

The Illusion of Far-Right Partisan Stability

How Party Positioning Affects Far-Right Voting in Germany*

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Abstract

How stable is support for far-right parties? In one view, far-right voters are *antisystem voters*, beyond capture by established parties. In another, they form *frustrated issue publics*, gravitating towards parties that represent their policy preferences. We evaluate these hypotheses in Germany, where the far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is presently the largest opposition party. Using an original panel survey, we show that AfD voters resemble stable partisans with entrenched anti-establishment views. Yet, this consistency does not simply reflect antisystem voting, but is also rooted in unchanging party-issue positioning: our experimental evidence reveals that many AfD voters change allegiances when established parties accommodate their issue preferences. Persistence in party positioning thus gives rise to an “illusion” of far-right partisan stability. We further demonstrate that, while mainstream parties can attract far-right voters via restrictive immigration policies, they alienate their own voters in doing so – suggesting the status quo is an equilibrium.

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1 Introduction

Far-right parties have become a potent political force in many democracies. Given that such parties inherently embody a “kind of revolt against the established structure of power in the name of the people” (Canovan, 1999), their rise has sparked concerns about the public’s confidence in the established political order. To some, the popularity of the Far Right forewarns of a backlash against liberal democracy — a hypothesis seemingly fortified by recent examples of democratic backsliding in the wake of far-right victories in Eastern Europe (Foa and Mounk, 2017). These experiences raise a troubling possibility: that far-right voters, even in Western Europe’s older, consolidated democracies, increasingly oppose democratic government in principle, rather than just on the issues (cf. Sartori, 2005).

Are such concerns well-founded? Although far-right parties constitute the fastest-growing party family in Europe, we know relatively little about what causes support for such parties to be fleeting or to endure, and what role established parties play in this process. We aim to address these issues empirically by probing the loyalty of far-right voters, asking: Can established parties capture far-right voters by changing their policy positions on the issues most salient to them? Or does the rise of the Far Right represent a more encompassing and enduring rejection of the political establishment?

We distinguish between two general answers to these questions. If, on the one hand, far-right voters represent *frustrated issue publics* who support the Far Right because these parties best reflect their policy preferences, then established parties can undercut far-right parties by becoming more responsive on the issues that their voters prioritize (Meguid, 2008; Carter, 2013). Viewed from this perspective, the rise of the populist right signals dissatisfaction less with democracy than with the policies put forth by established parties. If, on the other hand, far-right supporters are better characterized as *antisystem voters* who fundamentally reject the political establishment, then there is little parties can do in the near term to stem the tide. Even if mainstream parties were to adopt positions that are closer to those embraced by the typical far-right voter, these voters’ opposition towards the political establishment runs so

deeply that such moves would not shake their support of the Far Right (Sartori, 2005).

These accounts produce clear predictions, yet evaluating them convincingly is quite challenging. First, to gauge partisan stability, we need to examine individual voters over time. However, most analyses have either been cross-sectional or sampled different respondents over time.¹ Second, to examine whether far-right voters anchor their vote choice to parties' issue positions, we need to know what issues far-right voters prioritize and, further, how they rank different parties on these issues. While existing research has persuasively demonstrated that far-right voters hold distinct views on issues such as immigration and law and order (Ivarsflaten, 2008; Rydgren, 2008), it has yet to probe to what extent they prioritize these issues vis-à-vis other salient policy concerns, which may be better represented by other parties. Third, and crucially, to test whether these voters would actually desert the Far Right if established parties coopted its position on salient issues, these parties have actually to move, and far-right voters need to be aware of these moves. However, established parties rarely make dramatic shifts away from the status quo (Dalton and McAllister, 2015; Hooghe and Marks, 2018), and it is unclear whether voters monitor such moves closely (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu, 2011). Lastly, to produce realistic implications about party behavior, we have not only to determine whether policy shifts allow established parties to capture far-right voters; it is also critical to assess how these shifts affect the support of their existing voter bases.

We designed our study to meet these challenges. First, to examine partisan stability, we conducted a four-wave panel study in which we observed the voting intentions and political preferences of German citizens over a 15-month period (from September 2016 to December 2017). To examine the linkage between party and issue preferences, we asked respondents detailed questions about party choice, policy preferences, issue priorities, and party rankings on these issues. Drawing on these rich descriptive data, we next designed a conjoint experiment, in which we varied parties' stated policy positions on priority issues, as well as other theoretically-important attributes separating the frustrated issue publics and antisystem voting views. Our

¹ For a review, see Golder (2016). The use of panel data to study far-right voting is a recent phenomenon; see, for example, Berning, Lubbers and Schlueter (2018); Evans and Mellon (2016); Jacobs and Kayser (2018); Mader and Schoen (2018).

experiment examines directly whether established parties can recapture AfD voters (and repel or retain other voters) by accommodating these voters' issue preferences.

Based on this multi-pronged design, we arrive at two main conclusions: First, although AfD voters are extremely dissatisfied with the political system and remarkably stable in their partisan support, many are better characterized as frustrated issue publics than as antisystem voters. Their support for the AfD in part remains stable because other parties fail to meet their preferences on their most prioritized issue – immigration – not because they mistrust the political system altogether. Once we introduce the important counterfactual scenario in which other parties do adopt more restrictive immigration positions, up to half of the AfD's electorate deserts the party for more established alternatives.² Not only are our estimated effects considerably larger than those based on observational data (e.g., Adams et al., 2006; Meguid, 2005; Tavits, 2007), they are also substantively critical; for example, the far-left Die Linke could propel itself to the forefront of the political opposition by capturing just 10% of AfD voters. Thus, much of what appears as far-right partisan stability is not caused by entrenched antisystem views. Rather, it is an “illusion” that is endogenous to party positioning on immigration.

Second, although we find that established parties that advocate more severe immigration restrictions can peel away voters from the AfD, we also demonstrate that doing so is a losing strategy, for these gains are far outweighed by defections from their more immigrant-friendly core electorates. Our analysis thus explains why mainstream parties do not simply absorb far-right voters by accommodating their preferences: The gridlock of established parties on immigration reflects an electoral equilibrium, in which mainstream voters bind their parties to more liberal immigration policies than AfD supporters prefer (cf. Arzheimer, 2013).

Our study advances existing research in several ways. First, recent work has considered declining trust in political institutions and the ascent of populist, far-right politicians that flout democratic norms to reflect a deeper backlash against the political establishment and, in

²We find that the AfD's own position on immigration moderates this effect, suggesting that the party enjoys a first-mover advantage (Kitschelt, 2007; Meguid, 2008), a point we discuss in Section 5.

some cases, even democracy at large (e.g., Foa and Mounk, 2017).³ Our theoretical framework and empirical evidence allow us to demonstrate why this inference can be misleading when established parties are out of step with public opinion from constituencies that are not their own. In short, when parties fail to offer policy alternatives that satisfy issue voters, the latter come to resemble antisystem voters, even as issue preferences continue to structure their vote choice.

Second, while we provide further evidence of changing partisan alignments (Bornschieer, 2018; Hooghe and Marks, 2018; Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015), our research also foregrounds the importance of electoral strategy in translating such realignments into far-right voting. By highlighting the role of party-issue positioning in driving up far-right party vote shares, we demonstrate that their support is precarious and highly sensitive to the configuration of established party positions on immigration (Carter, 2013; Meguid, 2005). Yet, we also show that established parties have strong incentives to maintain the status quo, thereby leaving an opening for the Far Right. Our research thus supports the notion that immigration presents parties with a collective action dilemma (Arzheimer, 2013): Unless all established parties coordinate on proposing tougher immigration policies so as to prevent party defections across the board, the Far Right will remain a potent electoral force. The way out of this dilemma would be to raise the salience of other issues, a point to which we will return in the conclusion.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. In Section 2, we outline our main research question and contrast the antisystem voting and frustrated issue publics views. In Section 3, we explain why adjudicating between these two views is conceptually and empirically difficult, as far-right support is a function of both voters' preferences and party-issue positioning. This observational equivalence necessitates a research strategy that allows for the manipulation of party-issue positioning. In Section 4, we introduce our empirical analysis and demonstrate using our original panel survey that AfD voters exhibit persistent, non-strategic support for the AfD. Although these characteristics are consistent with the antisystem voting view, they

³For accounts that also highlight the erosion of democratic norms and the connection to fascism, see, respectively, Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) and Copsey (2018).

also line up with the frustrated issue publics view. Therefore, in Section 5, we utilize a conjoint experiment, where we vary party-issue positioning to show that many AfD supporters fluidly change allegiances when mainstream parties accommodate their issue preferences. Section 6 concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and empirical implications of our analysis.

2 Two Views of Far-Right Voting

Following Golder (2016), we use the term “Far Right” to describe a party family combining three ingredients. First, far-right parties are populist, calling for political power to be transferred from parties and politicians to “the people” (Canovan, 1999). Second, they are nationalist, defining the people in terms of rigidly drawn national (and oftentimes ethnic) boundaries. Lastly, they are radically authoritarian, calling for the root-and-branch reform of the established political order around traditional morality, strong leaders, and society’s “natural” hierarchies (Mudde, 2007, 2010).

Mirroring their growth, a voluminous literature has formed around the question of why voters support far-right parties. Much of this work has focused on the social and economic developments that have recently driven up “demand” for these parties,⁴ ranging from rising immigration, to cultural change, to the economic pressures wrought by globalization and austerity and the accompanying shifts in groups’ social status (Dancygier, 2010; Gidron and Hall, 2017; Golder, 2016; Hobolt and Tilley, 2016; Inglehart and Norris, 2017).

Complementing these important, demand-oriented works, we examine the supply-side of far-right voting, focusing on the choices of mainstream parties that either nourish or starve far-right parties of support (e.g., Art, 2011; Bustikova, 2014; Dancygier and Margalit, 2018; Kitschelt, 2007). In particular, this paper addresses how parties should respond *programmatically* to the rise of the Far Right, that is, the types of policy stances they should adopt, without necessarily modifying the rules of the game (Carter, 2013; Meguid, 2005, 2008). We outline two general views on this dilemma below.

⁴Additionally, scholars have examined the individual-level attributes associated with far-right voting (e.g., Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers, 2002; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Rydgren, 2008; Mayer, 2013). We present AfD voters’ individual traits in the Appendix.

The Frustrated Issue Publics View Can established parties capture far-right voters by moving closer to their preferred issue positions? This strategy depends on the *frustrated issue publics* view of far-right voting, which assumes that far-right voters are predominantly pragmatic and issue-motivated — that is, their goal is to achieve key policy outcomes (van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie, 2000). Unlike prototypical issue voters, however, far-right voters are frustrated by the perception that established parties will not accommodate their issue preferences. This perception generates antipathy for the political establishment and feeds into the populist accusation that established parties are out of touch with and unaccountable to “the people” (Mudde, 2010).

The frustrated issue publics model yields several key predictions. First, though far-right voters may appear as though they oppose the entire political system, they would readily defect to mainstream parties if the latter accommodated their issue preferences (Carter, 2013; Meguid, 2005, 2008). Indeed, established parties should be even more attractive to far-right voters (as issue voters), as the former possess greater legislative capacity, experience, and probability of holding office (Meguid, 2008). Thus, in the frustrated issue publics view, the partisan loyalties of far-right voters are fickle and “skin-deep” — once established parties change their issue positions, far-right voters should readily follow.

Second, if far-right voters are issue-motivated, they should punish their party for adopting more centrist positions on core issues (cf. Adams et al., 2006; Tavits, 2007). This is true even if far-right voters are protest voters who do not actually expect their party to win office, as moderating dilutes the message that their vote communicates (cf. Alvarez, Kiewiet and Núñez, 2018).

Although the frustrated issue publics view assumes that far-right voters are goal-oriented, it does *not* make consistent predictions about their strategic voting behavior. While studies have shown that far-right voters are often unresponsive to strategic voting incentives, such as party size or district magnitude (e.g., Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Golder, 2003), this does not imply that they are not issue-motivated (see van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie, 2000, for a careful discussion). This is because, when issue-motivated voters perceive established parties

as failing to provide suitable policy alternatives, they may cast nonstrategic protest votes in order to stimulate party repositioning (Alvarez, Kiewiet and Núñez, 2018). In other words, whether frustrated issue voters respond to strategic voting incentives depends on the range of party alternatives open to them.

To summarize, in the frustrated issue publics view, far-right voters are chiefly swayed by their issue preferences, rather than by partisan loyalty or antipathy towards the political establishment. Thus, far-right voters should be willing to support established parties if the latter accommodate their policy views. This core prediction sharply divides this perspective from the antisystem voting view, to which we now turn.

The Antisystem Voting View In the *antisystem voting* view, far-right voters are distinguished foremost by their overriding distrust in political institutions and established parties (Belanger and Aarts, 2006; Schumacher and Rooduijn, 2013). Unlike frustrated issue publics, who are highly responsive to party positioning on core issues, antisystem voters are fundamentally cynical about the willingness and capacity of established parties to address their grievances. As a consequence, they are likely to view policy shifts by the latter as cheap talk, greatly limiting the effectiveness of issue competition (cf. Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018).

The antisystem voting view yields radically different predictions from the frustrated issue publics view. Most importantly, while mainstream parties can integrate frustrated issue publics by accommodating their policy preferences, antisystem voters are fundamentally averse to supporting established parties. The roots of this rigidity lie in factors that are inherently difficult for established parties to emulate or to overcome, such as political cynicism and distrust (Foa and Mounk, 2017); the charismatic authority of far-right politicians (Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers, 2002); and blame for contemporary social and economic developments, which have eroded the social and economic status of far-right voter bases (Bonikowski, 2017).

In contrast with the frustrated issue publics view, which predicts the *conditional* absence of strategic voting, the antisystem voting view is only consistent with non-strategic voting. That is, antisystem voters “vote with the boot”: they mistrust the entire political system and seek

its complete reform (van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie, 2000; Mudde, 2007). As a corollary, antisystem voters also differ from issue voters in the weight that they place on political experience. Given their political cynicism, antisystem voters are more likely to cast pure protest ballots against incumbent parties and career politicians (Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018). In contrast, issue publics do not share this intrinsic aversion to incumbency, and may value it to the extent that it enhances politicians’ ability to achieve desired outcomes.

We should point out that though we use the distinction between frustrated issue publics and antisystem voters to structure our theoretical framework, empirically we expect the far-right electorate to consist of a mixture of these two ideal types. Furthermore, it is conceivable that frustrated issue voters eventually turn into anti-system voters; disappointment with the established parties’ failure to move closer to their issue preferences can undermine these voters’ trust in the political system as a whole (cf. Voogd and Dassonneville, 2018). Although we are unable to test these (likely long-term) developments, we find no evidence that such a dynamic unfolded in the 15 months during which our panel was fielded.⁵

3 The Problem of Observational Equivalence

Are far-right voters better described as frustrated issue publics or as antisystem voters? As our point of entry into this debate, we argue that, while the two views stem from different micro-foundations, they can also be observationally equivalent. For example, when frustrated issue publics perceive established parties to be nonresponsive on their core issues, they may well agree with antiestablishment statements like “Mainstream parties do not care about what the public thinks.” Conversely, antisystem voters may simply adopt the issue positions endorsed by antiestablishment leaders or by parties that they already identify with, rather than choosing parties based on issues (Lenz, 2013). Unfortunately, many kinds of data — in particular, cross-sectional data that do not contain perceptible shifts in party positioning — are unable

⁵For example, we find no increase in antisystem views between waves 1 and 4 among voters who in wave 1 agreed that established parties do not listen to voters’ concerns about refugees. Comparing across waves, these voters were not more likely to mistrust parties or to believe that politicians do not care about what people like them think (Table A7).

	Established parties move closer to far-right voters on salient issues	
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Antisystem Voting	Stable, non-strategic far-right voting	Stable, non-strategic far-right voting
Frustrated Issue Publics	Stable, non-strategic far-right voting	Willing to vote for established parties

Table 1: Observational Equivalence of Antisystem Voters and Frustrated Issue Publics. This table synthesizes the empirical implications of the antisystem voting and frustrated issue publics views. Unless established parties move closer to far-right voters on salient issues, neither antisystem voters nor frustrated issue publics have cause to vote for established parties or vote strategically: the two views are observationally equivalent.

to distinguish between these two causal sequences. When parties do not actually change their positions on core issues, neither antisystem voters nor frustrated issue publics change their party preferences; the two models are observationally equivalent.

Instead, what distinguishes the two models empirically is the hypothesis that, if established parties do move closer to their preferred issue positions, frustrated issue publics will transfer their votes, whereas antisystem voters will continue to support a far-right party. This argument is summarized in Table 1. As the left column of Table 1 shows, we can often observe highly stable, non-strategic far-right voting in the absence of party repositioning, *regardless of whether far-right voters are antisystem or issue voters*. This is because frustrated, issue-motivated far-right voters can look like antisystem voters when they perceive parties as unwilling to accommodate their issue preferences.

It is only under party repositioning that we are able to distinguish the two views (bottom-right cell). When established parties adopt more accommodative stances on the Far Right’s core issues, the empirical implications of the two models diverge, with frustrated issue publics moving back into the fold of established parties. This empirical divergence frames our core research question: By changing the positions taken by political parties on priority issues, can we also induce far-right voters to alter their party preference?

This question not only speaks to a long-standing debate about voter types; it has also pre-occupied centrist parties trying to formulate an optimal electoral response to niche party challengers (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2018; Bale, 2008; Cohen, 2018; Meguid, 2008; Pardos-Prado, 2015). In Germany, established parties are grappling with this question as they campaign in state elections that have taken place after the AfD’s entry into the Bundestag. Having laid out our theoretical framework and core research question, the next section pivots to our empirical analysis of the German case.

4 The Apparent Stability of Far-Right Voting in Germany

4.1 The Refugee Crisis and the Rise of the AfD

We situate our analysis in Germany, a case which shares important features linked to far-right voting with other West European countries and offers several explanatory advantages. First, the emergence of the AfD has been accompanied by a heated debate about its rise, with both antisystem and issue-based approaches appearing plausible (Hambauer and Mays, 2018; Lux, 2018). After four years of a grand coalition between the center-right CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische/Christlich Soziale Union) and the center-left social democrats (SPD) and a twelve-year reign by Angela Merkel, voters in Germany expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the political dominance of the established parties, a development on which the AfD capitalized.⁶ Second, the inflow of refugees preceding the 2017 Bundestag elections propelled the topic to the forefront of the political agenda. When asked what issues would decide their vote choice, respondents to our survey most frequently cited immigration (followed by social and income inequality; see below).

The German situation thus reflects trends in many West European countries, where immigration levels are high and rising, and mainstream parties have been offering increasingly similar stances on this issue (Dancygier and Margalit, 2018), potentially providing an opening for challenger parties on both sides of the political spectrum. Moreover, though Merkel’s run

⁶The AfD’s 2017 manifesto denounces the omnipotence of the political oligarchy, represented by the major parties and calls for power to be returned to the people (Alternative für Deutschland, 2017, 8).

as chancellor is particularly long, dissatisfaction with political elites runs high across Europe (Kriesi, 2012). Learning about the foundations of voter preferences in the German case could therefore shed light on developments elsewhere.

As in many other European countries, party-issue positioning in Germany is stable over time, giving rise to the problem of observational equivalence discussed earlier. To verify this stability, we used newspaper articles to document the positions of Germany’s leading political parties on prominent policy questions connected to immigration, most centrally whether there should be an upper limit (Obergrenze) on the number of refugees allowed annually into Germany. We recorded party positions from mid-2015 to early 2018, bracketing the endpoints of our panel survey and beginning just before the sharp uptick in refugee inflows. These positions are shown on a quarterly basis in Table 2.⁷

	2015			2016			2017			2018		
	Jun.	Sep.	Dec.	Mar.	Jun.	Sep.	Dec.	Mar.	Jun.	Sep.	Dec.	Feb.
CDU												
CSU												
FDP												
SPD												
Greens												
Die Linke												
AfD												

	No clear statement		Against upper limit
	For nonzero upper limit		For complete stop

Table 2: Timeline of Party Positions on Refugee Cap. This table illustrates the stasis of German political parties on an annual cap on the intake of new refugees (“Obergrenze”) during our panel survey period, encompassing the 2017 Bundestag election in September.

To put this policy in perspective, the question of an upper limit became increasingly salient in the lead up to the elections. Germany received by far the most refugees of any European country, and while Merkel’s liberal stance was initially greeted with public support, views

⁷We searched German-language newspapers for mentions of the Obergrenze by leading figures in Germany’s seven most prominent political parties. We covered 15 newspapers as well as party manifestos and interviews with party politicians.

soon began to harden (Mader and Schoen, 2018). Fleeing violence at home, Syrian refugees constituted the largest group, followed by Afghans and Iraqis. Though the government pursued measures that curbed the inflow (e.g., the reclassification of sending countries as “safe”; an agreement with Turkey to host refugees), established parties did not change their positions on the upper limit. We also verified that they did not drastically alter their positions on two other salient policy dimensions, deportations and family reunification. In brief, though the established parties took steps to limit the arrival of refugees, they did not change course on the major, salient refugee-related issues of the day.

These circumstances provided an opening for the AfD. Founded in 2013 on a platform opposing the Eurozone, the party soon pivoted to immigration. As Table 2 shows, no major political party adopted a radical stance or significantly changed positions on the upper limit while our survey was in the field. The AfD, which, having won 12.6 percent of the votes, is now the largest opposition party, is the only party to endorse a complete stop.

4.2 Probing the Stability of Attitudes and Behavior of AfD Voters

To provide descriptive evidence on the attitudes and behavior of AfD voters, here we draw on our original 15-month, four-wave online panel survey of German respondents, which we carried out from September 2016 to December 2017. The target sample size for each wave of our survey was approximately $N = 3000$. Respondents were sampled to be nationally representative on age, gender, and region. However, to ensure that our results are not driven by the composition of our sample, we replicate the analyses below using weights (see the Appendix for additional details). To our knowledge, our survey is unique in its breadth and longitudinal structure: There is no other panel study of German citizens that elicits voters’ views of the political establishment vis-à-vis a far-right alternative; their self-selected issue priorities and associated preferences; their assessment of how parties rank on these self-selected issues; and how these issues in turn influence their vote choices in both an observational and experimental setting. Thus, our study is uniquely positioned to evaluate the individual-level stability and effects of these variables.

However, we also note that our approach is not designed to illuminate long-term processes relating to structural changes in the economy and society, (e.g., Bornschieer, 2018; Inglehart and Norris, 2017) or to varying organizational or ideological features of far-right parties (Golder, 2003; Art, 2011; Kitschelt, 2007). Rather, we examine party support during a time of high immigration salience, established party convergence on this contentious issue, and mistrust of political elites, a setting that generalizes to several West European countries in the 21st century.

We begin by assessing the individual-level stability of AfD support using self-reported vote intention in each of our four waves. We define AfD voters as all respondents who cast a party or a candidate ballot for the AfD during the 2017 Bundestag election (none of our results change significantly if we restrict the definitions to either party-ballots or candidate-ballots only). We then compute the percentage of AfD voters who reported an intention to vote for the AfD in each wave.⁸ Figure 1 shows that 72% of eventual AfD voters expressed a vote intention for the AfD in at least 3 out of 4 waves, a much higher incidence of persistence than among other voters (CDU = 49%, SPD = 35%, Die Linke = 50%, Greens = 46%, and FDP = 35%). Interestingly, the same number of AfD voters (72%; second panel) stated they felt closest to the AfD in at least three waves.⁹ Again this value is higher than those for other established parties (CDU = 50%, SPD = 53%, Die Linke = 66%, Greens = 65%, and FDP = 35%).

AfD voters also exhibit extremely stable issue priorities and preferences. The remaining panels of Figure 1 plot the proportion of respondents who prioritize the immigration issue and prefer a reduced refugee intake. The vast majority of AfD respondents persistently state that immigration determines their vote choice, and that Germany must accept fewer refugees.¹⁰

⁸Vote Intention Question: “If federal elections were held this Sunday, which party would you vote for?”

⁹Feel closest to AfD: takes the value of one if a respondent gives the highest score to the AfD in the following question: “There are many political parties in Germany. How close do you feel to the following parties? Use a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means that you do not at all feel close to a party, and 100 means that you feel very close to the party.”

¹⁰(1) Issue deciding vote choice: “Germany is facing a set of different issues, and political parties deal with these issues in different ways. Which of these issues are most important when it comes to deciding which party to vote for during the general election? Please list three issues.” Respondents were presented with a list of 14 issues (in addition to “other” and a write-in option). (2) Accept fewer refugees: takes the value of one if a

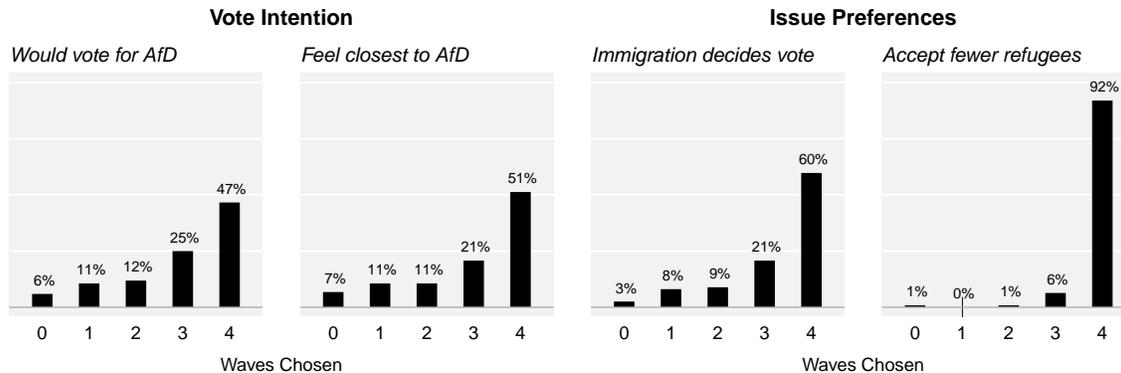


Figure 1: Persistence of Vote Intention and Issue Preferences Among AfD Voters Over Time. This figure illustrates the percentage of AfD voters who, in a given number of waves (0-4), plan to vote for the AfD; feel closest to the AfD; say that immigration decides their vote; and call for accepting fewer refugees. For the great majority – between 72% and 98% – these opinions are stable across our 15-month survey, being chosen in at least three of four waves.

Finally, our survey reveals that AfD voters hold extremely negative perceptions of mainstream parties and politicians. We examined three survey items asking respondents whether they think (1) that “the AfD is for those who no longer feel at home in the politically established parties”; (2) that politicians care not at all, very little, somewhat, quite a lot, or a lot “about what people like [them] think”; and (3) whether they have no, little, some, or complete “trust in political parties.”

Figure 2 shows that AfD voters almost universally hold antiestablishment attitudes. On each item and across all waves, roughly 90% of AfD voters hold the antiestablishment position, relative to only about a quarter to 60% of non-AfD voters. This gap persists even when comparing AfD voters to supporters of another non-centrist party, Die Linke. Its supporters do not hold above-average anti-establishment views. (Notably, among non-AfD voters we observe a reduction of antiestablishment views over time, which is perhaps a function of parties’ stepped up campaign efforts ahead of the election.) These findings are consistent with comparative research on far-right voters – in Germany as elsewhere, far-right voters hold dismal views of the political establishment (Rooduijn, van der Brug and de Lange, 2016; Van Hauwaert and Van Kessel, 2018). Furthermore, like far-right voters in other countries, AfD voters are more given respondent strongly or somewhat agrees with the following statement. “The number of refugees should be reduced.”

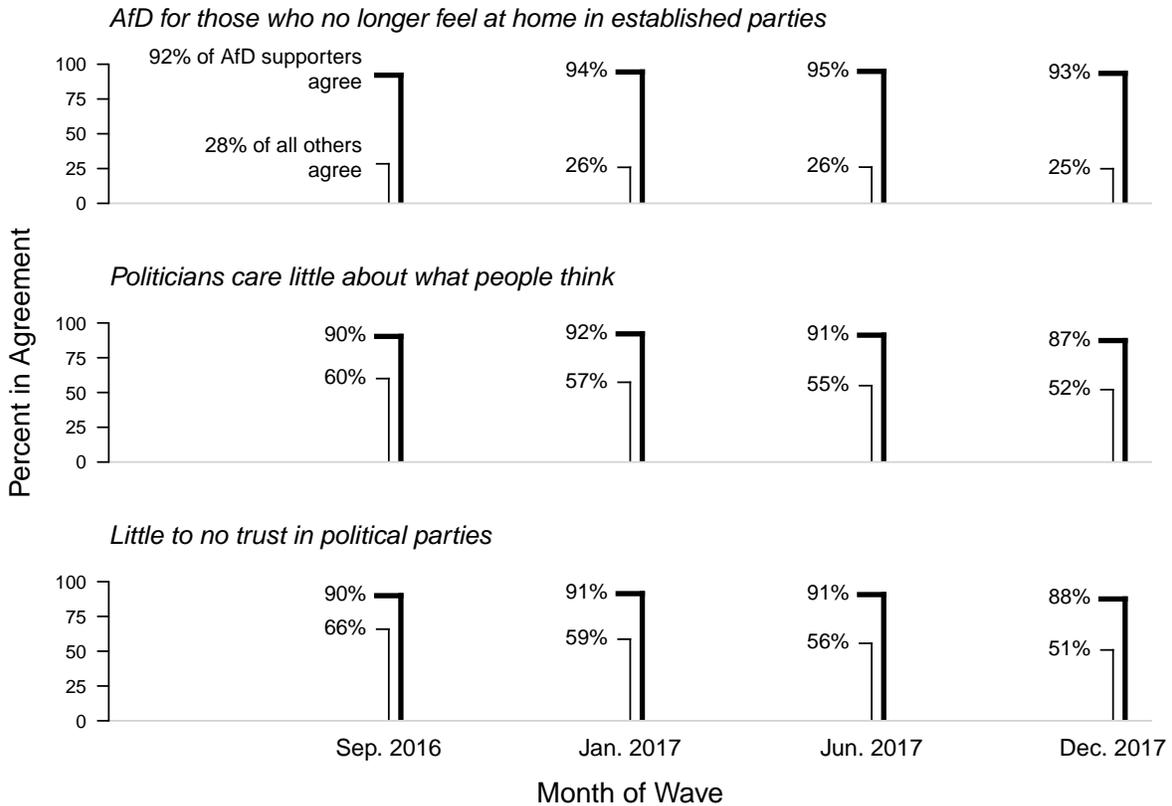


Figure 2: Prevalence of Antiestablishment Views Among AfD Supporters. This figure illustrates the prevalence of antiestablishment views among AfD voters (thick lines) and other voters (thin lines) across survey waves.

likely to be male, to have low levels of education, to be manual workers, and to perceive themselves as occupying a low rung on the social status hierarchy (Gidron and Hall 2017, Mudde 2007; they are also disproportionately found in East Germany (see Appendix for more details)).

4.3 Evidence that the AfD Vote is Non-strategic

These pessimistic assessments could prompt voters to cast ballots for anti-establishment parties, even if their candidates do not have a chance of winning. In this section, we show, using constituency-level electoral data, that AfD voters are indeed willing to vote for unpopular candidates, suggesting, at least at first glance, that they are antisystem rather than issue voters. To do this, we follow a strategy used by Gschwend (2007) and exploit Germany's unique, mixed electoral system, which has voters cast two ballots. The first vote determines winning candidates of single member district races, who receive half of the seats in the Bundestag,

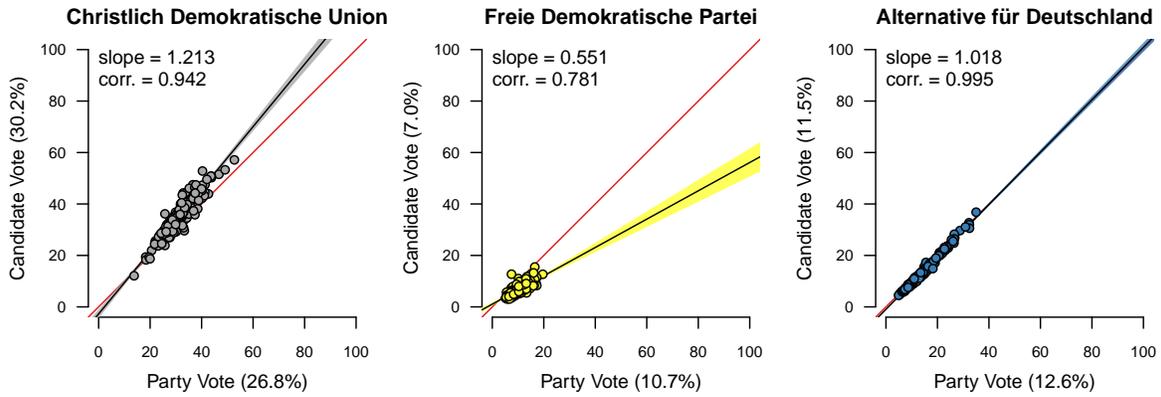


Figure 3: Evidence of Non-strategic AfD Voting. This figure shows the correlation between the candidate- and party-level vote share across Germany’s 299 constituencies for the major right-wing parties: the CDU, FDP, and AfD. For the AfD vote shares, the slope and correlation are close to 1, indicating that votes are not redirected towards stronger candidates, as with the CDU, nor away from weaker candidates, as with the FDP.

while the second vote goes to the party and determines the allocation of the other half to party lists using proportional representation rules. Because voters have a stronger incentive to redirect their first vote to a possibly less favored but more competitive candidate, the larger parties have historically captured a larger share of the first vote, while smaller parties have fared better in the second vote. Thus, the level of party-specific ticket splitting provides a measure of the degree to which parties benefit or lose from calculating voters.

Figure 3 provides a simple visualization of this dynamic by plotting the party vote shares (x-axis) against the candidate vote shares (y-axis), focusing on the CDU, the major center-right party; the FDP, a small liberal party and historically a junior coalition partner to the CDU; and the AfD.¹¹

The left panels of Figure 3 illustrate that strategic voting incentives drive votes towards CDU and away from FDP candidates: for each point of the party vote that the CDU receives, the CDU candidate receives about 1.2 points. Conversely, FDP candidates receive slightly more than half a point for each point that the FDP receives as a party.

By contrast, the AfD party and candidate vote shares are tightly correlated at one, indicating a near-complete absence of strategic voting: AfD voters appear, at least at the aggregate-level, not to redirect their votes to candidates from larger parties. Furthermore,

¹¹The source of these data is Bundeswahlleiter (2018).

while the competitiveness of the candidate races varies considerably from constituency to constituency, we find that virtually no constituency deviates from this line. Taken together, the results shown in Figure 3 indicate that – unlike supporters of other small parties (e.g., the FDP) – AfD voters do not change their support depending on electoral institutions or the competitiveness of elections.

To avoid ecological bias, we also examine the prevalence of ticket splitting at the individual level with our survey. Again, we find that AfD voters rarely redirect their votes to candidates from larger parties. Conditional on giving her party vote to the AfD, the probability that a voter also votes for the AfD candidate is 80%. In contrast, Die Linke party voters only support the Linke candidate 66% of the time, and FDP/Green party voters support the FDP/Green candidate less than half of the time. AfD voters are thus most willing to “waste” their votes on uncompetitive candidates.

5 The Illusion of Far-Right Partisan Stability: Experimental Evidence

In the previous section, we have shown that AfD voters have persistent vote intentions; that they hold dismal views of established political parties; and that they are inattentive to strategic voting incentives. Each of these attributes is often linked to the hypothesis that far-right supporters are antisystem voters who fundamentally reject established political parties. Yet, for reasons discussed in Section 3, they are also consistent with the frustrated issue publics view. This observational equivalence arises because mainstream parties in Germany did not change their positions on core issues (Section 4.1). To disentangle these competing accounts, we need to test whether AfD voters will alter their support for the party if other parties adopt positions similar to those of the AfD.

Indeed, how to best respond to the rise of the AfD is a question that is dividing political parties. While there is a cross-party consensus that the AfD must be stopped from entering the next Bundestag, there is considerable disagreement about how to achieve this goal. Within the CDU, for instance, some strongly oppose a move to the right on immigration, “because

for every voter that you win back with AfD-light-slogans, you lose two in the middle.”¹² Other CDU politicians argue instead that stricter refugee policies would bring AfD voters back into the fold without alienating core supporters.¹³ The CSU bet on this scenario when it adopted harsh anti-immigrant rhetoric in the run-up to the 2018 Bavarian election, but its poor electoral performance suggests that this was not a winning formula. Similar debates are splitting Die Linke, with some in the party’s leadership blaming its liberal refugee stance for its weak showing in the eastern states, and other Linke politicians highlighting the need to more strongly emphasize economic inequality and redistribution.¹⁴

To test whether established parties can capture far-right voters by changing their policy positions, we designed a conjoint experiment (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014), where we presented our respondents with hypothetical candidate profiles. This conjoint experiment can adjudicate the two main views because it allows us to observe the behavior of AfD voters in the counterfactual setting where mainstream parties shift their issue positioning.¹⁵ Only in this setting where established parties move closer to far-right voters on salient issues, do the antisystem voting view and the frustrated issue publics view have different theoretical predictions. If AfD voters move, it provides some evidence that AfD voters are, at least in part, frustrated issue voters. If they don’t, it supports the notion that they are antisystem voters.

Conjoint analysis has been shown to have several important strengths and is pertinent for our research design. First, we can combine policy positions and candidate characteristics that our survey suggested were important to AfD voters, allowing for richer candidate profiles and substantively meaningful choice tasks. Second, previous research has shown that the

¹²Ruprecht Polenz: ”Hört auf, immer nur über Flüchtlinge zu reden!”, 05.11.2017, DIE ZEIT, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2017-11/ruprecht-polenz-cdu-afd-fluechtlinge-medien-in-terview>

¹³Ministerpräsident Tillich: “Leute wollen, dass Deutschland Deutschland bleibt”, 30.09.2017, Berliner Morgenpost, <https://www.morgenpost.de/politik/article212091167/Stanislaw-Tillich-Das-Wahlergebnis-geht-mir-sehr-nahe.html>

¹⁴Konflikt bei der Linken: Wagenknecht will neue Flüchtlingspolitik ihrer Partei, 20.10.2017, Spiegel Online, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/sahra-wagenknecht-linken-fraktionschefin-will-neue-fluechtlingspolitik-a-1173852.html>

¹⁵Note that Vehrkamp and Wratil (2017) also employ an interesting conjoint experiment to examine the effect of issue positions on Germans’ vote choice. However, since the study does not include party affiliations, it cannot address the central question about partisan stability that we pursue here.

realistic properties of conjoint analysis result in high levels of external validity (Hainmueller, Hangartner and Yamamoto, 2015). Nonetheless, we also acknowledge that some respondents might not consider policy shifts that we assign to candidates as credible. We therefore only select candidate-policy pairings that would be realistic given the current state of German politics (see below). Moreover, we chose to vary policy positions of candidates, not parties, as the stated policy preferences of German legislators have been shown to deviate from the party line (Zittel and Nyhuis, 2018). Note also that if some respondents still do not find these policy shifts credible, this would make it more difficult for us to detect evidence of issue-based party-switching, and our results would consequently represent a conservative, lower-bound estimate of the prevalence of frustrated issue voters among the AfD’s electorate.

5.1 Experimental Design and Methodology

Harnessing the unique panel structure of our study, we proceeded in two steps. First, before administering our conjoint experiment in Wave 4, we analyzed the previous waves to identify the issues most salient to AfD voters. Specifically, we presented respondents with a list of 14 issues (in randomized order) and asked them to select the 3 issues that would be most important in deciding their vote choice during the general election. While AfD voters chiefly prioritized immigration (along with linked issues like terrorism and crime), they were also likely to prioritize other issues (see Figure 4).¹⁶ Specifically, while 80% of AfD voters selected “immigration” as one of their top three issue priorities, about 30% of AfD supporters selected pensions – a proportion rivaling those we observe among supporters of Die Linke, the SPD and the CDU. Furthermore, we found that a relatively large share of AfD voters – about 20% – indicated that social and income inequality weighed heavily on their vote decision.

Reflecting these three priorities, we composed profiles of candidates holding distinct positions on immigration, pensions, and taxation. Given its centrality to the AfD’s platform and salience among AfD supporters, our core attribute of interest is the proposed refugee policy.

According to the frustrated issue publics view, the AfD’s appeal chiefly resides in the fact

¹⁶See footnote 10 for the question wording. Figure 4 shows results from Wave 3, but results are similar for all other waves in which we asked this question.

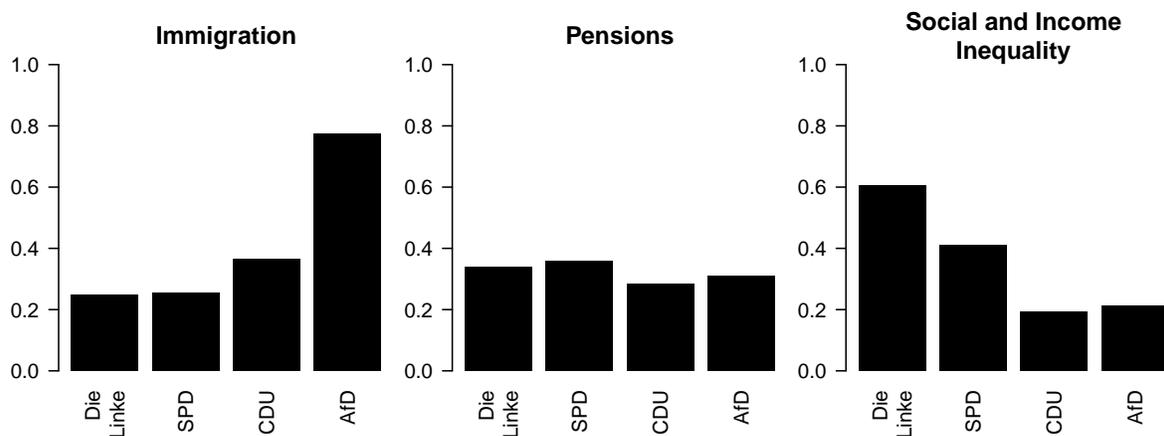


Figure 4: Issue Priorities of AfD Voters Relative to Supporters of Other Parties. Here, we plot the percentage of voters stating that immigration, pensions, or social and income inequality are one of three issues determining their vote. The figure shows that AfD voters strongly prioritize immigration, but that nontrivial percentages also prioritize pensions and inequality.

that it is the party that has proposed the most restrictive refugee policy. By implication, AfD voters should be less likely to support the AfD if either the AfD adopts a less restrictive refugee policy or if another party proposes a more restrictive one. Alternatively, if AfD voters more closely resemble antisystem voters, variation in proposed refugee policies should have little effect. Since the upper limit (Obergrenze) was among the most publicly discussed policy positions, we varied candidates stances on the number of refugees that should be allowed to enter Germany (no upper limit; 500,000; 200,000; or complete stop).

We also examine whether especially extreme proposals related to the treatment of refugees drive some voters away from the AfD, even if the party met their immigration policy preferences. To do so, we varied whether candidates approved of border police being permitted to shoot refugees who entered Germany unlawfully. In January 2016, Frauke Petry, then the leader of the AfD, advocated for this radical policy in order to restore “law and order” at the border.¹⁷

Lastly, the fact that many AfD voters prioritized social and income inequality and pensions led us to probe whether they could be pulled away from the AfD by introducing policy dis-

¹⁷See Zeit Online, “AfD will Flüchtlinge notfalls mit Waffengewalt stoppen.” January 30, 2016 (<https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-01/frauke-petry-afd-grenzschutz-auf-fluechtlinge-schiessen>). So that our conjoint analysis can generalize more easily outside Germany we did not choose an extremist stance related to Germany’s Nazi past.

agreement on these issues. Indeed, our survey indicated that many AfD voters either disagree with their party's position on these issues or view it as relatively incompetent; for example, when asked how well the AfD represented their views on pensions, on average AfD voters rated it quite poorly (42 out of 100). To capture the causal impact of this disagreement, we included an attribute for whether a candidate had given "much" or "no thought" to the sustainability of pensions. We chose this neutral language because pension sustainability tends to be a valence issue in Germany, and it is a subject that the AfD had not focused on prior to the election. The attribute is therefore meant to signal competence and attention to the issue rather than postulate a specific position.

Additionally, since AfD voters gave the AfD relatively low scores on the issue of social and income inequality (43 out of 100) and because our survey showed that AfD voters vary in their support for welfare spending, we included an attribute indicating that a candidate would advocate raising, lowering, or maintaining the top tax rate. The inclusion of this dimension also allows our results to speak to the larger debate about whether radical right parties can broaden their appeal by adopting leftist economic policies (Arzheimer, 2013; Harteveld, 2016).

To further differentiate the frustrated issue publics and antisystem voting views, we composed three additional attributes: incumbency status, the candidate's stated reason for running, and his projected competitiveness. These attributes map straightforwardly onto our two models. If the frustrated issue publics view is correct, our expectation is that incumbency would have a positive effect, since it would signal greater legislative capability and ability to implement policy (Meguid, 2008). Conversely, antisystem voters should punish incumbency, especially among non-AfD candidates. Along similar lines, issue voters should be more likely to reward candidates for trying to influence policy, while antisystem voters should be more likely to reward candidates who run for office to give "ordinary citizens" a voice. Finally, electoral competitiveness can help us estimate the degree of strategic voting. While our observational data suggest that competitiveness had little to no effect on the probability that an AfD supporter chose the AfD candidate in the 2017 election, if the frustrated issue publics view is correct, this effect should vary depending on whether other candidates also propose

restrictive immigration policies. Conversely, antisystem voters should always vote for the AfD, regardless of the projected win probability. Thus, we are not chiefly interested in the average effect of this variable, but in its interaction with the proposed refugee policies.

Each respondent was asked to complete five choice tasks. For each choice task (i.e., selecting the preferred candidate and rating each candidate on a scale of 1-7), respondents were shown four experimentally-varied candidate profiles. Each candidate was assigned to one of four parties: Die Linke, SPD, CDU, and AfD (See Appendix for conjoint script and other details). We did not include the Greens or the FDP (or the option of non-voting), to avoid excessive complexity in the choice tasks that can undermine the quality of responses. Moreover, since AfD voters are too far removed ideologically from the Green Party, switching support between these two parties is rather implausible. Finally, to preserve statistical power we restrict the analysis to male candidates (male politicians also significantly outnumber female politicians in the AfD and in Germany as a whole).

5.2 Evidence for Frustrated Issue Publics

We begin by showing that support for the AfD is highly responsive to party-issue positioning. To estimate the average marginal component effects (AMCEs) of AfD candidate attributes (Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto, 2014), we focus on respondents who indicated that they had voted for the AfD party or candidate in the 2017 election. The number of unique AfD voters in this conjoint analysis is 414 (about 14% of respondents in this experiment; the total number of unique respondents is 3019). Each of the 414 respondents is presented with 5 different candidate profiles, yielding a sample size (respondent-candidate profile pairs) of 2070. We fit a linear regression model of the binary outcome variable, *Vote for the hypothetical AfD candidate*, on sets of indicator variables measuring the levels of the AfD candidate attributes. Hainmueller, Hopkins and Yamamoto (2014) show that the estimated coefficients of this regression model correspond to the causal effects of each attribute on the probability that a given AfD voter selects the hypothetical AfD candidate. The results are shown in Figure 5, along with 95% confidence intervals with standard errors clustered at the respondent-level. Some lev-

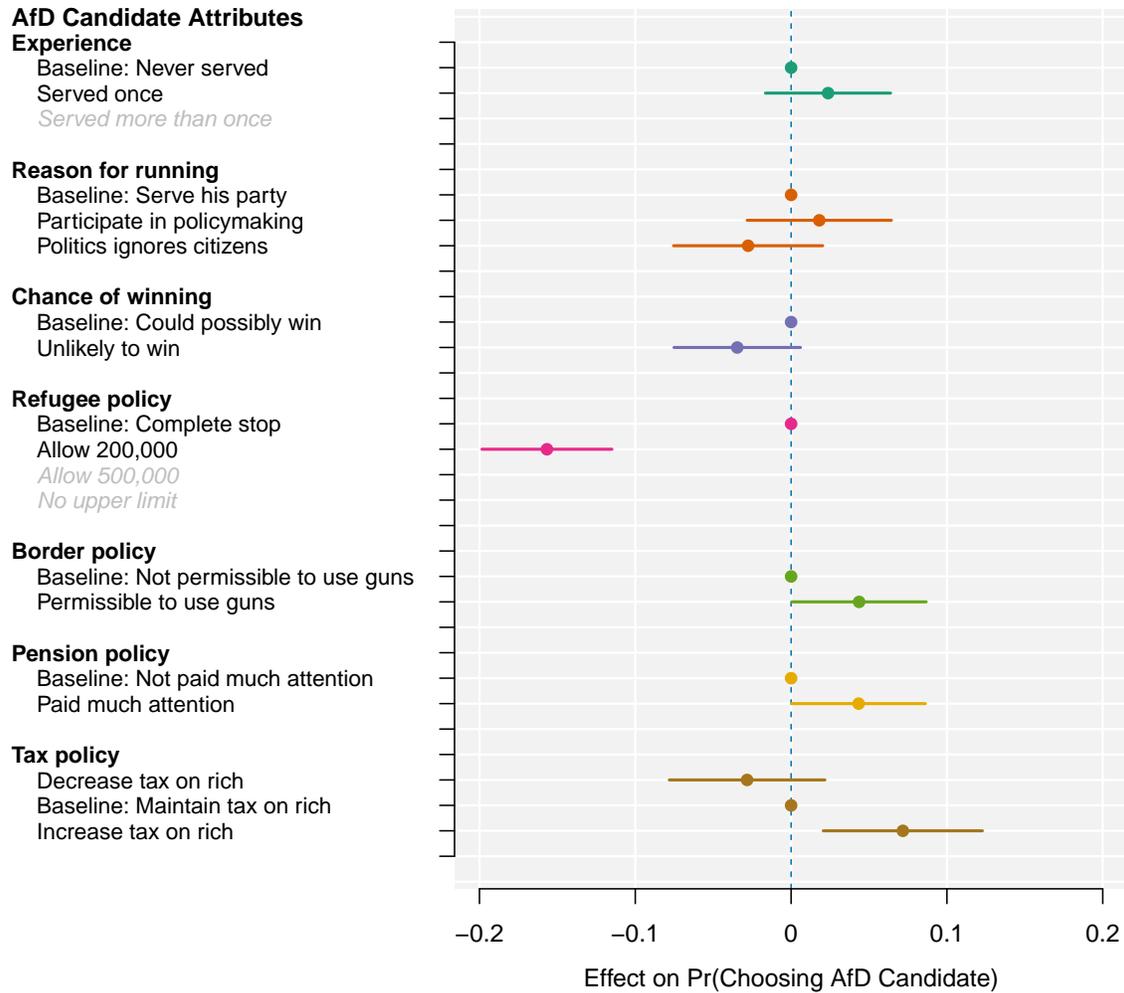


Figure 5: Causal Effects of AfD Candidate Attributes on AfD Vote Choice Among AfD Voters. Here, we plot the AMCEs of hypothetical AfD candidates’ attributes on the probability that they are chosen by AfD voters. We find that the refugee policy predominates, with AfD voters being around 15 points less likely to choose an AfD candidate that does not propose a ban. We blocked implausible attribute levels, denoted by gray italicized labels.

els are shaded in gray to indicate that those levels are excluded from a particular experimental design because they might lead to unrealistic profiles (see the Appendix for details).

Figure 5 shows that AfD voters are responsive to the AfD’s issue positioning. In particular, positions on the refugee issue predominantly and significantly shape support for the AfD. Among AfD voters, the causal effect of the AfD candidate adopting a moderately less restrictive stance on immigration is to reduce support for the hypothetical AfD candidate by more than 15 percentage points.

Focusing on *Experience* and *Reason for running*, neither attribute reveals substantively

or statistically meaningful effects. If anything, each provides evidence *against* the antisystem voting account. AfD voters do not intrinsically value newcomers who state they run for office because “politics too often ignores ordinary citizens” over candidates who focus on policymaking. We investigate the chance-of-winning attribute in detail in Section 5.4.

We also find suggestive evidence that AfD voters are potentially swayed by the candidates’ proposed pension and tax policies. Specifically, AfD voters are significantly more likely to prefer candidates who are attentive to pensions and who propose increasing taxes on the rich, reflecting a broader European trend whereby many far-right party supporters are in fact economic leftists (Harteveld, 2016). These findings confirm the logic of the AfD’s actual drift to the left on pensions, taxation, and social welfare. Especially east German branches of the AfD have begun to campaign on expanding the welfare state, embracing generous pension policies in the hopes of strengthening their support ahead of upcoming state elections (Oltermann, 2018). Lastly, we find that AfD voters are also sensitive to the severity of the proposed border security policy, even after accounting for the broader question of how many refugees Germany should accept. AfD voters are about 5 percentage points more likely to support the AfD candidate when he condones gun violence targeted at refugees at the border. Violent extremism appears not to repel AfD voters; it solidifies their support.

The findings on the tax and border policies allow us to rule out an alternative explanation, which is that AfD voters withdraw support from AfD candidates who propose less restrictive refugee policies as punishment for deviating from the party program (rather than because of their issue preferences). If this mechanism were in effect, we should not find that AfD voters are sensitive to AfD candidates’ aggressive position on gun usage or liberal position on taxes, neither of which reflected the party line at the time.

Although the causal effects of the other policy dimensions are substantively meaningful, ranging from 5 to 10 percentage points, positions on refugee policy clearly predominate among AfD voters. In particular, AfD voters heavily punish the AfD for adopting less restrictive immigration policies. The next crucial question is whether AfD voters respond to refugee policy positions of other established parties. While issue publics would respond to shifts in

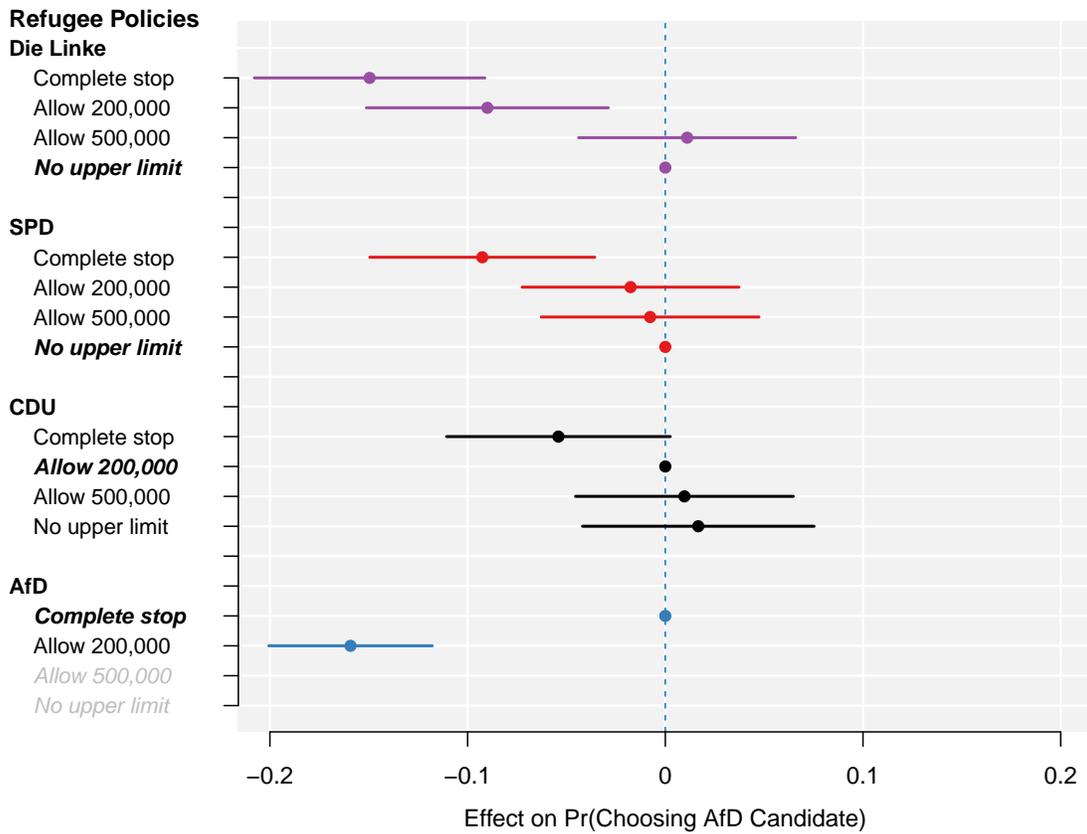


Figure 6: Causal Effects of Refugee Issue Positioning on AfD Vote Choice Among AfD Voters. This figure shows that AfD voters are between 5 and 15 points less likely to select the AfD candidate when other candidates propose stricter refugee policies. The baseline policies for each party are set to their status quo policies, denoted by bold italicized labels, while restricted policies are denoted by gray italicized labels.

refugee policy positions of any party, including mainstream established parties, antisystem voters do not opt for established parties, even if they agree with those parties' proposed policies. Can AfD voters be persuaded to move to established parties when those parties accommodate their issue preferences on refugee policy? We answer this question in Figure 6, where we regress the same binary outcome variable, *Vote for the hypothetical AfD candidate*, on sets of indicator variables measuring positions on the upper limit adopted by hypothetical candidates from the established parties.

In Figure 6, we set the baseline for each party so that it approximates its real-world policy position. We also represent the causal effect of refugee policy positioning of the AfD as a reference. Figure 6 shows that the mainstream parties can dramatically reduce the AfD's vote share by adopting more restrictive positions on immigration. Controlling for the AfD's position

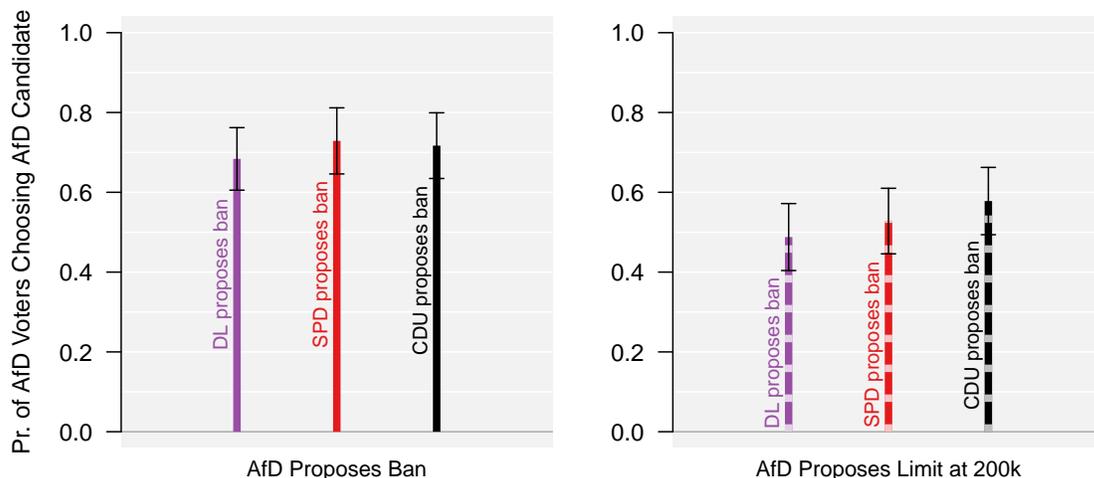


Figure 7: Interactions Between Proposed Refugee Policies. This figure illustrates the interaction between the AfD’s proposed refugee policy and the policies proposed by other candidates. For example, when the AfD candidate proposes an annual cap of 200,000 while Die Linke candidate proposes a ban, fewer than half of AfD voters choose the AfD candidate.

on refugees, accommodative parties can reduce the share of AfD voters who support the AfD by between 5 and 15 percentage points. The estimated effects are largest for parties on the Left, which is consistent with the overrepresentation of AfD voters in eastern, blue-collar, and low-income districts (Franz, Fratzscher and Kritikos, 2018).

Although the average impact of refugee policy positions is large, there might be important heterogeneity. In particular, effects could be moderated by voters’ trust in political parties. If voters are antisystem and genuinely distrustful of established parties rather than expressing dissatisfaction simply because those parties don’t meet their issue preferences, then they should not be swayed by changes in issue positions. Yet we found surprisingly little variation in the magnitude of the effects of refugee policy positions by political trust: in the Appendix, we show that AfD voters who express no trust in parties are as willing to switch their vote to these parties when they appeal to them on the basis of issues. This evidence further casts doubt on the independent importance of antisystem views in explaining voting behavior.

Instead, we find that the effect of other parties’ refugee policies varies most strongly in interaction with the AfD’s own position on the refugee issue. As Figure 7 shows, when the AfD candidate proposes a less restrictive refugee policy – an upper limit of 200,000 – he can lose more than half of his voters to a candidate that proposes a complete ban. To be clear,

we do not think this configuration is a realistic scenario, but we include it here to demonstrate that positioning on the refugee issue outweighs allegiance to the AfD among many AfD voters. By contrast, when the AfD remains at the most extreme position and another party proposes a ban, it loses about 30% of its voters. The dampening of this effect suggests that the AfD enjoys greater credibility in this domain, so long as it remains fixed at the most restrictive position (Meguid, 2008; Kitschelt, 2007). This finding highlights the need to replicate our analysis in future years: if established parties lose credibility over time by eschewing the Far Right’s pet issues, then their ability to persuade far-right voters might also decline over time (Golder, 2016).

5.3 Why Party Positioning and Far-Right Support Remain Stable

Thus far, we have shown that a considerable share of AfD voters are sensitive to issue positioning and open to capture by established parties. Why, then, do established parties not simply absorb the AfD’s constituency by adopting its anti-immigrant platform?

We show here that, in fact, established parties have strong incentives not to accommodate AfD voters’ preferences as they can lose their own supporters by proposing harsher refugee policies. In Figure 8, for each party, we estimate causal effects of refugee policy positions on their own supporters. In particular, we regress the binary outcome variable, *Vote for the hypothetical candidate from Party X*, on sets of indicator variables measuring the refugee policy positions of hypothetical candidates from **Party X** where **Party X** is one of Die Linke, the SPD, or the CDU.¹⁸ The estimated causal effects of the refugee policy positions for each of these regressions are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8 demonstrates that the three established parties each stand to lose a large proportion of their voters by becoming more restrictive on the immigration issue, which, in the case of the SPD and CDU, more than offsets their gain from AfD voters. As Figure 8 shows, proposing a ban results in an average loss of around 10% of each party’s constituency. Post-multiplying

¹⁸In this conjoint analysis, the number of unique voters for each party are 482, 760, and 756 for Die Linke, the SPD, and the CDU, respectively. Because each respondent evaluates five choice tasks, the sample sizes (respondent-candidate profile pairs) of those three parties are 2410, 3800, and 3780, respectively.

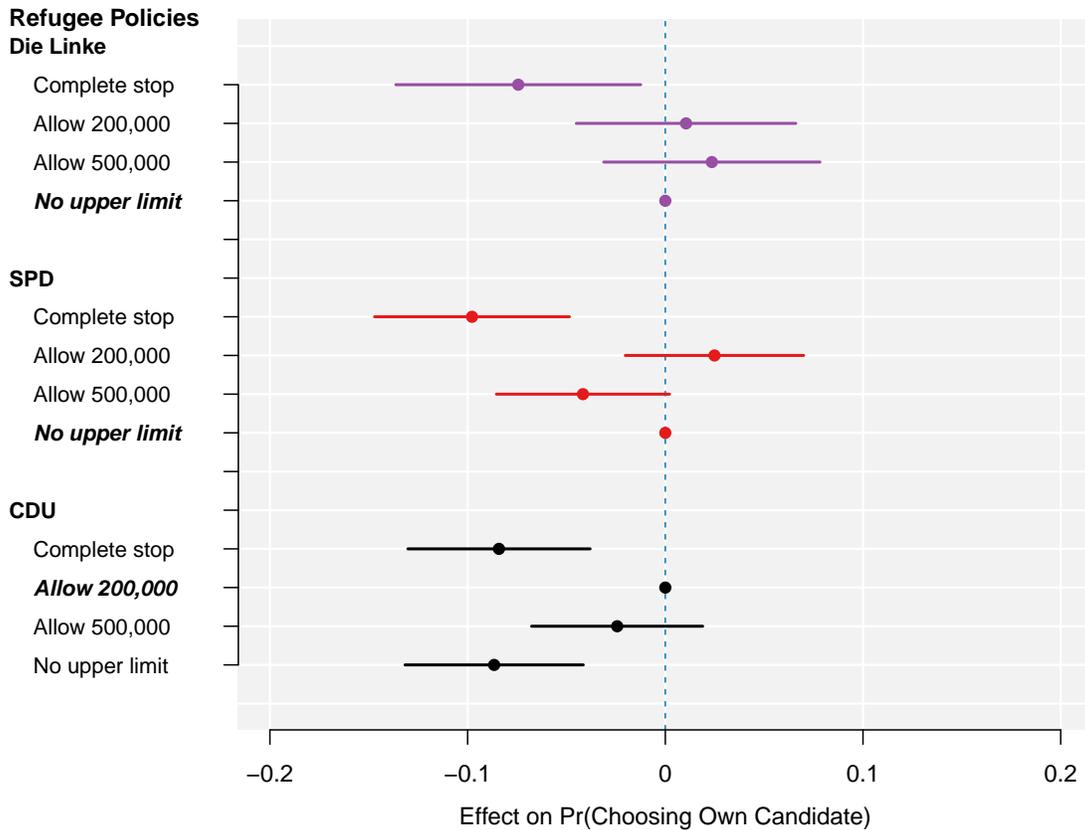


Figure 8: Causal Effects of Refugee Issue Positions on Vote Choice by Own Supporters. This figure plots the AMCE of the refugee policies proposed by each party on their own supporters. For example, when the SPD candidate proposes a ban, SPD voters are 10% less likely to support him. As the figure shows, the ban is quite unpopular among supporters of the established parties, outweighing the potential influx of AfD voters for the SPD and CDU, though not the Left Party.

this estimate by 2017 vote shares, this corresponds to an absolute loss of around 3% (CDU), 2.5% (SPD), and 0.8% (Die Linke), relative to an absolute gain of around 1.3% from the AfD.¹⁹ Proposing a ban is thus potentially incentive-compatible – if highly risky – only for Die Linke, which has in fact begun to split internally over the refugee issue (Oltermann, 2018).

5.4 Why AfD Voters Look Non-strategic

Our experimental results establish that roughly 30 to 50% of AfD voters can switch their vote choice to established parties if the latter move closer to AfD voters on salient issues.

Another key difference between the antisystem voting and frustrated issue publics view is

¹⁹In the Appendix, we show the average treatment effects for all voting respondents of moving to a ban (Table A8). We find that, relative to their most popular policy, the non-AfD candidates lose between 2% to 5% of voting respondents by proposing a ban.

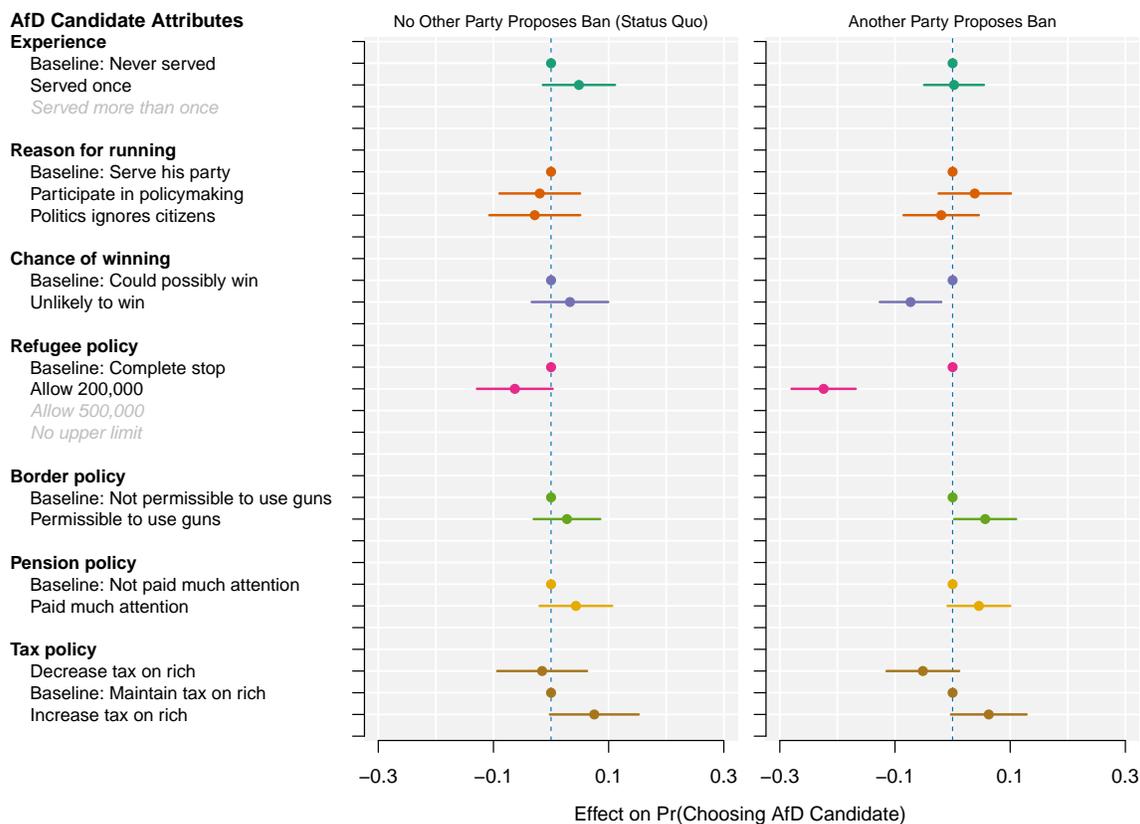


Figure 9: Causal Effects of AfD Candidate Attributes on AfD Vote Choice Among AfD Voters, Interacted With Status Quo. This figure shows that, for AfD voters, the refugee policies proposed by other parties strongly moderate strategic voting and the effect of the AfD’s proposed refugee policy. Only when another party proposes a ban do the *Chance of winning* and *Refugee policy* attributes have a statistically significant effect on the probability that AfD voters choose AfD candidate.

their emphasis on strategic voting behavior, as discussed in Section 2. While we showed that AfD voters seemingly voted non-strategically, the effect of strategic voting incentives can be muted even for issue voters if they perceive no other party as offering an acceptable alternative (Section 3). To test this possibility, we define a new variable, *Status Quo*, that takes the value of one if no other party proposes a complete stop to new refugees, and zero otherwise.

In Figure 9, we show the causal effects of AfD candidate attributes on AfD vote choice among AfD voters when interacted with *Status Quo*. We identify two important empirical findings. First, by fixing the experimental conditions to the real-world configuration we are able to replicate the non-effect of strategic voting incentives identified in Section 4.3. That is, once our experiment mimics actual party positioning at the time of the 2017 election, AfD voters look non-strategic: they are as willing to support candidates with low probability of

winning as candidates with high probability of winning. The causal effect of the *Chance of Winning* attribute is weak, insignificant, and in the wrong direction.

Second, the right-hand panel of Figure 9 shows that AfD voters do behave strategically when other parties propose a ban. Under such counterfactual conditions, AfD voters are nearly 10 points less likely to support a noncompetitive AfD candidate. Put differently, outside of the status quo, AfD voters are significantly less likely to waste their votes on uncompetitive AfD candidates, instead diverting their support to candidates who will actually be in a position to implement their desired policies.

Outside of the strategic voting and refugee intake attributes, we did not find any other significant interactions with *Status Quo*.

5.5 Summary of Findings

To summarize, in Section 4, we showed that AfD voters exhibit several important features that are often associated with antisystem voters. Not only is support for the AfD highly stable over time, AfD voters feel profoundly alienated from established parties and do not redirect their votes to them, even when they have strategic incentives to do so. Each of these findings is consistent with the view that far-right voters are antisystem voters who would not vote for mainstream parties, even if the latter reconfigured their positions on the issues most salient to them.

However, in contrast to this explanation, our experimental evidence reveals that a large fraction of AfD voters – in some scenarios, more than half – are perfectly willing to vote for established parties that better suit their issue preferences. Furthermore, once AfD voters have the option of choosing between multiple parties that meet their preferences, they do vote strategically, and are more likely to support stronger candidates.

Importantly, we are able to reconcile our descriptive and experimental findings. First, we experimentally recover a precise null effect of strategic voting incentives when other parties do not accommodate AfD voters' preferences for more restrictive refugee policies. Second, we demonstrate that the status quo balance of party positions on the refugee issue is an electoral

equilibrium: no party has a clear incentive to adopt more restrictive positions, and the AfD has no incentive to adopt a less restrictive position.

6 Concluding Remarks

Despite the prevalence and growth of far-right parties in Europe, researchers have yet to address under what circumstances their support is fleeting or likely to endure. A key aspect of this question is whether far-right voters are forming loyal partisan identities, binding them to their parties irrespective of the policy positions of other parties, or if mainstream parties can undercut the Far Right by adopting its issue positions. Focusing on the German case, our findings suggest that the rise of the AfD – and the loyalty it appears to command – do not simply reflect a growing disenchantment with the political order, but instead emerge from an electoral equilibrium that prevents established parties from accommodating AfD voters’ issue preferences.

Our findings have nuanced implications for forecasting the stability of far-right support. On the one hand, we show that support for the AfD rests precariously on party positioning on immigration: If an established party were incentivized to adopt more restrictive immigration policies, it could greatly undermine the AfD (Carter, 2013; Meguid, 2008). On the other hand, we also illuminate the electoral logic underpinning partisan gridlock on immigration. In this sense, the liberal preferences of more educated and cosmopolitan voters act as a powerful, if indirect lever shaping far-right support (cf. Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten, 2013). In all likelihood, views on immigration will continue to be polarized and structured by social divisions in status, education, and cosmopolitanism, making it difficult for mainstream parties to integrate far-right voters into their electoral coalitions. As a result, in the absence of shifting issue priorities or preferences, support for far-right parties could indeed be stable, even without strong partisan identities.

Encouragingly, we find that AfD voters hold multidimensional preferences. Thus, it may be possible to undercut the AfD by lowering the salience of immigration and accommodating their voters’ preferences on the economic dimension. Although we find preliminary evidence

of the efficacy of this mechanism, future research should investigate more thoroughly how attention to issues other than immigration can affect the electoral success of the Far Right. At the same time, our results also suggest that, if far-right parties continue to drift leftwards on economic issues and to build competence in this area, this strategy may well lose its bite (Ivaldi, 2015; Oltermann, 2018).

Finally, although many AfD voters change partisan allegiances based on issue fit, we also find that nearly half never do. Interestingly, antisystem attitudes do not explain this loyalty. Rather, being male and especially disapproving of refugees best predict this unwavering support (see Appendix). On the one hand, this finding might bode well for democratic stability. Indeed, most of our analyses demonstrate that opposition to the political order has little independent explanatory power. On the other hand, that antisystem views do not cause AfD support suggests that far-right parties won't lose the backing of their core electorate when and if these parties become part of the political establishment, so long as they remain fiercely xenophobic. By implication, the erosion of democratic norms that can accompany the rise of far-right parties could reflect a troubling political bargain: even when xenophobic voters are not drawn in by the anti-democratic impulses of far-right parties, future research should examine whether they are willing to accept a weakening of democratic norms if they are promised closed borders in return.

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A Panel Survey Data

A.1 Survey Administration

The Respondi panel covers the online, 18+ German population. Our initial sample (wave 1) was sampled from the Respondi’s panel to be nationally representative on age, gender, and region. Respondi’s quality standards, along with further details on their sampling methodology, are reported below:

Membership and participation are voluntary and follow a double opt-in registration process. The panel is actively and centrally managed by a professional panel team. In order to ensure a high standard of quality, the panel undergoes a continuous quality control process using a thorough scoring and controlling system. Since we recruit via our own opinion platforms and the telephone, the focus is on intrinsic motivation thus preventing sample bias due to “professional” respondents. A guaranteed panel response rate of 60 % within the first seven days serves as proof of this high standard of quality (Respondi, “Quality Standards”).

Our panel survey design was archived in the Evidence in Governance and Politics (EGAP) repository (#20170321AA). As the project evolved, we introduced the conjoint experiment in Wave 4 to gain additional leverage on our research questions. Please note, however, that the conjoint experiment in this paper was not pre-registered.

Our panel survey consisted of 4 waves, with the first wave consisting of 3435 respondents. We added fresh samples in each wave, both to avoid panel conditioning and to maintain the per-wave sample size at close to 3000. We also embedded a simple attention check every wave and analyze only observations that passed this check. Our 15-month panel lasted from September 2016 to December 2017, bracketing the German federal election in September 2017. In each wave, we retained about 70% of respondents from each previous wave. Around 44% of respondents participated in all four waves.

Wave	Date	Sample Size	Fresh Sample	Sample Size (Analyze)
Wave 1	09/05/2016 – 09/23/2016	3435	–	3419
Wave 2	01/04/2017 – 01/17/2017	2907	10.3 %	2883
Wave 3	06/19/2017 – 06/30/2017	3538	38.7 %	3274
Wave 4	12/07/2017 – 12/22/2017	3083	23.1 %	3019

Table A1: Sampling Design.

	Until Wave 1	Until Wave 2	Until Wave 3	Until Wave 4
From Wave 1	100	75.9	58.0	44.2
From Wave 2	–	100	74.6	56.3
From Wave 3	–	–	100	67.0
From Wave 4	–	–	–	100

Table A2: Attrition Rate.

A.2 Survey Question Wording

- “Vote Intention if elections on Sunday”

If the federal elections were held this Sunday, which party would you vote for? Please answer this question even if you are not entitled to vote. This information is very important for the scientific analysis of our study. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential and will remain anonymous.

1. CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union/ Christlich Soziale Union)
2. SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
3. Die Linke
4. Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen
5. FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands)
6. AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)
7. Piraten Partei
8. NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
9. FW (Freie Wähler)
10. Tierschutzpartei
11. ÖDP (Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei)
12. Republikaner
13. Other [write in]
14. I would not vote
15. Don't know
16. No answer

- “Established parties listening to concerns about refugees”

And do you think that the established parties are listening to the German publics' concerns in relation to the inflow of refugees? When it comes to the inflow of refugees, established parties:

1. Listen carefully
2. Listen somewhat
3. Don't tend to listen
4. Don't listen at all

to the concerns of German citizens.

- “Party best able to handle refugee crisis”

Germany has been receiving large numbers of refugees. What party do you think is best able to handle the refugee issue?

1. CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union / Christlich Soziale Union)
2. SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
3. Die Linke
4. Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen

5. FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands)
 6. AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)
 7. NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
 8. Republikaner
 9. No party
 10. Other party [write in]
 11. Don't know
- “The AfD is an alternative for all those who no longer feel at home in the politically established parties”
 1. Agree completely
 2. Agree somewhat
 3. Disagree somewhat
 4. Disagree completely
 - “How much would you say that politicians care what people like you think?”
 1. Not at all
 2. Very little
 3. Some
 4. Quite a lot
 5. A lot
 - “Please tell me how much you personally trust each of the institutions listed below.” I trust political parties:
 1. completely
 2. somewhat
 3. not very much
 4. not at all
 - “Issue deciding vote choice”

Germany is facing a set of different issues, and political parties deal with these issues in different ways. Which of these issues are most important when it comes to deciding which party to vote for during the general election? Please list three issues (Note that the order of issues was randomized across respondents and waves).

- Immigration
- Education
- Pensions
- Health and health insurance
- Crime
- Unemployment
- Environment, climate and energy
- Terrorism

- Rising prices, rising cost of living, inflation
- Economic situation
- Construction of housing
- Gender equality
- Foreign policy
- Income inequality/social equality
- Other [write in]
- Don't know

- “Issue Allocation for vote choice” for three issues picked.

And how important is each issue when it comes to deciding your vote choice? If you had a total of ten points to allocate across the issues that you just selected, how would you allocate the points? The more points you allocate to an issue, the more important the issue is to you.

- “Issue Fit” for three issues picked.

And how well do you think the following parties represent your views on these issues? Use a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 means that the party does not represent your views at all on an issue and 100 means the party represents your views very well.

- CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union/Christlich Soziale Union)
- SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
- AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)
- Die Linke
- Bündnis 90/Die Grünen
- FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands)

- “Attitude toward refugee policies”

Now we will ask you a few additional questions about refugees in Germany, a topic on which there are many different opinions. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? “The number of refugees should be reduced.”

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Disagree strongly

B Conjoint Experiment

B.1 Experimental Design

Our conjoint experiment prompt was worded as follows

Here are four hypothetical candidates for the Bundestag. Please choose the candidate you would be most likely to vote for if the election was held next Sunday. Also, rank each candidate overall on a scale on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being you strongly disapprove of the candidate and 7 you strongly approve of the candidate. Please note that the candidates are similar except for the attributes below.

Each respondent saw five screens. Four profiles with eight attributes were shown on each screen. The first attribute, Party, was fixed on all screens as Die Linke, SPD, CDU, and AfD, both to avoid confusion and to allow each respondent to choose an option from one of these four parties on every screen. Among the remaining 7 attributes, the first three rows (Experience, Reason for running, and Chance of winning) were shown in the same order. However, levels in each factor are randomized. The order and levels of the four remaining rows were randomized. In order to maintain realistic profiles, we imposed randomized restrictions; for example, AfD candidates could not have previously served for several terms in the Bundestag and could not propose to accept all or 500,000 refugees per year, as this would not produce a plausible profile. Complete details on our randomization restrictions are reported in the following table.

Factor	Levels	Note
Experience	(1) In Bundestag for the first time (2) Previously served one term in Bundestag (3) Previously served for several terms in Bundestag	Do not assign to AfD
Reason for running	(1) Because politics too often ignores ordinary citizens (2) To continue to serve his party (3) To participate in policymaking	
Reason for running	(1) This candidate is expected to win the support of many voters and could possibly enter the Bundestag (2) This candidate is expected to win the support of few voters and will probably not enter the Bundestag.	Half of the screens should show this attribute for one candidate and the other half should show this attribute for two candidates. A maximum of two candidates should have this attribute for any screen.
Refugee policy	(1) There must be a complete stop to the arrival of refugees (2) There should be an annual upper limit of 200,000 (3) There should be an annual upper limit of 500,000 (4) There should not be a limit to the number of refugees	Do not assign to AfD Do not assign to AfD
Border policy	(1) The German border police should be allowed to use gun violence against refugees who come to Germany illegally (2) The German border police should not be allowed to use gun violence against refugees who come to Germany illegally	Do not assign to SPD
Pension Policy	(1) Has paid much attention to the question of how to sustainably secure pensions and the pension level (2) Has not paid much attention to the question of how to sustainably secure pensions and the pension level	
Tax Policy	(1) The top tax rate for the rich must increase (2) The top tax rate for the rich should stay the same (3) The top tax rate for the rich should be decreased	Do not assign to CDU Do not assign to Die Linke Do not assign to Die Linke and SPD

Table A3: Factors and Levels with Randomization Restrictions.

B.2 Example


Politische Langzeitstudie

13%

Partei	Die Linke	SPD	CDU	AfD
Wie lange im Bundestag	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Persönlicher Anlass für das Kandidieren	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Wahlprognose	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Position: Rente	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Position: Soziale Gerechtigkeit	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Position: Aufnahme von Flüchtlingen	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO
Position: Grenzpolitik	TODO	TODO	TODO	TODO

Ich würde am ehesten für diesen Kandidaten stimmen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meine Bewertung dieses Kandidaten (1= lehne ab, 7=befürworte)	<input type="text" value="--Bitte Auswählen--"/> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 2px;"> --Bitte Auswählen-- 1 = lehne ab 2 3 4 5 6 7 = befürworte </div>	<input type="text" value="--Bitte Auswählen--"/>	<input type="text" value="--Bitte Auswählen--"/>	<input type="text" value="--Bitte Auswählen--"/>

Weiter

Figure A1: Conjoint Experimental Design

C Robustness Checks

C.1 Survey Weights

We used poststratification weights to adjust the conjoint respondent data for common sources of survey error (non-response, coverage error, etc.). The weights adjust the sample to the demographic distributions of Germany data from the European Social Survey (Round 8, released on 30th of May 2018, weighted by its sampling weights) in terms of gender, age and education. Then, we computed the difference between our main results reported in the paper and results reported from weighted samples. The results are substantively similar for all main results reported in Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7 without using these weights.

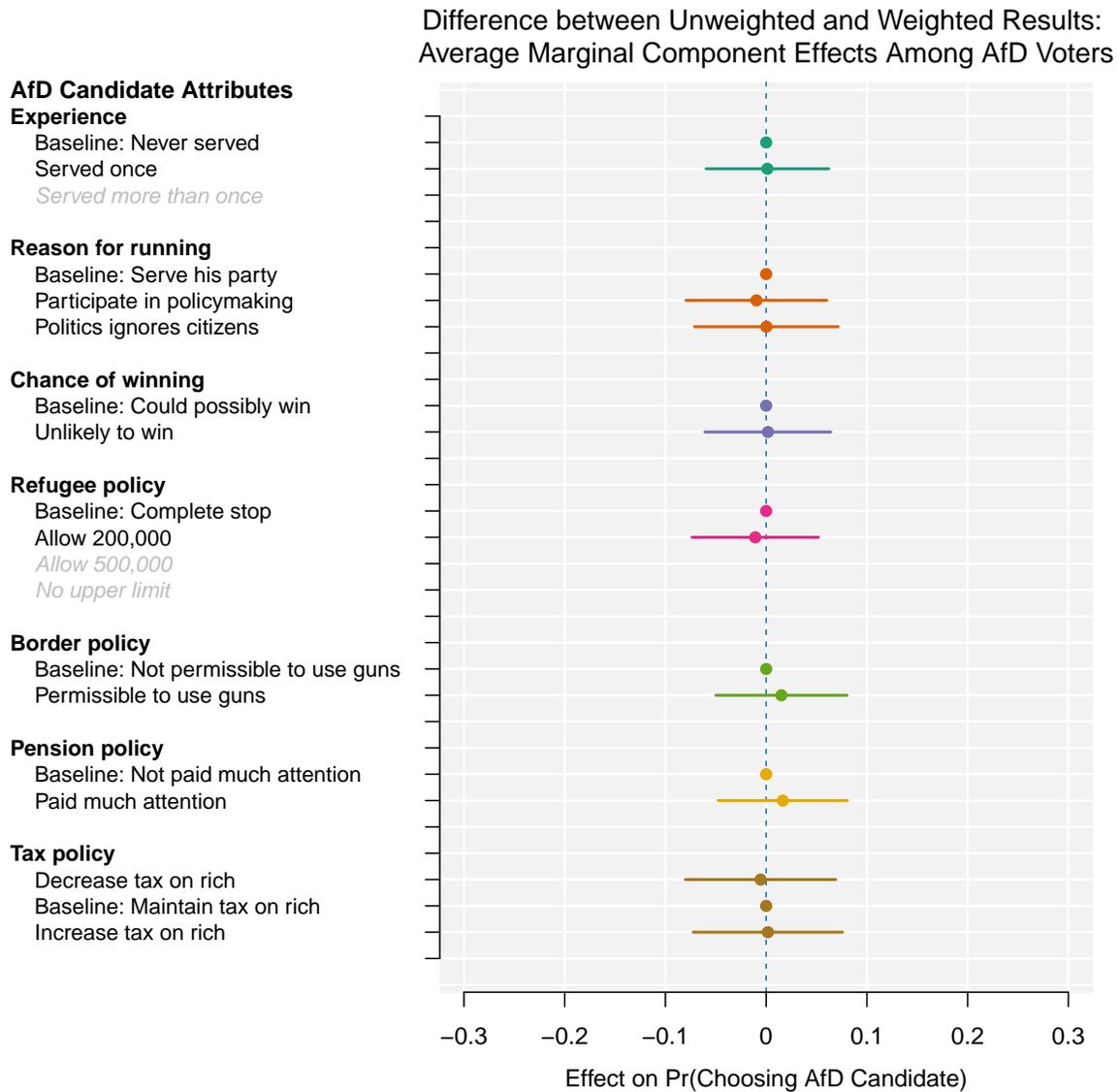


Figure A2: Difference between weighted and unweighted results (Figure 5): Effects of AfD Candidate Attributes on AfD Choice Among AfD Voters.

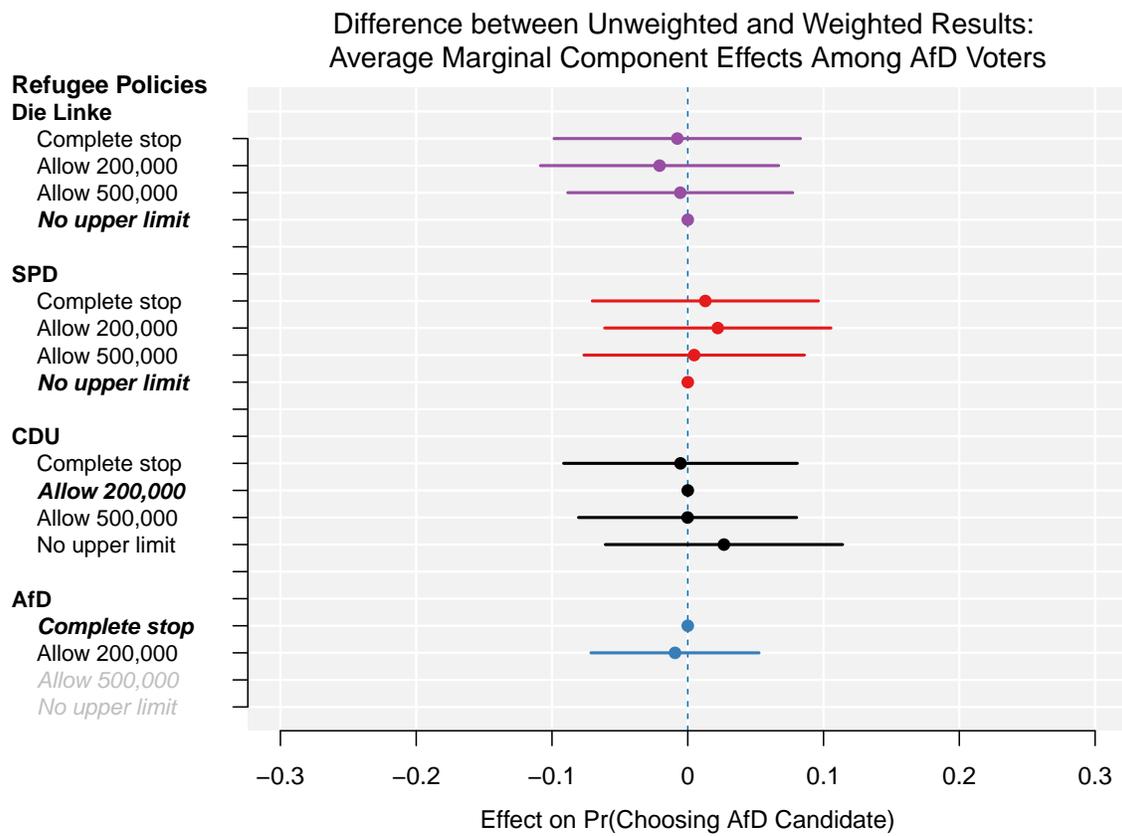


Figure A3: Difference between weighted and unweighted results (Figure 6): Effects of Refugee Policies on AfD Choice Among AfD Voters.

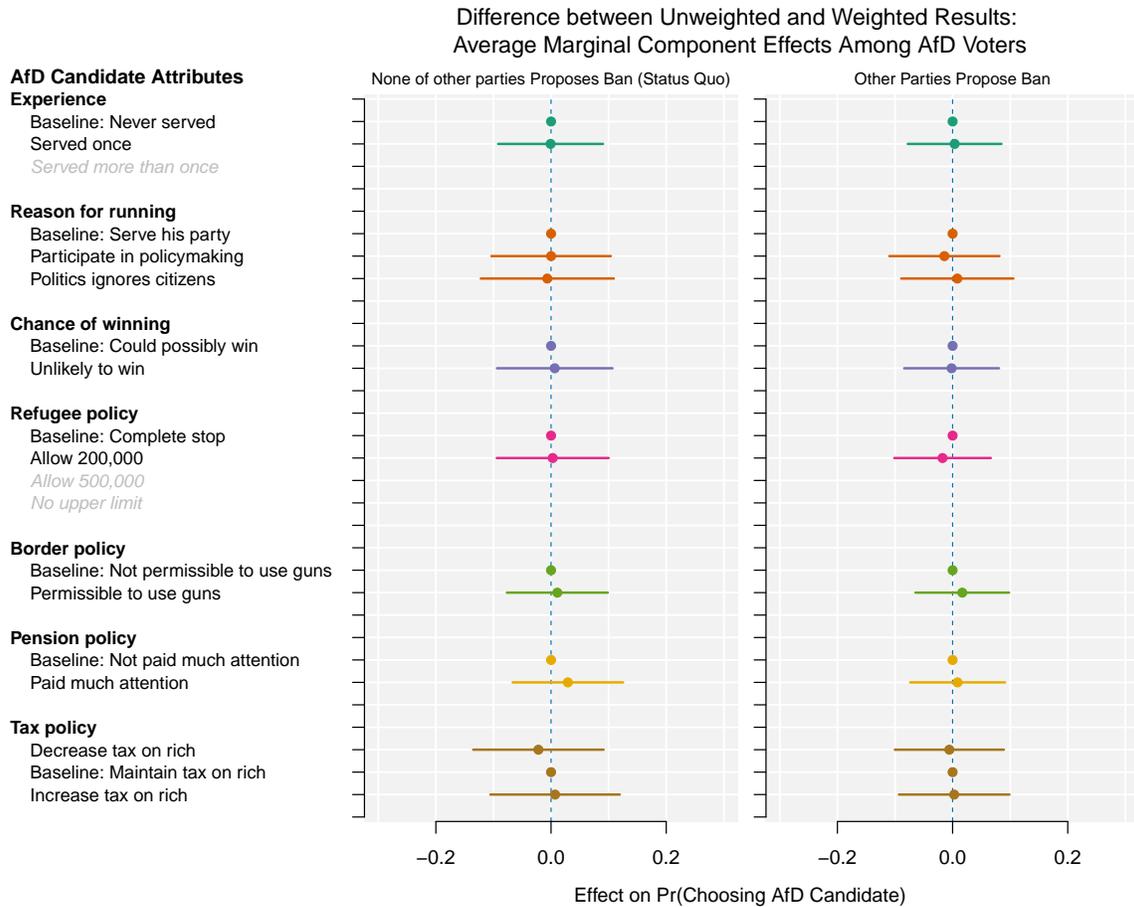


Figure A4: Difference between weighted and unweighted results (Figure 8): Recovering Non-instrumental Voting in the Status Quo.

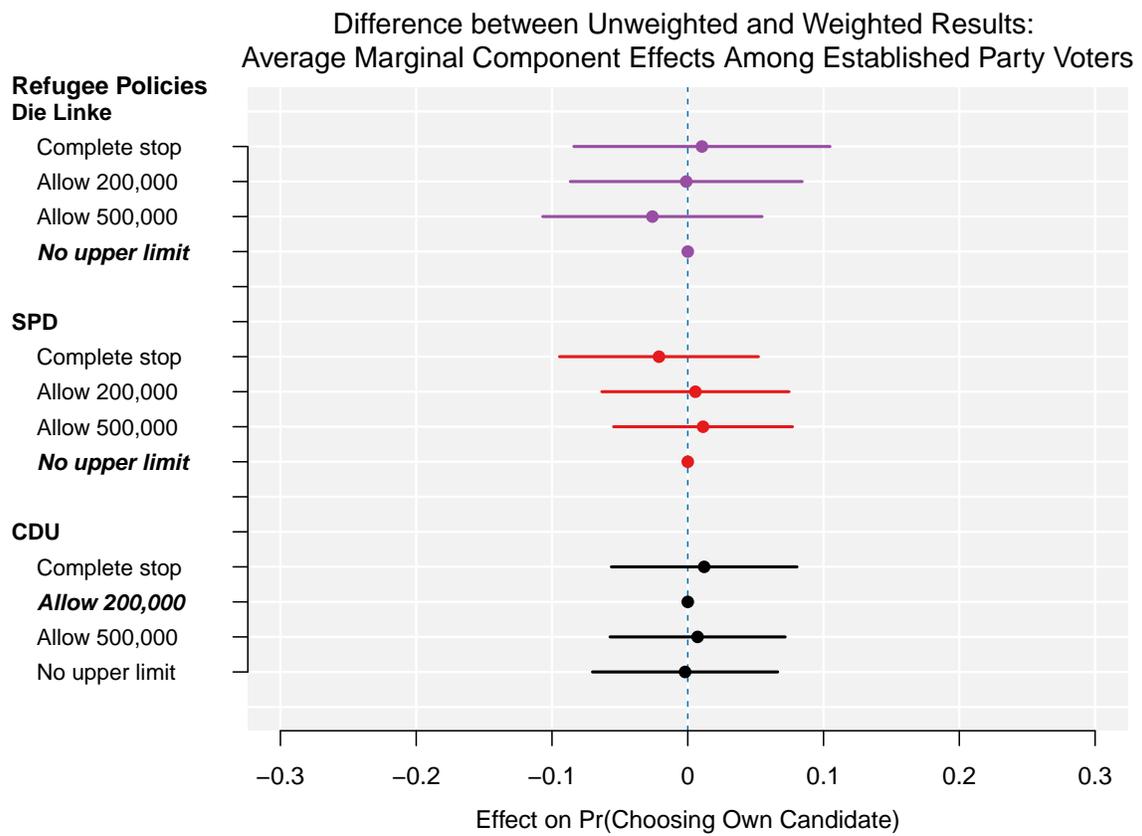


Figure A5: Difference between weighted and unweighted results (Figure 9): Identifying a Political Equilibrium.

C.2 Heterogeneous Effect Analyses

In Figure 6, the average impact of refugee policies is large, but could also mask important treatment heterogeneity. In particular, a relevant source of heterogeneity is the degree of voters' trust in political parties. If AfD supporters are antisystem voters and genuinely distrustful of established parties, rather than expressing dissatisfaction simply because those parties don't meet their issue preferences, they should not be swayed by changes in issue positions. Yet, we found surprisingly little variation in the magnitude of these effects of refugee policy positions by political trust. In Figure A6, we show that AfD voters who express “no trust in parties” or think that “Politicians don't care about people like me” are as willing to switch their vote to these parties when they appeal to them on the basis of issues.

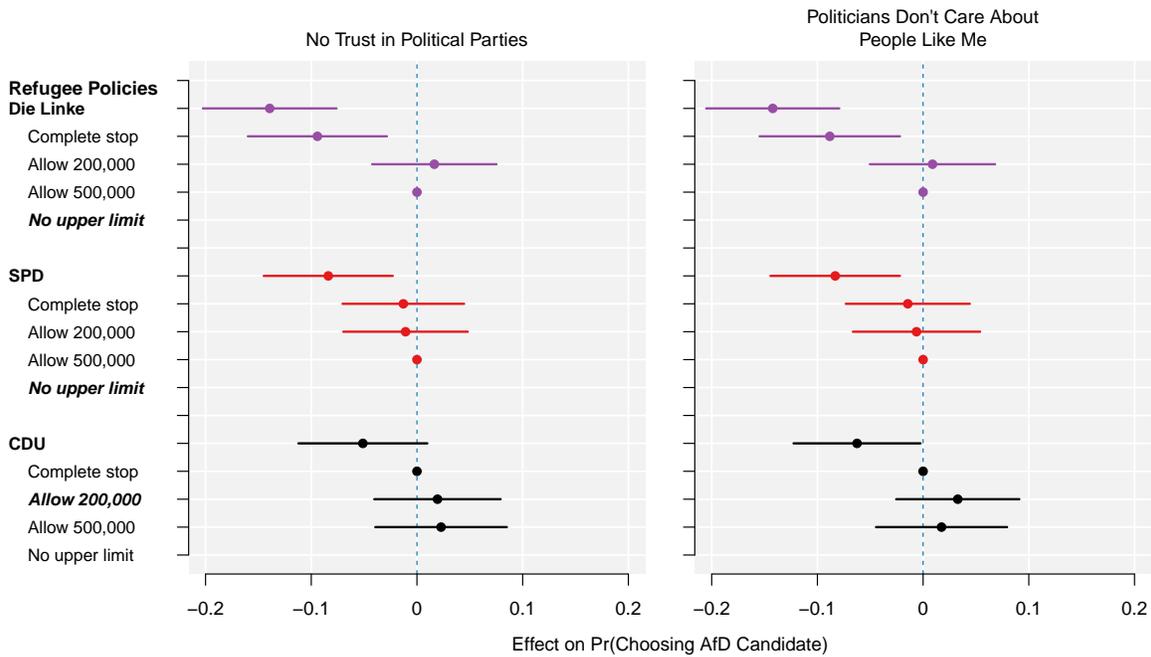


Figure A6: Subsetting by “No trust in political parties” and “Politicians don't care about people like me.”

D Characteristics of AfD Voters

D.1 Demographic and Ideological Predictors of AfD Voting

As previous research has shown, far-right voters in Europe tend to be disproportionately male and less educated. We find similarly that female gender and years of education are negatively correlated with AfD support in Germany (See Column 1 of Table A4). We further find that AfD supporters are younger and more likely to be from East Germany. We do not find evidence of a correlation with income, although this variable has a relatively high proportion of missingness (9.70%). Conversely, self-rated socioeconomic status, which has less missingness, has a negative bivariate relationship with AfD support and a curvilinear relationship, consistent with the argument of Gidron and Hall (2017), although the squared term is not statistically significant. Lastly, workers are more likely to support the AfD relative to white-collar employees.

We also examined the ideological predictors of AfD voting, focusing on three areas in particular: affective attitudes towards the AfD, attitudes towards other parties in Germany and politics in general, and lastly views about refugees. Each of these areas are measured by four, two, and ten items, shown below. Because the questions in these batteries are highly intercorrelated, we constructed a summary scale from the first principal component of the AfD and refugee attitudes.²⁰ We entered the refugee scale along with the demographic predictors in the multivariate probit model in Column 2 of Table A4, then the political attitudes in Column 3, and lastly all variables together in Column 4.

Unsurprisingly, we find that AfD voters hold significantly more negative views of refugees than non-AfD voters. While the relationship between the refugee scale and AfD voting is no longer significant after we account for political attitudes (Column 4), the two scales are highly correlated with each other ($\rho = 0.75$), meaning that AfD voters' positive views towards their party are closely related to their opinions of refugees. Lastly, we find that individuals who mistrust political parties in Germany are also significantly more likely to vote for the AfD.

Statements About the AfD

- The AfD is not distancing itself sufficiently from extremist far-right positions.
- I think it's a good thing that the AfD wants to limit the inflow of refugees and migrants to a larger extent than other parties.
- The AfD is an alternative for all those who no longer feel at home in the politically established parties.
- The AfD is the only party that is willing to openly discuss the integration problems of Muslims.

Attitudes Towards Politics

- How much would you say that politicians care what people like you think?
- Please tell me how much you personally trust political parties.

²⁰These principal components explain about 66% and 54% of the variance of the batteries, respectively.

Views About Refugees

- Refugees are integrating well into Germany.
- Refugees who live in Germany permanently should be entitled to German citizenship.
- The number of refugees should be reduced.
- More is being done for refugees than for native Germans.
- Refugees should be willing to give up much of their culture of origin and instead adopt German culture.
- Refugees are good for the German economy.
- Refugees increase crime.
- The inflow of refugees increases the risk of terrorism.
- The inflow of male refugees makes it more difficult for native men to find female partners.
- The inflow of young male refugees makes it more difficult for young native men to find apprenticeships and jobs.

D.2 “Always-AfD” and “Never-AfD” Voters

This section examines the “Always-AfD” (“Never-AfD”) voters in our sample – the respondents who voted for the AfD in the 2017 September elections and who choose the hypothetical AfD candidate in all five (zero) screens. For these voters, the estimated effects of all seven attributes for all four hypothetical candidates is zero; that is, there is no configuration of attributes that dissuades these voters from choosing the AfD candidate.

The results are shown in Tables A5 and A6, respectively. We find that that the strongest demographic predictor of being an Always-AfD voter, relative to an AfD voter that occasionally chooses a different candidate, is male gender. Turning to the attitudinal measures, we find that Always-AfD voters hold more anti-refugee attitudes and pro-party attitudes than even other AfD voters. Interestingly, we do not find much evidence that antisystem political attitudes are predictive of Always-AfD voting once refugee opinions and attitudes towards the party are taken into account. Our results suggest that Always-AfD voting may be driven more by positive affect towards the party and extreme xenophobic preferences rather than by antisystem voting per se.

Turning to the model of Never-AfD voting in Table A6, we find that, aside from assessments of the AfD itself, views about refugees are the only significant predictor of “Never-AfD’ers.” Indeed, among respondents with warmer-than-average values on the refugee scale, more than 90% are Never-AfD’ers, compared to about half of those with cooler-than-average values. We conclude that, when Germans have positive views about refugees, it is very unlikely that they will ever consider voting for AfD candidates, irrespective of these candidates’ positions on other issues.

D.3 Additional Analyses

	Voted for AfD Candidate or Party			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age (logged)	0.435** (0.183)	0.052 (0.228)	-0.258 (0.295)	-0.267 (0.296)
Female	-0.172 (0.110)	-0.225* (0.132)	0.045 (0.168)	0.038 (0.168)
East German	0.367*** (0.134)	0.425*** (0.160)	0.305 (0.213)	0.320 (0.213)
Years of Education	-0.071*** (0.016)	-0.036* (0.018)	-0.041* (0.023)	-0.041* (0.023)
Socioeconomic Status	-0.292* (0.152)	0.138 (0.180)	0.446** (0.217)	0.455** (0.218)
Socioeconomic Status ²	0.017 (0.014)	-0.015 (0.017)	-0.041** (0.020)	-0.042** (0.020)
Retired	-0.278* (0.166)	-0.103 (0.196)	0.063 (0.251)	0.068 (0.251)
Unemployed	0.131 (0.305)	0.262 (0.377)	1.024** (0.472)	1.015** (0.472)
Unskilled Worker	0.486** (0.226)	0.152 (0.280)	0.270 (0.327)	0.256 (0.328)
Skilled Worker	0.330* (0.189)	0.079 (0.226)	0.269 (0.281)	0.265 (0.281)
Refugee Scale		0.975*** (0.049)		0.071 (0.071)
AfD Statements Scale			1.841*** (0.098)	1.788*** (0.111)
Politicians Care			-0.089 (0.123)	-0.075 (0.124)
Trust in Political Parties			-0.591*** (0.123)	-0.570*** (0.125)
Constant	-1.337 (0.839)	-2.822*** (1.031)	-5.625*** (1.420)	-5.600*** (1.421)
N	2,772	2,772	2,772	2,772
Log Likelihood	-1,136.675	-777.545	-495.728	-495.232
AIC	2,295.350	1,579.091	1,019.456	1,020.464

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table A4: Multivariable Probit Model of AfD Voting.

DV: 1 if Respondent Chooses AfD in All 5 Screens				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age (logged)	0.328 (0.382)	0.138 (0.399)	0.101 (0.399)	0.081 (0.409)
Female	-0.491** (0.214)	-0.534** (0.220)	-0.393* (0.222)	-0.420* (0.225)
East German	-0.255 (0.258)	-0.171 (0.265)	-0.338 (0.267)	-0.259 (0.270)
Years of Education	0.015 (0.029)	0.019 (0.029)	0.001 (0.030)	0.007 (0.030)
Socioeconomic Status	-0.457* (0.274)	-0.301 (0.287)	-0.308 (0.286)	-0.272 (0.292)
Socioeconomic Status ²	0.046* (0.026)	0.033 (0.027)	0.032 (0.027)	0.029 (0.028)
Retired	-0.099 (0.318)	0.039 (0.326)	-0.008 (0.328)	0.053 (0.330)
Unemployed	-0.970 (0.671)	-0.821 (0.688)	-0.725 (0.687)	-0.645 (0.690)
Unskilled Worker	0.337 (0.404)	0.388 (0.423)	0.482 (0.423)	0.472 (0.430)
Skilled Worker	0.167 (0.341)	0.264 (0.354)	0.193 (0.355)	0.248 (0.361)
Refugee Scale		0.444*** (0.099)		0.283** (0.112)
AfD Statements Scale			0.919*** (0.191)	0.689*** (0.212)
Politicians Care				0.101 (0.173)
Trust in Political Parties				0.039 (0.175)
Constant	-0.771 (1.685)	-1.649 (1.766)	-2.512 (1.807)	-3.057 (1.962)
N	417	417	417	417
Log Likelihood	-267.031	-255.562	-252.828	-249.448
AIC	556.062	535.125	529.656	528.896

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table A5: Multivariable Probit Model of “Always-AfD” Voting.

DV: 1 if Respondent Chooses AfD on 0 Screens				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Age (logged)	0.372 (0.575)	0.680 (0.589)	0.629 (0.594)	0.724 (0.606)
Female	0.041 (0.317)	0.133 (0.324)	-0.090 (0.326)	-0.003 (0.336)
East German	-0.241 (0.399)	-0.369 (0.411)	-0.218 (0.412)	-0.313 (0.418)
Years of Education	0.013 (0.043)	0.009 (0.046)	0.029 (0.045)	0.026 (0.047)
Socioeconomic Status	0.592 (0.496)	0.423 (0.486)	0.471 (0.506)	0.449 (0.505)
Socioeconomic Status ²	-0.054 (0.046)	-0.039 (0.046)	-0.044 (0.048)	-0.042 (0.048)
Retired	-0.278 (0.500)	-0.432 (0.511)	-0.395 (0.519)	-0.436 (0.520)
Unemployed	0.680 (0.703)	0.393 (0.753)	0.448 (0.724)	0.422 (0.742)
Unskilled Worker	0.632 (0.518)	0.570 (0.531)	0.514 (0.537)	0.523 (0.547)
Skilled Worker	-0.662 (0.642)	-0.731 (0.645)	-0.729 (0.652)	-0.707 (0.656)
Refugee Scale		-0.392*** (0.117)		-0.233* (0.136)
AfD Statements Scale			-0.774*** (0.189)	-0.626*** (0.217)
Politicians Care				-0.174 (0.262)
Trust in Political Parties				-0.027 (0.259)
Constant	-5.093* (2.685)	-4.878* (2.684)	-4.011 (2.706)	-3.773 (2.870)
N	417	417	417	417
Log Likelihood	-145.688	-140.120	-137.513	-136.007
AIC	313.376	304.239	299.026	302.013

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table A6: Multivariable Probit Model of “Never-AfD” Voting.

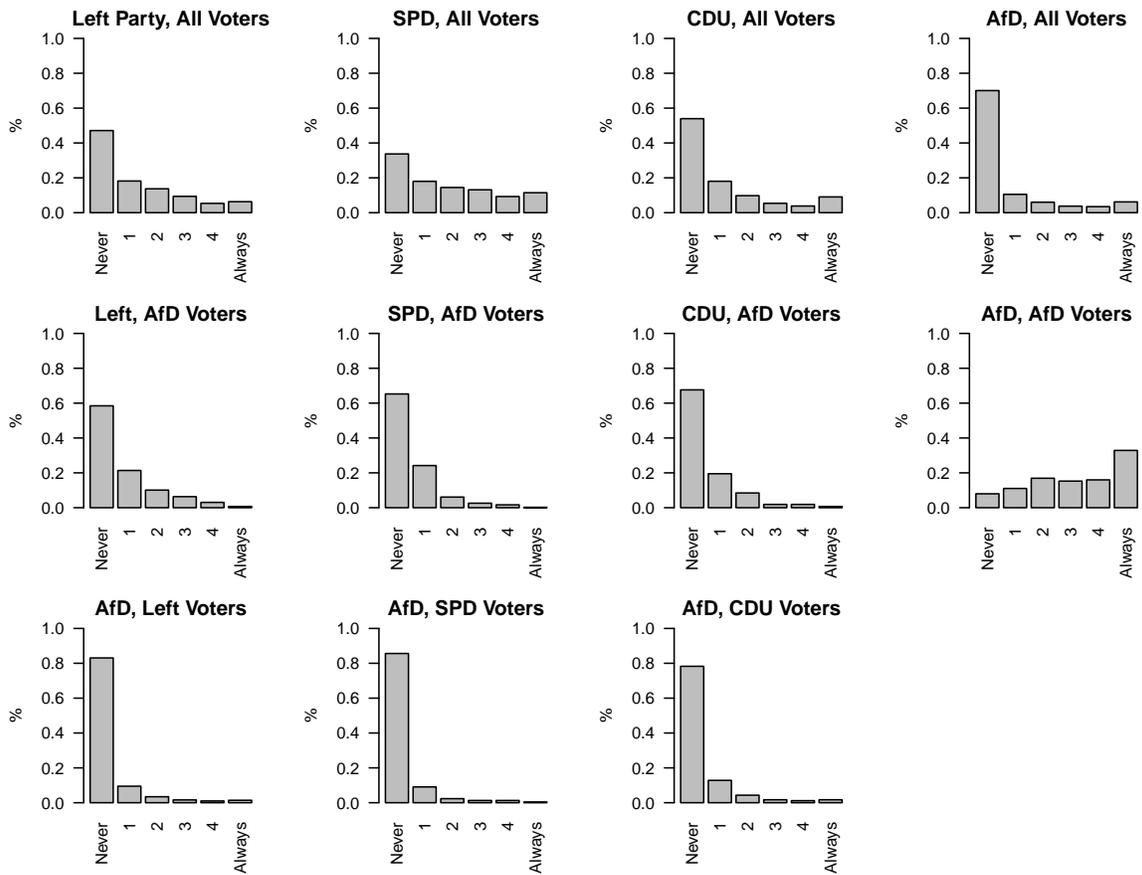


Figure A7: Conjoint Choice Frequencies by Party Label and Vote.

	AfD Only		Politicians		Little Trust	
	Alternative		Don't Care		in Parties	
	Est.	SE.	Est.	SE.	Est.	SE.
Sep. 2016	49.83	0.06	82.15	0.04	86.10	0.04
Jan. 2017	48.93	0.06	81.47	0.04	80.56	0.04
Jun. 2017	47.23	0.06	78.53	0.05	77.74	0.05
Dec. 2017	48.36	0.06	78.19	0.05	74.69	0.05

Table A7: Change in Attitudes Among Respondents Who Say Parties Aren't Listening on Refugees. This table shows the proportion of respondents who hold antisystem attitudes among those who said that parties do not tend to listen or do not listen at all on the refugee issue in Wave 1 of our survey in Sep. 2016. In general, the proportion who hold the antisystem view decreases over time.

	Party Label			
	Die Linke	SPD	CDU	AfD
<i>Baseline: Complete ban on refugees</i>				
Allow 200k	0.031*** (0.011)	0.054*** (0.013)	0.020* (0.011)	-0.003 (0.007)
Allow 500k	0.019 (0.012)	0.023* (0.013)	0.024** (0.011)	
Allow all	-0.004 (0.012)	0.011 (0.013)	-0.003 (0.011)	
Constant	0.231*** (0.009)	0.341*** (0.011)	0.220*** (0.009)	0.166*** (0.007)
N	15,095	15,095	15,095	15,095

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table A8: Voter-Average Treatment Effects of Refugee Policies (OLS). By showing the average treatment effect of refugee policies among all voting respondents, this table demonstrates that the prospective gains from proposing a refugee ban are outweighed by the losses, particularly when compared to upper limits of 200,000 or 500,000. Because the target population consists of all voters, we incorporate survey weights.