

A Study on the Reasons for the Rise of Right-Wing Forces in East Part of Germany After the Reunification of Germany Since 1989

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ABSTRACT

After the end of the Cold War, the growth of right-wing forces is dramatic, especially in Europe countries. The extreme right-wing political groups' view tend to support the nationalism, populism, and other political ideas with right tendencies. These right-wing supporters think that their superior identity is being threatened by foreign culture brought by immigrations and refugees. However, it's a complex problem that what are the mechanisms and reasons behind the rising support rate of right-wing parties? This article attempts to analyze an area where this phenomenon has been remarkable since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, this research will elaborate the mechanism of the rise of right-wing forces in the east part of Germany, which is based on summarizing the previous research findings, and provide solid foundation for further studies. This article makes a comprehensive analysis of 23 articles and does some further discussions about the political factors, which are based on the factual data and existing research results.

Keywords: Right-wing, East Germany, Populism, European politics.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rise of right-wing forces has a rather universal phenomenon since the end of the Cold War. This article will try to analyze the mechanism behind the phenomenon. The area which is focused by this research is East Germany were used to be GDR (German Democratic Republic) during the Cold War. This research improves the recognition of the inner causes of the rise of the right-wing party and can be helpful to the further studies on this topic.^[1]

Past research mainly focused on economic factors, like the relationship between unemployment rate and the support rate of right-wing party. Some other research paid attention to immigration factors and political cultural background that contribute to the rising of right-wing forces. In this article, we will try to do some further research on the political factors. We implement data studies、 literature research method to write this paper.

2. ECONOMICAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF EAST GERMANY

2.1 Basic Information of East Germany

In fact, the concept, East Germany, is a political and historical concept rather than a geographical concept^[2]. The East Germany the article is going to discuss is the provinces of today's Germany that used to belong to the German Democratic Republic. After the Second World War, under the control of Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic (Hereinafter referred to as GDR) was set up in 1949. The division of Germany was a significant symbol of the beginning of the Cold War. During the Cold War, GDR is an important member of the socialist camp. At the same time, GDR was also the front line of the Warsaw Pact. To be more specific, the article will introduce the background of East Germany from three aspects, which are political and social background.

2.2 Economical Background of East Germany During the Cold War

Under the influence of socialism, the political and economic system of GDR has become totally different from western capitalism. However, the economic system of GDR was inefficient and rigid^[3]. The final products of the GDR joint venture were mainly concentrated in industrial machinery and equipment and were mainly exported to the Soviet Union and other countries of the Economic Cooperation Council. The prices of industrial products in the whole countries of the Economic Cooperation Council are manipulated by the Soviet Union, that is, the prices of these industrial machinery and equipment are kept low and cannot absorb due benefits. Joint ventures bore great policy burden. Since 1984, according to national regulations, enterprises must pay social funds according to 70% of the total salary, and joint ventures undertook the responsibility of setting up housing, hospitals, staff schools and other social facilities. Moreover, under the abnormal industrial system in which the labor-intensive consumer goods industry in East Germany is sacrificed, these joint enterprises are bound to bear the social burden of excessive employment^[4].

All these facts left tons of structural economic problems in East Germany, which finally lead to the weak economic growth in East Germany after the reunification.

2.3 Political Background of East Germany

East German politics was a democracy that exists in name only. The Soviet Union often interfered in East Germany's internal affairs which led to a threat to East Germany's political independence. The political process in East Germany was closely monitored by the secret agency Stasi which made the dissidents silenced. Human rights and popular political participation could not be guaranteed at all^[5].

The rigid planned economic system and failed democracy led to the declining credibility of the government of GDR. Under the intentional infiltration of the capitalist camp, the socialist ideological belief of the GDR gradually disintegrated.

2.4 Germany Political Parties Approval Rating

Overall, the support rate of German political parties is fragmented^[6]. As of January 2017, the support rate of the German coalition government composed of the Coalition Party and the Social Democratic Party has fallen by more than 10% compared with the 2013 German general election. Most of the votes were lost to the rapidly emerging right-wing populist parties. After the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990, due to the differences in economic development and due to the political differences, that existed between the new and old German federal states, the fragmentation became obvious,

mainly reflected in the establishment of political parties and right-wing populist forces. The game is also reflected in the struggle of the establishment political parties^[6].

3. THE BASIC INFORMATION OF THE RIGHT-WING IN EAST GERMANY

3.1 GDP Of the Three Typical Cities in Sachsen

In accordance with the Gross Domestic Product of the three most representative cities in State Sachsen, all three cities were increasing constantly on their GDP value throughout the year 2007 to 2017(see Figure 1), with the same temporary drop extent in 2008 by the influence of global financial crisis. Additionally, Germany's national GDP decreased significantly and then recovered gradually. Superficially, the German economy was affected by the global financial crisis, but the growth rate of GDP in the predominant cities in Sachsen is slower than west German state' GDP growth rate, which proved why people in the former East Germany supported the right-wing forces more.

3.2 German Young Group Unemployment Rate Since 1990

From the line chart of female, male and total unemployment rate in German Young Group, their images all reveal the similar patterns from 1990 to 2020, while male generally had lower unemployment rate throughout the whole period. The unemployment rate reached the peak in 2005, by reason of the new policy" Hartz IV" formulated by the German government which allows more people to receive the unemployment benefits. While the benefit payment increased from 391 euros to 399 euros at the same time. This issue has caused controversy among enormous German workers, since even though many people work every day, their monthly salary was about the same as the people who did not work. Thus, increasingly more people tended to receive the unemployment benefits instead of working, which rose the unemployment rate extremely high. After that, the unemployment rate continued decreasing from 2005 to 2020(see Figure 2), except for the slight increase in 2008 which was affected by the global financial crisis.

3.3 German Gross Domestic Product Since 1990

Based on the information illustrated from the German Gross Domestic Product graph, German GDP raised up to 2.59 trillion and fell back to 1,94 trillion during 1990 to 2000(see Figure 3), then there was a significant increase in the next 10 year, this was mainly because of the increase in domestic demand, investment, and exports due to the depreciation of euro. Afterwards, German GDP gradually stabilized around 3.6 trillion despite several fluctuations during the last years.

3.4 German Education Expense Occupancy in Total GDP From 1990 To 2018

The line chart of German Education Expense Occupancy in Total GDP from 1990 to 2018 (see Figure 4) illustrated that the percentage that Education Expense occupied in German total GDP had increased dramatically since 2008 and fluctuated around 4.9% of total GDP after 2010. After applying statistics on the proportion of education expenditure in total GDP in Germany, to verify whether education will affect the East German right-wing support rate. However, we found that education expenditure is not related to East German right-wing support.

3.5 German Crime Rate Since 1990

In accordance with the line chart of the German crime rate (per 10 thousand people), the overall crime rate displayed a decreasing trend throughout 1990 to 2020. The reason for the decline in the crime rate in Germany is that in 2016, Germany introduced a law to simplify the procedures for the criminal repatriation of immigrants. This has caused many violent, hateful, and unemployed refugees to be expelled from Germany, and Germany itself is also constantly creating jobs for refugees. Opportunities, this has significantly reduced the crime rate of refugees who have a stable residence and income.

And these refugees have a new legal status to integrate into German society. But this also brings about the problem that the people of the country are depressed about the reduction of employment opportunities and the possible anxiety of the reduction of income, which has aggravated Germany's hatred of immigrants, so although the crime rate is declining, for the people of the former East Germany, The support rate of the right-wing will increase dramatically in East Germany, since the right-wing forces in East German are more exclusive and they like to set up opposition to exclude dissident.

However, a sharp rise occurred in 2015, which lifted the crime rate from 0.8338% to 1.1716% in one year (see Figure 5) The predominant reason of such consequence was that German accepted large number of refugees due to the severe intensification of the situation in the civil war country, Syria, together with the refugees from Eritrea and Iraq, more than 4 million people left their homes and went off to Europe. However, German undertook heaviest responsibility of this crisis based on the agreement between the German Immigration and Refugee Agency. Refugees must apply for asylum in the first country to enter the European Union to reduce the burden on Mediterranean countries such as Greece and Italy. While the crime of the natives is stable within a certain range, thus the rise of the right-wing forces in East Germany is not particularly closely related to the crime rate.

3.6 Recorded Crime Cases in Länder from 2013 To 2019

Given the information displayed in the recorded crime cases in an state Länder in the east part of Germany from 2013 to 2019 (see Figure 6), the number of recorded crimes in Länder jumped from 312500 cases to 327196 cases in 2013. As stated in previous paragraphs, the refugees from Syria, Eritrea and Iraq had not officially enter the European countries including German by 2014, the sharp increase on crime cases is strongly correlated to anti-refugee policies that was formulated in 2015, which demonstrated that the right-wing force was generally more supportive among the East German citizens. The number of recorded crimes decreased in 2014, while bounced back almost to the peak point in 2016 at 324736 cases. The statistics then fell significantly down to the 270000 cases by the end of 2019.

3.7 Offence Crime Cases in Länder Per 100000 Inhabitants From 2013 To 2019

From the Offence Crime Cases in Lander line chart (see Figure 7), it is clear to see the identical pattern as the last chart. The primary difference between the Recorded Crime Cases and the Offence Crime Cases is offence represented the action that violates civil or criminal law, while crimes manage with people who go against the normal or accepted behaviors.

3.8 The Origin of Right-Wing

When it comes to political orientation, people often refer to "left and right-wing". The term "left and right" originated from the French Revolution. At that time, the person sitting to the right of the chairman of the Speaker was the conservative "La Gironde", the neutral party in the middle was the "La Plaine", and the left-wing seat was the "La Montagne". The party was formed by the reaction of the original "right" in France to the "left". But it is difficult to define the specific implication of "left-wing and right-wing", on account of tremendous different stages or countries.^[11]

In fact, the definition of right-wing is opposite to left-wing. There is no separate left or right-wing. Compared with a country or a certain historical process, the definition and connotation of right-wing are always changing. It is very difficult to accurately define right-wing or left-wing. The long-term governance of the right or left will always lead to the polarization of society. The left-wing party's governance for too long will hinder economic development and harm the interests of people who own the vested interests, while the right-wing party's governance for too long will lead to an excessive gap between the rich and the poor in society. Therefore, for modern European political parties, to win the support of as many voters as possible, they need to constantly

make choices and adjust their policies and routes.^[12]

The history of right-wing forces can be roughly divided into the following four stages. The first stage is from the end of World War I to the end of World War II. The most typical examples of this stage are German fascism and Italian fascism. Its main manifestations are opposition to democratic politics, establishment of dictatorship, discriminate against to Jews, and launch large-scale external war. The second stage was from the end of World War II to the mid-1970s. In this stage, due to the vigilance, suppression, and attack of fascism by Western countries, the extreme right parties were basically in a state of suspension. However, there were also some far-right parties or organizations at this stage^[13], among which the more famous were the German Socialist Empire Party and the Austrian Independent Alliance. The third stage is from the 1980s to the end of the 20th century. Its representative organizations include the "National Front" in France and the Liberal Party in Austria. They have all proposed policies against immigration and advocated extreme liberalism economically. The fourth stage is from the beginning of the 21st century. Far-right parties have emerged in many European countries. They support extreme economic liberalism, advocate nationalism, oppose immigrants, and oppose European integration and globalization.

3.9 The Characteristics of Right-Wings in East Germany

First, the East Germany right-wing forces oppose mainstream elites and regard themselves as the representatives of most of the people. The East Germany right-wing forces oppose elite culture and elitism. For right-wing supporters, they are wary of mainstream elitism, believing that mainstream elites are ruthless, corrupt, and selfish. At the same time, they believe that elitism never believes in the people, and that elitism examines the people with a prejudiced eye and believes that the people are nothing. A group that is illogical and lacks wisdom. The Federal Civic Education Center under the German Ministry of the Interior pointed out that right-wing populism often portrays itself as a "little person" or "pure people" who opposes the "establishment" or the "upper elite", labeling itself as the most moral and noblest. People, thus occupying the moral high ground. In their view, government departments, large companies, political parties, or lobbying groups outside the hospital are all enemies of the people. Otherwise, the right-wing forces often glorify themselves as being honest, working seriously, and ethical people.

Second, the right-wing emphasizes their own identity and topics related to democratic politics. On the one hand, they oppose and exclude other races, especially Muslims. The right-wing believes that the increase in foreigners has led to an increase in the local crime rate. In terms of identity, the right-wing forces formed a group that

specifically opposed other races and foreigners. We must know that a person's world outlook and values derive from his education and cultural influence, which is one of the reasons for the emergence of right-wing forces in East Germany. From another observation, it was discovered that the East German right-wing forces set up opposites, trying to tear apart society through identity recognition. The common core feature of right-wing populist politics is to construct a threatened group based on identity politics.

4. THE REASONS OF THE RIGHT-WING RISE IN EAST GERMANY

4.1 Right-Wing and the Populism

According to the expound above, it's easy to find out that there is a strong relationship between right-wing and populism in nowadays politics. To some degrees, we can discuss the reasons of the right-wing rise in East Germany with the combination of the reasons for the rise of the populism.^[14]

Here comes an example which makes this problem easier to be discussed. AFD (Alternative für Deutschland), a German party which has a very high support rate in East Germany, is regarded as a right-wing and populism party by lots of people. The predecessor of the AFD is the "anti-euro group" established by a group of economists on February 6, 2013. In the context of the European debt crisis, AFD rose rapidly, which was recognized and supported by some elites and the people. As the refugee crisis intensified in 2014 and 2015, the choice party seized on the refugee problem, criticized the refugee policy of the Merkel Government, threw out political demands such as anti-refugees and resetting border control, and the public support rate continued to rise.

A German media said that the AFD has stirred up emotions among the people opposed to the euro and has also aroused the vigilance and dissatisfaction of Germany's major political parties. Tons of German politicians from other parties criticize AFD. It concerns them that AFD try to increase support rate by announce some Inflammatory claims. AFD try to solve the current problems by avoiding European economic integration and conduct conservative policy, like changing the refugee's policy^[15]. These claims are very provocative because these policies are short-term, effective and in line with the public's appetite. According to the claims raised by AFD, some people concluded that AFD is a populism party. And the claims of the AFD obviously show its right-wing political attribute.

From this example, talking about the rise of populism, the causes of it is highly related to the complex politics circumstances in Europe. New events like refugee issues, European integration issues, economic issues so on so forth has caused a profound and lasting impact on the

political environment in European countries. However, it's evident that there is a close positive correlation between the rise of right-wing forces and populism.

4.2 The Fragmentation of Germany Political Parties

The fragmentation of German political parties is also a main reason of the rise of right-wing party in East Germany.

The reasons for the fragmentation of German political parties are as follows. First, from the 1990s to the beginning of the 21st century, Germany has been digesting the financial burden brought about by the reunification of Germany^[16], and its economic growth has been weak. At the same time, global competition has escalated. The resulting negative effects of globalization have appeared, the challenge of an aging population has intensified, the welfare state has become overwhelmed, and the refugee problem and conflicts between the German social state have emerged. The second is the German electoral system model. Because Germany adopts a proportional electoral system that is relatively conducive to smaller parties, mainstream parties are often unable to cope with the emergence of a fragmented party structure based on relatively dispersed public opinion. At the same time, to prevent the loss of voters, mainstream parties are usually unwilling to adjust their policy programs to adapt to new changes. Compared with the situation where mainstream parties are unable to cope with the new situation, the Alternative Party relied on its radical stance on refugee issues, which is of concern to most Germans, and performed well in elections at both the federal and local levels.

The above reasons have further deepened the fragmentation of the support rate of German parties, and at the same time, radical parties are often able to put forward radical propositions that are extremely nationalistic which is the main criterion and purpose of East Germany right-wing political parties^[17]. As mainstream parties gradually converge on the middle road, the policies and propositions of East Germany right-wing parties are often very attractive to the lower classes. The right-wing parties can provide them with opportunities for their current conditions and social systems. The vision to redefine the rules of the game. First, the convergence of mainstream political platforms and ideologies will cause some middle-class voters to become politically indifferent or even bored, and they will become interested in the German Alternative Party (AFD), which is pursuing "unconventional"^[18]. Second, under the multi-faceted attack of the European debt crisis, refugee crisis and terrorist attacks, the East German people's sense of injustice, sense of social insecurity and disappointment have increased, and they are dissatisfied with the German government's handling of crisis events. Out of the the weak political position of East Germany

when it merged with West Germany, the people of East Germany have a strong distrust of the West German political parties and the government that dominated by the West German political parties. Voters with such dissatisfaction chose to vote for the German Alternative Party, in large part to punish mainstream parties^[19]. Third, under the negative effects of globalization and European integration, the interests of some of the middle and lower classes in Germany have been damaged, income and living standards have declined, social status has also declined, and the middle class has become severely impoverished. All this phenomena are much more serious and common in East Germany because of the bad economic situation mentioned above^[20].

5. CONCLUSION

According to the contents above, it is obvious that the rise of right-wing forces in East Germany after the reunification of Germany since 1989 is a sophisticated social and political phenomenon^[21]. According to the analysis above, the causes of this phenomenon can be attributed to the following two categories of reasons, which are political reasons and economic reasons.

Specifically, firstly, from the political reasons perspective, due to the similarity between modern right-wing ideology and populism, accompanying with the dramatic rise of populism support rate, the right-wing forces and its party has developed in a shocking speed. Secondly, because of the fragmentation of German main parties and some controversial policy (Immigration Policy)^[22], the electors who identify with the right-wing ideology have gradually lost its faith in main parties, such as Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, and they turn to support the dominant right-wing parties, such as AFD (Alternative für Deutschland).

From the economic perspective, the economic depression caused by the failure of East Germany government in the Cold War has led to the long-lasting disparity between the economic status in east part of Germany and west part of Germany, which result in the people in the east part of Germany have partly lost its faith in the government and ruling party.

All in all, though the rise of right-wing forces in east part of Germany seems to be a political crisis, this political and social phenomenon still needs to be discussed and researched further. For the prospect of future study, more discussions, which are on the level of ideology and political philosophy, are expected.

APPENDIX

GDP Of The Three Typical Cities In Sachsen

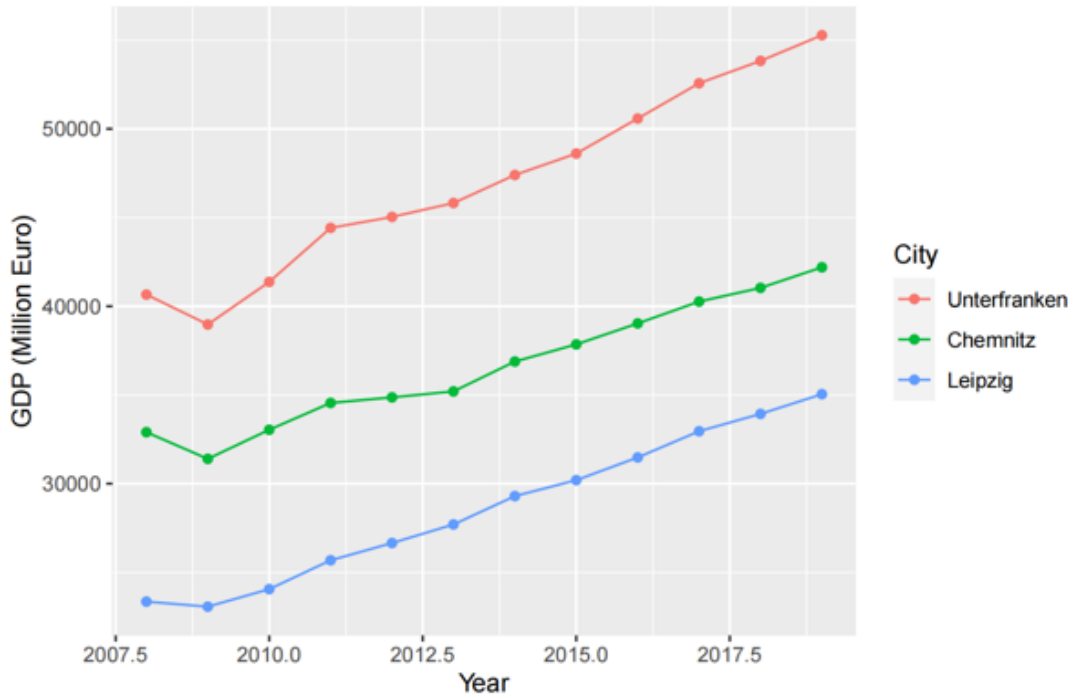


Figure 1. GDP Of the Three Typical Cities in Sachsen^[7]

German Young Group Unemployment rate Since 1990



Figure 2. German Young Group Unemployment Rate Since 1990^[7]

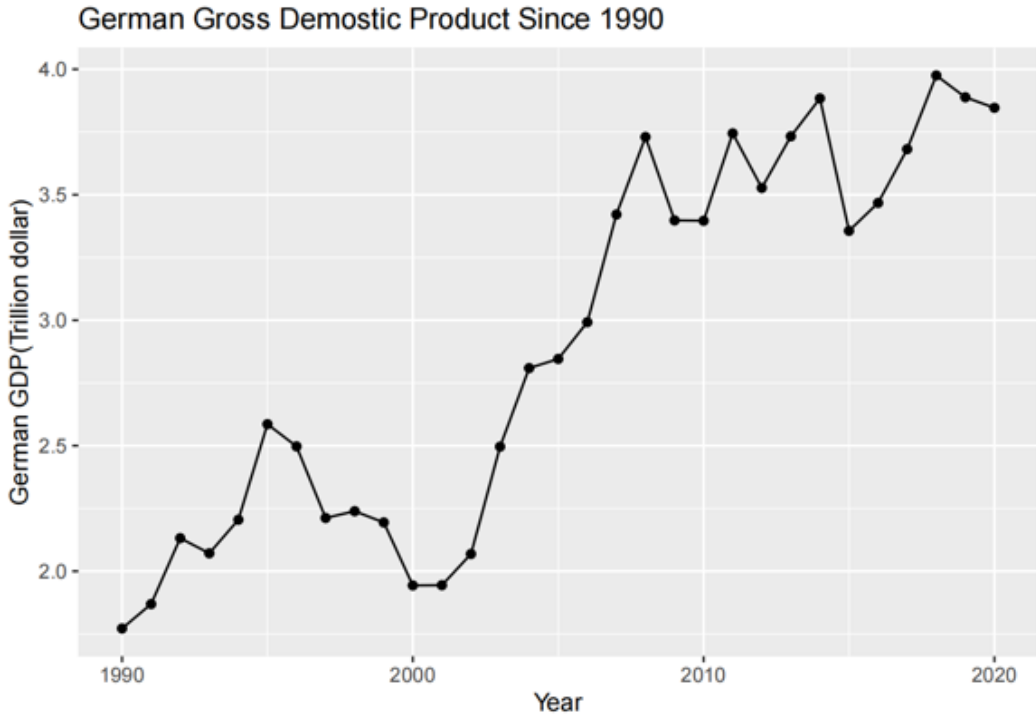


Figure 3. German Gross Domestic Product Since 1990^[8]

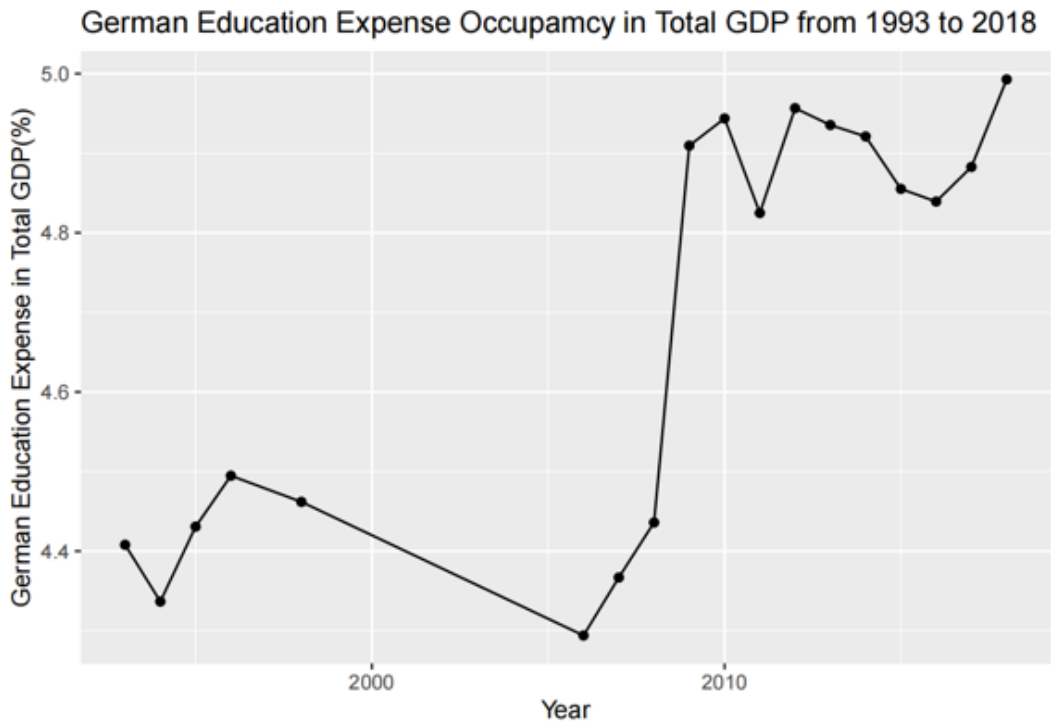


Figure 4. German Education Expense Occupancy in Total GDP From 1990 To 2018^[8]

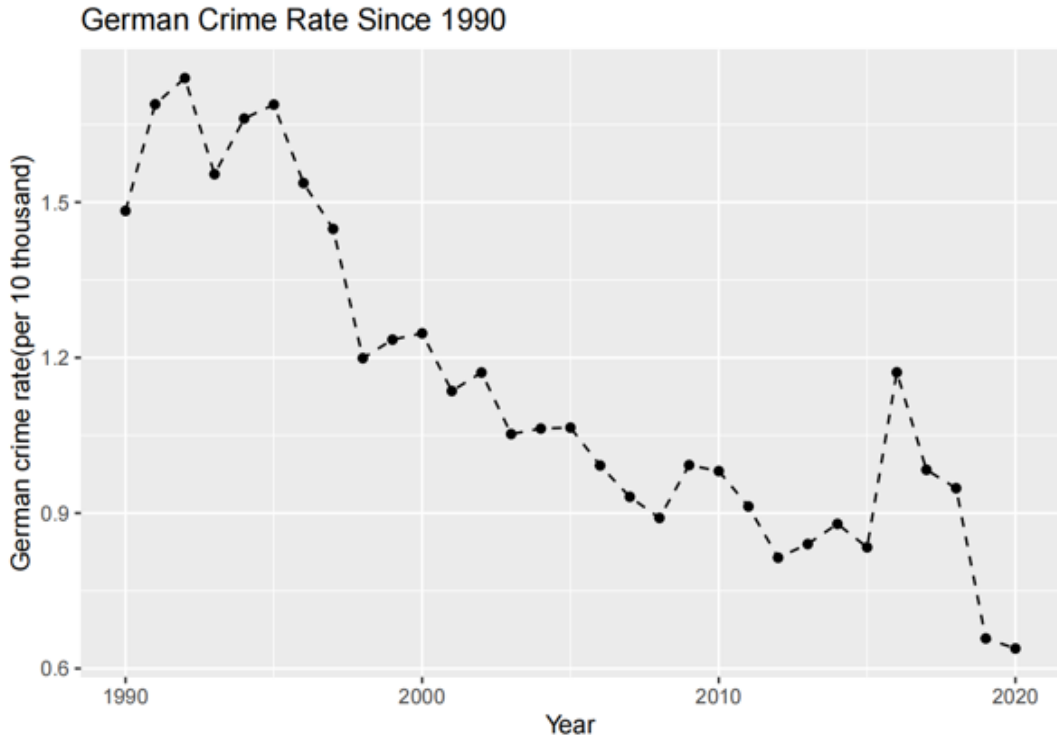


Figure 5. German Crime Rate Since 1990^[9]

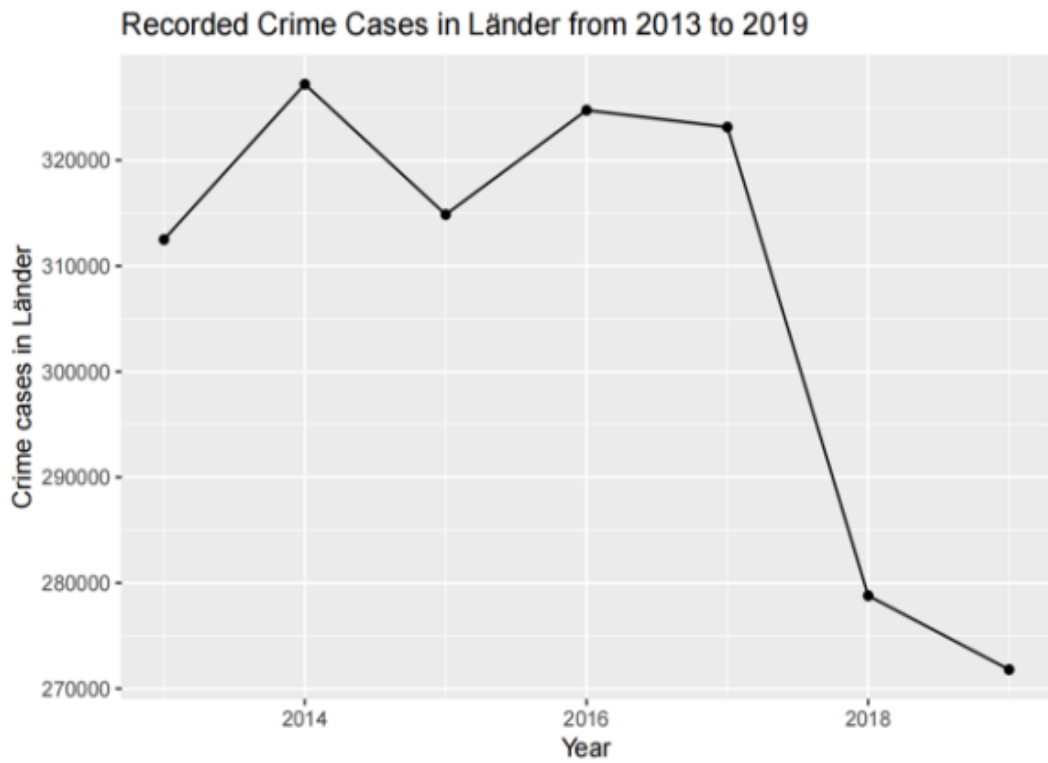


Figure 6. Recorded Crime Cases in Länder from 2013 To 2019^[9]

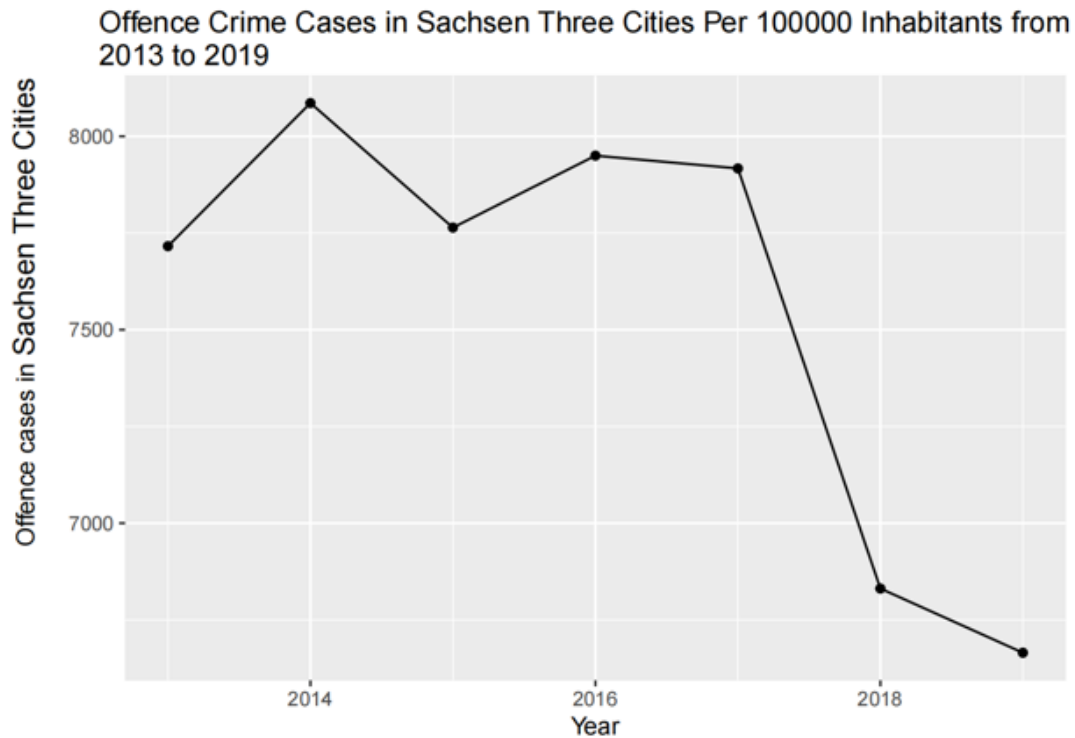


Figure 7. Offence Crime Cases in Länder Per 100000 Inhabitants from 2013 to 2019 [9]

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