ensure the newspaper remained impartial to all social and ethnic groups, especially the Jews. He would not tolerate any suggestion that *The Times*' Jewish ownership affected its news coverage and struggled to provide coverage that satisfied the paper's Jewish and non-Jewish audiences.³² The fact that *The Times*' publishers worried that extensive coverage of issues facing Jewish communities in the United States and abroad would negatively affect the paper's reception underscores the prevalence of American anti-Semitism as Hitler rose to power.

III. Methodology

Scholars have long recognized the power of media — from propaganda to news reports — to inform and shape public opinion. Grounded in cognitive psychology and sociology, media framing theory offers a way to determine how the content and organization of media texts and images affect cognitive processing of information. Goffman posited that individuals employ a multitude of frameworks, or “schemata of interpretation,” to “locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms.”³³ Though Goffman didn't focus exclusively on media effects, his work demonstrated that frames exist within language and communication texts. Gitlin and Tuchman used Goffman's conception of frames to determine how news media provide a sketch of reality for media audiences.³⁴ Their work formed the basis of media framing theory, which acknowledges media's effect on public opinion while taking into account the factors that influence individual interpretation. Like other social constructivist theories, it attempted to strike the middle ground between the hypodermic and minimal effects models. Several subsequent studies determined the particular effectiveness of news frames related to sociopolitical issues,³⁵ leading Gamson and de Vreese to argue that news media “dominate the issue culture for most people on most issues” and contribute to the shaping of public opinion and political socialization.³⁶ Gamson and Modigliani clarified the role of frames in shaping public opinion by defining them as interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue while emphasizing the complexity of the process by which journalists and individuals construct and derive meaning.³⁷ Entman further honed the meaning of media frames by defining them as aspects of a

30 Gary Klein, “When the News Doesn't Fit: The New York Times and Hitler's First Two Months in Office, February/March 1933,” *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly* 78 (2001), 142; Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 124.

31 Lauryl Leff, *Buried by the Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 55, 67.

32 Leff, *Buried by the Times*, 20.

33 Erving Goffman, *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1974), 21.

34 Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making & Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 1; Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1978).

35 Russell Neuman et al., *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

36 Claes de Vreese, “News Framing: Theory and Typology,” *Information Design Journal* 13 (2005): 51-62; William Gamson, “A Constructionist Approach to Mass Media and Public Opinion,” *Symbolic Interaction* 11 (1988): 161-174.

37 William Gamson and Andre Modigliani, “Media Discourse and Public Opinion on Nuclear Power: A Constructionist Approach,” *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1989): 2-3.

perceived reality that are made salient to the receiver in a communicating text.³⁸

This study uses Pan and Kosicki's linguistic approach to determine the presence and prevalence of certain frames within the articles included in this analysis. The linguistic approach, which identifies and analyzes how the syntactical, scriptural, thematic, and rhetorical dimensions of a news text affect its message, offers an objective and comprehensive method of frame analysis. For example, syntactic elements, such as headlines and attributions of facts to sources, and rhetorical elements, such as lexical choices and depictions, could serve to support themes established by the organization and presentation of facts within a story. This approach identifies the various components of the credible and non-credible frames and examines how they shifted over time.

Although the selection of newspapers may seem somewhat narrow, it is possible to gain considerable insight into how Hitler was framed in American media using these sources. Of the three dailies included in this study, *The Times* offered the most coverage of Hitler and Europe in general. Its circulation numbers grew considerably throughout the 1920s, and on average, its weekly and Sunday circulation numbers topped 430,000 and 760,000, respectively, between 1930 and 1934.³⁹ *The Monitor* had achieved a daily circulation of about 120,000 at the start of the 1920s, and the number grew throughout the decade.⁴⁰ Though *The Washington Post* failed to achieve the same influence by the start of the 1930s,⁴¹ *The Post*, as well as *The Times* and *The Monitor*, carried stories provided by wire services including the Associated Press and United Press International. At the end of World War I, the Associated Press supplied news to about 1,200 newspapers, a number that grew in the years preceding World War II.⁴² At the same time, United Press International had 745 newspaper customers, and between 1923 and 1935, the number grew from 867 to 1,300 worldwide.⁴³

Search criteria entered into the ProQuest historical newspaper database yielded every news article, news analysis, letter to the editor, and editorial regarding Hitler published in the *Times*, the *Post*, and the *Monitor* between 1930 and 1933. Because the search produced thousands of results, this analysis is limited to coverage of significant events and shifts that occurred during this period, including Reichstag and regional elections, widely-covered speeches and rallies, Hitler's entry into the presidential race in 1932, and his appointment as chancellor in 1933. The study also includes articles that carried headlines that supplied a substantial amount of information about Hitler and his party, for such detailed headlines indicated that Hitler's activities were among the most significant points of the articles. This analysis is limited in scope. Between 1930 and 1932, Hitler appeared in about 2,100 articles, the bulk of which appeared in 1932. Coverage of Hitler's activities skyrocketed following his appointment as chancellor; he appeared in approximately 1,000 articles during the first three months of 1933. In the interest of efficiency, the sample analyzed in this study is limited to articles published before and after significant events.

IV. Discussion

Like the fall of the Reichsmark less than ten years earlier, the Depression was just the opportunity Hitler needed to reinvigorate faith in his party and his promises to elevate Germany to its former glory by repudiating the punitive Treaty of Versailles and halting reparations payments. In March 1930, Hindenburg signed into effect the Young Plan, an economic agreement between Germany and its creditors that contained a 60-year reparations payment schedule and reduced foreign oversight of the country's economy. Despite the fact that the plan outlined relatively low payments, anti-Republican forces rallied the impoverished masses by claiming it would further impede Germany's economic recovery. During the first several months of the year, Hitler appeared in a small number of articles that explained his opposition to the plan, but provided little information about the scope of his influence following his near-absence from U.S. press coverage by the end of the 1920s.⁴⁴

38 Robert Entman, "Framing: Towards Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 (1993): 51.

39 "Adolph S. Ochs Dead at 77; Publisher of Times Since 1896," *The New York Times*, April 9, 1935.

40 Steven Vaughn, *Encyclopedia of American Journalism* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 99-100.

41 *Ibid.*, 576; *Advertising & Selling* 29 (Advertising and Selling Co., Inc., 1920), 33.

42 Vaughn, *Encyclopedia of American Journalism*, 508.

43 *Ibid.*, 555.

44 "Young Plan Arouses Debate in Reichstag," *The New York Times*, Feb. 12, 1930, 6; "Hindenburg Signs Young Plan Law," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1930, 8.

Hitler's appearance in the American press remained somewhat sporadic until July of that year, when it became clear the discontented masses were rallying behind the Nazis and other extremist parties. An article published in *The Monitor* at the beginning of the month noted that a party more radical than the National Socialists, headed by "Germany's would-be Mussolini," had formed in Germany and could erode Hitler's power by encroaching on some of his support base.⁴⁵ Though the article's thematic elements and lexical choices — the "would-be Mussolini" could lose power — undermined Hitler's political wherewithal and the potency of his party's influence, other analyses published throughout the month promoted his credibility by acknowledging his growing popularity. An article published in *The Times* in mid-July predicted that the Nazis would more than quadruple their representation in the Reichstag in the September elections, for the party's "skillful tactics" had earned it success in state and local elections, as well as a steady flow of funding.⁴⁶ The article noted that the party appealed not only to youth on the extreme right, but also "all bourgeois parties" that blamed their suffering on the parliamentary system. Quantification of the number of seats the party could gain in the election supported the proposition that Hitler's base of support was growing, as did the background information explaining the party's rise. An article published in *The Times* two days earlier contained similar rhetorical and thematic elements, as did one published the following month.⁴⁷ The variations in theme and focus among the pieces that mentioned Hitler and his party at this time demonstrated that credible and non-credible frames often appeared simultaneously within a sample of articles, though the prevalence of each depended on the circumstances underlying the coverage.

On September 14, 1930, the Nazis earned six million votes and 107 seats in the Reichstag, more than twice the projected number.⁴⁸ The fascists' massive gains resulted in a surge in coverage of Hitler and his growing popularity, some of which explained in detail his political comeback following his failed attempt to overthrow the Bavarian government in November 1923. A subhead of an article published in *The Times* the day after the election — "Hitler, Party Founder, 'Man Without a Country,' Came Back after Year in Jail for Coup" — summarized the theme of the piece. It opened with an explanation of "the German Mussolini's" key political goals, including the unification of Germany and Austria, the repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles, the restoration of Germany to its former geopolitical status, and the expulsion of all Jews from the country.⁴⁹ It then segued into a brief description of Hitler's rise to prominence, beginning with points that often served to undermine his credibility throughout the 1920s, including his non-German citizenship, his attempt to become an architect or artist, and his failed coup. But in the following description of his comeback, "one of the most remarkable in modern European politics," the writer compared Hitler's oratorical ability with that of Kerensky, Trotsky, Briand, and Mussolini, thereby heightening his credibility through use of a simile — a rhetorical structure — that likened Hitler to political leaders with a great deal of influence.

Lengthy analyses published in *The Times* near the end of the month used the same rhetorical, thematic, and lexical elements to explain his comeback, and a flurry of post-election articles highlighted the aforementioned aspects of Hitler's politics as reasons why the Fascists' massive gains posed a danger to the stability of both the German Republic and Western Europe.⁵⁰ The syntactical elements of these articles, which contained detailed information about his political influence and policy goals, framed Hitler as a credible power by providing background, relaying episodes, and quoting sources that suggested his party's newfound strength could rival that of the Republican government. An article in the special features section of *The Times*, accompanied by a photo of Hitler titled "Il Duce," stated that the most important factor in Hitler's rise to prominence was Hitler himself, a leader of the "young generation" who "may or may not prove the author of a new war of revenge." To illustrate his persuasive appeal, the writer recounted an episode first recorded in

45 "Ultra-Radical Party Forms in Germany," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 5, 1930, 1.

46 "Big Fascist Gains due in Reichstag," *The New York Times*, July 22, 1930, 12.

47 P.J. Philip, "Briand Union Plans Faces Many Snags," *The New York Times*, July 20, 1930, E4; Guido Enderis, "Extremists Likely to Gain in Germany," *The New York Times*, August 18, 1930, 1.

48 Shirer, *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 138.

49 "Fascists Glorify Pan-German Ideal," *The New York Times*, Sept. 15, 1930, 2.

50 Guido Enderis, "Hitler would Scrap Versailles Treaty and Use the Guillotine," *The New York Times*, Sept. 26, 1930, 1; "German Republic Shakes in Landslide of Radical Ballots," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 15, 1930, 1; Guido Enderis, "Moderates Shape Coalition to Hold Power in Germany," *The New York Times*, Sept. 16, 1930, 1; Clarence K. Street, "League is Uneasy over German Vote," *The New York Times*, 3; Carlisle MacDonald, "Paris Press Warns of German 'Menace,'" *The New York Times*, September 16, 1930, 3; Henry Kittredge Norton, "Germany's Future Also Contains Key to Europe's Peace," *The Washington Post*, September 12, 1930, 13.

early 1923 in which a communist and a German general walked “fraternally” to enroll in the Nazi party after hearing one of Hitler’s speeches, an anecdote that clearly spoke to his popular support and oratorical skill and suggested that he had again achieved the same level of perceived influence as he had in 1923, at the height of Germany’s hyperinflation crisis, prior to his attempted beer hall putsch.⁵¹ The “German Mussolini” catchphrase, iterated in both the article and the photo, conveyed more credibility than the “would-be Mussolini” catchphrase used earlier in the year, for many Americans held Mussolini’s political accomplishments in high esteem in the 1920s and early 1930s.⁵² Though most articles containing the “German Mussolini” catchphrase did not portray Hitler as a man to be held in the same esteem, the comparison likened him a man who wielded great influence.

But most articles published during and after the September elections did not lend as much credibility to Hitler’s influence. All three papers included in this analysis published editorials that framed Hitler’s surge in influence as a temporary phenomenon indicative not of his political prowess, but rather the sorry state of German political and economic affairs. *The Post* wrote that Hitler had been able to recruit the votes of those turning to “radical doctrines and quack remedies” to solve the Republic’s problems, but the gains the Nazis and Communists earned in the elections boosted their combined representation in the Reichstag to only 183 out of 575, rendering it a clear minority in the German parliament.⁵³ It concluded that “the nature of the radicals’ gains suggest they are temporary.” The next day, *The Monitor* discounted the lasting significance of the Nazi gains, “heralded by a somewhat overanxious foreign press as a dire omen for the eleven-year-old republic.”⁵⁴ It acknowledged that the Nazis’ gains gave Hitler more influence, but that his party’s makeup of “youthful, impressionable voters” would not enable him to achieve great influence in a country governed by more seasoned, moderate elements. Following an inflammatory speech Hitler gave during the trial of three Reichswehr officers accused of high treason, *The Times* wrote that “if it be true that a watched pot never boils, the menace of Adolf Hitler has been grossly exaggerated.”⁵⁵ Editorials published in *The Post* and *The Monitor* at the end of the month contained similar descriptions, *The Monitor* going as far as to caution readers not to take Hitler seriously, for “the Fascist chieftain is not a Prussian possessed of a native German gravity, but rather an imaginative Austrian with a keen sense of the dramatic and instinct for knowing the type of trumpet call that will rally his largely youthful followers.”⁵⁶ The descriptors used in each of the articles and editorials, combined with the quantification of Nazi votes and political representation, served to frame Hitler as an alien agitator whose success in the recent elections would likely be short-lived.

Others subscribed to the idea that Hitler’s influence would soon fade, and the temporary nature of his popularity proved the theme of many articles published in the weeks following the election. *The Times* carried a wire story by the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* in which Einstein averred that Hitler’s success in the elections were no cause for despair, for the “Hitler vote is only a symptom, not necessarily of anti-Jewish hatred but of momentary resentment caused by economic misery and unemployment within the ranks of misguided German youth.”⁵⁷ Einstein, whose thoughts and opinions on political and scientific matters appeared frequently in the press throughout the 1930s, had by then established a reputation as a man of intellectual influence, making his insight more likely to be taken seriously.⁵⁸ In a less intellectual analysis of Hitler’s electoral gains published on the front page of *The Times*, the president of the Berlin Astrological Society predicted that Hitler would “experience his great hour within the next two or three years, but in that moment,

51 Joseph Shaplen, “Hitler, Driving Force in Germany’s Fascism,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 1930, XX5; “Hitler New Power in Germany,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 1923, XX12.

52 John Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), 59.

53 “The German Elections,” *The Washington Post*, September 16, 1930, 6.

54 “German Elections Clear the Air,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 17, 1930, 16.

55 “Hitler’s Rhetoric,” *The New York Times*, September 27, 1930, 11.

56 “Fascism in Germany,” *The Washington Post*, September 28, 1930, S1; “Hitler Speaks,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 29, 1930, 14.

57 “Fascists Walk out of Berlin Council,” *The New York Times*, September 30, 1930, 9.

58 Between 1930 and 1933, Einstein appeared in more than 2,000 articles in *The Times*, *The Post*, and *The Monitor*. See, for example, Albert Einstein, “Einstein Sees Arms Injuring Nations,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 1930, 5; “Einstein Says Mussolini Is All Right for Italy, but Not for Rest of Europe,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 26, 1930, 3; “Einstein Lauds Joy of America in Work,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 1931, 13; “Einstein Advocates Economic Boycott,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1932, N4.

even as it happened to Napoleon I and Napoleon III, power will be wrested from his hands by others.”⁵⁹ The article was published at a time when interest in astrology and fortune telling skyrocketed amid the uncertainty and discontent of the Depression era, and such a prediction likely resonated in the minds of readers who believed clairvoyants could determine the future.⁶⁰ The former head of the Reichsbank, in a widely printed interview given during a visit to the United States, asserted that the Nazi gains in the elections indicated economic, rather than political, instability and that Hitler should not be taken seriously.⁶¹ The consistency of the “temporary influence” theme supported the proposition that the Nazi party posed little threat to German stability, and the range of individuals it was attributed to illustrates a widespread belief in the final months of 1930, despite the his portrayal as a credible power during and immediately after the September elections.

Germany struggled under its reparations burden in the first months of 1931 as the winter season taxed its resources and unemployment continued to rise. In January, articles that offered insight into or speculation on Hitler's strength noted that the Nazis' ability to make further inroads into the government was likely contingent on Brüning's ability to check the growth of the unemployment rate and avoid a serious clash with the extremist elements in the Reichstag. Several analyses emphasized the growing threat of fascism in the wake of Hitler's electoral gains four months earlier and posited that extremist factions — particularly the Nazis — would gain more traction if Germany's situation didn't improve, mirroring themes found in earlier articles that framed Hitler's successes as a result of widespread unrest rather than his political skill.⁶² But come February, the Reichstag agreed to approve the national budget by a majority of nearly 100 votes, despite the Nazis' demands to dissolve the Reichstag because the budget allowed for reparations payments to continue.

The American press framed the passage of the budget as an indication of Brüning's strength and the Nazis' relative weakness by emphasizing the solidarity of the moderate elements and emphasizing that the Nazis were but a minority in parliament despite their gains in September.⁶³ Following the institution of a rule to curb obstructionism in the Reichstag, the Nazi and Nationalist representatives walked out and refused to participate in a foreign policy debate. The dramatic exit resulted in several articles and editorials that framed the Nazis as “spoiled children of politics” unfit for parliamentary rule who, despite their numerical strength, likely stood little chance in the face of more powerful moderate elements.⁶⁴ Similar to post-election coverage in September 1930, the lexical choices and rhetorical elements found within these articles lent credibility to the moderates at the expense of the radicals, demonstrating that Hitler's strength was often assessed in relation to that of the Republican governmental elements.

Articles consistent with the non-credible frame continued to appear throughout the spring and early summer, a period marked by relative stability within the German government and few significant occurrences that drew attention to Hitler and his party. Exceptions included two narrative pieces by Sisley Huddleston, a British journalist who wrote for *The Monitor*. A front-page article published in March documented his visit to Hitler's “magnificent headquarters” in Munich, where he “radiates his influence over the whole of Germany.” He described Hitler as “one of the most remarkable men of our time” who had risen in 1923 from failure to triumph less than ten years later on the basis of popular appeal and oratorical ability. Though Huddleston did not speculate on the duration of his influence, the descriptors he used to describe Hitler and his party's

59 “Astrologer See Fate like Napoleons' for Hitler,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 1930, 1.

60 Elizabeth Connor, “Astrology is Not Extinct,” *Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific*, 55 (1943): 227-228.

61 “Schacht Discounts Hitler's Orations,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 3, 1930, 2; “Schacht, Here, Sees Warning in Fascism,” *The New York Times*, October 3, 1930, 12; “Schacht Hits Talk of German Revolt,” *The Washington Post*, October 3, 1930, 7.

62 Kendall Foss, “Pendulum Swings to the Right in Reich,” *The New York Times*, January 4, 1931, E4; Harold Callender, “Economic Crisis in Germany Sways the Reich's Destiny,” *The New York Times*, January 18, 1931, 127.

63 “Brüning Demands Reichstag Do Duty,” *The New York Times*, February 6, 1931, 9; P.J. Philip, “France Welcomes Brüning's Victory,” *The New York Times*, February 9, 1931, 7; “Brüning Gains Reichstag Vote in Budget Measure,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 9, 1931, 1.

64 “Reichstag Fascists Walk Out and Plan Weimar Parliament,” *The New York Times*, February 11, 1931, 1; “Common Sense in Germany,” *The Washington Post*, February 12, 1931, 6; “Hitler Stages an Exit,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 14, 1931, 20; Guido Enderis, “Reichstag Expects Nationalists Back,” *The New York Times*, February 25, 1931, 9.

strength supported credible subframes found throughout the piece.⁶⁵ The second piece, published in July, described Huddleston's experience at one of Hitler's mass meetings. It quantified Hitler's gains in the Reichstag elections the previous year and noted that thousands attended the meeting to hear him speak. Huddleston described in great detail how Hitler, "truly eloquent," had his audience at rapt attention, underscoring his popular appeal and oratorical ability with lexical choices and descriptions of episodes that supported the credible frame.⁶⁶ But such pieces appeared alongside a number of articles and editorials that undercut Hitler's credibility by pointing either to the strength of the Bruening government or Hitler's lack of political acuity. Three editorials published in *The Monitor* and *The Times* throughout the spring stated that the "sober procession" or "fighting attitude" of the Bruening's government would temper the threat of an extremist takeover or even "submerge" the Hitler movement.⁶⁷ A review of Wyndham Lewis's book *Hitler*, published in *The Monitor* in May, stated that Lewis credited Hitler with a "profundity of thought which he certainly does not possess" and that the book would be of value to a reader only if he or she knew "something about Hitler before reading" and took Lewis with "many grains of salt."⁶⁸

The number of articles containing the credible frame rose briefly in October, when Foreign Minister Julius Curtius resigned. His departure prompted Bruening to dissolve his cabinet and create a stronger one that could oppose Hitler and Hugenberg, leader of the German Nationalists, after the Reichstag reconvened midmonth. In the days preceding the Reichstag's vote on the new cabinet, the Nazis and Nationalists held a rally in Bad Harzburg during which Hitler and Hugenberg demanded immediate control of the national government and declared a "war" on Bruening. The succession of political events left correspondents and editorial writers struggling to determine what the shifts would mean for the balance of power in Germany. Articles immediately following Curtius's resignation and the dissolution of the cabinet noted the moment of instability might allow Hitler to wield greater influence in the Reichstag.⁶⁹ Some articles and editorials published after the formation of the new cabinet contained a similar theme, particularly those that noted the widespread support Hitler received at the Bad Harzburg rally. A UPI article that ran in *The Post* on October 12 described the "deafening ovation" the "dapper, ambitious Adolph Hitler and the powerful Dr. Alfred Hugenberg" received from the 600 Germans who attended the rally and heard the leaders' call for the overthrow of the national government.⁷⁰ The next day, an editorial in *The Post* called the rally "a startling demonstration of the strength and determination of the element that is opposing Chancellor Bruening."⁷¹ The description of the two leaders, coupled with the quantification of their popular support, underscored the proposition that Hitler could capitalize on the government's moment of weakness to achieve his aims.

But the formation and subsequent approval of the new cabinet resulted in coverage that suggested the Bruening government could effectively stem Hitler's aspirations, echoing a theme found earlier in the year and again illustrating how Hitler's portrayal in the press often depended on the perceived stability of the German government. An article headlined "Action in Reich Thwarts Hitler and Hugenberg" noted that after the cabinet's first meeting, "the turbulent activity of the Nationalists and the Fascists seems less menacing" and the question of whether Hitler and Hugenberg could take over the government had been postponed.⁷² The lexical choices used in the headline — a powerful syntactical framing element — effectively summarized a theme reiterated in the piece. The day before the Reichstag reconvened, *The Times* ran a piece by Enderis that noted that "rhetorical thunderbolts" let loose at the Bad Harzburg rally "failed to disturb the equanimity of the Chancellor or more sober Reichstag elements" and served to heighten the moderates' sense of responsibility as they prepared to vote on Bruening's new cabinet.⁷³ In regard to Hitler and Hugenberg's intention to introduce motions to revoke support of the new government, dissolve the Reichstag, and hold

65 Sisley Huddleston, "World Watches Hitler's Rise in Reich," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 27, 1931, 1.

66 Sisley Huddleston, "In the Citadel of Hitler," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 16, 1931, 14.

67 "Germany's Tactics," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 24, 1931, 20; "Hitler's Ebb Tide," *The New York Times*, April 3, 1931, 23; "Political Effect in Germany," *The New York Times*, June 23, 1931, 24.

68 "Hitler Explained," *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 16, 1931, 15.

69 "Curtius Resigns," *The New York Times*, October 7, 1931, 20; "German Cabinet Fall Looms; Curtius Quits," *The Washington Post* (United Press International), October 7, 1931, 1;

70 "Nationalists Declare War on Bruening," *The Washington Post* (United Press International), October 12, 1931.

71 "Germany's New Test," *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1931, 6.

72 "Action in Reich Thwarts Hitler and Hugenberg," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 10, 1931, 10.

73 Guido Enderis, "Bruening Faces Test in Reichstag Today," *The New York Times*, October 13, 1931, 1.

new elections, the article stated that “government leaders and the bulk of the moderate press are convinced that the nationalists’ defiance will dissipate into political puff and smoke.” The syntactical elements and lexical choices used in the piece supported the proposition that the opposition forces posed no great threat to Bruening’s new cabinet by framing Hitler and Hugenberg as little more than fiery orators incapable of carrying their movements to fruition. Although a handful of analyses and briefs covering Hitler’s rise and his party’s gains in regional elections lent him some credibility in late 1931,⁷⁴ the majority of article and editorials published throughout the remainder of the year supported the idea that the German government could keep Hitler in check and that his political influence would eventually fade.⁷⁵

Just prior to the Bad Harzburg rally, Hindenberg met Hitler for the first time. Details of the meeting were not made public, but the relatively small amount of coverage it received portrayed Hindenberg as patriarchal, practical head of state and Hitler as a young, illogical party leader. The day before the meeting, *The Times* published a piece that noted Hindenberg was expected to “impart to his visitor some candid advice on the futility of propaganda for a ‘Third Reich’ while the second is still under repair.”⁷⁶ The same day, an Associated Press story printed on *The Post’s* front page stated that Hindenberg intended to “talk bluntly to the fiery ‘Nazi’ leader, who is young enough to be his son.”⁷⁷ The idea that Hindenberg was to speak “candidly” or “bluntly” to a much younger man about the “futility” of his propaganda for the Third Reich undermined Hitler’s credibility by portraying Hindenberg as older and wiser, a theme that endured after the two men met. *The Times’* article about meeting stated in its lede that Hitler “unfolded his chimerical plans for the Third Reich” in the “coldly practical atmosphere of President von Hindenberg’s office.”⁷⁸ The use of “chimerical” and “practical” — contrasting descriptors — reinforced both the notion of the Third Reich’s “futility” and Hitler’s lack of political experience in the face of the Field Marshal. This theme resurfaced, alongside others that emphasized the temporary nature of Hitler’s influence, in the first months of the following year, when the press began to speculate on whether Hitler would run against Hindenberg in the presidential elections in March.

A quick succession of political shakeups in Germany kept the American press occupied in 1932. The presidential elections in March and the runoff in April resulted in a narrow but decisive victory for Hindenberg, who dismissed Bruening as chancellor in May and gave Papen the position. The appointment of a new

74 Harold Callender, “The Nazis Click Their Heels and Wait,” *The New York Times*, October 18, 1931, 79; “Nazis Battle Foes as Hitler Declares he can Keep Order,” *The New York Times*, October 18, 1931, 1; “Nazis Score in Anhalt,” *The New York Times* (Associated Press), October 26, 1931, 7; “Hitlerites Win Seats in German Elections,” *The Washington Post* (Associate Press), October 26, 1931, 1; “Hitlerites Gain Again,” *The New York Times* (Associated Press), November 9, 1931, 4; “Hitlerites Sweep Election in Hesse,” *The Washington Post* (Associate Press), November 16, 1931, 1; Guido Enderis, “Nazi Vote Alarms Reich Government,” *The New York Times*, November 17, 1931, 9; Harold Callender, “The German Crisis as Seen from Germany,” *The New York Times*, November 29, 1931, XX1; Harold Callender, “Hitler Replies to Some Fundamental Questions,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1931, XX5; Webb Miller, “Hitler’s Rise Pictured as Reparations Peril,” *The Washington Post* (United Press International), December 28, 1931, 1.

75 “Hitler’s Challenge is Met by Groener,” *The New York Times*, October 13, 1931, 10; “Reich Defense Leader Defies Ministry’s Foes,” *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), October 13, 1931, 1; “Real Leaders,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 1931, 19; “Bruening’s Victory,” *The New York Times*, October 17, 1931, 11; “Reich Upholds Bruening Rule and Adjourns,” *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), October 17, 1931, 1; “Promises to Crush Violence in Reich,” *The New York Times*, October 20, 1931, 8; “Another Hitler Threat,” *The New York Times*, November 17, 1931, 24; “The Future of Hitlerism,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 3, 1931, 16; “A Hitler Flurry,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 1931, 18; “Unable to Pay on Young Plan, Germany Avers,” *The Washington Post*, December 8, 1931, 1; “Price and Pay Cuts Decried in Germany, Hitler to be Curbed,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1931, 1; Guido Enderis, “Bruening Threatens to Use Reich’s Army,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1931, 12; “German Voters,” *The New York Times*, December 9, 1931, 24; “Hitler Aids German Plan,” *The Washington Post*, December 11, 1931, 6; George Bernhard, “Tactics of Hitler,” *The New York Times*, December 13, 1931, E1; “Hitler Words and Votes,” *The New York Times*, December 17, 1931, 22; “German Fascism,” *The Washington Post*, December 27, 1931, M6.

76 Guido Enderis, “Bruening Succeeds in Forming Cabinet,” *The New York Times*, October 10, 1931, 8.

77 “Two-Man Rule for Reich Seen in New Cabinet,” *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), October 10, 1931, 1.

78 Guido Enderis, “Hitler Lays Plans before Hindenberg,” *The New York Times*, October 11, 1931, 10.

chancellor resulted in new Reichstag elections held in July, but the Reichstag dissolved after its first meeting, and new elections were held in November. Coverage of Hitler consistent with the credible frame increased during moments of uncertainty about the future of parliamentary rule in Germany, but at no point throughout the year did the credible frame overshadow the non-credible frame.

At the start of 1932, Hindenberg's term in office was quickly coming to an end. New elections were fast approaching, Bruening asked Hitler for the Nazi's agreement to extend the president's term without holding new elections, a move that required a two-thirds vote in the Reichstag. Hitler refused to forego the elections and instead primed himself for candidacy. In mid-February, Hindenberg announced he would seek another term in office, and at the end of the month, Hitler proclaimed his intention to run against the 85-year-old incumbent. Articles and editorials following the revelation that Hitler would oppose Hindenberg generally discounted Hitler's chance of winning against the venerated field marshal by attesting to Hindenberg's prestige or Bruening's relative strength and emphasizing Hitler's Austrian nationality, which would have precluded him from running had he not been appointed a member of the Brunswick legation in Berlin two days after he announced his candidacy.⁷⁹

Some coverage of Hitler's campaign conveyed his credibility by quantifying his popular support, demonstrated by the number of Germans who attended the campaign speeches he gave throughout the country.⁸⁰ Between March 10 and March 14, the day after the elections, a four-part series explaining the meaning of Hitlerism ran in *The Monitor*. The first installment stated that Nazism, which has "permeated every section of the nation," displayed a "capacity for organization unequalled in our times by any except the Bolshevik leaders" and had "evolved into one of the most effective engines of propaganda the modern world has seen."⁸¹ The remaining three framed Hitler as a credible force in German politics by heralding the tenets of Nazism, explaining its wide appeal and predicting that the growth of the party would be "epoch-making."⁸² But the themes found in the series, as well as the articles touting Hitler's popular support, all but disappeared after the presidential election and the subsequent runoff.

On March 13, Hitler received 30 percent of the vote, while Hindenberg received 49.6 percent, a fraction less than the 50 percent he needed to obtain an absolute majority and secure the presidency. Though the results necessitated a runoff, most articles and editorials published in the wake of the election pointed to the relatively low number of votes cast for Hitler as an indication that his party's strength paled in the face of the Republican forces.⁸³ A *Times* article that broke down the results stated that Hitler's 30 percent was "accepted as the first step toward [the Nazi party's] elimination as a powerful political factor in Germany."⁸⁴ A 79 Guido Enderis, "Hitler Enters Race for the Presidency," *The New York Times*, February 23, 1932, 9; "Fascist Leader Decides to Try to Run for Presidency," *The Washington Post* (United Press International), February 23, 1932, 1; "Hitler against Hindenberg," *The New York Times*, February 24, 1932, 20; "Hitler Becomes German Citizen by Appointment," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 26, 1932, 1; "German Citizenship Acquired by Hitler," *The New York Times*, February 26, 1932, 9; Harold Callender, "Hitler Now Faces Unpleasant Task," *The New York Times*, February 29, 1932, 10; "Von Hindenberg's Election Forecast," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 29, 1932, 5; "Position at Berlin Growing Stronger," *The New York Times*, February 29, 1932, 25; "Hindenberg or Chaos," *The Washington Post*, March 1, 1932, 6.

80 "Hitler Stirs 20,000 as Campaign Opens," *The New York Times*, February 28, 1932, 18; "15,000 Cheer as Hitler Campaign Opens," *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), February 28, 1932, 10; "Hitler Pledges Sound Policies if Fascists Win," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 29, 1932, 1.

81 W. Horsfall Carter, "Organization Capacity Shown in Rapid Advance of Hitlerism," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 10, 1932, 1.

82 W. Horsfall Carter, "Rise and Fall of Hitler's Power Follows Economic Tide in Reich," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 11, 1932, 1; W. Horsfall Carter, "Hitler Appeal Not in Program but in Criticism of Conditions," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 12, 1932, 1; W. Horsfall Carter, "Socialist Move in Reich Called New Era Mark," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 14, 1932, 1. "Results in Germany Elate Washington," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1932, 1; "Hitler is Beaten where Nazis Rule," *The New York Times* (Associated Press), March 14, 1932, 8; "Hindenburg Far Ahead but Fails at Election; Runoff is Set April 10," *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), March 14, 1932, 1; Guido Enderis, "Hindenberg Enters Runoff Election," *The New York Times*, March 15, 1932, 1; Julius Curtius, "Curtius Say Vote Assures Stability," March 15, 1932, 8.

83 "Hindenberg Wins Primary from Hitler," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 14, 1932, 1;

84 Frederick Birchall, "President has 18,661,136: Lacks Only 168,453 for a Majority of the 37,660,377 Total," *The New York Times*, March 14, 1932, 1.

Post editorial published the same day asserted that the elections results proved “the forces of disintegration, repudiation and reaction . . . are not as strong as their boasts have made them seem” and that “Hindenberg and his government are stronger than the opposition.”⁸⁵ Editorials in *The Monitor* and *The Times* expressed the same opinions.⁸⁶ The non-credible frame, supported by quantification of Hitler's relatively small amount of electoral support and the proposition that his party's strength had peaked, persisted after Hindenberg was reelected with 53 percent of the vote in the April 10 runoff election.⁸⁷

News coverage of Hitler surged again in late July, just before the Reichstag elections following Papen's appointment as chancellor in May. Since the presidential election, the Nazis had won substantial gains in multiple regional elections, as well as several concessions from the new cabinet, most notably the decision to hold new Reichstag elections so that the party might achieve greater representation.⁸⁸ Several articles published just before the elections noted that the results would measure the strength of the Nazi Party, which had by then grown to be the country's single largest, and determine whether the prevailing political attitude in Germany had changed since Hindenberg's reelection.⁸⁹ These pieces generally supported Hitler's credibility as a political leader by ascribing significance to the elections and acknowledging that Hitler's gains or losses would have a great impact on the future of the Republic.

But the non-credible frame eclipsed the credible frame after July 31, when the elections produced a Reichstag in which no party held a majority. Despite the Nazi party's substantial gains — the 230 seats it earned more than doubled its representation and rendered it the largest party in parliament — most post-election coverage interpreted its failure to secure a majority as an indication of both the party's decline and the relative steadfastness of Papen's cabinet, as conveyed through headlines that emphasized Hitler's lack of majority and the thematic elements found consistently in the content of the coverage.⁹⁰ An analysis of the results in *The Times* stated that the nearly fourteen million votes cast for the Nazis only slightly exceeded the number cast for the party during the April 10 runoff elections, “indicating that the party's progress is slowing down and is possibly near to reaching its climax.”⁹¹ An editorial published in *The Times* the same day asserted that Hitler had been “stopped” with 37 percent of the vote. The results, it argued, proved that the “Hitler tide” had reached its “high-water mark” and that “the role of Mussolini or Lenin is not for him.”⁹² Rhetorical elements in both pieces, including the quantification of the lack of majority, supported the proposition that Hitler's popularity was waning, a non-credible frame that appeared with greater frequency after the Reichstag elections in November.

The lack of majority given to any one party following the July elections resulted in the dissolution of the Reichstag in mid-September. In October and early November, as the new elections approached, predictions that Hitler would lose votes appeared in coverage of the situation in Germany, nearly all of which

85 “A Rational Germany,” *The Washington Post*, March 14, 1932, 6;

86 “Hindenberg Wins,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 15, 1932, 16; “German Republicanism,” *The New York Times*, March 15, 1932, 20.

87 Guido Enderis, “Expect Hindenburg To Win By 8,000,000 In Reich Vote Today,” *The New York Times*, April 10, 1932, 1; “The German Duel,” *The New York Times*, April 10, 1932, E1; “Reich Reelects Hitler with Wide Margin,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 11, 1932, 1; “Symbol of Stability,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 11, 1932, 14; Guido Enderis, “13,417,460 Votes for Nazis,” *The New York Times*, April 11, 1932, 1; “Germany Stands Fast,” *The New York Times*, April 11, 1932, 14;

88 Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 160-165.

89 Frederick Birchall, “Reich Reactionaries Due to Gain Heavily in Reichstag,” *The New York Times*, July 27, 1932, 7; “Reich Election to Test Power of Hitler Vote,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 30, 1932, 1; “The German Elections,” *The New York Times*, July 17, 1932, 16; Frederick Birchall, “Reich Votes Today with Strong Trend Toward the Right,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 1932; Edwin James, “The Week in Europe; Germans Vote Today: Elect a New Reichstag,” July 31, 1932, E3, Hugh Jedeli, “Nationalism to Fore in German Election,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 1923, E3, Guido Enderis, “Showdown is Near for German Nazis,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 1923, E3.

90 “Reich Keeps Republican Government,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 1, 1931, 1; “Cabinet Likely to Continue,” *The New York Times*, August 1, 1932, 8; “Hitler Fails to Win Reichstag Majority Despite Big Gains,” *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), August 1, 1932, 1; “Vote Disappoints the German Press,” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1932, 4.

91 Frederick Birchall, “Right Parties Fail to Carry Germany; Nazi Seats Doubled,” *The New York Times*, August 1, 1932, 1.

92 “The German Elections,” *The New York Times*, August 2, 1932, 16.

reiterated the idea that the Nazi Party had peaked in strength.⁹³ A piece in *The Times* stated that Germany was “getting tired of the Nazis” and relayed predictions that the party would lose between thirty and fifty of its seats in the Reichstag.⁹⁴ The prediction held true: The Nazis lost 36 seats on November 6, reducing their number of representatives to 196. Coverage of the loss produced articles and editorials consistent with the non-credible frame, most of which contained rhetorical and syntactic elements that supported the proposition that Nazism, a temporary phenomenon, was fading quickly.⁹⁵ An article in *The Times* asserted the party was “at last in its retrogressive state,” and an editorial published in the same paper the next day claimed that the ebbing of the Nazi tide proved that “the threat of sole control of the country by Hitler is definitely removed.”⁹⁶

Hitler appeared in a relatively small number of articles in the first weeks of January 1933, the month he was appointed chancellor. Elections in the state of Lippe drew the attention of the American press as Hitler campaigned to regain the losses he suffered in November. The subhead of an Associated Press article that appeared in *The Post* characterized the Nazi efforts as “desperate,” and the piece stated that should these efforts failed, Hitler’s claims to the head of the Reich would be considerably damaged.⁹⁷ The Nazis won nearly 40 percent of the vote in the state elections, a “minor” victory an article in *The Monitor* implied would not strengthen Hitler’s “waning” cause.⁹⁸ The article compared the percentage of votes cast for the Nazis January to the number cast in July, a decrease it highlighted as a reason Hitler would not be able to duplicate the victory on the national level. A story in *The Times* reiterated that idea.⁹⁹ An Associated Press article contradicted the theme present in the aforementioned articles by noting that the Nazis’ relatively small gains were “regarded nevertheless as being a refutation of enemies’ assertions that Hitlerism is on the downgrade,” and an editorial published the next day lamented Hitler’s seeming resurgence and the political uncertainty it created at a time of relative stability within the German government under Schleicher, who had become chancellor the previous month.¹⁰⁰

But articles that portrayed Hitler as a man who could have a significant impact on German political affairs — the theme that most often underlay the credible frame — appeared sporadically until Hitler was appointed Chancellor on January 30, 1933, following Schleicher’s resignation. A complex series of political machinations allowed a party leader widely believed to be on the decline to become the head of a Reich cabinet based on parliamentary majority. The Nazis’ minority representation in the cabinet — Papen’s arrangement — appeared to limit Hitler’s power, a fact the press readily noted. But a number of articles published in the immediate aftermath of the appointment emphasized its significance by acknowledging that Hitler, despite the makeup of his cabinet, had the power to dissolve the Reichstag and set new elections, which could result in substantial Nazi gains.¹⁰¹ An editorial in *The Monitor* argued that the “deep change” Hitler’s appointment effected throughout Germany could in fact be a positive development if he promoted the interests of the “vast group of sound citizenry” found among his twelve million supporters.¹⁰² Articles and editorials such as these bolstered the credible frame by attesting to the lasting significance of Hitler’s ascension to one of the most important roles within the German government.

93 Frederick Birchall, “Heavy Loss Likely for Nazis in Polls,” *The New York Times*, October 4, 1932, 9; “Tumult in Germany,” *The Washington Post*, October 18, 1932, 6; “The German Campaign,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 1932, E1; Guido Enderis, “Germany Uneasy as Election Nears,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 1932, E3; “Hitler’s 37 Percent,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 1932, E1; Carl Puekler, “Hitler Facing His Acid Test in the Reichstag Election,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 1932, XX3.

94 Frederick Birchall, “New Deadlock Seen in Reich Poll Today; Nazi Losses Likely,” *The New York Times*, November 6, 1932, 1.

95 “Nazis Receive First Big Loss in Reich Vote,” *The Washington Post*, November 7, 1932, 1; “Hitlerism Ebbs,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 8, 1932, 14.

96 Frederick Birchall, “Hitler’s Vote Cut, Communists Gain, in Reich Election,” *The New York Times*, November 7, 1932, 1; “German Prospects,” *The New York Times*, November 8, 1932, 20.

97 “Lippe Vote May Hold Hitler’s Fate Today,” *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), January 15, 1933, 3.

98 “Hitlerites Use Minor Victory To Strengthen Waning Cause,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 16, 1933, 1.

99 “Nazis Gain in Lippe Poll After Big Drive, But Fail to Win Back November Losses,” *The New York Times*, January 16, 1933, 4;

100 “Hitlerism Again,” *The Washington Post*, January 17, 1933, 6.

101 “Hitler Appointed To Chancellorship In German Reich,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 30, 1933, 1; “Poland Sees Reich Showing True Face,” *The New York Times*, January 31, 1933, 3.

102 “Hitler on Top,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 31, 1933, 14.

But a greater number of articles published after the appointment aligned with the non-credible frame.¹⁰³ An article in *The Times* emphasized that the makeup of Hitler's cabinet left him "no scope for gratification of any dictatorial ambition" and that the real governing power in Germany lay in Papen's hands.¹⁰⁴ The article stated that the speed with which the new cabinet was "projected into office is said to have bewildered Herr Hitler even more than its other members and left him cogitating on whether he had been stampeded into taking the Chancellorship on anything but his own terms." The lexical choices used in the piece — "bewildered," "stampeded," — supported the proposition that Hitler's appointment did not endow him with any lasting political influence, but rather curtailed his power and tempered his potential. Another article published in *The Times* the same day opened with the observation that Hitler's acceptance of the position marked a "radical departure from his former demand that he be made the 'Mussolini of Germany' as a condition of his assumption of governmental responsibility" and emphasized his party's waning influence by explaining its internal struggles and charting the decline in the number of votes it had garnered since the last Reichstag elections.¹⁰⁵ The use of "radical departure" contradicted the "German Mussolini" catchphrase that often supported the credible frame in articles explaining Hitler's rise to prominence.

The credible frame heightened in prevalence following Hindenberg's dissolution of the Reichstag at Hitler's request. Hitler could not obtain a workable majority, and most coverage of Hindenberg's decision conveyed that new elections could give Hitler far greater power than he held at the time, which would boost his credibility as a political leader.¹⁰⁶ But not all articles and editorials recognized that possibility. An editorial published in *The Times* framed Hitler as far less powerful than Hindenberg, Hugenberg, Papen, and the Centrist party that refused to support his party in the interest of creating a parliamentary majority.¹⁰⁷ It concluded that come March, when the new elections were to be held, Hitler "may appear to his followers and to the German electorate as a whole to be even more dominated by the enemies into whose arms he has cast himself than he seems today." As the elections neared, *The Times* published another editorial that asserted that the key figures in the German government had appointed Hitler chancellor "to let him expose to the German public his own futility and then get rid of him forever," a statement that again portrayed Hitler as simply a puppet on Papen and Hindenberg's stage.¹⁰⁸

Only after the March 5 elections did the credible frame appear almost exclusively. Though the Nazis won only 44 percent of the total vote — six percent short of a majority —Hugenberg's Nationalists won 8 percent, giving the nationalist bloc a narrow majority in the Reichstag. Every article and editorial published in the wake of the elections recognized that the Nazi victory foreshadowed the end of German's parliamentary system and marked the beginning of its transformation into a totalitarian state under Hitler, two ideas clearly conveyed in both the headlines and content of the stories.¹⁰⁹ Articles conveying the shift quantified the Nazis' gains relative to the votes they earned in the November 1932 elections and focused not on his political background or personal attributes but rather how the political goal he had for so long expressed might affect the stability of Europe. The passage of the Enabling Act, which transferred legislative power from the Reichstag to the Reich cabinet for four years, resulted in coverage that underscored themes found in coverage of Germany's last diplomatic elections and left no doubt that Hitler, more than any other figure in the

103 "Hitler's Way to Power," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 31, 1933, 1; "Germany Ventures," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1933, 16; "Editorial Article 1," *The Washington Post*, January 31, 1933, 6; "Centrists Demand Hitler Make Clear his Cabinet Policy," *The New York Times*, February 1, 1932, 1.

104 Guido Enderis, "Group Formed By Papen: Nationalists to Dominate in Government Led by National Socialists," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1933, 1.

105 "Hitler Puts Aside Aim to be Dictator," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1933, 3;

106 "Germany's Reichstag Dissolved," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 1, 1933, 1; Guido Enderis, "Cabinet Made the Issue: Reich's Support to Be Asked for National Concentration," *The New York Times*, February 2, 1933, 1.

107 "Another German Election," *The New York Times*, February 5, 1933, 16.

108 "Plenty of Rope," *The New York Times*, February 19, 1933, E4.

109 "Hitler's Victory in Germany Closes Parliamentary Regime," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 6, 1933, 1; Frederick Birchall, "Hitler Bloc Wins a Reich Majority; Rules in Prussia," *The New York Times*, March 6, 1933, 1; "Dictatorship Now Seen," *The New York Times*, March 6, 1933, 8; "Hitler Winner by Reich Vote; Dictator Near: 17,000,000 of Electorate Express Confidence in Chancellor," *The Washington Post* (Associated Press), March 6, 1933, 1; "Hitler in Power," *The New York Times*, March 7, 1933, 14; "Hitler Vote Stirs Anxiety in France," *The New York Times*, March 7, 1933, 16; "British Sympathy for Reich is Gone: Hitler's Triumph Completes Change From Friendliness to Extreme Distrust," *The New York Times*, March 8, 1933, 10.

government, controlled the future of the country.¹¹⁰

V. Conclusion

This analysis reveals that the March 1933 elections constituted a tipping point in coverage of Hitler in the American press, and, by extension, readers' understanding of a man who would become one of the most notorious leaders of the twentieth century. None of the three papers included in this study consistently framed him as a credible political power prior to the Nationalist victory in Germany's last free elections, indicating that many of their readers would have had little reason to believe his growing popularity and eventual appointment as chancellor would result in the end of the Weimar Republic and the relative peace it ensured. This research demonstrates that the American press did recognize and convey the popular appeal of Hitler's movement, but tended to assign greater significance to the Nazis' strength in relation to that of the German government. It also reveals that articles that framed him as a credible leader often contained what might be termed "policy" subframes that focused on his political appeal and ideas, while those that framed him as non-credible often contained what might be termed "personalization" subframes that focused on his background and personal attributes more than his political ideas. Because the presence and prevalence of each frame depended on the stability of the Weimar Republic, this research could serve as a springboard for other studies of the relationship between the perceived strength of foreign governments and media coverage of extremist leaders and groups that wish to unseat them.

110 "Germany's Day of Fate," *The Washington Post*, March 24, 1933, 6; "Hitler Begins Second Stage of New Reich," *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 24, 1933, 1; "Quick Action in the Reichstag: Vote Dictatorship for Hitler Regime," *The New York Times*, March 24, 1933, 1; "Four Years Rule Voted by Reichstag," *The Washington Post*, March 24, 1933, 1; "Hitler on Trial," *The Washington Post*, March 26, 1933, 6;
