

Terrorism and Voting: The Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Germany

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This Version: April 4, 2023

Abstract

Can right-wing terrorism increase support for far-right populist parties and if so, why? Exploiting quasi-random variation between successful and failed attacks across German municipalities, we find that successful attacks lead to significant increases in the vote share for the right-wing, populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party predominantly in state elections. Investigating channels, we find that successful attacks lead to differential increases in turnout which are mainly captured by the AfD. Using the German SOEP, a longitudinal panel of individuals, we investigate terror's impact on individual political attitudes. We first document that people residing in municipalities that experience successful or failed attacks are indistinguishable. We then show that successful terror leads individuals to prefer the AfD, adopt more populist attitudes and report significantly greater political participation at the local level. Additionally, terror leads voters to migrate away from (some) mainstream parties to the AfD. We also find differential media reporting: successful attacks receive more media coverage among local and regional publishers, coverage which focuses on issues related to Islam and terror. Our results hold despite the fact that most attacks are motivated by right-wing causes and targeted against migrants. Moreover, successful attacks that receive the most media coverage have nearly double the effect on the AfD vote share in state elections and they also increase the AfD vote share in Federal elections, highlighting media salience as a driver of our overall results.

Keywords: Terrorism, Populism, Media, Salience, Voting

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A specter is haunting the world: Populism

– Ghita Ionescu & Ernest Gellner

1. Introduction

Right-wing populist movements present a threat to liberal democracies around the world (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019). Whereas in the past, the threat was explicit — for example, through military rule, outright dictatorships and fascist governments — today, it is more subtle, involving the gradual erosion of trust in democratic norms and institutions (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Nevertheless, right-wing movements are thriving: In Western societies, for example, the vote share for right-wing authoritarian populist parties in national elections more than doubled from some 5 percent in the 1960s to more than 12 percent in the 2010s (Norris and Inglehart 2019).

These developments have renewed academic interest to understand the causes (and consequences) of populism. In this respect, a substantial literature has argued that the rise of right-wing populism in many countries can be attributed to such factors as economic insecurity (Fetzer 2019; Dal Bó et al. 2018; Guiso et al. 2017a, 2020), globalization and migration shocks (Rodrik 2018; Dustmann, Vasiljeva, and Piil Damm 2019) as well as cultural attitudes, identity and education (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021; Bonomi, Gennaioli, and Tabellini 2021).¹ Surprisingly, although this literature has examined the role of cultural conflict in explaining the rise of populism, the role of political conflict, and in particular terrorism, has received less attention. Given that many right-wing authoritarian movements emphasize security against (actual or perceived) threats and play on the politics of fear (Norris and Inglehart 2019), the question arises as to whether acts of terror can actually shift the political landscape of a nation to the right: Can they, for example, mobilize voters, affect voter preferences and attitudes, and, ultimately, lead to differential voting behavior?

In this paper, we identify the causal impact of small, local terror attacks on the vote share for the right-wing, populist Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany, henceforth AfD) party across German municipalities. Additionally, we provide an account as to *why* terror increases support for the far-right, highlighting the role of such factors as voter mobilization, shifting voter preferences, and media salience — including biased media reporting — in driving our results. For identification, we rely on the success or failure of attacks.² A balance test along a wide range of municipality characteristics reveals no significant social, economic, demographic, geographic or political differences between municipalities hit with successful or failed attacks, lending credence to our identifying assumption that, conditional on being attacked, the success

1. Although economics based accounts of populism prevail, Margalit (2019) argues that this literature overstates the role of economic factors in explaining populism's success.

2. In doing so, we follow Brodeur (2018) and Jones and Olken (2009): Brodeur (2018) exploits the success rate of attacks to identify employment effects in the USA while Jones and Olken (2009) use assassination attempts of political leaders to explain cross-country institutional change and conflict.

of an attack is unrelated to municipality characteristics.³

Having established covariate balance, we then compare the AfD vote share in Federal, European and state elections between 2013 and 2021 in German municipalities targeted with successful and failed attacks since 2010.⁴ Our baseline estimate suggests that the AfD experiences a 6 percentage point increase in state elections in municipalities hit with successful attacks, an increase of some 35 percent relative to the sample mean. This result is robust to a wide range of different specifications and samples, placebo tests and alternative methods of statistical inference.⁵ We also find significant geographic spillovers: The AfD vote share in state elections in untargeted, neighboring municipalities also increases significantly, an effect that diminishes to zero with distance. This suggests that local acts of terror have local spillovers.

Our results are even more intriguing when one considers that nearly 75 percent of the attacks in our sample are both carried out by right-wing extremists and target foreigners, suggesting that the right-wing AfD benefits from right-wing attacks. To better understand why this is the case, the rest of our paper explores the mechanisms that drive our effects. In this respect, we report four main sets of results.

First, we find that successful terror attacks lead to large, significant increases in voter turnout in state elections, in the order of some 16 percentage points. The AfD claims more than 30 percent of this mobilization whereas the remaining 70 percent of the turnout effect is spread among other political parties.⁶ This differential capture of voters translates into significant realignment of vote shares. Whereas the AfD increases its vote share by some 6 percentage points, other (mainstream) parties, including the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) that led the Federal government from 2005 to 2021, experience either no effects or much smaller gains.⁷

Second, the aggregate patterns in voting outcomes appear to be driven by changes in individual political attitudes and preferences. Using the restricted-use German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) we study the political preferences of the *same* person each year before and after an attack. We find that a person residing in a municipality hit with a successful attack, compared to a similar person residing in a municipality hit with a failed attack, identifies as more as hard-right on the political spectrum and significantly prefers the AfD following an attack. They also report being increasingly worried about immigration and significantly more active in local

3. We also find no significant differences in attack characteristics, including attack motivation or weapon technologies, although, unsurprisingly, successful attacks are more deadly than failed attacks.

4. Our sample begins in 2010 because it is just a few years prior to the establishment of the AfD in 2013 and because Germany experienced a surge in terror attacks beginning in of 2010.

5. This finding is also in line with the fact that matters of internal security in Germany — including policing politically motivated terrorism — are primarily (but not exclusively) left to Federal states to determine. They are also in line with the fact that the terrorist attacks in our sample receive far more news coverage at the regional and local level than they do at the national level.

6. These figures assume no voter migration and therefore represent an upper bound. As we explain later, we do find evidence of voter migration, and the magnitude of the relevant coefficients suggest that baseline effect is explained equally by voter migration and political activation.

7. The SPD, the main rival of the ruling CDU, experiences a 3 point increase in response to terror, the only other party to increase its vote share.

politics. Interestingly, individual concerns about terrorism are not affected by successful attacks. Importantly, we find no significant social or economic differences between individuals residing in municipalities hit with failed attacks compared to those hit with successful attacks. This confirms the view that successful acts are politically impactful because they differentially affect voter preferences and not because they target different types of voters.

Using the SOEP, we document several heterogeneities in individual responses to successful terror. We find, for example, that individuals without pre-terror partisan affiliation are significantly more likely to prefer the AfD following a successful attack. In addition, we find that people that have prior political affiliation with the CDU, the main ruling party in Germany, the Left party, a traditional protest party, as well as smaller, Neo-Nazi fringe parties (the National Democratic Party (NDP) and *Die Republikaner*), differentially prefer the AfD following a successful attacks. These results indicate that voters migrate from across the political spectrum, including from two established parties, to the AfD. We also find that people who reported being politically inactive pre-attack go on to prefer the AfD significantly more following an attack, suggesting that terror leads to politically slanted mobilization. What is more, we find that individuals without university education prefer the AfD differentially more in response to terror compared to those with university education, results in line with Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty (2021) who document the gradual process of “disconnection” between the effects of income and education on voting outcomes. This particular result is also in line with what Norris and Inglehart (2019) term the “authoritarian reflex”: the notion that groups in society who are “left behind” by globalization may react defensively to shocks that undermine security — including terrorism — by adopting more extreme ideological positions.

Third, we posit that a primary channel through which successful terror affects both voting outcomes and political preferences is media salience. Following Bordalo, Gennaioli, and Shleifer (2013), we argue that successful terror attacks are salient because they (a) attract differential attention compared to failed attacks and (b) disproportionately affect subsequent decisions. To support these claims, we first examine whether successful attacks receive differential attention in the news media compared to failed attacks. Second, we test the extent to which high-coverage attacks explain our voting results. To conduct these exercises, we collect news stories from two sources: the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), a national publisher in Germany that enjoys one of the highest circulation rates among all newspapers, and LexisNexis which collects stories from a range of publishers and which includes reports from regional and local levels. Using these data, we find that, on average, successful attacks are no more *likely* than failed attacks to receive regional or local coverage. However, we find that successful attacks receive significantly *more* coverage than failed attacks. We also document significant difference in *tone* and *content* between local stories that cover successful attacks and local stories that cover failed attacks: Stories that cover successful terror have lower sentiment scores and use significantly different vocabulary, highlighting themes such as Islam and playing down issues related to right-wing populism. We find no such patterns when examining national

news coverage: Not only do attacks receive less coverage at the national level than at the local level, there is no differential coverage of successful attacks compared to failed attacks at the national level. These results suggest that local media coverage plays an important role in making successful attacks, and certain themes used to describe those attacks, salient.

To understand the extent to which media salience drives our voting results, we re-run our baseline analysis in samples split according to the media coverage attacks receive. We find that the effect of successful terror on the AfD vote share in state elections nearly doubles for those attacks that receive the most media coverage (i.e. attacks that receive more coverage than the 75th percentile of the news coverage distribution). Interestingly, these same attacks also significantly increase the vote share of the AfD in Federal elections by some 4 percentage points, an effect that represents a 35 percent relative to the sample mean, very similar to our baseline effects for state elections. This result underscores the role of media salience in shaping political preferences and voting behavior. These results are broadly in line with other scholarship that highlights the role of media attention in driving the effects of terrorist attacks on human capital accumulation and economic activity. In this regard, Alfano and Görlach (2022) finds that media access helps explain the negative effects of terrorism on schooling while Brodeur (2018) finds that successful attacks, compared to failed attacks, receive more media attention which in turn helps explain the negative impact of terror on employment and consumer confidence.

Finally, we study the response of political parties to acts of terror. To this purpose, we collect the main parties' election manifestos for every state election in our sample. We identify a number of trigger words related to crime, terror and migration and measure the difference, for each party in each state election, between the number of trigger words it uses and the CDU in its 2009 Federal election manifesto.⁸ We find that the state election manifestos of the AfD contain significantly more usage of words related to crime, integration and immigrant naturalization in states that experience the most violence while terror receives no special mention at all. All other parties either display no significant shift in their language or shift in the opposite direction as the AfD, indicating a clear ideological divide in the response to terror among the main political parties in Germany.⁹

Our paper contributes to two strands of literature. First, our paper adds to the literature that aims at explaining the rise of populism. Especially in recent years, this has been the subject of some focus by economists who have highlighted the important role that economic factors play in explaining the rise of populist movements. These include the role of economic insecurity (Guiso et al. 2020; Guiso et al. 2017b; Dal Bó et al. 2018), economic distress (Dehdari 2021) and globalization shocks, such as trade liberalization (Rodrik 2018) and government austerity (Fetzer 2019), in bolstering anti-establishment, anti-migrant parties. Increasingly, scholars have

8. We choose the 2009 CDU manifesto because it was published four years prior to the establishment of the AfD and during a period of time in which Germany experienced virtually no terror attacks.

9. Of course, because election manifestos vary at the state level, this analysis is done by aggregating the number of successful terror attacks to the state level. We thus lose our identifying variation between successful and failed attacks and so we interpret these results with some caution.

paid attention to the “socio-cultural axis of political conflict” by highlighting the importance of such factors as identity, education and migration in generating a “cultural backlash” from which populist movements spring to power (Bonomi, Gennaioli, and Tabellini 2021; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Although this literature has examined cultural conflicts, the role of violent conflict is surprisingly absent. We thus advance this literature by shedding light on the causal role of violence in explaining the rise of, or at least the added support for, right-wing populism.

Second, we add to the economic scholarship on the consequences of terrorism. By and large, this scholarship has considered the impact of terror on economic outcomes including the allocation of productive capital across countries, foreign direct investment (Abadie and Gardeazabal 2008), GDP per capita (Abadie and Gardeazabal 2003), housing prices (Besley and Mueller 2012) and even employment and consumer sentiment (Brodeur 2018). In terms of the political consequences of terrorism, Jones and Olken (2009) study the effect of the assassination of national leaders on institutional change and war in a cross-country setting; Getmansky and Zeitzoff (2014) examine the *threat* of terrorism on voting behavior, exploiting variation in the range of rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel; and Hetherington and Suhay (2011) and Jacobs and Spanje (2021) document the impact of terrorist threats on political attitudes and preferences. Our point of departure from this literature is to provide sharp, causal evidence of experienced terror on a country’s political landscape, including an account of *why* terror influences political outcomes, highlighting the role of voter mobilization, shifting political attitudes and media coverage.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the institutional setting of our study, including details on terrorism in Germany, the establishment of the AfD and the broader German political landscape. In Section 3 we provide sources and other relevant details regarding our data. In Section 4, we discuss and evaluate our identification strategy. In Section 5 we present our baseline estimating equation and results while in Sections 6 to 9 we present evidence on mechanisms that drive our effects. We conclude in Section 10.

2. Institutional Setting

2.1 Terrorism in Germany

Our data on terror attacks in Germany come from the Global Terror Database (GTD, 2018) collected by the University of Maryland, College Park.¹⁰ These data indicate that there have been 232 attacks in Germany between 2010 and 2020. These attacks are geographically widespread, taking place in all 16 Federal states, and are mostly small and non-deadly. The average population of targeted municipalities is around 155,000, and the attacks, on average, result in 1 injury and 0.2 casualties.

10. We describe these data further in Section 3, including the criteria the GTD employ to classify attacks as terrorist attacks.

A novel feature of this data is that it includes a variable that records whether an attack was successful. The code book to the GTD defines this variable as follows:

Success of a terrorist strike is defined according to the tangible effects of the attack. Success is not judged in terms of the larger goals of the perpetrators. For example, a bomb that exploded in a building would be counted as a success even if it did not succeed in bringing the building down or inducing government repression.¹¹

It should be noted that plots of conspiracies that are *not* attempted are not included in the GTD. As the GTD code book explains, “for an event to be included in the GTD, the attackers must be “out of the door”, en route to execute the attack. Planning, reconnaissance, and acquiring supplies do not meet this threshold.”

Two examples from the GTD included in our sample help illustrate the difference between successful and failed attacks:

04/22/2015 - Success: An assailant threw fire crackers at the home of an asylum seeker, and stabbed him in Brand-Erbisdorf, Saxony, Germany. The asylum seeker was injured in the assault. Authorities identified the assailant as a right-wing extremist and noted that he shouted “I will kill you” and “I will remove the foreigners” during the attack.

03/23/2015 - Failed: Assailants threw an incendiary device that landed near Paul-Loebe-Haus and failed to ignite in Tiergarten neighborhood, Berlin. An unknown right-wing extremist group claimed responsibility for the attack.¹²

We provide detailed descriptive information on terrorist attacks in Germany in Online Appendix Table A.1. As shown in that table, of the 232 attacks in our sample, 86 percent succeeded and 14 percent failed. What is more, the majority of the attacks in our sample are carried out by right-wing extremists and target migrants.

2.2 *The Alternative für Deutschland*

Whilst populism comes in many shades, right-wing, authoritarian populism has experienced a recent surge, both in Germany and across Europe. Norris and Inglehart (2019) classify the Alternative for Germany (AfD) as “authoritarian-populist” on the basis of political party positions along three dimensions: authoritarian values (security against threats, loyalty to strong leader), populist rhetoric (“*we the people*”) and conservative economic values (economic protectionism).

11. An important exception are assassination attempts. As the GTD explains: “In order for an assassination to be successful, the target of the assassination must be killed. For example, even if an attack kills numerous people but not the target, it is an unsuccessful assassination.” Because the success/failure of assassinations is defined differently to other types of attacks, we omit assassinations from our analysis.

12. The Paul-Loebe-Haus is a building of the German parliament, though it is not the parliament building itself.

The AfD was established in 2013 as a single-issue party focused on the Euro crisis and the Greek bailout. The party quickly gathered public attention as it won 4.7 percent of the seats in parliament in the Federal elections later that same year and 7.1 percent of the European parliament elections in 2014 (Cantoni, Hagemeister, and Westcott 2019). Although established as a single-issue party, the AfD included many members that held hard-right, populist sentiments from its beginnings. Their voices eventually led the party to a turning point in 2015 when two of its members, Björn Höcke and Andreas Kalbitz, laid out the prominent “Erfurt Declaration” which founded the far-right faction of the AfD (*Der Flügel* or *The Wing*) (Cantoni, Hagemeister, and Westcott 2019). This document described the AfD as a “resistance movement against the further erosion of the identity of Germany” and, since then, the party, especially its far-right faction, has been increasingly characterized by racist, Islamophobic, xenophobic and anti-Semitic rhetoric, including downplaying Nazi crimes.¹³ One of its former members was also arrested as part of a 2022 attempt to overthrow the German government, execute the chancellor, and restore Germany’s imperial Reich.¹⁴ Nonetheless, support for the party has only increased. After its hard right turn in 2015, the party won as much as 16 percent of the vote in state elections. Figure B.1 in Online Appendix B shows the average vote share for the AfD between 2013 and 2021 across all elections. As shown, its average vote share has increased from less than 5 percent in 2013 to close to 16 percent in 2021.

2.3 The German political landscape

The AfD is situated on the far-right of the political spectrum in German politics. In addition to the AfD, this spectrum consists of five other mainstream parties that have, with some exceptions, always been represented in the federal parliament in every legislative period since the contemporary German state’s foundation in 1949.

The two dominant parties are the center-right CDU, which ruled the German government between 2005 and 2021, and the left-leaning social democrats, the SPD. In fact, all elected chancellors of (West) Germany have, until present, been members of one of these two rival parties, and they have on several occasions ruled together under a “grand” governing coalition (*Große Koalition*). The other main party right of center in German politics is the FDP which considers itself economically liberal and has always been represented in German parliament, with the exception of the legislative period between 2013 and 2017 when it failed to meet the 5 percent threshold to enter federal parliament.

The left end of the political spectrum is populated by two parties, aside from the SPD: *Die Grünen* (the Greens), which have been represented in parliament since 1983, and the socialist *Die Linke* (the Left party), which has been represented since 1990. The Greens have their roots in the post-materialist movements of the 1970s and emphasize environmental sustainability and women’s rights (Probst 2013). The Left party, on the other hand, is the successor of the East

13. See this news piece for further details. Accessed 4 April 2023.

14. See this story for further details. Accessed 4 April 2023.

German Communist Party, which had ruled the German Democratic Republic (GDR) until its dissolution in 1990.¹⁵

In 2017, the AfD was represented in the federal parliament for the first time and it continues to enjoy representation across various levels of government across the country. The German political landscape now comprises six major parties, as shown in Figure 1, where they are plotted according to a left-right score according to data collected by the Manifesto Project (Lehmann et al. 2022). As shown, the AfD is clearly the far-right party.

2.4 Elections in Germany

In our analysis, we study election outcomes across the three most prominent elections in the country: Federal elections, which determine representation in the federal legislative body, the *Bundestag*; elections for representatives in the European parliament; and elections across the 16 Federal states, the *Bundesländer*, that determine representation at the state level.

Our analysis indicates that successful acts of terror have a strong, positive influence on the AfD vote share primarily in state elections, though for attacks that receive high media coverage we also find positive and significant effects for the AfD in Federal elections. We offer two potential explanations for why terror attacks have stronger effects at the state level than at the Federal level.

The first reason is that matters of internal security are, according to the German constitution, matters for state governments to decide. Specifically, in Article 30 of the German Constitution, the *Grundgesetz*, internal security is one of two political topics primarily organized and executed at the federal state level (Schnöckel 2018; Riedl 2018). This institutional feature of Germany is reflected in public expenditures on internal security: they are significantly higher at the state level (€14.619 billion in 2011) than they are at the federal level (€3.343 Billion in 2011) (Riedl 2018). Relatedly, there is the issue of immigration and refugee settlement in Germany which, as we show later, terror increases worries about. Although asylum seekers are distributed across the Federal states according to formula, their distribution *within* states is a discretionary matter for states to determine.¹⁶ Our results suggest, therefore, that at least a subset of voters is aware of the distribution of competencies between federal and state governments concerning internal security and asylum and vote accordingly in response to terror.¹⁷

15. Even though these two parties had occasionally not met the five-percent hurdle to enter parliament in federal elections, they have been represented in parliament in every legislative period since their initial entry. The exemptions from the minimum vote share threshold either followed special provisions under the Unification Treaty or a party winning at least three direct mandates.

16. See this page of The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees for additional details. Accessed 4 April 2023

17. To lend some credence to this view, we compare the AfD vote share in municipalities targeted with successful or failed terror attacks on a sample of municipalities that had both Federal and state elections on the *same* date. The intuition is to test whether terror attacks have differential effects at different levels of government even when those elections are held on the same day. Although this exercise considerably shrinks our sample, we find, interestingly enough, that the AfD vote share is fully 2 points higher (though not quantitatively significant) in state elections than it is in Federal elections in successfully targeted municipalities ($\beta = 0.020$ with a p -value of 0.272). This increases our confidence that local acts of terror make state level policy making more relevant for voters.

A second plausible explanation concerns media coverage. Attacks that receive high media coverage influence both state and Federal elections, suggesting that media salience plays a role in the scope of influence a terror attack exerts on voting outcomes. But the average attack in our sample is mostly a small, local affair that does not receive a great deal of media coverage. What is more, there is a difference in news coverage at the national level (on average, attacks receive less than 1 story per attack using data from our national outlet) compared to regional and local news outlets (where our attacks receive, on average, 11 stories per attack). This seems to suggest that local acts of terror are most salient at the sub-national level. This, combined with the fact that matters of internal security are primarily handled by Federal states, might explain why terror has a stronger effect on state elections than on Federal elections.

3. Data

The primary unit of observation in our study is the German municipality which we observe in different election years. In this section, we describe the main variables used in our analysis. The Supplemental Data Appendix contains further details.

Terror attacks: As explained, our data on terror attacks in Germany come from the Global Terror Database (GTD, 2020) collected by the University of Maryland, College Park. This is an open source database that documents information on terror attacks from around the world from 1970 to the present day. The database is maintained through data collection efforts from public, unclassified materials including media articles and electronic news archives, existing datasets and secondary source materials such as legal documents and books.

For an event to be included in the GTD several criteria must be met. First, the incident must be intentional, it must entail some level of violence and it must be perpetrated by sub-national actors. In other words, the database does not include state-sponsored acts of terrorism. Second, two of the following criteria must also be met: (i) The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal; (ii) there must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience beyond the immediate victims; and/or (iii) the incident must occur outside the context of legitimate warfare.

The GTD data include longitude and latitude coordinates of the city in which each attack took place which we use to map each attack onto a German municipality.¹⁸ This enables us to map the 232 attacks in our sample onto 124 unique municipalities.

Of the 124 municipalities targeted with an attack between 2010 and 2020, 33 were targeted more than once. We thus define a municipality as being hit with a successful attack if, at any point since 2010, it was hit with a successful attack, even if before or after that particular attack it was hit with a failed attack. A municipality is marked as being targeted with a failed attack

18. In the case of Berlin, we do not rely on these coordinates as they always point to central Berlin. Instead, we rely on the description of the attack in order to locate in which of the 12 municipal districts, *Stadtbezirke*, of Berlin the attack is located.

if, at any point since 2010, it was targeted with one or more failed attacks but never with a successful attack. In our baseline analysis, the date of the first failed or first successful attack is the reference point from which we determine whether an election was pre- or post-attack.

The GTD provides information with regard to the identity of the target and the motivation of the perpetrator(s), though the latter information is not always complete. We therefore complete this information by looking up each of the 232 attacks using our news data (described below) and the internet to obtain information on the identity of the perpetrator and the motives behind the attack. Doing so enables us to classify 211 of the 232 attacks. The majority of the attacks (116 of the 211, or 55 percent) are carried out in the name of right-wing extremist causes and 57 percent target non-Germans, in line with the example illustrated in Section 2. If, however, we consider only the 124 first attacks in each of the unique 124 municipalities targeted by an attack, the figures are considerably higher: 75 percent of these attacks are carried out by right-wing extremists and 75 percent target foreigners.

Election data: We obtain municipality level election results for the 2013, 2017 and 2021 Federal Elections and the 2014 and 2019 European Parliament elections in Germany from the Federal Returning Officer (*i.e. the Bundeswahlleiter*).¹⁹ We obtain municipality election results for state elections that took place between 2013 and 2021 from the Regional Data Bank service of the German Federal Government.²⁰

Municipality characteristics: We check for balance along a wide range of covariates in municipalities hit with successful or failed attacks. Information on all municipality characteristics are taken from the Regional Data Bank service of the German Federal Government whose source is provided in footnote 20.

SOEP Survey Data: The Germany Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) is one of the largest and longest-running multidisciplinary household surveys worldwide. Every year since 1984, approximately 30,000 people in 15,000 households are interviewed for the SOEP. The SOEP contains survey questions on a wide range of social, political, demographic and economic issues. Crucially, the SOEP is a panel that tracks individuals and households over time. This enables us to study the political preferences and attitudes of the *same person* before and after experiencing a terror attack. We obtained access to the restricted-use SOEP data with municipality identifiers in order to link our data on successful/failed attacks to this survey data. The Supplemental Data Appendix contains further details on the exact formulation of the questions used in the SOEP and how we used them in our analysis.²¹

19. These data can be accessed here: <https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/>. Accessed 14 December 2022

20. Specifically, these data were taken from *the Statistische Ämter Des Bundes und Der Länder* which can be accessed here: <https://www.regionalstatistik.de/genesis/online/>. Accessed 14 December 2022

21. We are thankful to the German Institute for Economic Research (the DIW) in Berlin for making our visit to the SOEP Data Center possible.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ): The FAZ is a prominent newspaper in Germany that enjoys some of the highest nationwide circulation. We obtain its newspaper data in order to test whether successful attacks receive differential coverage compared to failed attacks. Specifically, for each of the attacks in our sample, we obtain all news stories that mention the city of the attack on the particular day of the attack and for the 10 days that follow the attack. This provides us with a database of some 105,000 unique news stories.²² We employ three criteria to match stories to attacks: a neural-network based classification model trained on Austrian terror data and its coverage; matching based on key words; and, as a final step, we manually checked all remaining stories to rule out false positives.²³ In the end, we are left with around 350 stories.

LexisNexis: We use LexisNexis in order to collect news stories from national, regional and local publishers across Germany. This provides us with a sample of some 80,000 stories. For each of the attacks in our sample, we match them to stories from the LexisNexis data using the same three criteria we used for the FAZ data. Moreover, we identify all news stories from *local and regional* sources and exclude stories from national publishers. This leaves us with a sample of around 4,500 stories.²⁴

Election Manifestos: Prior to each election, political parties release their election manifestos which outline their policy goals for the coming election cycle. We collect the election manifestos of all political parties for all state elections between 2013 and 2021 in order to carry out an analysis of the language different parties use in response to terror attacks. These documents are mostly taken from the non-profit organization *Abgeordnetenwatch* (Delegate Watch) and can be found here: <https://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de/>.²⁵

4. Establishing Balance

Our identification strategy relies on the assumption that the success of an attack is orthogonal to municipality characteristics. In this section, we test this assumption. To do so, we define the variable $SUCCESS_i$ as one if municipality i was hit at least once with a successful attack since 2010 and zero if it was hit with at least one failed attack (and no successful attack) in that same time period; the variable is undefined for municipalities that did not experience any attacks. We then regress a range of municipality characteristics measured in time periods *prior* to the attack on the success variable as shown in the following estimating equation:²⁶

22. We thank the FAZ-Foundation for its financial support in helping us to procure these data.

23. We thank Zheyu Liu and Christina Poppe for outstanding research assistance in accomplishing this task. Further details on the methods used to match stories to attacks can be found in the Supplementary Data Appendix.

24. We thank Zheyu Liu and Christina Poppe for excellent research assistance to complete this task.

25. In the few instances that *Abgeordnetenwatch* does not have a particular manifesto, we obtain it directly from the party's website.

26. The only exceptions are (1) the foreign born population which is taken from the 2011 census and is measured only at this point in time and (2) the number of days between an election and an attack, for which we include

$$X_{i,t < t_{ATTACK}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SUCCESS_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Our strategy is validated if $\hat{\beta}_1$ is indistinguishable from zero. We present our findings in Columns 1 and 2 of Panel A of Table 1. As shown, there are no differences between municipalities targeted with successful and failed attacks. This holds true for a wide range of socio-economic characteristics. Importantly, it also holds true for political characteristics, including the size of the eligible voting population, voter turnout and, crucially, the vote share of the AfD. This suggests that, in the absence of terror attacks, support for right-wing populism is not a pre-existing characteristic of municipalities targeted with successful attacks.

In Panel B, we compare the characteristics of all the attacks in our sample.²⁷ As shown, there is little distinguishable difference in weapon technologies or attack motivations, further underscoring the quasi-random nature of an attacks success.²⁸

5. Terror and the AfD

5.1 Baseline Model

We model the AfD vote share in municipality i , in election e , in time period t as follows:

$$AfD_{i,e,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 [SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,e,t} \times ELECTION_e] + \zeta \mathbf{X}_{i,e,t} + \lambda_{ie} + \alpha_t + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (2)$$

To isolate the effect of a terror attack on an election result, we interact the indicator $SUCCESS_i$ with an indicator $POST_{i,e,t}$ that is 0 for all elections e in years t that were held *prior* to the first attack in municipality i and 1 for all elections that were held after the first attack and with a categorical variable, $ELECTION_e$ that indicates a Federal, European Parliament or state election. European elections serve as the reference category. The vector $\mathbf{X}_{i,e,t}$ includes all lower order terms of the triple interaction, but we omit the term $SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,e,t}$ so that the coefficient of interest, β_1 , is interpreted as the total marginal effect of a successful attack, compared to failed attacks, before and after a given election.

Because we study Federal, European and state elections in the same model, we include election-type by municipality fixed effects, λ_{ie} , so as to filter out potentially confounding effects specific to each municipality that might vary across different election types. We also include year fixed effects, α_t to capture unobserved time heterogeneities and we cluster the standard errors, $\epsilon_{i,t}$, at the municipality level.

periods both before and after.

27. We study patterns for all 232 attacks to (1) increase the sample size of this analysis and (2) establish the more general conclusion that successful and failed attacks resemble each other. Repeating this analysis using only the first attack in the 124 unique municipalities that experience an attack produces similar results.

28. We present balance results for the three most common weapon types used in attacks: explosives (which include incendiary devices), firearms and melee (hand) weapons.

5.2 Baseline Results

We report the results in Table 2. In Column 1, we run our baseline model and find that the AfD vote share increases by some 6 percentage points in state elections, a 36 percent increase relative to the sample mean. In Columns 2 to 9, we undertake a number of robustness exercises which we describe in turn.

In Column 2, we include the interaction between an east/west Germany indicator and year dummies so as to control for any time varying factors specific to east/west Germany that might influence both the number of attacks and the rise of the AfD. This is especially important when one considers that the AfD has stronger support in former east-Germany. In Column 3 we omit Berlin, a city-state that experienced some 25 percent of the attacks in the sample and which, in some ways, acts as an outlier. In Column 4, we interact an indicator for whether a municipality is classified as an urban district, a *kreisfreie Stadt*, with year dummies so as to control for potentially confounding effects of dense urban centers. In Column 5, we control for the weapon used in the attack and in Column 6, we include the number of days between a given election and the date of the first attack so as to account for the wide variation in an attacks timing relative to an election. In Column 7, we omit the 33 municipalities that experienced more than one attack and in Column 8, we omit those attacks that were part of a larger, coordinated attack and thus had greater likelihood of success.²⁹ Finally, in Column 9, we include all municipality characteristics presented in Panel A of Table 1 as controls (except for political characteristics). Specifically, for each municipality, we measure the *pre-attack* mean of each characteristic and interact this measure with year dummies, thus allowing municipality characteristics other than terror to differentially affect the AfD vote share post-attack. Across all these specifications and samples, we find consistent patterns: successful terror attacks lead to differential increases for the AfD in state elections. The coefficient of interest is stable across all columns and is precisely estimated. By contrast, we see no clear patterns for Federal or European Parliament elections. The coefficients are much smaller, are not distinguishable from zero and display no clear sign.

5.3 Additional Robustness

In Online Appendix C, we report results from three additional sets of robustness exercises which we briefly describe here.

First, we estimate our model using standard two-way fixed effect regression commands in Stata. In recent years, however, there has been a fast-growing literature addressing the issues related to panel estimations with two-way fixed effects and staggered treatment. Because our setting has a binary treatment variable that is heterogeneous in terms of its timing, we carry out our baseline estimation using an alternative estimator from this literature put forward by Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2021). As shown in Appendix C.1, there is little difference to

29. The GTD counts a coordinated terror attack as successful even if 1 of its constituent attacks succeeded and the others failed.

our main result when using this alternative estimator.

Second, in Online Appendix C.2, we repeat the baseline analysis using a rolling window approach in order to incorporate every attack into the analysis. For the 91 municipalities that received one attack, the coding of the variables *SUCCESS* and *POST* remain unchanged. However, instead of dropping the 33 municipalities that received more than one attack as we did in Column 7 of Table 2, we now code each attack in these municipalities as either successful or failed and create a window of time before and after each attack. The results are reported in Table C.2 and produce very similar results to those generated using the first attack only, alleviating concerns that municipalities hit with multiple attacks adversely affect our results. As mentioned in the Online Appendix, however, this approach has the disadvantage of making interpretation more difficult because of overlapping time-periods: the “post” period of one attack in a given municipality is the “pre” period for the subsequent attack in that same municipality. It is for this reason that we use only the first attack in our baseline analysis. As shown, however, the differences in the approaches are negligible.

Third, given the relatively small size of our sample — 124 municipalities of which 14 percent of which experienced failed attacks — we present our baseline result with alternative inference methods in Online Appendix C.3. These include wild cluster bootstrapping (Cameron, Gelbach, and Miller 2008) and a permutation exercise in which the variable success is randomly permuted in order to generate a null distribution from which to estimate a p -value. As shown, our baseline result is robust to alternative inference.

5.4 *Effects of Successful Terror and Failed Terror*

Our baseline estimate identifies the effect of successful terror *relative* to failed terror. One still may wonder, however, whether terror, regardless of success, has an overall *level* effect on voting outcomes when compared to untargeted municipalities. We address this question in this subsection by undertaking a propensity score matching exercise. Specifically, for each successfully targeted municipality, we identify its nearest neighbors on the basis of propensity scores from the sample of untargeted municipalities using all the municipality covariates presented in our balance table.³⁰ We then use these matched municipalities, which we refer to as *placebo fail*, to run a number of additional tests presented in Table 3.

In Columns 1 and 2 we check for balance in the AfD vote share between (Column 1) successfully targeted municipalities and placebo fail municipalities and (Column 2) failed municipalities compared to placebo fail. As shown, there is no distinguishable difference in the AfD vote share between these municipalities, suggesting that the matching procedure worked well.

Next, we run our baseline analysis using these different municipality types. In Column 3, we estimate our baseline model in a sample that uses only successful targeted municipalities

30. Online Appendix D contains further details regarding the propensity score matching.

and untargeted municipalities matched via propensity scores (i.e. placebo fail). As shown, the coefficient is very similar to our baseline estimate, even as the size of the control group expands considerably. In Column 4, we compare outcomes in municipalities that actually experienced failed attacks compared to placebo failed municipalities. As shown, the coefficient on state elections is two orders of magnitude smaller and is indistinguishable from zero. These results suggest that failed attacks do not generate their own effects and that our baseline is, in fact, driven by the success of terror attacks.

5.5 *Attack Type Heterogeneity*

We examine whether our baseline estimates display heterogeneous effects according to the motives of the attacker. As mentioned in Section 3, information regarding the motives of the attack is available in 211 of the 232 attacks in our sample, over 50 percent of which are motivated by right-wing causes. This leaves us with little variation in order to identify heterogeneous effects for attacks other than right-wing attacks. Nonetheless, in Figure 4, we estimate our baseline model in samples split by right-wing causes — all right-wing attacks and right-wing Neo-Nazi attacks — as well as on a sample of attacks that target foreigners. We also estimate the baseline effect on the sample of attacks that are non-right wing, including left-wing attacks and Islamist attacks. As shown, we find that the baseline attack is driven almost entirely by right-wing attacks and by attacks that target foreigners. This suggests that the AfD benefits from acts of terror which, by and large, are perpetrated by right-wing causes.³¹

5.6 *Geographic Spillovers*

In Figure 2 we investigate spillover effects. Specifically, we code untargeted municipalities within an 80 kilometer radius of targeted municipalities as either success or failed depending on their distance to the nearest successful or failed attack. We then re-run our baseline estimating equation in samples of municipalities according to their distance to an actual attack and plot the coefficient of interest for state elections. Distance 0 shows our baseline effect and the coefficients for all other municipalities are plotted according to their distance to the targeted municipality. As shown, there are clear, local spillover effects: the coefficient is around 50 percent smaller than the baseline but statistically significant for municipalities located between 25 and 50 kilometers from an attack. The qualitative effects persist beyond 50 kilometers, but

31. One concern is that these effects might not cleanly identify the motive of an attack because some municipalities received more than one attack and might have experienced attacks with mixed motivations — say, a right-wing attack followed by a left-wing attack — making it difficult to identify the role of attack motive on the AfD vote share. To alleviate this concern, we re-generate Figure 4 in a sample of municipalities that were attacked only once, enabling us to cleanly identify effects according to motives. The revised plot is shown in Figure E.1 of Online Appendix E. As shown, right-wing attacks have an even larger effect in the sample of municipalities targeted with only one attack, reinforcing the view that right-wing terror has the strongest impact on the AfD vote share.

are even smaller and are mostly indistinguishable from zero. For municipalities located 80 kilometers away, the effect diminishes to zero.

6. Terrorism and Turnout

We begin our investigation of channels by studying the effect of terror on voter turnout and on the vote share for other parties.³² We estimate the same model presented in equation 2 and present the results for the triple interaction for state elections in Figure 3.³³

In the top panel, we study the effect of terror on turnout as measured by the number of votes cast per eligible voter in a municipality. The coefficient in the first bar suggests that, following a successful attack, the number of eligible voters who participate in state elections increase by some 16 percentage points ($\beta = 0.1665$, p -value = 0.000), a 28 percent increase relative to the sample mean of turnout in state elections. Given that the eligible voting population does not differ between municipalities hit with successful or failed attacks, this result underscores the impact of successful terror on voter mobilization and not on the size of the voting population. In the remaining bars, we study how these voters are distributed among the various parties in German politics. These coefficients thus measure the share of voters, and not the share of the vote, claimed by each party. As shown, the AfD captures fully a third of the increases in voter turnout, some 5 percentage points out of the 16 ($\beta = 0.050$, p -value = 0.000). With the exception of the FDP, which captures none of the increases in turnout, the other major parties in the German political landscape claim between 2 and 4 points of the 16 point increase.

In the lower panel of Figure 3, we examine the extent to which these changes in turnout affect each party's performance as measured by the share of the vote they win. The AfD bar repeats the baseline effect while the remaining bars show the results for other parties. Aside from the SPD, which experiences a 3 percentage point increase in state elections as a result of terror, no other major party in Germany experiences a significant increase in vote shares in response to terror attacks.³⁴

7. Terrorism and Political Attitudes

In this section, we examine the extent to which successful terror affects the political attitudes and preferences of individuals. To do so, we use data from the German Socio-Economic

32. Though election data is available for years prior to 2013, we limit our sample to elections that took place as of 2013 so as to compare the effects of terror on turnout and other parties vote shares once the AfD had entered the political market in Germany.

33. Like the baseline results, the coefficients for Federal and European elections display no clear or convincing patterns when studying turnout.

34. The SPD result also appears somewhat robust: specifically, six of the 9 specifications in Table 2 return positive and significant results for the vote share of the SPD in state elections. However, the absolute magnitude of the coefficient is smaller for the SPD compared to the AfD. Given the sample mean for the SPD in state elections is larger for the SPD than it is for the AfD, the SPD effect is even smaller relative to the sample mean (15 percent increase relative to the sample mean compared to a 36 percent increase for the AfD). Nonetheless, this positive effect for the SPD might help explain some of the voter migration results which we present later in the paper.

Panel (SOEP), a panel of individuals and households observed over time. The advantage of a longitudinal study like this is that it enables us to study the political attitudes and preferences of the *same person* before and after an attack. We obtained access to the restricted-use SOEP data with municipality identifiers in order to link our data on successful/failed attacks to this survey data. We first present evidence that individuals residing in municipalities targeted with success and failed attacks are statistically indistinguishable, lending credence to the view that terror affects voting outcomes by changing political attitudes and not by targeting different types of people. We then present evidence that suggests our AfD results are driven by voters migrating from across the political spectrum to the AfD as well as by the political activation of previously inactive persons. Finally, we demonstrate that our results display significant heterogeneous effects according to education and, to a lesser extent, gender and age, in line with recent scholarship that documents demographic factors that make individuals most prone to populist rhetoric and authoritarian values.

7.1 Balance in the SOEP

We begin by checking for balance across a range of pre-attack individual characteristics between people who live in municipalities that experience successful or failed attacks. For each person, we regress different individual characteristics on the variable, $SUCCESS_i$, defined as before. We present the results in Figure 5. As shown, there are very little distinguishable differences in socio-economic characteristics between people living in municipalities hit with successful or failed attacks.³⁵ This increases our confidence that successful acts of terror lead to differences in voting outcomes because they affect political preferences and attitudes and not because they target different types of people.

7.2 Terrorism and individual political attitudes

For each person, p , residing in municipality i surveyed in period t , we estimate the parameters of the following model:

$$y_{p,i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 [SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,t}] + \delta_p + \alpha_t + \epsilon_{m,t} \quad (3)$$

Where y captures responses to different survey questions. Success is 1 or 0 if an individual resides in a municipality that experiences a successful (1) or failed (0) attack. The variable $POST_{i,t}$ is now defined as 0 for all interviews that occurred prior to an attack and 1 for all interviews that occurred after an attack. Crucially, the model includes person fixed effects, δ_p , as well as year fixed effects α_t . Because treatment still varies at the level of the municipality, we cluster our standard errors at that level, denoted by $\epsilon_{m,t}$.

35. The only significant difference is marital status which has a coefficient with a p-value of 0.0823. Controlling for this one factor in the analysis does not make any difference to our results.

Table 4 presents our findings. The coefficients in Columns 1 and 2 indicate that, after successful attacks, individuals not only identify as more right-wing on a left-right political ideology scale but as more hard-right. This ideological shift is also reflected in the partisan preferences individuals hold. In Columns 3 to 5, for example, we find that successful attacks lead people to identify more with the AfD, less with the CDU (though not quantitatively significant) and significantly more with the SPD, results that are directly in line with our aggregate results on vote shares. Although the coefficient for the SPD is larger than that of the AfD, the effect relative to the sample mean is much larger for the AfD than it is for the SPD, again in line with our baseline findings. Interestingly, the coefficient in Column 6 suggests that, following a successful attack, individuals participate significantly more in politics *at the local level*, patterns consistent with our findings that suggest terror matters primarily for state elections.

In Columns 7 and 8 we investigate the differential effects of terror on different social attitudes. In Columns 7, for example, we find that terror significantly increases people's worries about immigration to Germany. By contrast, in Column 9 we find that successful terror has no effects on people's concerns about terrorism. While these results are interesting in their own right, they are broadly consistent with how both the news media and the AfD respond, in terms of the language they employ in their reporting and election documents, respectively (described in subsequent sections).

7.3 Heterogeneous effects: Voter migration and political activation

To what extent are these changes in political attitudes driven by voter migration — that is, committed partisans of one party leaving to support the AfD — and to what extent are they reflective of the political mobilization of politically inactive people who turn out to support the AfD? To investigate these questions, we test for heterogeneous effects along two dimensions: partisanship and political activity. Specifically, we estimate the parameters of the following two estimating equations:

$$\text{Prefer AfD}_{p,i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 [SUCCES_i \times POST_{i,t} \times PARTISAN_p] + \zeta \mathbf{X}_{p,i,t} + \delta_p + \alpha_t + \epsilon_{m,t} \quad (4)$$

$$\text{Prefer AfD}_{p,i,t} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 [SUCCES_i \times POST_{i,t} \times ACTIVE_p] + \zeta \mathbf{X}_{p,i,t} + \delta_p + \alpha_t + \epsilon_{m,t} \quad (5)$$

In both models, the outcome is an indicator that is 1 if the preferred political party of person p in municipality i in time period t is the AfD and zero otherwise.

In equation 4, we identify the effects of terror on a person's likelihood to prefer the AfD for people with and without partisan commitments. The variable $PARTISAN_p$ is thus defined as 1 if, in all the surveys *prior* to an attack, a person prefers a particular party (i.e. the person is a committed partisan). It is zero if, in the surveys preceding an attack, an individual states more than one party as their preferred political party. For each major party, we thus identify its pre-terror committed partisans and investigate whether successful terror leads them to migrate

from their preferred party to the AfD.

In equation 5, we investigate whether successful terror has differential effects for people who are politically active compared to those who are inactive.³⁶ The variable $ACTIVE_p$ is thus defined as 1 if, in all the surveys that *precede* an attack, an individual reports participating in local politics frequently and it is defined as zero for individuals who, pre-attack, report their participation in local politics as seldom or never. Both estimating equations include all lower order terms, $X_{p,i,t}$, and all other terms are defined as before.³⁷

We present our results in Table 5. In Columns 1 to 6, we find that, across the board, people who are *not* politically committed to a certain party all tend to prefer the AfD after experiencing a successful attack. Moreover, people who display partisan commitment to the SPD (the main rival to the CDU), the FDP and the Greens show no preference for the AfD in response to terror, suggesting that voters do not migrate from these parties to the AfD. By contrast, people who are committed to the CDU prior to an attack display significant preference for the AfD after experiencing a successful attack, suggesting that voter migration from the the main ruling party to the AfD does, in fact, drive some of our results. Similar patterns are found for the Left party in Germany (Column 4): in fact, the coefficient is larger for committed partisans than it is for uncommitted partisans, suggesting that acts of terror lead to significant voter migration from the Left party to the AfD. Interestingly, we find some migration away from Germany's ultra-right parties into the AfD. Specifically, in Column 6, we find that individuals who, pre-attack, identify with parties such as the Neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NDP) of Germany or the anti-immigration *Die Republikaner* respond to terror by preferring the AfD. This suggests that voters from across the entire political spectrum respond to terror by shifting their preference to the AfD. In Column 7, we present our estimate of γ_1 from equation 5. The coefficients indicate that politically inactive individuals significantly prefer the AfD following a successful attack whereas the opposite is true (though not statistically significant) for politically active people, suggesting that the political activation effects of terror have a partisan slant.

Together, these results suggest that the strong demand for the AfD in response to terror appears to be driven both by voter migration from across the entire political spectrum as well as by the political activation of previously inactive people.

7.4 Heterogeneous effects: Cultural conflict

Norris and Inglehart (2019) explain that groups in society who are “left behind” by globalization may react defensively to shocks that undermine security — including terrorism — by adopting more extreme ideological positions. To investigate whether local acts of terror prompt such a reaction, we test for heterogeneous effects of terrorism on political attitudes along relevant

36. In the SOEP this question asks how often people participate in municipal politics and attend local meetings of a political party.

37. In both equations, we omit $SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,t}$ such that the triple interaction can be interpreted as total marginal effects and not differences.

dimensions of political conflict, including education, income and employment, gender and age. Specifically, we study three outcomes from the SOEP: whether a person prefers the AfD; whether they prefer the SPD; and whether they participate in local politics. For each outcome, we estimate β_1 from equation 3 in samples split by the relevant dimension of political conflict and plot the corresponding coefficients in Figure 6. We also estimate a model that includes a triple interaction, $SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,t} \times COVARIATE_p$ (lower order terms included as well), and plot the coefficient on the triple interaction in order to understand whether the coefficients in the split samples are significantly different from one another.

We document strong heterogeneous effects along one dimension: education. Individuals without university education respond differentially to successful terror by preferring the AfD; they show no preference for the SPD. For those with university education, the opposite is true: they differentially support the SPD in response to terror without showing any preference for the AfD. In both cases, the differences between university and non-university educated are quantitatively significant. Interestingly, we also find that education helps drive our results on political participation. While individuals with and without education respond to terror by participating significantly more in local politics, the effect is significantly larger for higher-educated people. These results are directly in line with Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty (2021) who document the gradual process of “disconnection” between the effects of income and education on voting outcomes: Whereas in the 50s and 60s, support for left-leaning parties was strongest among lower educated (and lower income) voters, low-educated voters now tend to support right-wing, anti-migration parties while high-educated voters tend to vote for the left.

The remaining dimensions of political conflict display some heterogeneous effects in terms of preferences for the AfD, though the differences are not always significant. In samples of men, of people above median age and above median income, successful terror significant affects a person’s propensity to prefer the AfD. However, the only quantitatively significant difference is between women and men (p -value = 0.0693 on the triple interaction). Moreover, none of the dimensions of political conflict produce significant differential effects for the SPD.

Together, these results are consistent with recent empirical work that document important political cleavages emerging around factors such as education that help explain the rise of right-wing, authoritarian populist parties like the AfD (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021; Gennaioli and Tabellini 2019).

8. Terrorism and Media

We posit that a primary channel through which successful terror affects both voting outcomes and political preferences is media salience. Following Bordalo, Gennaioli, and Shleifer (2013), we argue that successful terror attacks are salient because they (a) attract differential attention compared to failed attacks and (b) disproportionately affect subsequent decisions. In this section, we lend credence to these claims first by studying the extent to which successful attacks

receive differential media coverage compared to failed attacks and second by investigating the impact of highly-covered attacks on the AfD vote share.

8.1 *Differential media coverage of successful and failed attacks*

To test whether successful attacks receive more media coverage than failed attacks, we collect news stories from two sources: the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), a prominent national publisher in Germany, and LexisNexis which collects stories from a range of publishers and which includes regional and local news reports.³⁸ For each terror attack in our sample, we first aggregate the number of stories that cover it in order to understand whether successful attacks are (a) more *likely* to receive coverage and/or (b) whether they receive greater *quantity* of coverage than failed attacks. Then, for each story that is linked to a terror attack in our sample, we analyze the extent to which success influences the *tone* of coverage, as measured by sentiment scores, and the *content* of coverage, as measured by the frequency of key words. Our results are presented in Table 6. In Columns 1 and 2, the unit of observation is the terror attack. In Columns 3 to 9, the unit of observation is the news story. Because we aim at estimating the difference in media coverage between successful and failed attacks — and not between successful and failed attacks before and after an election — we drop municipality and year fixed effects and replace them with state $\times$ year fixed effects so that we can estimate the parameter of interest.

In Panel A, we present results from regional and local news reports collected from LexisNexis. In Column 1 we find that successful attacks are no more *likely* than failed attacks to receive coverage. However, in Column 2 we find that successful attacks, on average, receive differentially *more* coverage: compared the failed attacks, successful attacks receive around 8 more news reports among regional and local news sources (a 73 percent increase relative to the sample mean of 11 stories per attack). The results in Columns 1 and 2 thus suggest that successful attacks are salient in the news media because they are covered more intensively and not because failed attacks fail to receive coverage.³⁹ In Columns 3 and 4, we find that news stories that cover successful attacks have worse sentiments, both in the story title (though not quantitatively significant) and body, suggesting that success not only influences the quantity of coverage but the *tone* of coverage. Finally, we investigate the extent to which successful terror attacks influence the *content* of news reports as measured by the frequency of key words. Stories that cover successful attacks speak significantly less about right-wing populism and crime but significantly more about Islam, a result that is particularly noteworthy given that the majority of the attacks in our sample are motivated by right-wing causes and are targeted against migrants. We also find that news coverage at the sub-national level uses words related to terrorism significantly more in response to successful attacks. This suggests that local and regional media

38. LexisNexis also includes stories from national outlets but we omit these so that our LexisNexis measures only local and regional coverage.

39. These results are also directly in line with Brodeur (2018).

coverage differentially label successful attacks as terrorist events and differentially highlight Islam when describing them.

The patterns for national coverage are different. As shown in Columns 1 and 2 of Panel B, successful attacks do not enjoy greater coverage at the national level, nor is the sentiment of a story (Columns 3 and 4) affected by an attacks success. National stories that cover successful attacks, compared to national stories that cover failed attacks, do, however, appear to highlight issues related to Islam and downplay crime, just like news coverage at the local and regional level. On the whole, however, not only do the attacks in our sample receive less coverage at the national level compared to the local level, successful attacks are no more salient than failed attacks in national reporting. Together, these results suggest that the regional and local news media play an important role in making successful attacks, and certain topics used to describe those attacks, more salient.⁴⁰

8.2 *High-coverage attacks and AfD vote share*

We now examine how media salience affects our baseline results. To conduct this test, we repeat our baseline analysis in samples split by the amount of media coverage that terrorist attacks receive. The results are presented in Figure 7. In the left panel, we repeat our baseline analysis. In the middle panel shows the same parameters but in a sample of municipalities whose terror attacks received more than the 75th percentile of news coverage. There are two noteworthy conclusions: first, the baseline effect on state elections nearly doubles in the sample of high-coverage attacks, in line with the view that greater salience of successful attacks leads to stronger political effects. Second, there is now a positive, significant effect for Federal elections. The point estimate on Federal elections is around 4 percentage points which represents a 35 percent increase relative to the sample mean, very similar to our baseline effects for state elections. In the sample of municipalities hit with low-coverage attacks, by contrast, the Federal election effect vanishes while the coefficient on state elections decreases by around 50 percent but remains statistically significant. Together, these results underscore the important role that media coverage plays in shaping political outcomes. They are also broadly in line with scholarship that illustrates the role of media attention in amplifying terror's effects on educational and economic outcomes. In this connection, Alfano and Görlach (2022) finds that media access reinforces the negative effects of terrorism on schooling of children in Kenya while Brodeur (2018) finds that successful attacks, compared to failed attacks, receive more coverage, in terms of the number of news stories, which in turn helps explain terror's impact on decreasing employment and consumer confidence.

40. In Online Appendix F we also test for differential coverage of successful attacks using Facebook data. Drawing on data from Müller and Schwarz (2021), we find that successful attacks lead to differentially more AfD Facebook users.

9. Terrorism and Political Parties

As a final step in our analysis, we examine the language employed by political parties in their election manifestos in state elections in response to terror. We thus collect the election manifestos (i.e. the *Wahlprogramm*) of all political parties in state elections from 2013 to 2021 and we also collect the 2009 Federal election manifesto of the CDU which we use as a reference to compare shifts in language. We digitize the text of all such manifestos in order to identify the number of trigger words per 10,000 words related to topics such as migration, terrorism and crime.⁴¹ For each party, p , we calculate the difference in the number of trigger words per 10,000 words, ΔTW , between party p 's state election manifesto in year t and the 2009 CDU Federal election manifesto. We use this difference as the outcome of interest in the following estimating equation:

$$\Delta TW_{p_t-CDU_{2009}} = \pi_0 + \pi_1 \sum_s SUCCESS_{s,t-1} + \pi_2 1\{Party = p\} + \pi_3 \left[\sum_s SUCCESS_{s,t-1} \times 1\{Party = p\} \right] + \alpha_t + \zeta_s + \epsilon_{s,t} \quad (6)$$

In this model, $\sum_s SUCCESS_{s,t-1}$ measures the total number of successful attacks in federal state s in the year prior to a state election in year t . The parameter π_1 thus captures the effect of violence, at the state level, on the number of trigger words a given party uses in comparison to the 2009 CDU. The model includes a dummy, $1\{Party = p\}$, that is 1 for political party p and 0 for all other parties. The coefficient π_2 thus captures the *level* difference in trigger words used between the various parties and the 2009 CDU *regardless* of violence at the state level.⁴² The coefficient of interest, therefore, is π_3 . It captures, for each party, the additional effect on the number of trigger words used in its election manifestos at the state level compared to the 2009 CDU base level as a result of terrorism. The model also includes year fixed effects, α_t , state fixed effects, ζ_s and its standard errors are clustered at the level of the state.⁴³

Of course, a state level analysis in a setting such as ours suffers from two important limitations: first, analysis across the 16 German Federal states offers more limited cross sectional variation. Second, aggregating (successful) attacks to the state level means that we lose our sharp identifying variation between successful and failed attacks. As such, we interpret these findings with caution. Nonetheless, a state level analysis offers insights into how political parties respond to terror. And the results are broadly in line with the rest of the analysis that exploits much richer variation at the municipal and individual level.

We report our results in Figure 8. Each patch reports our result for π_3 which we estimate

41. We choose these trigger words on the basis of work by Detering (2019) who studies the rhetoric of the parliamentary right in Germany.

42. Although this parameter is subsumed by state fixed effects, we model it explicitly so as to underscore the additional effect that π_3 captures on trigger words as a result of acts of terror at the state level.

43. Because there are only 16 Federal states, we bootstrap the standard errors.

for each party in samples split by trigger word.⁴⁴ The patches are colored according to the sign of the coefficient (negative red, positive blue) and shaded according to precision (lightest 90 percent, darkest 99 percent). The patterns are clear. In response to terror at the state level, the AfD uses differentially more trigger words related to issues like crime, immigrant naturalization and integration. All other parties either do not respond or respond in the exact opposite direction as the AfD, using less trigger words on these same subjects. Interestingly, the word terror receives no special mention, neither by the AfD nor by other parties, in response to terror. The figure thus provides some suggestive evidence that parties respond to differently to terrorism by realigning the issues on which they speak most about in their election documents.

10. Conclusion

Exploiting quasi-random variation in the success of terror attacks across German municipalities, we shed light on the extent to which local acts of terrorism influence the political landscape of a country. The picture that emerges is that terror has significant effects on political attitudes, preferences and outcomes: following successful terror attacks, the vote share of the right-wing, populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party, a relative newcomer to German politics, increases by some 6 percentage points in state elections. This effect is driven both by the mobilization of previously politically inactive individuals and by voters migrating from from two mainstream parties to the AfD. In addition to voter preferences shifting right, people's social attitudes shift to considerably more populist positions in response to successful acts of terror: people are increasingly worried about migration and are more likely to participate in local politics. We also found differential coverage of successful attacks in the news media and that high coverage attacks have even larger consequences for the AfD in state elections but also in Federal elections. Together, our results provide first evidence that acts of terror can lead to a broad shift in the political landscape of a nation by mobilizing voters, shifting their preferences and realigning news reporting and the messaging of political parties in their campaign documents.

One striking feature of our results is that a right-wing, populist party like the AfD benefits from acts of terror which, by and large, were carried out by perpetrators motivated by right-wing extremist causes, including Neo-Nazi attacks, and who, by and large, targeted foreigners. This appears to be the result of the ability of the AfD to use acts of terror to support its own narrative. That the AfD speaks more about crime, integration and immigrant naturalization following attacks rather than terrorism speaks to this point. Additionally, we found that news stories that cover successful attacks make use of significantly different vocabulary, highlighting such issues as terrorism and Islam and using less words related to right-wing populism. These results point to the powerful role of the media in shaping human perceptions as well as political and social attitudes, preferences and behaviors.

44. Specifically, for n parties and m trigger words, we run $n \times m$ regressions.

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11. Figures

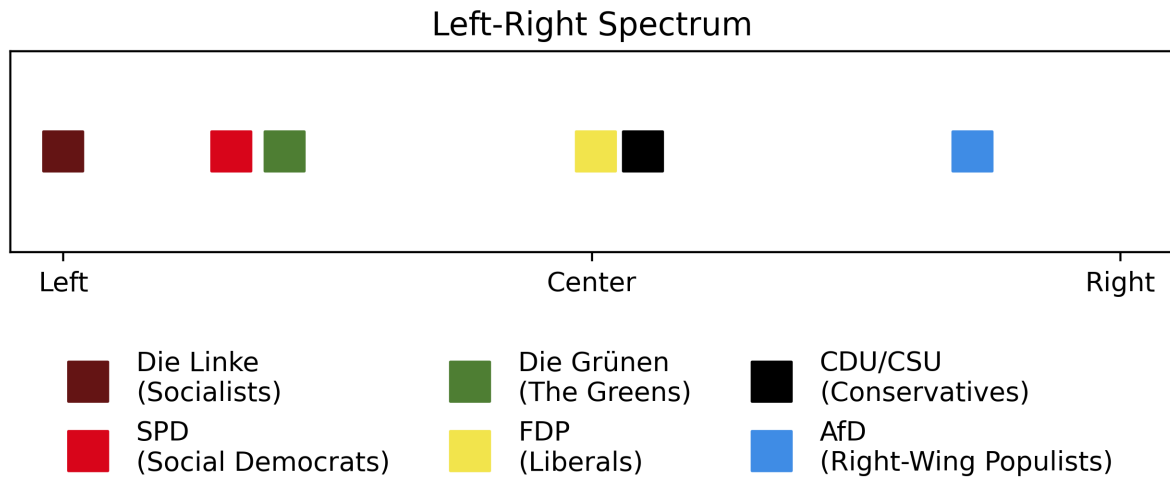


Figure 1
The Political Spectrum in Germany

Note: This figure shows the six major political parties in Germany according to their positions on a left-right policy scale using data from election manifestos from Lehmann et al. (2022). The dimensions used to map a party on the left-right scale include, among others, the extent to which a party favors traditional moral values; a party's preference for rigorous law enforcement; the degree to which a party upholds a positive memory of its nation's history. For a complete list of considered dimensions, see the code-book offered by Lehmann et al. (2022).

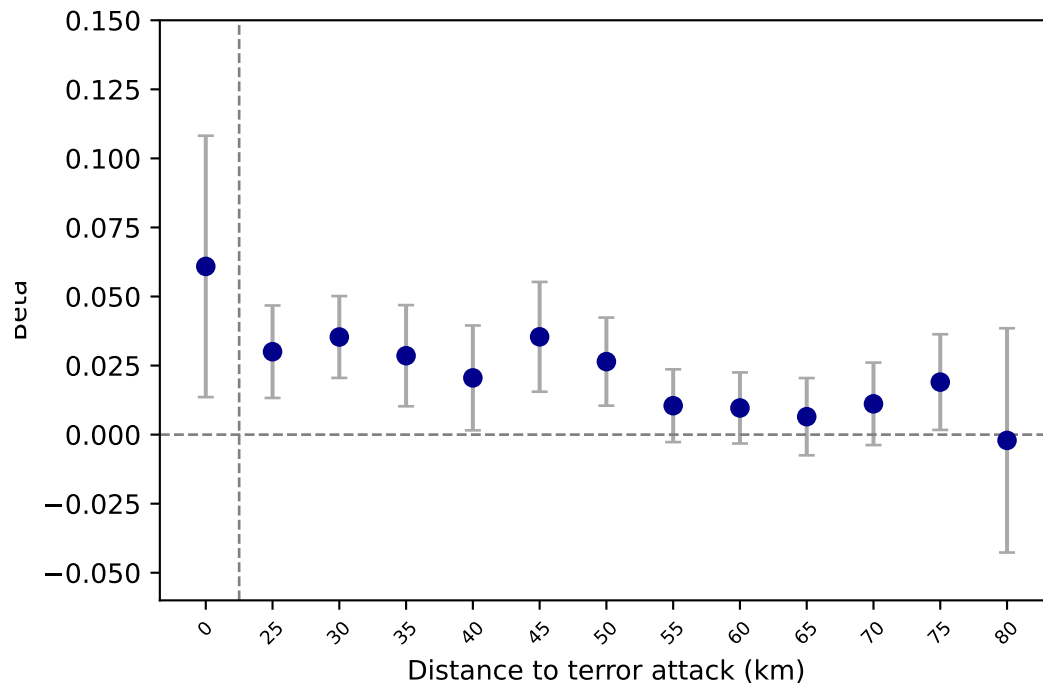


Figure 2
Geographic Spillovers of Successful Terror

Note: This figure plots the coefficient on $SUCCESS \times POST \times STATEELECTION$ from our baseline estimating equation for all municipalities in Germany as a function of distance to a successful or failed attack. Untargeted municipalities are coded as having either a successful or failed attack according to their distance to the nearest successful or failed attack. The regressions all include municipality and year fixed effects as well as municipality by election-type fixed effects and include all lower order terms. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality and confidence intervals are drawn at 95%

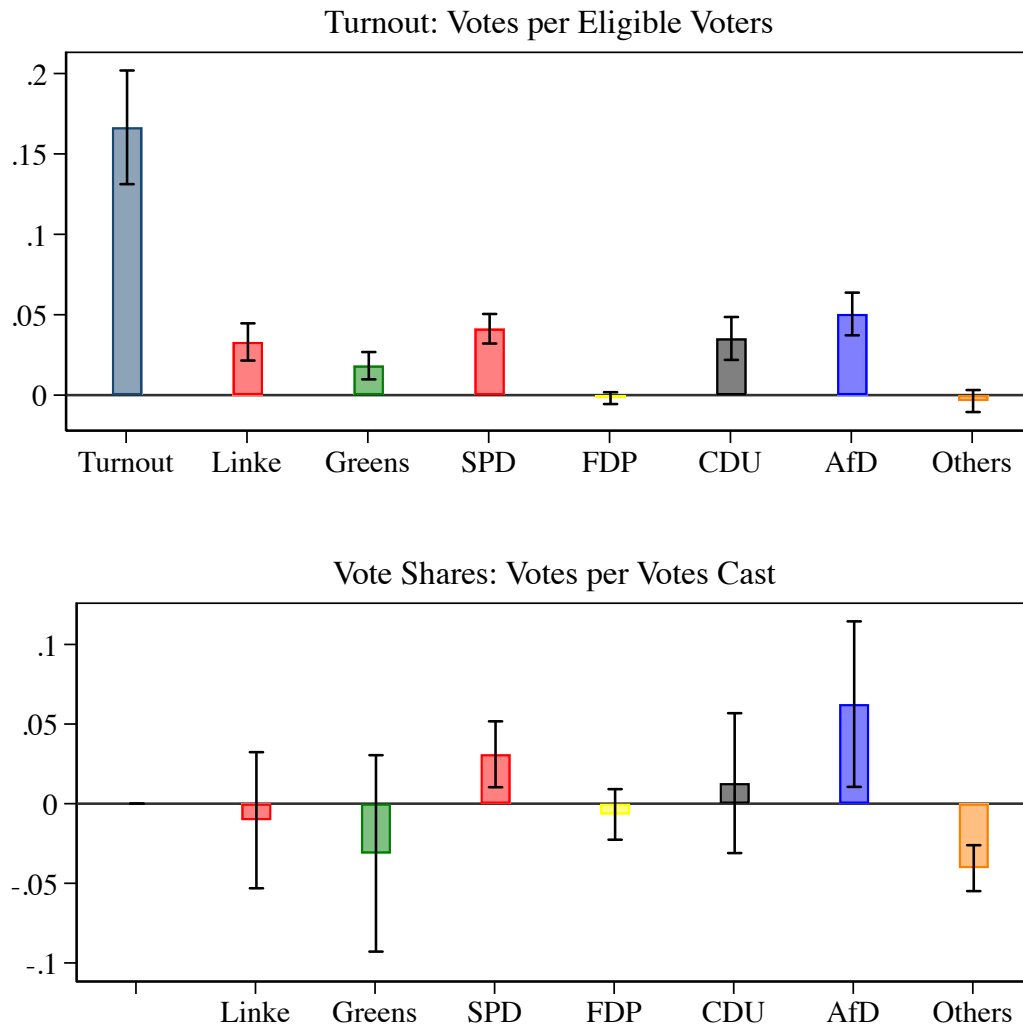


Figure 3
Terror, Turnout and Other Parties

Note: In the top panel, we run our baseline regression specification using voter turnout, as measured by the number of votes cast per eligible voter, as the main outcome variable. We first study overall municipality turnout and then party-specific turnout as labeled along the x -axis. In the bottom panel, we run the baseline when using party-specific vote shares as the outcome, again as labeled along the x -axis. For each regression, we report only the coefficient on the triple interaction between *SUCCESS*, *POST* and *STATE ELECTIONS*. All regressions include election-type by municipality fixed effects, year fixed effects, and all lower order interactions. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality and confidence intervals are drawn at 95%.

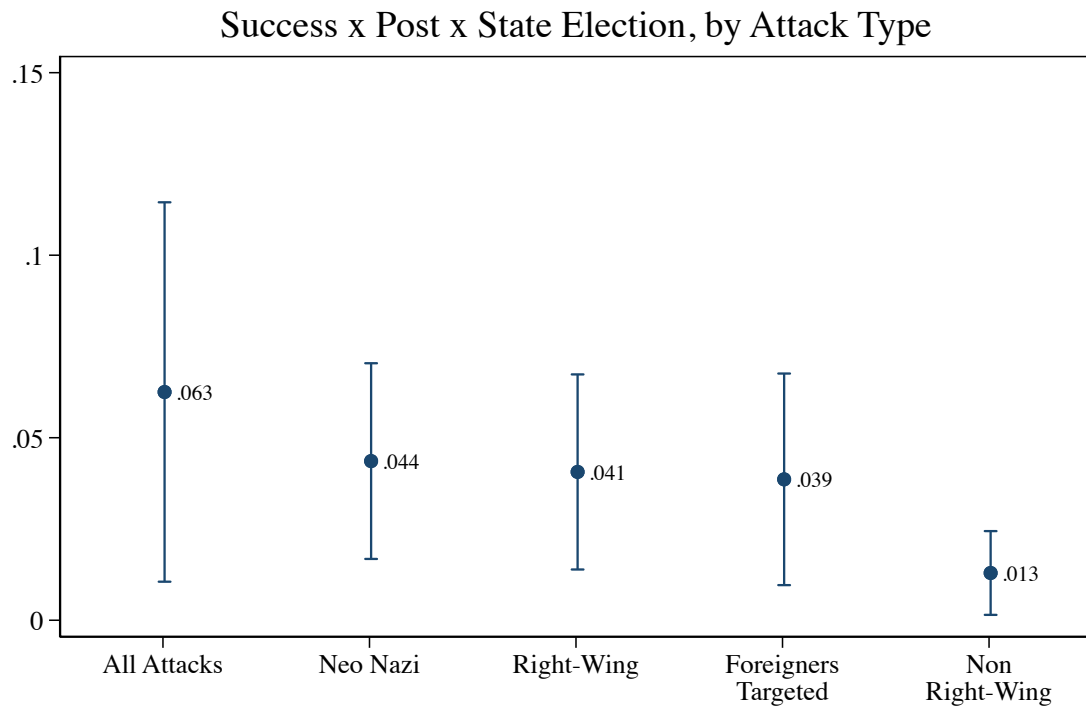


Figure 4
Heterogeneous effects according to attack type or target

Note: In this Figure, we plot β_1 from our baseline estimating model as specified in equation 2 in samples split by attack type or attack target. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality and confidence intervals are drawn at 95%.

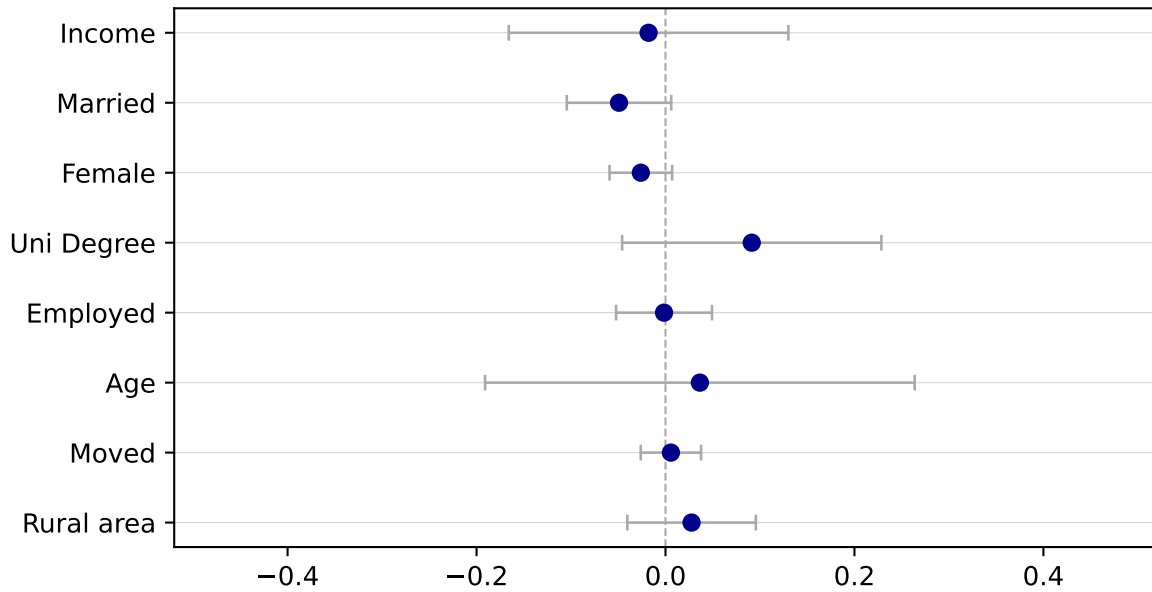


Figure 5
Individual characteristics of people in successful v. failed municipalities

Note: This figure plots the differences in individual characteristics for people residing in municipalities that experienced successful attacks compared to those that experienced failed attacks. Specifically, it plots β from the following regression: $X_{p,t < t_{Attack}} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SUCCESS_i + \epsilon_i$ where $X_{p,t < t_{Attack}}$ is a person p 's characteristic measured in the pre-terror time period for those characteristics that are time varying. For time invariant characteristics we measure the covariate in the year immediately before the attack. The regression that uses the dummy variable “moved” also uses all time periods in the sample in order to test whether individuals in successful or failed municipalities move differentially post-attack. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality and confidence intervals are drawn at 95%.

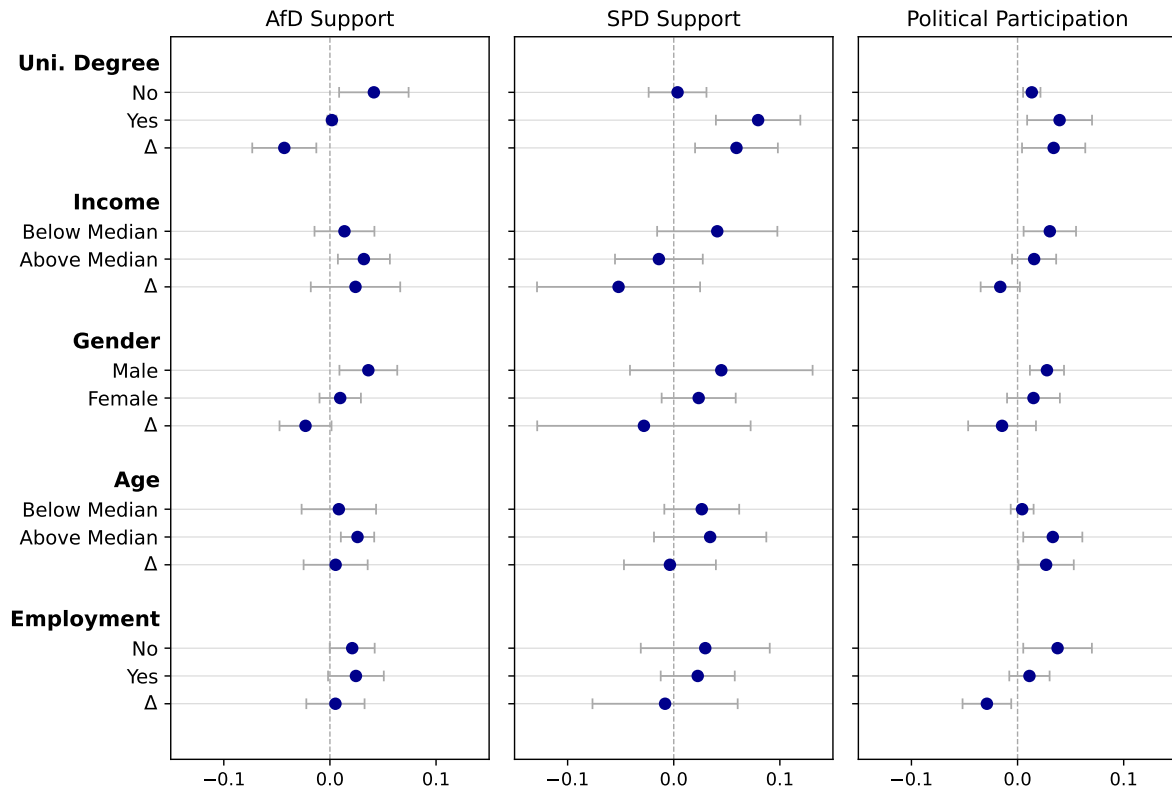


Figure 6
Political attitudes in samples split by various socio-economic variables

Note: The outcome in each panel is an indicator that is 1 if people prefer the AfD, the SPD or participate more in local politics, respectively, and 0 otherwise. For each outcome, we estimate the coefficient on $SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,t}$ in samples split by the relevant covariates as labeled. Δ is the coefficient on the triple interaction when the outcome is regressed on $SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,t} \times COVARIATE_p$. This model includes all lower order terms as well as person fixed effects and year fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality and confidence intervals are drawn at 95%.

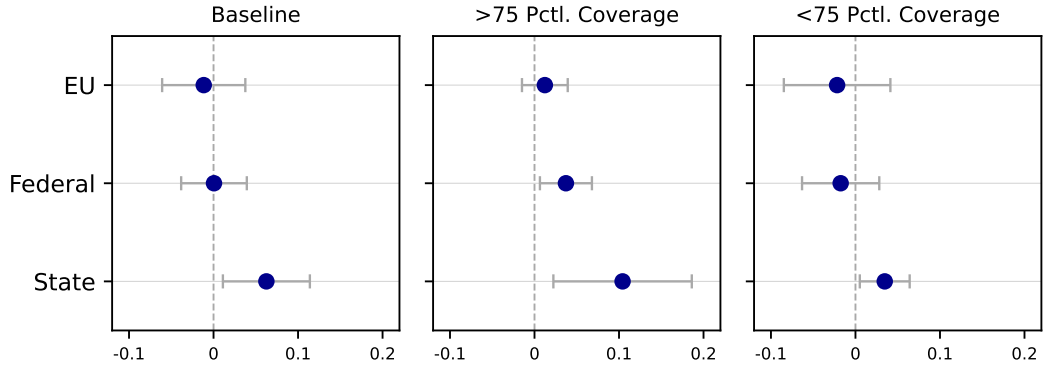


Figure 7

Baseline Effects of Terror on AfD Vote Share in Samples Split by Media Coverage

Note: The left panel presents our baseline estimate for $SUCCESS \times POST$ for European, Federal and State elections, respectively. The middle and right panel repeats the analysis in samples split by the amount of media coverage attacks receive. The middle panel is the sample of municipalities hit with terror attacks that receive more than 75th percentile news coverage while the right panel includes the sample of municipalities targeted with attacks that receive less than the 75th percentile of coverage.

Attack	-0.073 (0.051)	-0.064 (0.027)	0.094 (0.077)	-0.136 (0.056)	-0.084 (0.089)	0.26 (0.156)
Naturalization	-0.072 (0.071)	-0.066 (0.043)	-0.129 (0.019)	0.047 (0.029)	-0.09 (0.03)	0.291 (0.129)
Integration	-0.059 (0.065)	-0.121 (0.068)	0.004 (0.176)	-0.057 (0.077)	-0.005 (0.041)	0.244 (0.079)
Criminal (adj)	-0.101 (0.037)	-0.127 (0.037)	-0.054 (0.026)	-0.0 (0.045)	-0.003 (0.039)	0.248 (0.038)
Crime	-0.033 (0.11)	-0.034 (0.063)	0.045 (0.032)	-0.047 (0.083)	-0.059 (0.097)	0.103 (0.032)
Asylum	-0.036 (0.039)	-0.066 (0.051)	-0.05 (0.051)	-0.021 (0.044)	-0.081 (0.083)	0.197 (0.192)
Terror	-0.04 (0.126)	0.007 (0.045)	0.065 (0.086)	-0.03 (0.043)	0.089 (0.086)	-0.11 (0.1)
	Linke	Grünen	SPD	FDP	CDU/CSU	AfD

Figure 8

Trigger words used by different parties in different states compared to 2009 CDU

Note: This figure plots π_3 from estimating equation 6: It measures the differences in each trigger word used by each party in its state level election manifesto in states with more or less acts of terror relative to the 2009 CDU Federal election manifesto. Colored patches indicate statistical significance for positive (red) and negative (blue) effects: lightest shade indicates precision at the 90 percent level and darkest shade indicates 99 percent significance.

12. Tables

Table 1
Characteristics in Successful v. Failed Municipalities and Attacks

Variable	(1) $\hat{\beta}$	(2) p-value $H_0 : \beta = 0$	(3) N
Panel A: Municipality Characteristics			
<i>Economic:</i>			
Per capita income (000s)	1.427	0.284	411
Unemployed (000s)	-3.478	0.280	408
Tax revenue (pc)	0.165	0.669	353
<i>Demographic:</i>			
Population (000s)	-62.891	0.313	423
Average age	0.409	0.615	401
Share men	-0.003	0.437	423
<i>Migration:</i>			
In-migration (000s)	-4.058	0.382	423
Out-migration (000s)	-4.143	0.328	423
Asylum seekers	-791.335	0.585	402
Foreigners (000s)	-17.395	0.115	112
<i>Education:</i>			
University eligible	58.139	0.747	402
No secondary education	-50.275	0.295	402
<i>Geographic:</i>			
Surface area (km ²)	-1.662	0.938	432
Forest area (ha)	-263.798	0.736	389
East Germany	-0.098	0.540	432
<i>Social Assistance:</i>			
Welfare recipients (pc)	-0.556	0.381	402
Welfare recipients (foreigners),(pc)	-0.000	0.928	386
<i>Road Accidents:</i>			
Traffic accidents	-247.482	0.413	432
Deadly accidents	-202.472	0.433	432
<i>Tourism:</i>			
Number of hotels	-6.770	0.713	410
Tourists (000s)	-69.541	0.872	374
<i>Health:</i>			
Number of hospitals	-0.337	0.852	393
Hospitals beds	-68.165	0.847	393
<i>Political:</i>			
Eligible voters (000s)	-31.778	0.374	431
Turnout	0.017	0.422	429
AfD Vote Share	-0.007	0.533	326
Days b/w Attack and Election	1.55	0.995	916
Panel B: Attack Characteristics			
<i>Weapon Type:</i>			
Explosives	-0.052	0.488	232
Firearms	0.039	0.280	232
Melee	0.027	0.564	232
<i>Casualties:</i>			
Killed	0.204	0.027	232
Wounded	1.054	0.001	231
<i>Motivation:</i>			
Right-Wing	0.097	0.332	211
Neo-Nazi	0.061	0.543	211
Left-Wing	0.013	0.875	211
Islamist	-0.108	0.172	211

Notes: Panel A compares characteristics in municipalities targeted with successful v. failed attacks in the pre-attack period. Panel B compares characteristics of successful and failed attacks.

Table 2
Terror Attacks and AfD Vote Share

	Outcome: AfD Vote Share								
	(1) Baseline Model	(2) East × Year	(3) Omit Berlin	(4) Urban × Year	(5) Weapon × Year	(6) Attack Timing	(7) Omit Multiple	(8) Omit Coordinated	(9) All Controls
Success × Post × Federal	0.0005 (0.0198)	0.0225 (0.0144)	0.0071 (0.0213)	-0.0068 (0.0169)	-0.0066 (0.0207)	0.0005 (0.0198)	0.0050 (0.0217)	0.0030 (0.0200)	0.0252 (0.0191)
Success × Post × European	-0.0116 (0.0251)	0.0226 (0.0177)	-0.0102 (0.0290)	-0.0166 (0.0208)	-0.0098 (0.0264)	-0.0116 (0.0251)	-0.0113 (0.0288)	-0.0104 (0.0253)	0.0096 (0.0209)
Success × Post × State	0.0625** (0.0263)	0.0501*** (0.0132)	0.0671*** (0.0255)	0.0589** (0.0228)	0.0335*** (0.0096)	0.0733** (0.0308)	0.0477*** (0.0151)	0.0715** (0.0307)	0.0549*** (0.0128)
<i>N</i>	734	734	664	734	723	734	534	664	528
Clusters	124	124	114	124	123	124	91	112	92
$\bar{Y}_{State}$	.17	.17	.19	.17	.18	.17	.19	.17	.18
[<i>S.D.</i>]	[.1]	[.1]	[.1]	[.1]	[.1]	[.1]	[.11]	[.1]	[.1]

Notes: The dependent variable is the vote share for the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) party at the municipality level. Success is one if a municipality experienced a successful terror attack anytime after 2010 and 0 if it experienced a failed attack but not a successful attack in that same time period. Post is 1 if the first attack in a municipality occurred prior to an election and zero if it occurred after an election. Column 2 includes an indicator that is 1 if a municipality is located in east Germany and zero otherwise interacted with year dummies. In Column 3 we omit 10 of the 12 municipal districts, *Stadtbezirke*, of Berlin targeted with attacks. In Column 4 we include an indicator for whether a municipality is an urban district interacted with year dummies and in Column 5 we interact the weapon used in the attack with year dummies. In Column 6 we control for the number of days between an attack and an election. In Column 7 we omit those municipalities targeted with more than one attack. In Column 8, we omit those municipalities that experienced coordinated attack with multiple attacks on the same day. In Column 9 we include mean values of all pre-attack municipality covariates presented in Table 1 interacted with year dummies. All regressions include election-type by municipality fixed effects, year fixed effects, and all lower order interactions. Standard errors (shown in parentheses) are clustered at the municipality level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3
Effects of Successful and Failed Attacks

	Balance Test		Baseline Estimate	
	(1) Success v. Placebo Fail	(2) Failed v. Placebo Fail	(3) Success v. Placebo Fail	(4) Failed v. Placebo Fail
Success	0.0090 (0.0066)			
Failed		0.0162 (0.0155)		
Success × Post × Federal			0.0132 (0.0085)	
Success × Post × European			-0.0033 (0.0132)	
Success × Post × State			0.0505*** (0.0161)	
Failed × Post × Federal				0.0107 (0.0184)
Failed × Post × European				0.0083 (0.0259)
Failed × Post × State				-0.0007 (0.0357)
<i>N</i>	1,993	1,334	1,828	1,214
Clusters	316	214	314	212
$\bar{Y}_{State}$	.14	.14	.17	.17
[<i>S.D.</i>]	[.083]	[.074]	[.091]	[.08]

Notes: The dependent variable is the vote share for the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD) party at the municipality level. The variable success is one if a municipality experienced a successful terror attack anytime after 2010 while the variable Failed is one if a municipality experienced a failed terror attack in that same time period. The counterfactual municipalities in this table are all derived via propensity score matching. Both Success and Failed are thus coded as 0 for municipalities that did not experience any terrorist attacks but that, on the basis of propensity score matching, resembled municipalities that experienced a successful attack (i.e. placebo fail). Post is 1 if the attack in a municipality occurred prior to an election and zero if it occurred after an election. The regressions in columns 3 and 4 include election-type by municipality fixed effects, year fixed effects, and all lower order interactions. Standard errors (shown in parentheses) are clustered at the municipality level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 4
Terrorism and Individual Political Attitudes and Preferences using SOEP

	Dependent Variable: Individual Attitudes and Preferences							
	(1) Identify Right-Wing	(2) Identify Hard-Right	(3) Prefer AfD	(4) Prefer CDU	(5) Prefer SPD	(6) Participate Local Politics	(7) Worried Immigration	(8) Worried Terrorism
Success $\times$ Post	0.0652*** (0.0206)	0.0438** (0.0179)	0.0234** (0.0104)	-0.00693 (0.0185)	0.0314* (0.0178)	0.0205*** (0.00693)	0.0361*** (0.0174)	0.00204 (0.0261)
<i>N</i>	4,572	4,572	13,279	13,279	13,279	14,298	29,610	9,587
Clusters	87	87	89	89	89	95	95	88
$\bar{Y}$	0.176	0.0956	0.0297	0.318	0.307	0.0254	0.289	0.84
[<i>S.D.</i>]	[0.381]	[0.294]	[0.170]	[0.466]	[0.461]	[0.157]	[0.453]	[0.367]

Notes: The dependent variable is the attitude of a given person in a given municipality toward various political and social topics as measured in the SOEP survey. Success is one if a person's municipality experienced a successful terror attack anytime after 2010 and 0 if it experienced a failed attack. Post is 1 if the attack occurred prior to the individual being surveyed and zero if it occurred after the survey. All regressions include person fixed effects and year fixed effects. Standard errors (shown in parentheses) are clustered at the municipality level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5
Political Commitment, Political Activation and the AfD using SOEP

	Dependent Variable: Individual Prefer's AfD						
	(1) CDU	(2) SPD	(3) FDP	(4) Linke	(5) Greens	(6) Ultra Right	(7) Politically Active
Success × Post × Non-partisan	0.0253* (0.0145)	0.0281*** (0.00895)	0.0230** (0.0109)	0.0230** (0.0110)	0.0257** (0.0125)	0.0219** (0.0106)	
Success × Post × Partisan	0.0166*** (0.00475)	0.0109 (0.0262)	0.0715 (0.0525)	0.0381** (0.0188)	0.00806 (0.00623)	0.267** (0.125)	
Success × Post × Inactive							0.0259** (0.0115)
Success × Post × Active							-0.0116 (0.00868)
<i>N</i>	9,089	9,089	9,089	9,089	9,089	9,089	9,162
Clusters	76	76	76	76	76	76	76

Notes: The dependent variable is an indicator that is 1 if a person's preferred party is the AfD and zero otherwise as measured in the SOEP survey. Success is one if a person's municipality experienced a successful terror attack anytime after 2010 and 0 if it experienced a failed attack. Post is 1 if the attack occurred prior to the individual being surveyed and zero if it occurred after the survey. Partisan is a dummy that is 1 if a person's preferred political party pre-attack is always as stated in the column header. It is zero (i.e., non-partisan) if a person states more than one party as their preference in the pre-attack surveys. Active is an indicator that is 1 if a person participates in local politics on a regular basis pre-attack. It is zero (i.e., inactive) if a person seldomly or never participates in local politics pre-attack. All regressions include person fixed effects and year fixed effects. Standard errors (shown in parentheses) are clustered at the municipality level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 6
Media Coverage of Successful Terror Attacks

	Articles		Sentiment		Topics				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Found	Count	Title	Body	Right-wing Populism	Migration	Crime	Islam	Terror
<i>Panel A: Lexis</i>									
Success	.0756 (.1754)	8.246** (4.015)	-.0339 (.0232)	-.0321** (.0145)	-.3467*** (.091)	-.1185 (.0995)	-.8085*** (.1641)	.6186*** (.0818)	.1895*** (.0684)
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publisher FE			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	232	232	4,683	4,683	4,683	4,683	4,683	4,683	4,683
Clusters	124	124	1,303	1,303	1,303	1,303	1,303	1,303	1,303
$\bar{Y}$	0.642	11.125	-0.091	-0.114	0.544	0.440	1.162	0.314	0.607
<i>Panel A: FAZ</i>									
Success	.0241 (.1531)	-.017 (.3378)	-.0251 (.042)	.0338 (.029)	-.2848 (.212)	.1211 (.0963)	-.4963* (.2774)	.3178*** (.1052)	.1145 (.1023)
State × Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	186	186	338	338	338	338	338	338	338
$\bar{Y}$	0.457	0.828	-0.053	-0.105	0.715	0.576	1.229	0.298	0.515
Unit of Observation	Attack				Story				

Notes: Panel A presents results when using regional and local news sources collected via LexisNexis. Panel B presents the same results but using national news stories collected from the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ). In Columns 1 and 2 the individual terror attack is the unit of observation. In Columns 3 to 9, the news story is the observation. In both cases, Success is an indicator that is 1 for successful terror attacks (or stories that cover successful attacks) and 0 for failed attacks (or stories that cover failed attacks). Standard errors are shown in parentheses. In Panel A, they are clustered at the municipality level in Columns 1 and 2 and at the municipality × publisher level in Columns 3 to 9. In Panel B, robust standard errors are reported. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Online Appendix for Paper:
Terrorism and Voting:
The Rise of Right-Wing Populism in Germany

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A. Terrorism in Germany

In this Online Appendix, we provide detailed descriptive statistics on terror attacks in Germany.

A.1 Summary Statistics

Table A.1 provides detailed statistics related to the targets, weapons and attack types used in each of the 232 attacks in Germany between 2010 and 2020 while Figure A.1 illustrates the frequency and intensity—in terms of deaths and injuries—of these attacks.

As shown in Table A.1, the overall success rate of attacks in Germany stands at 86 percent. The majority of attacks are facility or infrastructure attacks. They constitute 62 percent of all attacks and have a very high success rate of 94 percent. The next most common type of attack is armed assault. These make up 21 percent of all attacks and have a success rate of around 80 percent. The next most common attack type are bombings and explosions; they make up 10 percent of the attacks but have a success rate of just 54 percent, the lowest among all attack types. Fifty percent of the attacks target private citizens and their property.

Panel A in Figure A.1 demonstrates that, with the exception of 2013, attacks occur in Germany in every year, though there is great variation across years with 2015 experiencing many attacks and 2010 and 2012 experiencing relatively few attacks. In Panel B we see that most attacks involve very little deaths and injuries.

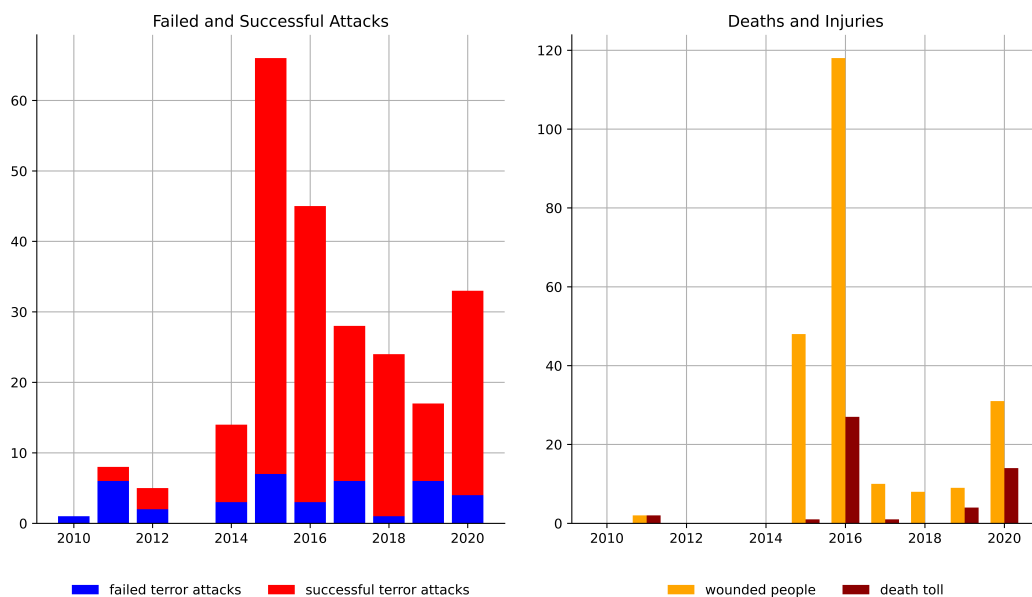


Figure A.1
Frequency and intensity of attacks

Table A.1
Terrorism summary statistics for Germany (2010 - 2020)

				If success (mean)	
	Observations	Percentage	Attack success	Wounded	Killed
<i>Attack Type</i>					
Armed Assault	48	0.21	0.79	2.32	0.87
Bombing/Explosion	24	0.10	0.54	1.54	0.08
Facility/Infrastructure Attack	143	0.62	0.94	0.24	0.00
Hijacking	1	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
Hostage Taking Barricade Incident	1	0.00	1.00	4.00	0.00
Unarmed Assault	13	0.06	0.77	7.44	1.20
Unknown	2	0.01	1.00	2.50	0.00
<i>Target Type</i>					
Business	26	0.11	0.92	1.54	0.50
Educational Institution	1	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Government Diplomatic	9	0.04	0.89	0.00	0.00
Government General	20	0.09	0.75	0.20	0.07
Journalists & Media	2	0.01	1.00	2.00	0.00
Military	2	0.01	1.00	1.00	1.00
Police	10	0.04	0.90	0.22	0.11
Private Citizens & Property	116	0.50	0.87	1.65	0.30
Religious Figures/Institutions	22	0.09	0.86	0.16	0.05
Telecommunication	2	0.01	1.00	0.00	0.00
Transportation	20	0.09	0.75	0.00	0.00
Utilities	1	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
Violent Political Party	1	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Weapon Type</i>					
Explosives/Incendiary	178	0.77	0.85	0.48	0.02
Firearms	15	0.06	0.93	3.00	1.79
Melee	20	0.09	0.90	2.18	0.39
Other	2	0.01	0.50	1.00	0.00
Sabotage Equipment	3	0.01	1.00	0.00	0.00
Unknown	8	0.03	1.00	0.62	0.00
Vehicle	6	0.03	0.67	14.50	3.00
<i>Attack Motivation</i>					
Islamist	24	0.10	0.75	5.67	1.17
Left-wing	44	0.19	0.86	0.05	0.00
Others	33	0.14	0.91	1.23	0.43
Right-wing	116	0.50	0.87	0.70	0.13
Unknown	15	0.06	0.87	0.38	0.00
Total Attacks	232		0.86	1.09	0.23

B. The AfD in Germany

In this Online Appendix, we present descriptive statistics that show the AfD's rapid rise in German politics since its inception in 2013. Figure B.1 plots the average vote share for the AfD party across all elections since its establishment in 2013. As shown, the AfD has experienced a marked increase in the years since it was founded in every election, increasing its average vote share from less than 5 percent to some 15 percent.

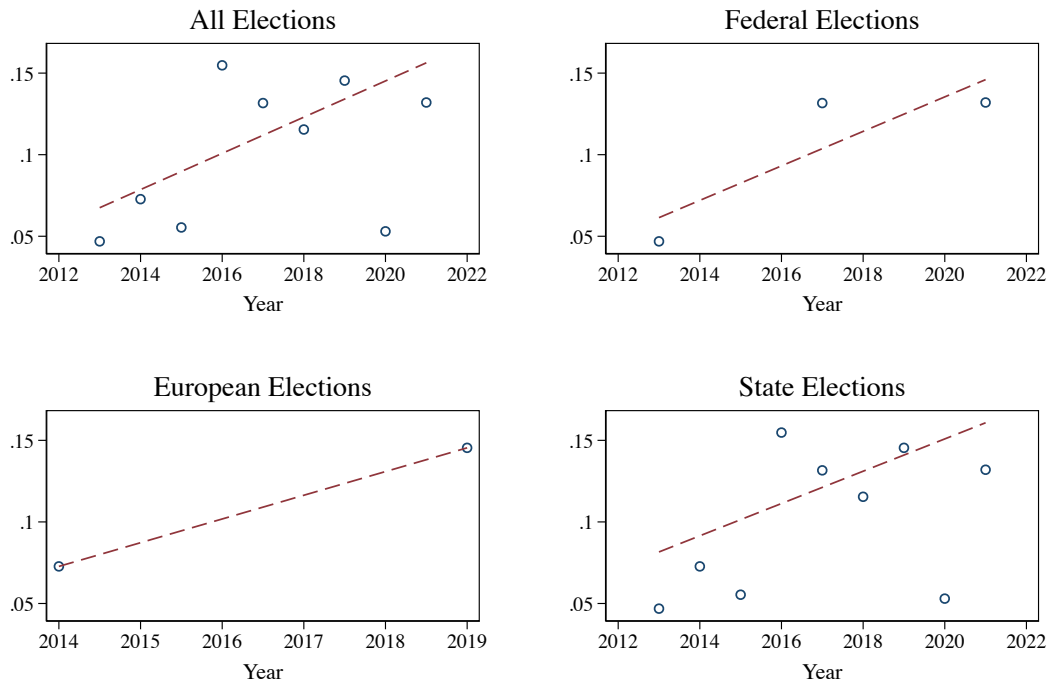


Figure B.1
Average AfD Vote Share Across All Elections in Germany

C. Additional Robustness

In this Online Appendix we present our baseline results using estimators that are robust to two-way fixed effects with staggered treatment. We also present our baseline estimate using a rolling window approach to incorporate every attack into the analysis and not just the first attack in a given municipality. Finally, we demonstrate that our baseline estimation is robust to two alternative methods of statistical inference.

C.1 Heterogeneity Robust DiD with Staggered Treatment

In recent years, there has been a fast growing literature addressing the issues related to difference-in-differences estimations using two-way fixed effects (TWFE), in particular when treatment effects are heterogeneous and/or when treatment is staggered (De Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille 2022; De Chaisemartin and d’Haultfoeuille 2020; Goodman-Bacon 2021; Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess 2021).

In our setting, the issue of a staggered, binary treatment takes on relevance. Because different municipalities are hit with attacks at different points in time, our baseline estimate may, in fact, be the result of “forbidden comparisons” (De Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille 2022; Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess 2021), whereby groups that are treated early are compared to those that are treated later but receive different weights which might affect of overall estimate.⁴⁵ In particular, those municipalities hit with attacks very early may receive negative weights compared to those who were attacked later. To the extent that the short- and long-run effects of terror are different, this may give rise to a biased estimator as more weight is given to the short-run effects of terror and a negative weight assigned to its long run effects.

This literature has not only identified the nature of the problem, but has also developed a range of heterogeneity-robust DID estimators (for a summary, see De Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille (2022)). In this Online Appendix, we repeat our baseline model using one of these alternative estimators, *did_imputation*, put forward by Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2021). This estimator estimates the effects of a binary treatment with staggered rollout allowing for arbitrary heterogeneity and dynamics of causal effects in manner that is more efficient to those proposed by other researchers.⁴⁶

Our results are shown in Table C.1. In Column 1, we report our baseline estimate as a marginal effect (rather than a total marginal effect) so as to make estimation with *did_imputation* comparable. As shown, successful attacks increase the AfD vote share by some 6 points in state elections compared to European elections. In Column 2, we report the results when using *did_imputation*. As explained in Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2021), this estimation is carried out in three steps. First, municipality and year fixed effects are fitted on a model that uses only untreated observations (i.e. those that were hit with failed attacks or successfully attacked municipalities prior to the attack). Second, these estimations are used to predict the untreated *potential outcomes* for treated units, including imputing non-treated potential outcomes where necessary. This enables the command to estimate the treatment effect $\tau = Y_{it,observed} - Y_{it,potential}$. Finally, the command calculates a weighted average of these

45. Goodman-Bacon (2021) provides an exposition of the various comparisons that make up an overall difference-in-difference estimator when treatment is staggered while Borusyak and Jaravel (2017) provide an intuitive explanation of “forbidden” comparisons or extrapolations involved in such cases.

46. The only difference is that using this alternative command, we report the marginal effect of successful terror on state elections compared to European elections rather than the *total* marginal effect of successful terror on state elections.

different treatment effects with weights corresponding to the estimation target.⁴⁷

As shown, the differences, both in magnitude and precision, between Columns 1 and 2 are small and, if anything, the effect size using a heterogeneity robust DiD estimator is larger. This increases confidence that our baseline estimation using linear difference-in-difference is, in fact, unbiased.

Table C.1
Heterogeneity Robust DiD Estimation

	Coefficient on $SUCCESS \times POST \times STATE$ Election	
	(1) Baseline	(2) DiD Imputation
β	0.0741*** (0.0280)	
τ		0.0938*** (0.0022)
N	734	623
Clusters	124	105
Estimator	reghdfe	DID imputation

Notes: This table reports the coefficient of $SUCCESS \times POST \times STATE$ in a model that includes municipality and year fixed effects as well as municipality-by-election-type fixed effects. In Column 1, the coefficient, β , is estimated via using `reghdfe`. In Column 2, the coefficient, τ , is estimated using using the imputation estimator of Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2021). In both models, we report the marginal effect of successful terror on state elections relative to European elections. . * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

C.2 Rolling Window Approach

In our baseline analysis, we use the first attack in a given municipality as a reference from which we determine the variables *SUCCESS* and *POST*. In this Online Appendix, we reproduce Table 2, our baseline results, using every attack in the sample and not just the first attack. For the 91 municipalities that received only one attack, the coding of *SUCCESS* and *POST* remain unchanged. For the 33 municipalities that received more than one attack, however, we code each attack as either successful or failed and create a window of time before and after each attack. Each window begins prior to each attack (i.e. “pre”) and extends (i.e. “post”) until the next attack in a given municipality. This approach has the advantage of incorporating every attack into the analysis. It has the disadvantage, however, of making interpretation more complicated because of overlapping time-periods: the “post” period of one attack in a given municipality is the “pre” period for the subsequent attack in that same municipality. For this reason, we use

47. With municipality fixed effects included in the model, imputation is not possible for units treated in all periods in the sample; this is the case for 63 municipality-years in our sample and this explains the difference in observations between Columns 1 and 2 of Table C.1.

only the first attack in our baseline analysis. Nevertheless, we present the results using a rolling window approach in Table C.2 and, as shown, the results are rather similar to our baseline, alleviating concerns that municipalities hit with multiple attacks adversely affect our results.

Table C.2
Terror Attacks and AfD Vote Share Using a Rolling Window

	(1) Baseline Model	(2) East × Year	(3) Omit Berlin	(4) Urban × Year	(5) Weapon × Year	(6) Attack Timing	(7) Omit Multiple	(8) Omit Coordinated	(9) All Controls
Success × Post × Federal	0.0019 (0.0159)	0.0106 (0.0125)	0.0118 (0.0180)	-0.0053 (0.0138)	-0.0031 (0.0166)	0.0060 (0.0162)	0.0050 (0.0217)	0.0039 (0.0162)	0.0122 (0.0172)
Success × Post × European	-0.0184 (0.0222)	0.0028 (0.0183)	-0.0075 (0.0291)	-0.0251 (0.0190)	-0.0156 (0.0234)	-0.0154 (0.0220)	-0.0113 (0.0288)	-0.0166 (0.0223)	0.0104 (0.0206)
Success × Post × State	0.0571** (0.0252)	0.0436*** (0.0115)	0.0533** (0.0237)	0.0563** (0.0236)	0.0441 (0.0272)	0.0683** (0.0300)	0.0477*** (0.0151)	0.0588** (0.0266)	0.0436*** (0.0123)
<i>N</i>	787	787	693	787	776	787	534	711	549
Clusters	124	124	114	124	123	124	91	112	92
$\bar{Y}_{State}$ [<i>S.D.</i>]	.16 [.099]	.16 [.099]	.18 [.1]	.16 [.099]	.17 [.1]	.16 [.099]	.19 [.11]	.16 [.1]	.18 [.1]

Notes: See notes of Table 2. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

C.3 Alternative Inference

Our estimating sample involves 124 unique municipalities of which around 15 percent experienced a failed attack. Given this relatively small sample, we present our baseline estimate using alternative methods of statistical inference. Our results are shown in Table C.3. The table reports $\hat{\beta}$, the coefficient on the triple interaction for state elections from our baseline model. It then presents p -values from three different methods of inference: First, p -values based on analytically derived standard errors using clustered standard errors (as in our baseline approach). Second, p -values calculated using wild cluster bootstrapping as suggested by Cameron, Gelbach, and Miller (2008) and implemented via their `boottest` command in Stata with 10,000 replications. Third, p -values are estimated from permutation tests using Monte Carlo simulations with 10,000 permutations of the variable success in order to generate placebo coefficients and a null distribution from which to estimate the p -value. As shown, across all three methods of inference, the baseline estimate of successful terror is significantly distinguishable from zero.

Table C.3
Alternative inference

	(1)
$\hat{\beta}$	0.0625
N	734
Clusters	124
p -values:	
1. Analytical	.019
2. Wild Cluster Bootstrap	.034
3. Permutation Based	.000

Notes: 1. p -values are based on analytically derived standard errors using Stata's `vce(cluster)` command. 2. p -values are calculated as the two-tailed symmetric p -value using wild cluster bootstrapping following Cameron, Gelbach, and Miller (2008) and implemented via their `boottest` command in Stata with 10,000 replications. 3. p -values are calculated as two-tailed symmetric p -value based on 10,000 permutation placebo coefficients resulting from permuting success using Stata's `permute` command.

D. Propensity Score Matching

In this Online Appendix, we present details concerning our propensity score matching which we use to generate a counterfactual set of “placebo fail” municipalities. As mentioned in the main text, we use all the municipality covariates presented in our balance table in order to match untargeted counties to successfully targeted ones on the basis of propensity scores. We use nearest neighbor matching in order to identify each successfully targeted municipalities two nearest neighbors. We generate our propensity scores from the following probit regression, the results of which are presented in Table D.1

$$Pr(SUCCESS_i|X) = \Phi(\gamma_0 + \gamma X_i) \quad (7)$$

Table D.1
Propensity Score Matching Results

	(1) PrSuccess=1
Per capita Income (000s)	0.9592 (0.0364)
Employed (000s)	1.0000 (0.0000)
Unemployed (000s)	1.0001 (0.0001)
Tax revenue (pc)	1.0673 (0.1372)
Population (000s)	0.9909 (0.0104)
Average age	0.9649 (0.0188)
Share men	0.0000*** (0.0000)
In-migration (000s)	1.0002* (0.0001)
Out-migration (000s)	0.9997* (0.0001)
Foreigners (000s)	1.0000 (0.0000)
Asylum seekers	1.0001* (0.0000)
University eligible	0.9999 (0.0001)
No secondary education	0.9983* (0.0008)
Welfare recipients (pc)	0.8430 (0.1621)
Welfare recipients (foreigners),(pc)	0.0000*** (0.0000)
Traffic accidents	1.0030** (0.0011)
Deadly accidents	0.9984 (0.0011)
Surface area (km ²)	0.9917 (0.0054)
Total Farmland (Agricultural Use) in ha	1.0001 (0.0001)
Forest area (ha)	1.0001 (0.0001)
Number of hotels	0.9899* (0.0048)
Tourists (000s)	1.0001 (0.0003)
Number of hospitals	0.9661* (0.0158)
Hospitals beds	1.0003*** (0.0001)
<i>N</i>	10,967

Notes: See notes of Table 2. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$,
*** $p < 0.01$

E. Attack Heterogeneity Using Only First Attacks

In our main paper, we demonstrated that successful terror has the largest effects on state elections when those attacks are motivated by right-wing extremists. In this Online Appendix we reproduce Figure 4 using only the first attacks in a given municipality. The reason is that municipalities that received more than one attack might complicate the interpretation of Figure 4: A municipality, for example, targeted with several attacks of mixed motivations — say, a right-wing attack followed by a left-wing attack — would make it difficult to cleanly identify the effect of an attack's motive on the AfD vote share. To alleviate this concern, we re-generate Figure 4 in a sample of municipalities that were attacked only once (i.e. dropping the 33 municipalities hit more than once), enabling us to cleanly identify effects according to motives. The revised plot is shown in Figure E.1. As shown, the baseline effect in this sample is about 25 percent smaller than the overall baseline (.0477 v. .0625). However, in this sample, the baseline effect is amplified for right-wing attacks.⁴⁸ This confirms that right-wing terror has the strongest impacts on the AfD vote share.

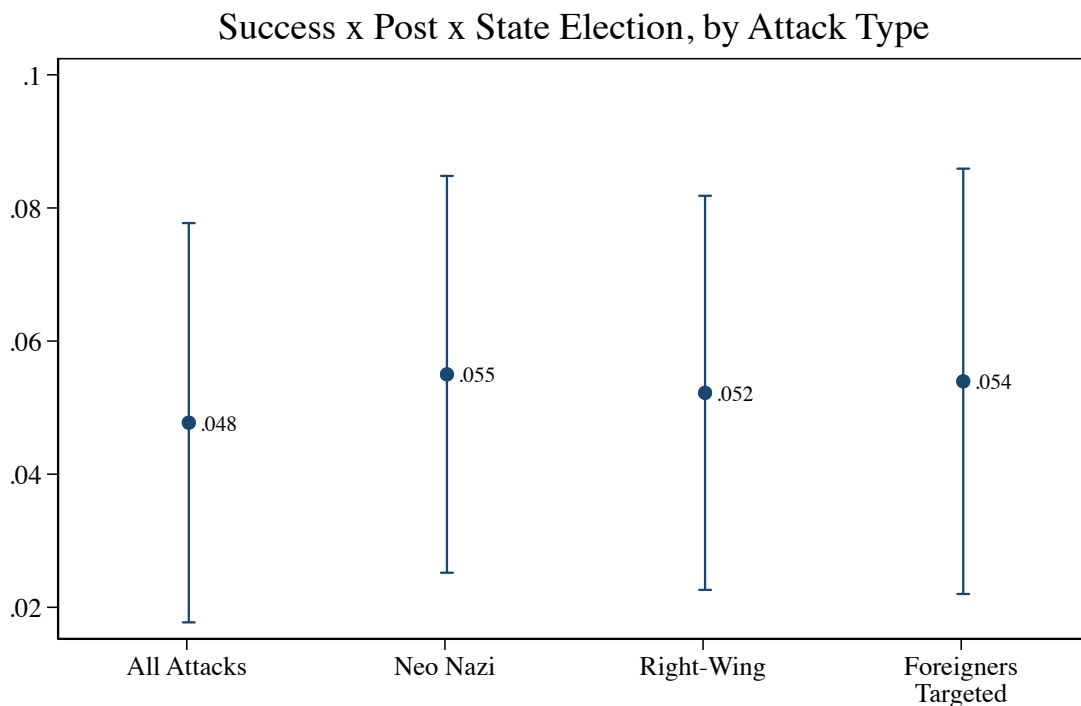


Figure E.1
Heterogeneous effects according to attack type or target

Note: This Figure plots β_1 from our baseline estimating model in samples split by attack type or attack target. All samples omit the 33 municipalities targeted by more than 1 terror attack. Confidence intervals are drawn at 95 percent.

48. There are not even a sufficient number of non-right wing attacks in this sample to estimate an effect.

F. Terror and Social Media Posts

In this Online Appendix we examine whether successful terror leads to differential social media activity. To conduct this exercise, we rely on data from Müller and Schwarz (2021) who collect data on the number of AfD Facebook page users per population at the county level. We therefore assign municipalities hit with successful and failed attacks the outcome of their associated county. In order to estimate the parameter on the variable *SUCCESS*, the model omits municipality fixed effects and includes, instead, federal state $\times$ year fixed effects. As shown in Table F.1, successful attacks leads to differentially more AfD Facebook users.

Table F.1
Social Media and Successful Terror

	(1) AfD Users
Success	0.255** (0.106)
<i>N</i>	10,101
Clusters	64

Notes: The outcome variable is the number of AfD Facebook users per 1,000 population. The model includes federal state $\times$ year fixed effects so that we can estimate the parameter on *SUCCESS*. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level.

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$,

*** $p < 0.01$