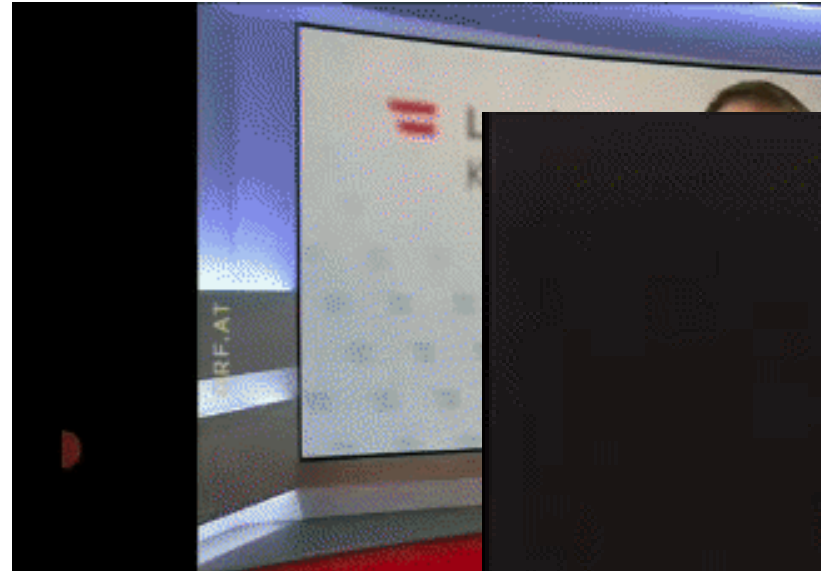


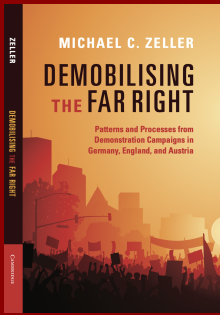
Demobilising the Far Right

Patterns and Processes from Demonstration Campaigns in Germany,
England, and Austria

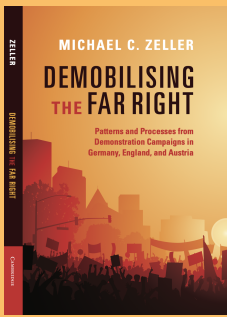
Dr. Michael C. Zeller



Demobilising the Far Right by Michael C. Zeller.



Why do far-right movement campaigns demobilise?



Demobilising the Far Right by Michael C. Zeller.

ZELLER

DEMOBILISING THE FAR

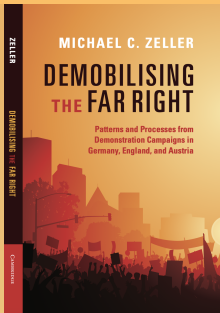
MICHAEL C. ZELLER

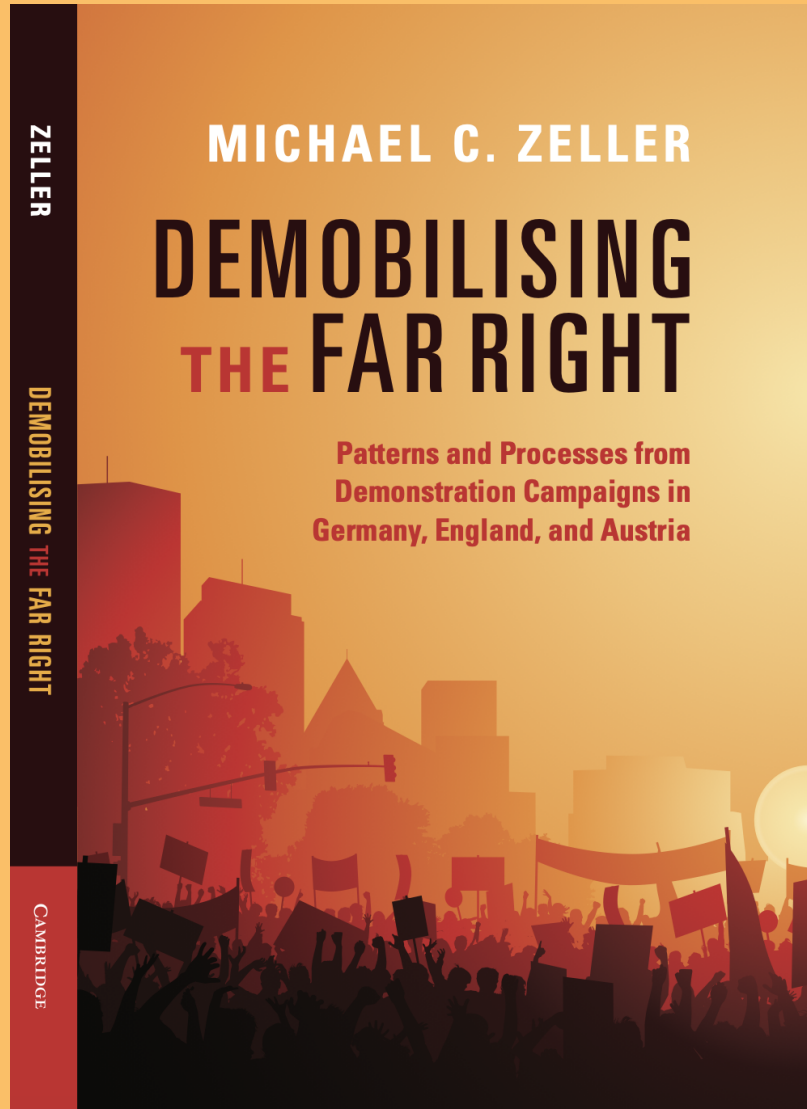
DEMOBILISING

THE FAR RIGHT

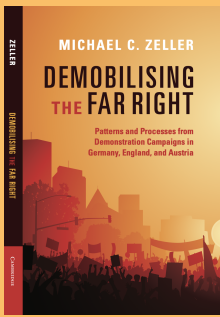
Patterns and Processes from
Demonstration Campaigns in
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Demobilising the Far Right by Michael C. Zeller.

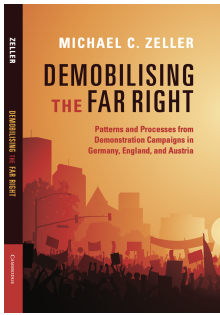




- Published by **Cambridge University Press**
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- for order at [cambridge.org/9781009720762](https://www.cambridge.org/9781009720762)
 - enter code **ZELLER26** at checkout for 20% discount (expires *2027-05-31*)



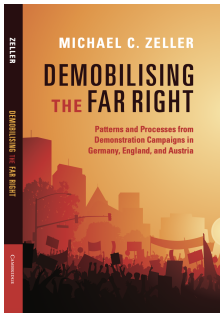
Demobilisation



the process whereby collective action, whether in the form of campaigns, organisations, or even whole movements, decreases and ultimately ends

- covers *decline* and *cessation*
- applicable to campaigns, organisations, even whole movements
 - campaigns: *a series of strategically linked actions by an organising actor(s) in order to advance goals*
- difference of ‘positive’ demobilisation and ‘negative’ demobilisation (and non-demobilisation)

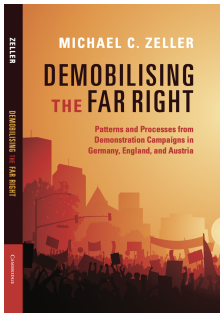
Demobilisation research



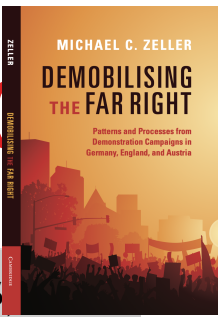
- Macro-sociological approaches to movements
 - Tendency to gloss over demobilisation, formulate it as inverse of mobilisation
- Terrorism studies
 - theorisation often particular to militarised antagonism against the state
- Repression research
 - one grouping of (external) demobilising pressures inconsistent findings: by turns deterring and inciting
 - suggestive of causal complexity!

Demobilisation research

- Social movement studies
 - demobilisation of social movement industries
 - biographical outcomes
 - psycho-social aspects of (non-)participation and activist 'burnout'
 - single-case studies on particular aspects of demobilisation
- Davenport (2015) provides most comprehensive theorisation of organisational demobilisation
 - some issues resulting from reliance on single-case inference



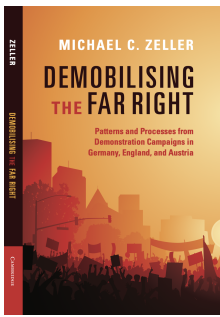
(Re-)Theorising demobilisation (Davenport 2015; Earl 2000)



Internal		External	
Lost Participation (individual level)	Organisational Failure (group level)	Social control (two dimensions)	
<i>Burnout/exhaustion</i> (inability to continue participation)	<i>Membership loss</i> (failure to recruit/retain members)	<i>(1) Identity of</i>	<i>repressive agent</i>
		State agents (actors representing state institutions)	Private agents (actors not representing state institutions)
<i>Lost commitment</i> (unwillingness to continue participation)	<i>Factionalisation</i> (internal splitting of organisations or coalitions)	<i>(2) Character of</i>	<i>repressive action</i>
		Coercion (direct repression; the threat or use of force)	Channelling (indirect repression, such as resource deprivation, problem depletion)
	<i>Rigidity</i> (failure to adapt according to new circumstances)	<i>causes overlap and interact in different demobilisation processes</i>	

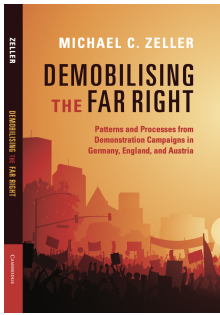
Why this research?

- Why demobilisation?
 - mobilisation and activism most studied aspects of social movements—relatively little about demobilisation
- Why campaigns?
 - again, less studied compared to macro-level ‘cycles of contention’ and to studies of particular organisation’s campaigns: *how movements move*—yet a unit of analysis infrequently examined in SMS
- Why the far right?
 - demonstration campaigns are particularly important for far-right movements, many benefits—still, even with online activity
 - pressing subset of cases, but also generalizable to others

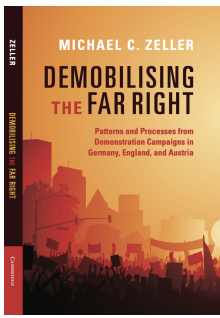


Research on a subset of cases

- Far right (in three countries: Germany, Austria and England)
 - extreme right (Mudde 1995) traits: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti- democracy, and prefer strong state
 - radical right (Mudde 2007) traits: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism
- Demonstrations—ubiquitous movement tactic
 - esp. important for far right, *symbolically* and *instrumentally*
- Campaigns (Staggenborg and Lecomte 2009): (1) constant organising actor(s), (2) temporal boundedness, (3) strategically linked actions, (4) intention to advance movement goals
 - ‘*large*’ is a campaign that mobilised at least 1000 participants



Why cases in Germany, Austria, & England?

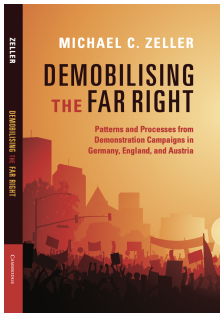


- Guarding against limited diversity
 - Germany: high mobilisation (and weak parties, at least until 2017), but also most active state social control against far right
 - Austria: regular mobilisation, but mostly around fraternity and Wehrmacht events—often tolerated or even endorsed by the state
 - England: sporadic mobilisation—mostly ignored or contained
- Beneficial for finding more generalisable results (i.e., patterns not limited to one country)

Data collection

- protest event data (PED): (1) identify large events, (2) identify related events (campaigns)
 - extant datasets (e.g., **PolDem**) → state sources → newspapers → organiser accounts

Data sources, archives and other assistance



Germany

Austria

England

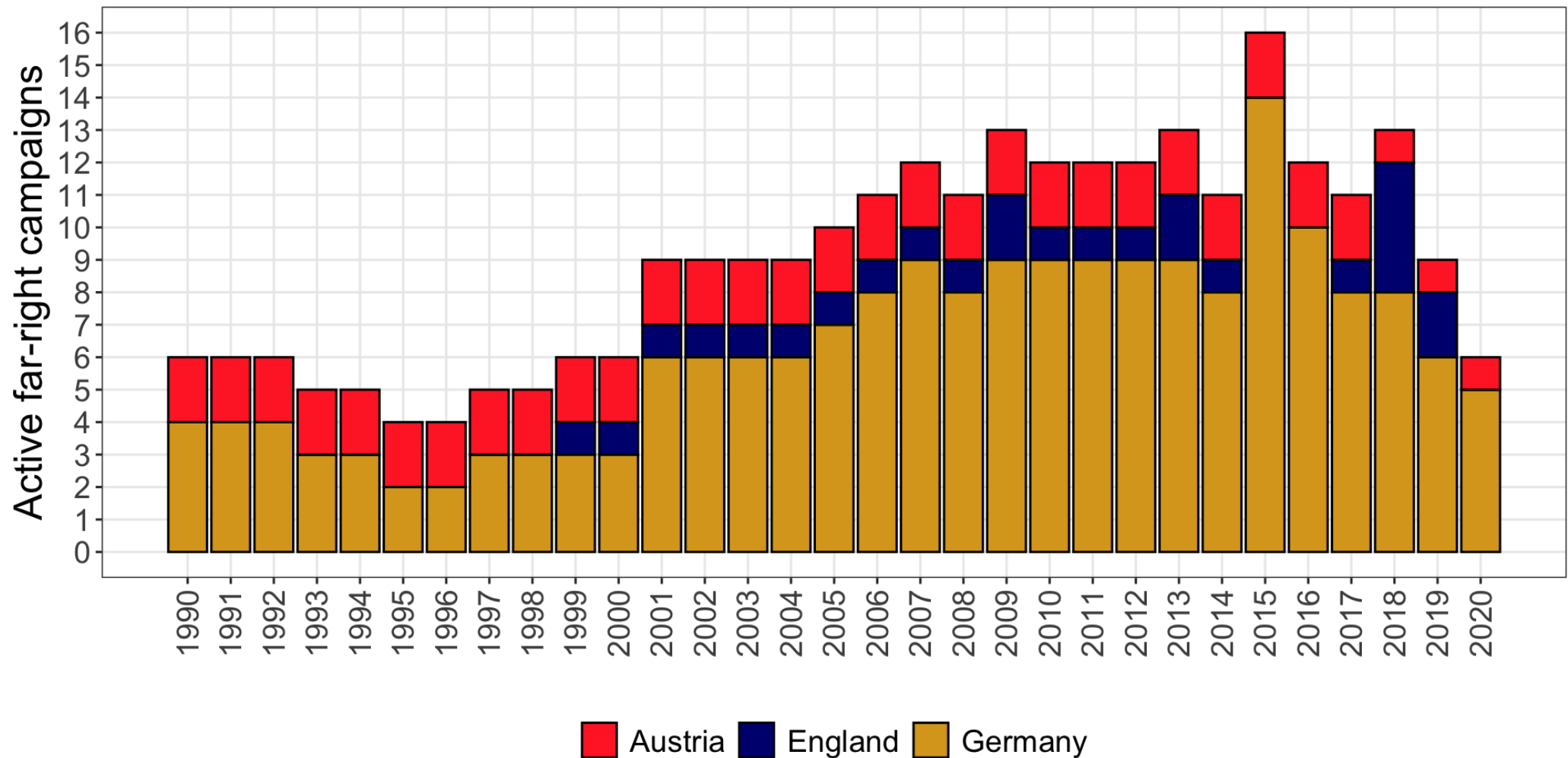
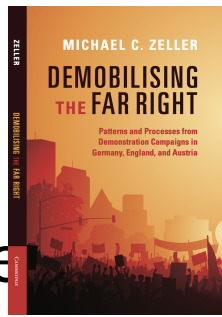
Location	Archive
Berlin	antifaschistisches pressearchiv und bildungszentrum berlin e.V. (apabiz)
München	Antifaschistische Informations-, Dokumentations- und Archivstelle München e.V. (a.i.d.a.)

- VfS reports; newspapers (*Zeit*, *Süddeutsche*, local papers), participant accounts at archives

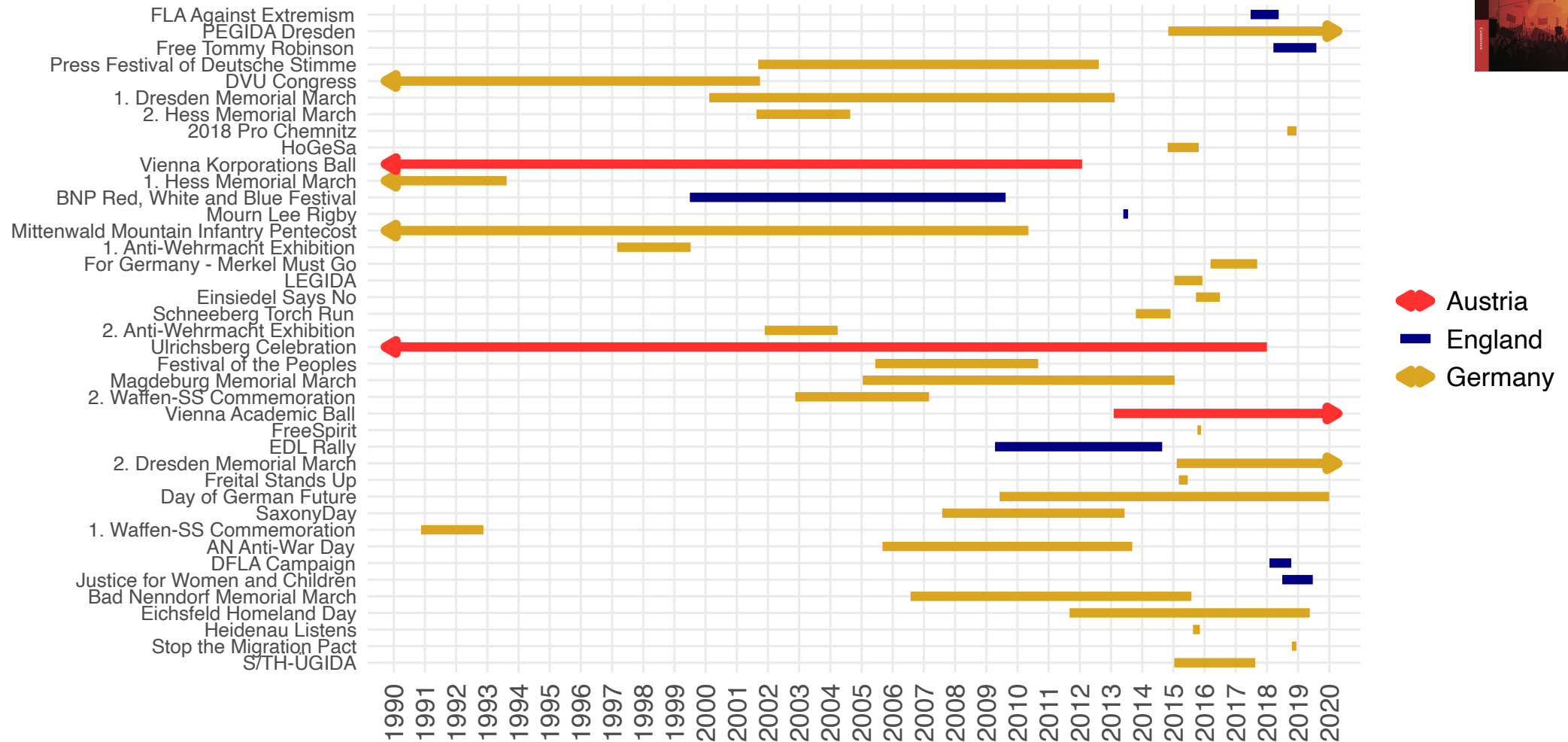
with thanks for support to Fabian Virchow, Dan Jones, Nigel Copsey, Bernhard Weidinger, CEU colleagues, and András Bozóki, Carsten Q. Schneider, and Dorit Geva

Active campaigns by country, 1990-2020

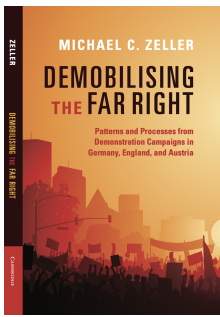
40 large far-right demonstration campaigns over three decades



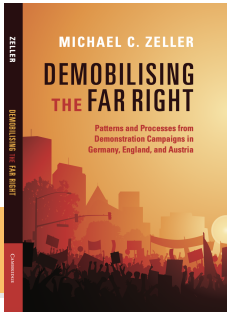
Campaign timelines



- even split of radical & extreme right
- varying tempos (annual vs. more frequent)

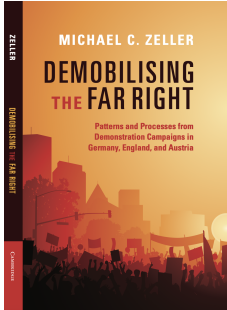


Cases overview

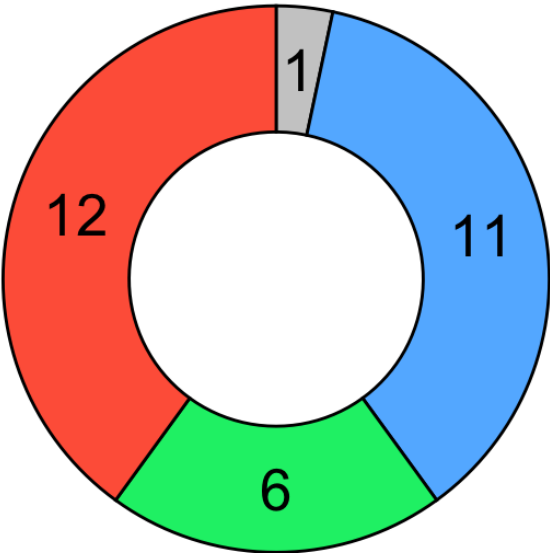


	Country	Location(s)	(Main) Organiser(s)	Years active
1. Waffen-SS Commemoration	GER	Halbe	Deutschen Kulturgemeinschaft	1990-1992
1. Hess Memorial March	GER	Wunsiedel, various	National Liste	1988-1994
1. Anti-Wehrmacht Exhibition	GER	various	NPD	1997-1999
DVU Congress	GER	Passau	DVU	1987-2001
2. Anti-Wehrmacht Exhibition	GER	various	NPD	2001-2004

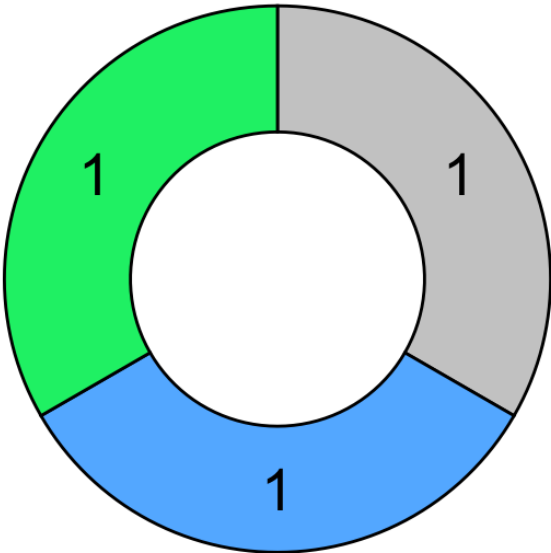
Main thematic focus of campaigns



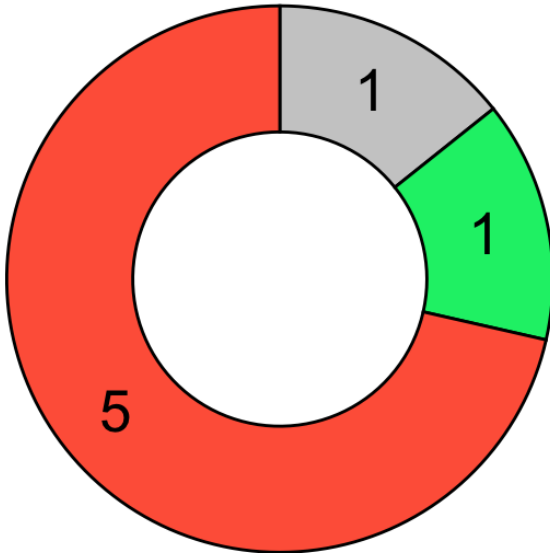
Germany



Austria



England

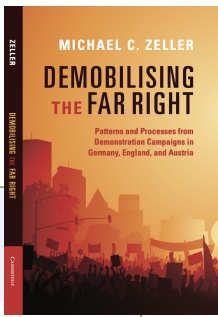


anti-immigration/anti-Islam electioneering/party-building
historical memory other

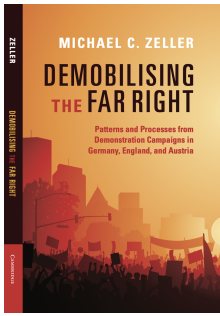
Data availability

Data file (Excel) [Download the data](#)

- Sheets in Excel:
 - Campaigns: *Campaigns data (including cases excluded as outside of scope conditions)*
 - codebook: *codebook for Campaigns dataset*
 - UK_council: *UK council election results*
 - fin_bnp: *British National Party (BNP) finances*
 - fin_dvu: *Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) finances*
 - ENG_crime: *England racist crime statistics*
 - GER_crime: *Germany far-right crime statistics*
 - GER_org: *Germany far-right person potential*
 - GER_pol: *Germany far-right election results*
 - AUS_crime: *Austria far-right crime statistics*
 - AUS_pol: *Austria far-right election results*



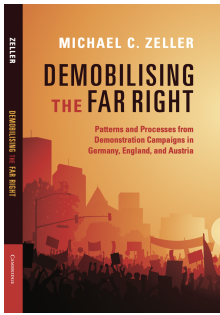
Complementary mixed methods



- qualitative comparative analysis ([fs]QCA)
 - cross-case analysis
 - useful for addressing phenomena with certain causal properties
 - necessity and sufficiency relationships
 - conjunctural causation, equifinality, multifinality, asymmetry
 - *Under what conditions do large far-right demonstration campaigns demobilise?*
- process tracing
 - within-case analysis
 - *how do those conditions cause campaigns to demobilise?*

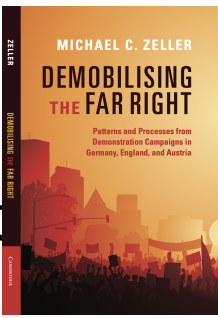
QCA calibration: outcome set

- Outcome: negative demobilisation (ND)
 - composite of two sets ...
- 1. observation or not (i.e., **crisp set**) of ceased demonstration events where the organising actor has not had some demand or raison(s) d'être satisfied (which would signify 'positive demobilisation');
- 2. observation of decreased demonstration size in a campaign (i.e., **fuzzy set**) over repeated events



QCA calibration: conditions

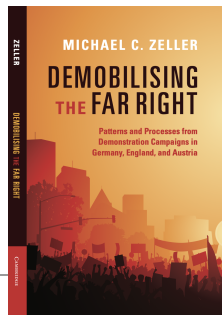
- **State channelling (SCH)** - state action that inhibits but does not coercively prohibit demonstrations (e.g., conditions on permit)
 - **State coercion (SCO)** - state coercion against the demonstrations/campaigns (e.g., banning demonstrations, arresting/detaining numerous demonstrators)
 - **Private channelling (PCH)** - non-state action inhibiting the demonstration campaign (e.g., organising boycotts)
 - **Private coercion (PCO)** - non-state coercive action: use of violence or threat of violence (e.g., blockades obstructing demonstrations)
- calibrated on basis of **proximity** to the outcome and **repetition**
- **Long duration (LD)** - demonstration campaigns lasting for ten or more events (i.e., a crisp set)
 - accounts for varying campaign tempos (e.g., annual, weekly)



QCA Solution

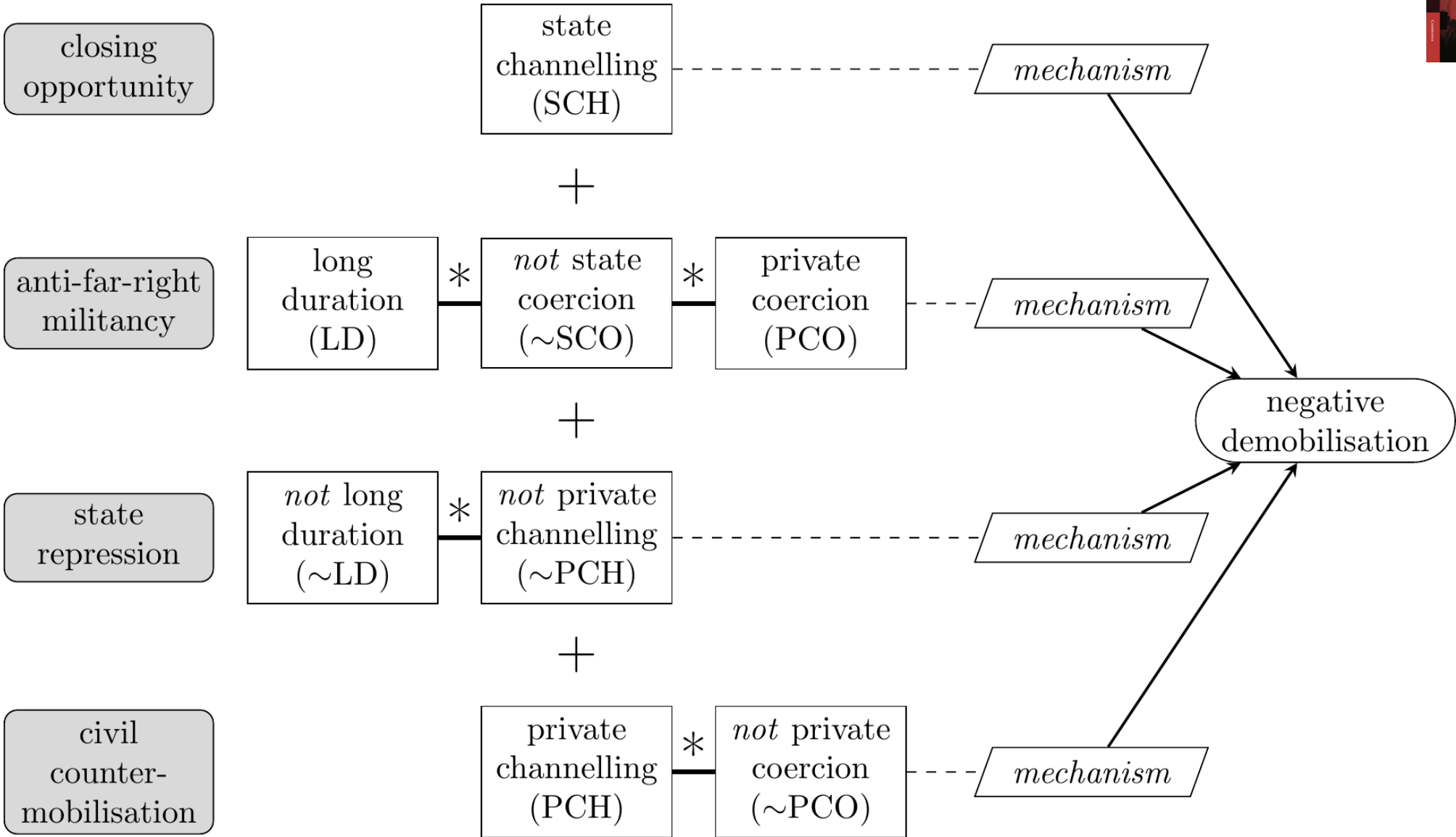
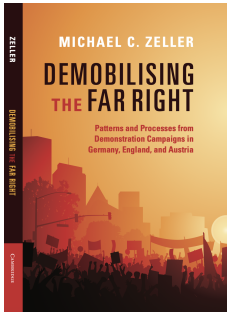
Solution table

Solution measures

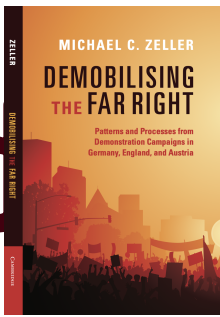


		inclS	covS	covU	cases
closing opportunity	SCH	0.977	0.408	0.097	HoGeSa, Pressefest der Deutsche Stimme, Eichsfelder Heimattag; AN Antikriegstag; 2. Hess Gedenkmarsch; 1. Hess Gedenkmarsch; 2. Waffen-SS commemoration, Heidenau hört zu; Ulrichsbergfeier; Freital steht auf, 2018 Pro Chemnitz; Tag der deutschen Zukunft; Trauermarsch Bad Nenndorf
state repression	~LD* ~PCH	1	0.136	0.087	Freigeist; Sachsentag; 1. Waffen-SS commemoration; 1. Hess Gedenkmarsch
civil counter- mobilisation	~PCO* PCH	0.925	0.475	0.243	Lichtelläufen Schneeberg, Free Tommy Robinson, FLA against extremism, Justice for Women and Children; HoGeSa, Pressefest der Deutsche Stimme, Eichsfelder Heimattag; 2. Hess Gedenkmarsch; Deutsche Volksunion Congress, PEGIDA Dresden, Legida, EDL rally, Migrationspakt stoppen, S/TH-ÜGIDA; Freital steht auf, 2018 Pro Chemnitz
anti-far-right militancy	LD* ~SCO* PCO	1	0.214	0.146	2. Wehrmachtsausstellung; Trauermarsch Magdeburg, BNP Red, White and Blue festival, Wiener Korporations Ball, 1. Trauermarsch Dresden; Tag der deutschen Zukunft; Trauermarsch Bad Nenndorf
	Solution	0.949	0.893		

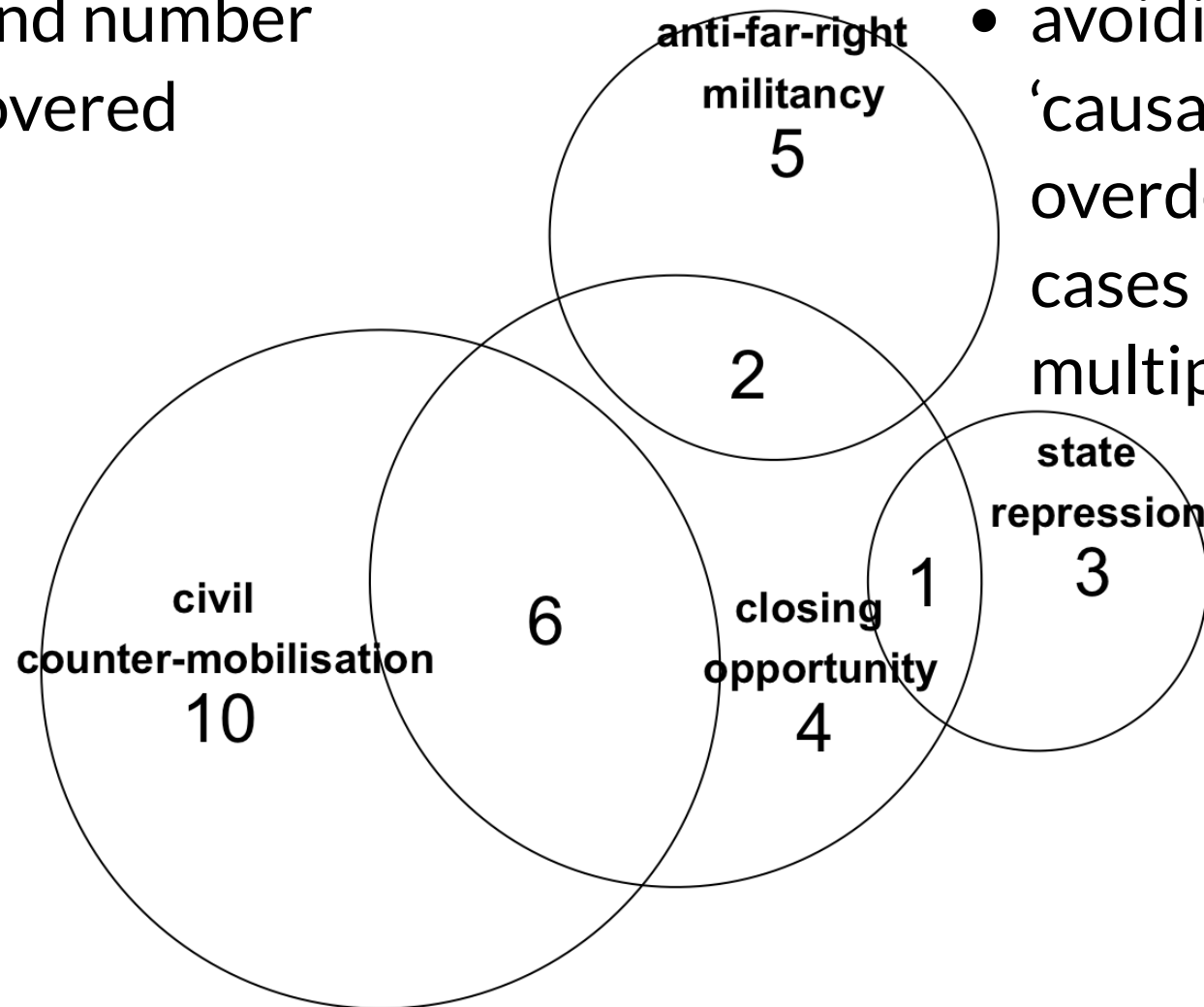
Patterns of demobilisation



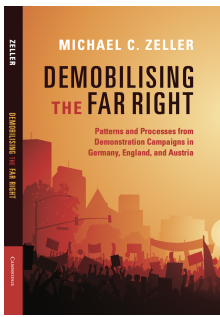
Case coverage and cases further studied



- patterns and number of cases covered

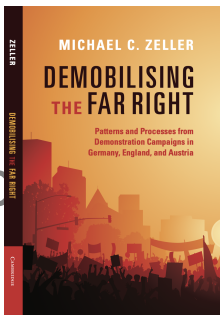


- avoiding the 'causally overdetermined' cases covered by multiple patterns



BNP Red, White, and Blue Festival

BNP Red, White, and Blue Festival



British National Party, foremost
postwar extremist party
Founded in 1982 by John Tyndall,
continuing his extremist activism
BNP was not explicitly neo-Nazi,
but avowedly racist
Tyndall recruited an experienced
young neo-Nazi, Nick Griffin
Griffin ousted Tyndall and began
party 'modernisation'
RWB Festival: sanitise the BNP's
image, make it *family friendly*
Inspired by *Front National* Fête
des Bleu-blanc-rouge

BNP Red, White, and Blue Festival events

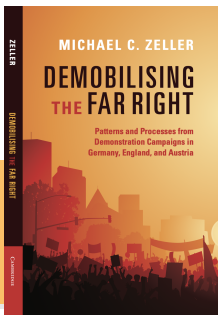
Date	Location	Participants	Counter-protesters	Arrests
1999.7.3	Shropshire, West Midlands	150		
2000.8.12-13	Shropshire, West Midlands	300		
2001.8.11-12	Llanerfyl, Wales	310-500	150	15
2002.8.17-18	Sawley, Lancashire	500		
2003.8.16-17	Sawley, Lancashire	1700		
2004.8.14-15	Sawley, Lancashire	1600		

1–6 of 12 rows

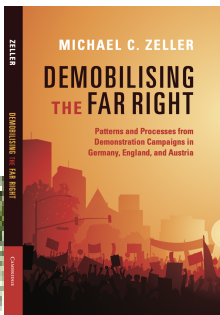
Previous 1 2 Next

- aiming to make BNP palatable to families, mobilise social support, and boost electoral prospects
 - no significant **counter-mobilisation**
 - positive media coverage (even in **The Guardian**)
 - crowned with 2009 electoral victories

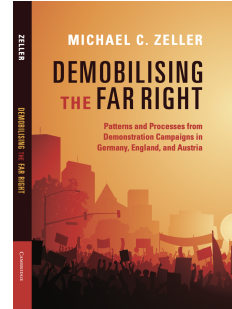
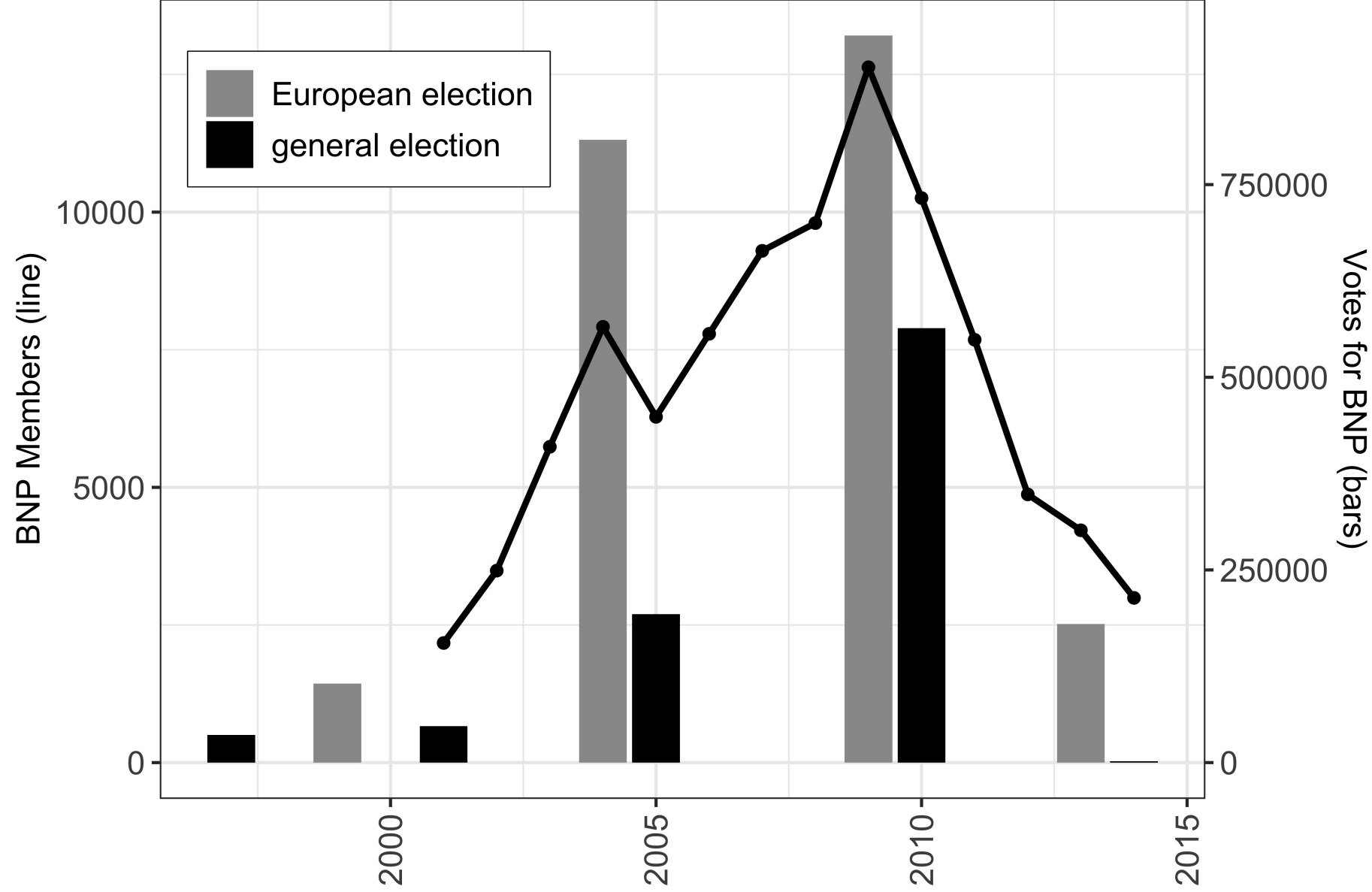
... but RWB **demobilisation** the next year



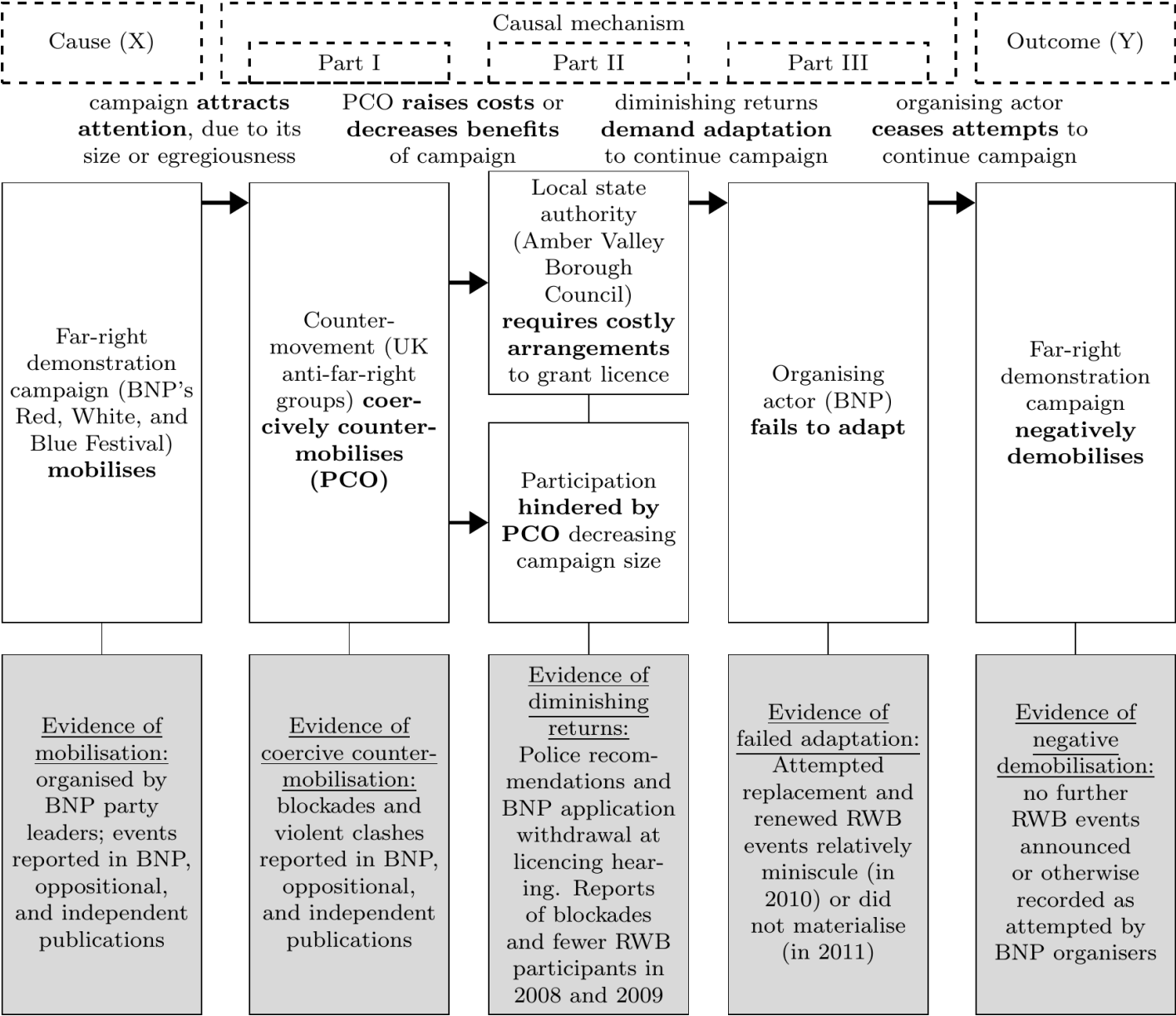
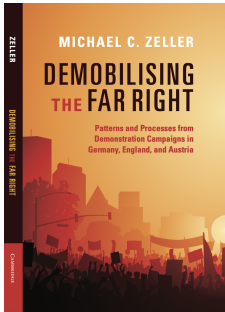
RWB Case calibration



BNP rise and fall

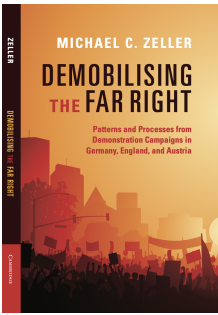


RWB demobilisation process

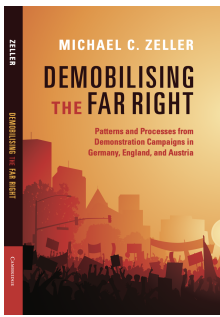


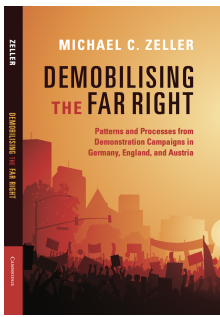
RWB case conclusions

- RWB was an evolution from BNP's 'march and grow', aimed at bolstering the party's electoral prospects
- the case is typical of British state responses: **neutrality** — no mandate (as elsewhere) to curb far-right activity
 - but recent organisational bans are something of a shift
- **anti-far-right militancy** caused the RWB to demobilise
 - higher costs (e.g., extra security measures required to get alcohol licence)
 - decreased benefits (counter-protest discourages participation and tars attempt to create family-friendly image)
 - *diminishing returns* mechanism



Ulrichsbergfeier



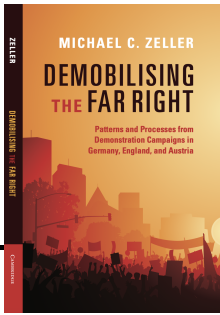


Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) in Passau

Conclusions

- multiple paths to demobilising the far right
- many benefits of counter-mobilisation
- wider relevance
- further resources available from research

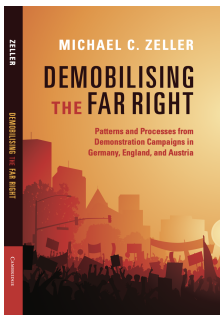
Conclusions: paths to demobilising the far right



- internal factors and competition among far right are relevant—once mobilised FR campaigns are quite internally stable
- multiple sufficient paths to campaign demobilisation:
 1. closing opportunity,
 2. state repression,
 3. civil counter-mobilisation, and
 4. anti-far-right militancy
- what is effective depends on context (e.g., state posture) and circumstances of the campaign (e.g., how it is vulnerable)
- BUT counter-mobilisation is often the crucial, catalysing ingredient in demobilisation processes

and it never hurts to consider
banning booze

Conclusions: the many benefits of counter-mobilisation



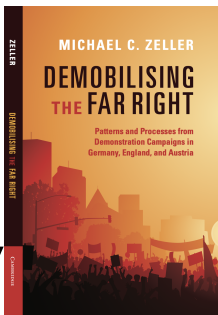
- can weaken the far right by...
 - problematising and challenging its presence in public spaces
 - showing solidarity with targeted groups
 - directly blocking far-right demos or prompting state action
- can trigger wider responses, e.g.,
 - **obstructing** far-right parties' meeting and organising activity
 - **pressuring** payment services to limit access to far-right groups
 - **copyrighting** neo-Nazi slogans, denying right to sell merchandise
- effective counter-mobilisation capacity is built well in advance...
 - community work
 - formation of inter-org. connections that can make coalitions

Wider relevance

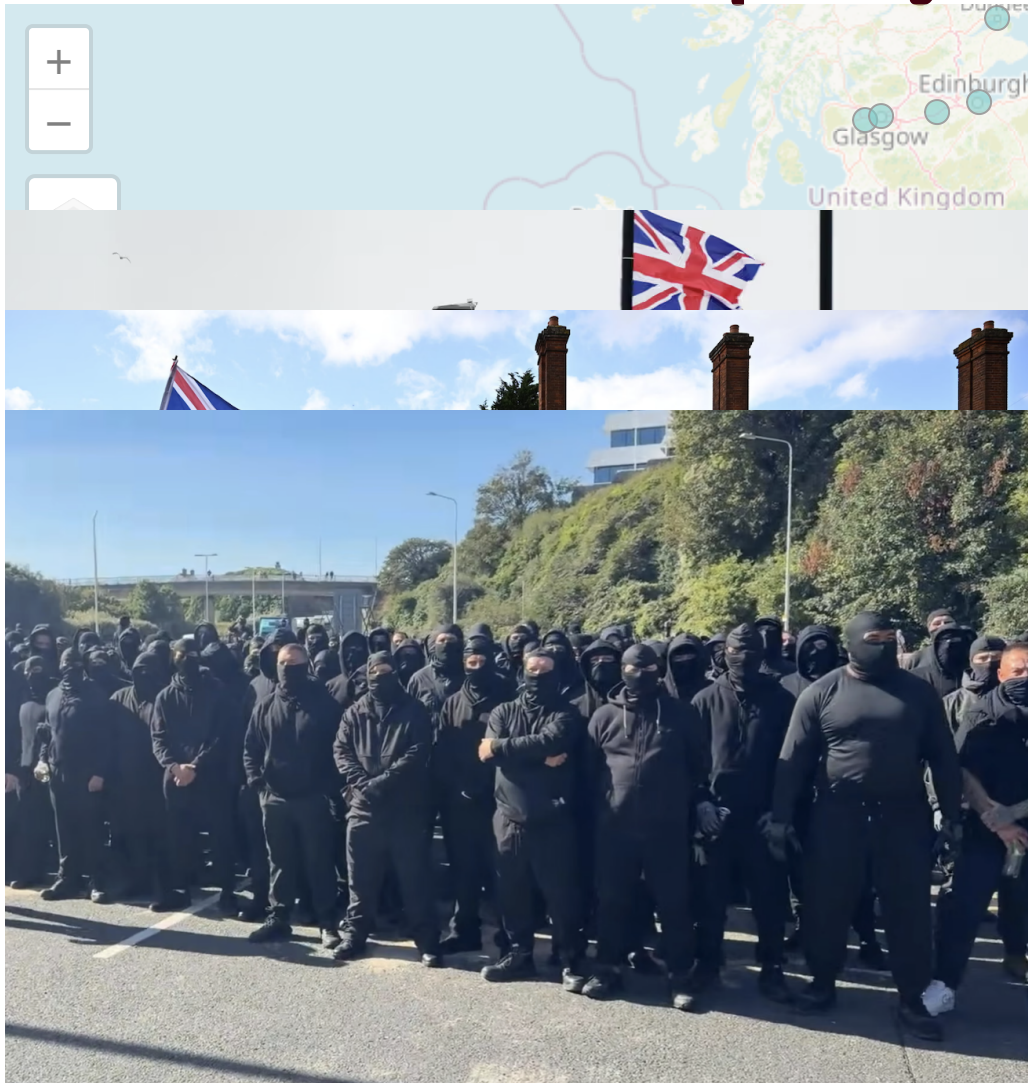
Far-right movements across Europe (and beyond) commonly rely on demonstrations



Annual **Lukov March** honours fascist general—despite **bans**
Jerusalem Day marchers often **threaten** Palestinian residents
Polish Independence Day march mixes **far right** with conservatives
FPÖ's **Akademikerball** replace a demobilised FR event (WKR Ball)
Bleiburg Commemorations (now held in **Croatia** after **Austrian ban**): historically revisionist, sanitising the **Ustaša**

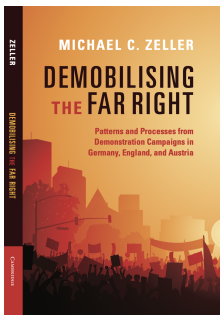


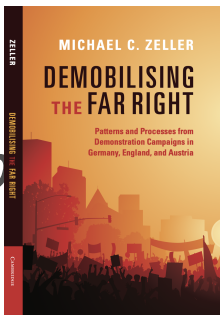
Relevance for contemporary UK



- anti-migrant protests after Southport
- Raise the Colours campaign – high court injunction in 2026
- protesting refugee housing (e.g., Bell Hotel in Epping)
- anti-migrant blockading action in Dover and Portsmouth

parallels to DE campaigns in 2015-2016:
FreeSpirit, Freital Stands Up, Heidenau Listens,
Einsiedel Says No, as well as UK campaign
'Justice for Women and Children' (2018-19)

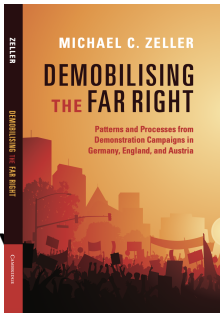




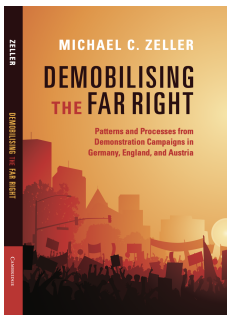
Phrases like ‘march and grow’ and ‘battle for the streets’ (*Kampf um die Straße*) are not so much artefacts of one or another organisation’s strategy as they are summaries of archetypal far-right activism. Demonstrations are unshakeably central in far-right movements’ repertoire of contention.

- Far-right campaigns will continue to emerge
- Counter-mobilisation (and demobilising pressure) most effective where there
 - are strong oppositional networks and
 - strategies to prompt state action
- Data and resources available online:
https://michaelzeller.de/book/index_book.html

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