

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

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This Version: December 23, 2022

## Abstract

Can right-wing terrorism increase support for far-right populist parties and if so, why? Exploiting quasi-random variation between successful and failed attacks across German municipalities, we find that successful attacks lead to significant increases in the vote share for the right-wing, populist Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party in state elections. Investigating channels, we find that successful attacks lead to differential increases in turnout which are mainly captured by the AfD. Using the German SOEP, a longitudinal panel of individuals, we investigate terror's impact on individual political attitudes. We first document that people residing in municipalities that experience successful or failed attacks are indistinguishable. We then show that successful terror leads individuals to prefer the AfD, adopt more populist attitudes and report significantly greater political participation at the local level. These results display important heterogeneities: individuals without prior partisan commitments, without prior history of political participation and with less education prefer the AfD differentially more in response to successful terror. Terror also leads voters to migrate away from (some) mainstream parties to the AfD. Successful attacks also receive more media coverage among local and regional publishers and that coverage makes significantly more use of words related to Islam and terror. These results hold despite the fact that most attacks are motivated by right-wing causes and targeted against migrants. The AfD responds to attacks by speaking more about crime and integration in its election manifestos at the state level. Other parties do not shift their language or shift in the opposite direction.

*Keywords:* Terrorism, Populism, Turnout, Voter Realignment, Political Conflict

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*A specter is haunting the world: Populism*

– Ghita Ionescu &amp; Ernest Gellner

**1. Introduction**

Right-wing populist movements present a threat to liberal democracies around the world: Whereas in the past, the threat was explicit — for example, through military rule, outright dictatorships and fascist governments — today, it is more subtle, involving the gradual erosion of trust in democratic norms and institutions (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019; Norris and Inglehart 2019). Nevertheless, right-wing movements are thriving, even as instances of political violence are on the rise.<sup>1</sup> In Western societies, for example, the vote share for right-wing authoritarian populist parties in national elections more than doubled from some 5 percent in the 1960s to more than 12 percent in the 2010s (Norris and Inglehart 2019).

These developments have renewed academic interest to understand the causes (and consequences) of populism. In this respect, a substantial literature has argued that the rise of right-wing populism in many countries can—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. 2017b; Margalit 2019; Fetzer 2019; Dal Bó et al. 2018). Surprisingly, although this literature has examined the role of cultural conflict in explaining the rise of populism, the role of violent conflict has received less attention. Given that many right-wing authoritarian movements emphasize security against (actual or perceived) internal or external threats and play on the politics of fear (Norris and Inglehart 2019), the question arises as to whether acts of terror can actually shift the political landscape of a nation to the right: Can they, for example, mobilize voters, affect voter preferences and attitudes, and, ultimately, lead to differential voting behavior?

In this paper, we identify the causal impact of small, local terror attacks on the vote share for the right-wing, populist Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany, henceforth AfD) party across German municipalities. We also provide an account as to *why* terror increases support for the far-right, highlighting the impact of terrorism on voter mobilization, on voter preferences, on media coverage and on the language adopted by political parties to campaign. For identification, we rely on the success or failure of attacks.<sup>2</sup> A balance test along a wide range of municipality characteristics reveals no significant social, economic, demographic, geographic or political differences between municipalities hit with successful or failed attacks, lending credence to our identifying assumption that, conditional on being attacked, the success of an attack is unrelated to municipality characteristics.<sup>3</sup>

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1. In the United States for example, Capitol Police experienced a doubling of threats, from 3,939 in 2017 to 9,625 in 2021 (see here for more details: [shorturl.at/iyAU2](https://shorturl.at/iyAU2). Accessed 15 December 2022).

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 attack characteristics, including attack motivation or weapon

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.<sup>4</sup> Our baseline estimate suggests that the AfD experiences a 6 percentage point increase in state elections in municipalities hit with successful attacks, an increase of some 35 percent relative to the sample mean. There are no effects for Federal or European parliament elections, patterns that are robust to a wide range of different specifications and samples. These results are in line with the fact that matters of internal security in Germany—including policing politically motivated terrorism — are primarily (but not exclusively) left to Federal states to determine. They are also in line with the fact that the terrorist attacks in our sample receive far more news coverage at the regional and local level than they do at the national level. We also find significant geographic spillovers: The AfD vote share in state elections in untargeted municipalities located in a county that experiences a successful attack also increase, suggesting that local acts of terror have local spillovers.

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

First, we find that successful terror attacks lead to large, significant increases in voter turnout in state elections, in the order of some 16 percentage points. The AfD claims more than 30 percent of this mobilization whereas the remaining 70 percent of the turnout effect is spread among other political parties.<sup>5</sup> This differential capture of voters translates into significant realignment of vote shares. Whereas the AfD increases its share of votes cast by some 6 points, other parties, including the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) that led the Federal government from 2005 to 2021, experience either no effects or much smaller gains.<sup>6</sup>

Second, the aggregate patterns in voting outcomes appear to be driven by changes in individual political attitudes and preferences. Using restricted-use German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) data we are able 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, identifies, post-attack, as more as hard-right on the political spectrum and significantly prefers the AfD more. They also report being increasingly worried about immigration and active in local politics. Interestingly, people's concerns about terror are not affected by successful attacks.

technologies, although, unsurprisingly, successful attacks are more deadly than failed attacks.

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

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

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

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

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

Third, we 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), a national publisher in Germany that enjoys one of the highest circulation rates among all newspapers, and Lexis Nexis which collects stories from a range of publishers and which includes reports from regional and local levels. Using these data, we find that, on average, successful attacks are no more *likely* than failed attacks to receive regional or local coverage. Instead, we find that successful attacks receive significantly *more* coverage than failed attacks. We also document significant difference in *tone* and *content* between local stories that cover successful attacks and local stories that cover failed attacks: Stories that cover successful terror have lower sentiment scores and use significantly different vocabulary, highlighting themes such as Islam and playing down issues related to right-wing populism. We find no such patterns when examining national news coverage: Not only do attacks receive far less coverage at the national level than at the local level, there is no differential coverage of successful attacks compared to failed attacks at the national level. These results suggest that local media coverage plays an important role in making successful attacks, and certain themes used to describe those attacks, salient.

Finally, we study the response of political parties to acts of terror. To this purpose, we collect the main parties’ election manifestos for every state election in our sample. We identify a number of trigger words related to crime, terror and migration and measure the difference, for each party in each state election, between the number of trigger words it uses and the CDU in its

2009 Federal election manifesto.<sup>7</sup> We find that the state election manifestos of the AfD contain significantly more usage of words related to crime, integration and immigrant naturalization in states that experience the most violence while terror receives no special mention at all. All other parties either display no significant shift in their language or shift in the opposite direction as the AfD, indicating a clear ideological divide in the response to terror among the main political parties in Germany.<sup>8</sup>

Our paper contributes to two strands of literature. First, our paper adds to the literature that aims at explaining the rise of populism. Especially in recent years, this has been the subject of some focus by economists who have highlighted the important role that economic factors play in explaining the rise of populist movements. These include the role of economic insecurity (Guiso et al. 2020; Guiso et al. 2017a; 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, right-wing populism.

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

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the institutional setting

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

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

## 2. Institutional Setting

### 2.1 *Terrorism in Germany*

Our data on terror attacks in Germany, which we describe further in Section 3, come from the Global Terror Database (GTD, 2018) collected by the University of Maryland, College Park. These data indicate that there have been 232 attacks in Germany between 2010 and 2020. These attacks are geographically widespread, taking place in all 16 Federal states, and are mostly small and non-deadly. The average population of targeted municipalities is around 155,000 and, the attacks, on average, result in 1 injury and 0.2 casualties.

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.<sup>9</sup>

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

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

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

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

**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.<sup>10</sup>

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

## 2.2 *The Alternative für Deutschland*

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

The AfD was established in 2013 as a single-issue party focused on the Euro crisis and the Greek bailout. The party quickly gathered public attention as it won 4.7 percent of the seats in parliament in the Federal elections later that same year and 7.1 percent of the European parliament elections in 2014 (Cantoni, Hagemester, 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, Hagemester, 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.<sup>11</sup> One of its former members was also arrested as part of a 2022 attempt to overthrow the German government, execute the chancellor, and restore Germany’s imperial Reich.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, support for the party has only increased. After its hard right turn in 2015, the party won as much as 16 percent of the vote in state elections. Figure B.1 in Online Appendix B shows the average vote share for the AfD between 2013 and 2021 across all elections. As shown, its average vote share has increased from less than 5 percent in 2013 to close to 16 percent in 2021.

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

11. See this news piece (in German) for further details: [shorturl.at/zIS38](https://shorturl.at/zIS38). Accessed 15 December 2022.

12. See this story for further details: [shorturl.at/bILQ9](https://shorturl.at/bILQ9). Accessed 15 December 2022.

### 2.3 The German political landscape

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

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

The left end of the political spectrum is populated by two parties, aside from the SPD: *Die Grünen* (the Greens), which have been represented in parliament since 1983, and the socialist *Die Linke* (the Left party), which has been represented since 1990. The Greens have their roots in the post-materialist movements of the 1970s and emphasize environmental sustainability and women's rights (Probst 2013). The Left party, on the other hand, is the successor of the East German Communist Party, which had ruled the German Democratic Republic (GDR) until its dissolution in 1990.<sup>13</sup>

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

### 2.4 Elections in Germany

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

Our analysis indicates that successful acts of terror have a strong, positive influence on the AfD vote share only in state elections but not in Federal or European elections. We offer two explanations for this pattern.

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



The first is that the attacks in our sample are mostly small, local affairs. As such, they do not receive a great deal of national news coverage (on average less than 1 story per attack). What is more, successful attacks do not receive differentially more coverage than failed attacks at the national level. By contrast, the attacks in our sample receive more than 10 times the news coverage among local and regional publishers (on average 11 stories per attack) and successful attacks receive even more coverage at this level compared to failed attacks. This suggests that local acts of terror are most salient at the sub-national level which might explain why they also have such an effect on sub-national elections.

The second reason is that matters of internal security are, according to the German constitution, matters for state governments to decide. Specifically, in Article 30 of the German Constitution, the *Grundgesetz*, internal security is one of two political topics primarily organized and executed at the federal state level (Schnöckel 2018; Riedl 2018). This institutional feature of Germany is reflected in public expenditures on internal security: they are significantly higher at the state level (€14.619 billion in 2011) than they are at the federal level (€3.343 Billion in 2011) (Riedl 2018). Our results suggest, therefore, that at least a subset of voters is aware of the distribution of competencies between federal and state-level institutions as it relates to internal security and vote accordingly in response to terror.

### 3. Data

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

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

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

The GTD data include longitude and latitude coordinates of the city in which each attack

took place which we use to map each attack onto a German municipality.<sup>14</sup> This enables us to map the 232 attacks in our sample onto 124 unique municipalities.

Of the 124 municipalities targeted with an attack between 2010 and 2020, 33 were targeted more than once. We thus define a municipality as being hit with a successful attack if, at any point since 2010, it was hit with a successful attack, even if before or after that particular attack it was hit with a failed attack. A municipality is marked as being targeted with a failed attack if, at any point since 2010, it was targeted with one or more failed attacks but never with a successful attack. In our baseline analysis, the date of the first failed or first successful attack is the reference point from which we determine whether an election was pre- or post-attack.

The GTD provides information with regard to the identity of the target and, 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 the 232 attacks using our news data (described below) and the internet to obtain information on the identity of the perpetrator and the motives behind the attack. Doing so enables us to classify 217 of the 232 attacks. The majority of the attacks (116 of the 211, or 55 percent) are carried out in the name of right-wing extremist causes and 57 percent target non-Germans,<sup>15</sup> in line with the example illustrated in Section .

*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*).<sup>16</sup> We obtain municipality election results for all state elections that took place between 2013 and 2021 from the Regional Data Bank service of the German Federal Government.<sup>17</sup>

*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. The SOEP

14. 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.

15. If we consider only the 124 first attacks in each of the unique 124 municipalities targeted by an attack the figures are higher: 75 percent carried out by right-wing extremists and 75 percent target foreigners. Further details can be found in Table A.1 of the Online Appendix.

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

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/>. Accessed 14 December 2022

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.<sup>18</sup>

*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ):* The FAZ is a prominent newspaper in Germany that enjoys some of the highest nationwide circulation. We obtain its newspaper data in order to test whether successful attacks receive differential coverage compared to failed attacks. Specifically, for each of the attacks in our sample, we obtain all news stories that mention the city of the attack on the particular day of the attack and for the 10 days that follow the attack. This provides us with a database of some 105,000 unique news stories.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> In the end, we are left with around 350 stories.

*LexisNexis:* We use LexisNexis in order to collect news stories from national, regional and local publishers across Germany. This provides us with a sample of some 80,000 stories. For each of the attacks in our sample, we match them to stories from the LexisNexis data using the same three criteria we used for the FAZ data. Moreover, we identify all news stories from *local and regional* sources and exclude stories from national publishers. This leaves us with a sample of around 4,500 stories.<sup>21</sup>

*Election Manifestos:* Prior to each election, political parties release their election manifestos which outline their policy goals for the coming election cycle. We collect the election manifestos of all political parties for all state elections between 2013 and 2021 in order to carry out an analysis of the language different parties use in response to terror attacks. These documents are mostly taken from the non-profit organization *Abgeordnetenwatch* (Delegate Watch) and can be found here: <https://www.abgeordnetenwatch.de/>.<sup>22</sup>

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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.

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

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

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

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

#### 4. Establishing Balance

Our identification strategy relies on the assumption that the success of an attack is orthogonal to municipality characteristics. In this section, we test this assumption. To do so, we define the variable  $SUCCESS_i$  as one if municipality  $i$  was hit at least once with a successful attack since 2010 and zero if it was hit with at least one failed attack (and no successful attack) in that same time period.<sup>23</sup> We then regress a range of municipality characteristics measured in time periods *prior* to the attack on the success variable as shown in the following estimating equation:<sup>24</sup>

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

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

In Panel B, we compare the characteristics of all the attacks in our sample.<sup>25</sup> As shown, there is little distinguishable difference in weapon technologies or attack motivations, further underscoring the quasi-random nature of an attacks success.<sup>26</sup>

#### 5. Terror and the AfD

##### 5.1 Baseline Model

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

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

To isolate the effect of a terror attack on an election result, we interact the indicator  $SUCCESS_i$  with an indicator  $POST_{i,e,t}$  that is 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

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

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

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

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

variable,  $ELECTION_e$  that indicates a Federal, European Parliament or state election. European elections serve as the reference category. The vector  $\mathbf{X}_{i,e,t}$  includes all lower order terms of the triple interaction, but we omit the term  $SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,e,t}$  so that the coefficient of interest,  $\beta_1$ , is interpreted as the total marginal effect of a successful attack, compared to failed attacks, before and after a given election.

Because we study Federal, European and state elections in the same model, we include election-type by municipality fixed effects,  $\lambda_{ie}$ , so as to filter out potentially confounding effects specific to each municipality that might vary across different election types. We include municipality fixed effects,  $\delta_i$ , and year fixed effects,  $\alpha_t$  to capture, respectively, unobserved municipality or time heterogeneities and we cluster the standard errors,  $\epsilon_{i,t}$ , at the municipality level.<sup>27</sup>

## 5.2 Baseline Results

We report the results in Table 2. In Column 1, we run our baseline model and find that the AfD vote share increases by some 6 percentage points in state elections, a 36 percent increase relative to the sample mean and a 60 percent increase relative to the sample standard deviation. In Columns 2 to 10, we undertake a number of robustness exercises which we describe in turn.

In Column 2, we include the interaction between an east/west Germany indicator and year dummies so as to control for any time varying factors specific to east/west Germany that might influence both the number of attacks and the rise of the AfD. This is especially important when one considers that the AfD has stronger support in the east than in the west. In Column 3 we omit Berlin, a city-state that experienced some 25 percent of the attacks in the sample and which, in some ways, acts as an outlier. In Column 4, we interact an indicator for whether a municipality is classified as an urban district, a *kreisfreie Stadt*, with year dummies so as to control for potentially confounding effects of dense urban centers. In Column 5, we control for the weapon used in the attack and in Column 6, we include the number of days between a given election and the date of the first attack so as to account for the wide variation in an attacks timing relative to an election. In Column 7 we omit the 33 municipalities that experienced more than one attack and in Column 8 we omit those attacks that were part of a larger, coordinated attack and thus had greater likelihood of success.<sup>28</sup> Finally, in Column 9, we include all municipality characteristics presented in Panel A of Table 1 as controls (except for political characteristics). Specifically, for each municipality, we measure the *pre-attack* mean of each characteristic and interact this measure with year dummies, thus allowing municipality characteristics other than

27. 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.

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

terror to differentially affect the AfD vote share post-attack. Across all these specifications and samples, we find consistent patterns: successful terror attacks lead to differential increases for the AfD in state elections. The coefficient of interest is stable across all columns and is precisely estimated. By contrast, we see no clear patterns for Federal or European Parliament elections. The coefficients are much smaller, are not distinguishable from zero and display no clear sign.

In Column 10 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. We also include all municipality characteristics presented in Panel A of Table 1 as controls, again by interacting the pre-terror average of each variable with year dummies. As shown, the result for state elections are precise and positive and similar in terms of magnitude (especially when compared to the sample mean) as the baseline, suggesting that attacks have spillover effects in neighboring municipalities.<sup>29</sup>

### 5.3 Attack Type Heterogeneity

We examine whether our baseline estimates display heterogeneous effects according to the motives of the attacker. As mentioned in Section 3, information regarding the motives of the attack is available in 217 of the 232 attacks in our sample. When we consider the first attack in each of the 124 unique municipalities that experienced an attack, we are able to identify motives for 115 of the 124 attacks. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of these attacks—86 out of the 115, some 75 percent—are motivated by right-wing extremist causes. This leaves us with little variation in order to identify heterogeneous effects for attacks other than right-wing attacks. Nonetheless, in Figure 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. We also estimate the baseline effect on the sample of attacks that are non-right wing.<sup>30</sup> As shown, we find that the baseline attack is driven almost entirely by right-wing attacks and by attacks that target foreigners. This suggests that the AfD benefits from acts of terror which, by and large, are perpetrated by right-wing causes. In the sections that follow, we explore why this might be the case.

29. Although we control for many pre-terror characteristics in this regression, the municipalities in this sample—that is, all the municipalities in a targeted county—are *not* balanced and, as such, these particular results should be interpreted with caution.

30. These include left-wing attacks and Islamist attacks.

## 6. Terrorism and Turnout

We begin by investigating the effect of terror on voter turnout as well as on the vote share for other parties.<sup>31</sup> We estimate the same model presented in equation 2 and present the results for the triple interaction for state elections in Figure 2.<sup>32</sup>

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

In the lower panel of Figure 2, we examine the extent to which these changes in turnout affect each party's performance as measured by the share of the vote they win. The AfD bar repeats the baseline effect while the remaining bars show the results for other parties. Aside from the SPD, which experiences a 3 percentage point increase in state elections as a result of terror, no other major party in Germany experiences a significant increase in vote shares in response to terror attacks.<sup>33</sup>

## 7. Terrorism and Political Attitudes

In this section, we examine the extent to which successful terror affects the political attitudes, preferences and behaviors of individuals. To do so, we use data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), a panel of individuals and households observed over time. The advantage of a longitudinal study like this is that it enables us to study the political attitudes and

31. Though election data is available for years prior to 2013, we limit our sample to elections that took place between 2013 and 2021 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.

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

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

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

### 7.1 Balance in the SOEP

We begin by checking for balance across a range of individual characteristics (measured in time periods pre-attack) between people who live in municipalities that experience successful or failed attacks. For each person, we regress different individual characteristics on the variable,  $SUCCESS_i$ , defined as before. We present the results in Figure 4. As shown, there are very little distinguishable differences in socio-economic characteristics between people living in municipalities hit with successful or failed attacks.<sup>34</sup> This increases our confidence that successful acts of terror lead to differences in voting outcomes because they affect political preferences and attitudes and not because they target different types of people.

### 7.2 Terrorism and individual political attitudes

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

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

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

Table 3 presents our findings. The coefficients in Columns 1 and 2 indicate that, after successful attacks, individuals not only identify as more right-wing on a left-right political ideology scale but as more hard-right. This ideological shift is also reflected in the partisan

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



preferences individuals hold. In Columns 3 to 5, for example, we find that successful attacks lead people to identify more with the AfD, less with the CDU (though not quantitatively significant) and significantly more with the SPD, results that are directly in line with our aggregate results on vote shares. Although the coefficient for the SPD is larger than that of the AfD, the effect relative to the sample mean is much larger for the AfD than it is for the SPD, again in line with our baseline findings. Interestingly, the coefficient in Column 6 suggests that, following a successful attack, individuals participate significantly more in politics *at the local level*, patterns consistent with our findings that suggest terror matters only for state elections but not for European or Federal elections.

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

### 7.3 Heterogeneous effects: Voter migration and political activation

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

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

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

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

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

In equation 5, we investigate whether successful terror has differential effects for people who are politically active compared to those who are inactive. The variable  $ACTIVE_p$  is thus defined as 1 if, in all the surveys that *precede* an attack, an individual reports participating in local politics frequently and it is defined as zero for individuals who, pre-attack, report their participation in local politics as seldom or never. Both estimating equations include all lower order terms,  $X_{p,i,t}$ , and all other terms are defined as before.<sup>35</sup>

We present our results in Table 4. In Columns 1 to 5, we find that, across the board, people who are *not* politically committed to a certain party all tend to prefer the AfD after experiencing a successful attack. Moreover, people who display partisan commitment to the SPD (the main rival to the CDU), the FDP and the Greens show no preference for the AfD in response to terror, suggesting that voters do not migrate from these parties to the AfD. By contrast, people who are committed to the CDU prior to an attack display significant preference for the AfD after experiencing a successful attack, suggesting that voter migration from the the main ruling party to the AfD does, in fact, drive some of our results. Similar patterns are found for the Left party in Germany (Column 4): in fact, the coefficient is larger for committed partisans than it is for uncommitted partisans, suggesting that acts of terror lead to significant voter migration from the Left party to the AfD. In Column 6, we present our estimate of  $\gamma_1$  from equation 5. The coefficients indicate that politically inactive individuals significantly prefer the AfD following a successful attack whereas the opposite is true for politically active people, suggesting that the political activation effects of terror have a partisan slant.

Together, the results in this subsection suggest that the strong demand for the AfD in response to terror appears to be driven both by the migration of voters from the CDU and the Left party as well as by the political activation of previously inactive people.

#### 7.4 Heterogeneous effects: Cultural conflict

Norris and Inglehart (2019) explain that groups in society who are “left behind” by globalization may react defensively to shocks that undermine security — including terrorism — by adopting more extreme ideological positions. To investigate whether local acts of terror prompt such a reaction, we test for heterogeneous effects of terrorism on political attitudes along relevant dimensions of political conflict, including education, income and employment, gender and age. Specifically, we study three outcomes from the SOEP: whether a person prefers the AfD; whether they prefer the SPD; and whether they participate in local politics. For each outcome, we estimate  $\beta_1$  from equation 3 in samples split by the relevant dimension of political conflict and plot the corresponding coefficients in Figure 5. We also estimate a model that includes a triple interaction,  $SUCCESS_i \times POST_{i,t} \times COVARIATE_p$  (lower order terms included as well), and plot the coefficient on the triple interaction in order to understand whether the coefficients in the split samples are significantly different from one another.

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

We document strong heterogeneous effects along one dimension: education. Individuals without university education respond differentially to successful terror by supporting the AfD. For those with university education, the opposite is true: they differentially support the SPD in response to terror. In both cases, the differences between university and non-university educated are quantitatively significant. Interestingly, we also find that education helps drive our results on political participation. While individuals in both samples respond to terror by participating significantly more in local politics, the effect is significantly larger for higher-educated people. These results are directly in line with Gethin, Martínez-Toledano, and Piketty (2021) who document the gradual process of “disconnection” between the effects of income and education on voting outcomes: Whereas in the 50s and 60s, support for left-leaning parties was strongest among lower educated (and lower income) voters, low-educated voters now tend to support right-wing, anti-migration parties while high-educated voters tend to vote for the left.

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

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

## 8. Terrorism and Media

In this section, we test another channel through which successful terror might influence election outcomes: media coverage. To this purpose, we collect news stories from two sources: the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), a prominent national publisher in Germany, and Lexis Nexis which collects stories from a range of publishers and which includes regional and local news reports. For each terror attack in our sample, we first aggregate the number of stories that cover it in order to understand whether successful attacks are (a) more *likely* to receive coverage and/or (b) whether they receive greater *quantity* of coverage than failed attacks. Then, for each story that is linked to a terror attack in our sample, we analyze the extent to which success influences the *tone* of coverage, as measured by sentiment scores, and the *content* of coverage, as measured by the frequency of certain key words. Our results are presented in Table 5.

In Panel A, we present results from regional and local news reports collected from Lexis Nexis. In Column 1 we find that successful attacks are no more *likely* than failed attacks to receive coverage. However, in Column 2 we find that successful attacks, on average, receive differentially *more* coverage: compared the failed attacks, successful attacks receive around 8

more news reports among regional and local news sources (a 73 percent increase relative to the sample mean of 11 stories per attack). The results in Columns 1 and 2 thus suggest that successful attacks are salient in the news media because they are covered more intensively and not because failed attacks fail to receive coverage.<sup>36</sup> In Columns 3 and 4, we find that news stories that cover successful attacks have significantly worse sentiments, both in the story title and body, suggesting that success not only influences the quantity of coverage but the *tone* of coverage. Finally, we investigate the extent to which successful terror attacks influence the *content* of news reports. Stories that cover successful attacks speak significantly less about right-wing populism and crime but significantly more about Islam, a result that is particularly noteworthy given that the majority of the attacks in our sample are motivated by right-wing causes and are targeted against migrants. We also find that news coverage at the sub-national level uses words related to terrorism significantly more in response to successful attacks. This suggests that local and regional media coverage differentially label successful and failed attacks at terrorist events.

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

## 9. Terrorism and Political Parties

As a final step in our analysis, we examine the language employed by political parties in their election manifestos in state elections in response to terror. We thus collect the election manifestos (i.e. the *Wahlprogramm*) of all political parties in state elections from 2013 to 2021 and we also collect the 2009 Federal election manifesto of the CDU which we use as a reference to compare shifts in language. We digitize the text of all such manifestos in order to identify the number of trigger words per 10,000 words related to topics such as migration, terrorism and crime.<sup>37</sup> For each party,  $p$ , we calculate the difference in the number of trigger words per 10,000 words,  $\Delta TW$ , 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:

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

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

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

In this model,  $\sum_s SUCCESS_{s,t-1}$  measures the total number of successful attacks in federal state  $s$  in the year prior to a state election in year  $t$ . The parameter  $\pi_1$  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  $\pi_2$  thus captures the *level* difference in trigger words used between the various parties and the 2009 CDU *regardless* of violence at the state level.<sup>38</sup> The coefficient of interest, therefore, is  $\pi_3$ . 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,  $\alpha_t$ , state fixed effects,  $\zeta_s$  and its standard errors are clustered at the level of the state.<sup>39</sup>

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

We report our results in Figure 6. Each patch reports our result for  $\pi_3$  which we estimate for each party in samples split by trigger word.<sup>40</sup> The patches are colored according to the sign of the coefficient (negative red, positive blue) and shaded according to precision (lightest 90 percent, darkest 99 percent). The patterns are clear. In response to terror at the state level, the AfD uses differentially more trigger words related to issues like crime, immigrant naturalization and integration. All other parties either do not respond or respond in the exact opposite direction as the AfD, using less trigger words on these same subjects. Interestingly, the word terror receives no special mention, neither by the AfD nor by other parties, in response to terror. The figure thus provides some suggestive evidence that parties respond to differently to terrorism by realigning the issues on which they speak most about in their election documents.

38. Although this parameter is subsumed by state fixed effects, we model it explicitly so as to underscore the additional effect that  $\pi_3$  captures on trigger words as a result of acts of terror at the state level.

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

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

## 10. Conclusion

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

One striking feature of our results is that a right-wing, populist party like the AfD benefits from acts of terror which, by and large, were carried out by perpetrators motivated by right-wing extremist causes, including Neo-Nazi attacks, and who, by and large, targeted foreigners. This appears to be the result of the ability of the AfD to use acts of terror to support its own narrative. That the AfD speaks more about crime, integration and immigrant naturalization following attacks rather than terrorism speaks to this point. It also seems to reflect the powerful ways in which the media can shape human perceptions: not only do successful attacks receive more news coverage at the local level than failed attacks, news stories that cover successful attacks make use of significantly different vocabulary, highlighting such issues as terrorism and Islam and using less words related to right-wing populism. Together, our results suggest the powerful role that things like narrative can play in shaping perceptions as well as political and social attitudes and preferences.

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## 11. Figures

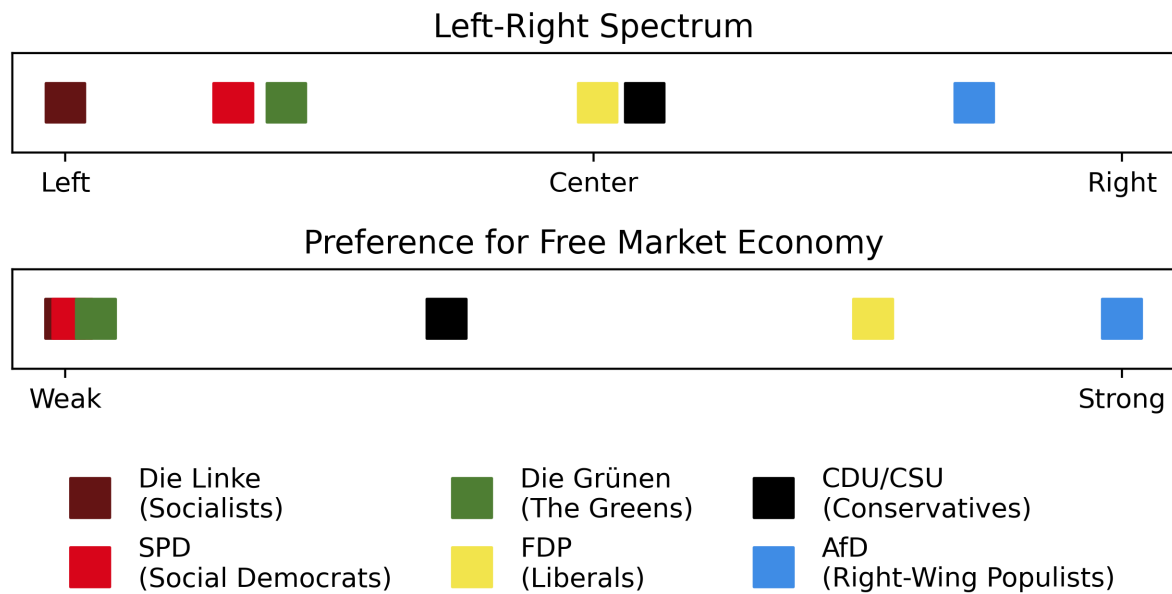


Figure 1  
The Political Spectrum in Germany

**Note:** This figure shows the six major political parties in Germany according to their positions on a left-right policy scale proposed by Lehmann et al. (2022).

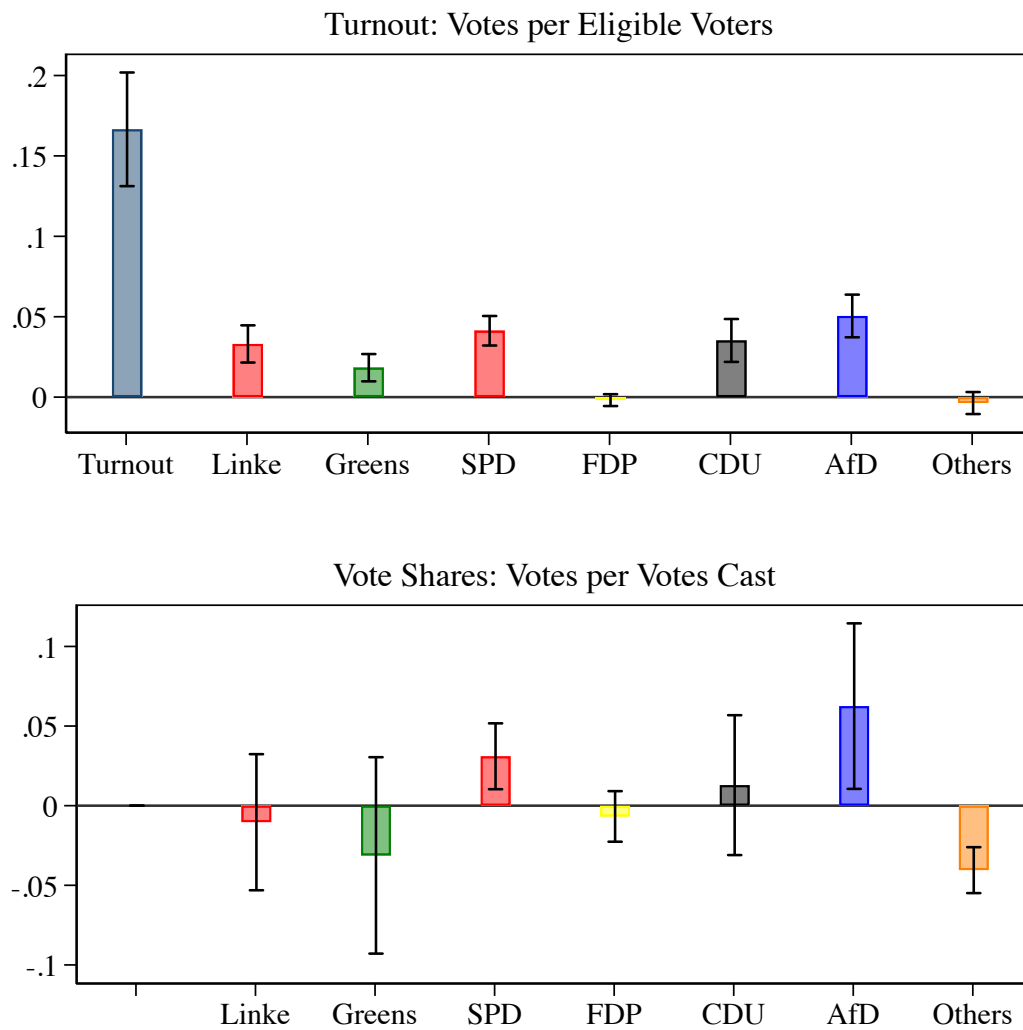


Figure 2  
Terror, Turnout and Other Parties

**Note:** In the top panel, we run our baseline regression specification using voter turnout, as measured by the number of votes cast per eligible voter, as the main outcome variable. We first study overall municipality turnout and then party-specific turnout as labeled along the  $x$ -axis. In the bottom panel, we run the baseline when using party-specific vote shares as the outcome, again as labeled along the  $x$ -axis. For each regression, we report only the coefficient on the triple interaction between *SUCCESS*, *POST* and *STATE ELECTIONS*. All regressions include municipality and year fixed effects, election type by municipality fixed effects and all lower order interactions. Standard errors are clustered at the municipality level (103 clusters). Confidence intervals are drawn at 95%.

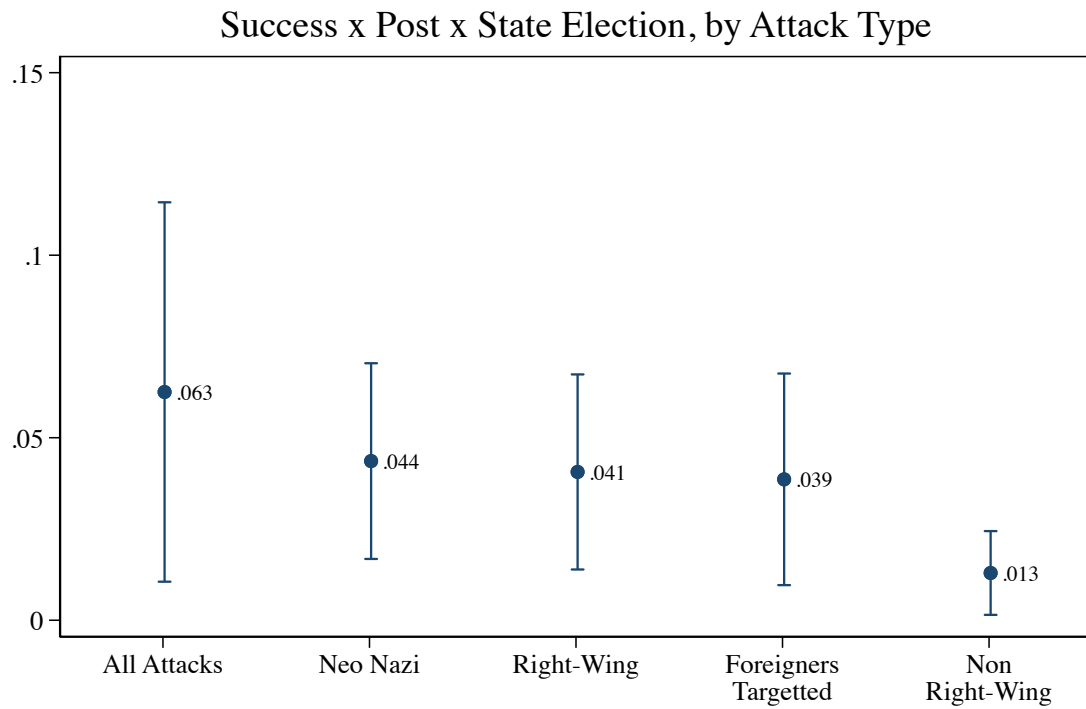


Figure 3  
Heterogeneous effects according to attack type or target

**Note:** In this Figure, we plot  $\beta_1$  from our baseline estimating model as specified in equation 2 in samples split by attack type or attack target. Confidence intervals are drawn at 95 percent.

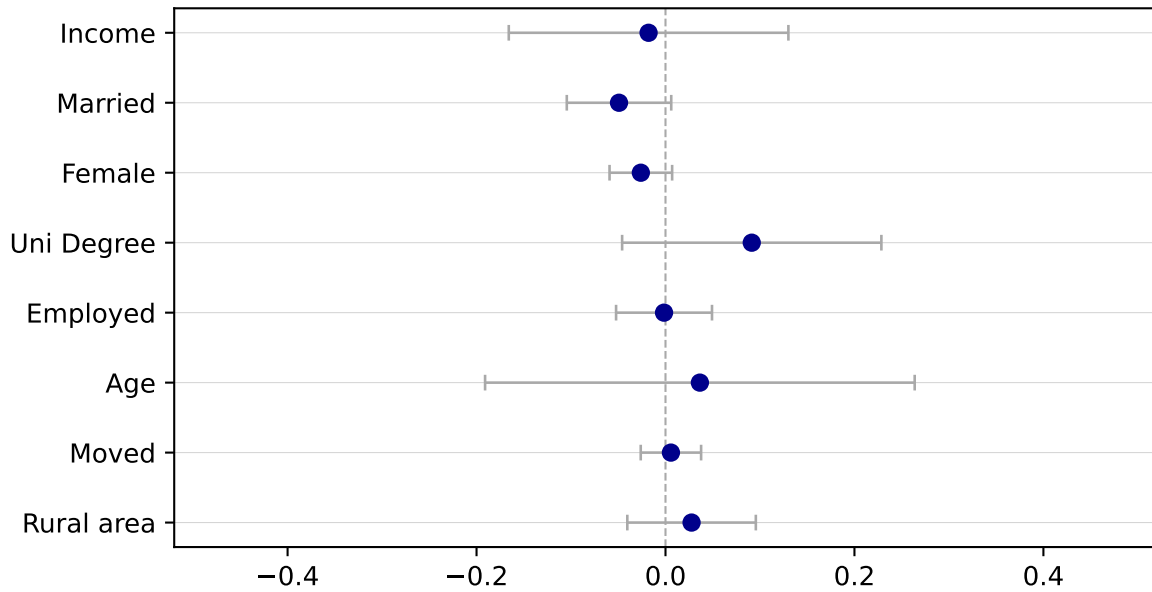


Figure 4  
Individual characteristics of people in successful v. failed municipalities

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

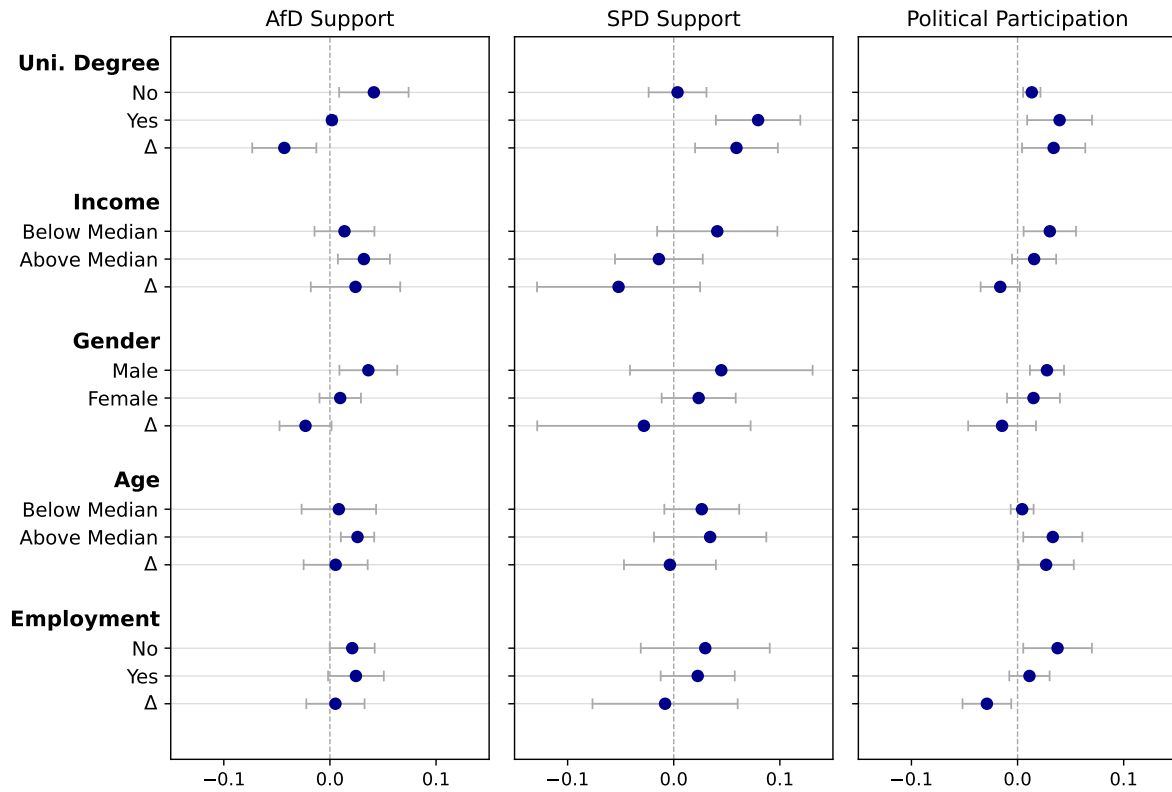


Figure 5  
Political attitudes in samples split by various socio-economic variables

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

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

Figure 6

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

**Note:** This figure plots  $\pi_3$  from estimating equation 6: It measures the differences in each trigger word used by each party in its state level election manifesto in states with more or less acts of terror relative to the 2009 CDU Federal election manifesto. Colored patches indicate statistical significance for positive (red) and negative (blue) effects: lightest shade indicates precision at the 90 percent level and darkest shade indicates 99 percent significance.

## 12. Tables

Table 1  
Characteristics in Successful v. Failed Municipalities and Attacks

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

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





Table 2  
Terror Attacks and AfD Vote Share

|                                     | (1)<br>Baseline<br>Effect | (2)<br>East<br>× Year | (3)<br>Omit<br>Berlin | (4)<br>Urban<br>× Year | (5)<br>Weapon<br>× Year | (6)<br>Attack<br>Timing | (7)<br>Omit<br>Multiple | (8)<br>Omit<br>Coordinated | (9)<br>All<br>Controls | (10)<br>Spillover<br>Effects |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Success × Post × Federal            | 0.0005<br>(0.0198)        | 0.0225<br>(0.0144)    | 0.0071<br>(0.0213)    | -0.0068<br>(0.0169)    | -0.0066<br>(0.0207)     | 0.0005<br>(0.0198)      | 0.0050<br>(0.0217)      | 0.0030<br>(0.0200)         | 0.0252<br>(0.0191)     | 0.0564***<br>(0.0087)        |
| Success × Post × European           | -0.0116<br>(0.0251)       | 0.0226<br>(0.0177)    | -0.0102<br>(0.0290)   | -0.0166<br>(0.0208)    | -0.0098<br>(0.0264)     | -0.0116<br>(0.0251)     | -0.0113<br>(0.0288)     | -0.0104<br>(0.0253)        | 0.0096<br>(0.0209)     | 0.0462***<br>(0.0061)        |
| Success × Post × State              | 0.0625**<br>(0.0263)      | 0.0501***<br>(0.0132) | 0.0671***<br>(0.0255) | 0.0589**<br>(0.0228)   | 0.0335***<br>(0.0096)   | 0.0733**<br>(0.0308)    | 0.0477***<br>(0.0151)   | 0.0715**<br>(0.0307)       | 0.0549***<br>(0.0128)  | 0.0692***<br>(0.0091)        |
| <i>N</i>                            | 734                       | 734                   | 664                   | 734                    | 723                     | 734                     | 534                     | 664                        | 528                    | 4725                         |
| Clusters                            | 124                       | 124                   | 114                   | 124                    | 123                     | 124                     | 91                      | 112                        | 92                     | 801                          |
| $\bar{Y}_{State}$<br>[ <i>S.D</i> ] | .17<br>[.1]               | .17<br>[.1]           | .19<br>[.1]           | .17<br>[.1]            | .18<br>[.1]             | .17<br>[.1]             | .19<br>[.11]            | .17<br>[.1]                | .18<br>[.1]            | .2<br>[.1]                   |

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

Table 3  
Terrorism and Individual Political Attitudes and Preferences

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

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

Table 4  
Political Commitment, Political Activation and the AfD

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

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



Table 5  
Media Coverage of Successful Terror Attacks

|                       | Articles         |                    | Sentiment            |                     | Topics                 |                   |                      |                     |                   |
|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
|                       | (1)              | (2)                | (3)                  | (4)                 | (5)                    | (6)               | (7)                  | (8)                 | (9)               |
|                       | Found            | Count              | Title                | Body                | Right-wing<br>Populism | Migration         | Crime                | Islam               | Terror            |
| <i>Panel A: Lexis</i> |                  |                    |                      |                     |                        |                   |                      |                     |                   |
| Success               | .0756<br>(.1754) | 8.246**<br>(4.015) | -.0731***<br>(.0265) | -.0423**<br>(.0198) | -.6227***<br>(.1158)   | -.0508<br>(.0382) | -.9067***<br>(.2266) | .6953***<br>(.0901) | .1789*<br>(.0994) |
| Land × Year FE        | ✓                | ✓                  |                      |                     |                        |                   |                      |                     |                   |
| Year FE               |                  |                    | ✓                    | ✓                   | ✓                      | ✓                 | ✓                    | ✓                   | ✓                 |
| City FE               |                  |                    | ✓                    | ✓                   | ✓                      | ✓                 | ✓                    | ✓                   | ✓                 |
| Publisher FE          |                  |                    | ✓                    | ✓                   | ✓                      | ✓                 | ✓                    | ✓                   | ✓                 |
| <i>N</i>              | 232              | 232                | 4,683                | 4,683               | 4,683                  | 4,683             | 4,683                | 4,683               | 4,683             |
| Clusters              | 124              | 124                | 1,303                | 1,303               | 1,303                  | 1,303             | 1,303                | 1,303               | 1,303             |
| $\bar{Y}$             | 0.642            | 11.125             | -0.091               | -0.114              | 0.544                  | 0.440             | 1.162                | 0.314               | 0.607             |
| <i>Panel A: FAZ</i>   |                  |                    |                      |                     |                        |                   |                      |                     |                   |
| Success               | .0241<br>(.1531) | -.017<br>(.3378)   | -.0251<br>(.042)     | .0338<br>(.029)     | -.2848<br>(.212)       | .1211<br>(.0963)  | -.4963*<br>(.2774)   | .3178***<br>(.1052) | .1145<br>(.1023)  |
| Land × Year FE        | ✓                | ✓                  | ✓                    | ✓                   | ✓                      | ✓                 | ✓                    | ✓                   | ✓                 |
| <i>N</i>              | 186              | 186                | 338                  | 338                 | 338                    | 338               | 338                  | 338                 | 338               |
| $\bar{Y}$             | 0.457            | 0.828              | -0.053               | -0.105              | 0.715                  | 0.576             | 1.229                | 0.298               | 0.515             |
| Unit of Observation   | Attack           |                    |                      |                     | Story                  |                   |                      |                     |                   |

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

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

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## A. Terrorism in Germany

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

### A.1 Summary statistics

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

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

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

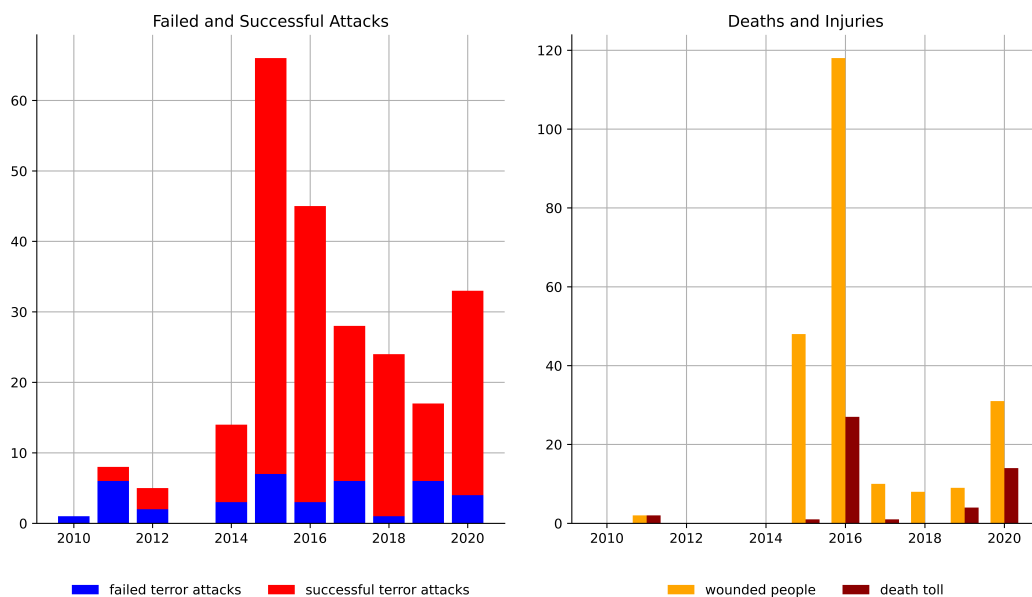


Figure A.1  
Frequency and intensity of attacks



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

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

## B. The AfD in Germany

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

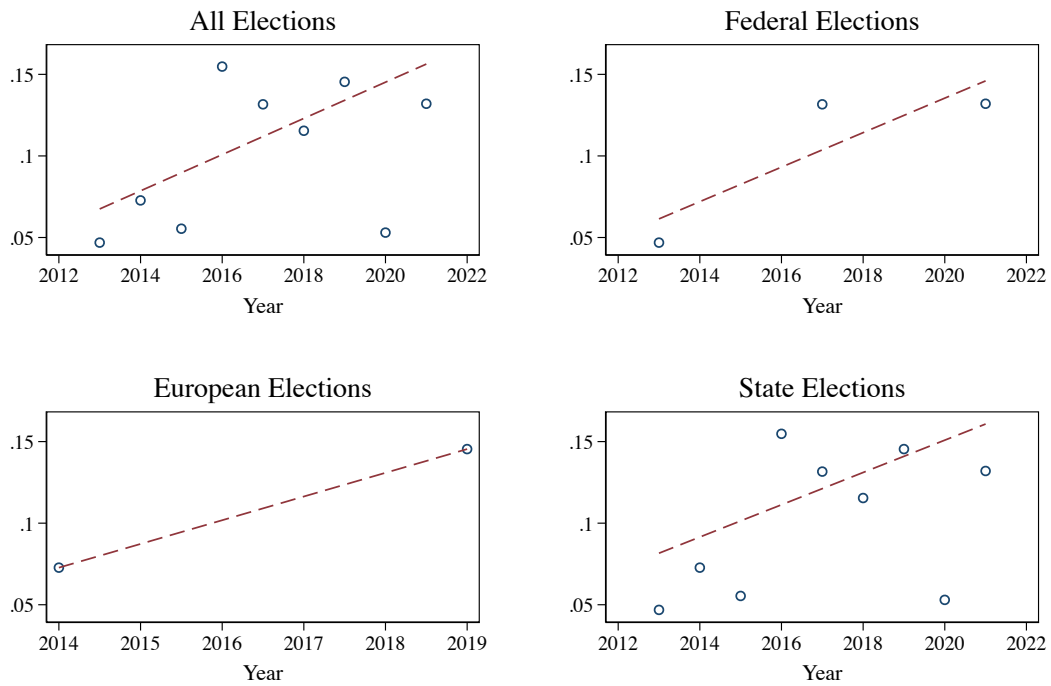


Figure B.1  
Average AfD Vote Share Across All Elections in Germany

### C. 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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup>

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.

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41. 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.

42. 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 $\text{Success} \times \text{Post}$ |                       |
|--------------|--|-----------------------|
|              | (1)  | (2)                   |
|              | Baseline   | DiD Imputation        |
| $\beta$      | 0.0533***<br>(0.0138)                              |                       |
| $\tau$       |  | 0.0559***<br>(0.0035) |
| $\delta_i$   | ✓  | ✓                     |
| $\alpha_t$   | ✓  | ✓                     |
| Observations | 64   | 53                    |
| Estimator    | reghdfe  | did_imputation        |

*Notes:* This table reports the coefficient of  $\text{SUCCESS} \times \text{POST}$  run on the sample of state elections in a model that includes municipality and year fixed effects, denoted  $\delta_i$  and  $\alpha_t$ , respectively. In Column 1, the coefficient,  $\beta$ , is estimated via using `reghdfe`. In Column 2, the coefficient,  $\tau$ , is estimated using using the imputation estimator of Borusyak, Jaravel, and Spiess (2021). . \*  $p < 0.1$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$