

NOTE: I HAD TO REMOVE MAPS TO ALLOW FOR UPLOADING. APOLOGIES

Religious Frontiers and Xenophobia

Evidence From Weimar Germany

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Abstract

This paper argues that religious frontiers produce fear of strangers. Spatial proximity to religious borders simultaneously enhances community strength, and threat perception. Together, these two forces create collective fear for those who are from outside the community. The author develops this argument by analyzing a newly created database on folklore and religion in approximately 20,000 towns and villages in religiously divided Germany during the 1930s. Spatial econometrics reveal that inhabitants of Protestant towns in the proximity of Catholic towns (and vice versa) were more likely to tell their children stories featuring xenophobic bogeymen. Instrumental variable analysis using 16th century religious boundaries, allow the author to rule out some endogeneity bias and establish causal order. In line with the main theory, religious frontier effects were particularly strong in towns that had stronger community norms, religious associations, militias and were located in areas where religious conflict had been more intense. The findings shed new light on how identity politics and state-formation unintentionally shape how citizens are taught to see and feel the world around them.

Keywords: *Ethnic Conflict, Religion, Xenophobia, Social Boundaries, Frontiers.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Sociologists who study the relationship between religion and xenophobia have centered the role of social boundaries and threat. The later literature is organized around the notion that groups develop prejudice once they perceive their social status to be under attack (Blumer 1958; Lipset 1960) and has been used to explain the rise of aggressive nationalism (Whitehead and Perry 2020) and Islamophobia (Albanese and Kurpiel 2025) among U.S. protestants. Strict social boundaries are conducive to xenophobia (Wimmer 2013) because they produce strong in-group norms and discipline (Burt 2005) which are accompanied by feelings of superiority to those who are outside the community (Straughn and Feld 2010). This process is particularly strong for denominational groups because religious community structures are anchored in a uniquely sacred worldview (Ysseldyk, Matheson and Anisman 2010).

Historical scholarship on religious xenophobia in 20th century Germany often echoes these processes but links them to how different denominations responded to the rise of the modern world. Drawing on Weber, Fromm, for instance, argued that the German evangelical middle class, freed from the chains of tradition, projected their fears for status decline onto real world strangers such as Jews and Gypsies (Fromm 1941). German Catholics, it has been argued, developed xenophobia because they organized their disciplined and insulated community structures against the threat of modern society, symbolized by the uprooted stranger (Blaschke 1997).

In this paper, I aim to untie threat and social boundary formation from denominational differences and modernization and instead focus on how different religious groups position themselves vis a vis another in space. I draw on research on social frontiers in geography to identify a spatial source of threat and community strength. Social frontiers are geographic locations where distinct social groups border each other but live in separate spaces (Gold 1982; Legewie 2018). They are, in other words, spatial manifestations of social groups that both connect and demarcate group difference (Sack 1983). My main

argument is that religious groups, regardless of denomination, are more likely to fear community outsiders when they live in close proximity to religious frontiers.

In times of upheaval, religious frontiers facilitate peaceful relations by organizing denominations into separate spaces in which unnecessary contact can be avoided (Sack 1983). As a result they increase closure by reducing religious mixing and preventing the formation of ties across religious and spatial divides (Dean et al. 2019). This closure facilitates strong in group norms and discipline but increases suspicion of those outside the community (Gold 1982).

This suspicion is further reinforced by the fact that religious frontiers make out-groups more visible and designate spaces that need to be defended from them (Gold 1982). This in turn creates a siege mentality and enhances threat perception (Iyer and Pryce 2024). It is this combination of threat and community strength which together increases fear for strangers who transcend local borders.

I substantiate this claim through a study of xenophobia and the religious frontier in Weimar Germany. The Weimar Republic provides an important opportunity to study this process for four reasons. First, existing research shows that community fears in Weimar Germany had a considerable impact on the rise of Nazi party and death of democracy, making it a crucial case to understand the fall of pluralism (Amaya and Braun 2026). Second there is considerable variation on the outcome variable. At the start of the twentieth century German village life was still characterized by immobility as large groups of people stayed at one place during their entire life. This static and corporatist society was defined in opposition to the itinerant. Traveling artists, prostitutes, pedlars, hawkers, Jews, Gypsies, beggars and thugs were seen as strangers that transcended community boundaries. The suspicion and fear they evoked served to establish boundaries between those who were in and outside the community (Blackbourn 1998). The forces of political, social and economic integration that shot through the German empire (Wehler 1985) and Weimar Republic made this dynamic only more apparent as it put the immobility of German community structures under immense pressure resulting in increased fear for the

outside world (Peukert 1993). However, as we will soon find out this fear was far from universal (see Figure 3). Third, apart from state-level differences, religion was arguably the most important dividing line of German society. Ever since the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, the German nation state was home to an ‘invisible boundary’ (Francois 1991) that created two Germanys (Riehl 1882), one Protestant and one Catholic. Over time, political elites actively manipulated religious fault lines to increase social cohesion, charging it with mutual suspicion, fear and threat. Due to French intervention from above, the invisible boundary cut straight through state lines, providing us with an important opportunity to disentangle frontier effects from institutional differences. Fourth, the Weimar Republic provides us with unique datasources that allow us to study frontier effects at a pivotal moment in Western history.

To explore the religious frontier effect, we need geographically fine-grained data on denomination and xenophobia. To this end, I digitized a large historical survey of German speaking towns and villages from the 1930s: the *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde (ADV)*. The ADV was collected by folklorists interested in local culture between 1930 and 1935 and provides information on approximately 20,000 German villages and towns that have at least one elementary school (Schmoll 2009). The survey provides extensive demographic information including religion and ethnic composition and asks over 240 questions about material and oral culture. I capture xenophobia by looking at the prevalence of Xenophobic Bogeymen such as Gypsies, Jews, Beggars and thieves in *Kinderschreck (children’s fright)*, an oral tradition that deploys fear to induce obedience in children. Other questions are deployed to trace local level community norms, religious discipline and threat.

Spatial econometrics reveal that xenophobic bogeymen clustered at both Protestant and Catholic sides of religious frontiers, suggesting that spatial locations of church communities and not denominational differences per se, shape whether Christians embrace fear for community outsiders. Using the religious borders from 1555, allows me to remove some concerns about endogeneity bias. Effects were particularly strong in localities with

strong community norms, vibrant religious associations, enhanced religious discipline and local militias that were located in parts of Germany where religious conflict had been particularly intense. Taken together, this suggests that religious frontiers play an important role in producing religious xenophobia through a convergence of social closure and threat perception.

This finding is part of a larger research project that links the increased fear for humans (as opposed to pagan spirits or animals) in the twentieth century to state-formation processes. Germany was created out of a large number of smaller and at times antagonistic states. In order to align these different regions under the German flag, Prussian elites, of whom Bismarck is the most famous, attempted to displace conflict between states (Obert Padgett) by activating nationalist, religious, socio-economic and community fault lines that transcended regional divides. These social fault lines produced spatial frontier zones in which human bogeys maintained order, the Nazis thrived and pluralism died (Amaya Braun). The findings draw attention to how emotional energies at the seams of society can undermine pluralism.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. In the next section, I will introduce the religious frontier thesis by drawing on work in geography and the sociology of religion. After that I will give a brief introduction to the evolution of Germany's invisible religious boundary. Methods and result are presented in the following two section. I will conclude this paper with a discussion of scope conditions. Through a comparison of the Netherlands and Germany, I will highlight how the effects of social frontiers in general and religious frontiers in particular on pluralism is conditional on state formation processes. Whereas Dutch elites pacified religious cleavages and turned religious frontier zones into anchors for pluralism (Braun 2019), German elites did the opposite through the repeated instigating culture wars along religious lines.

2 RELIGIOUS FRONTIERS & XENOPHOBIA

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3 GERMANY'S INVISIBLE BOUNDARY

After more than 20 years of religious war, the 1555 Peace of Augsburg introduced the constitutional right for princes to introduce the Lutheran church. The principle of “*cuius regio, eius religio*” (whose realm, whose religion) stated that the religion of the local lord would become the faith of all inhabitants living in his territory. People who refused to convert to the religious of the prince were given the right to migrate. However, an overwhelming majority was forced to religiously align with the local prince (Dixon 2008). The principle survived 250 turbulent years which featured decades of religious warfare. In 1795, 76 year before the establishment of the German empire, Immanuel Kant lamented the religious divide created by the 1555 peace treaty as it “involves a tendency to mutual hatred and pretexts for war” and employs “two means of separate people and prevent them from mixing: differences of language and of religion.” However, he was hopeful that with time, the cleavage between Evangelicals and Catholics would dissolve (Kant 2026, p.49).

Political centralization at the start and end of the Napoleonic occupation, as well as German unification in 1871, forced Evangelicals and Catholics to live in the same political units. Despite or perhaps even because of unification, Kant's hope's remained unfulfilled. Twelve years into the German empire Folklorist Reihl still saw two Germans, one Evangelical and one Catholic (Reihl 1882). At the micro level, historian Francois goes as far as to say that the country was cut in two by a “invisible boundary” (Francois 1991). During the early years of the empire, history had already supercharged this boundary with suspicion, fear and threat, with both sides perceiving each other as intolerant and destructive. While Catholics vividly remembered the violent destruction of the Holy Roman Empire, Protestants had little problem recalling the bloodshed brought about by

Tilly's armies of the past (Smith 2014).

The infamous *Kulturkampf* further exacerbated tensions between the two religious groups. Between 1871 and 1887 several German states in collaboration with Chancellor Bismarck tried to create a homogenous nation organized around enlightened Protestantism. Faced with the slow rise of mass politics, this form of nationalism feared religious difference, especially when this difference could induce loyalty to outside authorities, such as the pope. Consequently, Chancellor Bismarck sought control over the selection of priests, interfered with Catholic education, closed Catholic seminaries it deemed suspicious, imprisoned bishops and forced thousands of Catholics into exile (Strötz 1970). These top-down policies were accompanied by local level violence. Catholic processions and demonstrations resulted in mocking and riots, especially in religiously mixed regions of the country (Smith 2014).

The *Kulturkampf* failed in establishing a unified German culture but left a lasting imprint which was still visible in the Weimar Republic. After the *Kulturkampf* confessional was recast into modern associations. On the Protestant side, the *Kulturkampf* led to the establishment of the *Protestant League*, a group that aimed to eradicate ultramontane thought and raise Protestant consciousness. It warned for religious enemies intend on destroying the Evangelical church (Kupisch 1971). On the Catholic side, it produced a strong and disciplined civil society network with the parliamentary Centrum party at its helm (Anderson 2021).

There is some evidence that conflict between Catholics and Protestants got projected onto outsiders. If we go back to the sixteenth century, Catholic church leaders equated Jews with Lutherans. Partly in response, Luther provided his own blend of anti-Catholic and antisemitic discourse (Trachtenberg 1946). Throughout the twentieth century Catholics and Lutherans evoked anti-Jewish images against each other. Officials of the Centrum party described Jews and Evangelicals as godless, immoral and liberal. Protestant league members returned the favor by highlighting how Jews and Catholics were both dogmatic, divisive and international in focus (Bergen 1994). In the next sec-

tions we will explore whether the xenophobic side-effects of religious conflict are organized around religious frontiers in space.

4 METHODS & DATA

4.1 The ADV

To explore the effects of religious frontiers, we need geographically fine-grained denominational data. Existing statistical analysis of the Weimar Republic often rely on county or city level data. County-level measures are not suitable as they obscure the causal processes we are interested in. County level measures of religious diversity, for instance, do not tell us much about whether religious groups live together in towns, neighborhoods and hamlets (suggesting religious mixing) or are segregated into separate spaces (suggesting religious frontiers). City-level data has an additional problem as it excludes a majority of the population. In 1871, the latest pre-Weimar year for which we have disaggregated data for parts of Germany, two thirds of the Prussian population lived outside cities, in smaller towns and villages (Becker and Cinnirella 2020).

To overcome these challenges, I digitized a large historical survey of German speaking towns and villages from the 1930s: the *Atlas der deutschen Volkskunde (ADV)*. The ADV was collected by folklorists interested in local culture between 1930 and 1935 and provides information on approximately 20,000 German villages and town that have at least one elementary school (Schmoll 2009). The villages were sampled in space. Researchers aimed to access a village every 5 kilometers. In addition to towns, the data also provided information on neighborhoods in urban areas. For each village, town and neighborhood, the ADV organizers recruited a pre-screened local volunteer who served as a village expert. Often this expert was the head of the local school (Kehren 1994). The expert filled in questionnaires about folklore, customs, norms, demographics and material culture. In total, the survey provides information on 243 different questions collected over 5 different waves (Zender 1958).

The Nazi takeover and World War Two abruptly ended the analysis of the questionnaires from the early 1930s.¹ However, the original surveys survived the war and are currently located in the basement of the *Abteilung Kulturanthropologie* of the *Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms University* in Bonn, Germany. During the summers of 2017, 2018 and 2024 I received permission to access the survey material which had not been touched for over twenty years (Zender 1958). While the ADV also provides information on German speaking communities outside of Germany, I only focus on towns located within Germany's 1930's border. In total, I was able to find information on 19,828 villages. The median town housed 511 people while, the modal town size was 300 inhabitants.

4.2 The Religious Frontier

Being on a religious frontier is the main explanatory variable. For each wave of the ADV local experts were asked to provide information on population size and ethno-religious composition. The experts provided information on the size of major churches such as Catholics and Evangelicals but also smaller sects, minority churches and seculars. In addition, the local experts included information about foreigners, Roma and Jews. Figure 1 shows the distribution of Evangelicals per town. The graph shows that an overwhelming majority of towns are either dominated by Catholics or completely dominated by Evangelicals. Religious mixing within towns appears to be exceedingly rare. This is not surprising given the historically contentious relationship between Catholics and Evangelicals outlined in the previous section. Based on studies of smaller regions historians have pointed out that these dynamics were often accompanied by religious sorting into towns (Smith 2014). The data collected for this paper, which probably includes the most comprehensive and fine-grained denominational data that exists for the 1930s, confirms this picture.

[Figure 1 about here.]

Given these pattern, this paper shifts the focus from religious division within towns to

religious frontiers and religious division between towns. The main explanatory variable is based on religious boundaries between villages. Geographers have used several techniques to measure social boundaries (Schaeffer and Legewie 2016). These techniques are commonly referred to as Wombling (Womble 1951). This analysis draws on Wombling to determine whether villages are located on a religious frontier. It relies on the idea that localities are on the religious frontier if the difference in Evangelicalism in this locality and its neighboring villages is large. Specifically, to capture whether a German village is on Germany's invisible boundary between Protestants and Catholics, I create a religious difference variable:

$$EV_d = \frac{1}{\sum_{j \in N_i} \frac{1}{d_{ij}}} (EV_i - EV_j)$$

This measure takes the overall absolute difference in the percentage of Lutherans living in a village i and the percentage of Evangelicals, EV in all neighboring villages, while weighing each neighbor j by its inverse distance d_{ij} to the respective focal town i . A larger value would mean that a town is on a religious frontier because it is religiously distinct from its immediate neighbors (Legewie 2018). In the main analysis below, I mark all villages within 10 kilometers as neighbors. However we have also ran models using 5 and 25 kilometer buffers as well as specifications using the 5, 10, 25 nearest neighbors. These robustness checks are presented in Appendix XX.

If the religious frontier thesis is correct, we would expect that towns which vary more from their neighbors in terms of religion are more likely to be xenophobic. In total, I was able to reconstruct religious information for 18,074 villages. The distribution of the religious difference variable is depicted in Figure 1.

[Figure 2 about here.]

4.3 Xenophobia

Capturing early 20th century fears at a local level is hard. Existing analyses of local xenophobia in Europe before the Holocaust often rely on pogrom data (Voigtländer and Voth 2012; Johnson and Koyama 2019) or voting for xenophobic parties (Smith 1994). Pogrom data suffers from three shortcomings. First, pogroms are an extreme form of antisemitism and anti-Jewish sentiments are likely to exist even in the absence of pogroms. Second, pogroms cannot take place in the absence of Jewish targets. Deploying pogroms as a proxy therefore assumes a local Jewish presence as a precondition for the emergence of antisemitism, something that remains an open empirical question (Charnysh 2015). Third, pogroms are not a pure measure of local sentiments towards Jews as they also tap the capacity to mobilize and, in some cases, the presence of instigation by movement entrepreneurs.² Consequently, pogroms tell us about organized forms of antisemitic violence but do not fully capture latent and non-violent sentiments.

Similarly, voting data also has its problems. First of all, xenophobic parties often have much broader platforms covering a wide range of issues. A vote for a xenophobic party could therefore reflect xenophobia or a preference in different issue space. Perhaps more importantly, a vote for a non-xenophobic party does not automatically mean a voter is not xenophobic. This is particularly important if one considers the relationship between religion and voting in the Weimar Republic. The Catholic Centrum party had a firmer grip over the Catholic electorate while an equally strong Protestant party never emerged (Spenkuch and Tillmann 2018). Therefore, a lack of support for antisemitic candidates among Catholics could reflect the strength of the Catholic party rather than the absence of xenophobic sentiments. In addition, parties often vary the extent to which they deploy antisemitic rhetoric at a local level (Heilbrunner 1990) complicating local comparisons in votes, especially if one takes into consideration that even Liberal parties deployed xenophobic rhetoric in some parts of the country (Retallack 1999).

Given these shortcomings, I exploit data on xenophobic themes in children stories to investigate the religious frontier thesis. This paper zeros in on the genre of folk tales

known as *Kinderschreck* (or *Children's Fear*) to capture local variation in popular antisemitism. Kinderschreck was an oral tradition of storytelling widespread in Central

Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth century. It was deployed by parents to discipline children through the inducement of fear. The set up of Kinderschreck stories was both brief and basic, involving only two components: a spatial location and a bogeyman. Parents would tell their children to stay away from a certain place (water line, corn fields, etc) because otherwise a bogeymen would come and get them. Kinderschreck tales frequently featured rather innocent depictions of fantasy figures or animals that acted as bogeymen. In some villages, however, the bogeymen was the “Forest Jew” or the “Dirty Gypsy” (Beitl 1933; Mannhardt 1884). In the 1930s, the use of Kinderschreck was widespread and touched all segments of society. Survey evidence from the 1930s suggests that over 66 percent of all respondents had been exposed to Kinderschreck (Beitl 1933).

The ADV-surveys included 4 questions about local Kinderschreck stories at 3 different points in time (1930, 1931 and 1932) and explicitly asked about the bogeyman featuring in these tales (Zender 1958; Schmoll 2009). I hand-coded the answers to the Kinderschreck questions and marked all reports that featured the itinerant strangers that haunted the German community. In particular, I coded whether Kinderschreck stories featured Jews, Gypsies, beggars and other itinerant humans.

The resulting dataset included information on Bogeyman reported by 50,356 experts living in 19,828 localities. For 18,074 of these localities I was able to reconstruct data on the religious composition. In total 15.66 percent of all towns were reported to have xenophobic bogeymen. The spatial distribution of bogeymen can be found in Figure 2.

As individual judgement is prone to systematic biases, reliability is a major concern when using expert-based measures.(Maestas 2016). A discussion of the reliability of this measure can be found in Braun

[Figure 3 about here.]

4.4 Model & Controls

Conventional statistical analysis assumes independence of observations. The bogeymen data deployed in this paper are likely to violate this assumption as oral traditions tend to diffuse through space (Grober-Glück 1974). Spatial dependence creates autocorrelation and typically introduces bias in standard errors and coefficients. To account for spatial autocorrelation, I deploy spatial filtering (Murakami and Griffith 2019). This approach absorbs autocorrelation in coefficients through the inclusion of Moran Eigen Vectors as synthetic controls among the right-hand side of the statistical model. Inspection of the data reveal that the inclusion Moran Eigen Vectors indeed removes spatial autocorrelation. Furthermore, I deploy spatially clustered standard errors to remove downward bias in the standard errors (Conley 1999). Variogram modeling (Dormann et al. 2007) indicates spatial clustering in the error terms at a range of 5 kilometer. Since the presence of bogeymen is a binary outcome, I deploy a logistic link function.

I condition the religious frontier effect on the percentage of the population that adheres to the Lutheran church and population size (logged). As mentioned above, both measures are directly coded from the ADV. To ensure, that I am not comparing towns from completely different parts of Germany I include region fixed effects. These 30 fixed effect mark each of the 17 different states as well as the 23 Prussian provinces (e.g. Hannover, the Rhineland, Westfalen in the west and Upper and Lower Silesia in the East). Taken together these regions capture the most important religious regions in the country, making sure that I am not accidentally picking up differences in xenophobia between them.

In addition, the model includes several well established predictors of xenophobia: the percentage of Jews Roma living in a town, the crime & unemployment rate, distance to border crossings as well the percentage of people employed in trade, agriculture and industry. The first two measures are again taken from the ADV. The remaining measures are taken from Falter and Hanisch (Falter and Hänisch 1990) and are measured at the Gemeinde-level, a geographic unit roughly comparable to a US municipality. Gemeinden

and towns are matched to each other based on Meyer's Gazetteer (Utrecht 1913).

5 ANALYSIS

5.1 Main Results

The frontier thesis developed in this paper would lead us to expect that xenophobic bogeyman are more likely to cluster in towns that border towns of a different religious color (i.e. evangelical towns bordering catholic towns and vice versa). As a first step I look at a bivariate correlation between the religious frontier variable and the presence of xenophobic bogeymen. This correlation is .160, which is considerable given that I am working with historical data. However, it seems plausible that the correlation is caused by spatial clustering, regional variation and other differences between towns.

[Figure 4 about here.]

Therefore Figure 4 presents the results of a logistic regression with spatial filters that includes region fixed effects, spatially clustered error terms and a range of controls, including religious composition. As one can see, increasing the religious frontier variable with one standard deviation increases the chance that inhabitants of a village tell stories featuring xenophobic bogeyman with approximately 3 percent. This is a considerable effect given that only 15 percent of all towns have xenophobic bogeymen. The effect is also stronger than the effect of population size (logged) and proximity to border crossings. Taken together this indicates that xenophobia is more widespread in Evangelical towns that border Catholic towns and vice versa, providing strong support for the frontier effect.

[Figure 5 about here.]

Figure 5 runs separate analysis for Catholic and Evangelical towns. The frontier effect on xenophobia is important for both Catholic and Protestant localities. While the effect appear to be slightly stronger in Catholic towns, additional models reveal that this

difference is not statistically significant. This suggests that it is proximity to religious fault lines and not religion per se that shapes fear for strangers.

5.2 Omitted Variable Bias & Endogeneity

I deploy two strategies to ensure that the analysis is not affected by omitted variable and endogeneity bias. First, I exploit the fact that I have very fine-grained data that allow for the inclusion of county level fixed effects. Second, I draw on religious borders from 1555 to acquire variation in the religious frontier that is exogenous from recent sorting between towns. The left panel of figure 6 shows the effects of increasing relevant variables with one standard deviation on the presence of xenophobic bogeyman while including county level fixed effects. After inclusion of the 947 dummies the effect of increasing the religious frontier variable with one standard deviation still increases the likelihood of xenophobic bogeys with approximately 3 percent. This suggest that even if we compare towns in the same county, proximity to a town with religious others shapes fear for strangers, making it less likely that correlation is driven by latent variables.

[Figure 6 about here.]

One problem of the main analysis above is that it we cannot tell whether religious frontiers produced xenophobia or whether fear for outsiders somehow forced religious groups to segregate and produce religious fault lines. To make sure these kind of sorting effects are not driving our analysis, I make use of religious borders from 1555. After more than 20 years of religious war, the 1555 Peace of Augsburg introduced the constitutional right for princes to introduce the Lutheran church. The principle of “*cuius regio, eius religio*” (whose realm whose religion) forced an overwhelming majority of Germans to religiously align with the local prince (Dixon 2008). Therefore, the religious borders produced in 1555 were overwhelmingly the product of elite decisions and not driven by local fears. While people became free to choose their own religion after 1648, most areas

remained religiously homogeneous until the mass migrations of the second world war (Lutz 2010).

I exploit to the presence of these deep religious boundaries to capture variation in religious frontiers that cannot be explained by contemporary xenophobia. Based on (Spenkuch and Tillmann 2018), I visualize the religious borders of 1555 in Figure 7. I construct the religious boundaries that emerged after the Peace of Augsburg. I then calculated the logged distance to these religious borders for each village in the data.

[Figure 7 about here.]

For this measure to be a valid instrument, we need to make two assumptions. First, presence of religious borders in 1555 needs to be a strong predictor of ethnic boogys in the 1930s. This is commonly referred to as the relevance assumption. I test this assumption in the first-stage regression, which uses an OLS model to predict the religious difference score as a function of logged distance to a religious border in 1555. Results are presented in Model 1 and 2 of Table1. As one can see from the large F-statistics, the spatial distribution of religious borders in 1930 is strongly correlated with the spatial distribution of religious difference in the 1930s, regardless of whether I include control variables and region fixed effects or not (Model 1 vs Model 2).

Second, we need to assume that 1555 religious borders only influence voting via 1930s religious difference and are not correlated to other factors that independently shape voting. This is often referred to as the exclusion restriction. It would for instance be possible that border regions were already more xenophobic before 1555. To assess this possibility, I regress the logged distance 1555 religious borders antisemitic pogroms before 1555. Data on pogroms is obtained from Voigtlander and Voth (Voigtländer and Voth 2012). The results of this regression using are presented in the middle Table 1 (Model 3). As one can see, there is no relationship between antisemitic violence before 1555 and religious borders.

The reduced form analysis, presented in Table 1, Model 4 shows a positive relationship between the 1555 borders and xenophobic bogeyman. Model 5 presents the second stage

of two-stage probit-model. This second stage uses 1555 borders to determine whether towns near religious frontiers were more likely to tell stories about xenophobic bogeyman.

[Table 1 about here.]

The religious frontier effect is robust in the IV-specification. Results are visualized in the right panel of Figure 6. A one standard deviation increase in the religious difference measure in this specification results in a 3 percent increase in the likelihood of xenophobic storytelling.

5.3 Mechanisms

The first section of this paper outlined several mechanisms through which religious frontiers can activate xenophobia. The frontier literature suggests that proximity to frontiers increases community strength, discipline and threat perception which can all translate into fear of strangers. While it is hard to capture causal processes with quantitative data, I have tried to develop proxies for some of these mechanisms. Unless indicated otherwise, all information is obtained from the *ADV*.

I deploy two proxies to capture increased threat perception. First, I coded all villages that are located in dioceses in which the Kulturkampf (the single most important confrontation between Catholics and Protestant in Germany history) was most intense. Inspired by Haffert (Haffert 2022), the construction of this variable is based reports from the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. This newspaper published a Kulturkampf Kalender every two weeks which listed all hostilities between the Protestant state and the Catholic church in each diocese. For each diocese, I calculated the number of events per capita and then marked all towns located in a diocese that scored in the top 75 percentile.

The second proxy for threat perception distinguishes between towns that do and do not have a *Schützenverein* or sharpshooting societies. These societies began as civic militias that protected towns against internal and external threats in protestant parts of Germany (Imhoof 2013). While these Protestant sharpshooting societies lost some of

their policing functions in the German empire they remained oriented towards community defense. They became a dominant part of organizational life at the end of the nineteenth century. During this period, *Schützenverein* aligned themselves with the ideology of the empire and openly embraced the culture wars against Catholics (Mosse 2023). In response to this, Catholics started creating shooting associations, in particular in the religiously mixed areas of the Rhineland and Westphalia (Camilleri 2022).

To capture community strength I first combine six measures in a community scale index variable. All variables are standardized by the number of respondents that we have for each town ($\alpha = .77$). All measures are listed in Table 2. In addition, I measure associational strength by marking all towns that have either a sport, bowling or choir association (Satyanath, Voigtländer and Voth 2017).

[Table 2 about here.]

I turn to data on pagan beliefs to proxy the strength of religious discipline. Catholics and Evangelicals alike tried to root out pagan forms of worship and believe. While they successfully converted the German countryside, pagan beliefs remained intact in places where Christianity did not fully infiltrate and remained shallow (Becker and Voth N.d.). I make the assumption that religious discipline was weaker in places where pagan beliefs remained strong. To measure pagan beliefs, I mark all towns where people still told stories about pagan spirits.

To assess the plausibility of these different mechanism, I investigate whether the frontier effect is moderated by each of the proxies outlined above. Specifically we look at whether the effect of religious frontiers on xenophobia is particularly strong in places where it produces internal discipline, community strength, organizational capacity, threat perception and the perception of human difference. I replicate the main models above but add interaction terms between the religious difference score and each of the proxies. Results are presented in Figure 8. I find statistically significant interaction effects between religious frontiers and 1) internal discipline (no stories about pagan spirits) 2) community strength 3) organizational capacity 4) threat perception.

[Figure 8 about here.]

6 CONCLUSION

To be written.

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ENDNOTES

¹I will only draw on data collected before the seizure of power by the Nazis in 1933. After the Nazi takeover the ADV was Nazified and started collecting data in a different fashion using different questionnaires. There is considerable reason to believe that post-1933 data collection was unreliable (Schmoll 2009).

²It is important to highlight that some researchers do this consciously to analytically separate antisemitism from violent mobilization (Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018).

Figures

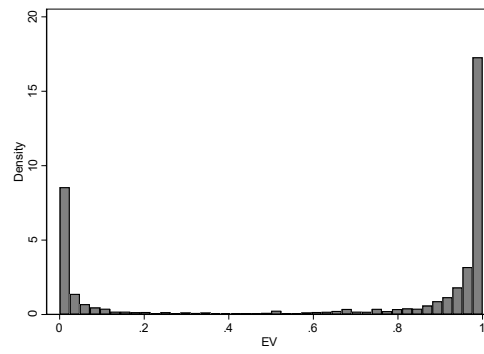


Figure 1: Percentage of Evangelicals per town (ADV 1930-1933).

Figure 2: Absolute difference in percentage Evangelicals between focal town and all towns within a 10 kilometer radius using inverse distance weights (ADV 1930-1933).

Figure 3: Xenophobic Bogeymen in Weimar Germany (ADV 1930-1932).

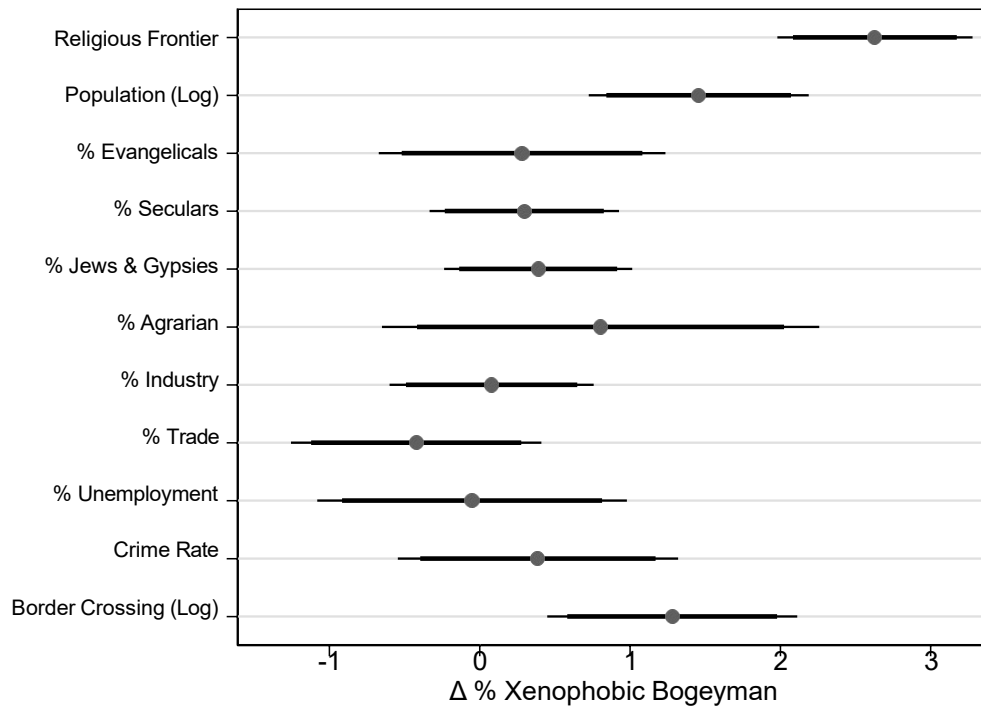
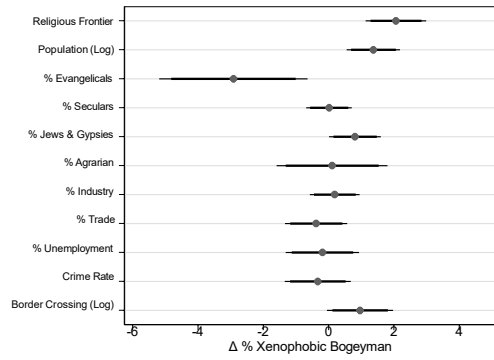
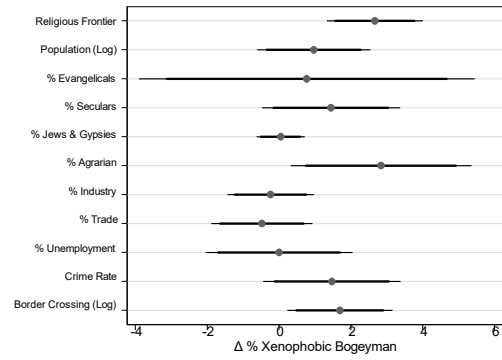


Figure 4: Effect of changing variables one standard deviation on % Xenophobic bogeymen in German towns with 95 and 99 percent confidence intervals. Estimates are based on logistic regression with spatial filtering and spatially clustered standard errors. Model includes region fixed effects.

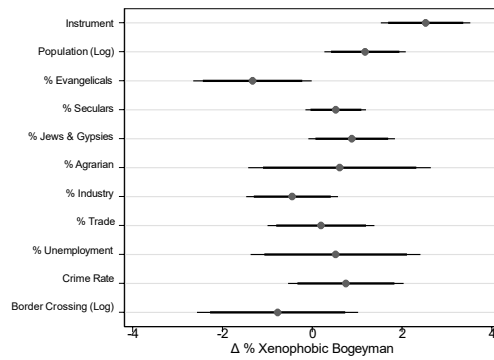


(a) Evangelical Towns

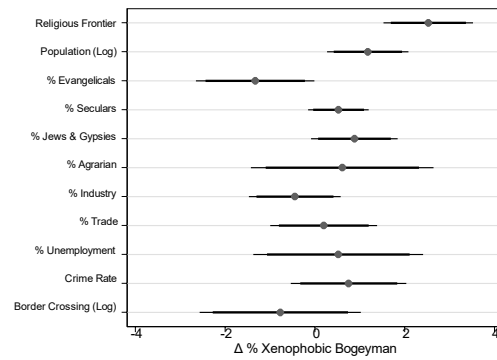


(b) Catholic Towns

Figure 5: Effect of changing variables one standard deviation on % Xenophobic bogeymen in German towns with 95 and 99 percent confidence intervals. Estimates are based on logistic regressions with spatial filtering and spatially clustered standard errors. Models include region fixed effects.



(a) County Level Fixed Effects



(b) Instrumental Variable Analysis

Figure 6: Effect of changing variables one standard deviation on % Xenophobic bogeymen in German towns with 95 and 99 percent confidence intervals. Estimates are based on logistic regressions with spatial filtering and spatially clustered standard errors. IV-Model includes region fixed effects.

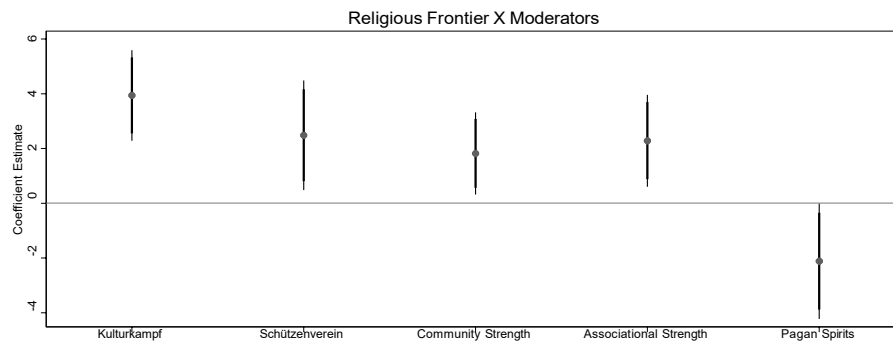


Figure 8: Estimates for the interaction effect between the religious frontier and 6 moderators with 95 and 99 percent confidence intervals. Estimates are based on logistic regressions with spatial filtering and spatially clustered standard errors. Models include main effect for religious frontier and moderator, controls and region fixed effects.

Tables

Table 1: The Effect of the Religious Frontier on Presence Xenophobic Bogeymen: Results based on Religious Borders, 1555.

	<i>First Stage:</i>		<i>Exclusion Test:</i>	<i>Reduced Form:</i>	<i>Second Stage:</i>
	<i>OLS</i>		<i>Probit</i>	<i>Probit</i>	<i>Probit</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Religious Frontier		Pogroms, 1349	Xenophobic Bogeyman	
Prox. Religious Border, 1555	-.060*** (.002)	-.059*** (.004)	.001 (.001)	-.057*** (.014)	
Instrument					15.777*** (3.923)
F-Statistic	733.79	267.02			
Moran Eigen Vectors	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Controls	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Region Fixed Effects	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Villages	18,074	18,074	18,074	18,074	18,074

Spatially Clustered Standard Errors in Parentheses.

*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001 (Two-Tailed).

Table 2: Items Used in the Community Scale

Items
In your village, are neighbors traditionally obligated to provide mutual assistance to one another?
In your village, neighbors attend funeral meals?
In your village, are neighbors traditionally obligated to engage in community labor?
In your village, are there specific day(s) on which people organize collective bonfires? In your village, are there special symbols to demarcate property lines?
<u>In your village, do neighbors prefer to marry someone from in or outside the town?</u>