

Does International Terrorism affect Public Attitudes toward Refugees?

Evidence from a Large-scale Natural Experiment

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Does international terrorism affect attitudes toward refugees? Does terrorism increase pressure on legislators to restrict refugee policy? Are these effects long- or short-lived? To answer these questions, this article presents results from a large-scale natural experiment to investigate the effects of the 2015 Islamic State terrorist attacks in Paris on attitudes toward Syrian refugees in a country that is a major recipient of refugees (Canada). The results demonstrate that the attacks increased (1) anxiety over refugee resettlement; (2) perceptions of refugees as a security and cultural threat; and (3) opposition to resettlement. Furthermore, the attacks led to increased mobilization among resettlement's opponents. Using a large, multi-wave survey (n = 18,634) fielded each day across a three-week period, however, we show that these effects were decidedly short-lived. The findings are highly relevant to our understanding of public reactions to major terrorist attacks, and the responses of political entrepreneurs in their aftermath.

The authors contributed equally to this article. We would like to thank Albert Fang, Chris Cochrane, Clinton van der Linden, Efrén Pérez, Fred Cutler, Greg Kerr, Ludovic Rheault, Michael Donnelly, Peter Loewen, Scott Matthews, and Seva Gunitsky for their comments and suggestions. Charles Breton acknowledges the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC post-doctoral fellowship - award number 756-2014-0071).

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On November 13, 2015, nine heavily armed gunmen and suicide bombers from the terrorist organization Islamic State perpetrated a series of attacks in the heart of Paris, killing 130 civilians and injuring more than 350. The attacks were the largest in a Western democracy in over a decade and they intensified concerns among world leaders and the public about the threat of international terrorism. They also coincided, however, with the Syrian refugee crisis, the largest refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War. Perpetrated by a Syria-based terrorist organization, the Paris attacks would tightly intertwine two of the most salient issues in modern international politics: the fight against terrorism and the large-scale resettlement of refugees.

In the aftermath of the attacks, politicians across Europe and North America sought to mobilize public opposition to refugee resettlement by invoking the perceived threat posed by Syrian refugees to national security. Within a week of the attacks, 30 US governors had voiced opposition to resettlement in their states and the US House of Representatives had passed a bill to suspend the section of the refugee program concerning Syrian and Iraqi refugees. In Canada, Prime Minister Trudeau postponed a plan to admit 25,000 Syrian refugees. In Germany, pressure mounted on Chancellor Merkel to end her government's open-arms refugee policy. Perceptions of the effects of the attacks on attitudes and policy were neatly summarized by Bavaria's Finance Minister: "Paris," he said, "changes everything" (Aust, Malzahn, and Vitzhum, 2015).

The Paris attacks and their political aftermath highlight a series of important questions concerning refugees and the effects of terrorist attacks on attitudes, emotions, and behaviors. What effects does terrorism have on public attitudes and emotions toward refugees from countries associated with terrorism? Does terrorism mobilize public pressure on political representatives to restrict refugee policy? Are these effects long- or short-lived?

To answer these questions, this article uses a natural experiment to examine the effects of terrorism on attitudes and emotions toward Syrian refugees. We use data containing an extensive set of questions concerning Syrian refugees that were asked in an exceptionally large, multi-wave national survey (n = 18,634) first fielded in Canada—a major recipient of Syrian refugees—less than 48 hours before the Paris attacks and subsequently fielded in light to the attacks to large

independent samples of respondents each day for three weeks thereafter. These data present the first opportunity to estimate, with substantial precision, the effects of major terrorist attacks on attitudes and emotions toward refugees; their effect on issue-based political mobilization; and the duration of these effects.

This article makes four major contributions to the literature. First, by examining the effects of terrorism on attitudes and emotions toward refugees, we broadly investigate an issue that remains understudied despite its substantial international importance. While there is a growing body of research that investigates the causal effects of real-world terrorist attacks, its focus is primarily on attitudes and behaviors concerning voting and partisanship, and on terrorism's effects on populations in the vicinity of attacks (e.g. Bonanno and Jost, 2006; Bali, 2007; Berrebi and Klor, 2008; Gould and Klor, 2010; Kibris, 2010; Montalvo, 2011; Hersh, 2013; Getmansky and Zeitzoff, 2014).¹ Large-scale terrorist attacks, however, are frequently aimed at international audiences, with wide-ranging consequences for international policy. We thus substantially extend past work by examining the effects of terrorism on attitudes toward refugees and on publics that are not its direct targets.

Second, although an important body of research has examined the link between perceptions of the threat of terrorism and a wide range of attitudes and emotions using cross-sectional surveys and survey experiments (e.g. Davis and Silver, 2004; Huddy et al., 2005; Merolla and Zechmeister, 2009*b*; Hetherington and Suhay, 2011; Malhotra and Popp, 2012; Renshon, Lee, and Tingley, 2015), it remains an open question whether the magnitude of the relationships demonstrated in these studies carries over to real-world terrorist events. We provide an examination of the causal effects of terrorism on public opinion concerning refugees by using a natural experiment to investigate these relationships in the context of large-scale terrorist attacks.

Third, although research on terrorism has investigated its effect on voter turnout (e.g. Hersh, 2013; Robbins, Hunter, and Murray, 2013; Getmansky and Zeitzoff, 2014), other more immediate

¹One notable recent exception leverages variation in terrorism across time to examine the effects of terrorism on political tolerance in Israel (Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir, 2016).

forms of mobilization have received less attention. We fill this gap by examining the effect of the Paris attacks on a quasi-behavioral measure of mobilization: the public's willingness to contact a political representative regarding Syrian refugees and resettlement. The results suggest that growth in vocal opposition to resettlement in the aftermath of the attacks was more likely due to changes in mobilization than it was due to changes in attitudes: although the effect of the attacks on opposition to refugee resettlement was modest, their effect on the salience of the issue strongly favored resettlement's political opponents.

Finally, our research design allows us to provide a remarkably clear illustration of the short-term dynamics of public opinion in the aftermath of large-scale terrorist attacks. Using large survey waves collected independently every day for three weeks after the Paris attacks, we show that although the attacks' effects were immediate, they were decidedly short-lived, with a clear pattern of decay across multiple outcomes. The results have important implications for our understanding of the window of opportunity open to political entrepreneurs in the aftermath of terrorism and for explaining the rapid birth and death of efforts to enact policy changes after large-scale acts of violence.

Background

By the end of 2015, more than 4 million refugees had fled the civil war in Syria (United Nations, 2015). The resulting refugee crisis led to serious debate about the issue in Western democracies, particularly in Europe. At first, the intensity of the European debate contrasted starkly with the limited attention given to the issue in North America. This changed in September 2015 when a photo was widely published in the international media of Alan Kurdi, a Syrian child who had drowned in an effort to seek refuge with his family in Europe and whose body was pictured washed ashore on a beach in Turkey. Calls came from across Europe and North America for increased support for refugees. In the US, where 2,500 refugees had been admitted since the beginning of the Syrian civil war, the Obama administration proposed accepting 10,000 more Syrian refugees by the end of 2015. In Canada, Alan Kurdi's death occurred during a federal

election campaign. The Liberal Party, which would eventually form government, committed to accept 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2015.

Two months later, the Paris attacks appeared to drastically change the international political landscape. In Europe, anti-immigration parties invoked the attacks to argue for restrictive refugee policies. In the US, House Speaker Paul Ryan called for a “pause” in the US’s plan to accept more refugees. “Our nation has always been welcoming,” he remarked, “but we cannot let terrorists take advantage of our compassion” (Werner, 2015). In Canada, provincial premier Brad Wall became the voice of opposition to resettlement. Wall, who two months earlier had expressed willingness to increase his initial pledge to resettle Syrian refugees, called for plans to admit 25,000 more refugees to be postponed (CBC News, 2015). The reactions of politicians and commentators suggested that concerns about national security had become the driver of policy positions on refugee resettlement. The attacks in Paris, it appeared, had led political leaders and the public to replace sympathy for Syrian refugees with heightened fears over national security.

Terrorism, Public Opinion, and Attitudes toward Refugees

The effectiveness of international terrorism such as that in Paris often rests in large part on the psychological, behavioral, and attitudinal effects of violence on audiences well beyond its immediate victims and targets (Crenshaw, 1986). Research that aims to estimate the causal effects of terrorism on public opinion, however, has tended to focus mostly on domestic audiences and outcomes tied to partisanship and voting behavior (e.g. Bonanno and Jost, 2006; Bali, 2007; Berrebi and Klor, 2008; Kibris, 2010; Montalvo, 2011; Hersh, 2013; Getmansky and Zeitzoff, 2014).² Research using cross-sectional survey data and those from lab and survey experiments, by contrast, has examined a wider array of outcomes (e.g. Huddy et al., 2005; Merolla and Zechmeister, 2009a; Malhotra and Popp, 2012; Brooks and Manza, 2013). The data used in these

²Important exceptions include the work of Gould and Klor (2010), who investigate the effects of terrorism on attitudes toward concessions to Palestinians in Israel, and Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir (2016) who investigate its effects on political tolerance.

studies, however, have well-known tradeoffs. On the one hand, cross-sectional research typically seeks to explain differences in attitudes and emotions related to perceptions of threat rather than to estimate the effects of terrorism itself. On the other hand, although lab and survey experiments can provide clean causal estimates, the degree to which these results approximate those from real-world acts of terrorism is generally unknown.

Overcoming these drawbacks is difficult due to limitations in the data available for study. Large-scale terrorist attacks, in particular, are infrequent and scholarship has generally concentrated on two important cases of terrorism: the 9/11 attacks and the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict.³ A small number of studies has nevertheless advanced our understanding of the effects of terrorism on international public opinion. Two previous studies, for example, investigate the effects of terrorist attacks that occurred during the fielding of the European Social Survey. In one, Finseraas and Listhaug (2013) find that the 2008 Mumbai attacks increased the public's fears of terrorism.⁴ In another, Legewie (2013) finds that the 2002 Bali attacks briefly affected the public's perceptions of immigrants, albeit in only three of nine countries surveyed. The findings in these studies are instructive, but research in this area is limited by the questions available in each survey and their fielding schedules. First, the outcomes examined in such studies are typically broad, such as attitudes toward immigration or fears of terrorism overall. Although these are important outcomes in themselves, the most consequential effects of terrorism on public opinion are likely to be those specific to the groups that are perceived to be associated with the perpetrators, whether by national origin, religion, and/or ethnicity. Second, research in this area often relies on data from a small number of survey responses collected immediately before and after an attack. This data limitation typically results in responses being pooled across relatively wide time intervals, raising questions about whether events or longer-term dynamics other than terrorism affected the outcomes examined.⁵ The sparsity of these data also renders

³There are some exceptions, such as Montalvo (2011) in Spain, and Kibris (2010) in Turkey.

⁴The authors do not find evidence, however, that the attacks affected attitudes toward restrictions on immigration or support for harsher interrogation techniques.

⁵A further complication is that these surveys can lack (pre-treatment) covariate balance before

investigation of public opinion dynamics and effect decay far more difficult.

To address these limitations, we use data from a large survey containing an extensive set of questions concerning emotions and attitudes toward Syrian refugees and resettlement, and which was fielded in large independent daily waves immediately before and after the 2015 Islamic State terrorist attacks in Paris. These data present a unique opportunity to estimate the causal effects of terrorism on the most theoretically salient emotional and attitudinal outcomes regarding refugees and, furthermore, to clearly demonstrate their rates of decay. We begin by detailing our theoretical expectations, after which we turn to our research design and results.

Refugees and the emotional response to terrorism

Past research suggests that terrorism will affect two critical emotions that will in turn affect the public's attitudes toward refugees and resettlement policy. First, terrorism may cause an increase in anxiety over the possibility of future terrorist attacks close to home. Second, it may affect the levels of sympathy that the public has for refugees themselves.

To begin, observational and experimental studies that have investigated emotional responses to terrorism often find evidence of a positive relationship between perceptions of the threat of terrorism and anxiety (Huddy et al., 2005; Huddy, Feldman, and Weber, 2007; Merolla and Zechmeister, 2009*b*). These findings are complemented by research in psychology that demonstrates that anxiety is frequently linked to situations that individuals perceive to be outside of their immediate control (Lerner and Keltner, 2001; Tiedens and Linton, 2001).

Anxiety, moreover, figures prominently in explanations of policy preferences. Higher levels of anxiety, for example, are associated with preferences for isolationist foreign policies (Huddy et al., 2005), “protective policies” more generally (Albertson and Gadarian, 2015), restrictive immigration (Brader, Valentino, and Suhay, 2008; Renshon, Lee, and Tingley, 2015), and vote choice (Ladd and Lenz, 2008). Surprisingly, however, there is not strong evidence that anxiety stemming from the threat of terrorism is associated either with support for restrictive immigration and after an attack (see Legewie, 2013), raising questions about bias in estimates caused by differential survey response, a concern we examine explicitly further below.

tion or harsh anti-terrorism policies (Huddy et al., 2005). Nevertheless, given the absence of data, empirical investigation of these relationships and emotional responses to terrorism has not been conducted in the context of real-world terrorist attacks. Indeed, it would be surprising if anxiety toward the presence of outgroups such as refugees were not affected by terrorism, or if anxiety were not a predictor of opposition to refugee resettlement. The Paris attacks, for example, can be expected to have raised anxiety about refugees and resettlement by indirectly linking Syrian refugees to the attackers by way of their shared nationality, ethnicity, and religion. In the aftermath of the attacks, furthermore, it was widely speculated that Islamic State was using Syrian refugees flows to enter Western countries, raising fears that refugees and resettlement served as a vector for terrorism.⁶ We hypothesize, therefore, that the Islamic State terrorist attacks in Paris increased the public's anxiety concerning Syrian refugee resettlement (**H₁**).

Much of the literature has centered on the theoretical link between 'negative' emotions, such as anxiety, and attitudes toward migrants. Recent work, however, is increasingly emphasizing more 'positive' emotions, such as sympathy and empathy. In one of the first studies to address such emotions, Newman et al. (2013) find that survey respondents with higher levels of empathy who are informed of the difficult conditions faced by prospective immigrants are less likely to favor restrictions on immigration. This finding is echoed by work that shows that the reasons for migration play a substantial role in preferences over individual migration applications. Those who migrate due to persecution, for example, are more likely to be preferred over those seeking to improve their economic conditions (Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015; Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner, 2016). This work is supported more generally by research showing that outgroups perceived to lack control over outcomes in their lives elicit compassion (Weiner, 2006; Gill and Andreychik, 2007), whereas those who face hardships due to factors perceived to be of their own making, elicit hostility (e.g. Aarøe and Petersen, 2014; Harell, Soroka, and Iyengar, 2017).

Because refugees face dangers due to factors primarily outside of their own control, they can

⁶The *Washington Post* would later report that at least two of the Paris attackers had entered Europe through Syrian refugee flows (Faiola and Mekhennet, 2016).

be expected to elicit more positive emotions than, for example, economic migrants (see Bansak, Hainmueller, and Hangartner, 2016). In an important recent study, for instance, increasing empathy for Syrian refugees through a “perspective-taking” task was shown to increase inclusionary attitudes and behaviors among research subjects (Adida, Lo, and Platas, 2018).

It is nevertheless not immediately clear how terrorism will affect positive emotions toward refugees. On the one hand, terrorism may heighten sympathy for refugees by demonstrating the violence that they themselves are fleeing, thereby increasing support for their resettlement. On the other hand, terrorism may be perceived to implicate refugees in the culture or society thought to be responsible for growing and exporting violence. Thus, rather than being perceived as victims of violence, terrorism may lead refugees who are indirectly linked to the perpetrators by national, religious, or ethnic association to be perceived, in part, as responsible for it. Empirically, our expectations are therefore competing. On the one hand, there is good reason to expect that terrorism will decrease the public’s sympathy for refugees by indirectly implicating them in violence (H_{2A}); on the other, it may increase the public’s sympathy for refugees by demonstrating concretely the violence from which they are escaping (H_{2B}).

Terrorism, refugees, and threat perceptions

Like emotions, the public’s perceptions of the threat of terrorism is a central concern in the literature on terrorism and public opinion, and research in this area finds that threat perceptions are related both to policy preferences and to intergroup attitudes. Higher threat perceptions, for instance, have been linked to support for restrictive immigration policies (Huddy et al., 2005); policies to curtail civil liberties (Davis and Silver, 2004; Malhotra and Popp, 2012); and pre-emptive war (Malhotra and Popp, 2012). Persistent threats of terrorism, moreover, have been shown to cause a decrease in political tolerance (Peffley, Hutchison, and Shamir, 2016).

Yet in contrast to debates about immigration, which have centered heavily on economic and cultural threats, the Syrian civil war and the expansion of the Islamic State focused the issue of refugee resettlement heavily on national security concerns. Even before the terrorist attacks in Paris, politicians and commentators expressed concerns that Syrian refugee resettlement would

pose a security threat. When a series of controversial vetting procedures for Syrian refugees were introduced by the Canadian government, for instance, the Prime Minister emphasized the need to keep the “country safe and secure” (Bailey, Galloway, and Leblanc, 2015). Similar concerns were expressed by politicians and commentators across the US and Europe.

This “securitization” of migration is not a new phenomenon (Messina, 2014), and the claim that migration flows can pose a threat to national security is not without empirical support (Bove and Böhmelt, 2016). Yet even if refugee flows were not empirically linked to violence, we should still expect terrorism to affect *perceptions* of refugees as members of a society, culture, and/or religion deemed to bear responsibility, and arise from the inherent uncertainty in determining who among a group might pose a security threat. Such uncertainty can lead terrorism to be perceived as a group-based threat (Huddy and Feldman, 2011), where those responsible are defined in homogenizing terms, causing an increase in negative attitudes toward members of the broadly defined outgroup (Rothgerber, 1997). We hypothesize, therefore, that the Paris attacks increased perceptions of Syrian refugees as a threat to national security (**H₃**).

Despite the emphasis on security concerns in the aftermath of the attacks, opposition to Syrian refugee resettlement also centered heavily on the threat posed by refugees to Western culture. Indeed, the differences between Western culture and that of Syrian refugees were frequently used by opponents of resettlement to represent refugees as a threat to Western norms and practices (e.g. Traub, 2015). Perceptions of cultural threat have similarly been central to explanations in the literature regarding the public’s attitudes toward immigrants (for a recent review, see Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2014).

With respect to terrorism, the motivations that drive it, and Islamic terrorism in particular, may also be perceived as an attack on the West’s values and culture. The attacks in Paris, consequently, are likely to have exacerbated public perceptions of cultural differences with Syrian refugees. Threats to a group’s identity or culture such as these—often called ‘symbolic’ threats—have been shown to increase the strength of ingroup identity; to raise the salience of ingroup-outgroup differences; and to generate outgroup hostility (Kinder and Sears, 1981;

Tajfel, 1982; Brewer, 2001). Consequently, we hypothesize that the attacks in Paris increased perceptions of Syrian refugees as a threat to national culture (**H₄**).

Terrorism, Resettlement Policy, and Mobilization

Above, we hypothesized that the Paris attacks affected emotions concerning Syrian refugees and resettlement, and perceptions of the threat that refugees pose to national security and culture. Importantly, the effects of terrorism on emotions and threat perceptions should also be expected to have meaningful consequences for preferences over policy. As noted earlier with respect to immigration, research frequently demonstrates a link between emotions and threat perceptions, and preferences for restrictive immigration policies (e.g. Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior, 2004; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay, 2008; Newman, Hartman, and Taber, 2012; Renshon, Lee, and Tingley, 2015). Terrorism can be expected to affect attitudes toward resettlement similarly. By affecting emotions and threat perceptions concerning Syrian refugees, we hypothesize consequently that the Paris attacks increased opposition to refugee resettlement (**H₅**).

Policy preferences over resettlement and the emotions and perceptions that underlie them represent important outcomes in themselves. But whether those preferences translate into pressure on legislators may be as consequential for policy as the changes in preferences themselves. There is good reason, moreover, to expect that terrorism is politically mobilizing. Changes in emotions and threat perceptions, for instance, have both been demonstrated to increase political participation (e.g. Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000; Cho, Gimpel, and Wu, 2006; Valentino et al., 2011). For example, increased perceptions of threat in the form of undesired policy changes have been shown to mobilize issue publics (Miller and Krosnick, 2004); increases in anxiety, to stimulate mobilization (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen, 2000; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay, 2008) and information-seeking (Gadarian and Albertson, 2014); and terrorism to increase voter registration and turnout (Cho, Gimpel, and Wu, 2006; Hersh, 2013; Robbins, Hunter, and Murray, 2013). We hypothesize, therefore, that the terrorist attacks in Paris increased mobilization of the public around the issue of Syrian refugee resettlement (**H_{6A}**).

Lastly, there is also reason to expect that terrorism will result in higher mobilization among

some groups more than others. Hersh (2013) finds, for example, that relatives and neighbors of victims of the 9/11 attacks were more likely than otherwise similar individuals to vote in future elections, and Cho, Gimpel, and Wu (2006) find that Arab-Americans mobilized through voter registration in response to the debate over and implementation of the Patriot Act. For the case examined herein, the Paris attacks provided opponents of resettlement with a political opportunity to highlight the potential risks of more liberal resettlement policy. The attacks, in other words, provided opportunities for advocates on one side of the issue to argue for a preferred policy. But terrorism can also close off opportunities for others. For supporters of resettlement, the Paris attacks appeared to undermine, if indirectly, claims that Syrian refugees would pose no threat to national security. Our final hypothesis, therefore, is that the Paris attacks resulted in higher mobilization among opponents of resettlement than among supporters (H_{6B}).

Research Design

Our hypotheses represent a comprehensive set of the key theoretically relevant emotional and attitudinal outcomes regarding terrorism and refugees, each of which is specific to the group of refugees—Syrians—most directly linked to the perpetrators. Fortunately, we are able to test these hypotheses precisely by leveraging a natural experiment that arose from the timing of an exceptionally large, multi-wave post-election study ($n = 18,634$) that contained an extensive set of questions concerning Syrian refugees. The survey was conducted by the public opinion research firm Vox Pop Labs, and sent to its complete national online panel of respondents in Canada in large independent daily survey waves, the setup of which we detail below.⁷ The two primary questions regarding refugees concerned (1) support for Syrian refugee resettlement,

⁷The survey was sent daily by e-mail invitation to all respondents in the public opinion research firm's national online panel. Because respondents were not initially selected to match the demographic characteristics of the national population, estimates below are adjusted through regression and survey weighting to match values from the national census (see Appendix).

and (2) willingness to contact a Member of Parliament about the issue.⁸ The survey further captured 21 indicators to build indexes measuring feelings of sympathy for Syrian refugees; anxiety regarding Syrian refugee resettlement; and perceptions of Syrian refugees as a potential threat to national security, to culture, and to the economy. The first wave of the survey (n = 1,152) was fielded on November 11, 2015. The terrorist attacks in Paris occurred less than 48 hours later.

In light of the attacks, we modified the fielding schedule of subsequent survey waves. The second wave was fielded to a large sample of respondents (n = 2,448) less than 48 hours after the attacks, and then fielded in separate waves to new samples of respondents each day for 18 days thereafter to capture effect duration. In each wave of the survey, respondents were drawn at random from the survey firm's online panel. The day on which each respondent received the survey was thus, by design, independent of the timing of the attacks. The attacks, in other words, are exogenous to the timing of survey receipt. As a consequence, respondents were in effect randomized to receive the survey immediately before (control), immediately after (treatment), or on one of the following days in the three weeks afterward. We explain the details and potential complications of our natural experimental setup below.

The Paris attacks as natural experiment

Due to the timing of the survey and the exogeneity of the attacks with respect to survey fielding, we treat the Paris terrorist attacks as an as-if randomly assigned treatment to respondents in the survey waves collected within a short time interval (within 2 days) of the attacks. Each large daily survey wave collected thereafter is used to examine effect duration. We begin by addressing two primary concerns regarding the credibility of our research design.

The first potential concern is that events or processes other than the Paris attacks may have

⁸The questions were embedded in a survey experimental module concerning refugees' religion and place of resettlement. For our present goals, we do not examine these factors herein. For robustness, however, we test whether the effects of the attacks are modified by the experimental conditions. In no cases are our estimates significantly moderated by these conditions.

contributed to differences in survey responses between the immediate pre- and post-attack periods. Theoretically, any differences in outcomes across this short fielding interval could be decomposed into the sum of the effect of the attacks and changes due to other causes. There is good reason, however, to expect that differences in attitudes and emotions due to other events or processes are implausible. First, the attacks occurred outside of any meaningful news cycle concerning either Syrian refugees or the Syrian conflict in general. Second, as noted variously throughout the literature, public opinion in such cases is slow-moving (e.g. Page and Shapiro, 1992; Zaller, 1992; Druckman and Leeper, 2012). As we demonstrate graphically in the results section, once the effects of the attacks return to their pre-attack baseline, there appears to be little if any change across time. We assume, therefore, that any differences between the immediate pre- and post-attacks periods result from the occurrence of the attacks, and that if this assumption were violated, any bias in our estimates would at most be slight.

The second and potentially larger threat to causal inference is differential survey non-response. Although each survey wave was fielded daily to randomly selected sets of respondents (i.e. the treatment is, by design, independent of the day of survey receipt) the composition of the control and treatment groups may differ due to differences in who responds in each survey wave. There is good reason, however, to reject this as a plausible explanation of any differences in observed outcomes. First, the survey invitation itself referred to the post-election survey as such and did not reference either the Paris attacks or refugees, minimizing the possibility of selection as a consequence of survey content. Second, we systematically examine this empirically by conducting an extensive series of pre-treatment covariate balance checks. These checks demonstrate that the immediate pre- and post-attack samples are effectively equivalent in composition and none of each of a variety of pre-treatment covariates individually predict membership in the control or treatment groups. Furthermore, we also test whether these covariates *jointly* distinguish membership in the control and treatment group. They do not. A series of likelihood-ratio tests find no evidence that the full set of pre-treatment covariates jointly differentiate respondents in (1) the immediate pre- and post-attack samples ($p = 0.74$);

(2) the pre-attack and complete post-attack samples ($p = 0.33$); or (3) the pre-attack sample and each of the post-attack daily samples separately (see Appendix). The pre- and post-attack samples, in other words, are statistically equivalent across pre-treatment covariates as would be expected given (1) random assignment to survey wave (by design) and (2) an absence of differential non-response. Nevertheless, we statistically adjust for potential differences in the pre- and post-attack samples by including pre-treatment covariates in regression models as appropriate to each outcome of interest. In only one model do the adjusted and unadjusted statistical tests differ, which we discuss explicitly at the relevant point of the text.⁹

Survey design

The survey was designed to capture two primary outcomes: (1) support for Syrian refugee resettlement, and (2) willingness to contact a Member of Parliament about the issue. It further captured 21 separate indicators measuring anxiety toward and sympathy for Syrian refugees, and perceptions of Syrian refugees as a threat to security, culture, and the economy. Due to survey length restrictions given by the survey firm, respondents were assigned at random to one of two survey branches containing either questions regarding emotions (sympathy and anxiety), or those regarding threat (security, cultural, and economic).

All respondents read a short paragraph stating that the government was considering admitting more refugees from Syria. Respondents who were assigned to the emotion branch were then asked to specify, on a 0 to 10 scale, the degree to which they felt the following emotions toward Syrian refugees: sympathy, indifference, compassion, sadness, and distress.¹⁰ Responses to the first four of these items were summed to form a sympathy index ($\alpha = 0.79$).¹¹ Respondents

⁹Because each daily sample consists of those who respond on that day, as a robustness check we also examine each of our results using only respondents who both received and responded within a day of survey receipt (the vast majority of respondents, 95%, respond within one day of receiving the survey). The results in all cases are equivalent (see Appendix).

¹⁰Terminal ends of the scale were labeled 'Not at all' and 'A great deal'.

¹¹In a factor analysis, the loading for the distress indicator was low, and excluded from the index.

were then asked a similar question regarding another set of emotions regarding Syrian refugee resettlement: anxiety, upset, worry, fear, anger, pride, and hope. Responses to the first four of these items were summed to form an anxiety index ($\alpha = 0.93$).^{12,13}

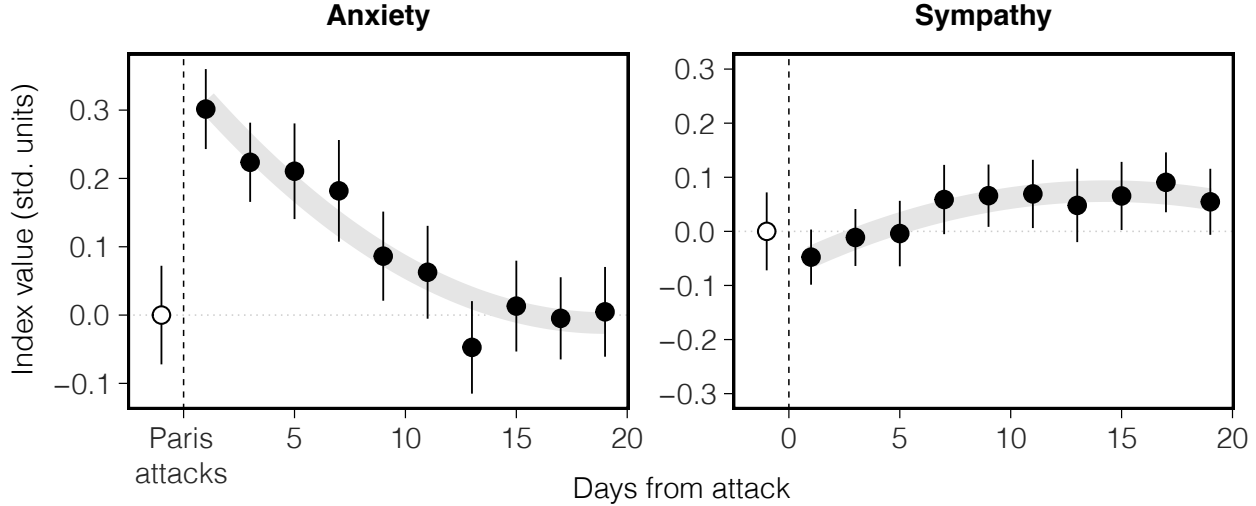
Respondents who were assigned to the threat branch were asked three sets of three questions to measure their beliefs concerning the degree to which Syrian refugee resettlement posed a threat to security, culture, and the economy. To create a security threat index, respondents were asked whether they believed that some refugees would have links to terrorism; whether refugees would pose a threat to national security; and whether refugees' presence would lead respondents to fear for their safety. A six-category likert scale, from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree", was used as the response scale, and responses were summed to form a security threat index ($\alpha = 0.91$). To measure perceptions of refugees as a cultural threat, respondents were asked whether they believed that Syrian refugees would integrate well into society; whether their values would conflict with those of the society into which they would belong; and whether their presence would benefit national culture ($\alpha = 0.81$). For the final index, respondents were asked whether Syrian refugees' presence would be economically costly; whether refugees would help grow the economy; and whether refugees would increase competition for jobs ($\alpha = 0.64$). All indexes are standardized to have mean zero and unit variance in the pre-attack period, and estimated effects are therefore presented in standardized units.

Finally, all respondents were asked whether they favored Syrian refugee resettlement on a 6-category likert scale ("Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree"), and whether they would consider contacting their Member of Parliament regarding refugee resettlement ("No"/"Yes"). We treat this latter measure as a proxy for political mobilization regarding the issue of resettlement, although

¹² Following Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008), we label this index 'anxiety', but it can also be interpreted as measuring 'negative affect'. Including 'anger' in the index produces equivalent results (see Appendix) and scale consistency ($\alpha = 0.93$). We exclude it from the index here because anxiety and anger are generally considered to theoretically signify distinct emotions.

¹³In factor analysis, the loadings for 'pride' and 'hope' were low, and excluded from the index.

Figure 1: Anxiety toward and sympathy for refugees across time



Each point represents a two-day average. The horizontal line indicates the mean index value immediately prior to the attacks (with CI); the vertical lines, the 90% confidence interval.

it may also be regarded more conservatively as a measure of issue salience.

Results

Before testing each hypothesis statistically, we show each measure graphically across time. As we will see, these graphs tell an exceptionally clear and consistent story about how emotions and attitudes shifted (or did not) as a result of the attacks, and how they changed over time.

Emotions and attitudes toward refugees and resettlement

Anxiety and sympathy. Figure 1 presents the raw data for the indexes measuring anxiety concerning resettlement and sympathy for refugees. To ease visual interpretation, changes across time in this figure and subsequent ones are approximated with a second-degree polynomial regression line. As expected, the level of anxiety concerning refugee resettlement increases sharply in the immediate aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks. In the days that follow, however, the effect of the attacks on anxiety rebounds rapidly. Within roughly a week and a half after the attacks, levels of anxiety concerning refugee resettlement return to their pre-attack level.

To examine the effect of the attacks on anxiety statistically, we regress the anxiety index on

an indicator variable representing the post-attack period and a set of pre-treatment covariates using data collected within 2 days of the attacks. Regression results are presented in Model (1) of Table 1. Consistent with the first hypothesis, and as is visually evident in Figure 1, there is strong evidence ($p < 0.001$) that the attacks caused a substantial increase in the public's anxiety over Syrian refugee resettlement. The attacks are estimated to have caused a 0.28 standard deviation increase in the public's anxiety toward Syrian refugees.

Moving to the second panel of Figure 1, we observe a similarly clear but substantively different picture with respect to the effect of the attacks on sympathy for refugees. In contrast to the pronounced increase in anxiety that is observable in the first panel, there is no clear indication that the attacks meaningfully affected sympathy for Syrian refugees themselves. Regression results presented in Model (2) of Table 1 bear this out: differences in sympathy for Syrian refugees between the immediate pre- and post-attack period is neither large nor is there strong evidence ($p = 0.52$) that the attacks affected the public's sympathy for refugees. The substantive importance of this, we address further below.

Security and cultural threat. Turning to security and cultural threat perceptions, Figure 2 presents the raw data for each threat index. As both panels of the figure make clear, respondents' beliefs regarding whether refugees pose a security and cultural threat to the country both increase in the immediate aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks, with a particularly sharp increase in perceptions of refugees as a security threat. Similar to the pattern of change in anxiety following the attacks, however, these changes in threat perceptions rebound rapidly, returning to their pre-attack levels roughly one to two weeks after the attacks.

To examine the effects of the attacks on threat perceptions statistically, we fit a regression model to each threat index using data collected within 2 days of the attacks. Results from these models are presented in the third and fourth columns of Table 1.¹⁴ Consistent with our third and fourth hypotheses, the results provide strong evidence that the attacks caused an increase in the public's perceptions of refugees as a threat to both security ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) and to culture

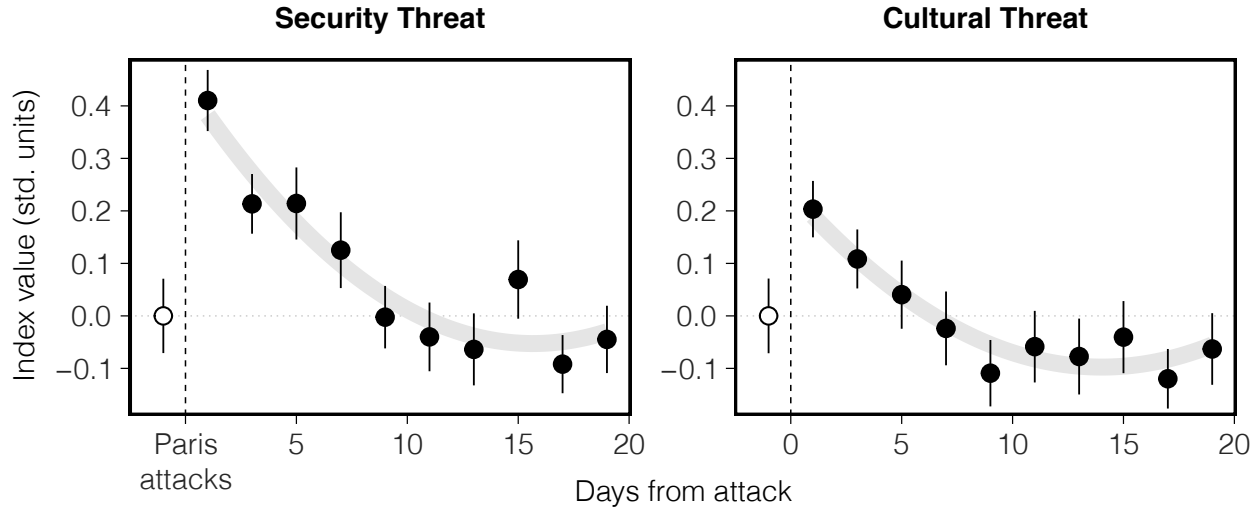
¹⁴Results for the economic threat index are shown for completeness (for details, see Appendix).

Table 1: Emotions and perceptions of threat OLS regression results

	Anxiety	Sympathy	Security threat	Cultural threat	Economic threat
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Paris attacks	0.262*** (0.054)	-0.020 (0.049)	0.392*** (0.054)	0.190*** (0.051)	0.081 (0.049)
Female	0.062 (0.052)	0.270*** (0.048)	0.029 (0.052)	-0.119* (0.049)	0.087 (0.048)
Age 30-39	0.095 (0.087)	-0.073 (0.079)	0.243** (0.091)	0.122 (0.085)	0.257** (0.083)
Age 40-49	-0.005 (0.095)	0.201* (0.086)	0.096 (0.098)	0.011 (0.091)	0.066 (0.089)
Age 50-64	0.033 (0.080)	0.209** (0.073)	0.126 (0.081)	0.101 (0.075)	0.044 (0.074)
Age 65+	0.095 (0.082)	0.184* (0.075)	0.219* (0.085)	0.141 (0.080)	0.082 (0.078)
College	0.178* (0.085)	-0.185* (0.078)	0.023 (0.084)	-0.049 (0.079)	-0.087 (0.077)
University degree	-0.185* (0.074)	0.182** (0.068)	-0.323*** (0.074)	-0.328*** (0.069)	-0.360*** (0.068)
Francophone	0.146 (0.092)	-0.089 (0.084)	0.029 (0.100)	-0.0004 (0.094)	-0.048 (0.092)
Other language	0.015 (0.084)	-0.073 (0.076)	0.019 (0.087)	0.009 (0.081)	-0.042 (0.079)
Ontario	0.219 (0.120)	-0.262* (0.110)	0.166 (0.108)	0.263** (0.100)	0.287** (0.098)
Quebec	0.111 (0.135)	-0.435*** (0.124)	0.276* (0.129)	0.504*** (0.121)	0.347** (0.118)
West	0.164 (0.121)	-0.293** (0.111)	0.042 (0.109)	0.253* (0.102)	0.289** (0.099)
Political ideology	0.199*** (0.011)	-0.140*** (0.010)	0.212*** (0.011)	0.187*** (0.010)	0.191*** (0.010)
Intercept	-0.983*** (0.146)	0.598*** (0.134)	-0.993*** (0.143)	-0.917*** (0.134)	-0.937*** (0.131)
N	1,702	1,693	1,805	1,806	1,808

Survey data used in each regression model are those collected within 2 days before and after the attacks. Standard errors in parentheses. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Figure 2: Security and cultural threat indexes across time



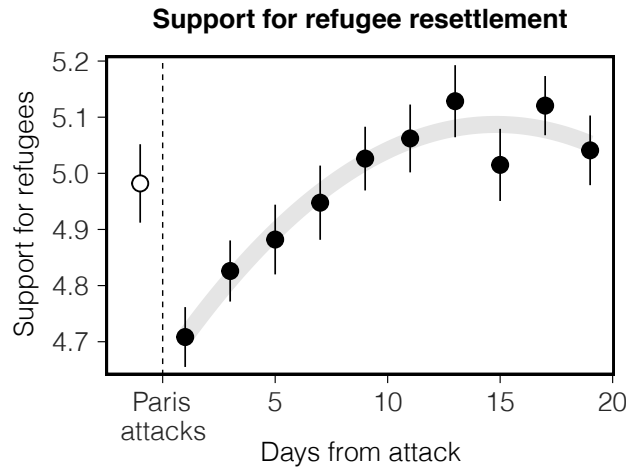
Each point represents a two-day average. The horizontal line indicates the mean index value immediately prior to the attacks (with CI); the vertical lines, the 90% confidence interval.

($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$).

Support for refugee resettlement. We now investigate the effect of the Islamic State attacks on our policy outcome: support for refugee resettlement. To begin, we present the raw data in Figure 3. As these data make clear, there is a sharp decrease in support for refugee resettlement immediately following the attacks. In a now-familiar pattern, in the days that follow however, attitudes toward refugee resettlement rebound rapidly. Within roughly a week after the attacks, support for resettlement rises to its pre-attack level, increasing slightly further before remaining relatively constant in the final week during which data were collected. To examine the effect of the attacks on support for refugee resettlement statistically, we fit an ordinal regression model to the data collected within two days of the attacks. Results from the model are presented in Table 2. Consistent with expectations, there is strong evidence ($p < 0.001$) that the attacks caused a decrease in the public's support for refugee resettlement.

To calculate the magnitude of this effect on the original response scale, we use parameter estimates from the fitted model to calculate the probability of support for resettlement for each respondent in the dataset, first by setting the treatment indicator to 0 and then to 1, after which

Figure 3: Support for refugee resettlement across time



Each point represents a two-day average, with 90% confidence intervals. Response categories to the question concerning agreement that Syrian refugees should be permitted to resettle are coded 1 (“Strongly disagree”) through 6 (“Strongly agree”).

we calculate an average of the differences in these probabilities. Results from this procedure are presented in Figure 4. As the figure shows, the Paris attacks are estimated to have caused a 4.2 percentage point decrease in the public’s support for refugee resettlement (agree vs. disagree), a relatively modest effect size, especially given the scale of the attacks.

To examine why support for refugee resettlement declined, we investigate the role of each emotion and threat perception as a causal mechanism through which the attacks affected attitudes toward resettlement. To so do, we turn to recent advancements in methods for the study of causal mechanisms by applying the method proposed by Imai et al. (2011) and Imai and Yamamoto (2013) to estimate the extent to which changes in support for refugee resettlement operated through each threat perception and emotion. A detailed description of the estimation procedure and results is provided in the Appendix. Given the well-known empirical challenges in assessing causal mechanisms in survey research (see Imai, Tingley, and Yamamoto, 2013; Imai and Yamamoto, 2013),¹⁵ we also conduct sensitivity analyses of our results, which show that our

¹⁵A design-based approach to identifying causal mechanisms—in which the mechanism is itself manipulated by the researcher (see Imai, Tingley, and Yamamoto, 2013)—is not possible given

Table 2: Support for refugee resettlement ordinal logistic regression results

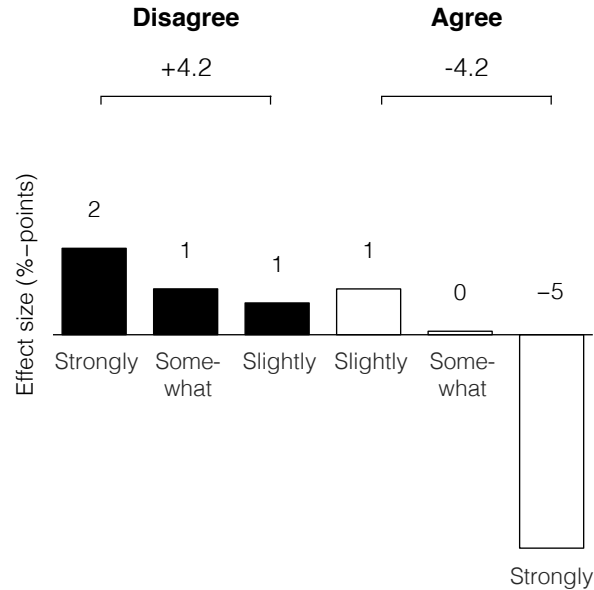
	Support for resettlement	
	Coef	SE
Paris attacks	-0.284***	(0.070)
Female	0.187**	(0.068)
Age 30-39	-0.223	(0.116)
Age 40-49	0.078	(0.125)
Age 50-64	0.087	(0.105)
Age 65+	-0.028	(0.109)
College	-0.194	(0.108)
University degree	0.426***	(0.096)
Francophone	-0.265*	(0.122)
Other language	-0.283**	(0.109)
Ontario	-0.544***	(0.160)
Quebec	-0.916***	(0.180)
West	-0.538***	(0.161)
Political ideology	-0.387***	(0.016)
N	3,548	

Survey data included in the regression model are those collected within 2 days of the attacks. Cut-point parameter estimates not shown. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

estimates are robust to the presence of strong unmeasured (pre-treatment) confounders (details of these procedures, requisite assumptions, and results are provided in the Appendix).

The results of the causal mechanisms analysis suggest that security concerns were the primary mechanism through which the attacks affected support for resettlement, followed by anxiety and cultural threat. Estimates of the effect of the attacks on support for resettlement that operate through sympathy are neither substantively nor significantly different from zero. That threat and anxiety, rather than sympathy, drive the decline in support for resettlement suggests that terrorism may work through channels principally linked to physical safety rather than those due to decreases in positive emotions toward groups associated with the perpetrators by religion, our natural experimental setup. This limitation highlights the tradeoff between the control afforded to researchers by survey- and lab-based experimentation, and the benefits to validity of assessing a real-world terrorist attack using a quasi-experimental research design.

Figure 4: Estimated effect of Paris terrorist attacks on public support for refugee resettlement



national origin, or ethnicity. The implications of this, we discuss further below.

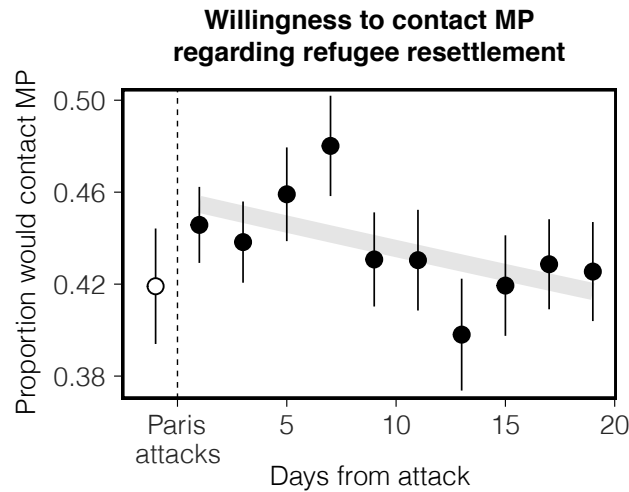
Political mobilization

Lastly, we investigate whether the Paris terrorist attacks politically mobilized the public around the issue of refugee resettlement and whether the attacks resulted in differences in mobilization among supporters and opponents of refugee resettlement. To do so, we examine, as a proxy for political mobilization, whether respondents express willingness to contact a Member of Parliament (MP) about Syrian refugee resettlement.¹⁶

The raw data for this outcome are presented in Figure 5. Unlike data shown in previous figures, however, the effect of the attacks on the public’s willingness to contact a political representative concerning refugee resettlement is less visually apparent. To examine the effect of the attacks on political mobilization statistically, we fit a logistic regression model to the data collected

¹⁶Because we do not directly measure whether respondents contact their MP, a more conservative interpretation of our results is that of the effect of the attacks on the salience of the issue of Syrian refugee resettlement.

Figure 5: Willingness to contact Member of Parliament across time



Each point represents a two-day average, with 90% confidence intervals.

within two days of the attacks, including pre-treatment covariates. Results from this model are presented in Model (1) in Table 3. The model provides evidence that the Paris attacks increased the probability of expressing willingness to contact an MP regarding Syrian refugee resettlement ($p = 0.04$). We note, however, that although the regression-adjusted estimate is significant, evidence from the unadjusted difference (as is evident in Figure 5) is weaker ($p = 0.15$).

More consequential for policy and our understanding of political responses to international terrorism, however, is whether terrorism leads to *asymmetry* in mobilization among supporters and opponents of a given policy. Because attitudes toward refugee resettlement is a post-treatment variable, we do not aim to estimate the effect of the attacks on mobilization among those who were either opposed to or supported resettlement before the attacks. Instead, we examine the magnitude of the gap in willingness to contact a political representative about the issue among opponents and supporters of refugee resettlement immediately before and then immediately after the attacks.

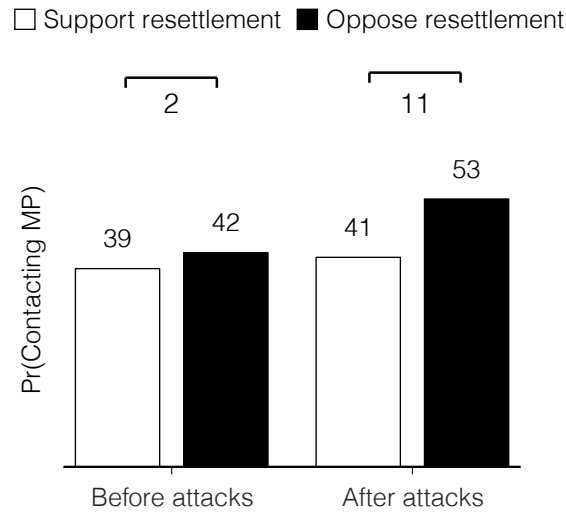
To do so, we begin by fitting two models to the data. The first model is fit to evaluate the difference in willingness to contact a political representative between opponents and supporters of refugee resettlement among those surveyed immediately before the attacks; the second,

Table 3: Willingness to contact MP regarding resettlement logistic regression results

	Willingness to contact MP regarding Syrian refugee resettlement			
	(1) Within 2 days of attacks	(2) Before attacks	(3) After attacks	(4) Within 2 days of attacks
Paris attacks	0.157* (0.079)			0.051 (0.087)
Oppose refugees		0.149 (0.206)	0.522*** (0.123)	0.020 (0.192)
Female	0.180* (0.076)	0.178 (0.140)	0.190* (0.091)	0.185* (0.076)
Age 30-39	0.137 (0.131)	-0.174 (0.242)	0.248 (0.158)	0.113 (0.132)
Age 40-49	0.437** (0.141)	0.527* (0.261)	0.413* (0.169)	0.444** (0.142)
Age 50-64	0.447*** (0.118)	0.243 (0.217)	0.546*** (0.143)	0.452*** (0.119)
Age 65+	0.500*** (0.123)	0.405 (0.229)	0.545*** (0.147)	0.498*** (0.123)
College	0.054 (0.123)	0.104 (0.223)	0.023 (0.150)	0.053 (0.124)
University degree	-0.062 (0.109)	0.073 (0.196)	-0.054 (0.133)	-0.012 (0.110)
Francophone	-0.496*** (0.144)	-0.219 (0.249)	-0.713*** (0.181)	-0.513*** (0.145)
Other language	-0.377** (0.122)	-0.517* (0.226)	-0.336* (0.147)	-0.387** (0.123)
Ontario	-0.145 (0.155)	0.025 (0.300)	-0.227 (0.183)	-0.165 (0.156)
Quebec	-1.383*** (0.187)	-1.376*** (0.346)	-1.350*** (0.226)	-1.404*** (0.188)
West	-0.129 (0.156)	0.161 (0.304)	-0.253 (0.184)	-0.145 (0.157)
Political ideology	-0.050** (0.016)	-0.126*** (0.034)	-0.055** (0.021)	-0.077*** (0.018)
Oppose refugees × Paris attacks				0.558* (0.218)
Intercept	0.001 (0.203)	0.149 (0.370)	0.115 (0.233)	0.102 (0.206)
N	3,551	1,134	2,408	3,542

Survey data included in regression models are those collected within 2 days before and after the attacks. Standard errors in parentheses. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Figure 6: Willingness to contact an MP regarding resettlement before and after Paris attacks



among those surveyed immediately afterward. Results from these models are presented in Models (2) and (3) of Table 3. As Model (2) demonstrates, before the attacks there is little evidence that willingness to contact an MP about refugee resettlement differed between opponents and supporters of resettlement ($p = 0.65$). In the immediate aftermath of the attacks, by contrast, those opposed to resettlement were substantially more likely to express willingness to contact an MP about the issue ($p < 0.001$). To examine these differences statistically, Model (4) in Table 3 is fit to the data collected within two days of the attacks, and includes an interaction term between support for resettlement and the Paris attacks indicator. The model demonstrates that the difference in mobilization between supporters and opponents in the post-attack period is different from that in the pre-attack period ($p < 0.01$).

To illustrate this difference, we generate predicted probabilities of willingness to contact an MP concerning refugee resettlement using parameter estimates from the models fit to the pre- and post-attack data (Models (2) and (3)). Predicted probabilities are calculated using these models for all respondents in the dataset, holding covariates at their observed values. Figure 6 presents the result of this calculation. As the figure shows, willingness to contact a political representative prior to the attacks is roughly equivalent between opponents and

supporters of refugee resettlement: the probability of contacting an MP is slightly higher among opponents (2 percentage points). After the attacks, however, the difference between opponents and supporters is far larger. Among opponents, the probability of willingness to contact a political representative regarding refugees is 11 percentage points higher, a substantial difference in political mobilization; among supporters, only 2 percentage points.¹⁷ The difference is thus a substantial 10 percentage points higher among opponents for the model fit to the post-attack data. Large-scale terrorist attacks, in other words, can lead to major differences in political mobilization between opponents and supporters of related policies. In the present case, this asymmetry strongly favored the political opponents of Syrian refugee resettlement.

Discussion and Conclusion

Although research into the effects of terrorism has grown in recent years, few studies have examined the effects of real-world attacks on public opinion internationally or on the public's attitudes toward refugees and resettlement. Remedying this is important because the audiences affected by terrorism and its policy implications are often international, and refugee resettlement remains one of the most pressing issues in contemporary international politics.

This study made substantial progress toward filling these gaps in the literature by using a large-scale natural experiment to estimate the causal effects of a major terrorist attacks on a comprehensive set of the public's emotions, attitudes, and mobilization concerning refugees and resettlement. The Islamic State attacks in Paris are a critical case not only because they were the largest in the West in over a decade, but also because they coincided with the Syrian refugee crisis, the largest refugee crisis since the end of the Second World War. Unlike previous attacks in the West, whose policy implications centered primarily on anti-terrorism and national security, the Paris case is defined by the intersection of national security policy and concerns over international migration. It represents one of the clearest examples of overlap between security

¹⁷Unadjusted estimates show even larger differences: 0.5 percentage points among supporters of resettlement between the pre- and post-attack periods; 13 percentage points among opponents.

concerns tied to terrorism and a set of domestic and international policies consequential for a wide range of actors. The implications are therefore many.

Attitudes and emotions. To begin, our findings demonstrate that, as hypothesized, the Paris attacks increased the public's anxiety toward refugees and perceptions of refugees as a threat to national security and culture. Contrary to expectations, we do not find strong evidence, however, that the attacks affected sympathy for Syrian refugees themselves, either positively or negatively. Combined with the clear effects of the attacks on threat perceptions and anxiety, these results suggest that although terrorism affects both attitudes and emotions toward refugees and resettlement, it does not necessarily lead the public to paint with a broad brush those who share a national, religious, and/or ethnic identity with the perpetrators. Terrorism may increase security concerns and anxiety about a minority of refugees, but concerns over security appear to increase in the absence of a decrease in sympathy for refugees as a whole.

Our results suggest, furthermore, that the public's preferences over policy are highly resilient, even in the face of what were substantial, dramatic, and widely covered terrorist attacks. Despite the attacks increasing opposition to refugee resettlement as hypothesized, the magnitude of the effect was a modest 4.2 percentage points.

Our research design allows us to provide this as a credible causal estimate of the effect of the attacks of attitudes toward resettlement, but it is worthwhile to consider how well this finding—specific to a given national context—might generalize. Absent new data, this question is inherently difficult, but contextual and policy similarities across Western countries in the aftermath of the attacks suggest that it is unlikely that the modest effect we estimate in one national context (Canada) differed substantially from those in European countries or the United States. First, as in Europe and the US, the issue of Syrian refugee resettlement in Canada was a highly political and sensitive issue. As elsewhere, there was substantial debate about resettlement, and the attacks in Paris led to intense concern over the threat posed by refugees to national security and a vocal political backlash against resettlement. Second, the resilience of public opinion to the attacks appears to be mirrored elsewhere in policy. For example, in Germany and

Sweden—two major recipients of refugees—resettlement policy changed little in the aftermath of the attacks despite heated debate. Furthermore, in France, the government promised to accept 30,000 Syrian refugees shortly after the attacks, despite their occurring in the French capital (Tharoor, 2015).¹⁸ In the United States, the Obama administration maintained its plan to accept 10,000 refugees by the end of 2016. In both political discourse and policy, in other words, responses to the attacks appeared relatively similar across Western countries.

Political mobilization. If the effect of the attacks on attitudes toward resettlement policy was modest, what explains the appearance, in a wide range of countries, of a substantial increase in vocal opposition to Syrian refugees and refugee resettlement in political discourse? Our results suggest that while terrorist attacks may shift public attitudes on policy only moderately, they can lead to large differences in mobilization among politically important sub-groups of the population. This is suggested by the fact that although before the attacks supporters and opponents of resettlement were roughly equally likely to consider contacting their Members of Parliament about resettlement, the difference between supporters and opponents of refugee resettlement widened substantially in the immediate aftermath of the attacks: among opponents of resettlement, willingness to express attitudes concerning refugees to a political representative increased by eleven percentage points; among supporters, only two.

These differences highlight a critical complication for the democratic process. In the aftermath of terrorism, the signal received from the public by political representatives will, in part, result from the mobilizing effect of terrorism. If mobilization differs between supporters and opponents of a given policy, however, then as a measure of public opinion, this signal will be misleading: the growth in expressions of opposition to refugees can increase even if underlying attitudes shift little or not at all. Absent attention to information distinguishing expressions of political preferences from changes in attitudes, political mobilization may be mistaken for

¹⁸Silva (2018) finds, for example, that the attacks did not affect the French public's overall attitudes toward immigration or refugees. This result should be treated with caution, however, due to its reliance on a small treatment group ($n = 96$) pooled across 4 days after the attacks.

increases in opposition to or support for highly consequential policies. This suggests that, at minimum, commentators and political leaders should exercise caution in their interpretations of increases in expressions of opposition to or support for policies in the aftermath of terrorism.

Duration. Finally, one of the most striking findings is the speed with which the effects of the Paris attacks rebounded. Using large independent daily survey waves collected for nearly three weeks after the attacks, we show that despite the severity of the attacks, their effects were surprisingly short-lived. These patterns are both clear and similar across multiple indicators.

The rapid decay in the effects of the attacks raises important questions, and opens up multiple avenues for future research. Because this is the first study to track the effects of a major terrorist attack with substantial precision, whether the effects of comparable events cause similar dynamics is unknown. Although research in political communication also shows that effects often disappear rapidly (e.g. Druckman and Nelson, 2003; Gerber et al., 2011; Hill et al., 2013; Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell, 2002; Mutz and Reeves, 2005), it is relatively surprising that the effects of a massive terrorist attack follow a similar pattern. This decay may be due to rapidly decreasing news exposure or be particular to the actions of politicians in the attacks' aftermath. The mediating role of news coverage and of politicians in lengthening or shortening the duration of the effects of large-scale events are important, if empirically difficult avenues for future research. It is nevertheless important to highlight the scope of the Paris attacks. Because the attacks were the deadliest in a Western democracy in more than a decade, these effects, compared to those of other cases, should be those most likely to be both substantial and persistent. Our results suggest, however, that large-scale events may not have the large and long-term effects on public opinion that are often presented as fact by politicians and political commentators: for attitudes and emotions toward Syrian refugees, the Paris attacks did not “change everything” for long.

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