

“THEY’LL RAPE OUR DAUGHTERS”

THE ROLE OF THE GERMAN NPD IN VIOLENT ANTI-REFUGEE PROTESTS

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned _____ hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where proper acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-academic program, in English or any other language.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between anti-refugee violence and municipal representation by the German neo-Nazi party, the NPD, in 2015. Unlike other studies which focus on the determinants of violence used by NPD supporters at a state, or national level, this research focuses on the municipal dynamics of representation and relatively small, but significant outburst of violent dissent. The analysis distinguishes between municipalities in which the NDP almost received enough votes to earn a seat, and those where it just crossed this threshold. This strategy allows for a comparison between communities with a close resemblance in NPD support-base and corresponding characteristics such as low employment levels and a dominating white, male voter-base. The crucial difference is, however, that half of those municipalities have democratic representation via officially sanctioned institutions. Using a Regression Discontinuity Design this thesis finds evidence to suggest that municipalities with NPD representation will experience fewer violent attacks against refugees than municipalities without this representation. The paper proposes three mechanisms that could explain this trend that bears significant relevance on our understanding of democratic representation and political violence. This should incite more studies to understand the dynamics of local representation and non-democratic means to achieve political ends.

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1 Introduction

“Wir schaffen das”¹, the exclamation made by chancellor Merkel in response to the large number of refugees entering Germany in 2015, received both praise and condemnation at home and abroad. The lack of a unified European response to the refugees’ arrival, necessitated member states to draft their own responses and separated Germany from other EU countries by publicly welcoming refugees. Where many other European countries would put up high physical and legal barriers, Germany’s highest elected official put forward an open policy that promised refuge. Notwithstanding the heroine-like status Merkel acquired from many humanitarian actors, the denouncing responses were of equal measure and intensity. The vast majority of protests against Germany’s unique refugee policy was conducted in a peaceful, non-violent and democratic manner. However, a number of violent events targeted, directly and indirectly at refugees, moderated the bold statement made by chancellor Merkel that the German people ‘can do it’. Arsonism, violence against the police, demolition of refugee housing, direct attacks on refugees are some examples of the more than 250 attacks that were registered in 2015 (Middelhoff 2015). The phenomenon of anti-refugee violence presents a puzzle: why would people in an advanced democracy like Germany, where democratic institutions accommodate and channel conflict, resort to such blunt use of violence? The paradigm on institutions and violence as laid out by North et al. posits that law enforcement, open and participatory democracy and high levels of prosperity increase the opportunity costs of engaging in violent behaviour and thus reduce its attractiveness (North 1990; North *et al.* 2007). Especially within the context of political participation, there are few examples where the use of violence has led to actual policy change. The purpose of this research is

¹ Translation by the author: “Yes we can!”

therefore to explore one possible factor that could explain the use of violence against refugees in Germany in 2015.

The high levels of violence in response to this political issue coincide with the rise of far right wing parties across Europe. In Germany, the National Democratic Party (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland, henceforth: NPD) has been part of the political arena since 1964. However, only recently has it been able to gain seats in several state parliaments and in the European Parliament (Kaufmann 2011). It has been repeatedly described as a neo-Nazi party and its platform and philosophy pose a threat to the German constitutional order according to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Brandstetter 2012). Their ultra-nationalist policies and beliefs on the inherent inequality between different human natures make them an obvious opponent of the refugee policy advocated by the government. Aside from expressing these concerns on legitimate platforms, they have also been accused of using violent tactics (Brandstetter 2012). Simultaneously the NPD has been able to win sufficient votes in a number of municipalities to have at least one seat in the municipal elections. Since the issue of 'immigration', plays out most tangibly at the local level through the arrival of refugees that access housing in apartments, gyms and other types of (temporary) arrangements, more resistance is expected at this level. However, perhaps the effect of local representation, through a variety of mechanisms, can accommodate the resentment and undercut the need for violence. The question this thesis thus seeks to answer is: Does the presence of the NPD in local, municipal councils is related to more or fewer violent attacks against refugees?

To answer this question an overview of the existing will provide a baseline for the theoretical framework. This framework relies on two main, alternative mechanisms where in the first scenario the NPD works as a catalyst for violence, through rhetoric

and dominant agenda-setting. The second mechanism or hypothesis theorises that the presence of the NPD in local councils will absorb the anti-refugee sentiments and exercise opposition through the democratic process. This will undercut the need for violence outside of the legitimate channels. To research these hypotheses a Regression Discontinuity Design (henceforth RDD) forms the most suitable research method as it matches different municipalities on their support for the NPD. By selecting those municipalities in proximity to a threshold of having acquired at least one seat for the NPD in the most recent municipal elections, a set of municipalities becomes comparable in terms of NPD support. However the crucial difference is that half are represented by the NPD in the local council and the other half are not represented. Regressing these two groups against the number of attacks that took place against refugees in 2015 will allow us to understand the effect of democratic representation of the far right NPD party on the use of violence on the local level.

The main finding of this paper is that the number of anti-refugee attacks, decreases when the NPD has a seat in the local municipality. Although this effect relies on a number of assumptions and is restricted by some limitations, the finding reflects the capacity of local democracy to absorb and moderate far right-wing political views. This thesis is organised as follows. The second chapter will provide a literature review on the nature of collective violence, political violence in particular, the far right-wing political context and the effect of representation on political violence. The next chapter deals with the empirical strategy and lays out the model and research methods. The fourth chapter discusses the findings of the model and checks the results through various robustness checks. A conclusion summarises the researches, draws up the conclusions and suggests further avenues of research.

2 Literature Review: Violence, Representation and the NPD

2.1 Introduction

What motivates people to engage in violence when the pay-offs are seemingly small and the opportunity costs considerable? Why resort to violence instead of exploring alternative avenues which are abundant in an advanced democracy like Germany? Is violence a deliberate strategy of the NPD? How does political representation influence how perpetrators perceive their interests to be looked after? These questions form the parameters of this research and capture the four themes of the literature review. After defining some key-concepts, the first section reviews the motivations for and structures of collective violence. Secondly, I will zoom in to the usage of political violence, especially in the context of right-wing parties and social movements. Thirdly, the agenda and tactics of the right-wing actors in Germany will be analysed, focusing specifically on the link to the topic of immigration. Fourthly, I will review existing literature on the effect of a party acquiring a seat in council or parliament on perceptions of representation by the party's constituency. I will demonstrate how this research contributes to the literature by providing an analysis of the relationship between political violence and party representation at the municipal level.

2.1.1 Definitions

This paper argues that democratic representation undercuts the need for NPD supporters to express their dissent regarding refugees in a violent way. In order to focus this paper and clarify its position within the wider literature, the terms 'refugee', 'extreme right-wing', and 'violent attacks/protests' will be defined.

A press statement by the UNHCR stated that 1 in every 122 people is now either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking for asylum (Clayton, 2015). Not only is this a

staggering high number but the three categories are indicative of the myriad of terms and labels that have been called into being. ‘Economic refugees’, ‘economic migrant’, ‘environmental refugee’, ‘asylum seeker’, are just some examples of new identities that media, state and NGOs have come up with. The different agendas and motivations that lie behind most of the categorisation process are multiple and interwoven, but are not relevant for this research. In principle, this paper is concerned with people who have reached Germany and have applied or are in the process of applying for asylum. Whether they fit the UNHCR’s definition of a refugee or not², whether they are documented or not, and what their motivations are, is irrelevant. What is important for this research is whether these individuals are perceived as refugees or immigrants by the perpetrators of the attacks and violent protests against them. The ability to test this perception is limited but will be revisited when discussing the data sources.

The second term that requires a clear definition is the adjective often used to describe the NPD: ‘extreme right-wing’. In the many articles on extreme right-wing parties’ there is an overwhelming agreement on the absence of a singular definition. However, simultaneously there is a definitive consensus on the existence of a far right-wing party family (Castles & Mair 1984; Laver & Hunt 1992; Huber & Inglehart 1995; Lubbers 2000). Arzheimer and Carter capture the most important common denominators to far right-wing parties in Western Europe, namely “a combination of racism, xenophobia, nationalism, and a desire for a strong state and law and order” (2006, 423). The vast literature on the NPD leaves no doubt that this party can be classified as a far right-wing party and, according to some, lies at the far end of the spectrum (Blee and

² “A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so”. (UNCHR, 2016).

Creasap 2010; Blee 2016). The NPD's specific association to neo-Nazism and fascism will be discussed in the section on the motivation and structure of the German party.

The final term to define is violent protest or attack. Since this research investigates the expression of dissent through legitimate, democratic channels compared to illegitimate, criminal channels, the definition of 'violence' is predominantly confined by legal terms. Although two themes of the literature are dedicated to specific sub-categories of violence, collective and political, the main purpose here is to define the nature of the violence according to Krug *et al.*'s typology. The authors configure four categories: physical, sexual, psychological violence and neglect or deprivation (Krug *et al.* 2002, 1084). This research is primarily concerned with physical violence, be it directly targeted towards a refugee or to the residence or meeting point. Cognisant that physical violence can have far-reaching psychological effects, the unit of analysis is the violent attack where someone or something is harmed physically. Similarly, this research does not concern itself with violent behaviour on online platforms or through hate speech in manifestos or speeches.

2.1.2 Collective Violence

The literature on collective violence can be roughly divided into three categories: greed and grievances, identities and institutions. Although origins of collective violence are rarely singular, the classification is useful analytically to gain a better understanding of the different, overlapping, complementary and intersecting motivations of perpetrators. The greed and grievances hypothesis is most clearly stated and researched by Ostby. She argues that horizontal inequalities in terms of economic, political or cultural status, can affect the likelihood of collective violence, especially when they are big or increasing (Ostby 2013). Hoeffler *et al.* go beyond this thesis by arguing that feasibility is the most important determinant of collective violence. Given that grievances are

ubiquitous, the feasibility of rebellion and use of violence will determine the likelihood (Hoeffler *et al.* 2009). Alluding to this thesis is Fearon and Laitin's study on general conditions that favour rebellion such as geographic conditions, population size and political instability. Although the above literature is usually applied in more extreme versions of collective violence, such as civil war, both the horizontal inequalities and feasibility aspect could help explain collective violence on a smaller scale as witnessed in Germany in 2015.

More closely related to the platform of the NPD and the status of the refugees as foreigners is the literature that focuses on identities to explain collective violence. Within this strand of literature, there are widely diverging views on *how* identities can account for collective violence. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations?*, is perhaps best known for its essentialist view of inherent incompatibility between different cultures (1993). Varshny approaches the concept of identity from an instrumentalist point of view and argues that identities mask a deeper set of core interests, economic or political, that make them attractive to exploit and aggravate (Varshny 2007). Inciting violence can entrench perceived economic or political inequalities and can be used for political or economic gain. Additionally in a more psychologically oriented study, results suggested that stronger identification with an in-group (higher salience of group identities), led to a higher confirmation of in-group bias and out-group stereotypes, which in turn increases the likelihood of inter-group violence (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Although inter-group violence suggests a mutual commitment to violence, increased salience of a particular societal group can also result in one-sided violence. Finally, identities can also (in part) be constructed by strategic use of media by elites or key

figures. Fearon and Laitin found that misrepresenting the out-group can lead to increased hostility and increase the likelihood of collective violence (2000).

Lastly, another category in the literature on collective violence looks at institutions and how they can deter or facilitate collective violence. In *Violence and Social Orders*, North *et al.* posit that 'orders' in which there is low enforcement of law and uneven access to services provided by the State, the pay-offs for violence are higher than that of non-violence (North *et al.* 2009). As such, the rules of society are not guided by impartial and democratic institutions but instead follow the law of the jungle. An interesting study by Posner highlighted how the institution of a border between Zambia and Malawi had different effects on the relationship between two different ethnic groups (Posner 2004). Where in Malawi the different groups were sufficiently large to be exploited politically, both ethnic groups were politically insignificant in Zambia. Hence, the group identity was salient in Malawi and source of ongoing communal conflict, involving violence. In Zambia however inter-group marriages were frequent and there was no evidence to suggest a strained relationship between the two groups. Within the literature on institutionalism and violence, a connection is often drawn to (behavioural) economics. When groups become more organised the likelihood of violence is reduced because in-group policing reduces problems associated with collective action (Blattman and Miguel 2010; Ostrom 2000). Likewise, the absence of third-party enforcers of contracts can also increase the likelihood of violence (Brass 2003). Hence, institutions can both act as a catalyst or cause of violence, but also reduce violence by increasing opportunity costs, mainly through law enforcement. Moreover, identities, given and created, can influence perceptions and stereotypes and increase the likelihood of collective violence. Finally, horizontal inequalities can lead to greed and grievances

and also motivate violence. These hypotheses, though informative, are still too general to function as lens in analysing the anti-refugee violence in Germany. Since this research investigates the link between a political party, the NPD, and violence, the literature on politically motivated violence will be reviewed in the next section.

2.1.3 Political Violence

Political violence has been studied mainly in two fields that rarely interact with each other: terrorism studies and social movement theory (della Porta 2006, 5). Terrorism studies emerged largely in response to international forms of terrorism and has had a tendency to isolate the objects of study from the wider political context (ibid.). Social movement theory has, on the other hand, often excluded violent political behaviour from its analysis. Yet another field that has also fallen under political violence – namely: domestic violence – has produced some interesting hypotheses pertaining to the degree of oppression, legitimisation issues and structural societal cleavages (comparable to the horizontal inequalities theorem discussed earlier) (Smelser 1962; della Porta 2006). What has seemed to become an unquestioned assumption however, is that anti-democratic goals invoke anti-democratic means. In other words, the context *shaping* the groups' anti-democratic ideas and goals is left unattended and it is therefore unsurprising that the 'puppet-theory' has gained so much traction within terrorism studies (della Porta 2006, 6). This theory posits that individuals can be manipulated blindly into participation in domestic or international violent attacks. Within the context of a political party like the NPD this seems exceedingly simplistic because the terrorist organisations from which this theory is derived are rarely embedded within the system that they fight. Fully capturing why supporters of a small but established political party would resort to violent (and thus inherently anti-democratic) means,

requires an analysis of both the structural context as well as the group dynamics. This provides an opportunity to examine the definition of political violence in addition to introducing racial violence, which is affiliated to, but not the same as political violence.

Zimmermann defined political violence as an act of violence committed specifically against the state (Zimmermann 2011). Although by extent one could argue that the violence committed against refugees or their housing arrangements implicitly is an attack against a state policy – it is a bit of a stretch. Other definitions extend the range of ‘victims’ of political violence to include the general public or the specific seeking out of minorities (della Porta 2006, 6). This latter definition, though broader, does absorb the type of violence that is captured neither by terrorism, nor by hooligans or gangs, or by guerrillas or civil war. At the same time, the focus on minorities shifts more weight to another type of violence, namely racially-motivated violence. According to Piatkowska this type of violence, also known as ‘hate crime’, is motivated by “racism, xenophobia and related intolerances” (Piatkowska 2016, 2). She argues that

“foreign-born persons are at higher risk of victimisation in areas where they constitute a smaller proportion of the total population, because in those places members of the dominant group may be less fearful of incurring negative consequences as a result of acting on their prejudice or committing hate crime”. (Piatkowska 2016, 6)

This power-differential hypothesis is interesting when analysing the motivations to engage in violence, however it is essential to understand how the NPD sees itself; as belonging to a dominant group or rather as a superior minority. This will be discussed further in the next section. At the same time, Piatkowska’s study suggests that other factors influencing hate crime, like low economic and social mobility, do so in a myriad of ways and the direction of the relationship can be both negative and positive (Piatkowska 2016, 7). An elaborate study by Caruso and Schneider investigated the socio-economic causes of terrorism and political violence in twelve countries in

Western Europe (2011). They drew two main conclusions: firstly, that the classical argument of opportunity costs was confirmed. The better the economic conditions or future expectations of improvement for an individual, the lower the probability to engage in political violence (Caruso and Schneider 2011, 48). However, as the authors note themselves and in line with the study by Piatkowska, this argument only holds under a strict set of conditions, which reduces its validity. More interesting, but hardly mentioned by the authors, is the finding that terrorist brutality (measure in victims per incident) is positively related to real GDP per capita (Caruso and Schneider 2011, 48). Although some form of qualitative research through surveys or interviews would shed more light on this – real or perceived economic inequalities could aggravate already existing cleavages and intensify hatred. Considering the German case study, refugees that have applied for asylum can receive stipends and allowances, in addition to housing – making it one of the most generous programmes compared to other EU countries (Trevelyan 2016).

However, the economic argument remains persistent in the literature. A study by Falk *et al.* directly researched right-wing extremist crime in relation to unemployment rates. Their primary finding supports the deprivation theory whereby unemployment causes a loss in status and further increases tensions and therefore raises the potential of participation in political violence (Falk *et al.* 2011, 263). However, this finding only holds in the context of non-violent crimes and is only measured at the state (Bundesländer) level. This fails to grasp the local bases of extreme-right supporters and the local aggravations to which they respond. The lack of a significant relationship between unemployment levels and violent, extreme right-wing crimes suggests that the puzzle of political violence perpetrated by the NPD cannot (only) be explained by economic

conditions. The next section will therefore focus on the structure, agenda and motivations of the NPD.

2.1.4 Germany's Right-Wing Political Landscape

This section on the German Right-Wing parties serves three purposes. In the first place it will provide a brief summary of the main right-wing party: the NPD, the party's history, main platform and composition of its constituency. In addition, I will analyse the NDP's position within the national, but also municipal, political arena and its past and present relationship to the usage of violence. Finally, I will also discuss other right-wing actors like the political party the Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, henceforth AfD) and the Pegida movement.

According to their own website, the NPD is the oldest, nationalist party in Germany since 1945 (Stawitz 2014). Like many other right-wing movements and parties across Europe, xenophobia is a long-standing characteristic of the NPD (Blee and Creasap 2010, 275). This results in a strong stance against immigration and integration and a hostile attitude towards the government and even the state at large (ibid.). This anti-system rhetoric also qualifies them as a populist party for being an 'underdog', fighting the malevolent system and for appealing to a unified 'people of Germany' (Decker 2008, 119). Although the party was successful after its foundation, the 1970s and 80s were a period of internal strife and little to no political successes. However, when a new leader was elected in 1991 and turned the party towards a more radical pathway, the NPD also became more attractive to neo-Nazis (Brandstetter 2012, 5). The neo-Nazis are a welcome addition as long as they adhere to the partyline (ibid.). This Second World War legacy is also found in other parts of the NPD's platform on regaining certain territories that were awarded to Poland and Austria at the end of the war. However, due to its illegality, explicit links to Adolf Hitler, the SS or the former

political party of Hitler, are not found in documents or official statements. Although, over the last years, investigative journalists have made several reports and broadcasts on leaders of the national and regional NPD making the Nazi salute, expressing anti-Semitic statements and glorifying the Nazi party in general (Kaufmann 2011).

Going beyond mere facilitation or membership to skinhead groups or neo-Nazis, the pattern that emerges out of the constituents is that of young, white males (ibid.). In a study of 2014 that analysed radical right-wing voting to other forms of electoral behaviour, the main conclusion was that the radical right electorate “is characterised by high anti-immigrant attitudes” (Zhirkov 2014, 294). Interestingly, this effect remained significant even when controlling for education and occupational status, which suggests that xenophobia or fear of job-loss perhaps plays a smaller role than assumed in the literature. In terms of economic preferences, the same study revealed a high level of opposition to income redistribution, which confirms an earlier hypothesis that the perception that refugees are awarded unjust benefits acts as a catalyst (Zhirkov 2014, 294).

The NPD holds a peculiar position within Germany’s political landscape. They have not been able to achieve electoral success at the national level, but do hold seats in two states (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Saxony) and in multiple municipalities across the country. Though they occupy an aggressive anti-government and anti-state stance, they are also embedded in the system and must adhere to the institutions that guide the political process. Although the above holds for any anti-establishment, populist party, the expression of anti-constitutional sentiments (mainly referring to WWII and the Holocaust) in addition to the use of violence, positions the NPD for the second time in a trial to have them banned (Mudde 2016). This paradox of participating in the system they oppose has interested scholars widely, but access to information

remains one of the largest barriers. An additional barrier, suggested by Blee, is that of diverging political views between most academics and the far right (Blee 2007, 121). Her overview of various right-wing movements reveals that the need to instil commitment and suspicion are key to understanding “how the far right recruits members and garners support from the general population” (Blee 2007, 119). Another interesting finding that sheds light on the use of violence by the NPD is that, according to Koopmans and Olzak, the rate of violence is significantly affected by public visibility and legitimacy by the media (Koopmans and Olzak 2004, 198). They find that when third-party actors respond to the violent attacks, i.e. the actions gain resonance, the likelihood of reproduction increases. This effect is stronger when the violent attack is (partially) legitimised (Koopmans and Olzak 2014, 224). In countering the violence, the German state has “reached the limits of repression within a democratic political context” (Koopmans 1997, 163). The banning of other far right organisations and the renewed attempt to ban the NPD surpasses measures taken by other European countries. At the same time, Koopmans also found that ‘situational’, that is to say direct, locational, repression from the police tended to aggravate the situation and induce more violence, whereas long-term institutional repression led to less violence (Koopmans 1997, 162). However, this cannot explain the different responses to the arrival of refugees in municipalities across Germany, for institutional repression is exercised at the national level and can therefore not account for cross-municipal variation.

At the same time, we must also consider other actors in the German political arena. The next section will briefly comment on the right turn taken by the political party AfD and the Pegida movement. The AfD has gained a large increase in support over the last couple of years (Kemper 2015, 43). This is surprising because within the European

Union, Germany fared relatively well through the economic crisis which does not serve as support for the AfD's successful euro-sceptical platform (Grimm 2015). Over the past years the party has developed on a largely gender, economic and educational conservative platform (Kemper 2015, 45). At the same time, perhaps with its growing success, it has known much internal strife which, in the fall of 2015, led to a split between the AfD and its neoliberal wing (Kemper 2015, 46). The remaining composition of the AfD sought a radical anti-refugee stance and organised weekly demonstrations that could attract up to 50,000 people. At the fringes of these demonstrations were hooligans, neo-Nazis and some people protesting against the demonstration were attacked (Kemper 2015, 47). Moreover, the party leadership has, be it informally, called the party the 'Pegida party' which also further underlines its strong turn to the right.

Pegida is a social movement that came into being in 2014. It criticises "the pronounced 'failures' of German asylum and immigration policy, refugees, and a so-called Islamization" (Malte Thran and Boehnke 2015, 178). Interestingly, Pegida's supporter base differs from the NPD's in that it does not attract only lower class, unemployed individuals, but instead pulls support from upper-middle class, financially well off German men; the gender denominator remains (Malte Thran and Boehnke 2015, 181). Pegida clearly advocates for a privileged treatment of 'native Germans' vis-à-vis immigrants and they strongly oppose Islam and fear Islamisation of Germany (Malte Thran and Boehnke 2015, 182). In understanding how Pegida, the AfD's own agenda and flirtations with the social movement, affect the NPD, there are two general factors to consider. First of all, that the AfD has taken a more moderate position, and has a far less controversial historic trajectory and therefore taps into a potential voter base of the NPD, would they become bigger. The Pegida movement has instilled a strong

sense of distrust against the current political system, as much as the NPD is against the current government and by extent 'system', it still operates within it, and thus may lose voters over this issue (Dostal 2015, 7).

2.1.5 Political Representation

The thesis this paper puts forward is that democratic representation undercuts the need for NPD supporters to use violent means as a way of pushing their agendas. Having reviewed the theories surrounding collective violence, political and racial violence in particular and the NPD's platform and political stances, the relationship between political representation and the extreme-right wing (violence) will be reviewed.

An interesting starting point is presented by Pedahzur and Brichta who talk about the institutionalisation of charismatic parties (2002, 4). Although right-wing parties do not exclusively fall under the umbrella of charismatic parties, many western-European right-wing parties have been qualified as 'charismatic', including the NPD (Pedahzur and Brichta 2002, 3). One requirement of institutionalisation of a charismatic party is one "that is reified in the public mind so that 'the party' exists as a social organisation apart from its momentary leaders (...)" (Janda 1980, 19). However, little is known about the influence of local party-leaders on the voting behaviour of their constituents in local elections. One study, however, found that there seems to be greater capture at the local level when there is greater cohesiveness of interest groups and voter ignorance (Bardhan and Mookerjee, 2000, 139). The first condition of cohesiveness can safely be applied to the NPD supporters base, which suggests that local leaders exercise real influence during elections, but possibly also are held in high regard once in public office. Another study analysed the type of representational system and the likelihood of extremist votes and violence. The author found that there is a strong correlation

between extreme votes and legislative fractionalisation (Powell 1981, 874). However, at the same time, the author also finds that: “The tendency of extremist parties to stimulate and be associated with turmoil seems offset by the dampening effect of multiple, group-linked, non-extremist parties.” (Powell 1981, 874). Hence, the presence of other non-extremist parties can also prevent extreme right-wing parties from resorting to violence.

Another important factor in estimating what the effect of political representation of right-wing parties has on the use of violence is whether these parties can govern successfully outside of their main agendas too. In other words, can they participate in the legislative process concerning a whole range of socio-economic conditions other than immigration? Mudde notes that immigration for extreme right-wing parties “has not been their sole issue, and not even their most important issue” (1999, 192). Instead, it has both acted as a catalyst to appeal to general feelings of ‘uneasiness’ that extend to much bigger socio-economic issues (Mudde, 1999, 193). Moreover, it has been found, in a comparative case study, that even when extreme right-wing parties are not in the ruling coalition, they can influence immigration policy (Zaslava 2004). However, a more recent study, with a larger sample size, found this effect to be much smaller and suggested that much of the policy-making efforts by right-wing parties is hampered by the difficulties they face in adapting to public office (Akkerman 2012, 523). Yet, in which way the representation interacts directly with violence in Western democracies has hardly been researched, let alone at the local level. Therefore, this research presents a unique opportunity to start exploring this dynamic.

3 Empirical Strategy: Data, Theory and Research Design

This chapter will draw from the literature to formulate a theoretical framework and elaborate on the mechanisms. The main hypothesis is that the democratic representation of the NPD in municipal councils will negatively affect the number of violent attacks directed towards refugees. After explaining the theoretical model, the data sources and research design will be introduced. Finally, some of the assumptions to the empirical strategy are stated and clarified.

3.1 Model and Mechanism

From empirical research, three main factors influence violence committed by the extreme right: economic conditions, gender and political dissatisfaction. The economic status as explanatory variable has been inconclusive in terms of the direction of its relationship with violence. In addition, although the profile of right-wing voters and supporters is largely white and male, these are static characteristics and in and of themselves do not explain the phenomenon of political violence. The remaining factor, though also broad, is political dissatisfaction. In order to understand whether the frustration of not seeing one's political preferences realised, is a determinant of resorting to political violence, this study uses Germany's NPD as a case study. To be more precise, it uses municipalities in Germany that have experienced violent attacks directed against refugees as observations. There are a number of reasons to focus on this particular set of municipalities. Firstly, there is sufficient variation on the dependent variable: the number of attacks. Germany has had a comparably large influx of refugees in 2015, due to its existing asylum policy and the welcoming stance taken by the government. This significantly aggravated the NPD as it is the literal opposite of their political views, which makes up the third reason: the presence of a far-right wing party. Moreover, the availability of data on the number of attacks, NPD supporters per

state, and NPD votes per municipality allowed for a large enough sample size to apply a quantitative design. In sum, the case of the NPD's violent responses to the arrival of refugees fulfilled all the requirements to test the thesis (George and Bennett 2005, 76).

Although some scholars have argued that the acquisition of political power by extreme right- (or left) wing parties will lead to further polarisation and by extent induce more violence, another part of the literature argues the opposite (Hibbs 1973; Della Porta 1995; Stucky 2003). They argue that political representation accommodates the dissent through a democratic, officially sanctioned institution. This has however, to the author's knowledge, not yet been tested at the municipal level in the context of right-wing violence. The puzzle can thus be split into three alternative outcomes. NPD representation in municipal councils could have no effect on the number of violent protests because political representation does not affect anti-refugee violence. Secondly, there could be higher levels of violence because the NPD has a wider platform, farther reach and protesters feel their views affirmed in the electoral outcome. Or the final outcome is the hypothesis that:

A municipality with NPD representatives will experience fewer violent attacks against refugees than municipalities without NPD representatives, because the political representation accommodates the dissent sufficiently.

The diagram below illustrates the logic of the model. By controlling for the two other main determinants that emerged from the literature, gender and unemployment, the model can account for the effect of political representation on the number of violent attacks.

Figure. Model and Mechanisms 1

<i>Scope condition</i>	<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Mechanisms</i>	<i>Dependent Variable</i>
Opposition to Refugees	NDP Representation in the Municipal Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sense of representation - Policy change - Stronger grip party leadership 	Thesis Statement: Fewer Violent Attacks
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Larger platform - Confirmation of views - Bigger numbers 	More Violent Attacks

There are three main mechanism for why a NPD seat would lead to increased levels of violence. Firstly, because the party has a wider platform and consequential access to resources and media attention. This could lead to an expansion of their political message to a larger set of people and thus increase the amount of perpetrators of violence. A second mechanism for why the acquisition of a municipal seat by the NPD could lead to more attacks is because the constituents may regard it as a confirmation of their views and by extent their methods. It is a simple mechanism of rewarded behaviour, which is therefore attractive to repeat. Thirdly, NPD representation may also lead to more violence by the sheer increase in NPD supporters and thus potential perpetrators of violence. This is not a mechanism as such but rather a numbers game, where a larger proportion of the population is against the arrival of refugees will lead to a higher number of violent attacks.

On the other hand however, there are three alternative mechanisms that would explain a decrease in violent attacks in those municipalities where the NPD has at least one seat within the council. In the first place, the newly established democratic channel of political representation and the inextricable accountability and legitimacy of that position held by the party, will absorb the anti-refugee sentiments and undercut the need to protest. This does not per se mean actual policy change, but rather for the NPD constituency to have their voice heard and to observe that opposition is exercised, albeit through democratic, officially sanctioned institutions. Secondly, the party might,

in conjunction with other parties or alone, be able to achieve actual policy change. Though absolute change, such as the complete relinquishment of asylum-seeker centres or provisional housing, is unlikely, a decrease in the amount of refugees or the timeframe can also be considered as effectively expressing dissent to the municipal plans. This could soothe the NPD supporters and limit their intentions to use violence for it can no longer be justified as a last resort. A final mechanism would speak to the party leadership in a municipality and their need, now held under public scrutiny and accountability, to comply with the rules and regulations. Keeping their constituents out of illegal activities becomes their interest for political leaders cannot tolerate violence which in turn would force them to abandon part of their constituency. Both tolerating, or on the other hand, breaking with part of their constituency would be politically costly and therefore unattractive. Their role, especially as leaders in the right-wing political culture, could therefore be instrumental in deterring NPD supporters from using violence.

Next, I will discuss the parameters of the research and how the variables are operationalised. In order to test whether there is any effect of political representation on anti-refugee violence, it is essential that there is such sentiment at all. In other words, a scope condition of this research is the existence of opposition to refugees. The German newspaper 'Die Zeit' has compiled a dataset on attacks against refugees or their settlements, including date, location and nature of the crime. This allows for an overview of all the German municipalities in which there has been at least one attack directed against refugees in 2015. Within the universe of cases of all German municipalities, I selected those in which anti-refugee violence has occurred. The independent variable is a binary factor of NPD representation in the municipality where the attack took place, or no representation. These data are structured according to the

percentage of votes the NPD received in the most recent elections for any given municipality. A threshold of 5% determines the cut-off point of having at least one seat.

The main other determinants that, according to the literature, appeared to bear significance on the outcome of violence used by the NPD are gender and unemployment status as indicator for economic outlook. Gender is a strong determinant, not directly of violence as outcome itself, but rather as determinant of whether an individual will follow the NPD or not. Therefore, some sort of gender imbalance in the sample could lead to under- or overestimation of the effect. The economic factor has been discussed in the literature review and although the direction of its effect is uncertain, it is certain that there is a relationship and should therefore be considered. Due to the wide disparity of the sample (the riots took place in municipalities in different states, of different sizes, with different demographics, etc) The additional number of control variables would in the first place pose a problem for data collection but also lead to overspecification of the model. The most suitable research method would therefore instead approximate the design of a randomised controlled trial, where allocation of a NPD representative seat in the municipal council is independent of any variable or factor. However, since the allocation of seats is not random but determined by one variable, namely voting percentage, the Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) is a suitable research method to explore the impact of at least one NPD seat in the municipal council on the violent attacks against refugees. The next section will further elaborate on the RDD, show how it is applied in this research and discuss its model-specific assumptions as well as the larger assumptions of the research.

3.2 Regression Discontinuity Design

The RDD was first introduced in 1960 by Thistlewaite and Campbell (Imbens and Lieux 2007). The design allows for the causal estimation of treatment effects for which assignment to treatment is determined at least partly by an observed covariate lying on either side of a threshold (Imbens and Lieux 2007, 615). The main idea of causal estimation stems from the model developed by Rubin. According to him, the fundamental problem of causal inference is that there are no observations for the counterfactual, in other words, we can at most only observe one of the potential outcomes for each unit (Imbens and Rubin). In causal inference, the assignment mechanism of a treatment is essential in that it determines which potential outcomes will be observed for which units. Within the context of this study, it is also important to note that these data on elections make this an observational study rather than an experiment. The assignment mechanism is therefore not under the researcher's control. Three restrictions guide the experimental design of causal inference, but those become assumptions in an observational study as the researcher cannot influence the assignment mechanism. These three assumptions are:

1. *Individualistic assignment: the dependence of a particular unit's assignment probability is limited by the values of covariates and potential outcomes for other units*
2. *Probabilistic assignment: the assignment mechanisms for each unit, for each regime is limited to a non-zero probability*
3. *Unconfounded assignment: the assignment mechanism is independent of potential outcomes*

In a regular observational study we maintain all assumptions, however we do not know the exact probability and cannot verify whether the assignment mechanisms of unit i is

indeed limited by values of other covariates. The third assumption also remains, although it cannot be validated. However the assignment mechanism in this research is *irregular*, there is an eligibility criterion for receiving treatment: the voting threshold determines whether a municipality will receive treatment, namely NPD representation. Imbens and Rubin note that: “For causal inference, one may, in such regression discontinuity settings, compare units with close, but distinct, values of the covariate, relying on smoothness of the relationship between potential outcomes and covariates (test scores) around this threshold value.” (Imbens and Rubin 2009 Part I chapter 3). This explains how the RDD creates a set of counterfactuals for the treated units since the units lying closely to either side of the cut-off point are likely to be highly comparable in nature. It thus differs from a classical randomised control trial in that the restriction of complete random assignment is purposely violated. In order to further explain the logic of the RDD, consider that the following straight, linear equation defines the pre-treatment relationship between the assignment score (S) and the outcome variable (Y), where α and β are coefficients and ε is the error term.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta S + e$$

After the treatment has taken place the regression is affected by a change in the intercept through the constant treatment effect of $\beta(0)$ on the outcome variable (Lee and Munk 2008, 1675). That provides the following regression estimation:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_0 T_i + \beta_i S_i + e$$

Here (T) denotes the treatment, which assumes a value of 1 for all treated units of i or 0 for all units in the control group who were not assigned to treatment. Hence, for the treated units the intercept is determined by $\alpha + \beta_0$ whereas the control group's intercept is only determined by α . This assumes that there is a constant treatment effect across

the units and that this effect is linear. Hence, the slope of the line does not change, only the intercept jumps up or down, according to the effect of the treatment. This research deals with a so-called ‘sharp’ RDD. This means that all units that have a value above the cut-off point receive treatment. Hence, all municipalities where the NPD received sufficient votes to attain at least one seat, it indeed received one seat. The alternative, a ‘fuzzy’ RDD, would entail a scenario in which due to election fraud, the NPD should have received at least one seat based on the number of votes, but did not. In other words, for some the likelihood of election fraud in Germany is sufficiently low to select the sharp design over the fuzzy one.

Having specified the base line model of a RDD, it is important to move on to the five assumptions of the research model without which the validity of the design, and thus causal estimand, would be undermined. It is important to note here, that these assumptions pertain specifically to the internal validity of the RDD. External validity, assumptions about the data, and operationalisation of the indicators will be discussed in the next section. Due to its non-experimental approach, the RDD “must meet a variety of conditions to provide unbiased impact estimates and to approach the rigor of a randomized experiment” (Jacob and Zhu 2012, 14).

- The rating or forcing variable, the variable that determines the cut-off point: in this research the vote percentage, cannot be influenced by the outcome variable. It must be measured prior to the treatment.
- The cut-off point must be determined independently from the forcing variable, in other words the threshold must be set exogenously from the rating variable. Percentage thresholds for seats are fixed and are not changed after the election results to ensure more or fewer seats for any party.

- There can be no other factor than the treatment discontinuous in the analysis interval. This means that outside the cut-off point there can no major other event affecting the sample. In other words, any other change that occurred independent of, but in conjunction with the voting threshold would confound the observed effect of the NPD-seat and thus render any causal estimation biased.
- The final assumption states that the average treatment effect for all units given the forcing variable (S) is the same. It is the basic assumption of linearity and also holds for a RDD.

These assumptions are all held within the research design of the German municipal seat allocation for NPD and the anti-refugee attacks. The next step is to determine the bin-width around the cut-off point. These bins, when too narrow generate too much noise and cannot reveal the relationship between the treatment and the outcome variable, but when too big, the jump of intercept for the two lines cannot be observed (Jacob and Zhu 2012, 20). The cut-off point is determined at 5% of the votes. For the vast majority of the municipalities, 5% is the minimum threshold for receiving at least one seat. However, there are a few municipalities for which this is not the case. Instead of including these in the sample and thus overestimating the effect, they have been deleted from the sample. In this way, no municipalities who have indeed acquired a seat, but whose number of attacks are counted towards those municipalities without representation are included in the sample. The bin-width is then set at 2, meaning that within a range of 3% to 5% of the votes, a linear regression is estimated, which is then compared to the data on the other side of the threshold between 5% and 7%.

Having thus specified all terms, the baseline regression of this research is as follows:

$$Attacks_i = \alpha + \beta_0 T_i + \beta_i Voting\ Percentage_i + e,$$

where α is the constant and $\beta(0)$ is the constant effect of the treatment, T is equal to 1 for those municipalities in which the NPD has at least one seat, and 0 in which it does not. The voting percentage remains the independent variable and remains the same slope for both sides of the cut-off point. The final section of the empirical strategy will discuss the data sources in more detail, the structure of the variables and the assumptions of this model and research strategy.

3.3 Data and Assumptions

This section is split into two parts, data and model assumptions. The data come from two main sources. The data on the attacks perpetrated against refugees are collected by 'Die Zeit', a German newspaper (Die Zeit 2016). They have documented the attacks and covered multiple stories on the attacks, but also made publicly available data on the date of the attack, the nature, the amount of perpetrators, the number of (fatal) casualties, the estimated cost of the damage and some additional information. The validity of the data is high: all attacks have a description, date and the publisher suggests that the sources of have been checked. As to the reliability of the data, there is a possibility that some of the attacks were not reported or for some reason did not make it into the dataset. However, given its wide, national coverage and the rigorous methodology, the reliability of the data is high. The data on the voting percentages is retrieved from individual, municipal websites. Although some states have a central overview of the municipal election-results, these often only included the three largest parties or only those parties who received enough votes to access a seat. Other efforts, among which is a forthcoming dataset by researchers at Konstanz university, are also limited to the five largest parties or those parties who received at least one seat. Hence, the data for the 254 municipalities has been taken from the respective websites. In some cases where the locality in which the attack took place did not have its own

municipality, data was taken from the municipality to which it belonged. Here, there are no concerns regarding the reliability of the data in terms of whether the source is trusted and if they are representative of the actual results. However, the validity of the vote percentages, as to whether they accurately reflect the support for the NPD is less clear-cut. A key point is that not all NPD supporters may have voted in the most recent elections. All though this reduces the validity of this indicator, there is not theoretical or empirical reason to assume that this reluctance to vote is unevenly balanced across the sample. In other words, although it may hamper the magnitude of the effect, it is unlikely to bias the result to a particular region or sub-group of the sample. A second factor that reduces the validity of the voting data is that municipal elections are not held at the same time across the sixteen states. This means that some seats were won by the NPD in 2013 and some in 2016. Although there are a number of implications, for example changes in support-bases between the most recent elections and the date of the attack(s) and the effect on the support base of the NDP the rise of the AfD has had, due to the extremist nature of the party – it is unlikely that large voter-shifts have taken place. This latter argument, in combination with the absence of any regular, detailed polls or surveys at the municipal level, renders the most recent elections as the best option. However, the results must be weighed considering these limitations of the data.

The final section pertains to the larger assumptions of this research design, which are particularly important for the validity of the RDD and the absence of any control variables. The literature review has put forward a number of characteristics that are associated, in one direction or the other, with NPD support. Most dominantly are economic context and gender. In a regular regression design, in order to fully specify the model, these factors would have to be taken into account via control variables. However, as the literature shows that they are endogenous to the presence of the

NPD, I assume that in both municipalities that are close to the threshold of votes to receive a seat (i.e. the binwidth of 3% - 7% of the votes) these characteristics are present in a similar distribution. In other words, because economic context engenders support for the NPD there is no reason to assume that this will be different across the maximum range of a 4% vote difference. Similar logic applies to the gender-factor. There is no empirical or theoretical ground that indicates a significant imbalance in the distribution of white, male NPD voters across Germany. Hence, the design of the RDD, in combination with the endogeneity of the characteristics of the NPD supporter base, eradicates the need for a set of control variables.

4 Findings and Discussion: The Effect of Representation

4.1 Results of the RDD model

This research set out to investigate the effect of municipal representation by the NPD on the number of violent attacks targeted against refugees or their housing arrangements. The results of the model, specified at a 5% threshold produce a significant result at the 0.05 confidence level. Figure 2 shows the graphical representation of the two linear relationships between percentage NPD votes and the number of violent attacks in 2015.

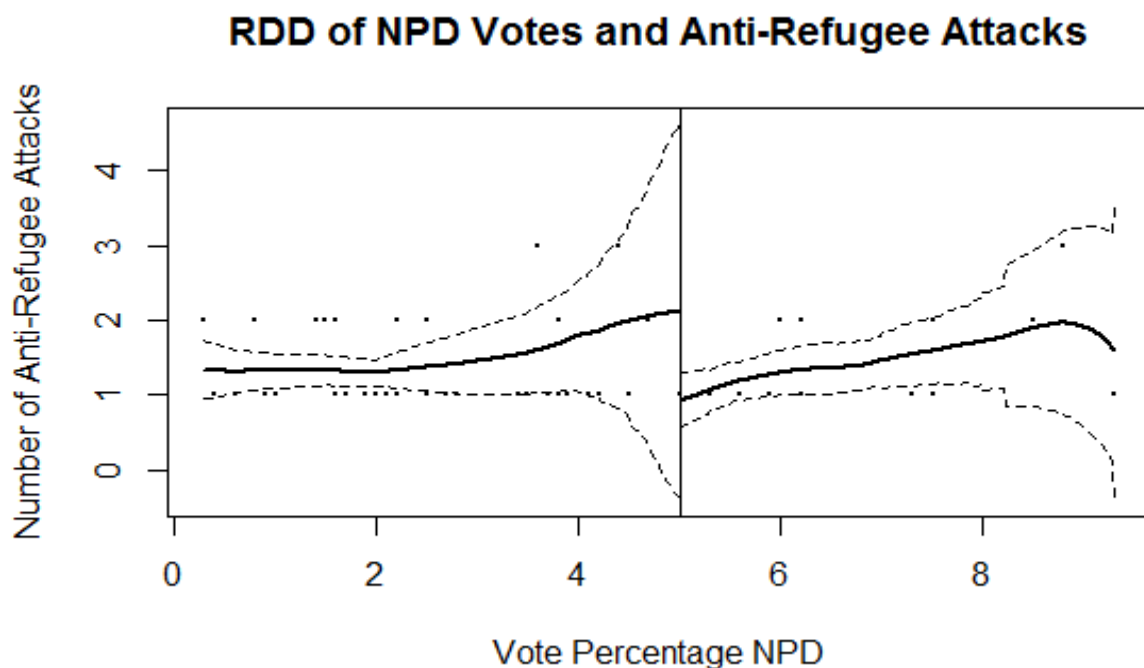


Figure 2. Results RDD 1

Interestingly, at the cut-off point there is a negative gap between the municipalities where the NPD has a seat vis-à-vis those where it does not. This means that holding a seat in the local municipal council by one of Germany's most extreme right-wing parties, seems to lower the number of attacks against refugees. Although the

substantive jump is small in absolute terms, from roughly two attacks to one, percentage wise it is a fifty percent decrease. However, before any further conclusions or extrapolations to percentages can be drawn, we must consider the statistical significance of this observed effect. Figure 3 shows the table containing the diagnostics of this test:

Local Average Treatment Effect *					
Bandwidth	Observations	Estimate	Std. Error	Z value	P value
2	27	-1.18	0.6	-1.97	0.049
Significance codes: 0 '***' 0.001 '**' 0.01 '*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1					

Figure 3. Table RDD Diagnostics 1

The diagnostics show that the effect of a seat in a local municipality decreases the number of attacks by 1.18. The effect is statistically significant at the 0.05 level, which is sufficient to at least further develop the theory and attract more research interests. The number of observations (27) is also quite low, but large enough to yield some results out of the significance tests. There are a few things important to note in the context of these findings. First of all, the nature of the research method restricts the generalisability of the results. These findings are only applicable to the range of the selected bandwidth. In other words, only in municipalities that experienced violent, anti-refugee attacks and where the NPD received between 3 – 7 percent of the votes in the most recent elections, the number of attacks decreases. It cannot be gradually extrapolated that for every one percent increase in votes the amount of attacks will go down by the estimand because the effect is based on a local regression determined by the bandwidth. It may be that another threshold effect occurs when the NPD reaches over 10% of the votes and gets a more significant number of seats which could lead to different effects, affecting both the direction and possibly the slope of the relationship.

Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that the effect of political representation on political violence is both negative and significant, which, despite the limitations to the data and the number of assumptions, is a stimulating finding. It speaks to the potential of social movements to seemingly satisfy constituents and undercut their need to resort to anti-system measures such as violence. Moreover it underscores the ability of Germany's democratic system to absorb even extremist, right-wing views and allow for a, thus far, peaceful integration of those parties into the institutionalised, democratic process. However, as normatively appealing as these inferences sound, there are a number of robustness checks that have to be carried out before final conclusions can be drawn.

4.2 Robustness Checks

The literature on RDD suggests a range of different robustness checks to validate the results in addition to the significance tests yielded by the model itself. The first test looks at the distribution of the forcing or rating variable, which, in this research, is the voting percentage for the NPD. In 2008, McCrary published a highly influential paper on the manipulation of the forcing variable in the RDD design. In essence he poses the scenario that if the cut-off point is known before implementation of the treatment, this could lead to a skewed distribution of observations on either side of the line, affecting the effect-size of the model (McCrary 2008, 699). He proposes a test whereby the null-hypothesis states that the forcing variable is discontinuous at the cut-off point, which means that there is a type of 'sorting process' around the cut-off points that biases the results (McCrary 2008, 700). For details on the type of test, smoothing parameters and conditions, please see his article from 2008. The test, in the context of the German case study shows the following:

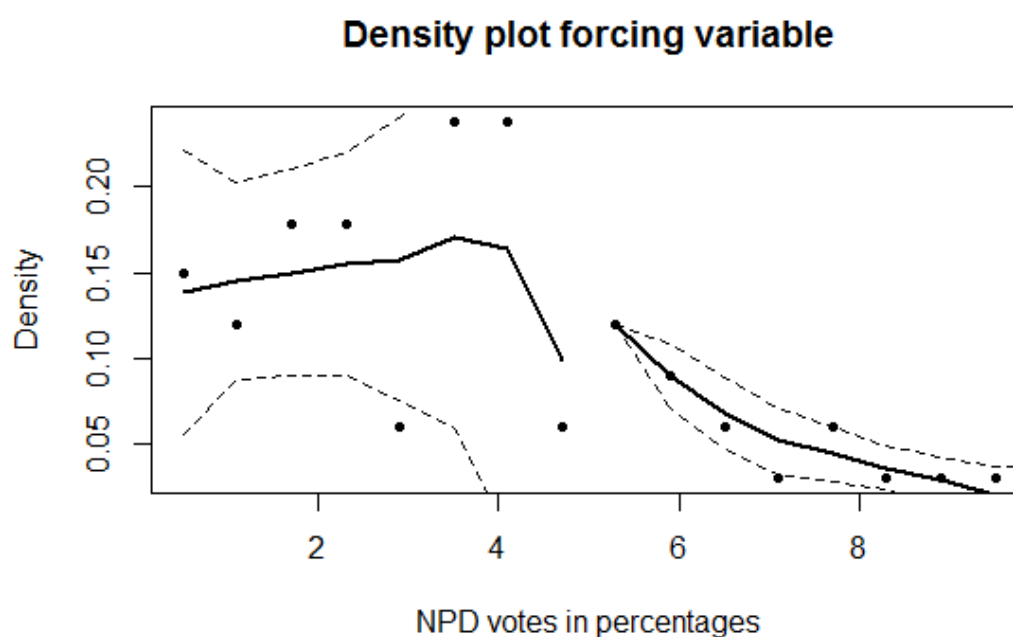


Figure 4. Density Plot 1

The density plot definitely reveals some discontinuity around the cut-off point. The test-diagnostics however, put forward a p-value of 0.23, that is just large enough to reject the null-hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that there is ‘no apparent sorting’. Although this is counter-intuitive to regular hypothesis-testing where a bigger p-value would be in favour of rejecting the alternative hypothesis, the test-design evokes the inverse since the null-hypothesis states discontinuity. A second robustness check, common in the RDD literature, is the use of a dummy cut-off point on either side of the real threshold (Lee 2007). I have chosen to arbitrarily assign a dummy cut-off point at -2.5 and + 2.5 of the original 5% share of the votes, maintaining the same bin-width of 2% on either side. If the real cut-off point does not yield the gap between the two local regression lines due to spurious results or as indicator of another similar phenomenon, then the two dummy cut-off points should not produce any gaps. In other words we expect a straight linear continuation of the relationship and no jump at the

arbitrary cut-off points. Figures 5 and 6 show the visual representation of the dummy cut-off points:

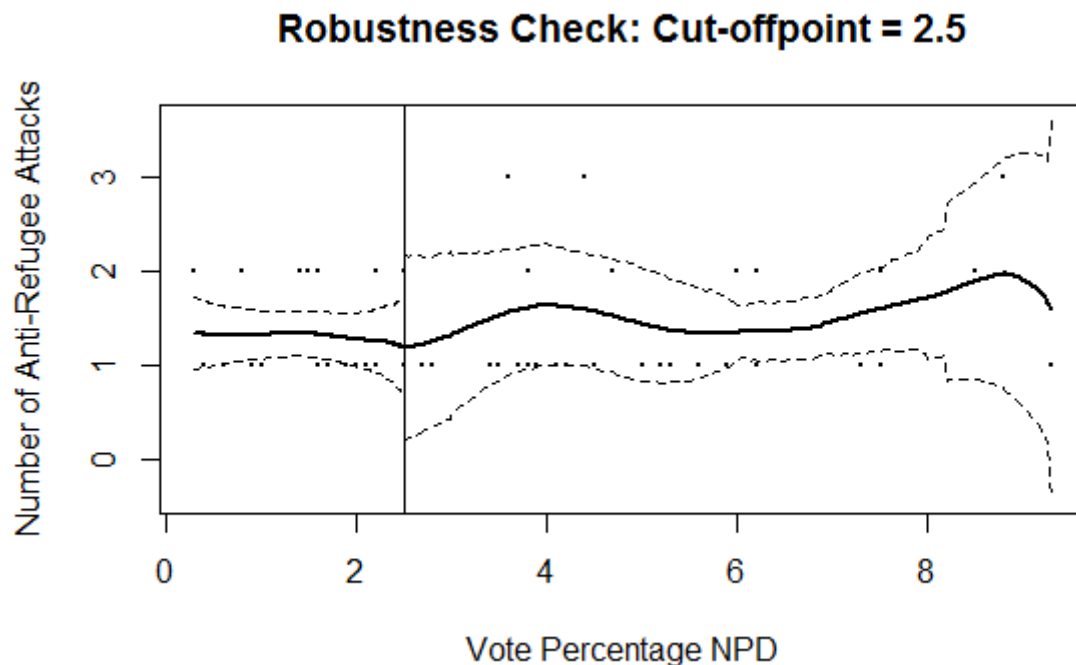


Figure 5. Robustness Check 1

The graph shows that the dummy threshold at 2.5 percentage of the NPD votes does not display any jump in the number of anti-refugee attacks. This means that there is no apparent effect on violent attacks through the NPD achieving just below or just above 2.5% of the votes. This makes sense because there is no seat awarded at this level and thus only marks a slight difference between size in supporter base and no other apparent threshold-effect.

Figure 6: Robustness check at cut-off point 7.5

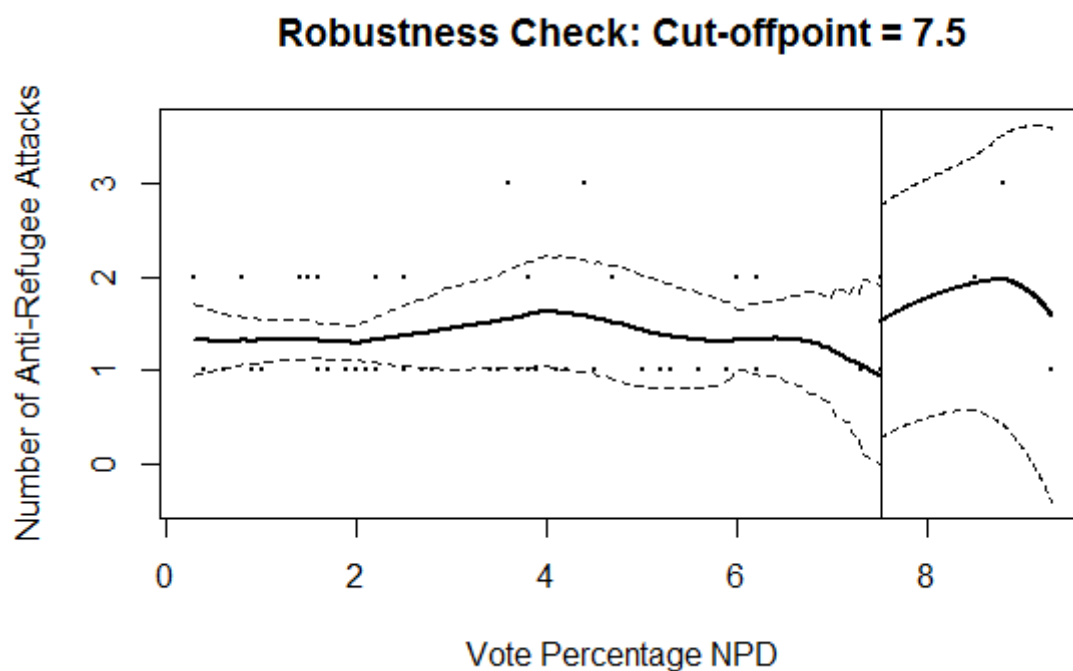


Figure 6. Robustness Check 2 1

In contrast with the other dummy threshold, figure 6 reveals another jump at the 7.5% of the votes cut-off point. This finding would suggest that there is another threshold effect and would undermine the reliability of the real threshold. However the diagnostics of the dummy cut-off point reveal that this effect is not significant ($p\text{-value} = 0.2$). Although this is sufficient to not eradicate the effect of the real cut-off point, it should be noted that there may be other effects as the amount of representation increases.

These two robustness tests, the density test and the dummy cut-off points, reveal some weaknesses in the strength of the relationship and hint at other possible effects at different intervals of NPD support. The main finding however, remains fairly robust in light of the two tests. The final section of the results will discuss some limitations to the

finding that a seat for the NPD in municipal council reduces the amount of violent attacks.

4.3 Limitations

The limitations to this study stem mainly from data availability and a yet unexplored field of study in the literature. To begin with issues concerning data availability, the data were in most instances found in percentages on the websites of the respective German municipalities. However in a few instances only the real votes were presented and so the percentages had to be calculated by hand. This can generate small deviations from the actual percentages due to the different and, to the author unknown, methods of redistributing any remaining votes. It is unlikely that this would have caused major shifts in the data patterns, but nonetheless impacts the validity of the results.

Moreover, the lack of a central database containing records on all votes cast would advance future research though including also those municipalities with (high) NPD representation in the municipal council but no attacks. This could potentially provide more insight into other determinants of anti-refugee violence that are not or in a different way associated with the extreme-right wing. Especially given the different voter-base of Pegida as rising movement this would be informative and fertile ground for future research. However, such data collection was beyond the scope of this paper. It does mean however, that in addition to the stated vote percentage limits, the findings of this paper are also limited to those municipalities in which violence was present. It thus means that within the sub-group of municipalities that experienced anti-refugee violence, there is evidence to suggest that political representation can reduce this. There is no empirical ground to extend the same claim to non-violent municipalities. Nor does it mean that the inverse also holds: a decrease in votes for the NPD will not necessarily lead to more violent attacks.

A final comment on the limitations imposed by the data, relates to the different election cycles per state. This is perhaps the most serious limitation, that the voting results are in some states only a few months old and in others three years. Unfortunately, there is no polling data available at the level of the municipality, although this would also impose validity concerns as a replacement to election results. Hence, there is no current 'fix' for this problem, but is important to be cognisant of this factor in weighing the results.

The second source that limits the explanatory effect of this study is the lack of literature on the examined relationship between political representation and political violence in advanced democracies. Though social movements and terrorism, as noted in the literature review, have been studied extensively, the fine line between utilising democratic channels of dissent and violent means is rarely studied outside the context of civil wars or secessionist movements. This means that the proposed mechanisms through which representation for the NPD could reduce violence, namely a sense of representation, actual policy change or a stronger grip by the party leadership, have yet to be tested empirically. Although theoretically plausible, the persuasiveness of the findings is hampered by the lack of previous research and this particular paper on the mechanisms. However, this paper seeks to inspire future research into those particular dynamics of representation, accountability and legitimacy at the local level of democracy.

5 Conclusion

The high number of violent protests and attacks across Germany in 2015, presented a puzzle as to what determines the use of violence when theoretically so many other channels of expressing dissent are available and the opportunity costs are high. Although the use of violence has been extensively researched in a variety of other contexts such as civil wars and terrorism, the use of political violence has rarely been connected to the notion of political representation. This paper has tried to open up this field of research, focusing especially on the micro-level of democracy: the municipality. It is at this level the consequences of national, immigration policies are directly felt, but also presents the most relevant space to adjust the, sometimes considerable, margins of these national policies. It can thus provide an opportunity to reduce or completely eradicate the need to resort to political violence through optimising democratic channels of opposition and dissent. This is however, only one suggested mechanism, through which representation can reduce political violence.

Although this paper has not been able to identify how at least one NPD seat in municipal councils reduces the number of anti-refugee attacks, it has been able to establish that there is a relationship between the two. Through using a RDD, it was found that in two sets of otherwise similar municipalities, the effect of political representation on political violence is negative. This finding opens up several interesting directions of research, including but not limited to the relevance of local elections and representation for parties at the fringes, an expansion of determinants of political violence and the interaction between political representation and political violence in advanced democracies. In several ways, western European societies are experiencing a growing disconnect between different groups of constituents and the political representatives. A growing number of people is feeling systematically

unrepresented, leading in some instances to the use of anti-system measures such as violence. Understanding that issues of political under- or misrepresentation are more complex than temporary economic situations or gender profiles can lead to a better understanding of extreme right- (or left-) wing parties and their supporters. Although this does not imply a justification of, or much less, a call for the use of violence, it does underline the need to examine all the determinants of political violence in order to find solutions that can be sustainable. The findings published in this paper can inform the re-examination by the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, of what would be in line with the German constitution: a ban on the NPD from the official political arena or allowing it to stay and thus accommodate their views into the democratic process in a peaceful manner?

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