Analyzing Right-Wing Discourse on Twitter:

A Case Study of the 2017 German Federal Election

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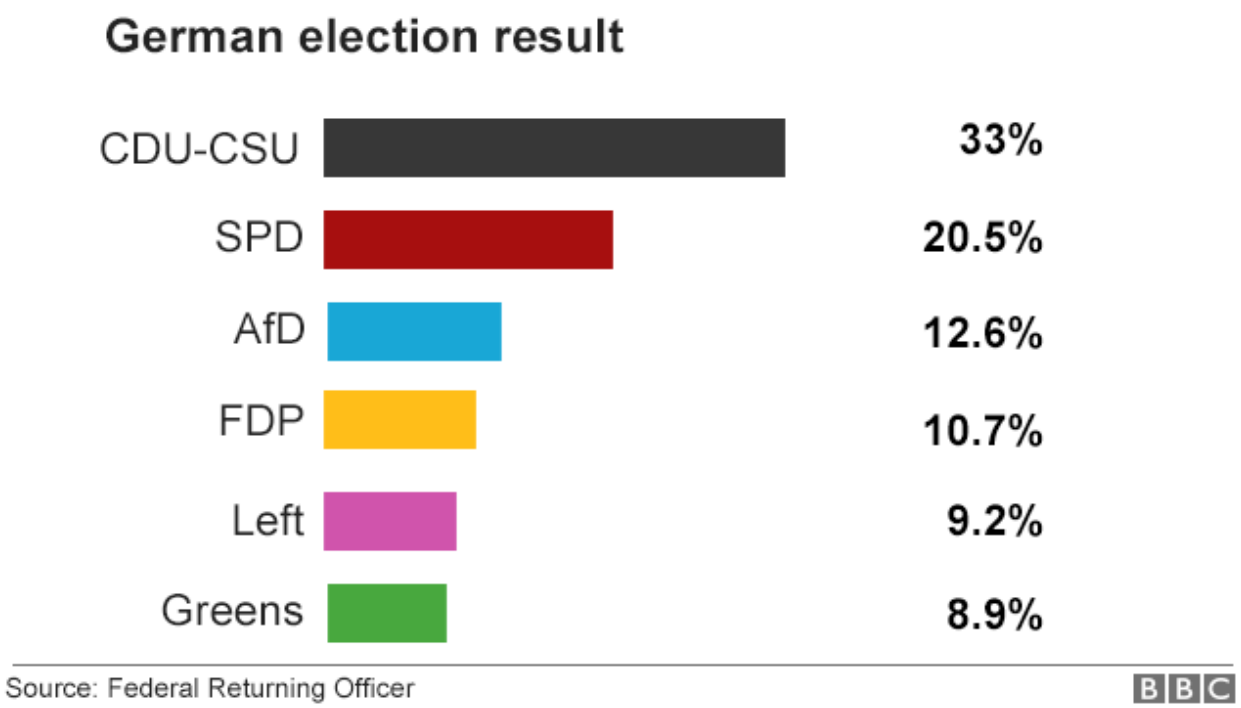
AfD Achieves Unexpected Success

This reveals a need to monitor right-wing sentiment



TWO GOALS

Theoretical

Can we test if the Spiral of Silence exists online for a German culture around discussion of right-wing ideals?

In essence: Is Twitter a good monitoring solution?

Methodological

Can we create a better way of monitoring public opinion using Twitter data through filtering mechanisms that increase relevancy of the data?

TWO GOALS

Testing SoS Online

Conceived in Germany in context of strong social and legal stigma against voicing nationalist sympathies.

Strafgesetzbuch § 86

Does the SoS apply online?

Measuring Public Opinion

Skeptics include:

Jungherr, Jürgens, & Schoen, 2012 O'Connor, 2010

Howard and Kollyani, 2017

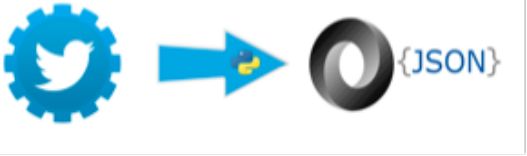
Top Methodology Mistakes

- Data Collection
- Topic
- Demographic Relevancy
- Automated Text Analysis

A Refined Methodology

Keywords rather than hashtags on general election

Bag-of-words to narrow topic to AfD (n = 980, 84% agreement)

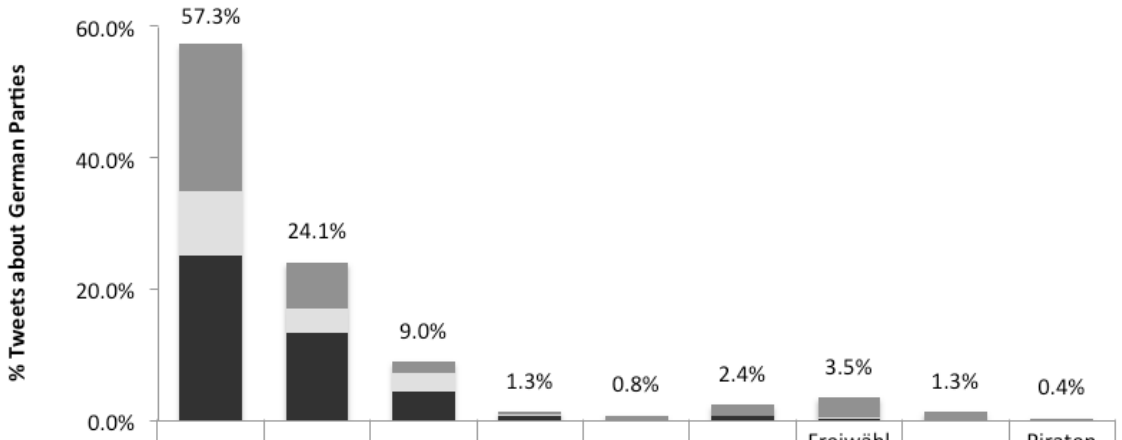


Google Maps APIs

57.3% of tweets about AfD.

31.5% contained #AfD.

39.1% of AfD tweets are supportive.



	AFD	CDU	SPD	Linke	DiePartei	FDP	Freiwähler	Grüne	Piraten Partei
Supportive	22.4%	7.0%	1.6%	0.4%	0.8%	1.6%	3.0%	1.3%	0.4%
Neutral	9.7%	3.7%	2.9%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Critical	25.2%	13.4%	4.4%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Total	57.3%	24.1%	9.0%	1.3%	0.8%	2.4%	3.5%	1.3%	0.4%

Sentiment Analysis of Global Tweets. n = 980

A Refined Methodology

Keywords rather than hashtags

Bag-of-words to narrow topic

Geolocating to narrow to relevant local

Unique users rather than volume

Hand-coding sentiment

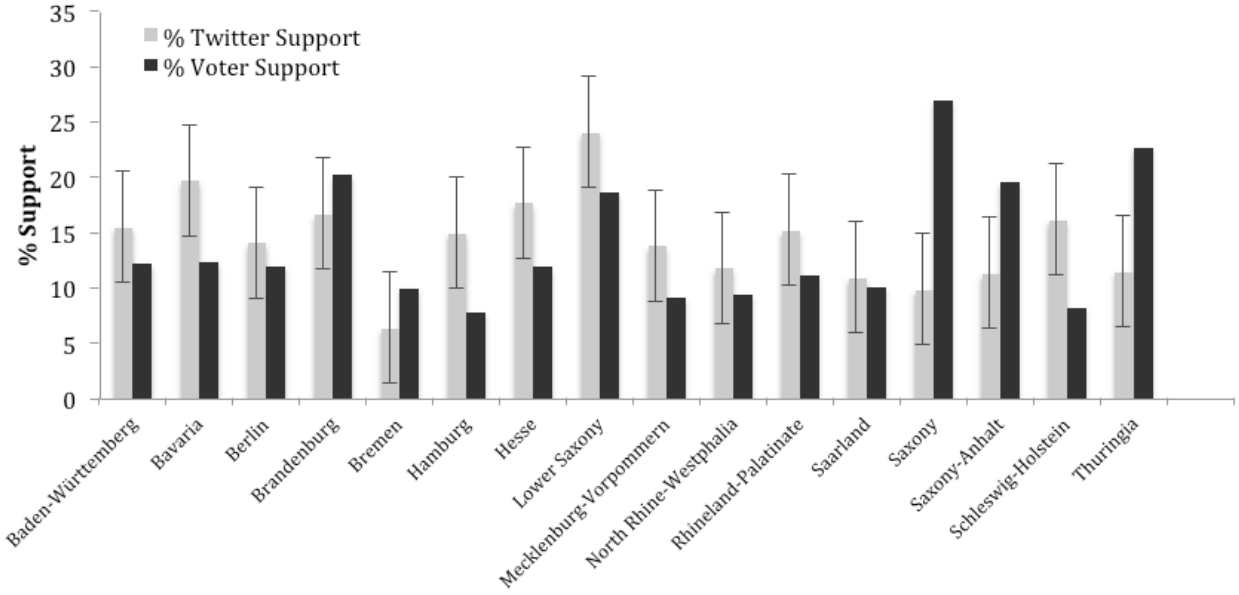
Let's narrow the set to within Germany and unique users only.

36% of tweets from Germany are about AfD.

14.25% of AfD tweets from unique users from Germany are supportive (95% confidence, ±2.93%, n = 1080).

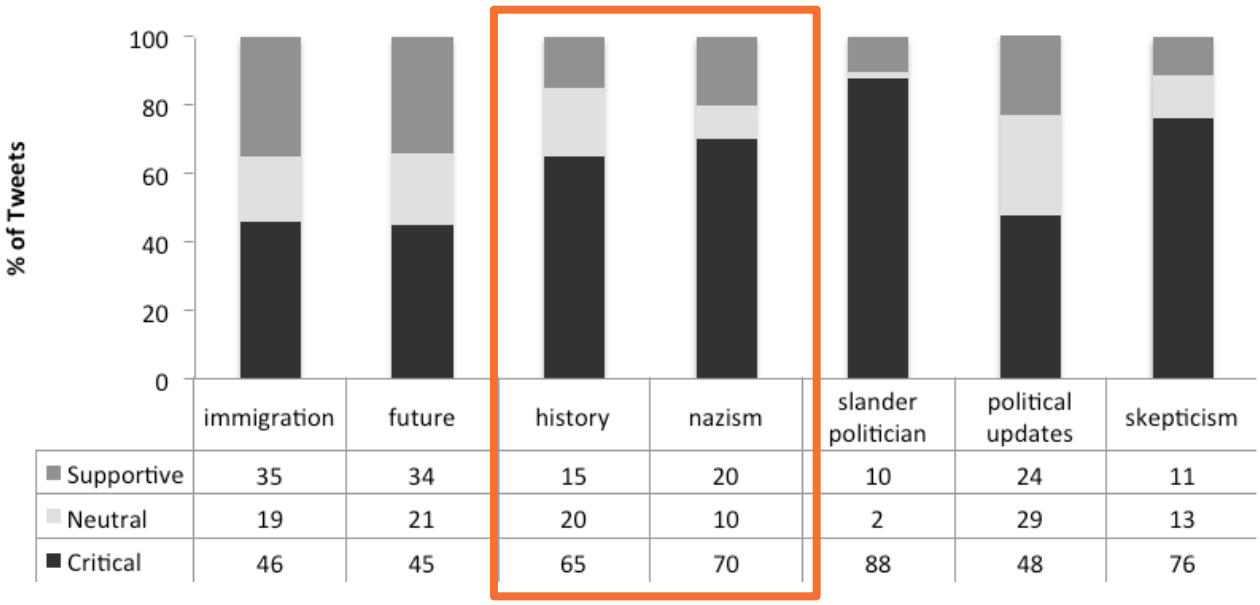
12.6% of Germans voted for AfD

AfD Twitter versus voter support.



n = 1068. 95% confidence, ±5.7-9.5% MOE, using proportionate stratified random sampling

Topic Saliency by Sentiment.



	immigration	future	history	nazism	slander politician	political updates	skepticism
Supportive	35	34	15	20	10	24	11
Neutral	19	21	20	10	2	29	13
Critical	46	45	65	70	88	48	76

n = 1,068.

”

@Nils_Borgwardt: 09/16/2017 - #Neubrandenburg - #AFD rally "#Merkel must go!" #Nazis

@Nils_Borgwardt: 16.09.2017 - #Neubrandenburg - #AFD Kundgebung "#Merkel muss weg!" #Nazis

LESSONS LEARNED

While there exists German AfD supports online, it is a smaller, more conservative conversation than initially anticipated. The Spiral of Silence applies.

We have the tools to perform a more nuanced analysis for location-based events on social media, allowing us to monitor public opinion and discourse. Not taking advantage of these methods can lead to misleading results.

Thank you very much for your time

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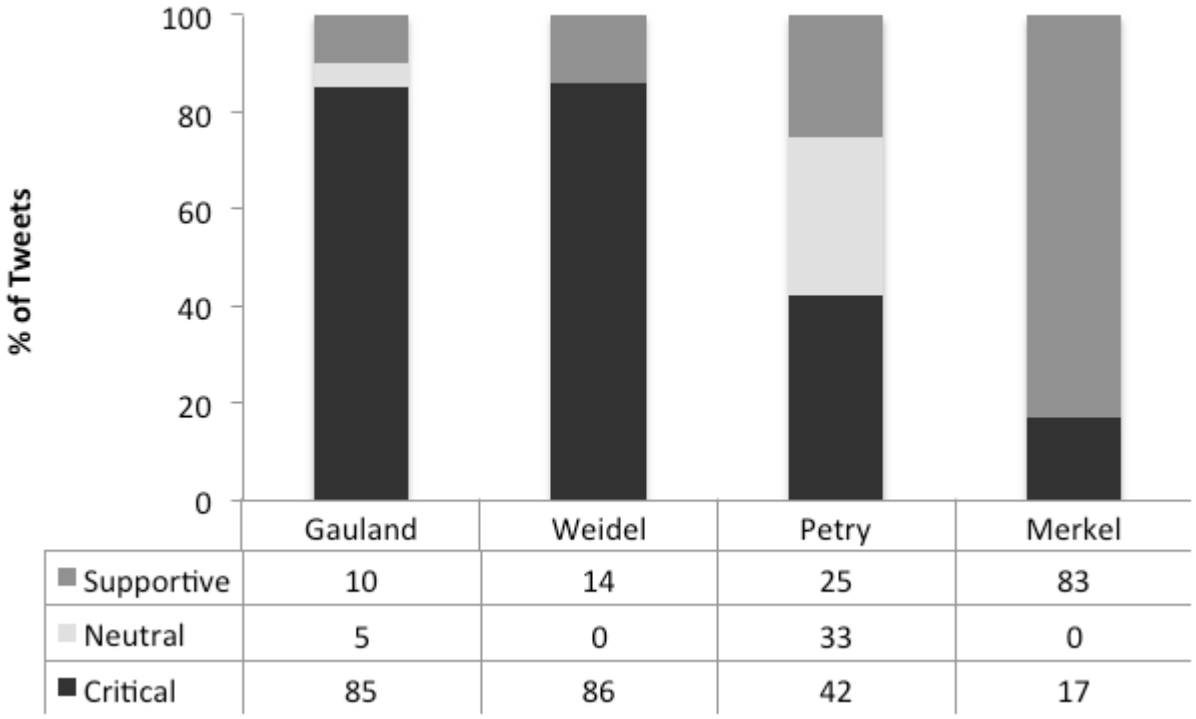
Politician Saliency by Sentiment.



	Gauland	Weidel	Petry	Merkel
Supportive	10	14	25	83
Neutral	5	0	33	0
Critical	85	86	42	17

n = 1,068.