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**You failed!**  
**Government Satisfaction and Party Preferences**  
**Facing Islamist Terrorism**

Anna Nowak

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*Anna Nowak*

**Abstract**

International crises like dramatic terror attacks leave their mark on society in various ways. According to the existing literature, some of these consequences include two seemingly conflicting responses: increasing as well as decreasing support for the incumbent government. To make sense of this seeming contradiction, this study combines these observations in one empirical framework. We investigate the effects of Islamist terrorism on citizens' evaluation of the national government by logistic regression analyses using data from the European Social Survey (ESS) for Germany from 2014 to 2017. Our analyses demonstrate that support for the government significantly increases in the aftermath of Islamist terror attacks. However, the intensity of such support decreases with repeated exposure to terror attacks, and these effects even reverse when a certain level of terror is reached. Further, we find that radical right parties benefit from the issues accentuated by terrorism.

**JEL-Codes:** H12, H56, D72, D74

**Keywords:** terrorism, crisis, rally effect, party preferences

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University of Münster  
CIW – Center for Interdisciplinary Economics  
Scharnhorststrasse 100  
D-48151 Münster

phone: +49-251/83-25329 (Office)  
e-Mail: [clementine.kessler@uni-muenster.de](mailto:clementine.kessler@uni-muenster.de)  
Internet: [www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/ciw](http://www.wiwi.uni-muenster.de/ciw)

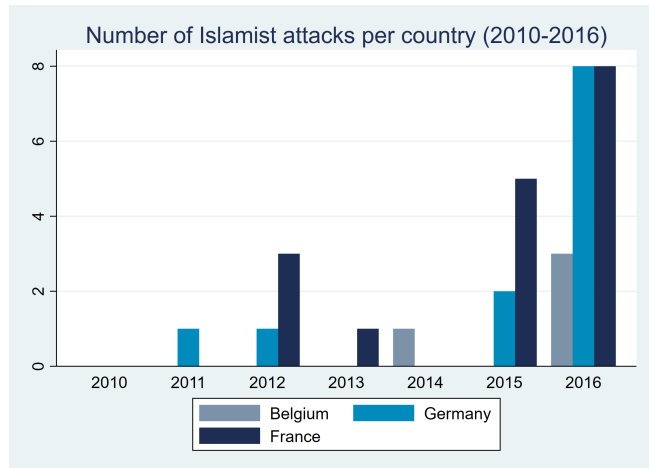
# 1 Introduction

Looking at the numbers of recent terror attacks in Europe, one can see a clear increase in the threat due to terrorism in the last years (figure 1). While serious terror attacks were almost nonexistent previously, a sudden upsurge of Islamist attacks can be observed from 2014 on. This exposure to serious international terror attacks is rather new to most Western European countries, whereas many other countries around the world have been facing transnational terrorism for long periods. Referring to the latest terror attacks in Europe, several attacks occurred in France, Belgium and Germany in 2015 and 2016. While France and Belgium have been dealing with locally operating terror cells for some decades, Germany has almost no experience with either Islamist terrorism or terror cells.<sup>1</sup>

Much research has already shown that such a threat has enormous effects on society. Terror affects the public and has psychological, economic and also political consequences. Psychological consequences like fear, panic, endangered well-being and heightened insecurity are reactions that are easily comprehensible in the aftermath of terror incidents (Krueger 2008). Such reactions induce a wide range of further consequences like losses in tourism sectors (Bassil 2014, Korstanje & Clayton 2012, Saha & Yap 2013) or insecurities in stock markets and investment (Kollias et al. 2011, Chesney et al. 2011, Nikkinen & Vähämaa 2010, Younas 2015, Enders et al. 2006).

Beyond the psychological consequences, terrorism is known to affect political dimensions as well. Several studies have observed that citizens' support and approval rates for their national governments increase in the aftermath of international crises or the exposure to terror. Driven by a desire for security, people affiliate with their close social environment or their leaders, since they hope that these individuals will provide the security they need; this is known as the rally-around-the-flag phenomenon (Mueller 1970,

Figure 1: Sum of Islamist attacks per country since 2010



<sup>1</sup> Compare Nesser (2008) for further details about Islamist terror attacks in Europe.

Lambert et al. 2010, Feinstein 2016, Chowanietz 2010, Baker & Oneal 2001, Chatagnier 2012, Lai & Reiter 2005). However, there is also opposing evidence that does not line up with these findings. Other studies have shown that the experience of terror attacks causes citizens to criticize governments, decreases the stability of governments or may even lead to the loss of elections (Bali 2007, Gassebner et al. 2011).

In light of these seemingly conflicting findings, the following study will analyze the political consequences of the latest Islamist terror attacks in Europe and aims to describe the nature of terrorism's effects on society. Our paper adds to the existing research as it systematically includes both previously discussed ideas in a larger and more comprehensive framework. Moreover, we will extend the current literature by going a step further and linking the existing outcomes to observations of the contemporary political landscape in Europe. This may answer whether the latest series of Islamist terror attacks plays a significant role in the observed rising influence of radical right parties.

In order to do so, our paper is organized as follows: We start by providing an overview of the relevant results regarding the political consequences of international terrorism. From this, we derive our hypotheses and argue why we believe that the latest terror attacks influence party preferences, especially those for radical right parties. Based on that, we introduce our data on the latest Islamist terror attacks in Germany and describe our empirical strategy. Finally, we present and discuss our findings. Our analyses show that we do indeed observe both of the previously discussed effects. We find that support for the national government increases in the aftermath of Islamist terror attacks. However, the regressions clearly show that the intensity of such support decreases with repeated exposure to terror attacks and that support may even reverse when a certain level of terror is reached. We also show that radical-right parties benefit from an increasing level of terror attacks.

## 2 Foundations and Hypotheses

Indeed, the threat and fear of terrorism has increased noticeably in the last years. Yet, previous studies do not provide unambiguous findings that help to qualify the political consequences of the latest terror attacks in Europe. To date, studies have chiefly reported two types of consequences: increasing or decreasing support for the national government.

Increased governmental support in the aftermath of terror has been investigated by many studies. Several theories and empirical analyses regarding increased support rates are based on psychological reasoning. Psychological findings show that people desire security, especially when they feel threatened. When experiencing severe terror attacks in their home country, this need for security induces people to affiliate more strongly with their family, friends and other ingroup-members. This can also include their neighborhood or country. People look for security from their nation's leaders, whom they consider to have sufficient power to guarantee citizens' safety (Lambert et al. 2010). Hence, facing severe threats can strengthen the ties among citizens and between citizens and their leaders.

Regarding citizens' strengthened ties, Feinstein (2016) found that rallies occur as a symbolic act to strengthen the international status of the citizens' nation. This can be the case when the public perceives a rally as an opportunity to present the nation as a leader in the world or enhance its national honor. Mueller (1970) was one of the first to formulate these ideas with concrete regard for leaders' popularity during international crises. He stressed that people may support their government in order to strengthen and defend their country against an external threat, and this support works to subdue the country's traditional partisan politics; this is commonly known as the "rally-around-the-flag-response". Mueller (1970) argued that such rallies are caused by dramatic international events that directly involve the country and its leaders. This rally-phenomenon has been found empirically in many contexts. It has been shown that different kinds of international crises increase incumbents' popularity or citizens' institutional as well as interpersonal trust (Arvanitidis et al. 2016, Geys & Qari 2017, Chowanietz 2010). A typical example of such a rally is the reaction of political elites in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001. Many members of the US Congress showed consent for national interests and supported George W. Bush's government. His popularity was unusually high in the months succeeding the attack (Chowanietz 2010). Further studies have added to this by showing that rallies occur with different intensities depending on factors like the government's crisis management, trust in the government, the dispute's nature itself, media coverage of the events or contemporary economic circumstances (Baker & Oneal 2001, Chatagnier 2012, Lai & Reiter 2005). All these findings support the rally-around-the-flag theory and describe facets of the phenomenon of increasing governmental support as a consequence of severe terror attacks.

However, supporting the government is not the only effect of such dramatic terror-related events; some findings seem to oppose the rally theory. These studies instead advocate that the experience of terror decreases support for national governments. For example, there is empirical evidence that terror destabilizes coalitions within cabinets and makes cabinet failure more likely, in particular when there is little initial experience with terror (Gassebner et al. 2011, Bali 2007). Associated with such observations, Chovanietz (2010) indicates that criticism from opposition parties happens more often when terror attacks occur repeatedly. Moreover, supporting such observations, further researchers have shown that terrorism affects support for political parties differently. Governments composed of right-wing orientated parties have been observed to perform better in holding office than governments that are made up of more left-wing parties (Williams et al. 2013). In line with that, evidence indicates that terror increases support for parties from the right bloc (Berrebi & Klor 2006, Berrebi & Klor 2008). It appears that terror attacks do not strengthen the ties among society and their leaders in every case. An example of how terror attacks might cause effects that counter the classical rally theory can be seen in the political consequences of the Madrid bombing attacks in March 2004, when Islamist terrorists attacked railway stations. The attacks took place just three days before the Spanish national elections, and the then-incumbents lost their seats to the opposition. Research suggests that this electoral upset was predominantly caused by the terror event (Bali 2007).

Further aspects should be considered when investigating the impacts of terror attacks. One such issue is strongly connected to Issue Voting Theory, according to which people vote depending on their individual preferences on political topics (Carmines & Stimson 1980, Kiewiet 1981). Islamist terror highlights issues connected to refugees and immigration, safety, culture, religion or the Islam as religious opponent; these are chiefly core issues of radical right parties (Golder 2016, Rooduijn et al. 2017). Voting for such parties is, according to recent empirical findings, often associated with an individual's national pride, perceived ethnic threats or general political distrust (Arzheimer 2012, Lucassen & Lubbers 2012, Werts & Lubbers 2012, Lubbers & Coenders 2017). Hence, one can expect that radical right parties profit from the issue salience that is increased by terror. Looking at the contemporary European political landscape, one clearly observes the rising influence of radical right parties across various countries. Taking into account Issue Voting Theory, it appears important to consider the role of Islamist terrorism in this development. Psychological findings that show people may turn against non-group members when they are confronted with external threats like Islamist terror support this

notion even further (Huddy et al. 2005). Here, the suggestions of Issue Voting Theory do not support the theoretical predictions suggested by the rally-around-the flag concept.

A second aspect to consider is the idea that the repetition of dramatic terror events may matter. There is evidence that upon repeated terror attacks, governments receive increased criticism from other political elites (Chowanietz 2010). The previously described psychological argument that people seek for security points out that this may not only apply for opposition parties but citizens and voters, too. Furthermore, findings indicating that voters also tend to prefer right-wing parties have been found in Israel, a country that has far more terror experience than Europe (Berrebi & Klor 2006, Berrebi & Klor 2008). Hence, repeated terror attacks may not only prompt the opposition parties to criticize the government, it may also affect the electorate. Following the psychological reasoning from above (Lambert et al. 2010), the repeated exposure to terror in the one's country may create the impression that the government is no longer able to provide the required safety. Based on the findings from countries with significant terror experience, this may even strengthen radical right parties.

Taken together, while the rally theory and some empirical evidence indicate that citizens show increasing support for the government after severe shocks like Islamist terror attacks, other theoretical suggestions and observations intimate that decreasing support for the government is conceivable, too. Yet, the presented and seemingly conflicting findings may not necessarily contradict each other. In order to interrelate these findings with the preceding arguments, we propose the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1.** Support for the government significantly increases in the aftermath of Islamist terror attacks in Germany.

**Hypothesis 2.** With repeated exposure to terror attacks, the rally effects do also repeat, but their sizes decrease.

**Hypothesis 3a.** When a certain level of terror is reached, the rally effects reverse and criticism of the government prevails.

**Hypothesis 3b.** Then, radical right parties are the ones that benefit from issues accentuated by terrorism.

Previous analyses have chiefly dealt with one of the two conceivable consequences; as such, no study systematically incorporated these partially conflicting ideas into a more comprehensive framework to analyze the political consequences of terror for democratic societies. Accordingly, our study will put the existing knowledge into a larger framework



by distinguishing single short-term effects from those that may develop over a longer run. In doing so, we aim to show that both seemingly conflicting findings are related and we aim to provide deeper knowledge on the evolution of terror effects, especially with regard to the latest series of Islamist terror attacks in Germany.

### 3 Data and Empirical Strategy

In order to test the presented hypotheses we use individual-level data from survey interviews conducted by the European Social Survey (ESS). The latest two survey rounds cover the period from 2014 to 2017 and thus offer interview data about individuals both before the first significant terror attacks and during and after the level of terror began to increase. However, the ESS data is cross-sectional and, consequentially, time series analyses are not possible. But ESS provides us with required information about individual attitudes, evaluation of the government, party preferences and further demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

We define terrorism as "premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or subnational groups in order to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience beyond that of the immediate victims" (Enders & Sandler 2012). We focus on attacks in Germany, as this has chiefly two advantages. First, Germany is one of the three countries that experienced a pronounced increase in terrorist threats during the period of 2014 to the beginning of 2017, which is covered by our ESS data. Second, in contrast to the other two countries - Belgium and France - Germany has almost no experience with transnational terrorism.<sup>2</sup> While Belgium and France had been dealing with Islamist terror cells -preliminary Al-Qaida - for many years before the heavy attacks (Nesser 2008), Germany is relatively new to confronting transnational terrorism. Thus, the ESS data enables us to observe an intensification of the terror level over a few years, starting from almost zero. In contrast to other studies that have shown effects of repeated terror attacks, we apply individual-level data to show that repeated terror does not only induce criticism of the government from political elites or opposition parties but that it also affects the whole society of a country. We consider this to be

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<sup>2</sup> Generally, one can distinguish national/domestic and transnational terrorism. National or domestic terrorism refer to terrorists' activities that take place in the same country that the terrorists are from. Usually, those terrorists pursue objectives of national interest. By contrast, transnational terrorism describes the case where terrorists' activities do not include aims and actions in one single country but cross various borders (Enders & Sandler 2012).

of great relevance, as it may also provide deeper knowledge about citizens' changes in voting behavior. Individual-level data enables us to test the hypotheses derived from Issue Voting Theory and make a statement about individual party preferences.

The required data about the terror attacks are taken from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), which contains information on worldwide terror attacks from 1970 to 2016. The database provides information about the attacks, locations, weapons, fatalities, perpetrators and usually the underlying motives, as far as they are known. We select all terror attacks that occurred in Germany and that are classified as transnational. We include only transnational but no domestic attacks, as both categories vary fundamentally regarding perpetrators' motives. Further, transnational attacks are attacks on the whole country and its leaders and should therefore spark a rally effect (Mueller 1970), whereas domestic terror attacks come from within a country itself and will not spark a rally. Moreover, we include transnational attacks that are directed against civilians of the attacked country, as the GTD also reports on transnational attacks that are directed against refugees - those attacks are xenophobic by nature and, thus, cannot be expected to evoke perceptions of an Islamist threat to the whole country (Lubbers & Coenders 2017). The remaining data in our sample only include attacks with an Islamist background.<sup>3</sup>

The attacks in our sample were used to create our explanatory variables. As we aim to combine the presented and seemingly conflicting findings in one framework, we define two terror variables. The first terror variable  $Attack_{i,t-z}$  with  $Z = 30$ , equals one if the respondent  $i$  witnessed an Islamist terror attack in the home country within 30 days before the interview day. We define  $z = 1, \dots, Z$ , which corresponds to the days before each respondent's interview. The variable for the terror level  $\sum_{z=31}^Z Terrorlevel_{i,t-z}$  with  $Z = 183$  represents the number of attacks that the individual experienced in the six months prior to the interview; thus, it counts the attacks that occurred within the 31 to 183 days before the ESS interview. By using these two variables we can capture the effect of a single attack shortly before the interview and also check for the influence of the preceding and additional terror level over a longer period before the interview.

In order to test Hypotheses 1 and 2, we aim to investigate whether a terror attack increases a respondent's satisfaction with the national government. Previous studies

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<sup>3</sup> A detailed summary of the terror attacks in Germany in our sample can be seen in Appendix A. All terror attacks that are included are known to have an Islamist motivation or at least a strong Islamist relation so that the public assumed that perpetrators had connections to Islamist ideas.

have applied different measures to test for this, such as presidential approval rates or the support for the governing party (Chatagnier 2012, Baum 2002, Lai & Reiter 2005). Following these studies, we will use data available in the ESS and measure a rally as the popularity of a government by looking at respondents' satisfaction with it at the interview day.<sup>4</sup> The according variable  $GovSatisf_{i,t}$  is based on the survey question "Now thinking about the [country] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?" and ranges from 0 to 10, where a value of 10 reflects the highest level of satisfaction.

Table 1: Summary statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
GovSatisf.	5741	4.96	2.172	0	10
CloseAFD	3079	.049	.217	0	1
CloseLinke	3079	.117	.321	0	1
CloseFDP	3079	.033	.179	0	1
CloseGruene	3079	.151	.358	0	1
Recent terror attack (within 30 days)	5897	.291	.454	0	1
Level of terror (within 1-6 months)	5897	1.381	1.468	0	4
Use of media	5897	1.228	.491	0	2
Perceived ethnic threat	5753	-5.72	2.068	-10	0
Perceived safety	5891	2.028	.783	1	4
Importance of a strong government	5809	2.293	1.178	1	6
Importance of safety	5836	2.479	1.266	1	6
Political trust	5805	4.531	2.153	0	10
Closeness to current government	3079	.635	.482	0	1
Gender	5897	.518	.5	0	1
Age	5881	49.257	18.45	15	102
Education	5865	2.603	1.034	0	4
Perceived deprivation	5850	1.694	.711	1	4
Unemployed	5897	.03	.171	0	1
Marital status	5897	.023	.149	0	1
Unempl.-rate change (yearly)	5897	-.382	.118	-.5	-.25
Asylum seeker (yearly, lagged)	5897	318.6	193.757	126.71	745.15
GDP pc (quarterly, lagged)	5897	109.094	2.034	106.67	111.6
Interview month	5897	22.392	11.97	8	39
ESS-round	5897	7.484	.5	7	8

Next, we have hypothesized that terror experiences affect individual party preferences. As we expect radical right parties in particular to benefit, we are interested in whether repeated terror experiences enhance the likelihood that a respondent will prefer such parties. We define a radical right party according to references made by the Manifesto Data Project and Chapel Hill Expert Survey. A party sorted in a party family of nationalist or radical right party families in these data projects is classified as a radical right party in our analysis, i.e. the Alternative for Germany (in German: *Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD). Our information is based on the ESS question "Is there a particular

<sup>4</sup> We think this is a more appropriate measure than individual intentions to vote for the governing party in the next election. The next election might be a long time after the interview day, and direct questions on voting intentions are perceived as more sensitive than ones about general satisfaction or approval.

political party you feel closer to than all the other parties? Which one?" If the answer corresponds to a radical right party, the dummy variable  $CloseAFD_{i,t}$  equals one.

A vector  $Controls_{i,t}$  contains two main aspects that must be controlled for on the individual level. Both can be obtained from the ESS data.<sup>5</sup> First, we include several control variables that cover the individual political attitudes that play a role in explaining evaluations of incumbents. Hence, we assess whether a respondent generally supports one of the governmental parties, trusts in politics and is supportive of a strong government. As we also aim to investigate whether terror attacks encourage preferences for certain parties, we include variables that cover attitudes that are known to do so. These are attitudes about different races, the perception of a threat induced by other ethnic groups and the need for and feelings of individual safety (Lucassen & Lubbers 2012, Werts & Lubbers 2012). We additionally include a measure for the time that respondents spend watching the news. By doing so, we can ensure that respondents have heard about the terror attacks. Second, besides political attitudes, several individual socioeconomic and -demographic factors can affect political evaluations and party preferences (Lucassen & Lubbers 2012, Werts & Lubbers 2012). Hence, we include the respondent's age, gender, information about their educational background, and their marital and employment status. Instead of a variable that represents the individual income as direct value, we use a measure representing respondents' perceptions of their incomes, i.e. whether they are satisfied with their financial situation. Since even people with a relatively high income class can be dissatisfied with their financial situation and perceive their income as lower than it actually is, we expect the perception of the income situation to be a more reliable control than income itself (Werts & Lubbers 2012).

As individual-level criteria alone cannot determine the values of our dependent variables, we need to control for factors that relate to generally underlying time trends. In our case we include the change in the unemployment rate during the preceding year and the quarterly GDP per capita to cover conceivable impacts of the recent national economic situation, applying lagged values for the GDP (Werts & Lubbers 2012). However, when investigating the changes in support of governments or parties, in particular radical right parties, one should not exclude publicly discussed high-profile issues that may stimulate support. Scholars have already stressed that the exponential growth in the number of asylum seekers from 2014 to 2016 has played a part in increasing the popularity of radical right parties (Ternès et al. 2017). Such observations are highly rel-

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<sup>5</sup> The questions underlying all applied variables are presented in Appendix B.

evant for our analyses. As we aim to find the effect induced by terrorist attacks and only terrorist attacks, and not by contemporaneously existing refugee debates, we include a variable that represents the number of yearly asylum applications in Germany, again using lagged values. In order to control for further time-related trends during our period of observation that cannot be calculated as straightforwardly as the asylum trend, we control for the ESS rounds as well as for the survey months from 2014 to 2017.<sup>6</sup>

All variables from our final sample and the according summary statistics are presented in table 1. Based on the presented variables, we conduct our analysis identifying our strategy as follows:

$$P(Y = y|X = x) = \Lambda(\alpha + \beta Attack_{i,t-z} + \gamma \sum_{z=31}^Z Terrorlevel_{i,t-z} + \psi Controls_{i,t}) \quad (1)$$

where  $i = 1, \dots, N$  identifies each survey respondent,  $t = 1, \dots, T$  represents the day of the individual interview and  $z = 1, \dots, Z$  is the temporal distance to a recent attack and the terror level within six month before it.  $\Lambda$  is a cumulative distribution function in a logistic model. The first dependent variable we investigate is *GovSatisf<sub>i,t</sub>* which takes eleven ordered values  $y$  with  $0 \leq y \leq 10$  ranging from zero to ten. Hence, we apply an ordered logistic regression approach. When our dependent variables are binary, i.e. when we investigate effects on various party preferences, we use simple logistic regressions.<sup>7</sup>

## 4 Results

### Baseline Regressions

We start our analyses by investigating whether single terror attacks increase government satisfaction and whether these effects repeat with the same sizes when the exposure to terror increases, as has been the case in Germany from 2015 to 2016. As the dependent

<sup>6</sup> Due to the timing of the survey rounds that predominantly focus on a successive period of about 6 to 8 months in each country, these two are a more specific measures for time effects than the interview years themselves.

<sup>7</sup> A further aspect should be mentioned at this point. One may think the difference-in-difference technique is a proper approach for our investigation. It must be noted that this approach requires the comparison of trends between a treatment and a control group without any spillover effects between them. However, experiences from terror research have shown that even terror occurring on another continent can affect people worldwide (Finseraas & Listerhaug 2011). Consequently, there cannot exist any true control group to analyze the effects of terror attacks; thus, that technique cannot reasonably be applied in our view.

variable is  $GovSatisf_{i,t}$ , we use an ordered logistic regression technique. We start by analyzing whether an attack in the first survey round 2014-2015, when the initial terror level was fairly low, significantly increased respondents' satisfaction with the national government. We repeat the same regression for the survey round 2016-2017, when there have already been several small terror incidents. Results are displayed in table 2, column (1) and (2). Interestingly, the coefficient of our recent-attack dummy is significant for the analysis of the first survey round, while it is not for the second. Accordingly, it seems that rally effects did occur in Germany, but only during the first attacks. A regression for the whole observational period in column (3) reveals a small positive effect that is significant at the ten-percent level. Based on the presented argumentation, this observation may be explained by the repeated exposure to terrorism in 2016-2017. If so, the size of a rally effect depends on the previous terror level. In order to test this, we interact the dummy for a recent attack with the preceding and additional terror level, which represents the current individual exposure to terror within six months before each respondent's interview day, and we run the regression for the whole observational period (see column (4)).

Dep. Var.:	$GovSatisf_{i,t}$			
	(1) 2014-15	(2) 2016-17	(3) 2014-17	(4) 2014-17
Recent terror attack home country (within 30 d. before interview)	0.776** (0.340)	0.0928 (0.120)	0.188* (0.101)	0.782** (0.329)
Level of terror home country (within 1 to 6 months before interview)				0.0757 (0.157)
Recent attack x level				-0.244** (0.115)
Perceived ethnic threat	-0.0947*** (0.0283)	-0.195*** (0.0281)	-0.145*** (0.0198)	-0.144*** (0.0198)
Perceived safety	-0.0372 (0.0707)	-0.0911 (0.0699)	-0.0643 (0.0495)	-0.0686 (0.0496)
Importance of a strong government	-0.158*** (0.0440)	-0.121*** (0.0457)	-0.139*** (0.0316)	-0.138*** (0.0316)
Importance of safety	-0.0588 (0.0415)	-0.0397 (0.0425)	-0.0501* (0.0297)	-0.0507* (0.0297)
Political trust	0.729*** (0.0307)	0.739*** (0.0325)	0.734*** (0.0223)	0.736*** (0.0223)
Closeness to current government	0.721*** (0.105)	0.574*** (0.107)	0.655*** (0.0748)	0.650*** (0.0749)
Use of media	-0.0421 (0.0976)	-0.169 (0.106)	-0.120* (0.0716)	-0.120* (0.0716)
Socio-demographic characteristics	Y	Y	Y	Y
Time controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Pseudo R2	0.1530	0.1682	0.1582	0.1586
Observations	1,529	1,389	2,918	2,918

Standard errors in parentheses: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

The effect of a recent attack remains positive and significant. This supports our hypothesis that rally effects do occur in Germany, but the effect size decreases significantly

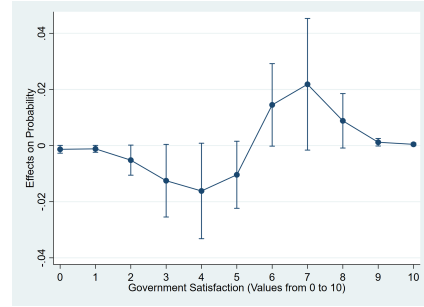
with an increasing terror level. Without controlling for the dependency of the previous terror level, a recent attack changes the likelihood for a different level of government satisfaction by one to two percentage points (table 3), i.e. it increases the likelihood that individuals will support the government and decreases the likelihood that individuals will oppose the government (figure 2). However, when including the interaction term, a recent attack changes the likelihood for different levels of government satisfaction by up to almost ten percentage points (table 4). When considering the conditional marginal effects of a recent attack over the preceding terror level, the results are even stronger when there has not been additional terrorism within six months before the interview, the effect size related to a recent attack is always greater than in cases where there were two additional previous attacks. When a respondent has been exposed to no additional attack, the observed rally effect is two to four times bigger than when they were exposed to two additional attacks. Rally effects are not even significant for cases when there were more than two additional attacks.

Table 3: Conditional marginal effects of a recent attack, table 2(3)

Value GovSatisf.	Recent Attack	Standard Error
=0	-0.00133*	0.000708
=1	-0.00117*	0.000628
=2	-0.00519*	0.00273
=3	-0.0125*	0.00660
=4	-0.0162*	0.00868
=5	-0.0104*	0.00610
=6	0.0145*	0.00750
=7	0.0218*	0.0120
=8	0.00882*	0.00495
=9	0.00119*	0.000686
=10	0.000444*	0.000267

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Figure 2: Conditional marginal effects of a recent attack, table 3, 95% CIs



Additionally, the conditional marginal effects suggest that the observed rally effects reverse for even higher levels of previous terror (figure 3). When there were four preceding attacks, the rally effects' signs become positive (table 4). Hence, it appears that when a country's exposure to terror attacks is already at a certain high level, single subsequent attacks do not cause an increase in individuals' government satisfaction. However, at a terror level of four prior attacks, we observe decreasing p-values for those coefficients and the effects are not significant; thus, there is only a small indication that the rally effects really reverse.

After a country reaches a certain terror level, we no longer observe significant effects on government satisfaction after a terror attack. Here, we have assumed that radical right parties benefit from increased terrorism and the issues that are accentuated by it. To analyze this, we test whether Islamist terror attacks change the likelihood that an

individual will to state that they feel close to a radical right party in Germany, i.e. our dependent variable is  $CloseAFD_{i,t}$ . As this is a binary variable, we run logistic regressions. Like in our analysis of effects on government satisfaction, we start by analyzing whether an attack in the first survey round, which is associated with a fairly low terror level, increases the likelihood that individuals will feel close to the AfD (table 5, column (1)), and repeat the same regression for the survey round associated with a higher terror level (column (2)).

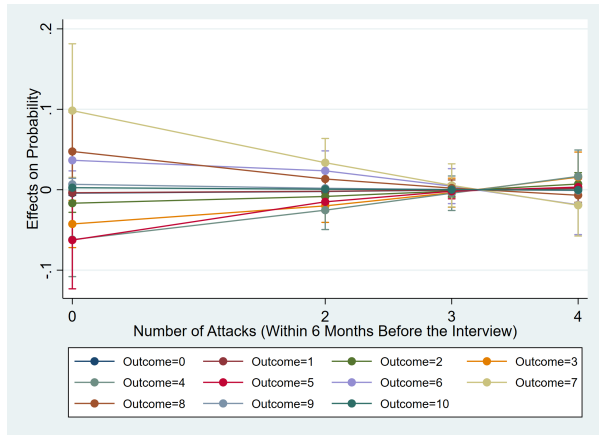
Table 4: Conditional marginal effects of a recent attack over the preceding terror level, table 2(4)

Value GovSatisf	Attacks 6 month	Coefficient Single Attack	Standard error	p-Value	Value GovSatisf	Attacks 6 month	Coefficient Single Attack	Standard error	p-Value
= 0	0	-0.00420***	0.00149	0.005	= 6	0	0.0366***	0.00673	0.000
= 0	2	-0.00215*	0.00120	0.074	= 6	2	0.0235*	0.0126	0.063
= 0	3	-0.000414	0.00103	0.688	= 6	3	0.00445	0.0111	0.688
= 0	4	0.00187	0.00193	0.333	= 6	4	-0.0187	0.0189	0.322
= 1	0	-0.00371***	0.00134	0.006	= 7	0	0.0984**	0.0424	0.020
= 1	2	-0.00189*	0.00106	0.075	= 7	2	0.0336**	0.0154	0.029
= 1	3	-0.000361	0.000898	0.688	= 7	3	0.00542	0.0137	0.692
= 1	4	0.00163	0.00168	0.333	= 7	4	-0.0193	0.0195	0.324
= 2	0	-0.0168***	0.00579	0.004	= 8	0	0.0476*	0.0248	0.055
= 2	2	-0.00837*	0.00455	0.066	= 8	2	0.0134**	0.00590	0.024
= 2	3	-0.00159	0.00395	0.688	= 8	3	0.00204	0.00515	0.693
= 2	4	0.00705	0.00722	0.329	= 8	4	-0.00683	0.00698	0.328
= 3	0	-0.0426***	0.0150	0.004	= 9	0	0.00672*	0.00379	0.076
= 3	2	-0.0201*	0.0105	0.056	= 9	2	0.00179**	0.000818	0.029
= 3	3	-0.00370	0.00921	0.688	= 9	3	0.000269	0.000682	0.693
= 3	4	0.0157	0.0159	0.325	= 9	4	-0.000891	0.000920	0.333
= 4	0	-0.0621***	0.0235	0.008	= 10	0	0.00253*	0.00150	0.091
= 4	2	-0.0254**	0.0123	0.039	= 10	2	0.000668**	0.000325	0.040
= 4	3	-0.00436	0.0109	0.690	= 10	3	0.000100	0.000255	0.694
= 4	4	0.0166	0.0167	0.322	= 10	4	-0.000331	0.000346	0.340
= 5	0	-0.0626**	0.0309	0.043					
= 5	2	-0.0150**	0.00622	0.016					
= 5	3	-0.00185	0.00481	0.700					
= 5	4	0.00328	0.00515	0.524					

Standard errors: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

In line with our expectations, a single attack only affects preferences for a radical right party in the second regression. The same regression run for the whole observational period in column (3) reveals no significant effect. Again, we test whether this is caused by the increased exposure to terrorism by including an interaction term with the preceding terror level in column (4). We find that a single attack itself has no effect on the likelihood

Figure 3: Conditional marginal effects of a recent attack over the preceding terror level, table 4, 95% CIs





that an individual will prefer the AfD, but a single attack significantly increases this likelihood under a higher terror level. The conditional marginal effects of a recent attack show that the likelihood an individual prefers the AfD even decreases by 0.7 percentage points without additional terrorism within six months before the interview, but the likelihood increases by about 2.5 percentage points when there have been four additional attacks. Intermediate terror levels have no significant effect (table 6). This again slightly supports that the effects of one terror attack depend on the overall level of terrorism.

Table 5: Closeness to the radical right AfD, logistic regression approach, varying time frames

Dep. Var.:	<i>CloseAFD<sub>i,t</sub></i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	2014-15	2016-17	2014-17	2014-17
Recent attack	-1.049	0.646*	0.426	-1.317
<i>(within 30 d. before interview)</i>	(0.868)	(0.370)	(0.341)	(0.863)
Level of terror in home country			0.399	-0.120
<i>(within 1 to 6 months before interview)</i>			(0.353)	(0.416)
Recent attack x level				0.634**
				(0.304)
Perceived ethnic threat	0.286***	0.639***	0.436***	0.442***
	(0.0838)	(0.0858)	(0.0561)	(0.0564)
Perceived safety	-0.0628	0.385**	0.189	0.197
	(0.227)	(0.178)	(0.133)	(0.133)
Importance of a strong government	-0.440**	-0.356**	-0.355***	-0.361***
	(0.177)	(0.143)	(0.106)	(0.106)
Importance of safety	0.260*	0.0280	0.127	0.133
	(0.134)	(0.119)	(0.0865)	(0.0867)
Political trust	-0.268**	-0.344***	-0.314***	-0.321***
	(0.109)	(0.0939)	(0.0688)	(0.0692)
Use of media	0.404	-0.326	0.0462	0.0684
	(0.319)	(0.291)	(0.206)	(0.207)
Government satisfaction	-0.247**	-0.242***	-0.232***	-0.229***
	(0.102)	(0.0916)	(0.0655)	(0.0657)
Socio-demographic characteristics	Y	Y	Y	Y
Time controls	Y	Y	Y	Y
Constant	-241.4	329.5	-172.8	-182.6
	(192.1)	(337.0)	(156.1)	(155.8)
Pseudo R2	0.2231	0.4713	0.3638	0.3668
Observations	1,529	1,389	2,918	2,918

Standard errors in parentheses: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Table 6: Conditional marginal effects over terror level for table 5(4)

Attacks	Coefficient	Standard	
6 month	Single Attack	error	p-Value
0	-0.007**	-2.06	0.040
2	-0.001	-0.13	0.901
3	0.014	1.49	0.137
4	0.026*	1.72	0.085

Standard errors: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## Robustness

Our analyses so far appear to substantiate our hypotheses. We conduct further robustness checks to consolidate our findings. We find that the radical right AfD benefits from an increasing terror level, and expect this to be motivated by the higher salience of issues that are emphasized by Islamist terrorism and that are especially covered by radical right parties. Following Issue Voting Theory, we have implicitly assumed that the people do not generally turn their back on the governmental parties (SPD and CDU/CSU) due to an increased exposure to terrorism but begin to prefer the AfD because people start to change their own priorities. If this is the case, we should not find any effects of terror attacks on the likelihood of an individual to prefer other non-incumbent parties. We test this in table 7 for the three other notable national German parties The Left (Die Linke), The Greens (Die Gruenen) and the Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP), columns (1) to (3). The binary dependent variables  $CloseLinke_{i,t}$ ,  $CloseGruene_{i,t}$  and  $CloseFDP_{i,t}$  equal one if the respondents' answer to the question "Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the other parties? Which one?" corresponds to the respective party. Supporting our considerations, none of the coefficients of single attacks or the interaction terms with the terror level are significant.

A further aspect may be interesting to investigate here, which is individuals' trust in politics in general. People prefer radical parties partially according to their individual trust in politicians and politics (Lucassen & Lubbers 2012, Werts & Lubbers 2012), and, according to the theory about rally effects, people affiliate with their leaders in their quest for security in the aftermath of severe international terror attacks (Chatagnier 2012). Combining these arguments, the effect of a single attack on one's satisfaction with the government and their preferences for radical right parties may also depend on the respondents' trust in politics. Therefore, higher political trust should also reduce the effect size of a recent attack. Hence, we repeat our regressions on  $GovSatisf_{i,t}$  and  $CloseAFD_{i,t}$  (table 2(4), table 5(4)) when including of a further interaction term: we interact our dummy for a recent attack with the respondents' political trust. We observe that the coefficient of our interaction term with the overall terror level remains significant in both columns. The coefficient of the interaction term from our regressions on  $CloseAFD_{i,t}$  is significant and negative. Thus, the likelihood that an individual will prefer the AfD in the aftermath of a terror attack also depends on the individual's trust in politics (column (5)) and higher political trust goes along with a reduced likelihood

to prefer a radical right party after a terror attack. This effect can not be found for the regression on  $GovSatisf_{i,t}$  in column (4). Accordingly, in this case the effect of a terror attack on an individual's evaluation of the government does not seem to depend on political trust.

Table 7: Robustness checks

Dep. Var.:	(1) $CloseLinke_{i,t}$	(2) $CloseGruene_{i,t}$	(3) $CloseFDP_{i,t}$	(4) $GovSatisf_{i,t}$	(5) $CloseAFD_{i,t}$
Recent attack (within 30 d. before interview)	-0.364 (0.574)	-0.00715 (0.558)	0.0660 (0.965)	0.551 (0.371)	-0.656 (0.920)
Level of terror in home country (1 to 6 months before interview)	-0.0204 (0.289)	-0.154 (0.269)	-0.521 (0.463)	0.0788 (0.157)	-0.136 (0.423)
Recent attack x level (1 to 6 months)	0.0754 (0.203)	0.0373 (0.198)	-0.0913 (0.348)	-0.248** (0.115)	0.652** (0.307)
Recent attack x Pol. trust				0.0482 (0.0359)	-0.236** (0.112)
Perceived ethnic threat	-0.243*** (0.0356)	-0.350*** (0.0374)	0.0771 (0.0608)	-0.145*** (0.0198)	0.452*** (0.0569)
Perceived safety	0.189** (0.0895)	-0.204** (0.0886)	-0.0397 (0.161)	-0.0699 (0.0496)	0.215 (0.133)
Importance of a strong government	0.0618 (0.0550)	0.213*** (0.0490)	-0.0299 (0.0977)	-0.138*** (0.0316)	-0.375*** (0.107)
Importance of safety	-0.0163 (0.0537)	0.148*** (0.0472)	0.0495 (0.0891)	-0.0516* (0.0297)	0.141 (0.0869)
Political trust	-0.209*** (0.0402)	0.0324 (0.0393)	0.0435 (0.0706)	0.722*** (0.0245)	-0.241*** (0.0775)
Closeness to current government				0.653*** (0.0749)	
Use of media	0.244* (0.125)	-0.162 (0.125)	-0.0955 (0.225)	-0.119* (0.0716)	0.0747 (0.207)
Government satisfaction	-0.179*** (0.0387)	-0.0887** (0.0382)	-0.0408 (0.0674)		-0.233*** (0.0662)
Socio-demographic characteristics	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Time controls	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Constant	-47.73 (81.94)	-114.7 (79.02)	36.14 (150.9)		-183.4 (154.9)
Pseudo R2	0.1060	0.1620	0.0401	0.1588	0.3708
Observations	2,918	2,918	2,918	2,918	2,918

Standard errors in parentheses: \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

Our empirical analyses suggest that individual satisfaction with the government significantly increases in the aftermath of Islamist terror attacks in Germany. Yet, the effect size clearly depends on the previous exposure to terrorism. A terror attack shortly before the interview increased the probability that an individual would have a relatively higher satisfaction with the government by up to ten percentage points without any preceding attacks. But, when there were two additional attacks before the interview, the observed rally effect was two to four times smaller. Further, when the level of previous terror attacks passed a certain level, the rally effects even appeared to reverse from supporting the government to criticizing the government. We show that a single attack does not

induce a higher preference for the radical right party, the AfD. But, as expected, when the terror level increased, the probability that an individual would feel closer to the AfD increased by 2.5 percentage points. Our robustness analyses reveal that this especially holds true for people with low levels of political trust. In line with Issue Voting Theory, such effects were not found for the probability that individuals would feel closer to a left-wing party or any other German party in the national parliament.

Our research has several relevant implications. It helps to identify determinants of public sentiment and deepens our understanding of the political consequences of violent shocks in democratic societies. Furthermore, it yields information about why European party landscapes have evolved in the way they have. It may thus help explain the contemporary increase in voter preferences for radical right parties and help develop strategies to successfully counteract forces that destabilize democracies.

However, our analyses give rise to further interesting questions. We have investigated the impact of the latest terror attacks in Germany for a compelling reason: Germany offers an ideal basis to analyze terror effects in countries with almost no previous experience with international terrorism, whereas the two other countries in Europe with heavy Islamist terror attacks between 2014 and 2016 - France and Belgium - have had more direct contact with Islamist terrorism in form of attacks or locally operating terror cells and networks in the former years. As we have focused on the repeated exposure to terrorism, we do not provide information on the attacks' intensities and persistence of the found effects. This confines the transferability of our results and leaves a broader analysis of consequences in other European countries to further research. Moreover, we know that some effects of severe terror attacks - like a general increase in the fear of terrorism - are not limited to the countries where they took place (Finseraas & Listhaug 2011). So far our analyses do not enable inference about the impact of terror attacks worldwide on the public sentiment and politics of a particular country or its neighboring countries. This is something we hope to elaborate in future studies.

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# Appendix

## A - Islamist Terror Attacks in Germany 2015 to 2016

Table 8: Islamist Terror Attacks in Germany (2015-16)

Summary	Fatalities <sup>8</sup>	Wounded	Large scale
01/11/2015: Assailants threw an incendiary device at Hamburger Morgenpost offices in Hamburg city. Motives are not clearly known but the Hamburger Morgenpost newspaper had reprinted pictures of prophet Muhammad that are connected to the ones that were originally published in Charlie Hebdo, which was attacked in the same week.	0	0	No
09/17/2015: A man with a knife attacked a police officer in Berlin. The assailant was known as Rafik Mohammed Yousef.	0	1	No
02/05/2016: An assailant threw two incendiary devices at the Ernst-August-Galerie mall in Hanover, Lower Saxony, Germany. There were no reported casualties in the attack. No group claimed responsibility; however, sources identified the assailant as Saleh Schmitter. Schmitter had previously been in contact with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) during a trip to Turkey.	0	0	No
02/26/2016: A 15-year old assailant stabbed a police officer in Hanover, Germany. The police officer was injured as a result of the attack. No group claimed responsibility for the incident; however, sources stated that the assailant had recently joined the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) during a trip to Turkey.	0	1	No
04/16/2016: A bomb detonated at a Sikh temple in Essen. ISIL claimed responsibility.	0	3	No
07/18/2016: A young man armed with an axe attacked people on a train near Würzburg. He stated that is was revenge for the Muslims. ISIL claimed to be included, too.	0	5	Yes
07/24/2016: A bomb exploded at a music festival (Ansbach). Perpetrator claimed to belong to ISIL.	0	15	Yes
10/16/2016: A man attacked people in Alster neighbourhood. ISIL claimed to be responsible.	1	2	Yes
12/05/2016: An explosive device was found at a Christmas market in Ludwigshafen, Germany. Authorities found that a child had posited it there, as he felt inspired by ISIL.	0	0	No
12/19/2016: A truck drove into a Christmas market in Breitscheidplatz, Berlin. The perpetrator said to belong to ISIL. Earlier at the same day 12/19/2016, he hijacked the truck and killed the driver.	13	48	Yes

## B - Variables and Survey Questions

All questions presented below are taken from the European Social Survey Data:

Table 9: Variables and Questions

Variable	Survey Questions	Remarks
<b>Dep. variables</b>		
GovSatisf	"Now thinking about the [country] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?" 0 - <i>Extremely dissatisfied</i> to 10 - <i>Extremely satisfied</i>	
CloseAFD, CloseLinke, CloseFDP, CloseGruene	Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the other parties? Which one?	
<b>Individual controls</b>		
Perc. ethnic threat	"Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries?" 0 - <i>Bad for the economy</i> to 10 - <i>Good for the economy</i> . "[...] would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries?" 0 - <i>Cultural life undermined</i> to 10 - <i>Cultural life enriched</i> . "Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?" 0 - <i>Worse place to live</i> to 10 - <i>Better place to live</i> .	Measure computed by arithmetic mean of the three items. Reversed scale.
Perc. safety	"How safe do you -or would you- feel walking alone in [local area] after dark? Do -or would- you feel..." 1 - <i>Very safe</i> to 4 - <i>Very unsafe</i> .	Reversed scale.

<sup>8</sup> excl. killed perpetrators



Importance of a strong government	"Now I will briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you. Use this card for your answer. It is important to her/him that the government ensures her/his safety against all threats. She/he wants the state to be strong so it can defend its citizens." 1 - <i>Very much like me</i> to 4 - <i>Not like me at all</i> .	
Importance of safety	"Now I will briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you. Use this card for your answer. It is important to her/him to live in secure surroundings. She/he avoids anything that might endanger her/his safety." 1 - <i>Very much like me</i> to 4 - <i>Not like me at all</i> .	
Political trust	"Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust. 1. politicians? 2. [country]'s parliament? 0 - <i>No trust at all</i> to 10 - <i>complete trust</i>	Measure computed as arithmetic mean of both items.
Use of media	Survey question from the round 7 (2014-15): "And again on an average week-day, how much of your time watching television is spent watching news or programs about politics and current affairs?" Survey question from the round 8 (2016-17): "On a typical day, about how much time do you spend watching, reading or listening to news about politics and current affairs?"	The answers are coded so that they indicate whether one does not watch news at all, up to an hour or more than an hour a week.

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University of Münster  
CIW – Center for Interdisciplinary Economics  
Scharnhorststrasse 100  
D-48151 Münster

phone: +49-251/83-25329  
fax: +49-251/83-28429

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