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JEL Classification: N/A

Keywords: Terrorism, populism, Turnout, Voter Realignment, Political Conflict

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

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This Version: June 21, 2022

Abstract

Can terrorism shift the political landscape of a nation? Exploiting quasi-random variation between successful and failed terror 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 in state elections. Successful attacks lead to differential increases in turnout which are mainly captured by the AfD; by contrast, the vote share for the ruling party decreases significantly. Using the German SOEP, a longitudinal panel of individuals, we find that people who reside in municipalities that experience successful attacks identify as more right-wing, prefer the AfD more and the ruling party less, and are more worried about migration and social cohesion. These results hold despite the fact that most attacks are targeted against migrants by right-wing nationalists. The AfD responds to attacks by speaking more about asylum, crime and Islam in its election manifestos at the state level. All other parties shift in the opposite direction.

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[*]Corresponding author at: Faculty of Economics and Business, Goethe University Frankfurt, Theodor-W.-Adorno-Platz 4, 60629 Frankfurt, Germany. Email: sabet@econ.uni-frankfurt.de. Telephone: +49 (69) 798-34803. I would like to thank Ebonya Washington for her hospitality in arranging a research visit to Yale during the spring of 2022. In addition, we thank Davide Cantoni, Michael Kosfeld, Gerard Padro i Miquel, José Antonio Espin Sánchez, Ebonya Washington and Noam Yuchtman as well as seminar participants at the Goethe University Frankfurt, at the TILEC Workshop on Economic Governance and Legitimacy and at the Universities of Mainz, Cologne and Konstanz for their constructive comments and suggestions. We also thank the ConTrust research cluster at Goethe University, and the FAZIT Foundation for financial support in obtaining media data.

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1. Introduction

One of the primary goals of terrorism, according to many governments, is to advance political objectives.[1] But can acts of terror actually shift the political landscape of a nation? Can they, for example, contribute to the rise of right-wing populism and if so, how? Can they mobilize voters, affect voter preferences and attitudes, and, ultimately, lead to differential voting behavior? A substantial literature has argued that the recent rise of right-wing populism in many countries can—at least partially—be attributed to voter insecurity triggered by factors such as globalization and migration. (Dustmann, Vasiljeva, and Piil Damm 2019; Gennaioli and Tabellini 2019; Norris and Inglehart 2019; Guiso et al. 2017a; Margalit 2019; Fetzer 2019; Dal Bó et al. 2018). Although this literature has examined the role of cultural conflict in explaining the rise of populism, the role of violent conflict has received less academic attention.

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) across German municipalities. We also provide an account as to *why* terror increases support for the far-right, highlighting the impact of terrorism on voter mobilization and on the realignment of voter preferences, voter behavior and the language used by political parties to speak about policy. 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 or geographic differences between municipalities hit with successful or failed attacks, lending credence to our identifying assumption that, conditional on being attacked, the success of an attack is entirely 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. Our baseline estimate suggests that the AfD experiences an 11 percentage point increase in state elections compared to European elections in municipalities hit with successful attacks prior to an election. There are no effects for Federal or European parliament elections, patterns that are robust to a range of different specifications and samples.[4] We also find significant spillovers: The AfD vote share in untargeted municipalities located in a county that experiences a successful attack also increase, though the effects are less strong.

1. See, for example, this table, prepared by the OECD which lays out definitions of terrorism used by its various member states: https://www.oecd.org/daf/fin/insurance/TerrorismDefinition-Table.pdf.

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

3. We also find no significant differences in the weapon technologies, motivations or timing relative to elections of successful or failed attacks.

4. As explained in Online Appendix A.5 and in footnote 27, matters of internal security in Germany are primarily left to Federal states to determine.

Importantly, we find that the motivation behind an attack does not lead to significant heterogeneous effects. These results are even more surprising when one considers that some 70 percent of the attacks in our sample are carried out by right-wing extremists and 80 percent target foreigners, suggesting that the AfD benefits from attacks regardless of their motivation. To better understand why this is the case, the rest of our paper explores the mechanisms that drive our effects.

We argue that acts of terror serve as localized shocks that encourage what Norris and Inglehart (2019) term the authoritarian reflex: Groups in society who are subject to broad economic, social or cultural change may react to such shocks by hardening their viewpoints and adopting more extreme ideological positions. In line with this view, we find that successful attacks shift the political landscape to the right by (1) mobilizing voters in support of the AfD, (2) shifting voter preferences and attitudes toward more populist positions and (3) influencing the language political parties use in their election manifestos.[5] We also find that successful acts of terror receive differential news coverage, suggesting that media play a role in making successful attacks more salient.

In terms of political mobilization, we find that successful terror attacks lead to large, significant increases in voter turnout in state elections, in the order of some 13 percentage points. The AfD claims more than 60 percent of this mobilization whereas the remaining 40 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 share of votes cast by some 11 points, other parties, including the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) that led the Federal government from 2005 to 2021, experience significant losses. All other parties experience no effects at all or much smaller gains.

These aggregate patterns of voter realignment are reflected at the level of individual political attitudes and preferences. Specifically, we investigate the differential effect of terror on individual attitudes and preferences using restricted-use German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) data with municipality identifiers. The SOEP is a person-level panel which enables us to study the political preferences of the *same* person at several points in time 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, becomes more worried about immigration and social cohesion. Moreover, successful attacks lead to individuals being more interested in German politics, identifying themselves more as hard-right on the political spectrum and, impor-

5. Our results also enable us to rule out competing explanations that might link terror to populism, for example, that acts of terror lead to geographic sorting, to self-censorship or to cultural adaptation (Norris and Inglehart 2019).

6. These figures assume no voter migration and therefore represent an upper bound. As we explain later, we do find some evidence of voter migration, though the effects are smaller, suggesting that political activation explains a larger part of our baseline effect than voter migration.

tantly, identifying more with the AfD and significantly less with the CDU. This latter result suggests that the baseline effect is explained both by the activation of new voters in support of the AfD and by the migration of existing voters from the CDU to the AfD. The magnitude of the relevant coefficients, however, suggests that the mobilization effects are a stronger driver of AfD support than the voter migration effects. We find no significant social or economic differences between individuals residing in municipalities hit with failed attacks compared to those hit with successful attacks, confirming the view that successful acts are politically impactful because they differentially affect voter preferences and not because they target different types of voters. Moreover, we find no evidence that terror affects people's trust towards others, suggesting that the effect of terror on the AfD is not driven by differences in trust.

As a next step, we study the response of political parties to acts of terror. To this purpose, we collect the main parties' election manifestos which summarize their ideological and policy commitments for the coming legislative period. 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.[7] We find that the state election manifestos of the AfD contain significantly more usage of words related to asylum, crime and Islam in states that experience the most violence while terror receives no special mention at all. The CDU, by contrast, shifts in the opposite direction: it speaks more about terrorism and less about Islam and asylum in response to attacks, highlighting the role that ideological differences play in responding to the same threat.[8]

Finally, we examine whether successful attacks receive differential attention in the news media. To conduct this exercise, we collect news stories from two sources: the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), which is a national publisher in Germany that enjoys the second highest circulation, 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 national or regional/local coverage. What is more, successful attacks that attract national coverage also receive similar coverage in terms of sentiment. The patterns for local coverage, however, are different: At the regional and local level, stories that cover successful attacks have differentially more negative sentiments. These results suggest that the media—at least at the regional and local levels—play a role in making successful attacks more salient in terms of the tone of coverage than failed attacks.

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

7. 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.

8. The other major parties on the political spectrum shift in a similar direction to the CDU.

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 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, 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 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 the language political parties use in response to terrorism.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides background information and institutional details relating to both terror attacks and the rise of the AfD in Germany. In Section 3 we provide sources and other relevant details regarding our data. Sections 4 through 7 discuss our empirical strategy and present our results and we conclude in Section 8.

2. Background: Terrorism in Germany and the AfD

2.1 Terrorism in Germany: Data from the Global Terrorism Database

Our data on terror attacks in Germany, which we describe further in Section 3, come from the Global Terror Database (GTD, 2018) collected by the University of Maryland,

College Park. This is an open source database that documents a host of information on terror attacks from around the world from 1970 to the present day. As explained by the GTD, its 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.

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.

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.[9]

We provide detailed descriptive information on terrorist attacks in Germany in Online Appendix Table A. There have been 184 attacks in Germany since 2010, of which 85 percent succeeded and 15 percent failed. 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.

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

2.2 Populism in Germany: The rise of 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.[10] Among other things, these parties tend to promote authoritarian values (Norris and Inglehart 2019), cultivate fear and polarization based on cultural anxieties and favor illiberal economic policies (Bonomi, Gennaioli, and Tabellini 2021). Scholars have pointed to the role of such factors as economic distress and insecurity (Guiso et al. 2017b; Guiso et al. 2020), migration flows and the refugee crisis of 2015 (Norris and Inglehart 2019) and a wider cultural backlash hypothesis whereby the "left-right" political conflict based on economic status is being replaced with a new political cleavage defined more by education and cultural attitudes (Norris and Inglehart 2019; Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty 2021).

Germany is no exception. The right-wing Alternative for Germany party (AfD) was initially established as a single-issue party in 2013 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. 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.[11] However, support for the party only increased. It won as much as 20 percent of the vote in state elections following 2015. Figure B.1 shows the gains the AfD made between the 2013 and 2017 Federal elections. Although support increased the most in the east, gains were seen in practically every region.

2.3 Linking Terror to Populism

Changing economic conditions and rapidly evolving cultural attitudes can threaten the core values of particular groups. In theory, there are different ways in which groups can react to such changes (Norris and Inglehart 2019): First, it is possible for group to react by self-censorship. Groups whose values are threatened could simply remain silent for fear of social reprisal. Second, groups might adapt to these changes. Third, groups might

10. Norris and Inglehart (2019) classify the AfD, along with several other parties in Europe, as "authoritarian-populist" on the basis of political party positions along three dimensions: Authoritarian Values, Populist Rhetoric and Left-Right Economic Values.

11. See this news piece (in German) for further details: shorturl.at/zIS38.

retreat to social bubbles, either via social media or geographic sorting. Finally, groups could cope with change through the authoritarian reflex. That is, groups can exhibit a defensive reaction to social, cultural and economic change by hardening their viewpoints, adopting more extreme ideological positions and identifying themselves as victims and blaming others for actual or perceived social problems.

Norris and Inglehart (2019) also argue that events that "undermine existential security" including acts of terror,[12] increase the number of people who hold more authoritarian values and are less tolerant and less open to new ideas. We argue that even small acts of *local* terror serve as *local* shocks that encourage the authoritarian reflex. We therefore expect that terror will lead to a hardening of viewpoints on key social issues, such as immigration, and lead people to identify themselves with more hard-right parties, such as the AfD. We thus expect the vote share of the AfD to increase as a result. In the rest of this paper, we set out to verify these claims.

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, 2018) collected by the University of Maryland, College Park. These 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.[13] This mapping leaves us with 184 total attacks in 108 unique municipalities.

Of the 108 municipalities targeted with an attack since 2010, 26 were targeted more than once. A municipality is thus defined 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 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 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, in some cases, the identity and motivation of the perpetrator, though this latter information is not always complete. We therefore complete this information by looking up each of

12. Specifically, Norris and Inglehart (2019) identify recessions, terrorist attacks and banking crises as especially relevant in underminding existensal secuty.

13. 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.

the 184 attacks using our news data (described below) to obtain information on the identity of the perpetrator and the motives behind the attack. In line with Buker (2017), we classify the motives for an attack into three categories: separatist motives, religiously motivated—including Islamist attacks—and revolutionary terrorism.[14] This information is summarized in Table A.2. As shown, we are able to classify 135 of the 184 attacks. The majority of the attacks are carried out by perpetrators of a German-Christian ethnic background who are motivated by right-wing extremist causes and who target non-Germans, directly in line with the example illustrated in Section .[15]

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*).[16] We obtain municipality election results for all state elections that took place between 2013 and 2019 from the Regional Data Bank service of the German Federal Government.[17]

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 17.

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 study. 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.[18]

14. Further details on how we conducted this classification can be found in the Supplemental Data Appendix.

15. Of attacks that took place in the 108 unique municipalities in our sample, we are able to classify just 76 of them into one of the three broad categories put forward by Buker (2017) which makes identifying heterogeneous effects in a reliable manner difficult for lack of sufficient variation. We take up this issue in more depth in Online Appendix A.3.

16. These data can be accessed here: https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/.

17. 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/

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

Election Manifestos: Prior to each election, political parties release their election manifestos which outline their policy and ideological commitments for the coming election cycle. We collect the election manifestos of all political parties for all elections since 2013 in order to carry out an analysis of the language different parties use in response to terror attacks in their campaign documents. These documents are mostly taken from the non-profit organization *Abgeordnetenwatch* (Delegate Watch) and can be found here: https://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de/.[19]

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ): The FAZ is a prominent newspaper in Germany with the second 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 184 attacks in Germany since 2010, 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.[20] 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.[21] In the end, we are left with around 300 stories from the FAZ that report on the 184 attacks in our data.

LexisNexis: We use LexisNexis in order to collect news stories from regional and local publishers across Germany. This provides us with a sample of some 60,000 stories. For each of the 184 attacks in Germany, we match them to stories from the LexisNexis data using the same three criteria we used for the FAZ data. This leaves us with a sample of around 6,400 stories.[22]

4. Establishing Balance

Our identification strategy relies on the assumption that the success of an attack is, for all intents and purposes, as good as random. 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.[23] We then regress a range

19. In the rare case that *Abgeordnetenwatch* does not have a particular manifesto of a particular party, we obtain it directly from the party's website.

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

21. We thank Christina Poppe for her 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.

22. We thank Christina Poppe for her excellent research assistance to complete this task.

23. The variable is undefined for municipalities that did not experience any attacks.

of municipality characteristics measured in 2012, the year prior to the establishment of the AfD, on the success variable as shown in estimating equation 1:[24]

$$X_{i,2012} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SUCCESS_i + \epsilon_i \tag{1}$$

Our identification 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 is no difference whatsoever between municipalities successfully targeted with an attack and those that where targeted but experienced a failed attack. In Panel B, we compare the characteristics of successful v. failed terror attacks and, as shown, there is no distinguishable difference in weapons technologies, attack motivations and targets employed both types of attacks, underscoring the random nature of an attack's success. There is also no difference in the timing between successful and failed attacks relative to an election date, although, as shown in Online Appendix A.4, there is some evidence that attacks—successful and failed—take place in the 12 to 18 months prior to an election. This suggests that, while the probability of success is unrelated to the timing of an attack, terrorists do appear, at least partly, to target elections with attacks. In Online Appendix B.2 we provide further evidence, using all the election data in our panel, that political characteristics, including voter turnout, the size of the eligible voting population and even the vote share for the AfD, are balanced between municipalities that experience successful and failed attacks.

By way of contrast, we define a variable $ATTACK_i$ as 1 if municipality i was targeted with an attack—successful or failed—and as zero if it was not targeted with an attack. We then estimate γ_1 from estimating equation 2 and present the results in Columns 3 and 4 of Panel A of Table 1. As shown, $\hat{\gamma}$ is large and significantly different to zero, pointing to the fact that terrorists systematically target larger, more densely populated, more diverse areas. Together, estimates of β and γ validate our primary identification assumption: conditional on being targeted by a terror attack, the success or failure of an attack is entirely orthogonal to municipality characteristics.

$$X_{i,2012} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 ATTACK_i + \eta_i \tag{2}$$

5. Terror and the AfD

5.1 Baseline Model

Next, we compare the vote share of the AfD in Federal, European and state elections at the municipality level. We model the AfD vote share in municipality i in election e, in time period t as follows:

24. The only exceptions are the share foreign born and the share asylum seekers which are taken from the 2011 census.

$$AfD_{i,e,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \left[SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,e,t} \times ELECTION_e \right] + \zeta \mathbf{X_{i,e,t}} + \theta DAYS_{i,e} + \lambda_{ie} + \delta_i + \alpha_t + \sum_{j=2010}^{2019} \gamma_j \left[FOREIGN_{i,2011} \times D_j^t \right] + \epsilon_{i,t} \quad (3)$$

To isolate the effect of an act of terror on an election result, we interact the indicator $SUCCESS_i$ with an indicator $POST_{i,e,t}$ that is 1 if the first attack in municipality i occurred *prior* to election e in year t and zero if the attack occurred afterwards and with a categorical variable, $ELECTION_e$ that indicates a Federal, European Parliament or state election. European elections serve as the reference category. The coefficient of interest, β_1, is interpreted as the differential effect of successful attacks, compared to failed attacks that took place before and after elections, for Federal and state elections relative to European ones. The vector $\mathbf{X_{i,e,t}}$ includes all lower order terms of the triple interaction.

While successful and failed attacks do not differ in terms of their timing relative to election days, there is variation in the relative timing of attacks. The model thus includes $DAYS_{i,e}$, the number of days between the first attack in municipality i and election e, enabling us to control for the differential effect that the relative timing of an attack might have on election results. Moreover, 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 include municipality fixed effects, δ_i, and year fixed effects, α_t to capture, respectively, unobserved municipality or time heterogeneities and we cluster the standard errors, $\epsilon_{i,t}$, at the municipality level.

Although municipalities targeted with successful attacks are statistically indistinguishable from those hit with failed attacks, our baseline model controls for the pre-AfD share of foreigners in a municipality interacted with year dummies, D_j^t. Because the AfD gained popularity, especially in elections after 2015, on a platform of anti-migrant rhetoric, one might be concerned that successful acts of terror might encourage greater AfD support in municipalities with large, pre-existing migrant populations, regardless of whether those municipalities experienced a successful attack. The inclusion of this interaction thus enables us to identify the effect of successful attacks independently from the time-varying effect of the pre-AfD share of migrants in a given municipality.[25]

25. We estimate our model using standard two-way fixed effect regression commands in Stata. In recent years, 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 engage with this literature in Online Appendix C and carry out our baseline estimation using an alternative estimator from this literature. As shown in that Appendix, there is little difference to our main result when using this alternative estimator.

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 11 percentage points in state elections, relative to European parliament elections. 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.[26] Although the coefficient does decrease, it remains sizeable and highly precise, indicating that acts of terror have a strong influence on the AfD independent of the general region of the country in which the attack takes place. In Column 3 we omit Berlin, a city-state that experienced many attacks and which, in some ways, acts as an outlier compared to other municipalities in our sample. If anything, the omission of Berlin increases the magnitude of the coefficient of interest, suggesting that local acts of terror have their strongest effect on the AfD vote share in smaller municipalities that experience far less acts of terror. In Column 4, we control for the weapon type used in the attack and, as shown, the result is similar to the baseline, suggesting that acts of terror, and not the terror technology, is driving our result. In Column 5, we drop those municipalities whose first attack happened more than three years prior to an election, in Column 6 we omit the 26 municipalities that experienced more than one attack and in Column 7, we include all municipality characteristics presented in Panel A of Table 1 as controls. As shown, the coefficient of interest remains positive, stable and precisely estimated across all specifications. By contrast, we see no clear patterns for Federal or European Parliament elections.[27]

In Column 7 we investigate spillover effects. Specifically, $SUCCESS_i$, is now defined as 1 if municipality i is located in a county—a *Kreis*—that experienced a successful attack and 0 if it is located in a county that experienced a failed attack (and never a successful attack). Moreover, we omit the municipalities where the attack actually took place so as to separate the spillover effects of terror from the actual experience of terror. As shown, the results are precise and positive but the magnitude of the coefficient on the triple interaction is some 60 percent smaller than the baseline, suggesting that attacks become less salient in geographically distant municipalities.

5.3 Attack Type Heterogeneity

In Online Appendix A.3, we test for heterogeneous effects according to the motives of the attacker. As mentioned in Section 3, information regarding the motives of the attack is available in just 76 of the 108 attacks in our sample. Moreover, the overwhelming major-

26. This is especially important when one considers that AfD support in Germany has stronger support in the east than in the west.

27. One explanation for these patterns is that internal security is, according to the German constitution, a matter for Federal states to determine. Online Appendix A.5 provides additional details.

ity of these attacks—55 out of the 76—are motivated by right-wing extremist causes.[28] This leaves us with little variation in order to identify heterogeneous effects for attacks other than right-wing attacks. Nonetheless, in Figure A.2 in Online Appendix A.3, 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 and we find little to no heterogeneous effects: Across all three samples, the coefficient on the triple interaction is nearly the same as that of the baseline. This suggests that the AfD benefits from acts of terror which, by and large, are perpetrated by right-wing causes. In the sections that follow, we explore why this might be the case.

6. Terrorism, Voting and Political Realignment

In this section, we endeavor to understand the mechanisms that drive our baseline effect. The picture that emerges is that terrorism shifts the political landscape to the right by mobilizing new voters while at the same time realigning voter preferences. Parties, moreover, realign their messaging at the state level in response to terror. We present this evidence in turn.

6.1 Terrorism and Voting

We begin our analysis by studying the aggregate effects of terror on voter turnout as well as on the vote share for other parties.[29] Our main results are presented in Table 3.

In Panel A, Column 1, we run our baseline model, using voter turnout, defined as the total number of votes cast as a fraction of total eligible voters in a municipality, as the outcome. The coefficient on the triple interaction suggests that, following a successful attack, the number of eligible voters who participate in state elections increase by some 13 percentage points.[30]

In Columns 2 to 8 of Panel A, we aim at understanding how these new voters are distributed among the various parties in German politics. For this reason, the shares in Columns 2 to 7 of Panel A are measured as total votes cast for a given party as a fraction of the total eligible voting population. They therefore measure the share of voters, and not the share of the vote, claimed by each party. As shown, the AfD captures captures fully 60 percent of the increases in voter turnout, some 8 percentage points out of 13.[31]

28. We group "right-wing" and "anti-migration" attacks together.

29. Though election data is available for years prior to 2013, we limit our sample to elections that took place between 2013 and 2019 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.

30. In Online Appendix B.2, we demonstrate that the size of the eligible voting population does not differ between municipalities hit with successful or failed attacks, underscoring the point that acts of terror stimulate changes in voter behavior and not in the size of the voting population.

31. These figures assume no voter migration between parties and, as such, represent an upper bound. In

No other party comes close: the SPD, the center-left party of German politics, and die Linke, the left-wing party, claim between 2 and 3 points of the 13 point increase. The CDU, the center-right party that dominated German politics between 2005 and 2021 claimed just 13 percent of the newly mobilized voters, or 1.7 our of 13 points.

In Panel B of Table 3, we examine the extent to which these changes in turnout affect each party's performance as measured by the share of the vote (not voters) they win. Column 2 repeats the baseline effect for the AfD while Columns 3 to 8 show the results for other parties. Aside from the SPD, which experiences a 3 percentage point increase in state elections relative to European elections as a result of terror, all other parties either experience no increases or significant decreases. In particular, the CDU experiences significant losses, in the order of 4 percentage points. These results demonstrate how the far-right benefits the most from the mobilizing effects of terrorism.

6.2 Terrorism and Voter Preferences

In addition to activating new voters, terrorism may also realign the political preferences of voters. To investigate this possibility, we use data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) which, as mentioned, is a panel of individuals and households over time. This enables us to study the political preferences and attitudes 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. For each person, p, residing in municipality i surveyed in period t, we estimate the parameters of the following model:

$$y_{p,i,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \left[SUCCESS_{p,i} \times POST_{p,t} \right] + \delta_p + \alpha_t + \epsilon_{m,t} \tag{4}$$

Where y refers to 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 at the time of the attack. Post 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 $\epsilon_{m,t}$.

Table 4 presents our findings. In Columns 1 and 2 we see that, after a successful attack, individuals not only identify more right-wing on a left-right political ideology scale but more hard-right. This ideological shift is also reflected in the partisan preferences

the subsequent subsection we provide evidence to show that individuals, after experiencing a successful attack, are significantly more likely to prefer the AfD and significantly less likely to prefer the CDU, suggesting that voter migration explains some degree of the turnout results. However, the magnitude of the relevant coefficients suggest that capturing new voters explains a larger portion of these political gains than voter migration. Voter migration is discussed in more detail in subsection 6.2.

individuals hold. In Columns 3 and 4, for example, we find that successful attacks lead people to identify more with the AfD and significantly less with the CDU, results that are directly in line with our aggregate results on vote shares for the AfD and CDU. These results also suggests that voter migration from the CDU to the AfD—and not just new voters supporting the AfD—explains part of the baseline effect, though it is difficult to say exactly how much it explains. However, the coefficient on people's preferences for the CDU is an order of magnitude smaller than it is for their preference for the AfD and is estimated with less precision, suggesting that capturing new voters is a stronger driver of AfD support than voters migrating from one party to another.

In Columns 5 through 8 we investigate the differential effects of terror on various social attitudes. In Columns 5 and 6, for example, we see that terror increases people's worries about immigration to Germany and social cohesion. Individuals also find more interest in German politics following a successful attack. Successful terror has no effects on people's attitudes towards terrorism and, if anything, reduces worries about criminality. These results are interesting in their own right, but are also broadly consistent with the results presented in Figure 1 (described in the following subsection) that documents the language used by political parties in response to terror. We also find no effects of terror on trust towards people, suggesting that terror increases support for the far-right because of changed political preferences and not because terror makes people less trusting.

In Online Appendix D, we compare individual characteristics from the SOEP of people living in municipalities that experienced successful and failed attacks. The results are presented in Figure D.1 and make clear that there are no differences in socio-economic characteristics between people in these two municipality types. This lends further credibility that β_1 in estimating equation 4 captures only the effect of terror on individual preferences and attitudes.

6.3 Terrorism and Realignment of Political Parties

Finally, we examine the language used in the election manifestos of various political parties in state elections in order to better understand whether and how political parties adjust their messaging in response to terrorism. Prior to each election, each party releases its manifesto on which it bases its campaign. Among other things, parties use these manifestos to articulate their policy and ideological commitments. We thus collect the election manifestos (i.e. the *Wahlprogramm*) of all political parties in state elections from 2013 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.[32] For each party, p, we calculate the difference, ΔTW, in the number of trigger words (per 10,000 words) 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:

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta TW_{p_t - CDU_{2009}} = \pi_0 + \pi_1 \sum_s SUCCESS_{s,t-1} + \pi_2 1\{Party = p\} + \\ \pi_3 \big[\sum_s SUCCESS_{s,t-1} \times 1\{Party = p\} \big] + \alpha_t + \zeta_s + \epsilon_{s,t}\end{aligned} \tag{5}$$

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.[33] 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.[34]

We report our results in Figure 1. Each patch reports our result for π_3 which we estimate for each party in samples split by trigger word.[35] 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. Whereas all other parties respond to terror by using differentially less trigger words related to issues like migration, crime and Islam in comparison to the 2009 base level, the AfD shifts in the opposite direction. In states that experience the most violence, the AfD speaks significantly more about asylum seekers, crime and criminality, all things foreign, punishment and even Sharia law. Interestingly, the word terror receives no special mention by the AfD in response to terror. Given that the majority of attacks in our sample are carried out by right-wing extremists, this particular result might reflect efforts of the AfD to legitimize acts of terror against other perceived threats. This result also highlights the role of party ideology in responding to the same threat.

The figure strongly suggests that terrorism leads to a significant realignment in

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

33. 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.

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

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

language used by political parties. In addition to whatever level differences might exist between parties in the ways they speak about issues, Figure 1 demonstrates that parties respond differentially to terrorism. The figure also demonstrates that the AfD uses language that is directly in line with people's changing preferences in response to terrorism as demonstrated in Table 4.

7. Media Coverage of Terrorism

As a final step in our analysis, we examine whether successful attacks receive differential coverage in the news media. To conduct this exercise, we collect news stories from two sources: the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), a national publisher in Germany with the second widest circulation, and LexisNexis which collects stories from a range of publishers and which includes regional and local news reports. We use this information to conduct two exercises. First, we examine whether successful attacks, on average, are *more* likely to be covered than failed attacks. Second, we analyze the extent to which successful attacks influence the *tone* of coverage as measured by sentiment scores. Our results are presented in Table 5. Columns 1 and 2 present results when examining national stories from the FAZ whilst Columns 3 and 4 show the results from regional and local news collected from LexisNexis.

In Columns 1 and 3 we find that, on average, successful attacks are no more likely than failed attacks to receive national (Column 1) or regional or local (Column 3) coverage. Interestingly, successful attacks that do attract national coverage receive similar coverage in terms of sentiment (Columns 2). The pattern for local coverage, however, is different. In Column 4, we observe that regional and local stories that cover successful attacks have differentially more negative sentiments.[36] These results suggest that the media—at least at the regional and local levels—play a role in making successful attacks more salient in terms of the tone of coverage than failed attacks.

8. 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 political participation. The basic picture that emerges is that terror has significant effects: 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 11 percentage points in state elections. This effect is driven both by the activation of new voters supporting the AfD and by voters migrating from the CDU to the AfD, though the activation effects appear stronger. In addition to voter preferences shifting right, people's social attitudes shift to considerably more populist positions in response

36. The story sentiment takes into account both the title of the story and the body of the report.

to successful acts of terror: people are increasingly worried about migration and social cohesion and are more interested in German politics. Finally, we found that political parties, in response to terror, use significantly different language in their campaign documents. While the AfD, in states that experience the most violence, uses differentially more language in its election manifestos on topics like asylum, crime and Islam, other parties shift in the opposite direction. 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 the messaging of political parties.

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 of German-Christian ethnic backgrounds who were motivated by right-wing extremist causes, including Neo-Nazi attacks, and who, by and large, targeted non-German-Christian targets. 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, Islam and asylum following attacks rather than terrorism speaks to this point. It may also reflect its efforts to downplay acts of terror as mere crimes against perceived threats. On the whole, the results suggest the powerful role that things like narrative can play in shaping attitudes and preferences.

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9. Figures

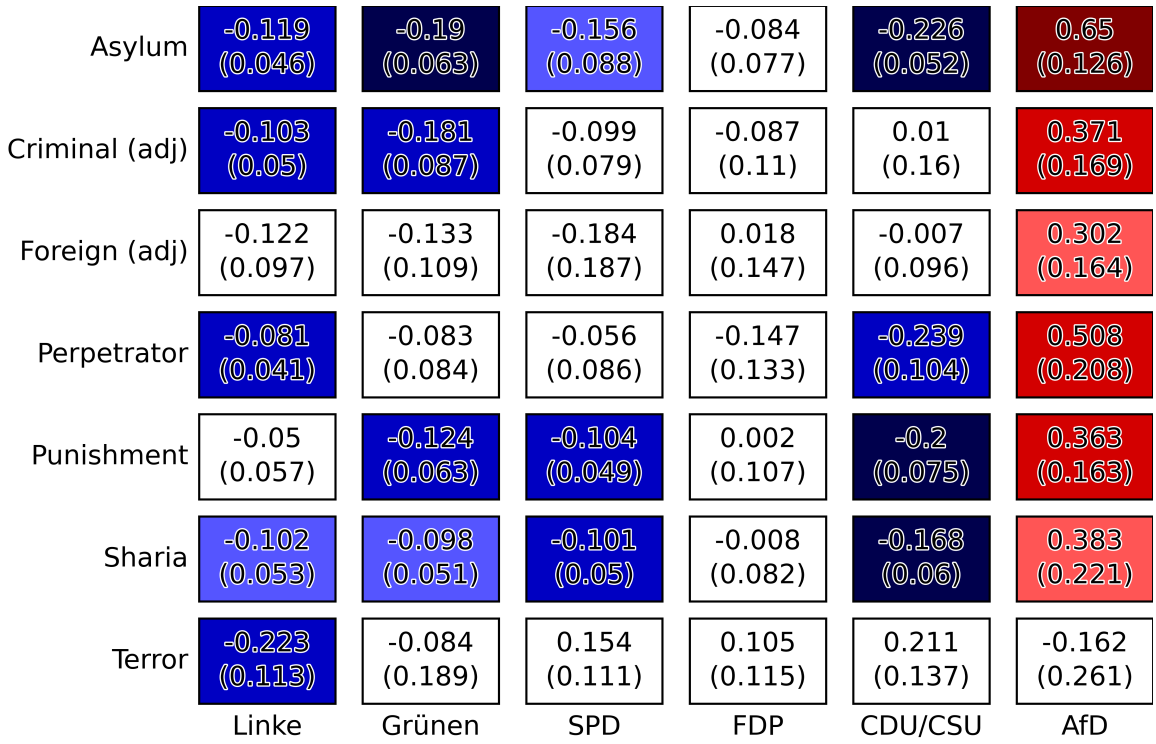

Figure 1
Trigger words used by different parties in different states compared to 2009 CDU

Note: This figure plots π_3 from estimating equation 5: 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.

10. Tables

Table 1
Characteristics in Successful v. Failed and in Targeted v. Non-Targeted Municipalities

	(1) $\hat{\beta}$	p-value H_0 : $\beta = 0$	(3) $\hat{\gamma}$	p-value H_0 : $\gamma = 0$
Panel A: Municipality Characteristics				
Economic:				
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
Demographic:				
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
Migration:				
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
Out-migration	291.162	0.923	6,490.661	0.000
Education:				
Graduates of university entrance exams	38.000	0.886	447.330	0.000
No secondary education	13.392	0.676	60.259	0.000
Geography:				
Surface area (km^2)	8.667	0.712	-5.449	0.716
Forest area (ha)	-887.756	0.334	-1,288.391	0.003
East Germany	-0.1919	0.273	0.1809	0.000
Social Assistance:				
Welfare recipients, per capita	-0.891	0.326	-0.713	0.000
Asylum welfare, per capita	-0.001	0.214	0.000	0.000
Road Accidents:				
Traffic accidents	173.283	0.509	708.244	0.000
Deadly accidents	152.162	0.458	565.828	0.000
Tourism:				
Number of hotels	14.167	0.290	18.045	0.014
Panel B: Terror Characteristics				
Weapon Type & Attack Timing:				
Explosives	-0.162	0.257	—	—
Incendiary device	-0.051	0.732	—	—
Days before election	-50.39	0.734	—	—
Identity of Target/Attacker:				
Foreign attacker	-0.312	0.175	—	—
Foreign target	-0.010	0.945	—	—
Attack Motive:				
Right-Wing Attack	0.203	0.380	—	—
Neo-Nazi Attack	0.175	0.447	—	—
Islamist Attack	-0.277	0.223	—	—

Notes: Each row reports the coefficients from the following two regressions: $X_{i,2012} = \beta_0 + \beta Success_i + \epsilon_i$ (Column 1) and $X_{i,2012} = \gamma_0 + \gamma Attack_i + \eta_i$ (Column 3) where $X_{i,2012}$ is a covariate in municipality i measured in 2012.

Table 2
Effects of Terror on AfD Vote Share

	(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	-0.0109	-0.0423**	-0.0265	-0.0246	-0.0157	-0.0229	0.0926***
	(0.0176)	(0.0210)	(0.0181)	(0.0164)	(0.0195)	(0.0175)	(0.0216)	(0.0145)
Success × Post × Federal	-0.0078	-0.0015	-0.0025	-0.0088	0.0185	0.0020	0.0041	-0.0244**
	(0.0092)	(0.0339)	(0.0099)	(0.0093)	(0.0172)	(0.0111)	(0.0126)	(0.0118)
Success × Post × State	0.1115***	0.0748***	0.1308***	0.1050***	0.1132***	0.1217***	0.0817**	0.0472***
	(0.0243)	(0.0267)	(0.0252)	(0.0242)	(0.0257)	(0.0260)	(0.0315)	(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

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 an attack—successful or failed—occurred prior to an election and zero if it occurred after an election. All controls in Columns 7 and 8 refer to all covariates presented in Table 1, with the exception of the geographical covariates which are subsumed by municipality fixed effects; the 2011 share of asylum seekers is interacted with year dummies. Success in Column 8 is defined as 1 for all municipalities in a county that experienced a successful attack and as 0 for all municipalities in a county that experienced a failed attack. The specification in Column 8 omits the municipalities that actually experienced a successful/failed attack so as to separate the spillover effects of terror from the effects of experienced terror. if a municipality is located in a county that experienced a successful attack and 0 if a municipality is located in a county that experienced a failed attack. Standard errors (shown in parentheses) are clustered at the municipality level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3
Terror, Turnout and Other Parties

	Turnout	Vote Share for Other Parties						
	(1) Turnout	(2) AfD	(3) CDU	(4) Linke	(5) Greens	(6) FDP	(7) SPD	(8) Others
Panel A. Votes per Eligible Voter								
Success × Post	0.0064	-0.0143	-0.0003	0.0020	0.0134	0.0028***	-0.0039	0.0066
	(0.0154)	(0.0099)	(0.0070)	(0.0029)	(0.0124)	(0.0010)	(0.0054)	(0.0071)
Success × Post × Federal	-0.0090	-0.0018	-0.0187**	0.0159***	-0.0125	0.0059*	0.0044	-0.0026
	(0.0138)	(0.0081)	(0.0088)	(0.0054)	(0.0101)	(0.0030)	(0.0052)	(0.0094)
Success × Post × State	0.1321***	0.0797***	0.0176*	0.0219***	-0.0031	0.0015	0.0304***	-0.0101
	(0.0177)	(0.0137)	(0.0090)	(0.0072)	(0.0129)	(0.0021)	(0.0057)	(0.0086)
Panel B. Votes per Votes Cast								
Success × Post		-0.0238	-0.0052	0.0208**	0.0169	0.0031*	-0.0102	-0.0014
		(0.0176)	(0.0137)	(0.0093)	(0.0116)	(0.0018)	(0.0109)	(0.0086)
Success × Post × Federal		-0.0078	-0.0145	0.0144*	-0.0151	0.0066	0.0132**	0.0027
		(0.0092)	(0.0117)	(0.0086)	(0.0133)	(0.0048)	(0.0060)	(0.0129)
Success × Post × State		0.1115***	-0.0395**	-0.0187	-0.0138	-0.0080**	0.0313***	-0.0382***
		(0.0243)	(0.0165)	(0.0144)	(0.0125)	(0.0033)	(0.0116)	(0.0132)
N	516	484	516	516	516	516	516	484
Clusters	103	103	103	103	103	103	103	103

Notes: Success is one if a municipality experienced a successful terror attack anytime after 2010 and 0 if it experienced a failed attack. Post is 1 if an attack—successful or failed—occurred prior to an election and zero if it occurred after an election. Post is 1 if an attack—successful or failed—occurred in the municipality prior to an election and zero if it occurred after an election. All regressions include municipality and year fixed effects, election type by municipality fixed effects, the 2011 share of foreigners in a municipality by year fixed effects and days between an attack and an election. 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

	Dependent Variable: Individual Attitudes and Prefereces								
	(1) Identify Right-Wing	(2) Identify Hard-Right	(3) Prefer AfD	(4) Prefer CDU	(5) Worried Immigration	(6) Worried Cohesion	(7) Interested German Politcs	(8) Worried Terrorism	(9) Worried Crime
Success × Post	0.0659**	0.0431*	0.0322***	-0.00618*	0.0431**	0.0463***	0.75**	0.00347	-0.0579*
	(0.0283)	(0.0244)	(0.0101)	(0.00322)	(0.0208)	(0.0114)	(0.282)	(0.0319)	(0.0311)
N	3,910	3,910	10,704	10,704	23,684	13,487	196	8,709	23,721
Clusters	215	215	238	238	387	284	22	281	387

Notes: The dependent variable is the attitude of a given person in a given municipality toward various political and social topics. 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 an attack—successful or failed—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
Differential News Coverage of Successful v. Failed Attacks

	FAZ Stories		Lexis Nexis Stories	
	(1) Article Found	(2) Story Sentiment	(3) Article Found	(4) Story Sentiment
Success	0.0240	-0.00695	-0.0953	-0.0334***
	(0.111)	(0.0194)	(0.144)	(0.0101)
Year FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
City FE			✓	✓
Publisher FE				✓
Unit of Observation	Attack	Story	Attack	Story
Observations	183	311	100	6,446

Notes: The outcomes in Columns 1 and 3 are binary variables that are 1 if a successful attack received news coverage at the national (Column 1) or regional and local (Column 3) levels. The outcome in Columns 2 and 4 are the sentiment scores for the title and the body of the news report. Robust standard errors in parenthesis. The standard errors in Column 4 are clustered at the city-publisher level. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Online Appendix for Paper:
Shifting the Political Equilibrium Right: Evidence from Terror Attacks and Extremist Voting in Germany

Table of Contents

A. Terrorism in Germany

In this Online Appendix, we provide detailed descriptive statistics on terror attacks in Germany. We also provide some analysis on the heterogeneous effects of terror on the AfD vote share according to the motives of the attacker.

A.1 Summary statistics

Table A.1 provides detailed statistics related to the targets, weapons and attack types used in each of the 184 attacks in Germany between 2010 and 2018 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 85 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 96 percent. The next most common type of attack is bombings or explosions. These make up 11 percent of all attacks but have a success rate below 50 percent. Fifty-five percent of the attacks target private citizens and their property; the two next most common targets are religious institutions and means of transportation.

Table A.1
Terrorism summary statistics for Germany (2010 - 2018)

				If success (mean)	
	Observations	Percentage	Attack success	Wounded	Killed
Attack type					
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
Target type					
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
Weapon type					
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

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.

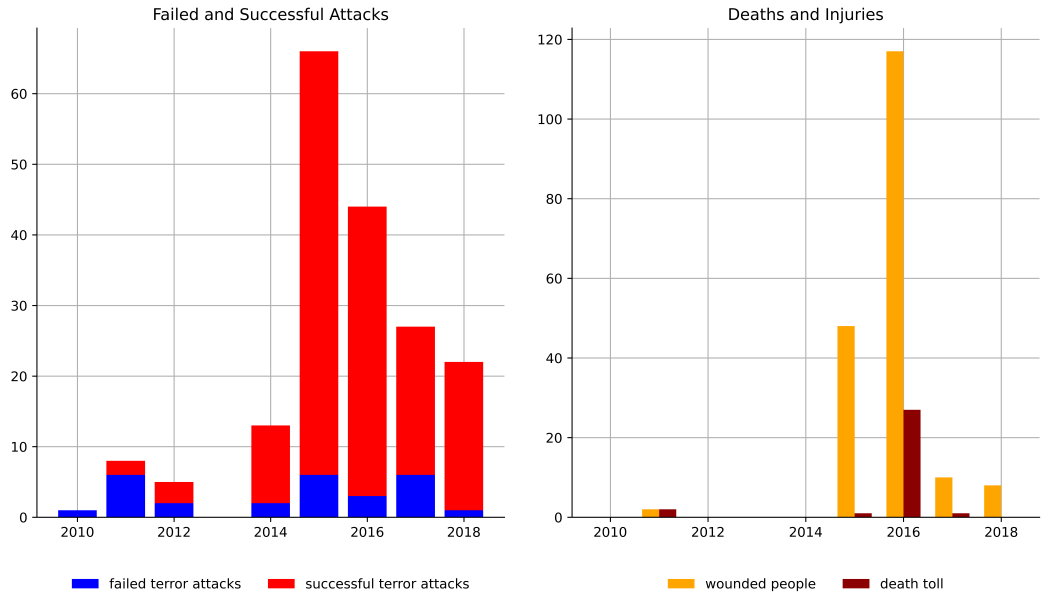

Figure A.1
Frequency and intensity of attacks

A.2 Attack motivations

In Table A.2, we provide statistics related to the motivation of each attack, the identity of the attackers and the identity of the target. This information is provided by the GTD itself, though information on the identity and motives of the attack are not always complete. We therefore use our data on news reports to identify as much information as possible regarding the motivations and identities of the perpetrators. Doing so enables us to identify the "demographic" characteristics of 135 of the 184 attacks in the data. After mapping these attacks onto German municipalities, however, we are only able to identify the background information of just 76 of the 108 attacks.

Table A.2
Terror Classification Based on GTD Data and News Reports

Motive	Attacker Identity				Target Identity	
	German-Christian	Other	Unknown	Sum	German-Christian	Other
Ethno-Nationalist/Separatist						
Separatism	0	11	0	11	0	11
Religiously Motivated Terrorism						
Christian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Islamistic	0	17	0	17	15	2
Revolutionary Terrorism						
Left-wing extremism	32	2	0	34	33	1
Anarchism	0	2	0	2	1	1
Right-wing extremism	50	2	0	52	8	44
Anti-Immigration	14	0	0	14	0	14
Environmentalism	0	0	0	0	0	0
Animal rights activism	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	4	1	49	54	17	37
Total	100	35	49	184	74	110

As shown, more than 50 of the attacks are related to right-wing extremism. Of these, 50 are carried out by Neo-Nazi's: individuals with German-Christian background. The majority of these attacks target foreigners. Just 17 attacks, 9 percent, are carried out in the name of Islam and 34 attacks are for left-wing causes.

A.3 Attack type heterogeneity

Unfortunately, there is even less variation in attack motivations in the attacks that map on to the 108 unique German municipalities in our main sample. 72 percent of these attacks are for right-wing or anti-migrant causes while less than 15 percent are Islamist attacks or left-wing attacks. Nearly 80 percent (77.78 percent) of these attacks target foreigners. This lack of variation makes it difficult to reliably identify heterogeneous effects according to the motives the attacker. Because our baseline model already involves a triple interaction, including a fourth interaction makes it all but impossible to estimate coefficients. To this end, we estimate the triple interaction on samples split according to attack motivation or attack target, where possible. These results are shown in Figure A.2 and, as shown, there is very little evidence of heterogeneous effects. Whether in a sample of all right-wing attacks, Neo-Nazi attacks or attacks that target foreigners, the effect of successful attacks in state elections on the AfD vote share is more or less stable and precisely estimated.

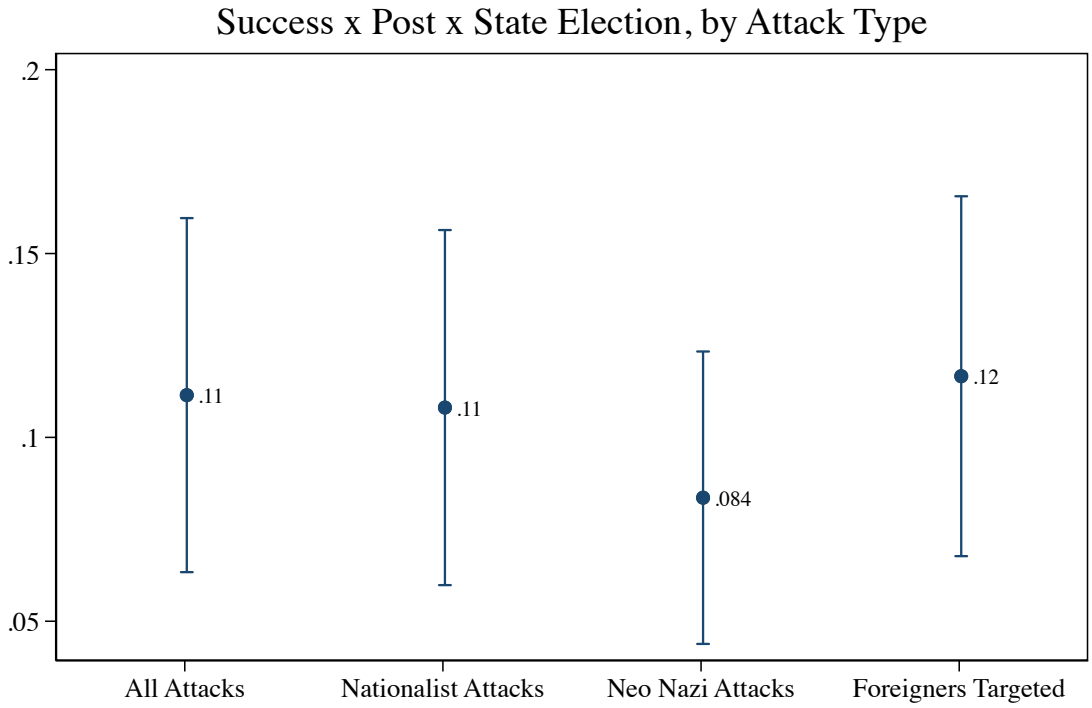

Figure A.2
Heterogeneous effects according to attack type or target

Note: In this Figure, we plot β_1 from estimating equation 3 according to attack type or attack target, where possible. Confidence intervals are drawn at 95 percent.

A.4 Attack timing

While successful and failed attacks have no differences in terms of their timing relative to elections, as pointed out in the main paper, there is variation in the timing of attacks overall, with some happening days before an attack, others months or years before an attack and still others happening after an attack.

To get a sense of the extent to which terrorists target elections, we plot the distribution of attacks according to the number of quarters between a given attack and an election. The result is shown in Figure A.3. While attacks happen at all points of time relative to an election, there is clearly a mass of attacks that take place in the two years leading up to an election. This suggests that, while terrorists may have non-political goals, a sizeable percentage of attacks do appear to target elections, lending credence to the view that one of the primary objectives of terrorism is to advance political goals.

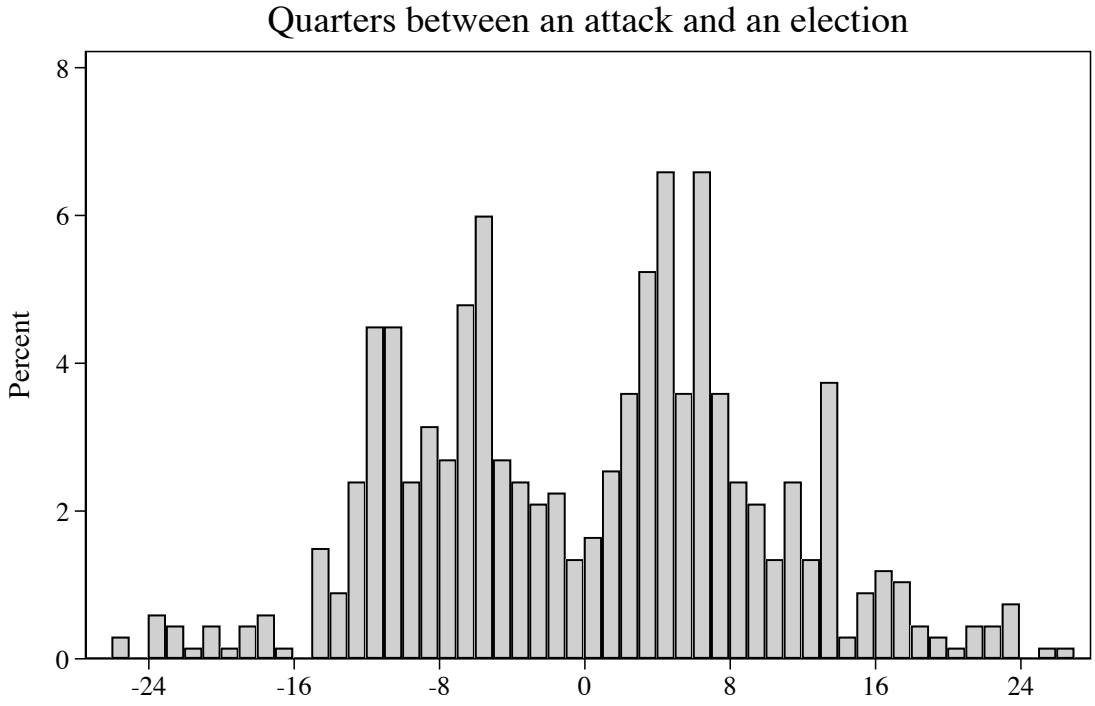

Figure A.3
Timing of attacks relative to elections

A.5 Internal Security Policy in Germany

Our baseline effect of terrorism on the AfD vote share is only visible in state elections. A relevant question is why this effect is only present for state elections and not others. The primary 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). Although a slow trend toward higher levels of centralization has existed since the 1970s, the de facto distribution of competencies is in line with the lawmakers' directives. This becomes evident when looking at the total numbers of people employed in state governments. In 2016, state-level institutions counted 304,850 full-time equivalents (FTEs) employed, a figure that is some five times higher than the 60,720 FTEs hired on the federal level in the same year (Bundesamt, 2021 [Online].). Similarly, state-level internal security expenditures are higher (€14.619 Billion in 2011) than federal agencies (€3.343 Billion in 2011) (Riedl 2018). Our results suggest, therefore, that at least a subset of voters is aware of the heterogeneity in competencies between federal and state-level institutions across political topics and vote accordingly in response to terror.

B. AfD Voting and Political Balance

In this Online Appendix, we provide visual evidence of the AfD gains in German Federal elections and we also provide evidence that, from the perspective of political characteristics, municipalities hit with successful and failed attacks are indistinguishable.

B.1 AfD Voting in Germany

Figure B.1 shows the increases, in terms of percentage points, in the AfD vote share between the 2013 and 2017 Federal elections. While the gains are the strongest in the east, the Figure demonstrates that gains could be seen in practically every region.

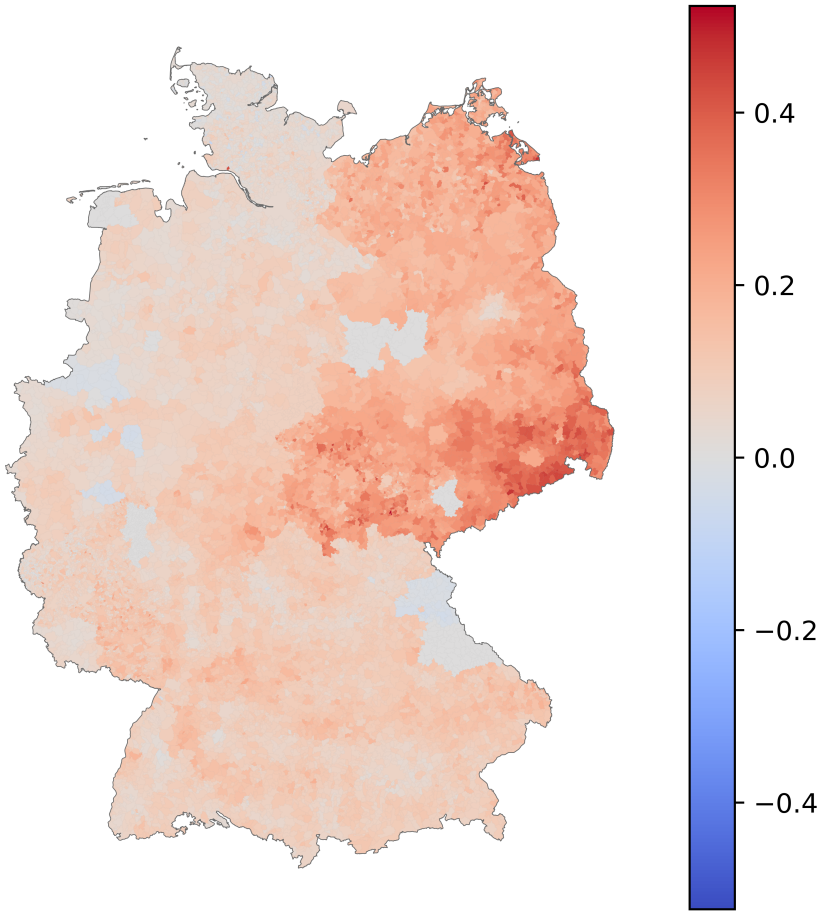

Figure B.1
AfD Support Between 2013 and 2017

Note: This map shows the increases, in percentage points, in the AfD vote share between the 2013 and 2017 Federal Elections.

B.2 Balance of Political Characteristics

In this Appendix, we demonstrate that municipalities hit with successful attacks are also indistinguishable from those hit with failed attacks from the perspective of certain

political characteristics, using all the election data in our panel. Specifically, for each municipality i hit with either a successful or failed attack, we estimate the parameters of the following model:

$$Y_{i,t,e} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SUCCESS_i + \epsilon_i \tag{6}$$

In this model, $Y_{i,t,e}$ represents one of three political outcomes in municipality i in election e in year t: the vote share for the AfD, the size of the eligible voting population (in 1000s) and turnout, defined as the number of votes cast as a fraction of the eligible voting population. We report our estimates of β_1 in Table B.1. In Columns 1 to 3 we run a simple bi-variate regression and in Columns 3 to 6 we include various controls and fixed effects. As shown, there are no intrinsic political differences between municipalities hit with successful and failed attacks, pointing to the role of attack timing relative to an election in driving our results.

Table B.1
Balance of Political Characteristics

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

Notes: Success is 1 if a municipality was hit with a successful attack anytime since 2010 and 0 if it was hit with a failed attack, but never a successful one, in that same time period. Eligible refers to the number of eligible voters (in 1000s) in a given municipality. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

C. Heterogeneity Robust DiD Estimation

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 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.[37] 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 run a simplified version of 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.

Our results are shown in Table C.1. In Column 1, we provide a simplified version of our baseline estimate so as to make estimation with `did_imputation` comparable. We therefore estimate the coefficient on $SUCCESS \times POST$ on the sample of only state elections and include municipality and year fixed effects. As shown, successful attacks increase the AfD vote share by some 5 points. 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 different treatment effects with weights corresponding to the estimation target.[38]

As shown, the differences, both in magnitude and precision, between Columns 1 and 2 are negligible, increasing confidence that our baseline estimation using linear difference-in-difference is, in fact, unbiased.

37. 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.

38. 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 8 municipalities in our sample and this explains the difference in observations between Columns 1 and 2 of Table C.1.

Table C.1
Heterogeneity Robust DiD Estimation

	Coefficient on Success × Post	
	(1) Baseline	(2) DiD Imputation
β	0.0533^{***}	
	(0.0138)	
τ		0.0559^{***}
		(0.0035)
δ_i	✓	✓
α_t	✓	✓
Observations	64	53
Estimator	`reghdfe`	`did_imputation`

Notes: This table reports the coefficient of $SUCCESS \times POST$ run on the sample of state elections in a model that includes municipality and year fixed effects, denoted δ_i and α_t, respectively. 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). . * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

D. SOEP Balance Test

In this Online Appendix, provide a balance test of individual characteristics for people surveyed by the SOEP and who live in municipalities targeted with successful versus failed attacks. In Figure D.1, we present the results of the following regression estimation for each person p residing in municipality m in the SOEP data:

$$X_{p,m} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SUCCESS_{p,m} + \epsilon_m \tag{7}$$

$X_{p,m}$ refers to various covariates for person p, including income, marital status, educational attainment, sex, employment status age and an indicator that is 1 if if they moved municipalities and 0 if they did not. $SUCCESS_{p,m}$ is 1 if person p lived in a municipality that experienced a successful attack and 0 if (s)he lived in a municipality that experienced a failed attack. We report the various β_1's in Figure D.1. As shown, there is no significant difference between people living in municipalities that experienced successful attacks. This increases confidence that terror affects voting outcomes because it influences voter preferences; not because of sample selection.

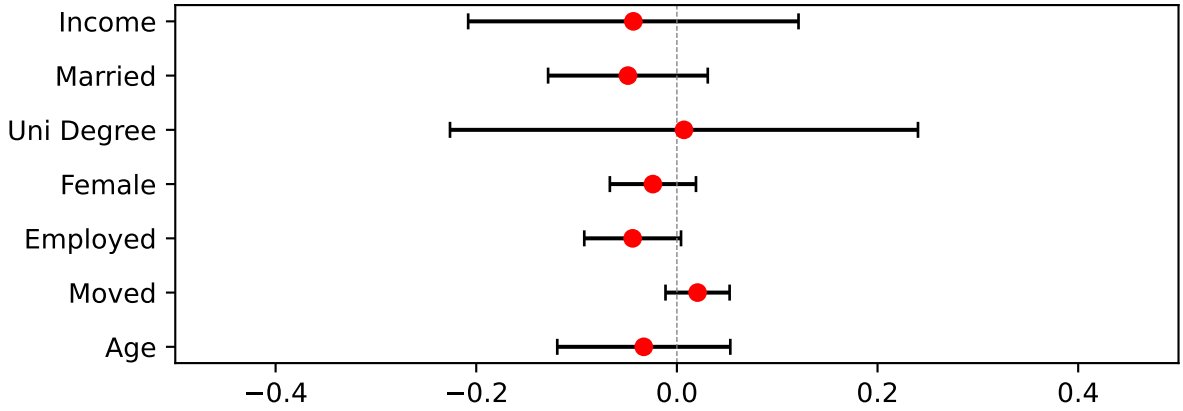

Figure D.1
Individual characteristics of people in successful v. failed municipalities

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. Confidence intervals are drawn at 95 percent.