To lead or to follow? Mainstream parties' strategies and radical right success in Germany[1]

Nicolai Berk
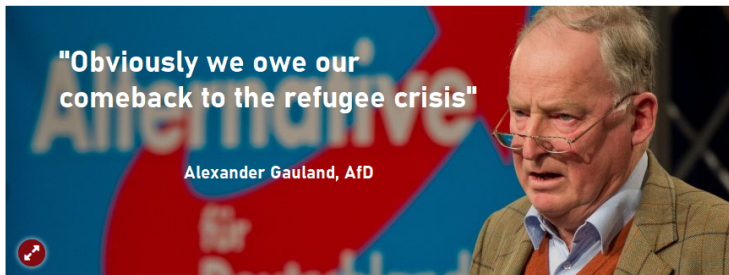
October 11, 2019

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[1]Presentation prepared for the Hot Politics Lab

Introduction

Theory
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A Measure of Issue Emphasis
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Time Series Analysis
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Conclusion
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Appendix

... others have different explanations.

"Obviously we owe our comeback to the refugee crisis"

Alexander Gauland, AfD

Research Questions

- Do mainstream parties (MPs) respond to competition from the radical right (RR) by addressing or ignoring the RR's main issue (immigration)?

- Does MPs attention to immigration affect support for the radical right?

- How does public salience of immigration affect these variables?

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Overview

1 Theory
   Theoretical expectations
   Hypotheses

2 A Measure of Issue Emphasis
   Data Collection and Coding
   The Classifier
      Training the Classifier
      Performance

3 Time Series Analysis
   Variables
   Model Specifications
   Results

4 Conclusion

Issue emphasis

Mainstream parties emphasise issues...

- that are popular among the public (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994; Klüver and Sagarzazu 2016).
- owned by challenger parties (Spoon, Hobolt, and Vries 2014; Abou-Chadi and Krause 2018)

Radical right performance

The radical right performs better electorally when...

- mainstream parties take up its issues (Meguid 2005).
- immigration is salient in the media (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2006; Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996).

Hypotheses

H1 Public salience of the immigration increases MP attention to the issue (*riding-the-wave*)

H2 Increasing electoral success of the RR increases mainstream party attention to immigration (*electoral threat*)

H3 Mainstream party emphasis of immigration increases the electoral success of the RR (*issue emphasis*)

H4 Public salience of immigration increases the electoral performance of the RR (*issue ownership*)

Data collection

Web scraping of nearly 30.000 press releases.

- SPD: 9,246 releases (Oct 2009 - May 2019) collected from website of parliamentary group.
- CDU/CSU: 20,290 releases (Jan 2000 - May 2019) of parliamentary group collected from website that collects press releases for journalists.

Hand-coding the data

Hand-coding of 1,000 randomly selected press releases.

- Does the PR talk about immigration?
- Does the PR talk about the integration of foreigners into the German society?
- Excluding:
    - humanitarian action for refugees in other countries,
    - war in other countries,
    - general border policy,
    - EU-integration,
    - German minorities outside of Germany,

  ... as long as they are not explicitly framed in terms of immigration.

Oversampling the minority class

Challenge: only ∼3% of press releases on immigration.

→ Train simple model on collected data to identify 500 more 'most-likely' cases

→ results in 196 additional positive cases (hence in total ∼15%).

Preparation of text

- tokenizing
- stemming
- stopword removal
- POS-tagging for identification of adjectives & nouns
- using NLTK and spaCy de_core_news_sm

Training the classifier

- Count and tfidf-vectorizers.
- Once full (pre-processed) text, once only adjectives and nouns.
- Classifiers: Logistic Regression, Naive Bayes and Support Vector Machine (`scikit-learn`).
- training set with oversampled minority class (`SMOTE`).
- 5-fold cross-validation.

Comparing classifiers

		Classifier		
Text	**Vectorizer**	LR	NB	SVM
Full	Tfidf	**X**		
Adj&N				
Full	Count			
Adj&N				

The different classifiers.
'**X**' indicates the best performing classifier.

Performance I

		Classifier	
		F	T
Data	F	496	9
	T	14	78

Confusion matrix.

Performance II: metrics

<div align="center">

Accuracy: 0.96
Precision: 0.9
Recall: 0.85
F1-Score: 0.87

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Theory
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A Measure of Issue Emphasis
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Face value performance I

Weight[?]	Feature
+7.009	fluchtling
+5.710	integration
+4.309	ausland
+3.058	zuwander
+2.266	migrant
+2.031	kommun
+2.012	deutschland
+1.956	eu
+1.853	zuwanderungsgesetz
+1.792	zuwand
+1.692	wer
+1.665	illegal
+1.550	staatsangehor
+1.504	spataussiedl
+1.501	uns
+1.457	land
+1.379	migration
+1.372	sprach
+1.299	arbeitsmarkt
... 1486 more positive ...	
... 2343 more negative ...	
-1.906	<BIAS>

Best predictor words.

Theory
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Face value performance II

Example of coded press release.

Further steps

- Apply the classifier to 28,000 uncoded press releases.
- Aggregate data monthly.
- → Measure of parties' attention to immigration in a given month.

- Match with data about current electoral performance of AfD from poll of polls.
- Match with data about immigration salience from Google Trends.

Measure
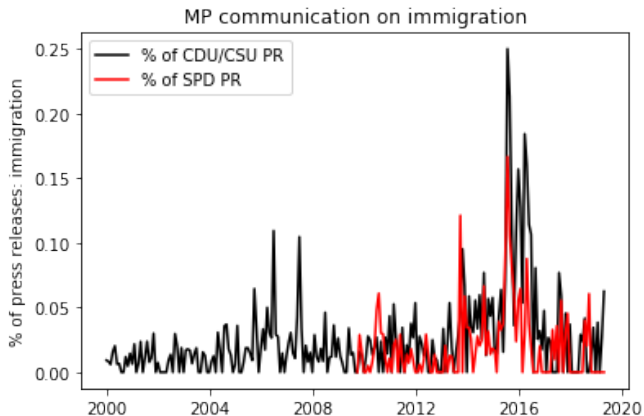
Recap: hypotheses

H1 Public salience of the immigration increases MP attention to the issue (*riding-the-wave*)

H2 Increasing electoral success of the RR increases mainstream party attention to immigration (*electoral threat*)

H3 Mainstream party emphasis of immigration increases the electoral success of the RR (*issue emphasis*)

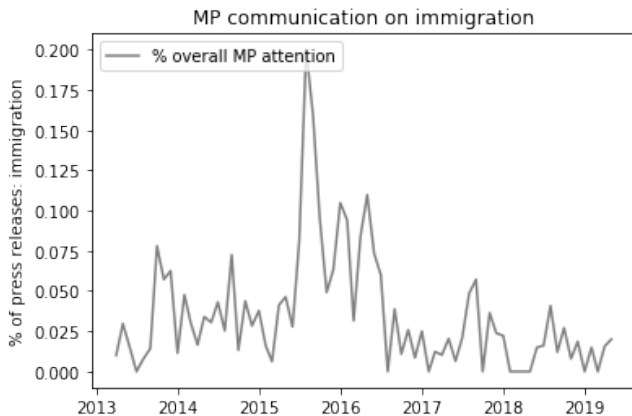H4 Public salience of immigration increases the electoral performance of the RR (*issue ownership*)

AfD performance in polls
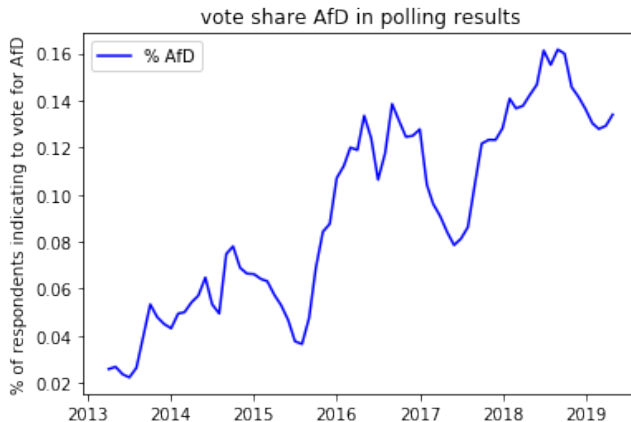
Google searches related to immigration

searches for topic 'migration', relative

Mainstream party emphasis of immigration
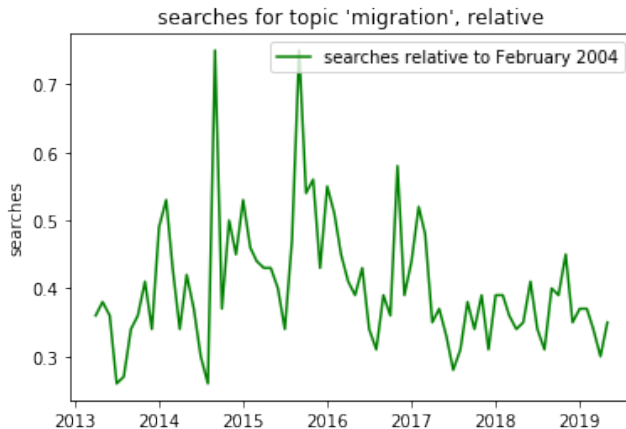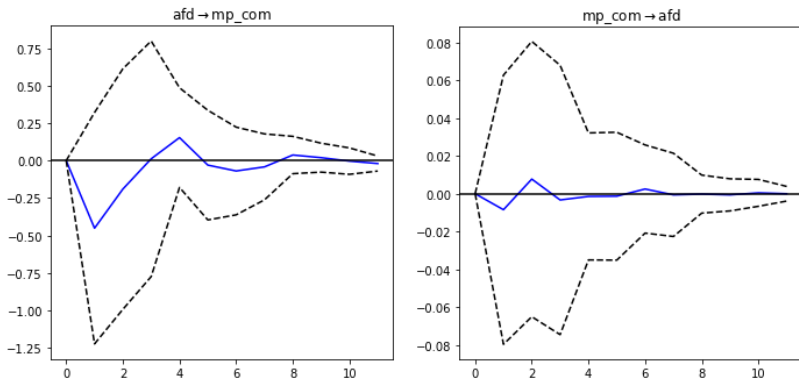

MP communication on immigration

Model specifications

- VAR-model using `statsmodels`.
  - $Y_t = \nu + A_1 Y_{t-1} + \ldots + A_p Y_{t-p} + u_t$
  - Includes lags of dependent & independent variables.
  - $p =$ number of lags
  - Predicts every included variable.
- First difference of time series.
- Number of lags (p) decided based on best fit.

AfD vote share $\leftrightarrow$ MP communication

Impulse responses

Theory
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Salience ↔ MP communication I

Impulse responses
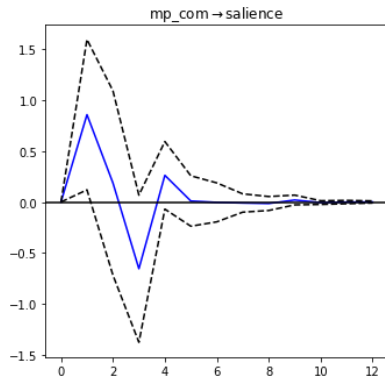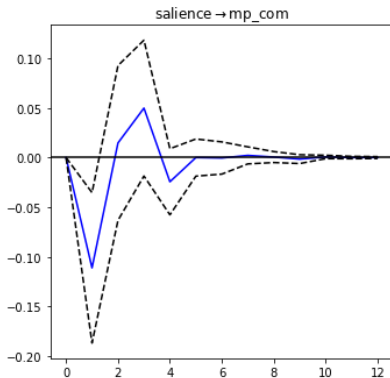
Salience ↔ MP communication II

Cumulative responses
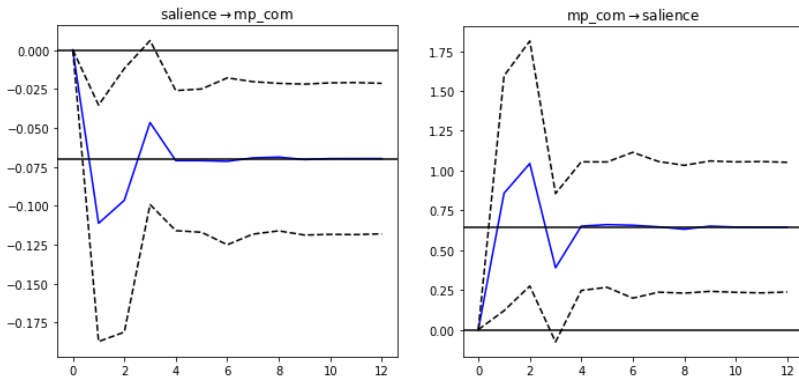
Findings

- Mainstream party communication through press releases does not seem to affect the AfD's vote share.
- Similarly, the AfD vote share does not seem to lead mainstream parties to compete on the same issue.
- However, parties seem to control public issue salience.
- Lastly, parties seem to emphasise an issue less when it is already salient.
- Public salience does *not* increase the AfD's polling performance.

Robustness

Findings (and non-findings) hold in several robustness tests:

- Granger causality tests
- Event control and split samples for August 2015
- CDU/CSU-only model
- Different lags

Limitations

BUT:

- Level of aggregation (monthly) too crude?
- Weak measure of public salience?
- Correct model?
- Is Germany a special case?
- Wrong issue? Should I look at MP-owned issues?
- Moderating factors?

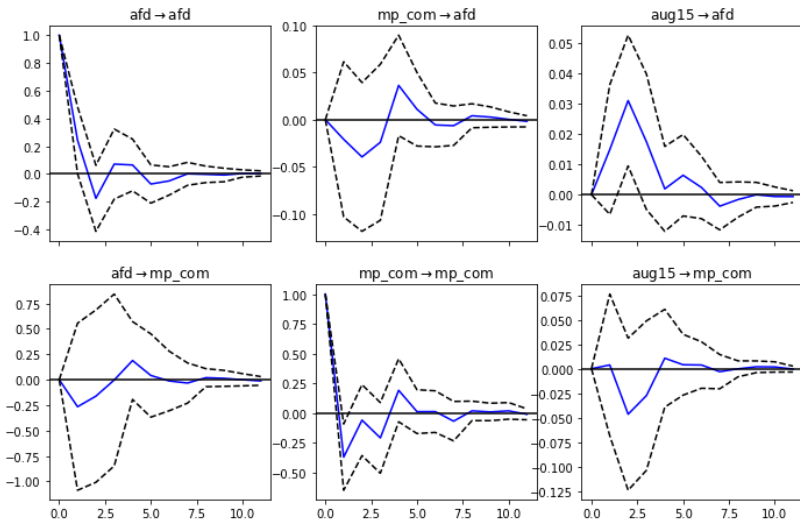... that's all folks!

Thank you!

Full time frame google searches

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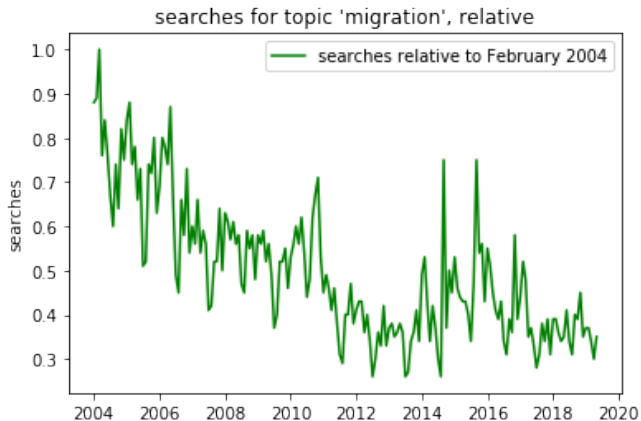
Robustness test: including event control

Impulse responses

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Sources of politicians' pictures

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