

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

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- Surprisingly, the role of violent conflict in explaining populism has received less academic attention.

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 - Realign the language used by political parties;
 - Receive differential media coverage.

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 - We exploit the randomness in whether an attack is successful.
- We compare political outcomes in municipalities hit with successful attacks to those hit with failed attacks.
 - Conditional on being targeted, municipalities hit with successful and failed attacks are indistinguishable.

1. Scholarship on the political consequences of terrorism.

- Assassinations on institutions and conflict in a cross-county setting (Jones and Olken 2009)
- The *threat* of terror on attitudes or specific voting outcomes (Getmansky and Zeitzoff 2014; Hetherington and Suhay 2011).

→ Our point of departure from this literature is to provide:

- Sharp, causal evidence of experienced terror on political outcomes in a within-country setting; and
- An account of *why* terror influences political outcomes, highlighting the role of political realignment and mobilization.

2. Literature on populism. Most of these studies focus on:

- Economic factors
 - Economic insecurity and distress (Guiso et al. 2020; Guiso et al. 2017, Dehdari 2021)
 - Globalization shocks (Rodrick 2018)
- Cultural Factors
 - Identity and education (Bonomi et al. 2021, Gethin et al. 2021)
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→ We advance this literature by shedding light on the causal role of violence in explaining populism.

Background and Institutional Details

Empirical Analysis

- Establishing Balance
- Baseline effects of terror on AfD
- Mechanisms: Political Mobilization, Realignment and Media

Background and Institutional Details

Terrorism in Germany

- Terror data comes from the Global Terror Database (GTD, 2018) collected by the University of Maryland, College Park.
- For an event to be included in the GTD it must:
 1. Be intentional; entail some levels of violence, be conducted by non-state actors.
 2. Aimed at political, religious or economic goal; have intention to send a larger message; not in the context of war.
- A novel feature of the data is that it records whether an attack was successful or not.

Example of Successful Attack from the GTD

- *04/22/2015: 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.*

Example of Failed Attack from the GTD

- 03/23/2015: 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.

Right-wing terror in Germany

- The 184 attacks from 2010 map on to 108 unique municipalities (*Gemeinden*).
 - 70 percent: right-wing extremism or anti-migration.
 - 30 percent: mixed motivations (left-wing, religious...)
- Success of attack is unrelated to its motivation.
- No significant heterogeneity according to motive of attack.
 - Baseline effect virtually unchanged on sample of nationalist attacks against migrants.

▶ Descriptive's of Terror

Descriptive's on Terrorism in Germany

- Terror in Germany is geographically widespread.
 - \approx 19 attacks per year between 2010 and 2019.
 - Attacks in all Federal states.
- Most are small, local affairs.
 - Majority of attacks are outside major cities.
 - Average population of targeted cities \approx 155,000.
 - Majority are non-deadly (1 injury and .2 casualties)

► Frequency and Intensity of Attacks

Right-wing populism

The AfD in Germany

- The AfD was initially established as a single-issue party in 2013 focused on the Euro crisis and the Greek bailout.
- This AfD won 4.7% of the 2013 Federal election and 7.1% of the 2014 European Parliament elections.
- However, the party included many members that held hard-right, populist sentiments from the beginning.
- Their voices led the party to a turning point in 2015.
- The AfD changed dramatically. Hard-right rhetoric and its popularity increased (Cantoni, 2019).
- In state elections, the party won as much as 20% of the vote.

- Our data includes the following elections:
 - 2013, 2017 and 2021 Federal elections.
 - 2014 and 2019 European Parliament elections
 - State elections from 2013 to 2019
- Importantly, per the German constitution, internal security is managed by Federal states (Riedl 2018).
 - State-level internal security expenditures: \approx €14 Billion
 - Federal agencies internal security spending: \approx €3 Billion

Empirical Analysis

Establishing Balance

Testing for Balance

- Our identification relies on the inherent randomness associated with whether an attack succeeds.
- To validate this assumption, we regress a range of municipality characteristics on two indicators as shown in equations 2 and 3:

$$X_{i,2012} = \beta_0 + \beta \text{Success}_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

$$X_{i,2012} = \gamma_0 + \gamma \text{Attack}_i + \eta_i \quad (2)$$

- Our identification strategy is validated if:

$$\hat{\beta} = 0$$

Testing for Balance: Municipality Characteristics

Table 1: Balance Table: Measured in 2012

	(1) $\hat{\beta}$	p-value $H_0 :$ $\beta = 0$	(3) $\hat{\gamma}$	p-value $H_0 :$ $\gamma = 0$
<i>Economic:</i>				
Log of income	0.304	0.754	2.717	0.000
Unemployed per capita	-0.002	0.738	0.016	0.000
Population density	-64.495	0.893	1,105.073	0.000
<i>Demographic:</i>				
Population, 000s	20.614	0.694	133.258	0.000
Average age	0.200	0.835	0.082	0.739
Share men	-0.003	0.527	-0.011	0.000
<i>Migration:</i>				
Share foreigners	-0.022	0.439	0.040	0.000
Share asylum seekers	-0.002	0.376	0.003	0.000
In-migration	952.707	0.778	7,808.352	0.000
<i>Education:</i>				
Graduates of university entrance exams	38.000	0.886	447.330	0.000
<i>Geography:</i>				
Surface area (km ²)	8.667	0.712	-5.449	0.716
Forest area (ha)	-887.756	0.334	-1,288.391	0.003
<i>Social Assistance:</i>				
Welfare recipients, per capita	-0.891	0.326	-0.713	0.000
Asylum welfare, per capita	-0.001	0.214	0.000	0.000
<i>Road Accidents:</i>				
Traffic accidents	173.283	0.509	708.244	0.000
<i>Tourism:</i>				
Number of hotels	14.167	0.290	18.045	0.014

Testing for Balance: Attack Characteristics

Table 2: Attack Characteristics

	(1) $\hat{\beta}$	p-value $H_0 :$ $\beta = 0$	(3) $\hat{\gamma}$	p-value $H_0 :$ $\gamma = 0$
<i>Weapon Type & Attack Timing:</i>				
Explosives	-0.162	0.257	—	—
Incendiary device	-0.051	0.732	—	—
Days before election	-50.39	0.734	—	—
<i>Identity of Target/Attacker:</i>				
Foreign attacker	-0.312	0.175	—	—
Foreign target	-0.010	0.945	—	—
<i>Attack Motive:</i>				
Right-Wing Attack	0.203	0.380	—	—
Neo-Nazi Attack	0.175	0.447	—	—
Islamist Attack	-0.277	0.223	—	—

Baseline effects of terror on AfD

Estimating Equation (Part 1):

$$y_{i,e,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 [SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,e,t} \times ELECTION_e] + \zeta \mathbf{X}_{i,e,t} + \dots \quad (3)$$

- $y_{i,e,t}$: outcome y in municipality i in election type e in year t .
 $SUCCESS_i$: 1 if successful attack, 0 if failed attack.
 $POST_{i,e,t}$: 1 if election e in year t was *post* attack, 0 otherwise.
 $ELECTION_e$: Federal, European or State election.
 $\mathbf{X}_{i,e,t}$: All lower order terms of the triple interaction.

Estimating Equation (Part 2):

$$y_{i,e,t} = \beta_0 + \beta[SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,e,t} \times ELECTION_e] + \zeta \mathbf{X}_{i,e,t} + \theta DAYS_{i,e} + \lambda_{ie} + \delta_i + \alpha_t + \sum_{j=2013}^{2019} \gamma_j [FOREIGN_{2011} \times D_j^t] + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (4)$$

- $DAYS_{i,e}$: Days b/w attack in i and election e in year t .
- λ_{ie} : Municipality \times Election fixed effects.
- δ_i : Municipality Fixed effects.
- α_t : Year fixed effects.
- $FOREIGN_{i,2011} \times D_j^t$: 2011 share foreigners \times time dummies.

Baseline Estimates

	(1) Baseline Effect	(2) East × Year	(3) Omit Berlin	(4) Weapon × Year	(5) Omit Old Attacks	(6) Omit Multiple Hits	(7) All Controls	(8) Spillover Effects
Success × Post	-0.0238 (0.0176)	-0.0109 (0.0210)	-0.0423** (0.0181)	-0.0265 (0.0164)	-0.0246 (0.0195)	-0.0157 (0.0175)	-0.0229 (0.0216)	0.0926*** (0.0145)
Success × Post × Federal	-0.0078 (0.0092)	-0.0015 (0.0339)	-0.0025 (0.0099)	-0.0088 (0.0093)	0.0185 (0.0172)	0.0020 (0.0111)	0.0041 (0.0126)	-0.0244** (0.0118)
Success × Post × State	0.1115*** (0.0243)	0.0748*** (0.0267)	0.1308*** (0.0252)	0.1050*** (0.0242)	0.1132*** (0.0257)	0.1217*** (0.0260)	0.0817** (0.0315)	0.0472*** (0.0077)
Municipality FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Share Foreign ₂₀₁₁ × D _j ^t	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Election × Municipality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Timing of attack	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
East × Year		✓						
Weapon × Year				✓				
All controls							✓	✓
N	484	484	434	478	390	361	388	4,296
Clusters	103	103	93	102	85	77	84	969

► Heterogeneous Effects

Mechanisms: Political Mobilization, Realignment and Media

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Conclusion: Narrative

- A striking feature of our analysis is that the AfD benefits from acts of terror which, by and large, were:
 - Motivated by right-wing extremists, including Neo-Nazi's
 - Targeted against foreigners
- This appears to demonstrate the ability of the AfD to use acts of terror to support its own narrative.
 - AfD concentrates on asylum, crime and Islam following attacks
 - Terrorism gets no special mention
- Our news results also demonstrate the powerful role of media coverage in mobilizing and shaping political support.

That's all!

Thank you!
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Appendix

Reported Identity of Targets and Attackers

Table 3: Terrorism summary statistics for Germany (2010 - 2018)

	Observations	Percentage	Attack success	If success (mean)	
				Wounded	Killed
<i>Attack type</i>					
Armed Assault	34	0.18	0.79	2.67	0.63
Assassination	5	0.03	0.00		
Bombing/Explosion	21	0.11	0.48	1.90	0.10
Facility/Infrastructure Attack	114	0.62	0.96	0.23	0.00
Hijacking	1	0.01	1.00	0.00	1.00
Hostage Taking Barricade Incident	1	0.01	1.00	4.00	0.00
Unarmed Assault	7	0.04	1.00	9.50	1.71
Unknown	1	0.01	1.00	1.00	0.00
<i>Target type</i>					
Business	14	0.08	0.86	1.75	0.08
Educational Institution	1	0.01	1.00	0.00	0.00
Government Diplomatic	7	0.04	0.86	0.00	0.00
Government General	11	0.06	0.55	0.17	0.00
Journalists & Media	1	0.01	1.00	0.00	0.00
Military	1	0.01	1.00	2.00	2.00
Police	8	0.04	1.00	0.25	0.12
Private Citizens & Property	102	0.55	0.87	1.69	0.30
Religious Figures/Institutions	18	0.10	0.94	0.18	0.00
Transportation	20	0.11	0.75	0.00	0.00
Utilities	1	0.01	1.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Weapon type</i>					
Explosives	25	0.14	0.44	1.82	0.09
Firearms	8	0.04	0.88	4.29	1.86
Incendiary	124	0.67	0.92	0.39	0.00
Melee	15	0.08	0.87	2.75	0.38
Other	1	0.01	1.00	1.00	0.00
Sabotage Equipment	3	0.02	1.00	0.00	0.00
Unknown	7	0.04	1.00	0.14	0.00
Vehicle not to include vehicle-borne explosives...	1	0.01	1.00	48.00	12.00
Total attacks	184		0.85	1.14	0.20

The Frequency and Intensity of Terror

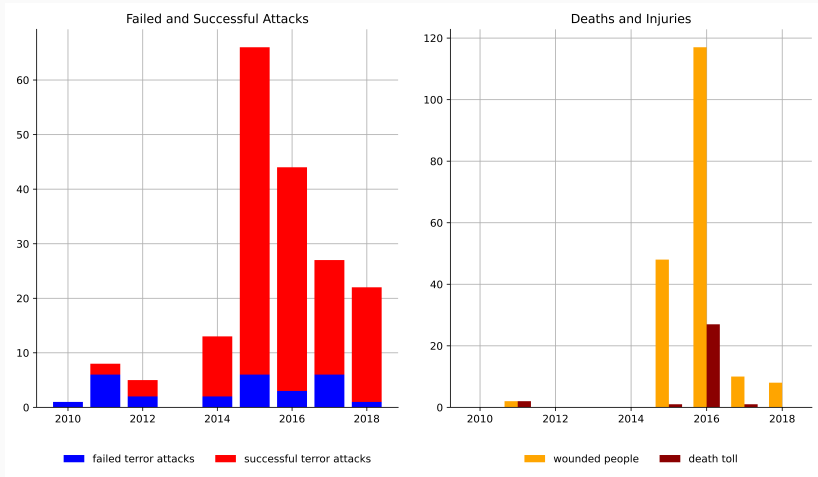


Figure 1: Successful and Failed attacks at the municipality-year level

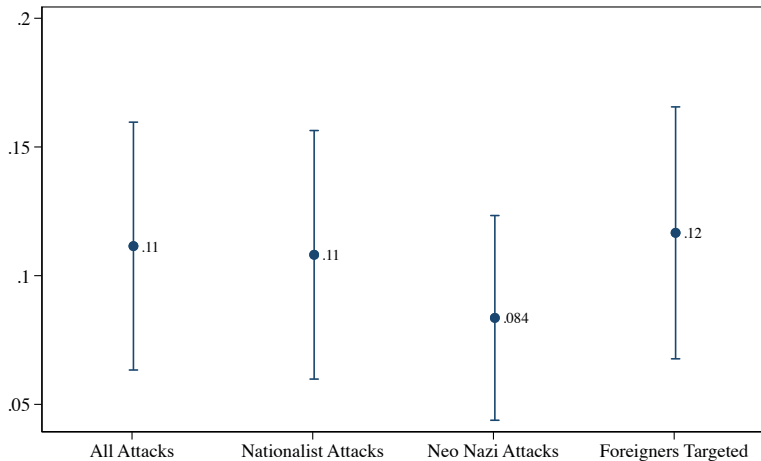
Testing for Balance: Political Characteristics

Table 4: Balance of Political Characteristics

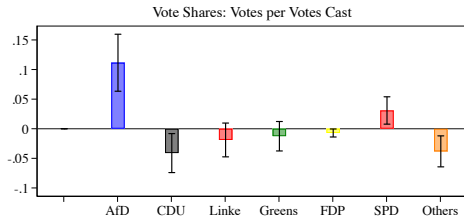
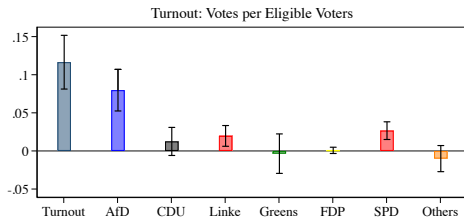
	(1) Share AfD	(2) Eligible	(3) Turnout	(4) Share AfD	(5) Eligible	(6) Turnout
Success	-0.0062 (0.0168)	11.5483 (39.1542)	0.0016 (0.0230)	-0.0090 (0.0097)	34.8573 (44.3812)	0.0109 (0.0231)
Year FE				✓	✓	✓
Foreign ₂₀₁₁ × D _j ^t				✓	✓	✓
Election Dummies				✓	✓	✓
Timing of attack				✓	✓	✓
Observations	567	660	660	542	630	630
Clusters	108	108	108	103	103	103

Heterogeneous Effects of Terror Motives and Targets

Success x Post x State Election, by Attack Type



Terror and Political Mobilization



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Terror and Realignment of Voter Preferences: German SOEP

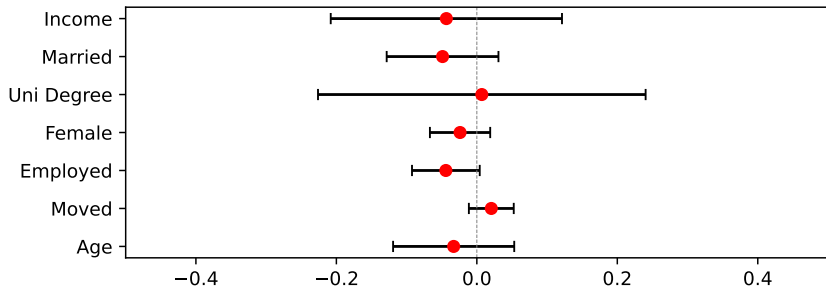
- We next test whether terror affects people's political and social attitudes using the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP).
- This enables us to study the political preferences and attitudes of the *same person* before and after an attack.
- For each person, p , residing in municipality i surveyed in period t , we estimate the parameters of the following model:

$$y_{p,i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta[SUCCESS_i \times POST_{p,t}] + \delta_i + \alpha_t + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (5)$$

Terror and individual attitudes

	Dependent Variable: Individual Attitudes and Preferences								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
	Right Wing	Hard Right	ID AfD	ID CDU	Worry Immig.	Worry Cohesion	Interested DE Politics	Worry Terror	Worry Crime
$S \times P$	0.0659*** (0.021)	0.0431** (0.0182)	0.0322*** (0.0102)	-0.00618* (0.00341)	0.0431** (0.0198)	0.0463*** (0.0106)	0.75*** (0.202)	0.00347 (0.0281)	-0.0579** (0.0285)
δ_i	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
α_t	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
N	3,910	3,910	10,704	10,704	23,684	13,487	196	8,709	23,721
Clusters	74	74	75	75	80	78	13	75	80

Individual characteristics in successful/failed municipalities



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Realignment of Political Parties:

- We collect the Election Manifesto (*Wahlprogramm*) for each party in each state election from 2013 to 2019.
- These documents articulate each party's policy goals and ideological commitments.
- Identify trigger words related to crime, terror and migration.
- We collect the 2009 Federal election manifesto of the CDU which we use as a reference point.

Political Realignment of Political Parties:

Using these documents, we estimate π_3 from the following model:

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

$\Delta TR_{p,t}$ Difference in trigger words in party p 's state election manifesto in year t compared to the 2009 Federal election manifesto of the CDU.

$SUCCESS_{s,t-1}$: Successful attacks in state s in $t - 1$.

$\mathbf{1}\{Party = p\}$: 1 for party p , 0 for all other parties.

α_t, ζ_s : Year and state fixed effects.

$\epsilon_{s,t}$: Bootstrapped standard errors, state level.

Realignment of political parties in response to terror

Asylum	-0.119 (0.046)	-0.19 (0.063)	-0.156 (0.088)	-0.084 (0.077)	-0.226 (0.052)	0.65 (0.126)
Criminal (adj)	-0.103 (0.05)	-0.181 (0.087)	-0.099 (0.079)	-0.087 (0.11)	0.01 (0.16)	0.371 (0.169)
Foreign (adj)	-0.122 (0.097)	-0.133 (0.109)	-0.184 (0.187)	0.018 (0.147)	-0.007 (0.096)	0.302 (0.164)
Perpetrator	-0.081 (0.041)	-0.083 (0.084)	-0.056 (0.086)	-0.147 (0.133)	-0.239 (0.104)	0.508 (0.208)
Punishment	-0.05 (0.057)	-0.124 (0.063)	-0.104 (0.049)	0.002 (0.107)	-0.2 (0.075)	0.363 (0.163)
Sharia	-0.102 (0.053)	-0.098 (0.051)	-0.101 (0.05)	-0.008 (0.082)	-0.168 (0.06)	0.383 (0.221)
Terror	-0.223 (0.113)	-0.084 (0.189)	0.154 (0.111)	0.105 (0.115)	0.211 (0.137)	-0.162 (0.261)
	Linke	Grünen	SPD	FDP	CDU/CSU	AfD

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Successful Terror and Salience: Media Coverage

- Finally, we study successful terror's effect on media coverage.
- To do so, we collect news stories from two sources:
 - FAZ: National paper with 2nd highest circulation (\approx 300 stories)
 - LexisNexis: Regional and local news sources (\approx 6,400 stories)
- We use this data to study the impact of successful terror on:
 - Quantity of coverage
 - Tone of coverage: sentiment
 - Topics covered: key words
- We find no differences in terms of *quantity* of coverage.
- At the local level, stories have *worse* sentiments and more keywords regarding migration, Islam and crime.

News Coverage Results

	Articles		Sentiment		Topics			
	(1) Found	(2) Count	(3) Title	(4) Body	(5) Migration	(6) Crime & Terror	(7) Islam	(8) Nationalism
<i>Panel A: Lexis</i>								
Success	-.0835 (.091)	-.2488 (.1942)	-.0592*** (.0156)	-.0076 (.0084)	.2391*** (.0622)	.3428** (.1576)	.4184*** (.0694)	-.5903*** (.0616)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City FE			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publisher FE			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	183	183	6,447	6,447	6,447	6,447	6,447	6,447
<i>Panel B: FAZ</i>								
Success	.024 (.1113)	.0224 (.1338)	.0081 (.0506)	.0387 (.0279)	.0544 (.1371)	.042 (.3647)	.4644*** (.1324)	-.3062 (.2143)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
City FE			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publisher FE								
Observations	183	183	291	291	291	291	291	291
Unit of Observation	Attack	Attack	Story	Story	Story	Story	Story	Story

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Terror and News Reports

- For each attack, we collect every news story potentially connected to the attack from two sources:
 1. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) national coverage
→ $\approx 105,000$ stories
 2. Lexis Nexis regional/local coverage of many publishers
→ $\approx 60,000$ stories
- We use three criteria to match a story to an attack:
 1. Classification model based on neural network trained on Austrian terror data and its coverage
 2. Matching using keywords
 3. Manual check of all remaining stories to rule out false positives

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