

What explains the electoral success of the Alternative for Germany?

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Introduction

- ▶ Within less than three years of being founded, the **Alternative for Germany** (AfD) has achieved extraordinary vote share in the General election of 2013, and the European Parliament election of 2014 (Arzheimer 2015)
- ▶ March 13 state elections: 15.1% in Baden-Württemberg, 12.6% in Rhineland-Palatinate, 24.3% in Saxony-Anhalt. (Baden-Wuerttemberg 2016; Rheinland-Pfalz 2016; Sachsen-Anhalt 2016)
- ▶ “a landslide”(Pausch 2016)
- ▶ The AfD has “arrived in German mainstream politics” (Gathmann and Wittrock 2016)

Existing Research

- ▶ AfD can be described as a “functional equivalent for a right-wing populist party in a country where right-wing politics are strongly stigmatised” (Berbair, Lewandowsky, and Siri 2015)
- ▶ Ivarsflaten (2008) : Successful RRWP parties almost always use **anti-immigration rhetorics**
- ▶ Swank and Betz (2003) : **Volume of refugees**, level of **immigration**, domestic **tax burden**, and strong presence of **left-wing parties** positively influences right wing-populist electoral success
- ▶ AfD was especially successful in mobilizing former **non-voters** and the **unemployed** (Gathmann and Wittrock 2016)

Project Outline

Research Question

“What explains the recent electoral success of the AfD in the different districts of Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Saxony-Anhalt?”

Election data

Source: Baden-Wuerttemberg (2016), Rheinland-Pfalz (2016), Sachsen-Anhalt (2016)

Variable	Name in dataset	Description
Dependent Variable (DV)	vote.AfD	The vote share of the Alternative for Germany in the current state election
Independent Variable 1 (IV1)	lag.turnout	Overall voter turnout of the previous state election
IV2, IV3, IV4, IV5, IV6	lag.CDU, lag.Greens, lag.SPD, lag.FDP, lag.Linke	The vote share of political parties in the previous state election (CDU, SPD, Greens, FDP, and Linke)

Structural data

Source: Bundesamt (2015)

Variable	Name in dataset	Description
IV7	abitur.ratio	Ratio of school leavers per district with general qualification for university entrance (Abitur)
IV8	nodegree.ratio	Ratio of school leavers per district with no school degree
IV9	GDP.cap	Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita
IV10	unemp.rate	Unemployment rate in the district
IV11	n.refugees	Number of asylum seekers per district

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3:

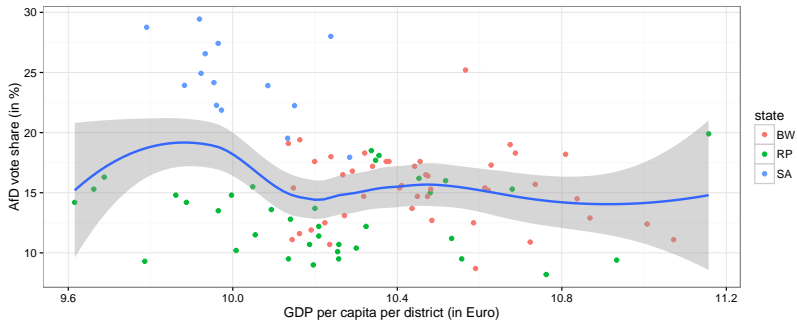
Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min
Vote share of AfD in 2016	94	15.825	4.856	8.200
Vote turnout in 2011	94	61.587	6.176	47.060
Vote share of CDU in 2011	94	36.675	6.350	21.500
Vote share of Greens in 2011	94	17.303	8.288	2.830
Vote share of SPD in 2011	94	27.731	7.606	16.600
Vote share of FDP in 2011	94	4.107	1.987	0.090
Vote share of Linke in 2011	94	5.986	7.283	2.000
High school ratio	94	29.524	8.957	13.900
No degree ratio	94	5.798	2.594	1.600
GDP per capita	94	31,543.490	10,577.930	14,998
Unemployment rate	94	6.246	3.032	2.900
Number of refugees	94	423.266	283.213	97

Correlation Matrix

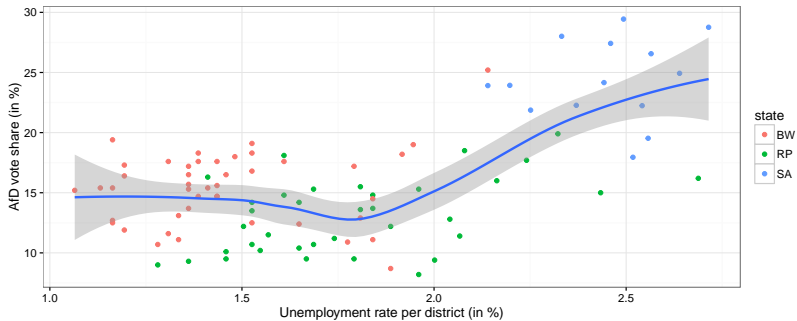
Table 4:

	vote.AfD	lag.CDU	lag.SPD	GDP.capita	unempl.rate
vote.AfD	1	-0.079	-0.337	-0.232	0.615
lag.CDU	-0.079	1	-0.409	-0.019	-0.527
lag.SPD	-0.337	-0.409	1	-0.119	0.045
GDP.capita	-0.232	-0.019	-0.119	1	-0.119
unempl.rate	0.615	-0.527	0.045	-0.119	1
n.refugees	0.020	-0.037	-0.400	0.185	-0.079
abitur.ratio	-0.298	-0.481	0.227	0.468	0.236

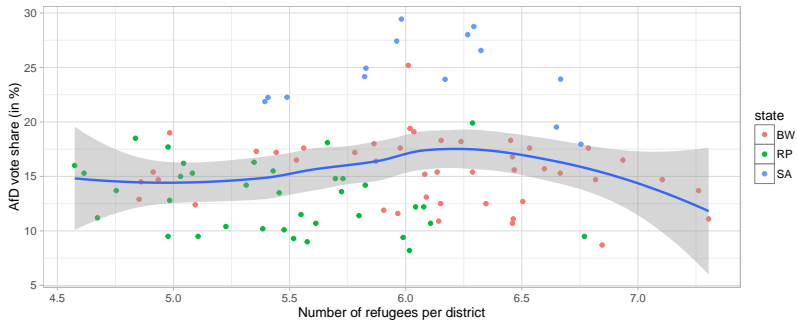
GDP per capita correlation



The effect of unemployment



The effect of refugee numbers

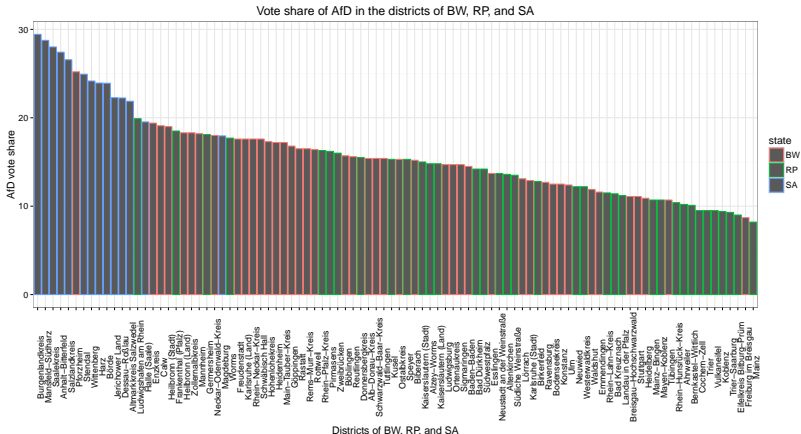


Inferential statistics

Table 5: Determinants of electoral success for the Alternative for Germany

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Vote share of AfD		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
GDP per capita	−0.0001** (0.00004)	−0.0001** (0.00003)	0.00004 (0.00004)
Unemployment rate	0.963*** (0.130)	0.682*** (0.222)	1.103*** (0.181)
Number of refugees	0.002 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Vote share of CDU in 2011 election		0.091 (0.074)	

Future research



- ▶ Analysis of all state elections in Germany where the AfD is present
- ▶ Additional variables, like “immigrants per district”
- ▶ Spatial analysis

Thank you!

References

Arzheimer, Kai. 2015. "The AfD: Finally a Successful Right-Wing Populist Eurosceptic Party for Germany?" *West European Politics* 38 (3). Taylor & Francis: 535–56.

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Gathmann, Florian, and Philipp Wittrock. 2016. "Blitzanalyse Zu Den Landtagswahlen: AfD Triumphiert, Schwarzer Sonntag Fuer Die CDU." Edited by spiegel.de.

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