Anti-immigration party success abroad and voter polarization at home☆

Tobias Böhmelt , Lawrence Ezrow [*], Roi Zur

Department of Government, University of Essex, Colchester, CO4 3SQ, United Kingdom

A R T I C L E   I N F O

Keywords:
Voter polarization
Anti-immigration parties
Cross-national diffusion
Migration attitudes
Elections

A B S T R A C T

If anti-immigration parties perform well in national elections, the media also in other countries will cover their success. This initiates a process of cross-national influence, which we argue polarizes public opinion abroad. This article examines the case of migration attitudes and how they are shaped by national election outcomes in other countries. We analyze data from the European Social Survey (ESS), and individual-level data from the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) in the context of the 2017 federal election in Germany. The combined findings from these analyses support our argument: citizens' polarization in one country is influenced by foreign anti-immigration parties' electoral success. Our research holds direct implications for the understanding of public attitudes toward migration, how public opinion is formed, political polarization, and cross-country political diffusion processes.

When explaining the polarization of attitudes in the electorate, existing studies mainly focus on the role and influence of political elites (see, e.g., McCarty et al. 2006; Lenz, 2012; Ezrow et al., 2014). For example, Feddersen and Adams (2022; see also Bishin et al., 2015) demonstrate that citizens' migration attitudes polarize in reaction to parties' messages: when a party communicates anti-migration positions, partisans of that platform update their views in a similar direction (i.e., in-party "legitimization"), but supporters of other parties show more positive attitudes toward immigration (i.e., out-party "backlash"). Along these lines, Bursztyn et al. (2020) argue that Donald Trump's election in 2016 allowed citizens to feel more comfortable in expressing xenophobic viewpoints. In the European context, Bischof and Wagner (2019) similarly provide theoretical and empirical evidence that voter polarization is affected by political parties, especially when radical-right parties enter parliament. The underlying cause of polarization following the success of radical parties is that anti- and pro-radical-right segments of the population are influenced by subsequent legitimization and backlash effects.

National election outcomes are the starting point of the theoretical mechanisms in Bursztyn et al. (2020) and Bischof and Wagner (2019). But citizens are not only responsive to national elections (see also Anderson and Guillory 1997), but also to elections at other levels. The performance of a political party in one set of elections thus influences its prospects in elections at other jurisdictional levels. According to Dinas and Riera (2018), for instance, European Parliament elections shape outcomes at the national level. And Bolleyer and Bytzek (2013) provide evidence that regional election outcomes have significant implications for new party success in national elections. These arguments directly relate to the research on diffusion, which emphasizes that actors belonging to one "spatial context" may be influenced by actors in other "spatial units" (see Elkins and Simmons 2005; Franzese and Hays 2007, 2008; Gilardi 2010; see also Cook et al. 2022). Numerous works of this stream in the literature report that not only do governing policies diffuse across countries, but so too do parties' policy positions (e.g., Böhmelt et al., 2016, 2017; Düpont and Rachuj 2022; Schleiter et al., 2021; Senninger et al., 2022).

We combine insights from these literatures – on citizen polarization, election outcomes, and cross-national diffusion – to evaluate whether election results in one national context also exert an influence across borders by shaping and indeed polarizing citizens' political preferences in another. We contend that anti-immigration parties' electoral success leads to legitimization and/or backlash effects and, hence, polarized

migration attitudes – not only among citizens in their own country, but also that legitimization and backlash influences travel cross-nationally.[1] To this end, national election results abroad are, as we claim, an important stimulus that polarizes public opinion on migration "at home" – through media coverage as the vehicle of diffusion (Knigge 1998; Bos et al., 2010; Lubbers and Scheepers 2001; Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2010; Koopmans and Vliegenthart 2010; Murphy and Devine 2020; Malet 2022).

The focus of this article is on the electoral performance of anti-immigration platforms as the movement of people across borders has risen significantly over the last few decades, making migration one of the most salient political issues of our time (see also Böhmelt and Mehrl 2022). Indeed, international migration has become a "fundamental driver of social, economic, and political change" worldwide (Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005: 99). Examining whether parties with anti-migration platforms in other countries shape voter polarization "at home" sheds new light on what we know of the factors behind public opinion formation, polarization, and cross-national influences.

As advanced by Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden (2010), Murphy and Devine (2020), or Malet (2022), the vehicle for wide-ranging cross-country effects of election outcomes is the media: anti-immigration parties' stronger performance tends to attract more extensive media coverage. Mass media are more likely to cover election results that produce unexpected results, i.e., when peripheral parties, including anti-migration platforms, perform well (Knigge 1998; Bos et al., 2010; Lubbers and Scheepers 2001; see also Koopmans and Vliegenthart 2010). The visibility of and increased media attention to such electoral outcomes initiates a process of cross-national influence that reaches other countries, which likely produces backlash against and legitimization of anti-migration attitudes (Bischof and Wagner 2019; see also Schwartz et al., 2021; Valentim 2021; Malet 2022). Eventually, voter polarization in one national context should increase due to the electoral success of anti-migration parties in other countries: those in favor of anti-immigration parties will foster their anti-migration attitudes, while citizens opposing such party platforms increase their pro-migration views.

We provide empirical evidence for our argument using different sets of observations, different units of analysis, and different data sets. First, we use data from the European Social Survey (ESS) in 2002–2016[2] and estimate models with a spatial variable that captures the effect of foreign election results on voters' polarization at home. Second, to assess micro-level influences, we have compiled data from the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) 2017 (Wagner et al., 2020) before and after the 2017 federal election in Germany. In that election, the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), a right-wing anti-immigration party, performed relatively well and entered parliament for the first time. Our empirical findings from both data sets (ESS and AUTNES) support the theoretical argument that migration views polarize when anti-immigration parties performed well in national elections abroad. In addition, our main analyses and the estimations in the Supporting Information (SI) provide evidence for the legitimization and the backlash mechanisms: in response to electoral performances, some citizens abroad develop more skeptical attitudes (the legitimization effect), while the study of Austrian attitudes shows that the electorate became more pro-migration (the backlash effect).

This research contributes to our understanding of democratic politics from several angles. First, there is an extensive literature on how public opinion is formed (e.g., Erikson et al., 2002; see also Soroka and Wlezien 2010) and how voters' attitudes polarize (e.g., McCarty et al. 2006;

Lenz, 2012; Ezrow et al., 2014; Bischof and Wagner 2019; Feddersen and Adams 2022). In this context, the "thermostatic" model by Wlezien (1995, 1996) suggests that public opinion responds to government policy: when policy outcomes are to the left, the electorate's demand for rightward policies increases. More recently, Van Hauwaert (2023) demonstrates similarly that when immigration policies are more restrictive (permissive), the demand for these decreases (increases). We contribute to these works by raising the possibility that foreign election results influence public opinion polarization at home.

Second, our research produces new insights for the literature on attitudes toward migration. A number of prominent studies provide evidence that public opinion on migration is affected by a several, predominantly domestic-level factors (e.g., Mayda 2006; Sides and Jack, 2007; Dustmann and Preston 2007; McLaren and Johnson 2007; Bohman and Hjerm 2016; see also Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Valentino et al., 2019; Van Hauwaert, 2023). We add to this by showing that immigration-opinion polarization, which thus far has been treated as a domestic-level phenomenon, is also driven by transnational influences, namely the success of anti-migration parties abroad.

Third, our results are important for the general literature on transnational diffusion as we explore a new election-to-public opinion pathway of diffusion. Traditionally, the diffusion research has focused on government-to-government influences (Elkins and Simmons 2005; Franzese and Hays 2007, 2008; Gilardi 2010; Gilardi and Wasserfallen 2019). More recently, the literature began looking at several other possible levels of cross-national diffusion such as from party to party across countries (Böhmelt et al., 2016, 2017; Schleiter et al., 2021; Senninger et al., 2022; see also Ezrow et al., 2021), election-to-election influences (Delis et al., 2020), or election-to-public opinion diffusion (Bateson and Weintraub 2022; Carreras et al. 2021). Moreover, Czaika and Di Lillo (2018) report how public opinion diffuses across regions. We show that all of the above level-to-level diffusion results – government-to-government, party-to-party, election-to-election, or public-to-public – do not occur in a vacuum. Instead, important insights arise when cross-level diffusion effects are taken into account: elections abroad can affect public opinion polarization at home, highlighting the election-to-public opinion pathway.

1. Anti-immigration parties' electoral performance abroad and voter polarization at home

Based on a set of studies (Bischof and Wager 2019; Feddersen and Adams 2022; Adams et al., 2022) that mainly focus on the domestic level, we derive that two components principally drive the mechanism that citizens "at home" will be influenced by the electoral performance of foreign anti-immigration parties. The first component of attitude polarization is the "legitimization" of extreme positions. That is, the electoral success of anti-immigration parties will increase the number of citizens who are comfortable self-reporting anti-migration positions (see also Bursztyn et al., 2020; Valentim 2021). Hence, anti-immigration parties can push citizens (especially those who already identify as their partisans) toward more restrictive views on migration. The second component pertains to anti-migration parties also creating a backlash to their policies – pushing opposition supporters toward adopting more strongly pronounced views in favor of migration (see also Schwartz et al., 2021). When backlash in this context occurs, pro-migration citizens adopt even more pro-migration stances.

Bischof and Wagner (2019) explore the effects of the success of radical-right parties, which are almost exclusively anti-immigration platforms, at the domestic level. They evaluate how voters react to radical-right parties' entry into parliament. Bischof and Wagner (2019) report that public opinion polarizes, i.e., the variance of political attitudes increases in response to radical-right parties' electoral success, due to legitimization and backlash effects (see also Bohman and Hjerm 2016; Valentim 2021). Feddersen and Adams (2022) find that parties can (weakly) persuade their supporters on the immigration issue. However,

---

party positions also generate backlash effects, whereby citizens who support platforms that are ideologically hostile to the focal party shift their positions away from the that party's announced position (see also Bishin et al., 2015; Schwartz et al., 2021). Adams et al. (2022) analyze how populist governments influence foreign political parties' policies across a range of issues, including immigration, multiculturalism, European integration, and economic policy. Their study concludes that political parties in other countries distance their policies from populist governments, which is a finding that is consistent with the backlash arguments. To summarize, existing research highlights the combination of backlash and legitimization effects in contributing to polarization. We extend these predictions by proposing that this occurs when foreign anti-immigration parties perform well in elections.

We argue that the vehicle for a cross-country influence stemming from foreign anti-immigration parties' electoral performance is the media (Knigge 1998; Bos et al., 2010; Lubbers and Scheepers 2001; Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2010; Koopmans and Vliegenthart 2010; Murphy and Devine 2020; Malet 2022). When anti-immigrant parties win more votes in elections, more extensive media coverage – also in other states – is the likely outcome. Citizens from one national context are then exposed to anti-immigrant parties' success and their policy platforms from another. As Murphy and Devine (2020: 894), among others, emphasize, mass media coverage is "the primary channel through which the electorate receives information about politicians and parties." To this end, the cross-national influence, which we contend emerges from the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties abroad and that comprises legitimization and backlash effects, is facilitated by the media, given that coverage of foreign election results is more likely and more extensive when an election produced somewhat unexpected results such as non-mainstream parties, including anti-migration platforms, performing well (Knigge 1998; Bos et al., 2010; Lubbers and Scheepers 2001; Vliegenthart and Boomgaarden 2010; see also Koopmans and Vliegenthart 2010).

There is theoretical and empirical evidence that citizens pay attention to foreign elections, and that this is due in part to the role of the media. For example, the German media covered the 2017 presidential election in France quite extensively. A search of the archive of the relatively large German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in the month prior to the election indicates that Marine Le Pen, the leader of the Front National campaigning on an anti-immigration platform, was mentioned in 77 articles. By contrast, Le Pen's competitor, Emmanuel Macron who went on to win the election, was mentioned in only 56 articles.[3] In light of studies like Malet (2022), Rooduijn (2014), and Deacon and Wring (2016), it is plausible that the German news coverage of the French election, combined with and the electoral success of the Front National, led to greater exposure to anti-immigration arguments to the wider German public. Malet (2022) argues that the results of the French referendum on the European Constitution in 2005, which was widely covered by news media sources across Europe and beyond, led to increased Eurosceptic attitudes in other countries. Rooduijn (2014) reports that the degree of populism in the media is influenced by populist parties doing well in national elections. Deacon and Wring (2016) analyze media coverage of the anti-EU, anti-immigration United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and suggest that media attention of UKIP was directly influenced by the party's strong political standing.

The media also draws upon and reports statements released by the parties "at home" (Haselmayer et al. 2017) to cover foreign elections, which in turn shapes domestic polarization. This clearly occurred in Austria, for example, in the immediate aftermath of the 2017 German national election, with Austrian parties publicizing their reactions to the outcome.[4] Herbert Kickl, the general secretary of the Austrian Freedom

Party (FPÖ), stated that the German election outcome demonstrates that Europeans would oppose Angela Merkel's migration policy and he congratulated the AfD party on their performance.[5] The New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS) congratulated their Liberal counterpart in Germany, and they also expressed their dissatisfaction with the AfD's entry into parliament.[6] Yet another example is the Austrian Green party leader, Ulrike Lunacek, who described the AfD success as "worrying."[7] Thus, Austrian parties were quick to comment on the German elections, and media outlets widely reported on these statements across the political spectrum, e.g., the newspaper Kurier,[8] which is one of the best-selling daily outlets in Austria. As a result, the public pays attention to the media and there is sufficient news coverage. While elections in European countries are covered through media attention across the globe, they will be reported more extensively in Europe as such, hence generating more facilitative conditions for cross-national influence here.[9]

To summarize, our theory suggests that foreign election results matter for public opinion in another country. A cross-level (election-to-public opinion channel) transnational diffusion effect occurs when anti-immigration parties perform well in their national elections abroad. The media "at home" then cover these elections and likely do so more extensively when there is a strong performance of an anti-immigration platform. Hence, with citizens paying attention to election results in other countries, the media serve as a vehicle for the cross-national influence, which generates legitimization and backlash effects "at home." The empirical implication is an increasing polarization of attitudes, which we seek to test in the following:

Anti-Immigration Hypothesis: Anti-immigration attitudes in one country polarize when anti-immigration parties perform well in national elections abroad.

2. Research design

Our empirical findings are derived from two different designs that rely on two different data sources: one analysis is located at the country-year level and employs the European Social Survey (ESS) between 2002 and 2016 ("Study 1"). For this first set of models, we seek to explore the macro-level effects of anti-migration parties' success abroad on polarization "at home." The ESS's key advantage over other, similar data sets is that their survey practices are harmonized, which reduces the likelihood of different results between countries being driven by variation in how the surveys are conducted from country to country (for a discussion, see De Vries, 2017).

A second analysis uses data from the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) 2017 (Wagner et al., 2020) and concentrates on the individual as the unit of analysis ("Study 2"). The AUTNES fielded a number of online survey waves before the Austrian national election in October 2017. Conveniently, for our purposes, one of these waves was in the field just before the German federal (parliamentary) election held on September 24, 2017: data for wave #3 was compiled between August 30 and September 14, 2017. The next wave (wave #4) was in the field just after the German election, namely between October 2 and 13, 2017. It is important to note that this last wave was completed before the Austrian election on October 15, 2017. Combining waves #3 and #4 of the AUTNES Online Panel provides an ideal testing ground for our theory at the individual level and for the micro-level impact of the postulated mechanism as the German election saw an anti-migration party performing exceptionally well: the AfD entered parliament for the first time

---

[3] We thank Roni Lehrer for sharing these analyses.

[4] The press releases were obtained from the OTS archive (https://www.ots.at/) following Müller et al. (2017).

[5] Available online at: http://tinyurl.com/4dkyc4nf.

[6] Available online at: http://tinyurl.com/4cncrn9w.

[7] Available online at: http://tinyurl.com/yc6326h4.

[8] Available online at: http://tinyurl.com/2hzutpnc.

[9] Below and in the SI, we empirically examine the claim about individuals' media attention in more detail.

and they secured 12.6 percent of the vote, which made them the strongest opposition party. The outcome of the German election, especially due to the performance of the anti-migration right-wing party, received considerable media attention abroad.[10] Thus, the AUTNES Online Panel allows us to examine migration-attitude polarization at the individual-level in Austria, caused by the strong performance of the German AfD.

The dependent variable in both analyses is an issue—specific polarization measure based on public attitudes toward migration. For the ESS analyses, we use the survey question "[t]o what extent do you think that your country should allow immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe."[11] The responses to this question include "allow many to come and live here," "allow some," "allow a few," and "allow none." We omitted individuals who have not responded to this question or expressed no opinion ("do not know"). Next, we calculated the standard deviation of this question for each country-year to arrive at our final, country-level polarization score. Larger values stand for a more polarized society on the migration issue.

For the AUTNES analysis, both surveys (waves #3 and #4) comprise several questions on attitudes towards migrants. For the main analysis below, we rely on the question: "[t]o what extent do you agree with the following statement: immigrants pay more into the Austrian social security system than they take out."[12] The possible responses (and values) include "completely agree (1)," "somewhat agree (2)," "partly agree/ disagree (3)," "somewhat disagree (4)," and "completely disagree" (5). Again, we omitted individuals who have not responded to this question or expressed no opinion ("do not know"). For this set of analyses, the operationalization is at the individual-level, and so polarization is calculated for each individual respondent as the squared distance to the overall mean response. Correspondingly, large (small) values indicate polarized (centrist) views.

We opt for these issue-specific questions as they are directly related to the electoral performance of anti-migration parties. Hence, they shed direct light on the "underlying structure of the ideological space" (Bischof and Wagner 2019: 892) for migration. Furthermore, the issue-specific questions are widely available. Although these questions are less general than, e.g., the traditional left-right self-placement scores, left-right responses may not actually capture the changes in the issue content of debates surrounding elections and anti-migration parties' success abroad. Ultimately, the most direct test of our theory and the closest approximation of public-opinion polarization due to anti-migration parties' electoral performance in other countries pertains to issue-specific questions on migration. Following the discussion above, we explore different specifications of the dependent variable and we control for respondents' left-right self-placements in the SI.

3. Empirical results: study 1 – European Social Survey 2002–2016

The sample of the first analysis comprises 27 established European democracies including non-EU states such as Switzerland and Norway.[13] The sample's country-time coverage is driven by data availability of the core variables of interest, most crucially the systematic definition of anti-migration party platforms. The country-year is the unit of analysis in this time-series cross-sectional data set. To this end, this first analysis does not look at the effect of the elections only, but at the entire term

between elections and, therefore, we capture the broad, macro-level impact of anti-migration parties' success abroad on polarization "at home."

Our theory posits that a country's migration-attitude polarization is driven by other states' anti-immigration parties' electoral performances. Hence, voters' polarization on migration is modeled as a function of neighboring countries' success of anti-migration parties in national elections. To this end, we created a spatial variable operationalized as the logarithmized average vote share of all anti-migration parties in other countries in each year of our sample. To code anti-migration party platforms, we use data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) and Van Spanje and Joost (2011).[14] We focus on parties' positions on migration, and whether they are for or against it. In particular, a party is coded as an anti-migration party if its mean expert placement on the 0–10 anti-immigration scale is larger than 8 in the CHES data. A list of anti-immigration parties per country and years is provided in the SI. Although we leave issue saliency aside for simplicity, we address its implications in the SI. The data on election dates and vote shares are mostly reported in the CHES data, but we rely on Döring and Manow (2012) if vote shares were not available from the CHES. To rule out that the possibility that elections took place after people already expressed their attitudes in the ESS, we lag the spatial variable by one year.

We further control for three variables from the World Bank Development Indicators that capture alternative influences to ensure that we identify a genuine cross-country social influence effect (see Buhaug and Gleditsch, 2008). These controls are also temporally lagged by one year. First, to address the impact of economic development, we use the logarithm of GDP per capita (in current US Dollars), which is defined as the gross domestic product divided by midyear population. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. Moreover, we consider the influence from unemployment, which is measured by the logged total number of unemployed as a share of the total labor force. Unemployment refers to the share of the labor force that is without work but available for and seeking employment. Third, we control for the logarithmized total population of international migrants and refugees per capita in a country. The World Bank defines international migrants and refugees as "people born in a country other than that in which they live. It also includes refugees." Hence, this variable captures the entire population of foreign-born individuals per capita in a state.

We employ two-way fixed effects OLS regression models with a lagged dependent variable. The temporally lagged dependent variable controls for voter polarization in the previous year and thereby addresses concerns over the potential influence of the public's past opinion on current polarization levels. Country fixed effects capture time-invariant, unobserved influences at the country level (including any possibly existing electoral thresholds of countries), while year fixed effects control for system-wide shocks.

We summarize our main models in Table 1, where we present six estimations. Model 1 comprises the main explanatory variable of interest only next to the fixed effects as well as the lagged dependent variable. In Model 2, we add the controls introduced above. In Model 3, we include the logarithmized vote share of anti-migration party platforms at home, thereby incorporating the core variable from Bischof and Wagner (2019). This item controls for the possibility that a successful anti-immigrant party exists "at home" and, hence, the success of

---

[10] See online, e.g., at: https://tinyurl.com/2p8tect8.

[11] A question not linked to the degree of wealth/poverty of immigrants' home countries does not exist in the ESS.

[12] This item is simple with the corresponding results easy to interpret. In the SI, we also examine the robustness of our analysis using factor analysis that combines several survey items.

[13] The ESS also has data on Ukraine or Israel, which we omit from our analysis with a view toward increasing case homogeneity.

[14] In case CHES data were not available, we rely on Van Spanje and Joost (2011) coding who applies the same cut-off (after adjusting the scales from different surveys to 0–10). The CHES lists the legislative term a party was coded. We use this coding for all that term's years. If no CHES data for a given election are available, but there are data within four years prior or past a given year, we use the closest future or past value. A list of anti-immigration party platforms per country is provided in the SI.

Table 1
Polarization of migration attitudes and anti-migration party success abroad.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Lagged Dependent Variable	0.909***	0.921***	0.925***	0.925***	0.941***	0.920***
	(0.026)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.029)
Anti-Migration Party Success Abroad	0.036***	0.036***	0.062***	0.064***		
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.016)	(0.017)		
Anti-Migration Party Success Home			0.003**	0.003**		0.003*
			(0.001)	(0.001)		(0.002)
Foreign Population per capita (ln)		0.016*	0.015	0.015	0.013	0.015
		(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)
GDP per capita (ln)		0.011	0.015	0.013	0.017	0.010
		(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.012)
Unemployment (ln)		−0.002	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Effective Number of Parties				−0.001		
				(0.001)		
Party Success Abroad (5%)					2.010***	
					(0.428)	
Party Success Home (5%)					0.109***	
					(0.023)	
Party Success Larger Countries						0.063***
						(0.022)
Constant	0.024	−0.043	−0.131	−0.114	−0.707***	−0.102
	(0.030)	(0.117)	(0.123)	(0.125)	(0.192)	(0.125)
Obs.	298	298	298	298	298	298
R^2	0.959	0.921	0.915	0.919	0.917	0.926
Country Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table entries are two-way fixed effects OLS coefficients; standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < 0.10$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

anti-immigrant parties abroad then likely has little legitimizing effects. Model 4 additionally incorporates a control for the effective number of parliamentary parties, which is also based on Bischof and Wagner (2019: 898), and Model 5 replaces our main explanatory variables by a more simple operationalization of anti-migration parties' success "at home" and abroad: instead of foreign anti-migration parties' vote share, we focus on a binary specification so that a value of 1 is assigned to a country-year if at least one party secured at least five percent of the votes in the last national election of that country. Similarly, we average anti-immigration parties' vote shares across all other states for *Party Success Abroad (5%)*, and a value of 1 is assigned if foreign countries' anti-immigration parties' average vote share is above five percent. This operationalization considers that possible electoral thresholds in some countries could make parties' entrance into parliament more difficult – this may affect their media coverage and, ultimately, whether a cross-national social influence occurs. Finally, Model 6 assigns weights to the size of countries so that anti-migration parties' electoral success only in larger states is covered, with the spatial variable in Model 6 being based on countries with a logarithmized income level of greater than 9. This excludes countries such as Poland, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, or Hungary in certain years. The rationale behind this specification is to proxy media attention: the electoral results of smaller countries with less economic weight in Europe might be less comprehensively covered abroad.

The results in Table 1 consistently show that anti-migration party platforms abroad affect voter polarization in the focal country. The estimated coefficients are very stable and the estimates for *Anti-Migration Party Success Abroad* are positively signed and significant in all models. In Model 4, for example, for each 10 percent increase in the vote share of anti-migration platforms abroad, the difference in the expected mean polarization is estimated at 0.0061 units. Fig. 1 displays the
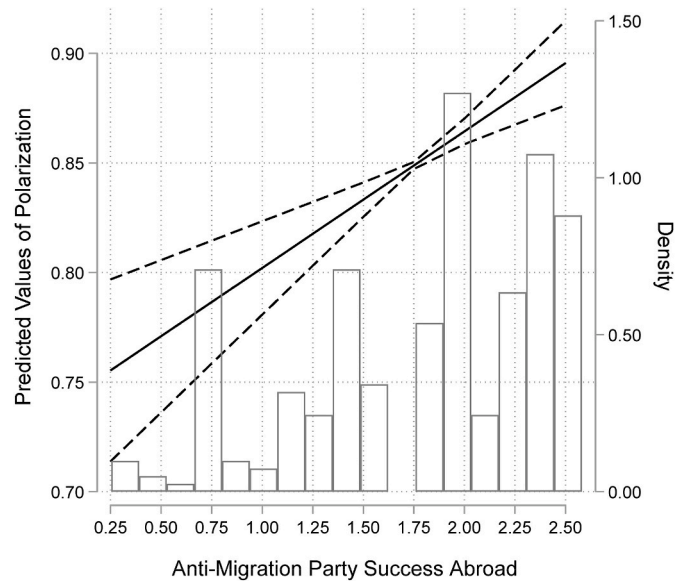
Fig. 1. Predicted Values of *Polarization* as a Function of Anti-Migration Party Success Abroad
Notes. The dashed lines are 90 percent confidence intervals; histogram shows distribution of variable *Anti-Migration Party Success Abroad*$_{t-1}$; graph based on Model 3.

predicted values of *Polarization of Migration Attitudes* when altering *Anti-Migration Party Success Abroad* (specifications of Model 3). The pattern summarized in this figure mirrors our interpretation of Table 1: voter polarization "at home" increases with anti-migration parties' success

abroad.[15]

Due to the temporally lagged dependent variable, our coefficient estimates of the spatial variables only reflect the short-term effect, i.e., the impact in a current year. In order to estimate the asymptotic, long-term impact of the spatial variable, we consider the coefficient of the temporally lagged dependent variable (see Plümper et al. 2005: 336):

$$\sum_{t=1}^{T}\left(\rho\sum_{j}w_{ij}y_{je-1}\right)\beta_0^{T-t}$$

"where β_0 is the coefficient of the lagged dependent variable, T is the number of periods with t denoting a single period" (Plümper and Neumayer 2010: 425), and i and j pertain to units (countries). Accordingly, we estimate asymptotic long-term effects (in addition to short-term effects) for the spatial variable and summarize them in Fig. 2. The short-term effect for *Anti-Migration Party Success Abroad* in Model 1 is 0.66 (Model 3: 1.157), which it is calculated from its (rounded) coefficient multiplied by 18.568, which is the average number of neighbors (other countries besides the focal state) for this spatial variable. The asymptotic long-term effect is 7.261 (Model 3: 15.357), which is calculated using the equation described above. These estimates are all statistically significant.

For the theoretical mechanism, we claim that the public pays attention to the news and that there is sufficient news coverage. While the latter is generally given in a geographical region as dense as Europe and we discuss it above theoretically and empirically, we compiled data on news media consumption to address the first component: that the public pays attention to the news. For this, we merged all integrated data files of the ESS covering 2002–2016 and focus on the question "how much of your time watching television is spent watching news or program about politics and current affairs?" Respondents could answer on a 0–7 scale with 0 standing for "no time at all" and 7 "more than 3 h".[16] We first deleted all individuals who have not responded to this question or expressed no opinion ("do not know") before aggregating this individual-level variable to the country level by averaging across respondents. We thus end up with a variable measuring average news media consumption in each country-year between 2002 and 2016, while country-years not covered by the ESS are linearly interpolated. According to our calculations, the variable has a mean value of 2.093, which translates into an average weekday consumption of programs about politics and current affairs of 30 min to 1 h. The patterns of this variable across countries and over time are plotted in Fig. 3, and they are consistent with the claim that the public follows the news on a regular and thorough basis. We further support this assessment by analyzing Google Trends data for Austria, Portugal, and Germany in the SI.

With respect to the control variables, the coefficient on *Migrant/Refugee Population per-capita (ln)* is positive and statistically significant in Model 1, and it approaches statistical significance in the other models. The positive estimates suggest that the more foreign-born individuals for each citizen of a state, the more polarized voters' opinions will be on migration. This pattern echoes other findings in the literature in that the exposure to migrants and refugees may lead to both more hostile and more sympathetic feelings: on one hand, more migrants and refugees can be seen as a threat to one's own economic security levels (e.g., Mayda 2006; Dinesen et al., 2016; Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Bello 2017). On the other hand, more exposure to foreign-born people could

also lower distrust and uncertainty, thus raising familiarity and trust towards refugees and migrants (see, e.g., Dinesen et al., 2016; Bello 2017). If both sets of arguments are correct, we will observe higher levels of polarization. In addition*, Anti-Migration Party Success Home* is positively and significantly associated with *Polarization*: the larger the success of anti-migration party platforms at home, the higher the degree of voter polarization. This finding is, as discussed earlier, consistent with Bischof and Wagner (2019).

Our main result is robust across several different specifications and operationalizations. Specifically, we operationalize the main explanatory variables in a straightforward way by focusing on a five-percent threshold of votes as a success criterion for anti-migration parties (Model 5 above) and when excluding smaller countries from the spatial effect (Model 6). We also replaced the dependent variable by a factor score and an average value of all migration-related questions that are included in the ESS (SI Tables A1 and A2). Next to parties' positions on migration, we furthermore considered their issue salience scores, i.e., how much a party stresses migration in their platforms (SI Table A3). We also control for election years (SI Table A4) and take into account people's views on the EU (SI Table A5). Additionally, we control for citizens' left-right self-placements (SI Table A6) and replaced the dependent variable by the actual public opinion item in order to explore how polarization has shifted in response to electoral outcomes abroad (SI Table A7 and Fig. A1). This allows us to assess whether and in which countries the polarization pattern we identify above is driven by people becoming more in favor of migration (backlash effect) or by those becoming less supportive of migration (legitimizing effect). Finally, we present a random effects model estimation (SI Table A8) and interact *Anti-Migration Party Success Abroad* with *Anti-Migration Party Success Home* (SI Table A9 and Fig. A2). All estimated coefficients provide further support for our argument.

4. Empirical results: study 2 – Austrian National Election Study Online Panel 2017

The success of anti-migration platforms abroad may not only have macro-level effects as estimated in the previous section, but also more micro-level impact. In the following set of analyses, we focus on the German federal election in 2017, which saw a huge success for a right-wing anti-migration party. As discussed earlier, we evaluate the influence of the German election on Austrian migration attitudes, using the AUTNES Online Panels waves #3 and #4, which were in the field in August/September 2017 and October 2017, respectively. As these two surveys are temporally close to each other, we minimize the risk that Austrian respondents interviewed before the German election outcome systematically differ from people interviewed afterwards – except for the "treatment," i.e., the German national election (see Böhmelt 2020). However, we do not have a quasi-experimental design as we cannot fully rule out confound treatments (see Bischof and Wagner 2019). For instance, there may be some time-varying influences such as the intensified election campaign in Austria as such, which are causally before the German election and related to voter polarization. We sought to assess and control for the influence of other treatments or sample differences, though. That is, first, to weaken an effect from a potentially intensified election campaign in Austria, we present models (Models 9 and 10 in Table 2) that are based on a more narrowly defined sample, i.e., the later phase of wave #3 (last two days in the field) and the early phase of wave #4 (first two days in the field). Second, we compare respondents' demographics across treated and non-treated groups below (Model 8) and find no statistically significant differences. Third, the control variables in Table 2 are meant to address any remaining imbalances in the data.

The dependent variable in the following analysis is based on one item asking respondents about whether they think immigrants pay more into the Austrian social security system than they take out. We focus on each respondent's squared distance to the mean value in survey wave #3 and after the election (survey wave #4) to capture polarization (see also

---

[15] Note that effects are in both directions. If anti-immigration parties perform poorly, this suggests that migration attitudes abroad should converge, or depolarize. This is consistent with Turnbull-Dugarte and Rama, 2022 who find that the Spanish far-right party Vox lost popular support also due to Donald Trump's electoral defeat in 2020.

[16] 2016 is an exception as the question is reformulated into "[o]n a typical day, about how much time do you spend watching, reading or listening to news about politics and current affairs?" We thus divided the variable first into seven equally sized quantiles to make the coding consistent with previous ESS rounds.
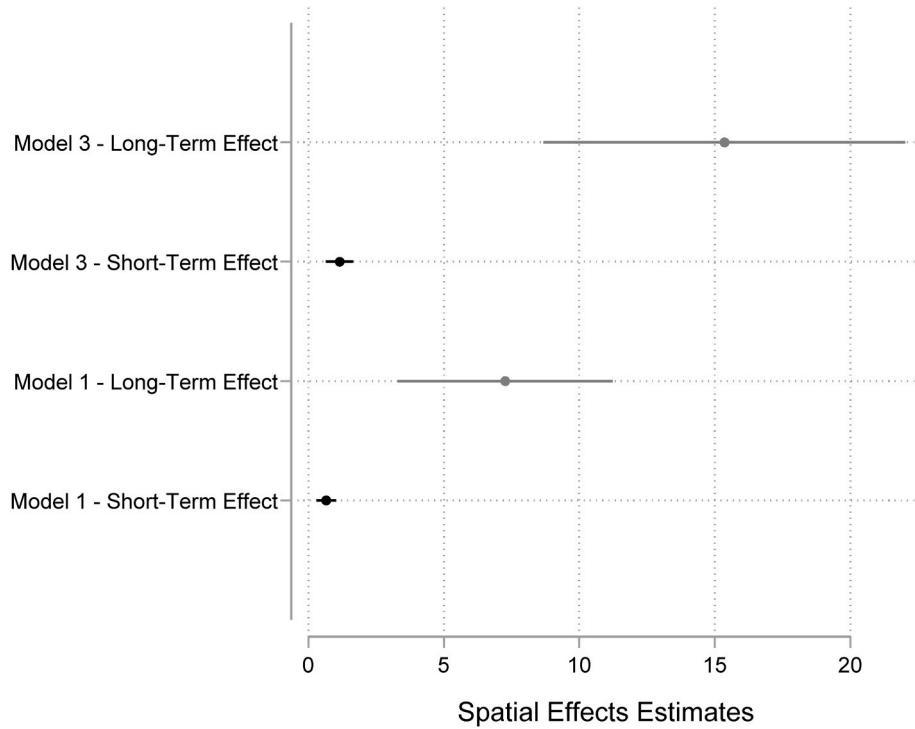
Fig. 2. Short-Term and Asymptotic Long-Term Spatial Effects of Spatial Variables
Notes. The horizontal bars are 90 percent confidence intervals and the vertical dashed line represents a spatial effect of 0. Estimates are based on Models 1 and 3 in Table 1.
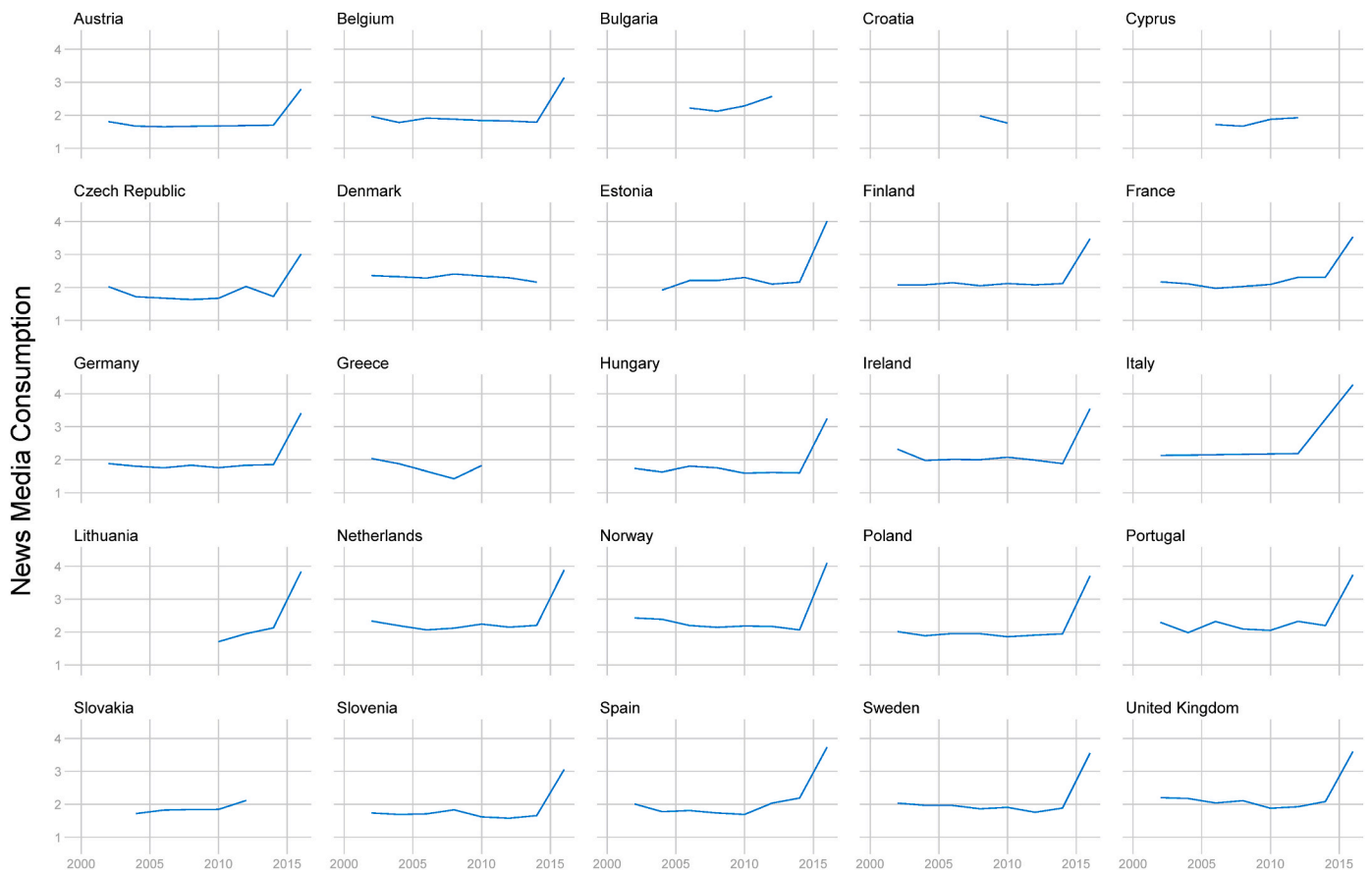

**Fig. 3.** News media consumption, ESS data 2002–2016.

Table 2
Austrian voter polarization in response to German Election Outcome 2017.

	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
						Placebo Test
Treatment	0.048***	0.063**	0.248*	0.176*	−0.456	0.098
	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.136)	(0.095)	(0.411)	(0.104)
Female		−0.047		0.029	0.037	−0.050
		(0.051)		(0.062)	(0.068)	(0.055)
Age		0.000		−0.000	−0.000	0.001
		(0.001)		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)
Political Orientation		−0.193***		−0.179**	−0.179**	−0.229***
		(0.068)		(0.085)	(0.084)	(0.078)
Social Class		0.003		−0.051	−0.053	0.043**
		(0.025)		(0.053)	(0.053)	(0.018)
Unemployed		−0.018		−0.152*	−0.140	0.094
		(0.038)		(0.086)	(0.090)	(0.064)
Media Consumption					−0.609	
					(0.397)	
Treatment × Media Consumption					0.707*	
					(0.406)	
Constant	0.930***	1.076***	0.744***	1.099***	1.660***	0.921***
	(0.016)	(0.060)	(0.137)	(0.093)	(0.406)	(0.105)
Obs.	5326	3518	1765	1255	1255	1676
Prob. > c^2	0.000	0.000	0.068	0.081	0.000	0.000

Table entries are coefficients; standard errors in parentheses.
*p < 0.10, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01.

Bischof and Wagner 2019). Fig. 4 gives a descriptive overview of this dependent variable. The vertical line allows for a distinction between the pre-election and post-election period: polarization among Austrians seems to be higher after the German election. This may provide some initial evidence supporting our ESS findings and the theory. Note that the point estimate of polarization decreases when approaching the end

of wave #3 and, hence, the German election, but, on the other hand, the confidence interval increases. This is driven by fewer respondents at the end of wave #3. To account for temporal dynamics against this background, Models 9 and 10 in Table 2 concentrate on interviews conducted in the later phase of wave #3 (last two days in the field) and the early phase of wave #4 (first two days in the field).
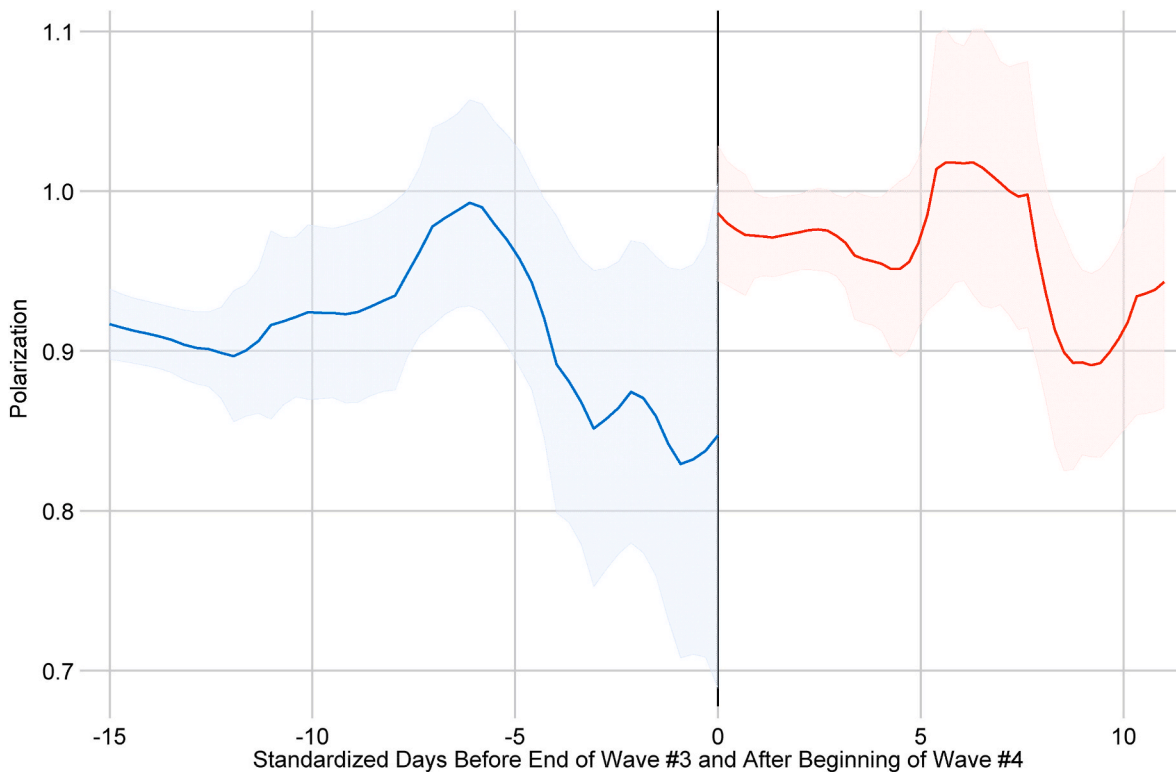
Fig. 4. Voter Polarization in Austria Before and After the German Election
Notes. The graph presents local polynomial regression plots with 90 percent confidence intervals (shaded areas); the vertical solid line marks the German election: left part of the graph pertains to survey wave 3 (before election; fieldwork period: August 30, 2017 to September 14, 2017) and right part pertains to survey wave 4 (after election; fieldwork period: October 2, 2017 to October 13, 2017); data points farther away on the horizontal axis from the vertical solid line pertain to surveys compiled more temporally distant from the election; days on horizontal axis have been standardized by the end of wave 3 (e.g., August 30 is day −15; October 2 is day 1).

To further substantiate this descriptive assessment, Table 2 provides a thorough analysis of Austrian interviewees' polarization. The unit of analysis in the models of Table 2 is the individual. Due to the hierarchical nature of the data, we use multilevel mixed-effects linear regression considering the fact that individuals are nested in Austrian states and waves. Thus, we use a random-intercept (country-level, modeled according to a normal distribution) approach (Gelman and Hill 2006). This accounts for unobserved heterogeneity at the country level (Skrondal and Rabe-Hesketh, 2009). We employ a demographic and political weight based on wave #4 that adjusts the populations of all Austrian states as a group. The main independent variable is Treatment: a binary variable that receives a value of 1 for each respondent in wave #4 (i.e., after the German election) and a value of 0 for wave #3 (before the German election). We include controls for gender (*Female*, binary item scoring 1 for female respondents, 0 otherwise), age (*Age*, actual age of interviewee at the time of the survey), political factors (*Political Orientation*, left-right self-placement based on the prospective party choice), and economic circumstances (*Unemployed*, binary item scoring 1 for respondents who were unemployed at the time of the survey, 0 otherwise; and *Social Class* ranging between 1 (very good income situation) and 4 (very difficult income situation)).

Model 7 focuses on the core variables of interest, and we add the control variables in Model 8. The control variables capture influences from and remaining sample imbalances pertaining to gender, age, political orientation, social class, and employment status. All of these variables, except for *Political Orientation*, are time-invariant and thus do not differ across waves #3 and #4 of the AES, however. But even for *Political Orientation*, the sample differences over treated and untreated groups are not statistically significant (*p*-value of 0.3128 in a *t*-test). Models 9–10 mirror the setup in Models 7–8 in terms of the variables, but we use a more constrained sample. Specifically, Models 9–10 are about the later phase of wave #3 (last two days in the field) and the early phase of wave #4 (first two days in the field). Finally, Model 11 interacts the treatment variable with an item on media consumption (and is also based on the constrained sample used for Models 9–10), while Model 12 provides a placebo test that estimates the effects on citizen migration attitudes before the elections took place so that there is a baseline estimate for citizens that do not observe the electoral success of the anti-immigration parties (i.e., for citizens not exposed to the treatment). For this placebo test, we divide the survey sample based on wave #3 only – into respondents interviewed before and after the last seven days in the field.

As expected, we obtain evidence for a positive and significant effect of *Treatment*, which ranges between 0.048 and 0.248 in Models 7–10. These calculations suggest that the marginal treatment effect in the Austrian electorate is about 0.048–0.248 units after the election in Germany. The evidence for this positive effect is consistent across the models in Tables 2 and it is substantively important, because the positive treatment effects for Models 7–11 provide evidence that Austrian attitudes polarized after the German election outcome. The findings are robust to adding the control variables (Models 8 and10) or employing a more narrowly defined sample (Models 9–10). Our estimation is also robust when considering a variable on news-media consumption: the Austrian election study comprises an item on how often respondents have informed themselves about political events through television, newspapers, radio, internet, and social media. Responses range between "several times a day" to "never." We constructed a binary variable receiving a value of 1 if respondents indicated that they informed themselves via either medium "several times a day," "nearly daily," or "several times per week" (0 otherwise). This variable is interacted with the treatment variable, and we estimate a coefficient of 0.707 in Model 11 (statistically significant at conventional levels). This suggests that, as argued in our theory, political news-media consumption amplifies the treatment effect on polarization as the media are the vehicle for the cross-country diffusion effect we explore.

Also note the effect of the left-right variable (*Political Orientation*):

the negative coefficient estimate highlights that right-wing supporters are characterized by a smaller squared distance to the mean value of the migration survey item. This supports the idea of a backlash effect (rather than legitimization) after the German election in this case as polarization, or the distance from the mean migration preference, increases especially for citizens on the left of the political spectrum who are generally more supportive of migration.

Turning to the placebo test in Model 12, we divided the survey sample of wave #3 into respondents interviewed before or after the last seven days in the field. Hence, the outcome of the German election was unknown to any survey respondent and there was no "shock" stemming from the electoral success of the AfD. As expected, the treatment variable is statistically insignificant in Model 12. This placebo test, for which respondents did not observe the electoral success of the AfD, additionally supports our theoretical argument that anti-migration party platforms' success at home influences voter polarization abroad.

In the SI, we created a polarization variable that captures individuals' squared distances to the mean value, based on factor scores that are derived from several different migration items (SI Tables A10 and A11). We also assess in which direction public opinion moved after the German election to evaluate backlash and legitimization effects more directly (SI Table A12). Furthermore, we analyze data on Google Trends in various countries before and after the electoral success of anti-immigrant parties abroad, and to evaluate the role of information consumption and the media again (SI Figures A3-A5). These additional analyses further support our argument and the empirical findings presented above.

5. Conclusion

Our study extends earlier research on public opinion, polarization, and diffusion. The arguments and empirical analyses support the finding that migration attitudes polarize when foreign political parties that promote anti-immigration policies perform well in their national elections. This result contributes to our understanding of how the public attitude changes (e.g., Soroka and Wlezien 2010), how it sees migration (e.g., Van Hauwaert, 2023), how it polarizes (e.g., Bischof and Wagner 2019), and the role of international trends that occur outside of domestic politics (e.g., Cook et al., 2022).

Several questions remain to explore in future research. For example, economic conditions at the country-level or ties with other states in the form of trade might influence the effects that we have identified. Cross-national effects may be stronger, e.g., between states with closer economic, language, or historical ties. We address some of these aspects with Model 6 above that weighs the influence of larger countries more strongly, and the second analysis based on the Austrian National Election Study may be seen as a most-likely scenario for the mechanisms at work due to the close ties between Germany and Austria.

Further analyses may also seek to evaluate the influence of clear election victories/losses for political parties that compete on additional dimensions of political contestation such as the environment, welfare, or European integration. Indeed, current research suggests that in the US, citizens' attitudes toward immigration influence their views on the welfare state (Garand et al., 2017). It is plausible, in light of Garand et al. (2017), that anti-immigration party success facilitates – through its effect on migration attitudes – the diffusion of polarized attitudes toward the welfare state. Also, there is evidence that the success of the green movement and parties in other countries may have given rise to pro-environmental views across borders (Dunlap 2012; Marquart-Pyatt 2016, 2018; Jorgenson and Givens, 2014), but this could (potentially)

polarize attitudes on this dimension, too.[17] Moreover, political institutions could facilitate the transmission of cross-border effects (e.g., Böhmelt et al., 2017). Anti-immigration parties may perform better under proportional electoral systems, because these systems feature lower electoral thresholds to gain representation in parliament. If anti-immigration parties have more success in proportional systems, the implication is that these systems will influence migration attitude diffusion more than disproportional systems. Finally, our central argument focuses on the media as a vehicle for a cross-country effect. We explore the validity of this component in detail above where we look at respondents' media consumption and in the SI using Google Trends data, but more extensive future analyses could concentrate on actual media analysis of elections abroad including the tone of reporting.

Nonetheless, the theoretical arguments and empirical analyses support the *Anti-Immigration Hypothesis*, and they are relevant to understanding attitudes towards immigration (e.g., Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014; Valentino et al., 2019; Czaika and Di Lillo 2018), because they imply that citizens are influenced by election outcomes in other states when specific parties do well. Our findings are also relevant for scholars of diffusion (e.g., Elkins and Simmons 2005; Gilardi 2010; Gilardi and Wasserfallen 2019). While several of these works focus on government-to-government policy diffusion, prominent works on political representation have shown that policy outputs are influenced by public opinion or the median voter (Kang and Powell, 2010; see also McDonald and Budge 2005; Budge et al., 2012). Thus, our research on migration highlights a different channel for policy diffusion through which elections abroad influence political attitudes "at home" – which, in turn, influence policies.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Tobias Böhmelt: Conceptualization, Data curation, Methodology, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Lawrence Ezrow:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Roi Zur:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at doi: mmcdoino

References

Adams, James F., Böhmelt, Tobias, Lawrence, Ezrow, Schleiter, Petra, 2022. Backlash policy diffusion to populists in power. PLoS One 17 (9), e0273951.

Anderson, Christopher J., Guillory, Christine A., 1997. Political institutions and satisfaction with democracy: a cross-national analysis of consensus and majoritarian systems. Am. Polit. Sci. Rev. 91 (1), 66–81.

Bateson, Regina, Weintraub, Michael, 2022. The 2016 election and America's standing abroad: quasi-experimental evidence of a Trump effect. J. Polit. 84 (4), 2300–2304.

Bello, Valeria, 2017. Interculturalism as a new framework to reduce prejudice in times of crisis in European countries. Int. Migrat. 55 (2), 23–38.

Bischof, Daniel, Wagner, Markus, 2019. Do voters polarize when radical parties enter parliament? Am. J. Polit. Sci. 63 (4), 888–904.

Bishin, Benjamin G., Hayes, Thomas J., Incantalupo, Matthew B., Smith, Charles A., 2015. Opinion backlash and public attitudes: are political advances in gay rights counter-productive? Am. J. Polit. Sci. 60 (3), 625–648.

Bohman, Andrea, Hjerm, Mikael, 2016. In the wake of radical right electoral success: a cross-country comparative study of anti-immigration attitudes over time. J. Ethnic Migrat. Stud. 42 (11), 1729–1747.

Böhmelt, Tobias, 2020. Environmental disasters and public-opinion formation: a natural experiment. Environmental Research Communications 2 (8), 081002.

Böhmelt, Tobias, Lawrence, Ezrow, Lehrer, Roni, Ward, Hugh, 2016. Party policy diffusion. Am. Polit. Sci. Rev. 110 (2), 397–410.

Böhmelt, Tobias, Lawrence, Ezrow, Lehrer, Roni, Schleiter, Petra, Ward, Hugh, 2017. Why dominant governing parties are cross-nationally influential. Int. Stud. Q. 61 (4), 749–759.

Böhmelt, Tobias, Mehrl, Marius, 2022. The security implications of transnational population movements: a meta-analysis. Migration Studies 10 (2), 338–355.

Bolleyer, Nicole, Bytzek, Evelyn, 2013. Origins of party formation and new party success in advanced democracies. Eur. J. Polit. Res. 52 (6), 773–796.

Bos, Linda, Van der Brug, Wouter, De Vreese, Claes, 2010. Media coverage of right-wing populist leaders. European Journal of Communication Research 35 (2), 141–163.

Budge, Ian, Keman, Hans, McDonald, Michael, Pennings, Paul, 2012. Organizing Democratic Choice: Party Representation over Time. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Buhaug, Halvard, Kristian Skrede, Gleditsch, 2008. Contagion or confusion? Why conflicts cluster in space. Int. Stud. Q. 52 (2), 215–233.

Bursztyn, Leonardo, Egorov, Georgy, Fiorin, Stefano, 2020. From extreme to mainstream: the erosion of social norms. Am. Econ. Rev. 110 (11), 3522–3548.

Carreras, Miguel, Visconti, Giancarlo, Acácio, Igor, 2021. The Trump election and attitudes toward the United States in Latin America. Publ. Opin. Q. 85 (4), 1092–1102.

Cook, Scott J., Hays, Jude C., Franzese, Robert J., 2022. STADL up! the Spatiotemporal Autoregressive Distributed Lag Model for TSCS Data Analysis. American Political Science Review, Forthcoming.

Cornelius, Wayne, Rosenblum, Marc R., 2005. Immigration and politics. Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci. 8 (1), 99–119.

Czaika, Mathias, Di Lillo, Armando, 2018. The geography of anti-immigrant attitudes across Europe, 2002-2014. J. Ethnic Migrat. Stud. 44 (15), 2453–2479.

Deacon, David, Dominic, Wring, 2016. The UK independence party, populism and the British news media: competition, collaboration or containment? Eur. J. Commun. 31 (2), 169–184.

De Vries, Catherine, 2017. Cross-national data sources: opportunities and challenges. In: Kai Arzheimer, Jocelyn Evans, and Michael Lewis-Beck. *Sage Handbook Of Electoral Behavior*. Sage Press, New York, pp. 962–981.

Delis, Agelos, Matakos, Konstantinos, Xefteris, Dimitrios, 2020. Electoral spillovers in an intertwined World: brexit effects on the 2016 Spanish vote. Br. J. Polit. Sci. 50 (3), 1169–1174.

Dinas, Elias, Riera, Pedro, 2018. Do European parliament elections impact national party system fragmentation? Comp. Polit. Stud. 51 (4), 447–476.

Dinesen, Peter, Klemmensen, Robert, Nørgaard, Asbjørn, 2016. Attitudes toward immigration: the role of personal predispositions. Polit. Psychol. 37 (1), 55–72.

Döring, Holger, Manow, Philip, 2012. Parliament and Government Composition Database (ParlGov): an Infrastructure for Empirical Information on Parties, Elections, and Governments in Modern Democracies. Available online at: http://parlgov.org.

Dunlap, Riley E., 2012. Environmental concern. The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Globalization. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670590.wbeog173. Available online:

Düpont, Nils, Rachuj, Martin, 2022. The ties that bind: text similarities and conditional diffusion among parties. Br. J. Polit. Sci. 52 (2), 613–630.

Dustmann, Christian, Preston, Ian P., 2007. Racial and economic factors in attitudes to ammigration. B E J. Econ. Anal. Pol. 7 (1). Article 62.

Elkins, Zachary, Simmons, Beth, 2005. On waves, clusters, and diffusion: a conceptual framework. Ann. Am. Acad. Polit. Soc. Sci. 598 (1), 33–51.

Erikson, Robert, MacKuen, Michael, James Stimson, 2002. The Macro Polity. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Ezrow, Lawrence, Böhmelt, Tobias, Lehrer, Roni, Ward, Hugh, 2021. Follow the foreign leader? Why following foreign incumbents is an effective electoral strategy. Party Polit. 27 (4), 716–729.

Ezrow, Lawrence, Tavits, Margit, Homola, Jonathan, 2014. Voter polarization, strength of partisanship, and support for extremist parties. Comp. Polit. Stud. 47 (11), 1558–1583.

Feddersen, Alexandra, Adams, James, 2022. Public Opinion Backlash in Response to Party Messages: A Case for Party Press Releases. Forthcoming, Electoral Studies.

Franzese, Robert, Hays, Jude, 2007. Spatial econometric models of cross-sectional interdependence in political science Panel and time-series-cross-section data. Polit. Anal. 15 (2), 140–164.

Franzese, Robert, Hays, Jude, 2008. Interdependence in comparative politics: substance, theory, empirics, substance. Comp. Polit. Stud. 41 (4/5), 742–780.

Garand, James C., Xu, Ping, Davis, Belinda C., 2017. Immigration attitudes and support for the welfare state in the American public. Am. J. Polit. Sci. 61 (1), 146–162.

Gelman, Andrew, Hill, Jennifer, 2006. Data Analysis Using Regression and Multilevel/Hierarchical Models. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Gilardi, Fabrizio, 2010. Who learns from what in policy diffusion processes? Am. J. Polit. Sci. 54 (3), 650–666.

---

[17] On the other hand, our research suggests that the media devotes disproportionate attention to anti-immigration parties compared to other parties, which implies that the effects we have reported may not be as strong for environmental attitudes.

Gilardi, Fabrizio, Wasserfallen, Fabio, 2019. The politics of policy diffusion. Eur. J. Polit. Res. 58 (4), 1245–1256.

Hainmueller, Jens, Hopkins, Daniel J., 2014. Public attitudes toward immigration. Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci. 17 (1), 225–249.

Haselmayer, Martin, Wagner, Markus, Meyer, Thomas, 2017. Partisan bias in message selection: media gatekeeping of party press releases. Polit. Commun. 34 (3), 367–384.

Jorgenson, Andrew K., Givens, Jennifer E., 2014. Economic globalization and environmental concern. Environ. Behav. 46 (7), 848–871.

Kang, Shin-Goo, Powell, Bingham, 2010. Representation and policy responsiveness: the median voter, election rules, and redistributive welfare spending. J. Polit. 72 (4), 1014–1028.

Knigge, Pia, 1998. The ecological correlates of right-wing extremism in western Europe. Eur. J. Polit. Res. 34 (2), 249–279.

Koopmans, Ruud, Vliegenthart, Rens, 2010. Media attention as the outcome of a diffusion process – a theoretical framework and cross-national evidence on earthquake coverage. Eur. Socio Rev. 27 (5), 636–653.

Lenz, Gabriel S., 2013. Follow the Leader? How Voters Respond to Politicians' Policies and Performance. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

Lubbers, Marcel, Peer Scheepers, 2001. Explaining the trend in extreme right-wing voting: Germany 1989-1998. Eur. Socio Rev. 17 (4), 431–449.

Malet, Giorgio, 2022. Cross-national social influence: how foreign votes can affect domestic public opinion. Comparative Political Studies. Forthcoming.

Marquart-Pyatt, Sandra, 2016. Environmental trust: a cross-region and cross-country study. Soc. Nat. Resour. 29 (9), 1032–1048.

Marquart-Pyatt, Sandra, 2018. Trust and environmental activism across regions and countries. Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences 8 (3), 249–263.

Mayda, Anna Maria, 2006. Who is against immigration? A cross-country investigation of individual attitudes toward immigrants. Rev. Econ. Stat. 88 (3), 510–530.

McCarty, Nolan, Poole, Keith, Rosenthal, Howard, 2006. Polarized America: the Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

McDonald, Michael, Budge, Ian, 2005. Elections, Parties, Democracy: Conferring the Median Mandate. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

McLaren, Lauren, Johnson, Mark, 2007. Resources, group conflict and symbols: explaining anti-immigration hostility in britain. Polit. Stud. 55 (4), 709–732.

Müller, Wolfgang, Bodlos, Anita, Ennser-Jedenastik, Laurenz, et al., 2017. AUTNES Content Analysis of Party Press Releases 2017. AUSSDA, Vienna.

Murphy, Justin, Devine, Daniel, 2020. Does media coverage drive public support for UKIP or does public support for UKIP drive media coverage? Br. J. Polit. Sci. 50 (3), 893–910.

Plümper, Thomas, Neumayer, Eric, 2010. Model specification in the analysis of spatial dependence. Eur. J. Polit. Res. 49 (3), 418–442.

Plümper, Thomas, Vera, Troeger, Manow, Philip, 2005. Panel data analysis in comparative politics. Eur. J. Polit. Res. 44 (2), 327–354.

Rooduijn, Matthijs, 2014. The mesmerising message: the diffusion of populism in public debates in western European media. Polit. Stud. 62 (4), 726–744.

Schleiter, Petra, Böhmelt, Tobias, Lawrence, Ezrow, Lehrer, Roni, 2021. Social democratic party exceptionalism and transnational policy linkages. World Polit. 73 (3), 512–544.

Schwartz, Cassilde, Miranda, Simon, Hudson, David, Jennifer van-Heerde-Hudson, 2021. A populist paradox? How brexit softened anti-immigrant attitudes. Br. J. Polit. Sci. 51 (3), 1160–1180.

Senninger, Roman, Daniel Bischof, Lawrence, Ezrow, 2022. How transnational party alliances influence national parties' policies. Political Science Research and Methods 10 (3), 651–658.

Sides, John, Jack, Citrin, 2007. European opinion about immigration: the role of identities, interests and information. Br. J. Polit. Sci. 37 (3), 477–504.

Skrondal, Anders, Rabe-Hesketh, Sophia, 2009. Prediction in multilevel generalized linear models. J. Roy. Stat. Soc. 172 (3), 659–687.

Soroka, Stuart, Wlezien, Christopher, 2010. Degrees of Democracy. Cambridge University Press, New York.

Turnbull-Dugarte, Stuart, Rama, José, 2022. When the U.S. Far-right sneezes, the European far-right catches a cold. Quasi-experimental evidence of electoral contagion from Spain. Elect. Stud. 76, 102443.

Valentim, Vicente, 2021. Parliamentary representation and the normalization of radical right support. Comp. Polit. Stud. 54 (14), 2475–2511.

Valentino, Nicholas A., Stuart, Soroka, Iyengar, Shanto, Aalberg, Toril, Raymond, Duch, Fraile, Marta, Kyu, S., Hahn, et al., 2019. Economic and cultural drivers of immigrant support worldwide. Br. J. Polit. Sci. 49 (4), 1201–1226.

Van Hauwaert, Steven, 2022. Immigration as a thermostat? Public opinion and immigration policy across western Europe (1980-2017). J. Eur. Publ. Pol.: Forthcoming.

Van Spanje, Joost, 2011. The wrong and the right: a comparative analysis of 'anti-immigration' and 'far right' parties. Gov. Oppos. 46 (3), 293–320.

Vliegenthart, Rens, Boomgaarden, Hajo, 2010. Why the media matter after all: a response to Pauwels. Elect. Stud. 29 (4), 719–723.

Wagner, Markus, Aichholzer, Julian, Eberl, Jakob-Moritz, et al., 2020. AUTNES Online Panel Study 2017. AUSSDA, Vienna. https://doi.org/10.11587/I7QIYJ.

Wlezien, Christopher, 1995. The public as thermostat: dynamics of preferences for spending. Am. J. Polit. Sci. 39 (4), 981–1000.

Wlezien, Christopher, 1996. Dynamics of representation: the case of US spending on defense. Br. J. Polit. Sci. 26 (1), 81–103.