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Media content's role in the making of a democrat: Evidence from East Germany

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Media content's role in the making of a democrat: Evidence from East Germany

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February 14, 2017

Abstract

This paper explores the causal influence of access to Western television programming on voting behavior. We exploit a natural experiment involving access to West German TV within the German Democratic Republic in which only geography and topography determined the allocation of individuals to treatment and control groups. Focusing on both the shares of extremist parties and voter turnout, we find that in the post-reunification decade in which TV content was harmonized, regions that already had access to Western TV broadcasts before reunification experience lower vote shares of extremist parties and higher voter turnout.

Keywords: Voting; Television; Media; Natural experiment; Germany.

JEL classification: J22, K42, P37, P39.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Which factors lead people to fully embrace newly established democracy? What entices people to use their new and hard-won freedom for supporting extremist parties that question the democratic regime? What circumstances induce more political participation? A substantial literature has tested the importance of different elements such as education, the extent of political rights or centralization for the consolidation of democracy (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson 2006, Goldstone and Ulfelder 2004, Siedler 2010). In this paper, we explore the role of media content consumed for a long period before the establishment of democracy. Without doubt, contemporaneous media content matters for political outcomes. The continued attempts to curtail unrestricted news reporting and media discourse by political leaders in Turkey, North Korea, and China, for example, give testimony to this fact. However, our interest lies with historical differences in media content.

This paper exploits a natural experiment involving access to Western TV programming during the authoritarian rule in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) to explore causal effects of media content on electoral outcomes in the post-reunification decade. Before the German reunification, Western TV broadcasts were accessible only in some parts of the GDR. For a period spanning more than a quarter of a century, only geography and topography were decisive in determining whether or not GDR residents could access West German TV broadcasts. The GDR regions without access were located either in the Northeast or in the Southeast of the country, and were thus either too far away from the transmitter masts in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) or were located in valleys on the other side of mountains that blocked the signals. As it happened, about 85% of the GDR population was "treated" with access to Western TV. We explore how the long-lasting exposure of a random subset of GDR residents to free Western TV broadcasting imprints on extremist parties' vote shares and voter turnout in the post-reunification decade. Put differently, we seek to explore whether there is a lasting effect of media content on voting behavior.

1.2 Differences in TV content

Media content depended drastically on the side of the Iron Curtain. Trying to instrumentalize this fact, the United States and other Western countries made an effort to reach audiences in communist countries, following up on the idea that the uncensored

information from Western media would nurture pro-democratic and possibly pro-Western public opinion while eroding support for communist rule (e.g., Kern and Hainmüller 2009). There was Western TV and radio coverage dealing specifically with political issues from the communist countries such as the supply shortfalls or the treatment of dissidents. For example, West German TV devoted much attention to politics in East Germany in formats such as *Kennzeichen D* and *Kontraste* (e.g., Kern and Hainmüller 2009). In addition to providing another viewpoint of GDR politics, access to Western TV broadcasts enabled viewers in East Germany to observe important features of the FRG's democratic regime, such as the unrestricted competition of different ideas and the workings of institutional checks and balances. Moreover, East Germans with access to Western TV broadcasts were presented with a much richer spectrum of lifestyles, cultures, and ways of thinking, possibly cultivating greater openness and tolerance, inter alia.

Soviet bloc states saw the media as a very potent instrument in persuading its citizens regarding socialism and in creating the *socialist personality*, and for that reason made extreme use of censorship. As in other socialist countries, East German TV professionals were subject to a range of checks on their work by the Propaganda Department of the central committee to ensure that it toed the party line, including thorough editing of scripts prior to broadcast (e.g., Kochanowski et al. 2013, Stiehler 2004). Political dissent was not tolerated in East Germany. Media content in the GDR comprised only material that was considered as helpful for socialism or the GDR. For example, Stiehler (2004) argues that East German TV lost contact with reality and with the audience's experience in the political domain, trying to show how reality should be and not how it actually was. In a stark contrast, the regulatory framework implemented in West Germany after World War II put a great emphasis on ensuring exceptional independence and minimizing any state influence on broadcasting (e.g., Müller and Gusy 2011).[1]

1.3 Implications of differences in TV content

There are different channels through which historic media content differences may matter for electoral outcomes in the post-reunification period in which access to media content was harmonized.

First, it may be that the previous exposure to Western TV programming gave people a head start in the political events right after the demise of the GDR. The political

[1]Freedom of the Press has rated West Germany as "Free" since its inception in 1980, and assigned an average score of about 15 in the period 1994-2015 (where 0 is the most free and 100 is the least free).

reunification in 1990 occurred very rapidly after protests had culminated in the fall of 1989, giving GDR residents little time to become accustomed to the suddenly relevant FRG regime. Until 1989, the GDR was considered to be one of the most stable communist regimes in Eastern Europe, meaning that people were not preparing for this change to come (e.g., Kern 2011). It is thus amidst the turmoil in 1989 and 1990 that previous exposure to Western TV may have had a direct effect on electoral outcomes in 1990 due to different levels of information. In all likelihood, such a direct effect would rapidly disappear.

We are particularly interested in whether or not access to West German TV was able to create different attitudes towards democracy *per se* which would lead to lasting differences in electoral outcomes. Such an impact would be consistent with the political culture theory (e.g., Inglehart 1988), for example. Political culture refers to the pattern of peoples' beliefs and assumptions towards the world in the political domain and consists of cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations towards the political system. With respect to democracy, both intrinsic and instrumental preferences may emerge among members of the society and critically influence a country's chances to become or remain democratic (e.g., Jebril et al. 2013). A positive attitude towards a political regime is more likely when there is *ideational identification* of the people with the system, *trust* in the representatives, and *content* about the workings and outcomes. Access to Western TV may imprint on these aspects, for example, by showing that politicians are tightly controlled by independent news reporters and institutions such as the Federal Audit Office, inter alia. Relatedly, political involvement requires that individuals perceive that they can affect outcomes, some political interest, and some level of information. It appears very likely that long-run exposure to West German TV impacted these ingredients to political participation.[2] For example, there was news coverage about politicians being responsive to citizens' groups and demonstrations. Moreover, multi-facetted news reporting is more likely to instill political interest than news only giving the government's reading of the facts.

In stark contrast, the utilization of East German TV by the GDR regime may have induced people to pay little attention to news out of a habit. Leeson (2008) indicates that stronger government media influence induces citizens to become politically ignorant and apathetic. In addition, at least with some people, the heavy socialist indoctrination

[2]From the view of cognitive psychology, it is even argued that some political interest is necessary for understanding and evaluating political facts (e.g., Lupia et al. 2000).

may have proved successful, implying that unfavorable attitudes toward democracy were instilled during the period of the German separation.

Lasting differences in electoral outcome due to historic differences in media content may result from having different levels of social capital in regions with and without access to Western TV broadcasts during the GDR era. Higher levels of social capital may enable, for example, better bonding within groups and bridging between groups. Putnam (1994) famously argues that social capital is important for electoral outcomes in the North and South of Italy. Importantly, Geber et al. (2016) present data consistent with the idea that free and pluralistic media systems support the production of social capital. Put differently, access to Western TV before the German reunification may have produced higher levels of social capital which tends to be beneficial for the consolidation of democracy.[3]

Media content can also influence the extent to which people perceive cultural proximity to other regimes or countries (e.g., Yoo et al. 2014). For our setting, this means that people from the treatment (control) region may have experienced social inclusion (exclusion) to a greater extent after reunification. Such differences in the perception of social exclusion are important for electoral outcomes.

1.4 Main results

Our results show that the vote shares of extremist parties in the post-reunification decade were significantly lower in municipalities that could access Western TV programming prior to the reunification. The effect regarding left-wing extremist parties vanishes towards the end of the post-reunification decade. Moreover, we find that voter turnout tends to be higher in the regions with access to Western TV broadcasts before the reunification, where dynamic effects are again important.

Our findings back up the proposition that the consumption of content from free media supports the making of a democrat. This result is consistent with access to Western TV changing the political culture and social capital during the times of the authoritarian socialist rule.

[3]In this regard, it is important to note that Western TV may also lead to people spending more time watching TV which may harm social capital (Olken 2009). However, in Section 2, we will argue that the extent of watching TV was comparable such that the difference in content remains.

1.5 Related literature

Our paper uses a natural experiment involving access to West German TV broadcasts in the GDR in an attempt to understand the influence of television content on voting, and is thus related to several strands of the literature. Importantly, other contributions interested in the link between media and electoral outcomes are focusing on contemporaneous differences in media content and not historic ones.[4]

Kern and Hainmüller (2009) show that access to Western TV broadcasts was in fact stabilizing the GDR regime as measured by survey data and the number of exit visa applications. They attribute this to the greater entertainment value of Western TV which made life in East Germany more bearable. Relatedly, Kern (2011) explores whether or not access to Western TV broadcasts made a difference regarding the protests unfolding in 1989, considering protest activity at the county level and survey data at the individual level, and finds no evidence. Crabtree et al. (2015) contribute further evidence along these lines.

Enikolopov et al. (2011) is another related contribution. The authors study the 1999 parliamentary elections in Russia and the effect from having had access to the only national and politically independent channel. Their paper also relies on variation in the exogenous signal availability for identification and establishes that access to the independent media content increased vote shares' of major opposition parties. For the US context, DellaVigna and Kaplan (2007) analyze the implications of the conservative Fox News Channel's entry in cable markets on the Republicans' vote share and voter turnout. Their results regarding the presidential elections 2000 suggest that media bias significantly affects both vote shares and voter turnout. There are studies on the effects from the expansion of other types of media for voter turnout in the United States. For example, Gentzkow (2006) considers the expansion of television between 1940 and 1972, which decreases turnout. Studying pre-World War II Germany and radio content, Adena et al. (2015) impressively document the electoral consequences of an episode without airtime for extremist parties and an episode of Nazi propaganda. Using more recent data, DellaVigna et al. (2014) describe how media content can fuel ethnic conflicts in Croatia

[4]There is some recent literature on long-lasting effects of institutions. For example, Acemoglu et al. (2001) relate colonization styles to present economic performance, Nunn and Wantchekon (2009) explain present levels of trust in Africa with references to the slave trade, and Voigtländer and Voth (2012) find that pogroms in medieval times predict anti-Semitic violence in Nazi Germany. In comparison to these and related contributions (see Bisin and Verdier 2011 for an overview), our interest involves a much shorter time span and a very different object of study.

by looking at electoral outcomes.

In addition to the literature about media and voting patterns[5], our paper is related to papers using the natural experiment dealing with access to Western TV to identify effects on other outcomes. Bursztyn and Cantoni (2016) consider the implications of this natural experiment for consumption levels in the post-reunification decade. Using consumption information from the years 1993 and 1998, they find that although absolute consumption levels were not affected, access to West German TV programming altered the composition of the consumption baskets of former GDR residents in favor of heavily advertised products, thus underscoring the importance of the difference between East and West German TV with respect to advertising. By relating pre-reunification TV access to post-reunification behavior, our study parallels Bursztyn and Cantoni (2016), albeit for a different outcome variable. Hyll and Schneider (2013) find that GDR citizens with access to West German TV broadcasts experienced higher material aspirations during the GDR era. The fact that differences in TV content influenced the belief of GDR citizens that success depends on effort rather than luck is established in Henninghausen (2015). Finally, Bönisch and Hyll (2015) determine that Western TV reception lowered fertility, demonstrating the importance of the lifestyles depicted on TV and confirming earlier analyses from other countries (e.g., Chong et al. 2012).

1.6 Plan for the Paper

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 describes the research design in detail. Section 3 introduces the data. Section 4 presents the empirical specifications considered for our analysis and then discusses the results. Section 5 concludes.

2 Research Design

The present paper explores the causal effects of TV content on voting, exploiting a natural experiment involving access to Western TV broadcasts in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). In this section, we explicitly address key issues pertaining to our research design.

Definition and Exogeneity of Treatment Only geography and topography were decisive in determining whether or not GDR residents could access West German TV

[5]For a recent survey on the literature dealing with economic and social impacts of the media more generally, refer to DellaVigna and La Ferrara (forthcoming).

broadcasts. Here, we use the coding of Bursztyn and Cantoni (2016), which relies on a signal propagation model that takes the Earth's curvature and elevation features into account. The GDR regions without access were located either in the Northeast or in the Southeast of the country, and were either too far away from the transmitter masts in the FRG or were located on the other side of mountains that blocked the signals (see Figure 1). The signal strength in Dresden is the cutoff level for the partition into treatment and control groups, implying that the treatment area comprises all regions with a positive probability of reception of Western TV broadcasts. Importantly, there was no sorting into or out of the treatment group because mobility in the GDR was very limited; in fact, the GDR had a rate of spatial mobility three times lower than that of the FRG. Mobility across occupations and across space was intended to serve the overarching social and economic objectives of the planning committees rather than personal desires. Citizens of the GDR had to apply for housing and sometimes had to wait decades to be able to move. On average, East Germans moved across county borders once every 64 years (Grundmann 1998). Interestingly, data from the *Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* (1989) survey suggest that the desire to move was similar for people in both the treatment and the control region.

Figure 1: Signal Strength in East Germany, 1989 (Dark areas: Signal strength weakly weaker than in Dresden; Yellow dots: Major cities). *Source: Bursztyn and Cantoni (2016), Figure 3.*

Comparability of Control and Treatment Regions Before Western TV became available in the treatment areas, residents of the GDR could be considered a highly homogeneous group (Hyll and Schneider 2013). The totalitarian socialist system contributed greatly to harmonization in most respects. In addition, treatment and control regions were comparable with regard to the presence of industrial and cultural centers such as Leipzig (treatment) and Dresden (control) (Bursztyn and Cantoni 2016). According to the data available, the treated and non-treated regions were comparable in terms of population density, shares of employment by sector, retail sales, and savings (see Table 1). In our data, we also find that the regions were comparable with respect to our covariate vector after the German reunification (see Section 3).

Our paper explores political attitudes and preferences. For comparability, it is important that the regions were similar along these lines before the treatment. Kern and Hainmüller (2009) report that vote shares of the parties SED, CDU, and LDP in the

Table 1: Regional Characteristics of Regions in the GDR With Access to Western TV and Regions Without Access in 1955/1990 at the GDR District Level

	Treatment	Control	Diff.	Std. err.	p-value
		1955			
Population density	206	202	4	77	0.959
Share of workers employed in agriculture	23.7	27.8	-4.1	11.1	0.744
Share of workers employed in industry	34.1	28.7	5.4	10.0	0.635
Retail sales per capita	1691	1694	-3	102	0.979
Savings per capita	277	297	-20	28	0.544
		1990			
Population density	181	176	5	62	0.941
Share of workers employed in agriculture	13.5	11.3	2.2	5.1	0.706
Share of workers employed in industry	33.2	39.5	-6.3	7.5	0.479
Retail sales per capita	7577	7250	327	188	0.190
Savings per capita	9312	9381	-69	928	0.946
Cars per 1,000 inhab.	237.4	237.6	-0.2	12.1	0.992
		Difference 1990-1955			
Population density	-18	-26.2	8.2	15.4	0.626
Share of workers employed in agriculture	-14.5	-12.6	-1.9	6.0	0.778
Share of workers employed in industry	5	5.5	-0.5	3.0	0.870
Retail sales per capita	5862	5557	305	157	0.142
Savings per capita	8946	8994	-48	770	0.954

Notes: Population-weighted averages. Number of GDR control (treatment) districts: 3 (11), namely the districts of Dresden, Neubrandenburg, and Rostock; East Berlin was excluded. P-values based on weighted Welch's t-tests of difference in means (two-sided, allowing for unequal variances). *Source: Bursztyn and Cantoni (2016), Table 1.*

Dresden district (i.e., the district containing the majority of municipalities from the control condition in the state Saxony) were similar to the other districts in the year 1946. Importantly, electoral outcomes from the elections in 1932 and 1933 do not suggest that the Dresden district has a history of leaning towards extremist parties when compared to the other East-German constituencies (see Table 2). This clearly suggests that there was no divergence in terms of political preferences before the imposition of the Western TV treatment.

Consumption of West/East German TV Broadcasts Despite the fact that TV broadcasts began only in 1959, by 1960, TV had become a mass medium in the GDR, with one million sets in private homes (implying that about 19 percent of households had a TV set) (e.g., Schubert and Stiehler 2006). By 1978, about 87 percent of GDR households had a TV set (Meyen and Nawratil 2004). Viewing Western TV was first vehemently opposed by the State; later, it was tolerated but frowned upon.[6] Nevertheless, a survey

[6]After the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Socialist Unity Party recognized the reception of West German TV (i.e., "enemy propaganda") as problematic, but it refrained from signal jamming because it feared the potential public outcry (Gumbert 2013). The important contribution by Kern and Hainmüller (2009) presents evidence that this ultimately was probably a wise choice regarding the

Table 2: Electoral outcomes for key parties in the Reichstag elections for districts proxying Saxony.

Electoral district	Voter turnout	Party vote share					
		KPD	SPD	Zentrum	DVP	DNVP	NSDAP
July 1932							
Chemnitz-Zwickau	89.2	19.6	22.4	0.7	0.8	3.8	47.1
Dresden-Bautzen	86.4	14.3	31.1	2.1	2.9	5.5	39.3
Leipzig	89.8	18.7	33.1	1.1	2.2	4.5	36
November 1932							
Chemnitz-Zwickau	85.7	21.4	22.3	0.6	1.4	5.1	43.4
Dresden-Bautzen	82	17	29.5	1.9	4.1	8.1	33.9
Leipzig	88	20.7	32.2	1.1	3.3	7.2	31
March 1933							
Chemnitz-Zwickau	92	19	21.3	0.6	0.9	5.4	50
Dresden-Bautzen	90.3	13.4	28.4	2.0	2.5	7.7	43.6
Leipzig	93	17.4	30.1	1	2	6.5	40

Notes: The electoral district of Dresden-Bautzen is about the same as the district Dresden during GDR times. *Source: Statistisches Reichsamt (1935).*

of young people conducted in 1985, *Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* (1985), reports that respondents in the treatment region watched more than two hours of West German TV per day on average. Other surveys consistently indicate that people with access to Western TV also consumed it (see Table 3).

Table 3: Self-reported Frequency of Watching West German TV by GDR District

	How often do you watch West German TV?				
District	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Never in %	Obs.
Berlin	1.5	0.78	1	0.24	416
Cottbus	1.28	0.72	1	1.67	60
Dresden	4.3	1.23	5	63.52	734
Erfurt	1.4	0.76	1	1.23	641
Karl-Marx-Stadt	1.51	0.82	1	2.05	622
Leipzig	1.85	1.18	1	5.42	274
Magdeburg	1.35	0.72	1	1.09	542
Schwerin	1.47	0.91	1	1.04	191

Notes: Data was collected only for the districts listed (out of the 15 GDR districts). The possible answers to the question "How often do you watch West German TV?" were: "Every day" (coded as 1), "more than once a week" (2), "once a week" (3), "less than once a week" (4), and "never" (5). *Source: Zentralinstitut fürJugendforschung* (1989).

With respect to the question of whether GDR residents without access to Western TV simply consumed less TV, Stiehler (2001) reports that usage was quite similar across treatment and control regions. Along the same lines, the youth survey *Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* (1989) suggests that people in treatment and control regions had similar

stability of the GDR regime.

habits with regard to involvement in sports and attendance of cultural events, among other aspects, indicating that there was no substitution of activities for TV viewing. Data on the purchasing of color TV sets strongly suggest that people in the control region also valued the ability to watch TV (Bursztyn and Cantoni 2016). Meyen and Nawratil (2004) report that the ratings of East German TV were comparatively high, with evening programming reaching an average of 35 to 40 percent of the population in the 1980s.

Migration in Reunified Germany After reunification, people from East Germany migrated to West Germany (Hunt 2006). There also was some minor degree of migration from West to East Germany by residents of the former FRG. East-West migration was highest right after reunification and peaked again around 2001. Chevalier and Marie (forthcoming) argue that the internal migration flow indeed died down quickly. Migration was a particularly attractive option for young and better-educated Easterners (Fuchs-Schündeln and Schündeln 2009). Nevertheless, East Germans continue to show a comparatively small willingness to migrate (Bönisch and Schneider 2013). Our identification strategy would be compromised if migration was of asymmetric importance for treatment and control areas. We test this by regressing the population figures on a dummy taking the value 1 when Western TV broadcasts were accessible in a municipality, a trend term as well as an interaction term between the dummy and the trend term. Our results indicate that there is no asymmetric migration pattern across the treatment and control region.[7] However, the possibility that migration may confound our estimated effects cannot be ruled out.

3 Data

In our analysis, we seek to explain post-reunification electoral outcomes using a dummy indicating access to Western TV broadcasts prior to reunification as well as a comprehensive set of covariates. Our sample comprises Saxon cities and municipalities during the post-reunification decade. There are 426 cities and municipalities in the state of Saxony forming 13 counties. Some of our covariates are available only at the county level.

Electoral outcomes We collected official data from the state electoral office (*Landeswahlleiter*) for the elections for the state parliament in the years 1990, 1994, and 1999

[7] Results are available upon request from the authors.

and the federal electoral office (*Bundeswahlleiter*) for the elections for the federal parliament in the years 1990, 1994, and 1998. The period analyzed comprises elections from the 1990s because previous studies have shown that the exposure effect vanishes after some years (Bursztyn and Cantoni 2016) and because potential problems stemming from migration after the reunification become more pronounced as time passes. Data on election outcomes are available on the municipal level.

We are interested in voter turnout and the vote share of extremist parties. Table 4 informs about the parties classified as either left-wing or right-wing extremist. The classification is informed by Avdeenko and Siedler (forthcoming) and Rellecke (2010), for example.

Table 4: Classification of left-wing and right-wing extremist parties.

Left-wing extremist parties	**Right-wing extremist parties**
Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter (BSA)	Republikaner (REP)
Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD)	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD)
Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SPAD)	Deutsche Volksunion (DVU)
Marxistisch-Leninistische Partei Deutschlands (MLPD)	Bund freier Bürger - Offensive für Deutschland (BFB)
Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS)	Bürgerrechtsbewegung Solidarität (BüSo)
	Patrioten für Deutschland

Notes: Some parties participated only in selected elections, and sometimes parties participated only in selected municipalities. The PDS is the succession party of the *Sozialistische Einheits Partei Deutschlands*, the ruling party in the GDR, and was subsequently renamed to *Die Linke*. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution had the PDS under surveillance and argued that the position towards democracy was unclear, justifying their inclusion here. The party BüSo is the succession party to Patrioten für Deutschland.

Explanatory Variables Our variable of main interest is a dummy variable that varies at the county level and is equal to one when the signal strength of the county in question was better than that of Dresden, following Bursztyn and Cantoni (2016). Our control variables include several socio-demographic and economic indicators (see Table 5).

At the municipal level, we control for population size (in logs), the age structure (i.e., the share of people aged between 15-25, 25-40, 40-65, and 65 and older), and the share of foreigners. With regard to economic indicators, our control variables include important covariates known to influence economic outcomes, that is, the unemployment rate, local business tax revenues (in logs), as well as the share of people who depend on welfare transfers from the government (e.g., DellaVigna and Kaplan 2007, Gomez et al. 2007). Note that some variables are not available for the year 1990 (see Table 5). In addition, we consider the geographic location to be an important municipality characteristic. This aspect is considered by taking into account the distance to the former border separating the two parts of Germany (*Close to GDR border*) and the distance to the closest foreign

country (*Close to Polish/Czech border*) by the inclusion of two dummy variables. A municipality is considered to be close to the border when the distance is less than 50 km. In addition, we also include the amount of precipitation on the election day at a weather station within or close to the municipality (e.g., Fraga and Hersh 2010, Gomez et al. 2007, Shachar and Nalebuff, 1999). In this regard, we rely on the Climate Data Center of the *Deutscher Wetter Dienst*.

At the county level, we control for GDP per capita (in logs) as well as the population's educational attainment and vocational qualifications by including the share of people with a lower secondary school degree, a higher secondary school degree, tertiary education, and vocational training. Note that the education and qualification variables are not available for 1990. The unemployment rate was obtained from the *Employment Office*, whereas the other economic and socio-demographic information was sourced from the *State Statistical Office* in Saxony.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
West TV	2,556	0.81	0.39	0.00	1.00
Turnout	2,556	70.41	10.06	36.90	89.96
Vote share left-wing	2,556	12.26	5.69	0.32	34.06
Vote share right-wing	2,556	2.63	2.36	0.00	14.33
Close to GDR border	2,556	0.13	0.34	0.00	1.00
Close to Polish/Czech border	2,556	0.77	0.42	0.00	1.00
Population	2,556	10,825.36	38,545.30	501.00	557,341.00
Population age 15-25	2,556	12.26	1.25	8.41	17.81
Population age 25-40	2,556	21.59	1.70	16.51	32.67
Population age 40-65	2,556	32.53	2.50	22.29	38.99
Population age > 65	2,556	16.75	2.33	7.30	24.85
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	2,556	0.85	1.80	0.01	34.46
Lower secondary school degree	1,704	32.07	2.26	23.90	36.90
Middle secondary school degree	1,704	36.18	1.43	31.90	38.90
Higher secondary school degree	1,704	9.87	1.84	7.80	23.30
NA school degree	1,704	21.38	2.02	17.90	25.65
Polytechnic education	1,704	10.51	0.85	8.80	13.40
Academic education	1,704	6.37	1.09	4.95	15.80
No education	1,704	14.62	1.71	10.95	18.10
NA education	1,704	19.51	3.01	14.80	25.60
Local business tax	1,702	1,131,134.77	6,782,294.18	-420,661.00	1.21e+08
Share welfare recipients	2,496	0.93	0.83	0.00	5.60
GDP per capita	2,556	10419.62	4009.49	4260	23791.00
Unemployment rate	1,683	18.52	4.71	0.67	51.29

Notes: The complete data set comprises elections for the federal parliament in the years 1990, 1994, and 1998 in addition to elections for the state parliament in the years 1990, 1994, and 1999. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. With respect to education and school degree, a non-negligible share of respondents preferred not to say (NA school degree and NA education).

It is interesting to assess whether the treatment and control groups are comparable

in terms of the covariates. This is similar in spirit to the discussion of the comparability of treatment and control regions presented in Section 2. Confirming those results, we find that the distributions for the covariates of the treatment and control regions are very similar (see Tables 9-12 in the Appendix). As expected, the treatment region is specific in terms of geographical distance to the former German border and the border to the neighboring countries Poland and Czech republic. In 1990, there are no other covariates exhibiting significant differences. Likewise, in 1994, we have balanced covariates (except for a somewhat higher share of foreigners in the treatment region). In the years 1998 and 1999, there are also significant differences with respect to the unemployment rate and the share of people reporting no education, where both variables are at relatively high levels in both regions.

4 Empirical Approach and Results

4.1 Empirical Approach

We are interested in the potential influence of the long-time exposure to Western TV prior to the German reunification on electoral outcomes in the post-reunification decade. To this end, we estimate separate regressions for three different periods, for which we pool information on state and federal elections: the elections of 1990, of 1994, and of 1998/1999. We use ordinary least squares estimation and cluster standard errors at the municipal level. The model specification that we estimate for period t is given by

$$y_{it} = \alpha_t + \beta_t \text{Western TV}_i + \gamma_t X_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}.$$

We consider as dependent variable y_{it} either the vote share of left-wing extremist parties, the vote share of right-wing extremist parties, or the turnout in municipality i at time t. We are primarily interested in the coefficient β_t. X_{it} is a vector of covariates at time t for municipality i. Since not all of our covariates are available for 1990, we estimate two different specifications for the elections of 1994 and 1998/1999: one including only those control variables that are also available in 1990, and one including the full set of available controls.

4.2 Main results

4.2.1 Results for extremist vote share

With respect to the extremist vote share, we differentiate between left-wing and right-wing extremism. The role of some covariates such as age may very well differ between left-wing and right-wing extremism. However, our hypothesis regarding the sign of the coefficient for access to Western TV broadcasts before reunification is the same for both contexts.

With respect to right-wing extremist parties, we find that municipalities that had access to Western TV prior to the German reunification experience significantly lower vote shares of right-wing extremists (Table 6). In the year 1990, the effect size is a drop by about .2 percentage points. This is a significant impact as is clear from taking into account the mean vote share of 2.63 (see Table 5). The influence seems to be more important in later elections. In the year 1998/99, the effect size is a drop by about .4 percentage points. This result supports the reference to political culture being critically influenced by free media content prior to the reunification.

It has been found that former GDR citizens are more skeptical about the democracy in the FRG (e.g., Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy 2015, p. 11). Voting for extremist parties can be interpreted as a manifestation of this skepticism. We are interested in differences between East Germans as we seek to show that the geographical divide between treatment group and control group has established a division when it comes to embracing the newly established democracy.

Right-wing extremist parties usually take a strong stand when it comes to policy as it applies to foreigners. East Germans are overall more skeptical regarding foreigners than West Germans (e.g., Schmidt and Heyder 2000). Similarly, violence against foreigners in the 1990s was much more important in East than in West Germany (e.g., Krueger and Pischke 1997).[8] Our interest is with whether or not access to Western TV programming prior to the reunification bears on xenophobic tendencies. The results for right-wing extremist parties' vote shares in Table 6 clearly present supporting evidence. In addition, using data from the *Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* (1990a) survey which was tailored to address the topic "Youth and right-wing extremism", we find further evidence that is consistent with this hypothesis.[9] We find that statements such as "Fascism also had its

[8]Interestingly, Krueger and Pischke (1997) show that covariates such as the unemployment rate and the wage level matter little when the location in the east is taken into account. This tendency to some extent also shows in our results for the shares of right-wing extremist parties.

[9]The survey data from the *Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* that we refer to throughout represent

upsides" (item 44) and "I would not be willing to invite a foreigner into my home" (item 65) find greater approval in the control region. Responses summarized in the data for the similar survey "Youth and xenophobia" (*Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* 1990b) provide further evidence along these lines. Respondents in the control region are significantly more likely to say that there are too many foreigners in East German states (item 29) or that the presence of foreigners harm German culture (item 43).

With respect to the other covariates, we find that the vote share of right-wing extremist parties is higher in municipalities with lower local business tax revenues and a higher unemployment rate. These findings are intuitive and consistent with previous findings (e.g., Lubbers and Scheepers 2001).[10] It is very important to note in this context that there was virtually no unemployment in the GDR and that the GDR idealized work in the "workers' and peasants' state". This implies that unemployment may have even graver consequences for people socialized in the GDR. Importantly, even though many people in East Germany were euphoric in the spring and summer of 1990, soon a decline occurred for some worrying, for example, about the prospects of becoming unemployed, which may already impact the election in fall and winter of 1990 (Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy 2015, p. 14). Data from the "Youth and right-wing extremism" survey (*Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* 1990a) already referred to above indicates that the fear of becoming unemployed or the parents' becoming unemployed was significantly higher in the control region. This presented a fertile ground for right-wing extremist slogans.

It is also widely accepted that relatively young people whose profession is in manual labor and whose education is low are more likely to vote right-wing extremist parties (e.g., Lubbers and Scheepers 2001). This is to some extent reflected in our results. Moreover, bad weather shows as a positive and significant coefficient in 1990. The previous literature has shown that bad weather usually serves right-wing parties[11]

We now turn to the relationship between access to Western TV programming prior to the reunification and left-wing extremist parties' vote shares after the reunification. Table 7 shows that there is a negative and significant effect in the years 1990 and 1994. In this

cross-sections of young adults and youths in the GDR and features prominently in the analyses Hyll and Schneider (2013), Kern (2011), and Kern and Hainmüller (2009), for example, as it is considered to be one of the very few sources for reliable information about behavior, attitudes, and beliefs of GDR citizens.

[10]For example, Frey and Weck (1981) report such an association for pre-World War II Germany and Falk et al. (2011) establish an association between unemployment and right-wing extremist crime using German data.

[11]See, for example, Arnold and Freier (2016) with an analysis along these lines using German data.

Table 6: Vote share of right-wing extremist parties

	Right-wing extremist vote share				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998/99	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Western TV	-0.234***	-0.359***	-0.271***	-0.376**	-0.474***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.026)	(0.005)
Precipitation	1.571***	0.004	0.017	0.136	0.070
	(0.000)	(0.876)	(0.484)	(0.109)	(0.481)
Close to FRG/GDR border	-0.190***	0.084	-0.000	-0.404*	0.292
	(0.001)	(0.271)	(0.996)	(0.055)	(0.185)
Close to Polish/Czech border	0.169***	0.145**	0.200***	0.562***	0.889***
	(0.000)	(0.019)	(0.005)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(population)	-0.025	-0.034	0.039	-0.481***	-0.330**
	(0.147)	(0.231)	(0.452)	(0.000)	(0.012)
Population age 15-25	0.068**	0.043	0.066	0.279**	0.323***
	(0.020)	(0.319)	(0.124)	(0.016)	(0.001)
Population age 25-40	0.078***	0.032	0.047	0.238**	0.297***
	(0.005)	(0.404)	(0.214)	(0.043)	(0.005)
Population age 40-65	0.042***	0.005	0.014	0.121	0.170**
	(0.003)	(0.808)	(0.492)	(0.123)	(0.022)
Population age > 65	0.006	0.018	0.030	0.123	0.128*
	(0.677)	(0.446)	(0.199)	(0.132)	(0.084)
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	-0.029	0.027	0.023	-0.012	-0.007
	(0.116)	(0.117)	(0.196)	(0.760)	(0.830)
Share welfare recipients	-0.074*	0.042	0.021	0.273***	0.141*
	(0.052)	(0.287)	(0.576)	(0.000)	(0.056)
log(GDP per capita)	-0.390*	-0.812***	-0.850*	-1.249**	-1.111*
	(0.051)	(0.002)	(0.095)	(0.020)	(0.076)
Lower secondary school degree			-0.144***		-0.568***
			(0.001)		(0.000)
Higher secondary school degree			-0.073		-0.182
			(0.463)		(0.325)
Job training			0.134***		0.003
			(0.005)		(0.957)
Academic education			-0.072		-0.261
			(0.643)		(0.216)
log(local business tax)			-0.045		-0.131*
			(0.179)		(0.052)
Unemployment			0.009		0.066***
			(0.269)		(0.001)
R^2	0.180	0.146	0.184	0.686	0.719
N	828	828	816	840	816

Notes: Our data collects elections at the federal and state level for the respective points in time. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. The classification of political parties is explained in Table 4. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

regard, we thus find an effect that vanishes over time. This is consistent with people with socialist indoctrination starting to develop a more favorable attitude toward democracy. Among the covariates, the unemployment rate again shows an important association with the vote-share of extremist parties. This is intuitive in view of the fact that left-wing parties often emphasize social policy in their campaigns. In contrast to what was true for right-wing extremist parties, left-wing extremist parties appear to be more popular in population-rich municipalities.

4.2.2 Results for voter turnout

Voting is a very important way of participating in the political domain and positively associated with social capital. On average, former GDR citizens show lower social capital, for example, when measured in terms of volunteer work (Gensicke 2000) or in terms of valuing participation in political parties, municipal politics, and citizens' initiatives (Arnold et al. 2015). Moreover, it has been repeatedly found that East Germans show less trust than West Germans (Rainer and Siedler 2009, Heineck and Süssmuth 2013), where trust is considered to be a key indicator of social capital (e.g., Knack and Keefer 1997). Social capital is important for the democracy, as argued by Paxton (2002), for example. Our results for voter turnout – which is sometimes used as a measure of social capital – give valuable insights into heterogeneity between East Germans.

We find that voter turnout tends to be higher in municipalities with access to Western TV broadcasts prior to the reunification. This is in line with our expectation. In the year 1990, the effect size is a drop by about 2.8 percentage points. This is a significant impact as is clear from taking into account the mean vote share of about 70 (see Table 5). In this regard, again, considering the dynamic effects appears to be important. When we consider federal and state elections in the respective years in isolation, we find statistically significant coefficients for the years 1990 and 1994 (see Tables 17-18 in our Appendix).

Political participation is more likely when people are interested in politics. Using responses from a survey entitled "Political Climate and Social Conditions in the GDR 1988/89" in which youth and young adults participated in the last year of the GDR (*Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung* 1989), we find that people from the control region are significantly less concerned about politics and political engagement from answers to the questions "How often do you discuss political issues with your family/partner/friends/colleagues or in churches" with possible answers ranging from "(almost) daily" to "never". This result supports our main result in Table 8.

Table 7: Vote share of left-wing extremist parties

	Left-wing extremist vote share				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998/99	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Western TV	-1.070***	-1.753***	-1.251***	-0.364	0.017
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.292)	(0.967)
Precipitation	-1.188***	-0.403***	-0.367***	1.323***	1.109***
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Close to GDR border	-0.572*	-0.570	0.078	-0.741*	-0.867*
	(0.056)	(0.156)	(0.887)	(0.072)	(0.075)
Close to Polish/Czech border	-0.062	-0.585	-0.281	-0.768**	-0.759**
	(0.830)	(0.153)	(0.577)	(0.015)	(0.017)
log(population)	1.263***	1.575***	1.958***	0.725***	0.860***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Population age 15-25	0.226	0.250	0.245	0.264	0.222
	(0.219)	(0.242)	(0.267)	(0.211)	(0.295)
Population age 25-40	0.409***	0.967***	1.024***	0.734***	0.758***
	(0.005)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Population age 40-65	0.259***	0.680***	0.756***	0.780***	0.808***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population age > 65	-0.048	-0.057	0.011	0.213	0.179
	(0.575)	(0.668)	(0.934)	(0.174)	(0.251)
Foreigners	-0.076	-0.044	-0.028	-0.031	-0.019
	(0.409)	(0.675)	(0.780)	(0.657)	(0.791)
Share welfare recipients	0.556*	0.407*	0.288	0.831***	0.708***
	(0.052)	(0.057)	(0.200)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(GDP per capita)	1.265	-2.413	-3.672	2.928**	6.232***
	(0.215)	(0.116)	(0.246)	(0.029)	(0.000)
Lower secondary school degree			-0.458**		0.244
			(0.044)		(0.223)
Higher secondary school degree			-0.969*		0.419
			(0.077)		(0.241)
Job training			0.198		-0.287**
			(0.458)		(0.031)
Academic education			0.771		-1.111***
			(0.376)		(0.008)
log(local business tax)			-0.322		0.021
			(0.108)		(0.864)
Unemployment			0.095**		0.065**
			(0.018)		(0.015)
R^2	0.422	0.468	0.498	0.457	0.492
N	828	828	816	840	816

Notes: Our data collects elections at the federal and state level for the respective points in time. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. The classification of political parties is explained in Table 4. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

In addition to the effect for access to Western TV programming, we find intuitive associations with covariates such as that voter turnout increases with the share well-educated and decreases with the share of unemployed and welfare recipients (e.g., Siedler 2010).

4.3 Robustness Checks

Our main results for the respective points in time stem from data sets that pool electoral outcomes of federal and state elections (Tables 6-8). The extent to which the patterns also carry over to isolated analyses at the two levels is an important question. Tables 13-18 show that this is indeed the case. The effect of Western TV for the vote share of right-wing extremist parties is stable or increasing throughout time. In contrast, the effect for left-wing extremist parties' vote shares is present only in 1990 and 1994. Finally, voter turnout at the municipality level in Saxony in the post-reunification decade seems affected by whether or not access to West German TV broadcasting was available prior to the reunification.

5 Conclusion

Democracy is widely considered to be the most desirable political regime. Accordingly, ways to ensure consolidation and stability of democracy are needed and many characteristics as regards institutions or citizens (e.g., education) are said to be important (e.g., Siedler 2010). This paper has presented evidence that exposure to free media content in the past is helpful in the making of a democrat.

Analyzing electoral outcomes at the municipality level, we find that regions that had access to West German TV prior to the reunification exhibit higher voter turnout and lower extremist parties' vote shares. Our results support the hypothesis that West German TV was helpful in developing a favorable attitude towards the democracy in the FRG during the German separation. In contrast, East German TV may have had its successes in indoctrinating some people towards undemocratic regimes and – at the least – made many people apathetic regarding the political discourse.

Previous literature has shown that free media content may not destabilize authoritarian regimes (Kern and Hainmüller 2009). Our results suggest that providing people that are captured by authoritarian regimes with access to free media can increase the likelihood that the establishment of a democratic regime will be more successful in terms

Table 8: Voter turnout

	Voter turnout				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998/99	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
West TV	2.842***	1.155**	0.734	0.896**	0.250
	(0.000)	(0.033)	(0.197)	(0.017)	(0.529)
Precipitation	4.937***	-1.833***	-1.827***	-1.160***	-0.930***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Close to GDR border	-0.454	-2.008***	-0.327	-2.453***	-1.818***
	(0.525)	(0.007)	(0.761)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Close to Polish/Czech border	3.427***	4.571***	3.954***	2.724***	2.733***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(population)	-1.873***	-2.213***	-2.485***	-1.147***	-1.283***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population age 15-25	-0.996***	-0.553	-0.744**	-0.099	-0.089
	(0.004)	(0.121)	(0.040)	(0.679)	(0.706)
Population age 25-40	-1.277***	-1.954***	-1.925***	-0.657***	-0.737***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.008)	(0.004)
Population age 40-65	-0.533***	-0.968***	-0.911***	-0.141	-0.180
	(0.002)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.335)	(0.215)
Population age > 65	-0.320*	-0.774***	-0.789***	-0.462***	-0.459***
	(0.072)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Foreigners	-0.065	0.305*	0.307*	0.141*	0.141*
	(0.717)	(0.092)	(0.086)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Share welfare recipients	-0.915*	-1.330***	-1.132***	-1.091***	-0.961***
	(0.059)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(GDP per capita)	-5.378**	-0.729	-9.288*	0.216	-5.126***
	(0.040)	(0.821)	(0.072)	(0.889)	(0.001)
Lower secondary school degree			0.343		-0.793***
			(0.349)		(0.000)
Higher secondary school degree			-1.579*		-1.124**
			(0.075)		(0.013)
Job training			-0.369		0.449***
			(0.381)		(0.001)
Academic education			3.335**		1.945***
			(0.015)		(0.000)
log(local business tax)			0.079		-0.053
			(0.779)		(0.678)
Unemployment			-0.114*		-0.082**
			(0.072)		(0.029)
R^2	0.400	0.301	0.316	0.914	0.921
N	828	828	816	840	816

Notes: Our data collects elections at the federal and state level for the respective points in time. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

of consolidation and stability.

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Appendix

Table 9: Covariate Balance 1990

Variable	$N_{Control}$	$\mu_{Control}$	$N_{Treatment}$	$\mu_{Treatment}$	Δ	p-value
Close to GDR border	79	0.00	347	0.16	-0.16	0.00
Close to Polish/Czech border	79	1.00	347	0.72	0.28	0.00
Population	79	13,304.37	347	10,734.49	2,569.87	0.71
Population age 15-25	79	11.88	347	11.84	0.04	0.73
Population age 25-40	79	21.63	347	21.95	-0.32	0.10
Population age 40-65	79	30.55	347	31.01	-0.46	0.11
Population age > 65	79	16.17	347	16.08	0.09	0.73
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	79	0.62	347	0.46	0.16	0.31
Share welfare recipients	76	0.47	338	0.51	-0.03	0.45
GDP per capita	79	5,341.57	347	5,122.24	219.33	0.314

Table 10: Covariate Balance 1994

Variable	$N_{Control}$	$\mu_{Control}$	$N_{Treatment}$	$\mu_{Treatment}$	Δ	p-value
Close to GDR border	79	0.00	347	0.16	-0.16	0.00
Close to Polish/Czech border	79	1.00	347	0.72	0.28	0.00
Population	79	12,789.85	347	10,299.56	2,490.29	0.71
Population age 15-25	79	11.82	347	11.82	-0.01	0.96
Population age 25-40	79	21.59	347	21.88	-0.28	0.15
Population age 40-65	79	32.10	347	32.52	-0.42	0.13
Population age > 65	79	17.02	347	16.74	0.28	0.26
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	79	0.61	347	0.88	-0.27	0.03
Lower secondary school degree	79	32.78	347	32.81	-0.04	0.97
Middle secondary school degree	79	34.92	347	35.62	-0.70	0.13
Higher secondary school degree	79	8.30	347	8.43	-0.13	0.61
NA school degree	79	23.52	347	22.69	0.83	0.25
Polytechnic education	79	10.52	347	10.24	0.29	0.45
Academic education	79	5.71	347	5.71	-0.00	0.98
No education	79	13.50	347	13.52	-0.01	0.97
NA education	79	22.70	347	22.07	0.63	0.34
Local business tax	79	1,208,372.68	346	895,312.66	313,060.02	0.73
Share welfare recipients	76	0.88	338	0.93	-0.05	0.53
GDP per capita	79	11,822.97	347	11,935.75	-112.77	0.81
Unemployment rate	78	17.66	346	16.41	1.25	0.24

Table 11: Covariate Balance 1998

Variable	$N_{Control}$	$\mu_{Control}$	$N_{Treatment}$	$\mu_{Treatment}$	Δ	p-value
Close to GDR border	79	0.00	347	0.16	-0.16	0.00
Close to Polish/Czech border	79	1.00	347	0.72	0.28	0.00
Population	79	12,380.47	347	10,119.19	2,261.28	0.72
Population age 15-25	79	13.26	347	12.90	0.36	0.03
Population age 25-40	79	21.09	347	21.39	-0.30	0.21
Population age 40-65	79	33.61	347	34.11	-0.50	0.05
Population age >65	79	17.31	347	17.09	0.22	0.37
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	79	1.36	347	1.20	0.16	0.74
Lower secondary school degree	79	31.91	347	31.95	-0.04	0.96
Middle secondary school degree	79	36.41	347	36.36	0.05	0.94
Higher secondary school degree	79	10.73	347	11.01	-0.28	0.65
NA school degree	79	20.34	347	20.04	0.30	0.52
Polytechnic education	79	10.75	347	10.51	0.24	0.54
Academic education	79	7.00	347	7.10	-0.10	0.87
No education	79	16.88	347	14.85	2.03	0.00
NA education	79	16.70	347	16.72	-0.02	0.97
Local business tax	79	1,791,876.91	347	1,112,328.85	679,548.06	0.61
Share welfare recipients	78	1.27	340	1.41	-0.14	0.25
GDP per capita	79	13,234.62	347	14,228.32	-993.70	0.16
Unemployment rate	78	21.15	346	19.65	1.50	0.03

Table 12: Covariate Balance 1999

Variable	$N_{Control}$	$\mu_{Control}$	$N_{Treatment}$	$\mu_{Treatment}$	Δ	p-value
Close to GDR border	79	0.00	347	0.16	-0.16	0.00
Close to Polish/Czech border	79	1.00	347	0.72	0.28	0.00
Population	79	12,300.37	347	10,051.75	2,248.62	0.72
Population age 15-25	79	13.55	347	13.20	0.35	0.03
Population age 25-40	79	20.54	347	20.83	-0.29	0.23
Population age 40-65	79	34.06	347	34.54	-0.48	0.05
Population age > 65	79	17.74	347	17.55	0.20	0.45
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	79	1.33	347	1.23	0.09	0.83
Lower secondary school degree	79	31.97	347	30.45	1.52	0.16
Middle secondary school degree	79	36.81	347	37.50	-0.68	0.27
Higher secondary school degree	79	11.36	347	11.77	-0.41	0.57
NA school degree	79	19.38	347	19.80	-0.42	0.13
Polytechnic education	79	11.22	347	10.83	0.40	0.36
Academic education	79	6.86	347	6.98	-0.12	0.85
No education	79	17.86	347	15.82	2.03	0.00
NA education	79	16.56	347	17.05	-0.49	0.09
Local business tax	79	1,781,876.53	347	1,286,476.96	495,399.57	0.71
Share welfare recipients	78	1.23	344	1.36	-0.13	0.31
GDP per capita	79	13545.38	347	14494.14	-948.76	0.15
Unemployment rate	75	22.07	336	20.69	1.38	0.02

Table 13: Vote share of right-wing extremist parties in federal elections

	Right-wing extremist vote share in federal elections				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Western TV	-0.150**	-0.369***	-0.288***	-0.510**	-0.539**
	(0.048)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.024)	(0.016)
Precipitation	0.385***	0.114	0.221*	0.344*	0.148
	(0.008)	(0.341)	(0.066)	(0.094)	(0.530)
Close to FRG/GDR border	0.169*	0.096	-0.005	-0.798***	0.262
	(0.054)	(0.208)	(0.963)	(0.002)	(0.353)
Close to Polish/Czech border	0.190***	0.074	0.106	0.932***	1.419***
	(0.002)	(0.274)	(0.173)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(population)	-0.051*	-0.025	0.044	-0.529***	-0.346*
	(0.064)	(0.414)	(0.414)	(0.000)	(0.061)
Population age 15-25	0.139***	0.022	0.045	0.356**	0.403***
	(0.004)	(0.656)	(0.371)	(0.020)	(0.003)
Population age 25-40	0.172***	-0.001	0.011	0.224	0.286**
	(0.000)	(0.980)	(0.807)	(0.153)	(0.048)
Population age 40-65	0.084***	-0.006	-0.000	0.114	0.165*
	(0.000)	(0.823)	(0.992)	(0.270)	(0.095)
Population age > 65	0.028	0.014	0.024	0.101	0.109
	(0.181)	(0.625)	(0.395)	(0.350)	(0.272)
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	-0.048**	0.039**	0.035**	-0.038	-0.037
	(0.037)	(0.017)	(0.039)	(0.432)	(0.401)
Share welfare recipients	-0.124**	0.038	0.016	0.285***	0.169*
	(0.032)	(0.405)	(0.715)	(0.001)	(0.077)
log(GDP per capita)	-0.784***	-1.037***	-1.203**	-2.340***	-2.663***
	(0.004)	(0.001)	(0.038)	(0.001)	(0.003)
Lower secondary school degree			-0.142***		-0.855***
			(0.002)		(0.000)
Higher secondary school degree			-0.080		-0.331
			(0.451)		(0.350)
Job training			0.144***		0.121
			(0.006)		(0.244)
Academic education			-0.042		-0.251
			(0.800)		(0.509)
log(local business tax)			-0.039		-0.166*
			(0.247)		(0.085)
Unemployment			0.010		0.060**
			(0.300)		(0.012)
R^2	0.202	0.161	0.197	0.253	0.363
N	414	414	408	418	411

Notes: Results are based on electoral outcomes at federal elections. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. The classification of political parties is explained in Table 4. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 14: Vote share of right-wing extremist parties in state elections

	Right-wing extremist vote share in state elections				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Western TV	-0.281***	-0.331***	-0.239***	-0.260	-0.400**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.006)	(0.116)	(0.033)
Precipitation	0.000	0.042	0.050	0.236***	0.258***
	(.)	(0.179)	(0.109)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Close to FRG/GDR border	-0.203***	0.075	0.002	-0.030	0.060
	(0.000)	(0.395)	(0.987)	(0.887)	(0.791)
Close to Polish/Czech border	0.147***	0.207***	0.289***	0.252*	0.376**
	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.000)	(0.076)	(0.032)
log(population)	0.014	-0.042	0.040	-0.442***	-0.358**
	(0.327)	(0.196)	(0.509)	(0.000)	(0.014)
Population age 15-25	0.007	0.062	0.085*	0.240**	0.280***
	(0.814)	(0.184)	(0.065)	(0.027)	(0.005)
Population age 25-40	0.024	0.070*	0.085**	0.296***	0.327***
	(0.281)	(0.066)	(0.029)	(0.006)	(0.001)
Population age 40-65	0.016	0.017	0.027	0.157**	0.173***
	(0.198)	(0.425)	(0.216)	(0.017)	(0.007)
Population age > 65	-0.003	0.022	0.035	0.172**	0.166**
	(0.826)	(0.376)	(0.165)	(0.023)	(0.020)
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	-0.001	0.013	0.008	-0.002	0.006
	(0.969)	(0.528)	(0.696)	(0.955)	(0.875)
Share welfare recipients	-0.048	0.047	0.025	0.268***	0.137
	(0.149)	(0.244)	(0.525)	(0.000)	(0.100)
log(GDP per capita)	-0.192	-0.524*	-0.414	0.234	0.143
	(0.175)	(0.057)	(0.453)	(0.647)	(0.844)
Lower secondary school degree			-0.153***		-0.208
			(0.001)		(0.101)
Higher secondary school degree			-0.061		0.278
			(0.591)		(0.436)
Job training			0.131**		0.012
			(0.013)		(0.880)
Academic education			-0.122		-0.361
			(0.497)		(0.311)
log(local business tax)			-0.052		-0.081
			(0.180)		(0.302)
Unemployment			0.009		0.065***
			(0.293)		(0.005)
R^2	0.245	0.154	0.204	0.127	0.218
N	414	414	408	422	405

Notes: Results are based on electoral outcomes at state elections. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. The classification of political parties is explained in Table 4. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 15: Vote share of left-wing extremist parties in federal elections

	Left-wing extremist vote share in federal elections				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
West TV	-1.092***	-1.457***	-1.031***	-0.135	0.423
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.007)	(0.673)	(0.259)
Precipitation	-0.411	-2.198***	-2.265***	0.670**	0.817**
	(0.336)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.027)	(0.017)
Close to FRG/GDR border	-0.735**	-0.868**	-0.051	-0.691*	-0.637
	(0.015)	(0.030)	(0.930)	(0.091)	(0.219)
Close to Polish/Czech border	-0.099	-0.594	-0.333	-0.726**	-0.534
	(0.715)	(0.137)	(0.488)	(0.012)	(0.127)
log(population)	1.211***	1.463***	1.864***	0.749***	0.821***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.002)
Population age 15-25	0.212	0.278	0.260	0.232	0.283
	(0.225)	(0.198)	(0.248)	(0.244)	(0.156)
Population age 25-40	0.360***	0.946***	1.016***	0.733***	0.807***
	(0.009)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population age 40-65	0.220***	0.704***	0.791***	0.737***	0.794***
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population age ¿ 65	-0.038	-0.028	0.041	0.125	0.151
	(0.642)	(0.829)	(0.762)	(0.396)	(0.300)
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	-0.079	-0.042	-0.023	-0.083	-0.093
	(0.343)	(0.674)	(0.806)	(0.200)	(0.160)
Share welfare recipients	0.478*	0.456**	0.367*	0.665***	0.617***
	(0.084)	(0.026)	(0.093)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(GDP per capita)	1.638*	-1.522	-3.248	2.420*	6.033***
	(0.090)	(0.323)	(0.291)	(0.059)	(0.000)
Lower secondary school degree			-0.324		0.495*
			(0.131)		(0.077)
Higher secondary school degree			-1.011*		0.960*
			(0.057)		(0.079)
Job training			0.058		-0.446**
			(0.817)		(0.013)
Academic education			1.034		-1.603***
			(0.217)		(0.008)
log(local business tax)			-0.358*		0.008
			(0.058)		(0.952)
Unemployment			0.081**		0.053*
			(0.035)		(0.056)
R^2	0.441	0.480	0.509	0.446	0.482
N	414	414	408	418	411

Notes: Results are based on electoral outcomes at federal elections. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. The classification of political parties is explained in Table 4. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 16: Vote share of left-wing extremist parties in state elections

	Left-wing extremist vote share in state elections				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
West TV	-1.071***	-1.855***	-1.293***	-0.637	-0.419
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.002)	(0.109)	(0.398)
Precipitation	0.000	-0.220*	-0.169	1.807***	1.396***
	(.)	(0.054)	(0.145)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Close to FRG/GDR border	-0.636**	-0.361	0.211	-0.648	-0.783
	(0.049)	(0.393)	(0.707)	(0.164)	(0.277)
Close to Polish/Czech border	-0.025	-0.517	-0.242	-0.988**	-1.009**
	(0.937)	(0.239)	(0.656)	(0.012)	(0.019)
log(population)	1.306***	1.677***	2.032***	0.667***	0.950***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Population age 15-25	0.235	0.227	0.222	0.352	0.261
	(0.244)	(0.319)	(0.344)	(0.185)	(0.337)
Population age 25-40	0.432***	1.041***	1.093***	0.797***	0.792***
	(0.007)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Population age 40-65	0.287***	0.704***	0.781***	0.845***	0.883***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population age > 65	-0.067	-0.051	0.017	0.357*	0.272
	(0.484)	(0.720)	(0.907)	(0.061)	(0.154)
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	-0.080	-0.048	-0.033	0.023	0.053
	(0.460)	(0.684)	(0.774)	(0.800)	(0.556)
Share welfare recipients	0.649**	0.368	0.228	0.997***	0.794***
	(0.034)	(0.106)	(0.341)	(0.000)	(0.001)
log(GDP per capita)	1.019	-2.707	-4.212	3.678**	6.979***
	(0.367)	(0.104)	(0.217)	(0.021)	(0.001)
Lower secondary school degree			-0.539**		-0.079
			(0.029)		(0.782)
Higher secondary school degree			-1.096*		-0.946
			(0.074)		(0.214)
Job training			0.300		-0.099
			(0.299)		(0.617)
Academic education			0.883		0.253
			(0.363)		(0.763)
log(local business tax)			-0.294		-0.006
			(0.176)		(0.971)
Unemployment			0.108**		0.088**
			(0.014)		(0.015)
R^2	0.418	0.469	0.503	0.419	0.460
N	414	414	408	422	405

Notes: Results are based on electoral outcomes at state elections. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. The classification of political parties is explained in Table 4. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 17: Voter turnout in federal elections

	Voter turnout in federal elections				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Western TV	2.889***	1.675***	1.353***	0.926***	-0.478
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.007)	(0.002)	(0.165)
Precipitation	0.952	1.602*	1.049	-0.555	-0.514
	(0.287)	(0.084)	(0.254)	(0.126)	(0.197)
Close to FRG/GDR border	0.160	-0.856	-0.260	-1.581***	-1.594***
	(0.810)	(0.213)	(0.796)	(0.000)	(0.002)
Close to Polish/Czech border	3.130***	4.103***	3.730***	1.498***	1.217***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(population)	-1.829***	-1.984***	-2.016***	-0.824***	-0.790***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
Population age 15-25	-0.911***	-0.578*	-0.693**	-0.109	-0.120
	(0.007)	(0.069)	(0.038)	(0.573)	(0.510)
Population age 25-40	-1.063***	-1.414***	-1.403***	-0.440**	-0.504**
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.038)	(0.011)
Population age 40-65	-0.354**	-0.652***	-0.626***	-0.008	-0.084
	(0.027)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.947)	(0.447)
Population age > 65	-0.339*	-0.724***	-0.758***	-0.290**	-0.358***
	(0.056)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.034)	(0.005)
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	0.030	0.178	0.185	0.123*	0.121**
	(0.879)	(0.248)	(0.233)	(0.056)	(0.044)
Share welfare recipients	-0.978**	-1.222***	-1.128***	-0.799***	-0.758***
	(0.040)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(GDP per capita)	-3.852	1.722	-1.826	-0.595	-7.180***
	(0.120)	(0.539)	(0.700)	(0.621)	(0.000)
Lower secondary school degree			0.415		-1.812***
			(0.214)		(0.000)
Higher secondary school degree			-0.353		-2.512***
			(0.661)		(0.000)
Job training			-0.359		1.103***
			(0.359)		(0.000)
Academic education			1.406		2.800***
			(0.261)		(0.000)
log(local business tax)			-0.048		-0.023
			(0.861)		(0.854)
Unemployment			-0.066		-0.081***
			(0.255)		(0.005)
R^2	0.452	0.489	0.499	0.404	0.500
N	414	414	408	418	411

Notes: Results are based on electoral outcomes at federal elections. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. The classification of political parties is explained in Table 4. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Table 18: Voter turnout in state elections

	Voter turnout in state elections				
	Elections 1990	Elections 1994		Elections 1998	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Western TV	2.918***	1.564**	1.207*	0.946*	0.695
	(0.000)	(0.018)	(0.078)	(0.070)	(0.214)
Precipitation	0.000	-0.044	0.006	-2.015***	-1.393***
	(.)	(0.838)	(0.979)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Close to FRG/GDR border	0.098	-3.104***	-0.453	-3.451***	-0.878
	(0.917)	(0.000)	(0.703)	(0.000)	(0.269)
Close to Polish/Czech border	3.724***	4.731***	3.923***	4.090***	4.501***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(population)	-1.872***	-2.388***	-2.798***	-1.430***	-1.794***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Population age 15-25	-1.052***	-0.631	-0.875**	-0.175	-0.220
	(0.007)	(0.144)	(0.041)	(0.615)	(0.530)
Population age 25-40	-1.358***	-2.260***	-2.176***	-0.987***	-1.110***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.004)	(0.002)
Population age 40-65	-0.660***	-1.196***	-1.077***	-0.316	-0.340
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.127)	(0.111)
Population age > 65	-0.260	-0.830***	-0.799***	-0.725***	-0.676***
	(0.187)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Foreigners (per 100 inhabitants)	-0.129	0.336	0.327	0.181*	0.211*
	(0.487)	(0.154)	(0.148)	(0.100)	(0.064)
Share welfare recipients	-0.931*	-1.398***	-1.126***	-1.366***	-1.235***
	(0.071)	(0.000)	(0.003)	(0.000)	(0.000)
log(GDP per capita)	-7.558***	-0.098	-13.823**	-0.036	-1.869
	(0.009)	(0.979)	(0.018)	(0.988)	(0.471)
Lower secondary school degree			0.126		-1.109***
			(0.763)		(0.001)
Higher secondary school degree			-3.089***		-1.561*
			(0.002)		(0.075)
Job training			-0.224		-0.205
			(0.632)		(0.429)
Academic education			5.462***		1.985**
			(0.001)		(0.044)
log(local business tax)			0.138		-0.092
			(0.657)		(0.580)
Unemployment			-0.151**		-0.057
			(0.041)		(0.316)
R^2	0.439	0.530	0.571	0.503	0.576
N	414	414	408	422	405

Notes: Results are based on electoral outcomes at state elections. Results stem from ordinary least squares regressions. Western TV, our key explanatory variable, is coded as zero when the signal access to broadcasts is at least as bad as in Dresden. All covariates except for Western TV, GDP per capita, and the unemployment rate are at the municipality level, while the exceptions are at the county level. The classification of political parties is explained in Table 4. p-values in parentheses; * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.