

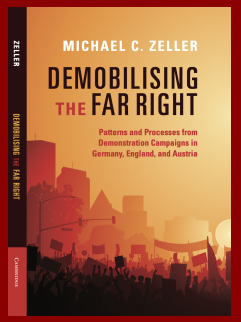
Demobilising the Far Right

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

Dr. Michael C. Zeller

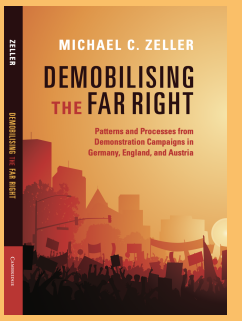


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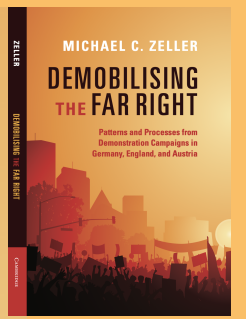


Why do far-right movement campaigns demobilise?

Demobilising the Far Right by Michael C. Zeller.



Demobilising the Far Right by Michael C. Zeller.



ZELLER

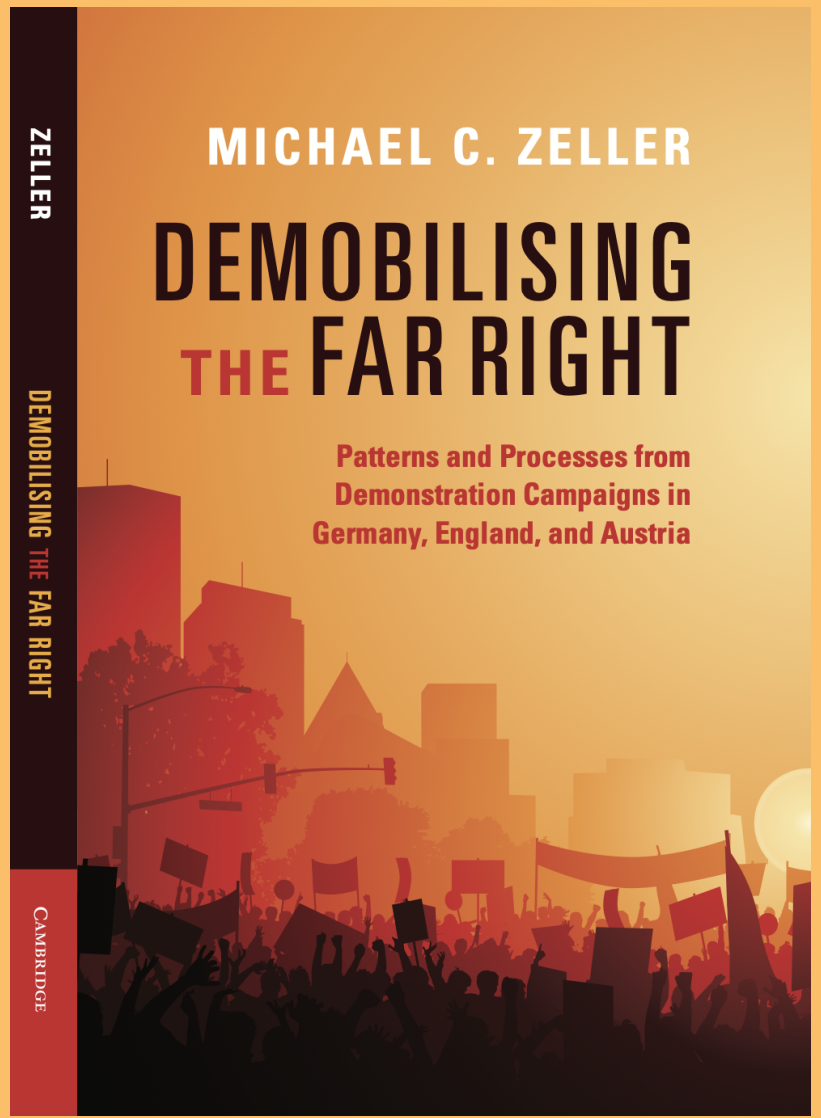
DEMOBILISING THE FAR RIGHT

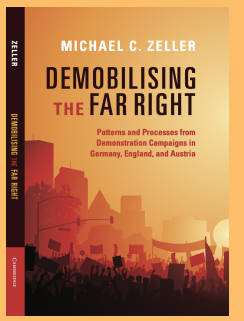
MICHAEL C. ZELLER

DEMOBILISING THE FAR RIGHT

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

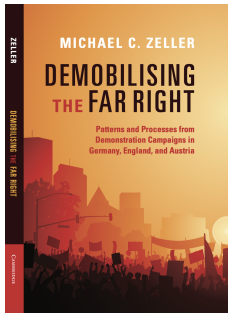
Demobilising the Far Right by Michael C. Zeller.





- Published by Cambridge University Press
- Available as hardback, paperback, and e-book
- for order at cambridge.org/9781009720762
  - enter code **ZELLER26** at checkout for 20% discount (expires *2027-05-31*)

Demobilisation

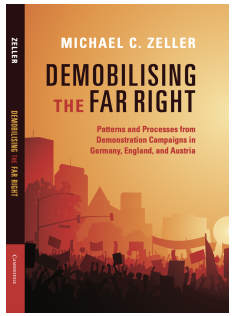


the process whereby collective action, whether in the form of campaigns, organisations, or even whole movements, decreases and ultimately ends

- 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)

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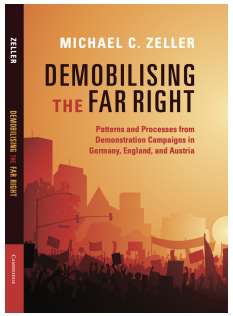
Demobilisation research



- 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!

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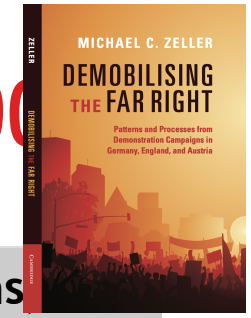
Demobilisation research



- 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

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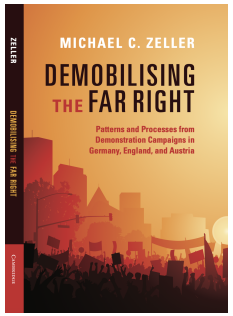
(Re-)Theorising demobilisation (Davenport 2015; Earl 20



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

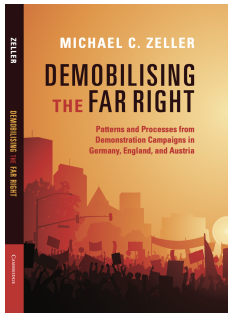
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Why this research?



- 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

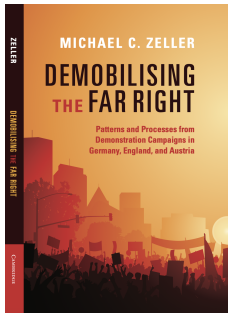
Research on a subset of cases



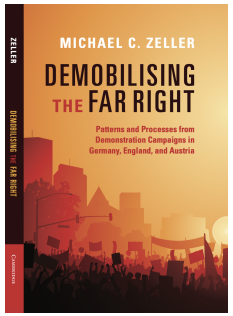
- Far right (in three countries: Germany, Austria and England)
  - extreme right (Mudde 1995) traits: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti- democracy, and prefer strong state
  - radical right (Mudde 2007) traits: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism
- Demonstrations—ubiquitous movement tactic
  - 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

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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)

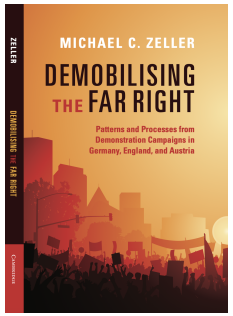


Data collection

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

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Data sources, archives and other assistance



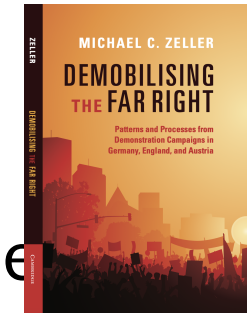
Germany | Austria | England

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

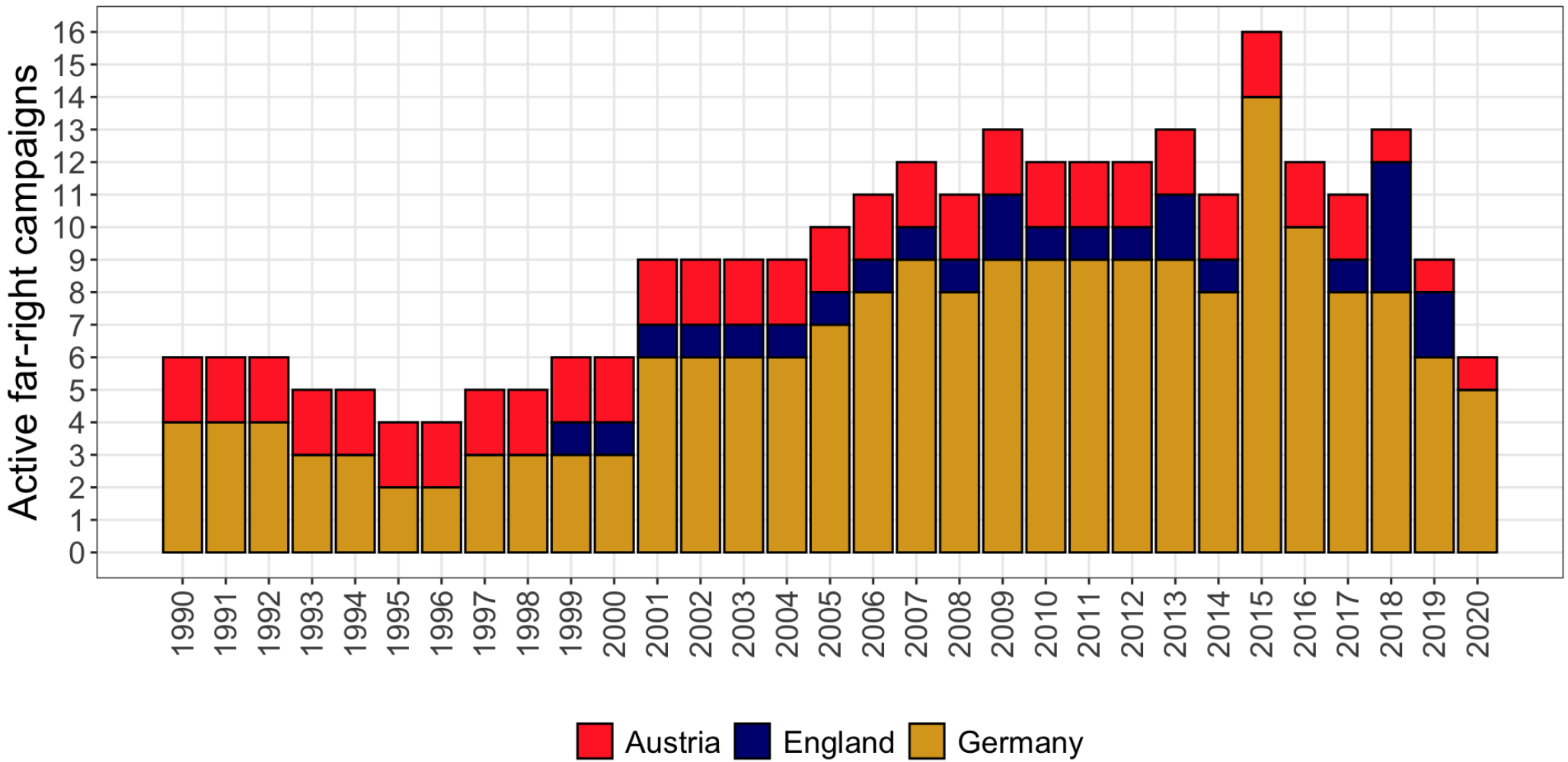
- VfS reports; newspapers (*Zeit*, *Süddeutsche*, local papers), participant accounts at archives

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

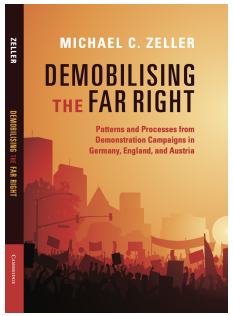


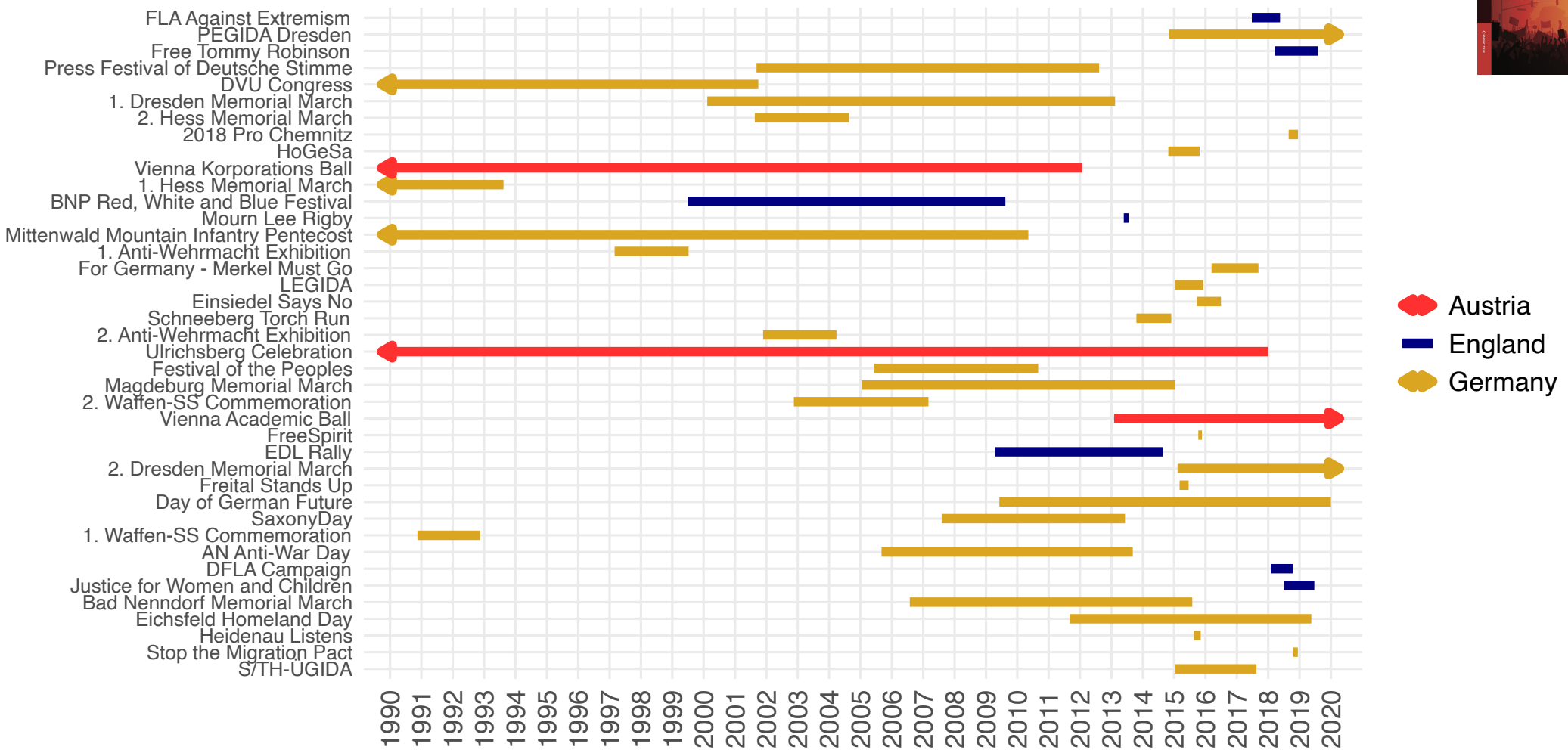
40 large far-right demonstration campaigns over three decade



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Campaign timelines

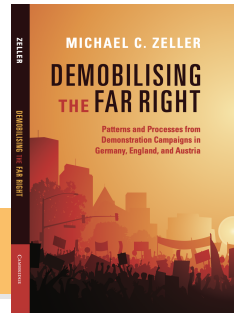




- even split of radical & extreme right
  - varying tempos (annual vs. more frequent)

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Cases overview



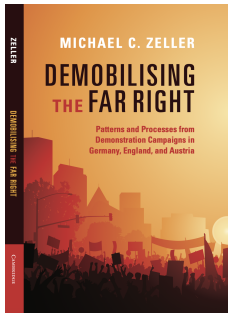
	Country	Location(s)	(Main) Organiser(s)	Years active
1. Waffen-SS Commemoration	GER	Halbe	Deutschen Kulturgemeinschaft	1990-1992
1. Hess Memorial March	GER	Wunsiedel, various	National Liste	1988-1994
1. Anti-Wehrmacht Exhibition	GER	various	NPD	1997-1999
DVU Congress	GER	Passau	DVU	1987-2001
2. Anti-Wehrmacht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

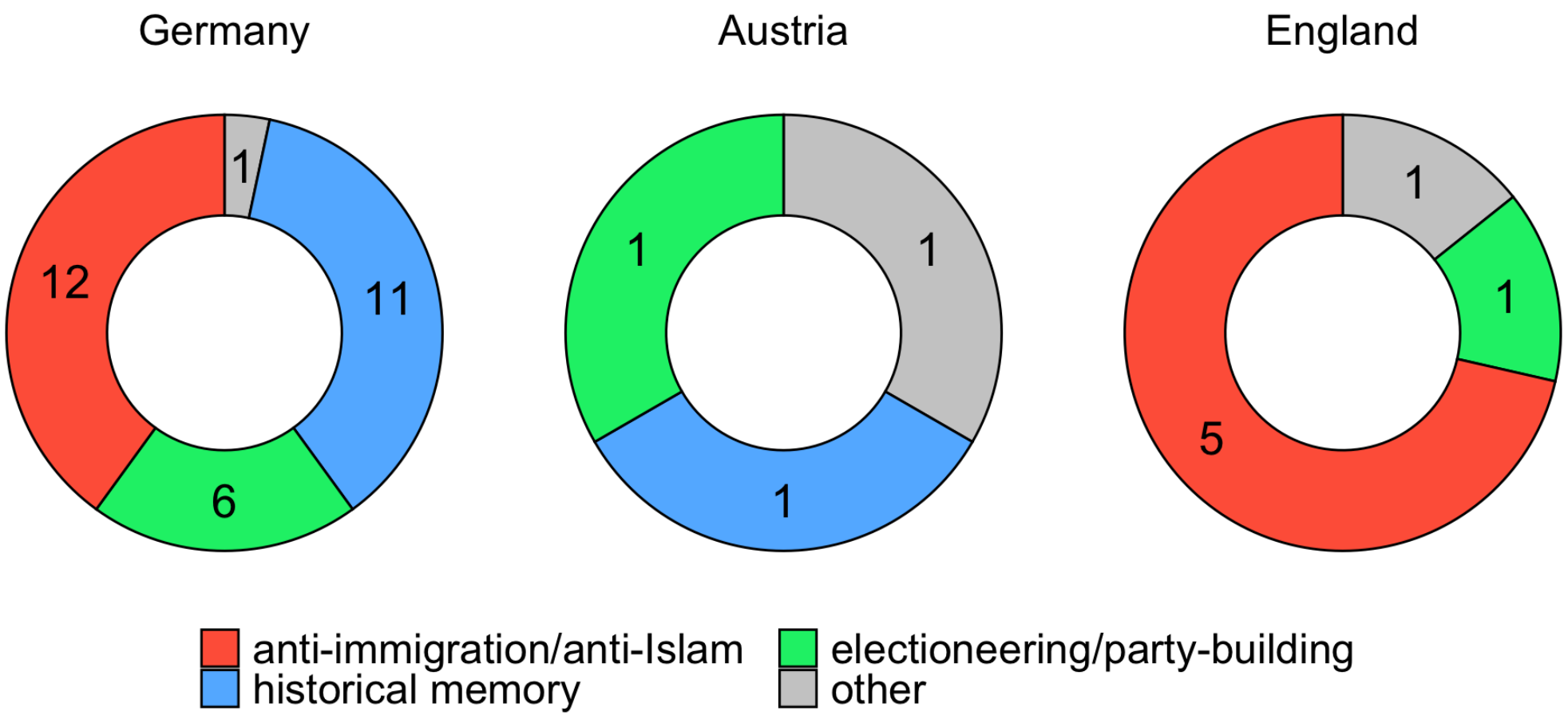
1–5 of 40 rows

Previous **1** 2 3 4 5 ... 8 Next

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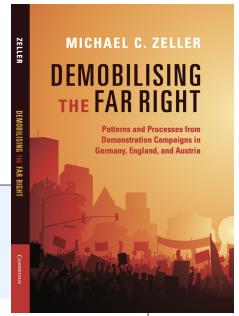
Main thematic focus of campaigns





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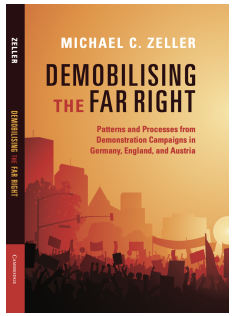
Data availability



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*

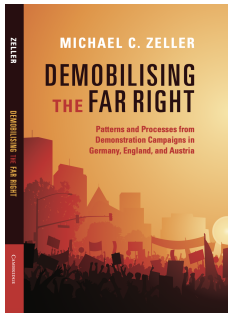
Complementary mixed methods



- 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?*

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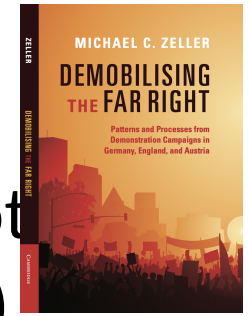
QCA calibration: outcome set



- 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

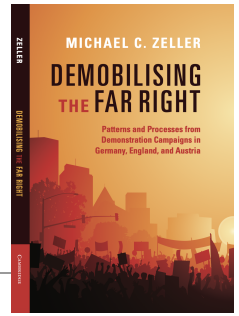


- State channelling (SCH) - state action that inhibits but does not coercively prohibit demonstrations (e.g., conditions on permit)
- State coercion (SCO) - state coercion against the demonstrations/campaigns (e.g., banning demonstrations, arresting/detaining numerous demonstrators)
- Private channelling (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)

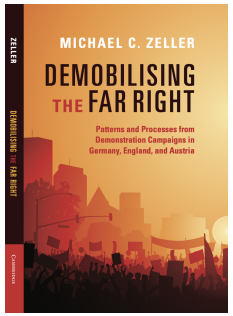
QCA Solution

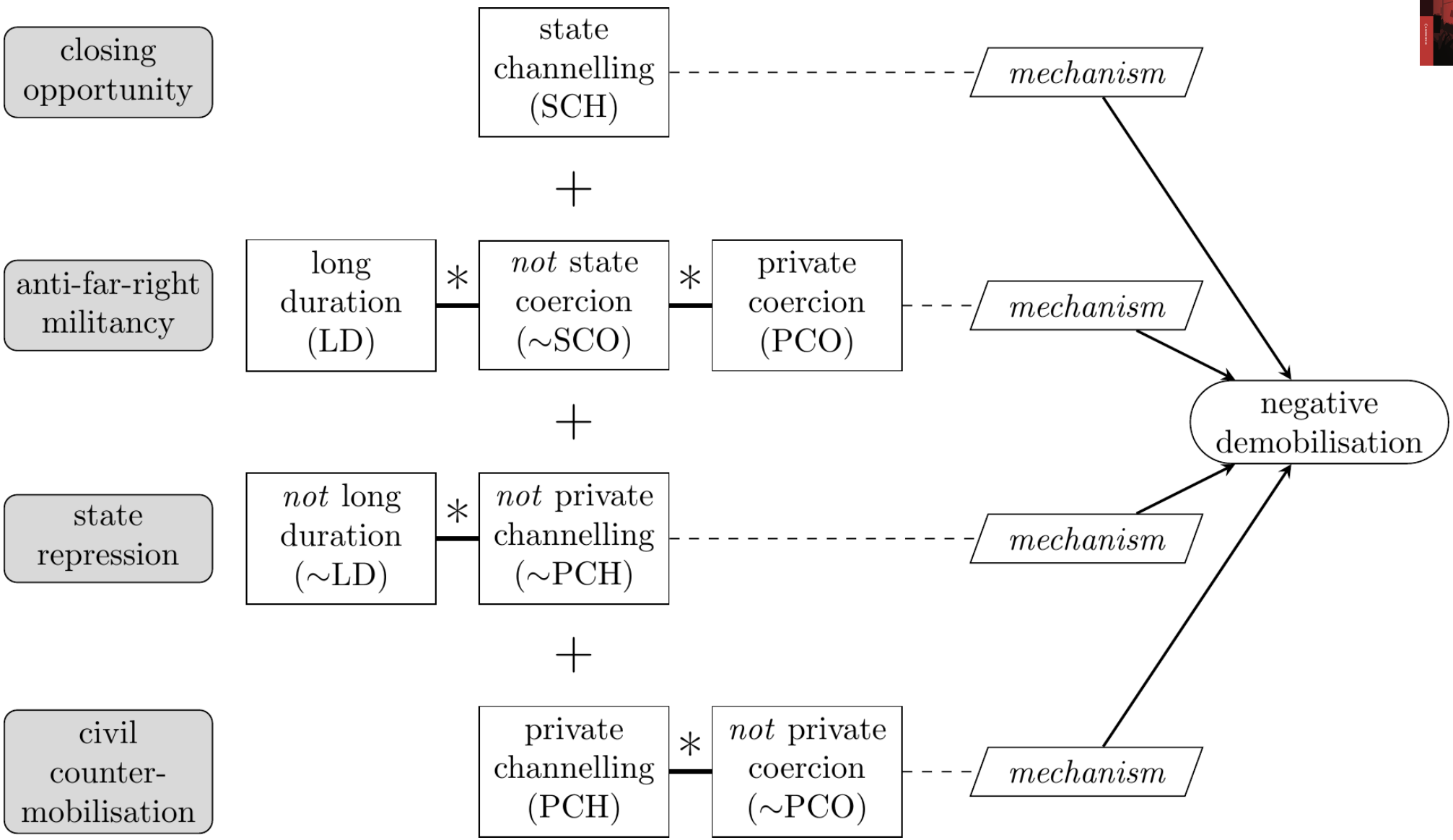


Solution table | Solution measures

		inclS	covS	covU	cases
closing opportunity	SCH	0.977	0.408	0.097	HoGeSa, Pressefest der Deutsche Stimme, Eichsfelder Heimattag; AN Antikriegstag; 2. Hess Gedenksmarsch; 1. Hess Gedenksmarsch; 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 Gedenksmarsch
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 Gedenksmarsch; 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		

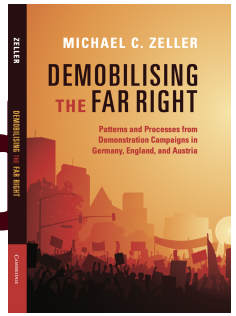
Patterns of demobilisation



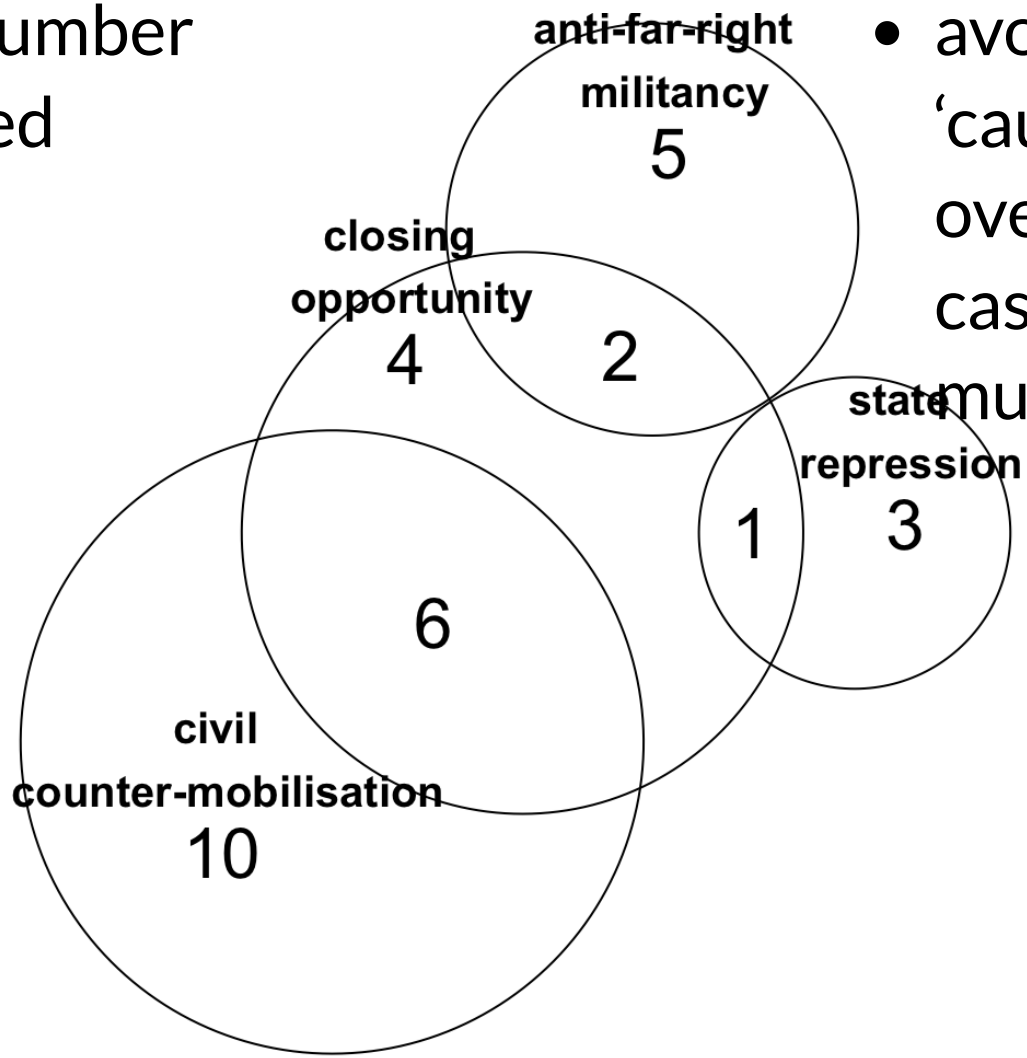


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Case coverage and cases further stud

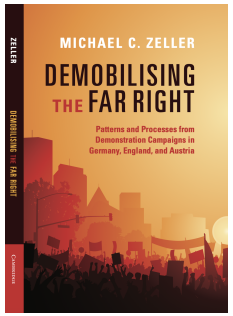


- patterns and number of cases covered



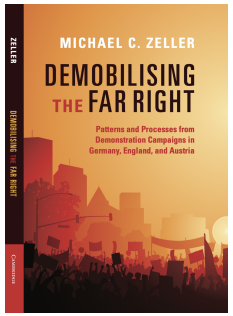
- avoiding the 'causally overdetermined' cases covered by multiple patterns

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BNP Red, White, and Blue Festival

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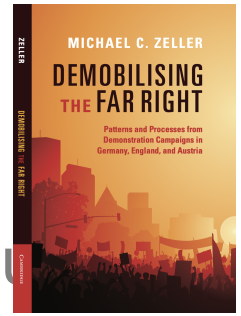


Ulrichsbergfeier

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Ulrichsbergfeier

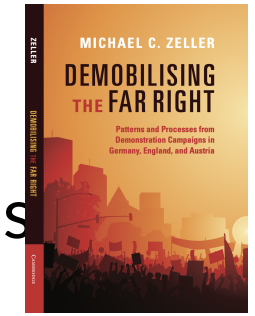




Ulrichsberg: site of ruined 15th centu church (owned by titled Goëss family) adopted as site for veteran commemoration in 1959, decorated (1984) with Arno Breker relief plaques to Flemish Waffen-SS volunteers,
Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers,
Latvian Waffen-SS volunteers,
KIV comradeship (modified SS motto)
ritual of pomp and ceremony: colour guard, veterans (sometimes in uniform) and active soldiers
and prominent politicians

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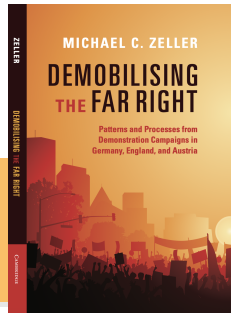
Ulrichsbergfeier - a far-right campaign



- fascist veterans celebrations, far-right WWII commemorations
  - e.g., Halbe, Mittenwald, Budapest, Sofia, Riga
  - *earlier*: aiming to win benefits for veterans; *more recently*: revisionism, refute some/all of Third Reich wrongdoing
- despite claims of 'non-political' and 'peace promotion', Ulrichsbergfeier was decidedly far right:
  - **organisers and speakers**: originated by B. Scheucher (*Gebirgsjäger* veteran), first speech (1959) given by A. Holzinger, Waffen-SS veteran and active Austrian army officer
  - **participants**: far-right fraternities, Waffen-SS veterans (KIV), Nazi 'celebrities', neo-Nazi activists — excluding partisans
  - **symbols**: NS-regime iconography, plaques (several illegal)

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Ulrichsbergfeier events



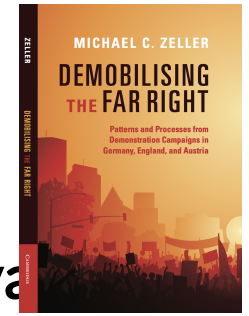
Date	Participants	Counter-protesters	Speakers
2017.10.1	200		Member of State Parliament Martin Rutter (BZÖ)
2016.10.9	120-150		Party General Secretary Karlheinz Klement (BZÖ)
2015.10.4	150-300		Regional Councillor Antonio Calligaris (Lega)
2014.9.14	100-190		Hermann Kandussi
2013.9.15	250-350		Hermann Kandussi
2012.9.16	300		Herbert Bellschan von Mildenburg

1–6 of 59 rows Previous **1** 2 3 4 5 ... 10 Next

- for many years participation of politicians across political spectrum (ÖVP, SPÖ, FPÖ)
- shifting context and consensus on Austria's *Opferthese*
  - 1986 Kurt Waldheim (successful) presidential campaign
  - radicalisation and rise of FPÖ under Jörg Haider
    - contentious speeches at Ulrichsberg by Haider in 1990 and 2000 (and at Krumpendorftreffen in 1995)

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Ulrichsbergfeier case calibration

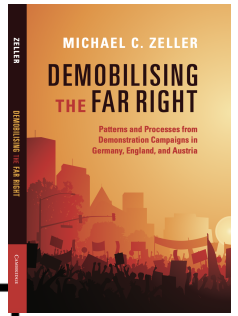


	Long Duration (LD)	State Channelling (SCH)	State Coercion (SCO)	Private Channelling (PCH)	Priva Coercion (PCO)
Ulrichsberg Celebration	1	1	0	0.33	0

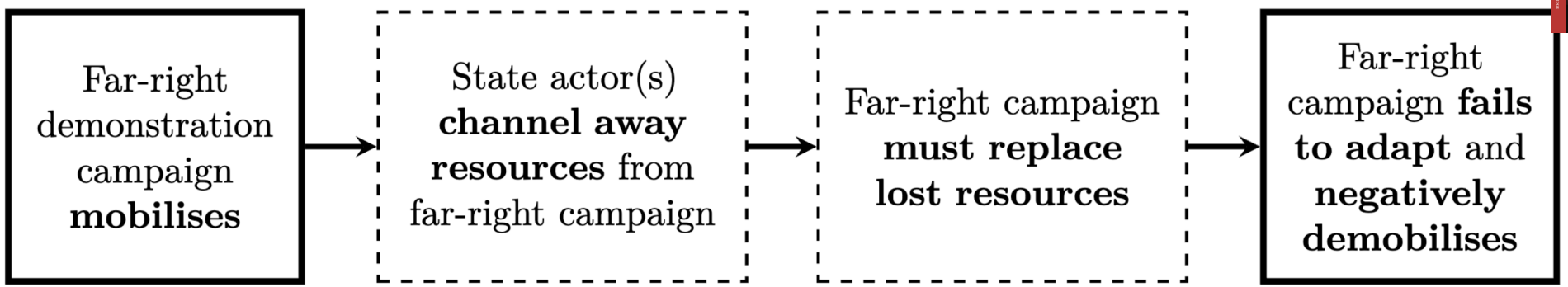
- Austrian state not only tolerated Ulrichsbergfeier—it *sponsored* it
  - Army honour guard
  - military jeeps to transport older participants up mountain
  - state financing for UBG veterans group (organisers)

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Ulrichsbergfeier - possible demobilising mechanisms



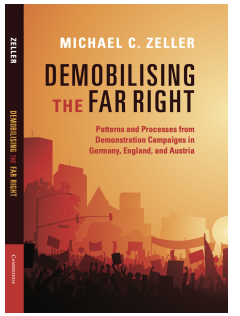
State channelling withdraws resources necessary for campaign



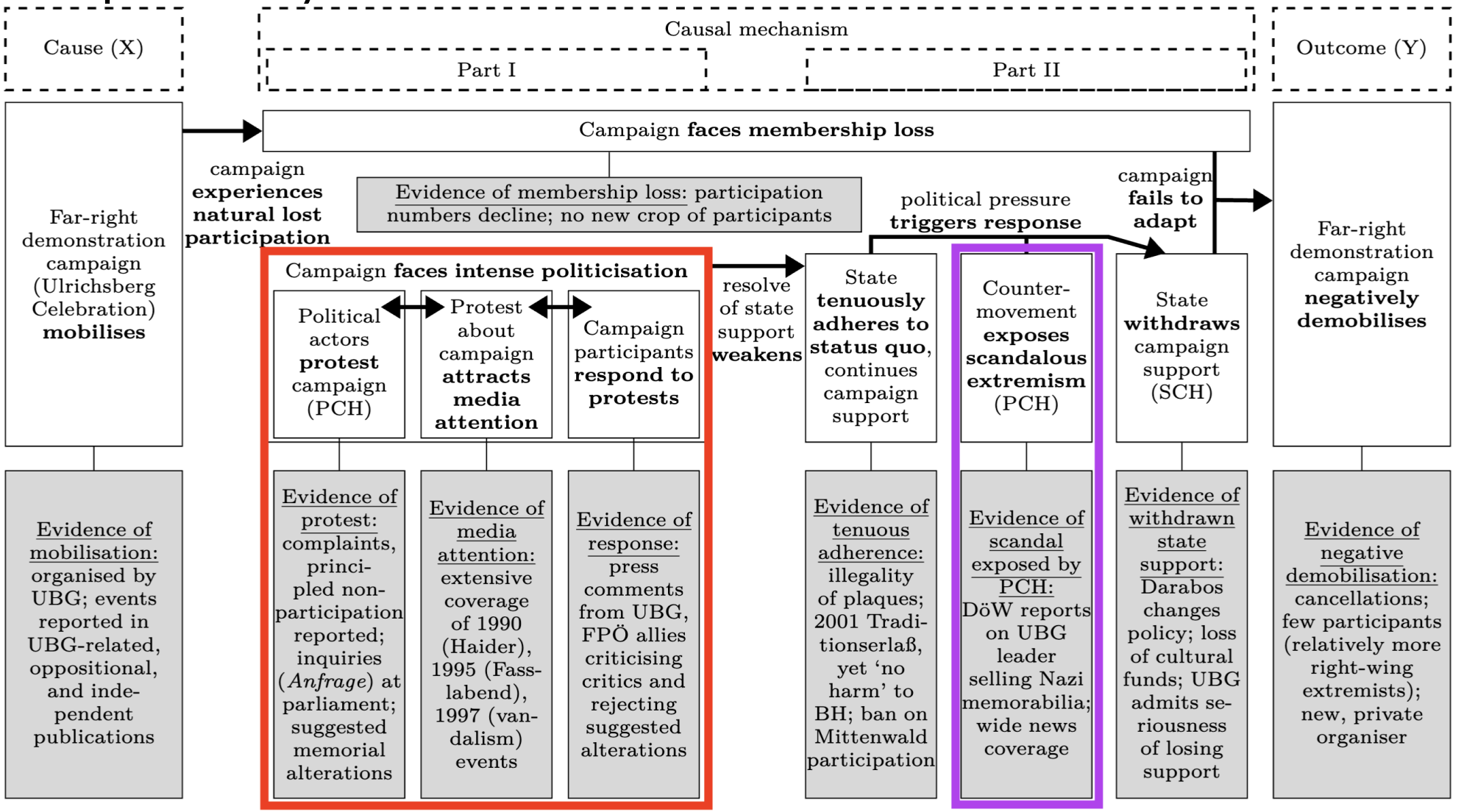
- Lost commitment: broader inclusion alienate existing participants
- Burnout/exhaustion: fewer veterans able to participate
- Membership loss: UBG fails to recruit new participants
- Factionalisation: splits among veterans' organisations within UBG weaken mobilising capacity
- Rigidity: UBG supports polarising and political rhetoric, undermining consensual support for the campaign

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Ulrichsbergfeier - demobilisation process

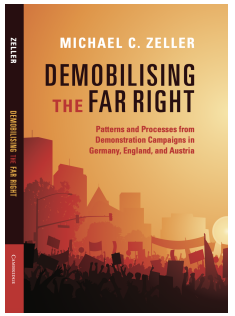


- without state sponsorship, demonstrations literally and metaphorically went downhill



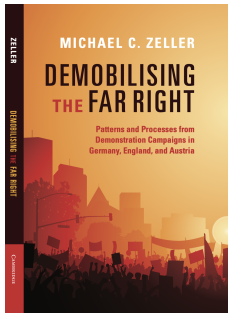
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Ulrichsbergfeier case conclusions



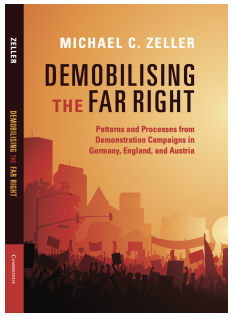
- Ulrichsbergfeier need not have demobilised
  - other far-right WWII memory campaigns have been carried forward by younger generations
  - ageing, dying veterans on its own is insufficient explanation
- closing opportunity demobilised Ulrichsbergfeier
  - relatively long process: politicisation (SPÖ distancing, FPÖ coopting) ⟶ weaker state support ⟶ shocking revelation of RWE by organiser ⟶ campaign ends after a few years
  - (state-driven) *resource deprivation* mechanism — private counter-action a key trigger
- state permissiveness, even outright support is not unique (e.g., Bleiburg, PL Independence March, Lega Nord events at Pontida, Roma's Via Acca Larentia, Milano's Sergio Ramelli Commemoration, Tag der Ehre in Budapest)

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Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) in Passau

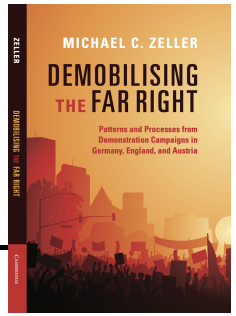
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Conclusions

- 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



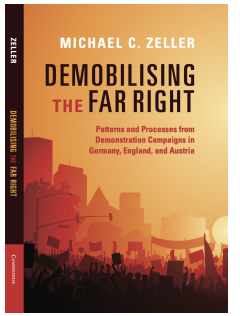
- internal factors and competition among far right are relevant—once mobilised FR campaigns are quite internally stable
- multiple sufficient paths to campaign demobilisation:
  1. closing opportunity,
  2. state repression,
  3. civil counter-mobilisation, and
  4. anti-far-right militancy

and it never hurts to consider banning booze

- 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

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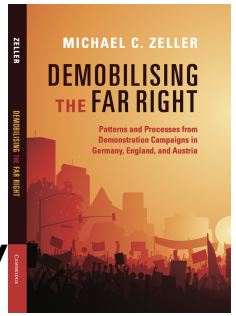
Conclusions: the many benefits of counter-mobilisation



- 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

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Wider relevance



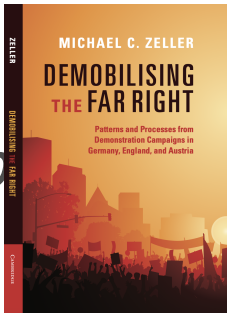
Far-right movements across Europe (and beyond) commonly rely demonstrations



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

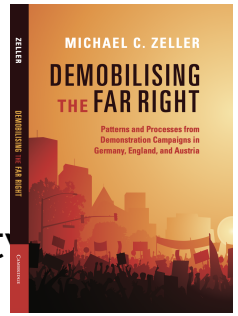
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> Phrases like ‘march and grow’ and ‘battle for the streets’ (*Kampf um die Straße*) are not so much artefacts of one or another organisation’s strategy as they are summaries of archetypal far-right activism. Demonstrations are unshakeably central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

References



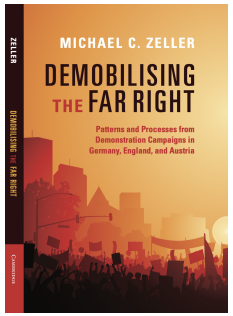
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