

# Denazification in Netflix Series *Dogs of Berlin* (2018)

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## ABSTRACT

Denazification is a government initiative implemented in post-war Germany. The program was operative until 1951, yet, arguably, its consequential proportion of political propaganda against Nazism has turned into a considerable legacy. This research focuses on proving that the propaganda is still imperative in contemporary popular culture products which involve Nazi and/or neo-Nazi portrayals. To reach that conclusion, this research analyses a Netflix original series titled *Dogs of Berlin*. The series has multitude of representation layers worthy of deeper analysis, to sort out whether it is a propagation anyhow. The objects – which consists of visual and abstract representation – are examined using multiple frameworks. With textual and contextual approach, this research concludes that the film's way of representing neo-Nazi posited the product to be an arrangement of propaganda, as a reaction toward right-wing resurgence in mainstream politics.

**Keywords:** Denazification, *Dogs of Berlin*, Neo-Nazism, Right-wing extremism, Skinhead, Propaganda, Semiotics, Tattoo

## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the period of occupation, following National Socialist's surrender in World War II, Germany underwent a mandatory initiative of denazification [1]. It was post-war reform adopted in both Allies' and Soviet's zones to alienate Nazism from many parts of Germany's institutions, as it was deemed hazardous to both occupants' ideological practices. Although each method had its unique manifestations, this article only refers to Allies' denazification, as the Soviet's was considered a failure [2].

Apart from tangible aspects such as pragmatic policies, which in most cases engendered capital punishment for those who took part in Nazi's activities and memberships [3], denazification also held several intangible features obliquely implemented within the German socio-political sphere. In other words, denazification also manifested a wide array of ideological propaganda to wash out Nazism – e.g., reorientation of German culture to promote and fit in Allies' version of democracy [4]. The propaganda was circulated through numerous means and reassured by various military departments, such as Information Control Division (ICD), controlling cultural affairs, particularly theatre, music, literature, press media and film [5]. ICD mainly dealt with censorship which implies every cultural product was under its supervision and to decide whether a text is allowed to be produced and distributed. Alongside Allies' military government and its subordinates, post-1945 thinkers perceived cinema as an institution that, like literature, required its denazification process [6].

Immediately after the war, the Psychological Warfare Division of Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEP/PWD) produced and screened documentaries that incorporate actual horrific footage of concentration camps – as a configuration of propaganda to internalize collective guilt upon Germans [7]. One propaganda film entitled *A Foreign Affair*, directed by Billy Wilder and produced by Allies' Office of War Information (OWI), uses different approaches to denazification from the documentaries. *A Foreign Affair* – and most post-war films – used Americanization to fight Nazism, as it was considered more effective than the confrontation of representing Nazis on screen [4]. Moreover, a long list of rubble films (*Trümmerfilme*) with their depressing post-war *mise-en-scene* indirectly supporting denazification program and posing Hitler figure to be strikingly absent, yet somehow, still make his legacy ever-present *per se* [8]. Of course, the fruit of propaganda depends heavily on how viewers perceive the product. The audience's understanding is not produced merely through textual viewing; rather, it is also shaped by 'extra-textual' factors. Nevertheless, Stuart Hall argues that writers could organize text properties to 'prefer' one read way. Therefore, 'preferred' reading is supposedly an important tool to identify propaganda in films [9].

Although Allies' denazification program was only in effect until 1951, one can argue that political propaganda against Nazism and/or neo-Nazism still lasts to this present day, to say the least in cinema, by observing films portraying Nazis or neo-Nazis. Klaus Mann [10] argues that "the primary task of an anti-Nazi film is to reveal and to dramatize the real atrocity of the Nazis" and in all

abovementioned titles, ‘preferred’ reading is executed by posing Nazis or neo-Nazis in dramatically narrow stereotypical facets, which are: either overtly evil, cunning, violent, criminal, uneducated or having those negative qualities altogether.

This article examines a Netflix original series titled *Dogs of Berlin* [11] and finds denazification in contemporary popular culture is still up and running. The first episode of *Dogs of Berlin* was released on December 7th, 2018, and by the time this research is conducted, the first season, which consists of ten episodes, is the only season that has been released. Therefore, this article focuses on how the film represents neo-Nazis throughout all ten episodes of the series’ first season. Apart from the seemingly apparent glaring representation, we find it important to analyze *Dogs of Berlin* because it has the potential for vast worldwide exposure since it is distributed through the Netflix canal, making it an ideal means for propaganda. Unfortunately, the data concerning how many viewers *Dogs of Berlin* has gained is undisclosed for the public.

The story revolves around two detectives investigating a murder of a prominent football player of Turkish descent who played for the German national team. The mixture of complications starts when the murder case, as it turned out, was of interests for groups of people, especially the Turkish and Hungarian underworld mafia who are in the betting business. Besides the Turkish and Hungarian mobsters, there was also a group of neo-Nazis, who played no significant part in the main plot — apart from the main character’s cause. Regardless of the relatively inconsequential presence, neo-Nazi still got massive airtime in *Dogs of Berlin* hence raise the question: why? The key that leads to the answer lies in how the film represents neo-Nazi.

This research analyses the depiction of neo-Nazis in *Dogs of Berlin*, how their representations may prevail to contemporary values, and how ‘preferred’ reading is implemented as a postulation aiming at narrowly specific understandings. The objects analyzed range from visual representations such as tattoos, costumes, and the characters’ physical looks to the abstract dimensions of their collective behavior and organization. Considering its intertextuality and contextual relations, we choose to analyze *Dogs of Berlin* using textual and contextual approaches. The textual one is used to identify the process of signification, as for the contextual: to further elaborate the signified to a certain extent to accomplish a holistic analysis and a solid conclusion.

## **2. VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF NEO-NAZI IN DOGS OF BERLIN**

*Dogs of Berlin* delivers multidimensional signifiers to represent neo-Nazis, and it requires multiple frameworks to elaborate the meanings adjusted with contexts. Before we get into the analysis of visual representation, it is important to explain the membership status of the characters regarding the neo-Nazi group in the series,

first and foremost because the status determines the visual portrayals. Generally, there are two membership statuses of neo-Nazi characters: those who are still active within the group and ex-member. The main character named Kurt is an ex-member. Besides him, every neo-Nazi character throughout the entire first season is a member of Kameraden Marzahn (the name of the neo-Nazi group with the word Marzahn referring to a locality within the borough of Marzahn-Hellersdorf in East-Berlin, and *Kameraden* referring to the German equivalent of the word brotherhood). Thus, other than Kurt, most neo-Nazi characters have similar visual representations.

### **2.1. Attributes, Costumes and Hair**

In one scene in episode 1 (0:29:06), near the entrance of *Kameraden* headquarters’ main room, there is a poster containing the sentence “*Kein Ort für Ausländer in Deutschland*” (no room for foreigners in Germany). That single poster captures the entirety of the film’s intent concerning where these neo-Nazi characters stand amidst the refugee crisis. Furthermore, we can also see an iron cross medal stacked inside a cabinet (0:29:22). As a military insignia, the iron cross symbol’s usage dated back to the 19th century. It served similar purpose in the Nazi era, with the only difference being an added swastika in the middle of the cross. According to Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the black and white iron cross symbol is now well-known to be a hate symbol that is often associated with white supremacist groups. In addition to the medal, we could also observe a flag (or maybe a banner) with an iron cross symbol used in the series, as can be seen in a character’s room (episode 1, 0:58:08).

We can also observe three more flags hanging around the headquarters, specifically in minute 43:42 episode 2; minute 30:18 episode 8; and minute 44:26 episode 3. The latter always appears in the scenes where Kameraden Marzahn is watching football, on which we can see four sets of numbers, specifically 54, 74, 90 and 14, which infer the years in which Germany won the World Cup. These scenes of football watching ensue from the sole motive of showing football hooliganism which is common among right-wing extremists [12]. The flag that appears in episode 2 is the German Empire’s red-white-black stripes with the eagle symbol placed on the middle, which was used from the year 1871 to 1918. The other one in episode 8 is also the German flag from the Imperial era without the eagle symbol. German neo-Nazi often uses imperial-themed flags to replace the Nazi flag [13] because it is illegal for public use [14]. The most relevant contextual meaning regarding the use of these flags is to emphasize their neo-Nazi identity through the symbols of nationalism, football hooliganism and white supremacism. Furthermore, we can see the brotherhood’s flag (episode 1, 0:29:14), which imitates the classical Nazi’s — the red one with a swastika embedded in the middle superimposing a white circle — only with the swastika replaced by the group symbol of Kameraden

Marzahn. Lastly, in the “ball-busting” scene (episode 7, 0:09:23), we can see several Nazi flags which functions correspond to the previously elaborated explanation.

However enticing, the Nazi flags used in the *Eierspeise* (ball-busting) event are overwhelmed by the ‘sacred’ sequence of the ball-busting ceremony, including the characters’ costumes. For one time throughout the whole season, we could see a standout uniform — black jumpsuit with Kameraden’s emblem on left arm — worn by all neo-Nazi characters, which inarguably are included in group identity. It is worth mentioning that the jumpsuit propagated the impression of intimidation for the scene, although there is no obvious contextual explanation. The uniform is special because it was used once throughout ten episodes, which implies that it is only used for special group occasions such as the “ball-busting” ceremony. Except for the ceremony scene, the characters have barely worn identical costumes at the same screen time. The characters are portrayed to have their personal clothing preferences since they always wore different apparel one way or another. We can see one ample example of this in one unnamed neo-Nazi character who appears in the background twice (in minute 54:33 episode 2 and minute 44:42 episode 3), wearing a jacket with the phrase “*Odin statt Jesus*” (Odin instead of Jesus) written on its back. The phrase represents the character’s religious preference in favor of Odinism over Christianity. The three major religious belief systems that contributed the most to the reinforcement of pride in the white race and white ethnic identity are Christian identity, World Church of the Creator and Odinism/Wotanism. The three beliefs are competing against each other for influence within the white racist movement; thus, it is common to find a neo-Nazi favoring one belief over the other two. Therefore, by using the jacket, the film exemplifies that the character is an Odinist opposing Christianity [15].

It is compelling how the film barely includes neo-Nazis’ religious preferences in *Dogs of Berlin* apart from that one character. Unlike the Turkish mafia in the series, that one character with Odinist jacket’s split-second appearances are the only times when neo-Nazi’s religious preference is explicitly shown throughout the whole season. In contrast to that character’s ‘religious’ jacket, the ‘religion-neutral’ skinhead look is used to represent neo-Nazis. All through ten episodes, most neo-Nazi characters wear apparels such as Doc Marten boots, jeans, bomber jackets, suspenders, Fred Perry and Ben Sherman shirts, considered skinheads’ fetish items. However, a more important aspect about what makes one a skinhead is, of course, a skinhead. Clean-shaved or buzz cut in skinhead subculture is an ideological principle — i.e., one of the symbolic acts of the working-class root against the hippie movement [12]. Since we can find many non-bald-headed neo-Nazi characters in the series, the film’s consistency regarding neo-Nazi representation is questionable.

The skinhead subculture is often confused with the punk subculture because, historically, they are closely

intertwined [16]. Punk and traditional skinheads had interchangeable clothing to emphasize their proletarian identity (e.g., boots, jeans and denim jacket) until the second generation of skinheads — neo-Nazi skinheads — started to apply a more extreme look such as a bomber jacket and more tattoos, to signify affiliation with the radical right [12]. Punk and skinhead are music-based subcultures, and one aspect that distinguishes the two is music [16]. Another difference between the two subcultures is the hairstyle. In contrast, punk is often associated with Mohawk, shaved, or liberty spikes hairstyles. On the other hand, skinheads are exclusively identified as a having clean-shaved or short buzz cut.

We can see at least three male characters having Mohawk hairstyle; the first one can be seen in minute 09:22 episode 7, the second in minute 46:49 episode 2 with a regular Mohawk and the last in minute 43:09 episode 10, a blonde slicked back Mohawk. The unkempt looking “scene hair,” “scene cut,” or “just-been-fucked hair” was also as prevalent as Mohawk in his empirical study about the punk community, especially for female punks [17]. On the contrary, female skinheads are stereotyped to have Chelsea look along with its Chelsea haircut, even though it is not universally applied [16]. The mixture of hairstyles, more specifically JBF, scene and semi-Chelsea cut, can be found in the series in one female character named Eva, who, along with his husband, founded Kameraden Marzahn. In conclusion, it is worth noting that the representation of neo-Nazi skinhead clothing — which bears a resemblance to punk’s — is inconsistent with the hairstyles, thus making many characters’ look to comply more with the identity of the punk subculture rather than skinhead.

Speaking of skin milieus, we should not miss the counterpart of its working-class root, which is the ritual display of manliness [18]. Unlike punk, displaying the image of orthodox masculinity is preeminent in skin subculture, in neo-Nazi skinhead *par excellence* [12]. With that in mind, it is baffling altogether to see how Kameraden Marzahn has one male character who wears an earring. The referred character is the same character whose hairstyle is slicked back Mohawk and whose clothing is a traditional skinhead. Hitherto, this unnamed character is the most erratic neo-Nazi character in the series.

In addition to clothing and hairstyle, skinheads are also generally identified to have no facial hair according to the practicality aspect of working conditions. It is therefore questionable how *Dogs of Berlin* composed several characters to have various moustache and beard styles. The most distinguishable one is Ulf, who has a chevron moustache, which makes him resembling Adolf Hitler. There is no narrow contextual explanation regarding the purpose of having a hybrid character who has Hitler’s facial hair and a hairstyle of a 2010s Hollywood actor and at length dresses like a skinhead. It seems that the film wants to make a strong impression that Kameraden Marzahn members are neo-Nazi skinheads who are, automatically, Nazi fanatics, yet also

not skinhead purists since not all of them are bald. One of them even wears an earring, which does not make sense. However, it may be resulting from the lack of research regarding the subcultures, hence the blatant arbitrariness.

## 2.2. Tattoos

Tattoos become an important object to analyze in this research because *Dogs of Berlin* professedly represents tattoos as an inseparable part of neo-Nazi identity. The series posits tattoo as one of the most conspicuous similarities among neo-Nazi characters, even for Kurt as an ex-member. The series also includes many close-up shots showing tattoos of the characters to expose the details of the images, for example in the sex scene minute 01:16 in the first episode, and the shower scene minute 12:26 in episode 6. However, this research focuses only on tattoos that correlate with neo-Nazism and symbols that do not only appear on one character but instead iterated on more than one character, which serves as identification of collective identity.

A tattoo may serve two general functions, which are symbolic (meaningful) and decorative (meaningless to varying degrees) [19]. However, regardless of the function, there is no way of knowing whether the tattoos represented in the series are incorporated decoratively to infer symbolic signifiers or the actors already have them before filming. Therefore, this research postulates that the tattoos serve symbolic meanings ostensibly and contextually to identify the functions.

Tattoos have cultural functions, which can be classified into three categories. The first is magico-religious: in some cultures, like Motu Koita of New Guinea, Omaha of North America and Attagals of Formosa, tattoos have a cultural significance as an overt belief to affect physical or spiritual changes. The second function is identity-status, which means the differentiation of individuals: the subject is not only playing a role of what the image designates; rather, the subject becomes what the image designates. One distinct type of identity-status function is to bind a social group together and set it apart from outsiders to show their statuses according to which identity they belong to. The last category is ornamental, “the primary motive for getting tattooed seems to be that of conformity. Groups of younger men, usually in gangs, secret organizations, or the military, get tattooed with similar or the same emblems as a form of bonding, with the desire to make their unity permanent – to make them ‘all of the same flesh,’ so to speak” [20]. According to this classification, there is no sign or indication which posits that tattoos in *Dogs of Berlin* have magico-religious significance. There are, however, strong indications that the tattoos serve the second and third functions when the shapes and the possible referred meanings are further analyzed.

As observed many times throughout all ten episodes, the most common tattoos in the series are related to Kameraden Marzahn, pictured in various images, namely

the word ‘brotherhood’ or the word ‘Marzahn’ or ‘Kameraden Marzahn’. These sets of tattoos deliver the second and third functions because they are on the visible area of the body parts, such as the arm and forearm. The tattoos’ placement implies the need for recognition as a group member or the intention to show their status or conformity.

Apart from the brotherhood-themed, some tattoos in the series are also compellingly related to Nazi in an explicit manner, almost as if the film inscribed the message that neo-Nazis are preordained to have a Nazi symbol engraved on their skin. One clear example of such tattoos is the image of a swastika (episode 1, 0:58:16). Besides the undisguised image of a swastika, minute 12:40 of episode 6 distinctly shows Ulf’s tattoo. It combines six letters: HKN KRZ, which stands for the German word *Hakenkreuz* (swastika), abbreviated. The exact combination of those letters is popularly known to be the alternative symbol for a swastika. Germany has a penal code that prohibits using the Nazi symbol in public, for they are the remark of unconstitutional organization [21]. However, the symbol HKN KRZ is currently not illegal [22].

Another Nazi-related tattoo is a monochrome tattoo of the phrase ‘*Arbeit macht Frei*’ followed by a stencil of Buchenwald detention camp below it. At the bottom of those tattoos is the phrase ‘*jedem das seine*’. ‘*Arbeit macht frei*’ is a known slogan to be found as a sign above the entrance gate of Auschwitz concentration camp [23], and so is the case with the phrase ‘*jedem das seine*’ near Buchenwald detention camp [24]. This set of images represents the historical event of the holocaust since Auschwitz is one of the most notorious extermination camps, and Buchenwald is yet one of the largest camps ever established [25].

Besides the previously explained tattoos, several characters also have an aligned theme, namely nationalism. We can see this depiction through one character with a tattoo of the phrase “Made in Germany” in minute 11:11 episode 8. Furthermore, we can find an eagle tattoo on Kurt’s waist in minute 37:36 episode 3. The image of an eagle is often associated with German nationalism, for it has been the German coat of arms for centuries (*Reichsadler* or *Bundesadler*). Eagle bears several different interpretations as a symbol, but its use translates to a sign of nationalist sentiment in this specific context.

Another eagle tattoo in the series comes in the image of the Nazi eagle (*Parteiadler*). The difference between the Nazi eagle and its predecessor lies underneath it: a specific item it is carrying on its claws – swastika. The Nazi eagle appears once in the series on Henkenmeier’s chest (episode 10, 0:52:16). Nevertheless, in closer observation, the tattoo on Henkenmeier’s chest is not completely a Nazi eagle because instead of a swastika, the eagle is carrying an x-mark on its claws. The military medals and emblems in the National Socialist era also used the Nazi eagle – one distinct type took its

combination with the iron cross symbol. Throughout German history, the national symbols often feature the eagle and the iron cross, and each exerts different functions. In imperial Germany. The *Ehrenzeichen der Bundeswehr* (Decorations of Honor of the Armed Forces) also uses the same combination with the eagle image embedded on top of the iron cross. Rivetingly, the series also has the same combination — such as that of the modern one — on Ulf’s upper back (episode 6, 0:12:27). However, instead of an eagle superimposing the iron cross, it has an image of a dog.

It is predominant to analyze dog as a symbol, first and foremost, because it is the title of the series. In addition to that, two neo-Nazi characters have dog tattoos, which may be interpreted as a part of collective identity since the symbolic interpretations augment various yet homogenous meanings corresponding with the big picture of neo-Nazism. Apart from Ulf, we can spot one more Kameraden character with dog tattoos in minutes 12:25 and 38:35 episode 8. He has a pit bull tattoo and a husky (or a wolf). According to ADL, the pit bull has a reputation as a ‘fighting’ dog. Its graphic is so often used by a white supremacist group, resulting in pit bull becoming one of the symbols of white supremacy itself. Other than that, many cultures signify dog to many meanings, such as guidance, protection, loyalty, fidelity, faithfulness, and watchfulness [26]. Another possible meaning regarding the use of dog tattoos is that of Celtic’s as numerous Celtic myths involved dogs or dog familiars belonging to heroic figures or deities going into battle.

In some societies, getting tattooed is often associated with juvenile bravado, which renders tattoo merely a decorative function, but that could be true in this series. However, that case does not apply to the symbols elaborated above since they refer to various constituents available within contexts. As mentioned before, we conclude that the tattoos in *Dogs of Berlin* fulfil the second and third functions of Lippert’s framework. The tattoos fulfil the third function because the members of Kameraden Marzahn similarly have aligned themes tattoo, the ones that bear reference to concepts venerated by neo-Nazis. Simultaneously, the tattoos also induce the second function since their meanings may fit to designate the characters’ statuses and selves as the symbols on their skins. Given the serious suggestions after analyzing the referred meanings, conclusively, the tattoos portrayed in the series represent characters’ lifelong devotion toward the epithets each symbol carries.

### **3. CHARACTERIZATION OF NEO-NAZI IN DOGS OF BERLIN**

Post-fascist justification precipitated the frequent exploitation of violence and brutality in cinemas depicting neo-Nazis. Cornell [27] states, “one can argue that it would be irresponsible to soften the portrayal of neo-Nazi group behavior,” and *Dogs of Berlin* is in no way exceptional to that premise. It is somewhat true that

right-wing extremists and violent behaviour often comes hand in hand [28], even though the perception might partially be caused by the minimum amount of study on the peaceful side of the movement [29]. Thus, the film portrays neo-Nazi to have ambivalent idiosyncrasies, although sometimes they are generated for the sake of the plot. The contradictions are executed remarkably through the main character Kurt, who is corrupt, unfaithful, and cunning yet is a good figure. He takes care of his family and his mistress; and he has the acumen of a good detective regardless of the dilemmas and pressures he faces. We can find these sets of individual dichotomies among the characters. However, this article focuses only on group behavior and organizational aspects as collective identity; for example, violence and brutality, manifested for instance, in the brawl scene between the Turkish gang and the brotherhood in episode 9 and the scene where Eva murdered Henkenmeier on either political or personal motive (episode 9, 0:21:43).

Another implementation of violent behavior within the group is the tattoo removal scene without anesthetic (episode 6, 0:17:19), which would result in extreme pain [30]. This set of tattoos is removed due to the rule of “no forbidden symbols in public” within the brotherhood, without any further textual explanation. One likely meaning for that prohibition is the perception of holocaust denial, an unseparated principle in accord with neo-Nazism [31]. Additionally, another interpretation regarding this rule corresponds with Germany’s criminal code that outlaws the use of symbols of an unconstitutional organization such as National Socialist, thus, subsequently made the Kameraden law-abiding citizens in terms of using symbols. This interpretation is consistent with how Kameraden Marzahn has no Nazi attribute in use apart from the Nazi flags in the *Eierspeise* scene, which was deliberately set in a woodland, far from ‘unwanted eyewitness.’ Contradictorily, the series also has one neo-Nazi character with a swastika tattoo on her breast. The Kameraden characters also willingly did the Nazi salute — which is forbidden in Germany — several times.

The peculiar, unexplained rules which perpetuate the violent behavior do not stop there, as the series unfolds another one in the form of a “ball-busting” scene in episode 7. The Kameraden holds the ceremony as a ramification to the money shenanigan done by Kurt. The text does not provide a detailed explanation regarding the event, and there exists no contextual sense to elaborate the event of people lining up to kick someone in the crotch. What is clear, though, the series implies that violence leaves the real problem unresolved. In conclusion, the scene signifies the flagrant ignorance and violent nature of individual characters.

The Kameraden members are also apparently portrayed as unemployed since they spend most of their time gathering with each other. Kurt is the only (ex) neo-

Nazi character explicitly shown to have a job. That depiction may be accurate since most supporters of right-wing extremist parties are coming from the unemployed part of the public, and most members of right-wing extremist groups are socially deprived people seeking to improve their social situation [32]. According to the same study, extreme right supporters blame foreigners as the cause of their circumstances, which generates the cultivation of racism discourse. The series portrays the Kameraden Marzahn members as racist. One instance is in the scene where the neo-Nazis are watching Germany national football team play against Turkey's in episode 3 minute 28:03. The neo-Nazis cheer happily for the goal when an Afro-European player scores for Germany, and in the first instance, as an immediate reply, a character shouts, "*der Torschütze war ein verdammter Nigger*" (the scorer was a goddamn nigger). Furthermore, in episode 2 minute 34.15, Eva character indoctrinates racism to her grandchildren by saying, "*das ist unser Land! Ihr lasst euch nicht den Platz wegnehmen von diesen Kuffnucken*" (this is our land! You can't let these buffoons take your place) when they let a Turk kid take first turn to slide on the playground. The neo-Nazis in the series also use the word *kanake* to refer to Turks, which is highly derogatory [33]. The series presents racism, hatred, and homophobia as the nature of neo-Nazi characters. However, it is discernible that the film does not constitute a single anti-Semitic aspect in Kameraden — this is worth mentioning considering that anti-Semitism is one of the most notable epistemes in neo-Nazism [34].

Thus far, the series depicted neo-Nazi to have undesired mannerisms and a state of living relative to Germany's contemporary values. Although the series portray the characters with 'positive' aspects, they are all overwhelmed by the 'bad' ones. Conclusively, highlighted social status, violent and racist behavior, packed with peculiar organization rules, lead to the only incompatible signifier; the plight of being neo-Nazi.

#### **4. GERMANY'S LATEST POLITICAL CONDITION**

The juxtaposition of Nazism, democracy and communism in post-World War II Germany generated at least three mainstream classifications in Germany's political spectrum. Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) classifies the streams as follows: 1) left-wing extremism, which includes communists and anarchists; 2) centrism which mainly includes the acting mainstream parties, for instance, democrats, conservatives and liberals, and; 3) right-wing extremism consists of neo-Nazis, subculture-oriented right-wing extremists and legalistically acting right-wing extremist parties. Centrist parties have dominated the parliaments since the 1949 federal election, particularly against right-wing extremists — suffice it to say, until the Great Recession happened. The

2008 global financial crisis set the course for right-wing populism to grow more rapidly throughout post-World War II Germany [35].

In Germany, right-wing populism has been emerging since the 1990s [36] but has gained no momentum to grow significantly larger until the refugee crisis peaked in 2015 [37]. Despite the dominant centrist parties' attempts to pressure it down, the rise of right-wing populism is inevitable — as the 2017 federal election had shown to result in far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) finishing in the third position. The *Bundeswahl* of 2017 ultimately became a historical cornerstone of the rebirth of right-wing movements in Germany's axis of political power after decades-long hiatus.

It is not necessarily correct to say that the rise of right-wing populism is directly linear to the rise of neo-Nazi. In fact, neo-Nazis are not completely ideologically conformed to AfD, nor to its grassroots 'natural ally' PEGIDA (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes). Contrariwise, data from the last two elections have shown that NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands), the only political reservoir for neo-Nazis since the 1960s to 2000s, gained far fewer votes in 2017 than in the 2013 election [38]. Meanwhile, AfD peaked its vote gain by a wide margin in 2017 vis-à-vis 2013. However, the phenomenon of the widely supported right-wing party implies a paradigm shift in Germany's right-wing movements toward the 'New Right', which is not only buttressed by the minority of poorly educated marginalized milieus, but also supported by the bourgeois milieu of German society in the 1930s, which rendered the domination of authoritarian ideas in public discourse [35]. A similar pattern might be currently recurring [39]. Thus, the wide support for radical right AfD might pave the way for neo-Nazi to rise, regardless of which political vehicle they opted for — whether or not they chose the old established NPD. However, it was the sole representation of right-wing movements in past decades. Furthermore, AfD is notably shifting its initial narrative from ordoliberal critique [40] more and more toward neo-Nazism [41].

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

Some portrayals of Neo-Nazis in *Dogs of Berlin* may or may not fall accurately. In this scope of research, the film's way of representing neo-Nazis is more important to examine to identify whether 'preferred' reading is being used — whether or not it is a product of propaganda. The series meticulously represent neo-Nazis to have total devotion toward the group and its ideas, as could be observed through the visual representation. The members' loyalty for the brotherhood and/or Nazism is almost admirable because they show total dedication to anything they conform to. Nevertheless, they also have absurdly peculiar and undesired manners and rules, as could be observed in the abstract dimension of the

representation. This packed representation concludes only one tone of the message the film tries to deliver: being a neo-Nazi is bad, it is atrocious, and it is the way it is.

Denazification may be an obsolete policy, but its legacy of political propaganda against Nazism circulated through cultural means is not the thing of the past at all. The propaganda in both eras is equally reactive against the rampant upheaval of right-wing extremism, although the two did not aim at the same ends. The post-war era aims to wash out, while today's propaganda aims to cultivate the status quo. The only difference between the post-war initiative and its contemporary incarnation is the means of production and distribution. In post-war Germany, the government produced and distributed the propaganda. Today, that same role is arguably taken by private corporations whose political leanings are the anti-right-wing movements. The series *Dogs of Berlin*, although not specifically discusses neo-Nazism, disseminates the idea of denazification. Amidst the increasing support towards far right-wing parties, we can see this as an attempt to fight the idea of right-wing populism in Germany.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Deni Ahmad Ghifari and Maria Regina Widhiasti. Deni Ahmad Ghifari wrote the first draft of the manuscript and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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