

The demobilizing effect of violent actions and radical-right involvement on public support for protest

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Abstract

How does radicality affect public support for protest? Despite a long-standing scholarly debate about the demobilizing power of radicality, empirical evidence beyond the use of violent action and left-libertarian social movements remains scarce. Therefore, this paper advances the debate by examining the effects of two forms of radicality, violent forms of protest and radical protest actors, in the context of a right-authoritarian movement. We employ a novel and comprehensive multistep research design to study these theoretical expectations, integrating original survey and natural experimental evidence. Empirically, we draw on the case of the anti-containment protests in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic, emblematic of the rise of right-authoritarian social movements in contemporary democracies. We examine the role of demonstrator-instigated violence and radical-right involvement in demobilizing sympathizers and likely participants. The empirical findings show that, in contrast to left-libertarian movements, individuals strongly committed to the cause are likely to continue to take to the streets regardless of the presence of violence and radical-right actors. The findings suggest adverse diminishing demobilization effects of radicality in contemporary democracies, which are less pronounced for individuals close to right-authoritarian movements.

Keywords: protest, radicalization, radical-right, anti-containment, social movements, experimental research.

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Introduction

The use of violent and confrontational forms of protest can demobilize individuals and discourage them from joining protests. Consequently, these tactics may harm social movements, especially in democratic contexts (Bugden 2020; Feinberg et al. 2020; Muñoz and Anduiza 2019; Simpson et al. 2018). However, existing research has largely examined only one dimension of protest radicality, i.e., violent tactics, and has done so predominantly in the context of left-libertarian social movements (Castelli Gattinara & Froio, 2024; Enos et al., 2019; Gutting, 2020; Shuman et al., 2021).¹ By contrast, we know far less about how other forms of radicality, such as the visible involvement of radical actors, shape public support for protest, or whether these dynamics operate similarly in the case of right-authoritarian mobilizations. Studying the latter seems particularly important given that many Western democracies are currently experiencing a wave of movements from the right on the streets (Caiani, 2019; Castelli Gattinara & Pirro, 2019; Hunger & Hutter, 2025).

In this article, we study how protest radicality affects support for right-authoritarian social movements. Our contribution lies in linking more in-depth measurements of radicality and mobilization outcomes with a research design that combines two causal approaches: a survey experiment and an unexpected event during survey design.

First, we extend previous literature by distinguishing between two different radical features of protests: violent escalation and the presence of radical-right groups. In our framework, radical actors are defined by their ideological positioning outside the democratic mainstream. In this study, this refers to radical-right organizations with exclusionary and authoritarian platforms (Pirro, 2023). Their radicality may, but does not necessarily, manifest in confrontational or violent tactics. *Second*, we also provide a more fine-grained assessment

¹We define left-libertarian movements as “critical of the logic of societal development and the institutions that underlie the postwar compromise between capital and labor in industrial societies”. (Kitschelt, 1988, p. 195)

of their effects by considering two individual-level outcomes: an individual’s sympathy for the protests and willingness to participate. By doing so, we aim to capture different levels of commitment, modeling the step from consensus to action mobilization (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). Thus, our design allows us to measure a movement’s broader and more narrow mobilization potential among the general population (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2006; Hunger et al., 2023; Kriesi et al., 1993; Rüdig & Karyotis, 2014).

We use a relevant and timely case to study the effect of radicality on protest support that goes beyond previous scholarship’s focus on left-libertarian movements: the German anti-containment protests in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. These protests were shaped by the newly emerging *Querdenken* movement (*lateral thinking* in German) and closely resemble anti-containment protests with a strong right-authoritarian tendency in various advanced democracies at that time (Ariza, 2020; della Porta, 2023). Radical-right social movement organizations and political parties played a prominent role in these protest events, with violent incidents – including attacks on police and journalists – becoming increasingly present at protests (Teune, 2021). On the individual level, survey data show that more radical-right-leaning individuals are overrepresented among the movement’s supporters (Hunger et al., 2023).

Methodologically, we employ a novel and comprehensive multi-step research design that integrates survey and natural experimental evidence, thereby advancing methodological approaches in the field of contentious politics and social movement studies. An emerging body of literature has recognized the lack of and need for comprehensive and multifaceted research designs (Feinberg et al., 2020; Muñoz & Anduiza, 2019; Williamson & Malik, 2021). By integrating two causal designs, our study makes a notable and innovative contribution to the literature and sheds light on previously underexplored aspects of protest dynamics.

First, we conduct a *pre-registered 2x2 between-subjects survey experiment* to investigate the effects of two distinct factors, namely the use of violent tactics by demonstrators and

the involvement of radical-right actors in protest coalitions, on sympathy for protests and willingness to participate in them.² *Second*, we use an *unexpected event during surveys design* (UESD) (Castanho Silva 2018; Muñoz et al. 2020) to assess how two large anti-containment protests affected support for the movement. We leverage the occurrence of two key protest events in August 2020 that involved radical-right actors and violence. Due to the real-world scenario involving violence and radical-right involvement, as well as statistical power concerns, the UESD design allows us to test only parts of our hypotheses regarding sympathy for the protests.

Our study overcomes a limitation in existing research by combining evidence from a survey experiment with a natural experiment. This provides a realistic context and exposure to protests that are often lacking in studies, which tend to focus solely on the effects of single, fictional protest characteristics (Feinberg et al., 2020; Glover & Ozden, 2022). Moreover, our study contributes to the existing literature on contentious politics and social movements by examining the demobilizing effect of radicality in terms of both the actions and actors of a recently emerged movement. Our results demonstrate that previous findings regarding the impact of violence and radical coalitions may not apply to the context of the increasingly prevalent right-authoritarian social movements in advanced democracies.

Even when study participants can expect violence, we observe only small and statistically non-significant differences in protest sympathy and potential participation. However, the presence of radical-right actors does have a discernible impact on sympathy for the protests. In contrast, we do not observe such effects regarding likely participants, i.e., among individuals more committed to the movement. In other words, the presence of radical-right actors does not deter individuals who would be willing to participate in the protests themselves. These findings further enrich our understanding of supporters of right-authoritarian movements and their willingness to participate in protests, even when potential escalation

²Our survey experiments, along with the main hypotheses, have been pre-registered (see <https://osf.io/e9q7w>).

dynamics and radical-right actors may be involved. Overall, our findings can shed light on the diminishing demobilizing effect of radicality in contemporary democracies.

Theoretical framework and expectations

Individuals' Commitment to a Movement: Issue-Specific Mobilization Potentials

To what extent do protest characteristics mobilize or demobilize individuals? To study this question, we adopt the concept of 'issue-specific mobilization potential,' defined as 'an individual's propensity to engage in certain protest activities in order to defend his or her position regarding a specific issue' (Kriesi et al., 1993, p. 155). This conceptual distinction is rooted in the formative work of Klandermans, 1984 on consensus and action mobilization, which highlights the distinction between two crucial processes of supporting a movement: (a) the persuasive efforts aimed at convincing individuals of the value and significance of a social movement's goals, and (b) the mobilization strategies employed to involve individuals in the movement's activities. As Beyerlein and Hipp (2006, p. 299) have argued: 'Before individuals are 'eligible' to participate in social movement activism, they must pass through the initial stage of the mobilization process and become part of a movement's mobilization potential by committing themselves to the goals and tactics of the movement.'

By conceiving the demand side of protest from a two-step perspective, this approach provides valuable insights that apply beyond specific phases and geographic areas of overt mobilization, thus uncovering the social and political characteristics of individuals who are drawn to a specific movement regardless of the availability of protest events and organizers (Klandermans, 1997). Since we recognize and explore this distinction, we gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics entailed in mobilizing individuals for social movements and contribute to a substantial body of literature that has employed similar research designs.

Drawing on previous work (e.g., Beyerlein & Hipp, 2006; Hunger et al., 2023; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Kriesi et al., 1993; Oegema & Klandermans, 1994; Rüdig & Karyotis, 2014), we adopt this two-stage approach to assess the anti-containment movement’s support in the general public. We distinguish between individuals who sympathize with the movement and those willing to participate in protest action (potential participants), which enables us to examine the effects of protest event characteristics across different levels of commitment within the public. The focus on the issue-specific mobilization potential is particularly well-suited to our research design, as we measure changes in attitudes following experimental conditions, thus assessing the impact of specific protest characteristics on public support for social movements.

The Demobilizing Effect of Radicality

Violent Action Forms and their Effects

Public support and protester mobilization are vital for social movement success (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987). As Tilly (2004, p. 3-4) highlighted, protests displaying WUNC – ‘worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment’ – can enhance a movement’s public perception and thus garner public support. Next to the issue of the protest, the *repertoire of contention* (Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978), consisting of ‘limited numbers of historically established-alternative performances linking claimants to objects of claims,’ is also central (McAdam et al., 1996, p. 23). Protesters can increase visibility and public backing by selecting from various protest forms, including conventional demonstrations, rallies, marches, or more disruptive actions like blockades or confrontational tactics.

Early research emphasized that confrontational or violent protests often attract more media coverage and generate public resonance (Piven & Cloward, 1978; Tilly et al., 1995). In line with this, Enos et al., 2019 found that the 1992 Los Angeles riot spurred a liberal shift in voter registration and polling outcomes among white and African American voters. Yet,

other studies suggest such tactics may not always boost public support for movements. In fact, they often have demobilizing effects and decrease levels of public backing (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011).

The use of confrontational or violent tactics may, for instance, decrease public support for the movement (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011), erode its legitimacy (Sharp, 1973), alienate potential supporters (Wasow, 2020), or provide justification for repressive measures (Pearlman, 2011) by provoking so-called *negative flank effects*. Moreover, the possibility of a violent escalation introduces risk and uncertainty for potential participants. Engaging in protests that involve violence increases the personal costs and potential repercussions, deterring individuals who might otherwise be inclined to support the cause (Steinert-Threlkeld et al., 2022). Peaceful, large-scale protests, conversely, might have a persuading effect on individuals, as protesters' civic behavior during events aligns with Tilly's understanding of an event's *worthiness* (Tilly, 2004). This arises not only from the risks citizens associate with participating in violent events, based on cost-benefit considerations, but also from the moral value they attribute to nonviolent protests (Dahlum et al., 2023).

Pioneering studies in social movement research have extensively explored how different tactics and forms of action affect key factors like public support and political outcomes (e.g., Gamson, 1975; McAdam, 1983; Morris, 1993). Recently, the literature has increasingly focused on the impact of radical tactics, like violence, on protest mobilization potential. Investigating Black-led protests between 1960 and 1972 in the United States, Wasow, 2020 found that nonviolent activism shifted public opinion in favor of civil rights, while protester-initiated violence shifted the public focus toward law and order, ultimately undermining the movement's objectives. Studying the anti-austerity movement in Spain, Muñoz and Anduiza, 2019 show that violent strategies led to a decline in public support. Similarly, Steinert-Threlkeld et al., 2022 demonstrate through a study across five countries and 24 cities, using computer vision and over 40 million tweets, that protester violence negatively affects protest size.

Survey experiments have also been used to analyze the impact of protester violence on public support. For instance, Wouters (2018) demonstrated that the representation of (d)WUNC – extending Tilly’s model with diversity – boosts support and sympathy for asylum seeker and Black Lives Matter protests in Belgium and the US, respectively (see also Wouters and Walgrave 2017). Thomas and Louis, 2014 found that reading about nonviolent protests increased fracking’s perceived illegitimacy among sympathizers, enhancing support for further nonviolent actions. Conversely, violent protests in their study led to increased hostility among respondents. Relatedly, Feinberg et al. (2020) observed that radical tactics harm public views of movements like animal rights, Black Lives Matter, and anti-Trump protests. In Poland, Huff and Kruszewska, 2016 showed that citizens are less inclined to support negotiations with movements employing extreme tactics like bombings compared to those less contentious tactics like demonstrations.

Overall, previous literature expects the effect of violence to be de-mobilizing, with these expectations formulated as universally applicable. However, nearly all these empirical tests have focused exclusively on protests that can be situated on the left of the political spectrum, leaving the generalizability of these theories unclear. We therefore extend them to a new context and expect the effect of violence to operate in the same direction for the case of a radical-right movement. As discussed earlier, we further distinguish between supporters with two levels of commitment to a social movement: sympathizers and potential participants. Thus, we add a more fine-grained test of the expected effect, adopting the perspective of issue-specific mobilization potentials. Based on the literature review, we expect similar effects across both outcomes:

H1a: *The presence of violence in protest events will diminish individuals’ sympathy for a movement.*

H1b: *The presence of violence in protest events will diminish individuals’ willingness to protest.*

The Presence of Radical Actors and its Effects

Having explored the impact of radical action forms on public support for protests, our investigation now extends to another critical aspect: the influence of co-mobilization on public support for protest events and individuals' protest intentions. Although radical actions are known to reduce public support, radical actors, especially the formation of problematic coalitions from both the left and the right, have received little empirical attention. In our study, we explore the role of radical-right actors' involvement in shaping public support for social movements, which we believe is particularly important in the current sociopolitical climate (Glover & Ozden, 2022; Madestam et al., 2013; Wasow, 2020; Wouters, 2018).

Social movement research has thoroughly examined the actors and coalitions behind protest mobilization, focusing on their heterogeneity (van Dyke & Amos, 2017). In pursuing their goals, movement actors often forge alliances with like-minded groups, forming campaign coalitions (Tarrow, 1998, p. 134-135). *Who* protests and, more concretely, *who* is involved in the protest as participants can have major consequences for the unfolding of the protest and the attention it receives (Boekkooi et al. 2011, p. 238; Fisher et al. 2005). In this regard, protest groups and social movement organisations play several important roles with their mere presence as participants: they jointly mobilize and signal their presence to the public (van Dyke & Amos, 2017); they carry symbolic weight into the public sphere (Dixon & Martin, 2012); and they shape collective identities (Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Protest coalitions that are sustained over time gain recognition as collaborating partners and can build a joint reputation, especially since the media often intensively cover the actors and coalitions involved in protest events (Boekkooi et al., 2011).

Despite having overlapping goals and similar tactical preferences, other factors might impede social movement organizations from co-mobilizing. In this respect, early research on social movements documented how moderate social movement organizations and individuals believed that the views and actions of their more radical counterparts could antagonize

external supporters and alienate the public (Barkan, 1986). Yet, how ideological differences among social movement actors deter potential activists and supporters is still not well understood. To our knowledge, no study has specifically explored the link between protest support levels and co-mobilization of radical actors. Thus, we focus on how radical co-mobilization – where at least one actor has a radical or extreme ideological stance and lacks broad social legitimacy – affects public support. In our concrete case, this ideological positioning outside the democratic mainstream relates to the radical right.

Being associated with and participating in political events alongside the radical right is heavily stigmatized in the German political landscape. After World War II, racism and Nazism were widely regarded as taboos, leading to the marginalization of radical-right actors (Rydgren, 2005). We contend that the radical right in Germany continues to face stigmatization and is perceived as illegitimate by elites and citizens – partly, though not exclusively, due to the Holocaust (Caiani, 2019; Linden & Klandermans, 2006). This is evident in the ban on public use of Nazi symbols, often cited as a reason for ‘German exceptionalism,’ marked by the long-term absence of a nationwide successful radical-right party in Germany (Arzheimer, 2015). In this context, the role of excluding or accommodating radical-right actors in politics has been widely debated (Akkerman and Rooduijn 2015; Minkenberg 2013).

Research on political parties and public opinion has shown how meso-level interactions between political actors affect the micro-level perceptions of radical actors’ legitimacy. On the one hand, some studies highlight that accommodating radical actors via “the presence of non-stigmatized sources of supply matter” (Mendes & Dennison, 2021, p. 771) to increase their perceived legitimacy among the public (see Van Spanje & Azrout, 2019). On the other hand, the mere presence and position-taking of radical (-right) actors can cause a legitimacy backlash, especially among progressive individuals (Valentim et al., 2025). More concretely, compared to mainstream-right politicians, statements by radical-right politicians generate backlash in terms of anti-migration positions. While the impact of the involvement of radical actors and the so-called *cordon sanitaire* in the electoral context is well-studied (for

an overview see Muis & Immerzeel, 2017), studies investigating its effect on protest participation are largely absent. We borrow from this strand of party research the notion that coalitions with radical groups can generate a legitimacy loss at the micro-level, and transpose this dynamic to the presence of radical actors in protest and its effects on a movement’s mobilization potential.

To close this gap in protest research, we explicitly elaborate on the negative effect of the radical-right involvement for protest mobilization, since ‘collaboration comes with costs and not all allies are of equal value’ (Dixon & Martin, 2012). Radical-right involvement in protests can thus be problematic, even for conservative individuals. Similarly, Weisskircher and Berntzen (2018) noted the German radical-right party AfD’s challenges in allying with the radical-right and anti-Islam PEGIDA movement. In summary, we anticipate that co-mobilization with radical groups — and in the context of our study, protest events featuring alliances with the radical right — will decrease support for the movement. Conversely, we expect sympathy for and willingness to participate in protests to be higher when no radical-right actors are present. Thus, we posit that:

H2a: The involvement of radical-right actors at protest events will diminish individuals’ sympathy for a movement.

H2b: The involvement of radical-right actors at protest events will decrease individuals’ willingness to protest.

We presented theoretical expectations regarding how violent protest events and the participation of radical-right actors may impact two crucial aspects of support for a movement: sympathy and potential participation. We then refined these expectations by introducing differentiated hypotheses on how the two elements of radicality – violence and the presence of radical-right actors – affect sympathizers and potential participants, respectively. Furthermore, we anticipate that radical actions and actors will positively interact, influencing

overall support levels. Based on previous research inspecting interaction effects between one protest characteristic and individual-level dynamics (Gutting, 2020), we translate this expectation into an additive interaction effect between the two protest characteristics. In other words, violent protest events involving radical actors should further decrease the mobilization potential of a given social movement. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3a: *The presence of violence and radical-right actors at the same protest events will diminish individuals' sympathy for a movement.*

H3b: *The presence of violence and radical-right actors at the same protest events will decrease individuals' willingness to protest.*

The case: The German Anti-Containment Protests during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The protests during the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany offer an ideal opportunity to examine the demobilizing effect of violent action forms and the involvement of radical actors in the context of right-authoritarian social movements. While protest in Northwestern Europe is still predominantly associated with the left (Borbáth & Gessler, 2020; Hutter, 2014), recently, the radical right has been increasingly active on the streets (Caiani, 2019; Castelli Gattinara & Pirro, 2019). Besides being motivated by the growing empirical significance of right-authoritarian social movements, we aim to contribute to the literature by testing established theories in this specific case, as much of the existing social movement research on the effects of radicality has primarily considered left-libertarian movements (Caiani et al., 2012; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017).

After an initial standstill of protest in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic, protesters soon returned to the streets, as in most other European countries (Kriesi & Oana, 2023; van

der Zwet et al., 2022). The pandemic soon triggered contentious protests that focused ‘on Covid-19-related issues, and [...] protest against the restrictions imposed by the government lockdowns’ (Kriesi & Oana, 2023). Germany was no exception here, as anti-containment protests were prevalent throughout 2020 – around half of the events were directly related to pandemic restrictions (ibid.) – and beyond. The pandemic has provided political opportunities for radical-right social movement organizations and political parties across Europe (della Porta, 2023; Wondreys & Mudde, 2022). Especially in areas where mainstream parties have poorly performed in past elections, anti-containment protests were more likely to take place (Plümper et al., 2021). Furthermore, notwithstanding their initial heterogeneity, protests against the government’s containment restrictions were frequently influenced by conservative and (radical-)right-leaning actors in later stages, as indicated by studies conducted in the US, Australia, Italy, Spain, and Germany (see, e.g., Ariza, 2020).

In Germany, a new movement called *Querdenken* emerged. Shortly after its emergence, the movement’s protests became more radical concerning its action repertoire and the involvement of organizations and participants from the radical right, leading most political parties, except for the radical-right AfD, to reject the movement’s demands (Heinze & Weiskircher, 2023; Lehmann & Zehnter, 2024). More radical actors, such as the *Reichsbürger* (‘citizens of the Reich’) movement and QAnon supporters, gained in importance (Hartleb et al., 2023), and the number of participants increased dramatically. This was accompanied by claims related to (racist and antisemitic) conspiracy theories, as well as demands to dismiss the federal government altogether or to completely reject the containment measures, which were seen as part of the ‘Corona dictatorship’ (Teune, 2021).

The emergence and radicalization of the movement were tied to two major events (Hunger et al., 2023). On August 1, around 20,000 protesters peacefully mobilized against the government’s containment policies in Berlin. Among the participants were the *Querdenken* group, supporters of the radical-right PEGIDA and the NPD (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*). While the primary aim of the protest was to criticize the federal government’s

COVID-19 policies, it also served as a platform for conspiracy theories and criticisms of the political system related to liberty restrictions. Later that month, on August 29, 40,000 people protested in the centre of Berlin. A diverse group of protesters marched towards the German parliament building, the *Reichstag*. However, radical-right participants were very prominent; some waved *German Reich* flags, a ‘nostalgic’ radical-right symbol. The situation escalated when a mob crossed the security barriers, ascended the parliament’s stairs, and violently confronted the police while trying to enter the building. In the public debate, the event was labelled the ‘*Storming of the Reichstag*’, a description that strongly resonated with radical-right narratives. The media saw the event as an attack on German democratic institutions and as the turning point of the anti-containment movement. This event is generally seen as similar to – and even predating – the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, which led to a short-term deidentification among Republicans (Eady et al., 2023).

Data and Methods

We implement a multistep research design with two elements of analysis and evidence. First, using a survey experiment, we causally assess how hypothetical protest scenarios involving violent actions by demonstrators or involving radical-right actors impact the mobilization potential of social movements. This approach enhances our ability to examine and understand the distinct impacts of protest characteristics on both the respondents’ sympathy for the movement and their willingness to protest. Second, we complement our analysis with an Unexpected Event during Surveys Design (UESD), which enables us to investigate how *actual* protest events involving violence and radical-right participants impact individuals’ sympathy for a social movement. Integrating both approaches addresses concerns related to the generalizability of our findings to real-world settings.³

³Although the UESD data were collected earlier (2020), our research process began with the design and implementation of the survey experiment (2022). Consequently, we present

We also address potential social desirability concerns and further enhance the validity of our findings by incorporating a pre-registered *list experiment* (Appendix F). Bias from demand effects and social desirability can lead respondents to conform to social norms or experimental expectations. Anti-containment protests faced criticism due to participants ignoring preventive measures and the organizers’ failure to distance themselves from radical-right groups. This controversial nature may have led to social desirability bias in respondents’ expressed support and willingness to participate in the protests. To address this, we conducted a pre-registered list experiment in February 2022 ($n = 2,038$) to measure sensitive attitudes indirectly and improve the validity of the results. Results of our list experiment indicate that respondents do not under-report their participation in anti-containment protests (see Appendix F). This supports the accuracy of our findings regarding the reported levels of sympathy and willingness to participate. Overall, our multifaceted design underlines the validity of our findings and allows us to thoroughly explore the relationship between violent action repertoires, problematic radical coalitions, and the mobilization potential of social movements, resulting in a more robust and nuanced understanding of the topic.

In our analyses, we use original survey data covering various social and political topics related to the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany. Several questions specifically relate to the protests against the government’s containment measures. We recruited respondents through the online access panel *respondi*. The rolling cross-section survey was fielded between June 2020 and February 2022 (24 waves) using quotas regarding education, age, and gender.

Survey Experiment

Within the last wave of our online survey in February 2022 ($n = 2,038$), we fielded a 2x2 survey experiment to investigate whether radical-right actors’ involvement and violence affected

the experimental study first. The UESD analysis then complements these results by providing external validity for the sympathy for the protest dimension.

Table 1: Survey Experiment Design

Condition	No violence	Violence
No radical-right participation	Heterogeneous group without radical-right participation	Heterogeneous group without radical-right participation
	No violence [T1 - Control]	Violence [T2]
Radical-right participation	Heterogeneous group with radical-right participation	Heterogeneous group with radical-right participation
	No violence [T3]	Violence [T4]

individuals’ sympathy for and willingness to participate in the anti-containment protests. Before the experimental manipulation, we asked respondents a series of standard questions covering demographics and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as various political attitudes.

In the survey experiment, respondents were presented with a text describing a fictional protest event. After reading the text, respondents were asked: a) *‘How much sympathy do you have for the participants of this protest event?’* and b) *‘How likely is it that you will participate in this protest event, given that it would take place close to you?’* These questions are our outcome variables and are measured using a 0–100 sliding bar. We manipulate the described protest event using four different scenarios (Table 1). All scenarios begin as follows: *This weekend, new protests are taking place against the COVID-19 containment measures. The organizers announced a demonstration through the city center.* The four different scenarios were created by interacting two elements: *radical-right actors are expected to participate* next to civil society at large and *whether the demonstration might involve violence*.

We analyze absolute differences in the outcomes of interest depending on the treatment based on OLS regressions. Since protest scenarios are randomly assigned to respondents, any differences in outcomes can be attributed to the causal effect of the characteristics of those scenarios. Additionally, we control for individual-level factors to account for systematic dif-

ferences, for example, due to imbalances in education across treatment groups (see Appendix C).

Unexpected Event during Surveys Design (UESD)

When the two focal protest events took place in August 2020 in Berlin, our survey on the anti-containment protests was in the field. Both demonstrations included radical-right participation, while the event on August 29 was also violent. Relevant for the UESD were four survey waves: waves 8 to 13 between June and September 2020 ($n = 3,297$; see Appendix Table B.1). 64.9 percent of the sample was surveyed pretreatment (before August 1), 31.1 percent after being exposed to the August 1 protest with radical-right participation (between August 1 and before August 29), and 4.0 percent after being exposed to the radical-right violent event (from August 29). We leverage these coincidental events in a UESD (Castanho Silva 2018; Muñoz et al. 2020). Due to statistical power restrictions, we only focus on explaining the variation in the following survey question: *How much sympathy do you have for the participants in the anti-containment protest events?* (answer categories range from (1), *none at all* to (4), *full sympathy*). Within this context, we examine whether the prominent involvement of radical-right actors and violent escalation against the German parliamentary building causally affected support for anti-containment protests. We argue that the national news coverage and public attention surrounding these events were the driving mechanism behind the exposure to the events (see e.g., Brown and Mourão 2021, for evidence on how media coverage can affect support for protests). We implement regression analyses with an OLS specification to estimate causal effects on sympathy for the protest. In sum, the UESD allows us to test hypotheses H2a and H3a.

There are potential limitations to the interrupted survey design concerning potential contamination between different protest treatments over time and challenges in ensuring respondents' exposure to the intended treatments. Moreover, we lack sufficient survey data

and thus statistical power to fully isolate the effects of violence, e.g., in the August 29 protest, and to study the effects of radicality on likely protest participation. Due to these limitations, we are not able to test H1a, H1b, H2b, and H3b using the UESD (see also Appendix Table A.1 for an overview). However, we believe that our multistep research design, which includes the survey experiment, addresses these limitations and improves the robustness of our findings overall.

Results

Survey Experiment: The Effect of Violence and Radical-Right Actors Disentangled

In the survey experiment, we assess the causal effect of radical-right involvement and violence during protests on both outcome variables. We study these protest characteristics across the four experimental protest scenarios previously described. We estimate predicted values of sympathy for and willingness to participate in anti-containment protests using regressions with an OLS specification. To account for the joint treatment of radical-right presence and violence in the protest, we include an interaction term between the treatments.

Across the cross-sectional survey waves from 2020 to 2022, we see differences in support levels between sympathy for the protests and willingness to participate in these protests: an average of 20 percent of respondents claimed to have a lot of or some sympathy for the protests, while only 10 percent claimed to be (very) likely to participate in an anti-containment protest. In the February 2022 wave, which incorporated the survey experiment, the mean sympathy for the protests stood at 31.2 percent, while the average willingness to participate reached 14.3 percent (100-point scale). In other words, both sympathy and willingness to participate differ in absolute terms, but the proportions remain comparable - despite the differences in scale. This indicates a stable mobilization potential over time.

We now turn our attention to the results of the survey experiment (Table 2). To ease the interpretation of the findings concerning the interaction effects, we visualize these in Figure 1. The results indicate that radical-right coalitions in a protest event significantly reduce sympathy for the protest, as can be seen in the left panel. Compared to a peaceful protest, in which only participants from broad civil society participate, a protest with radical-right involvement decreases sympathy from 34.8 to 28.8 points – a 6-point decrease ($p = 0.03$). The violent action in the protest scenario with radical-right involvement slightly reinforces this effect by decreasing sympathy to 27.7 points. Although this effect indicates statistically significant differences from the peaceful scenario without radical-right participation ($p < 0.01$), it does not indicate significant differences from the protest scenario that only portrays radical-right involvement. Thus, the scenario that only includes violent actions has no statistically significant effects on sympathy for the protest.⁴

Next, we analyze the effect of violence and radical-right presence on the willingness to participate in the right-hand panel of Figure 1. Contrary to our findings for sympathy, we do not find any statistically significant effect of either radical-right presence or violence on individuals’ likelihood to mobilize.⁵

Overall, the results of the survey experiment provide evidence in line with Hypothesis 2a, which predicted that the involvement of radical-right actors in protest events would diminish individuals’ sympathy for a movement. The findings indicate that radical-right protest involvement reduces protest sympathy but has no significant impact on willingness to participate, thus supporting Hypothesis 2a but not Hypothesis 2b. Specifically, the presence of the radical right results in a 6-percentage-point decline in sympathy, which translates into a

⁴Note that the low R-squares in the regressions are not problematic for causal inference in experimental settings since the independent variables aim to explain absolute differences and not variation.

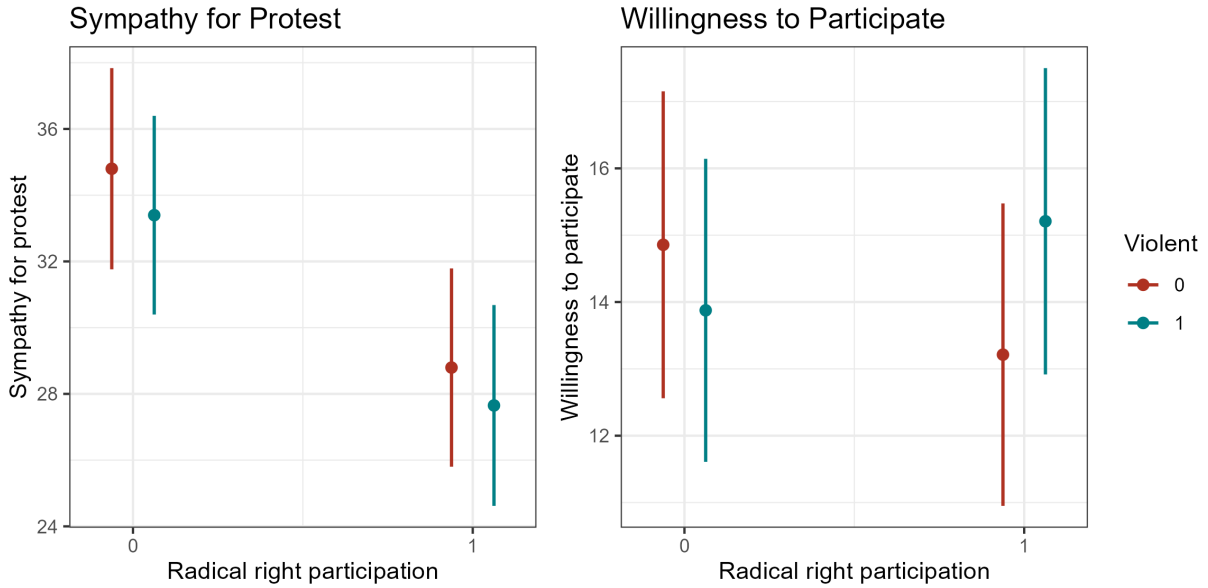
⁵The treatment groups show balance across gender but not across education levels. We address these imbalances in a regression analysis. Moreover, the main results are robust to additional socio-economic and political controls (Appendix C).

Table 2: Experimental Main Results - OLS Regressions

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>	
	Sympathy for Protest	Willingness to Participate
Violent protest	-1.403 (-5.669, 2.864)	-0.981 (-4.206, 2.244)
Radical-right participation	-6.004*** (-10.266, -1.741)	-1.644 (-4.866, 1.578)
Violent protest x Radical-right participation	0.259 (-5.769, 6.286)	2.976 (-1.580, 7.532)
Constant	34.799*** (31.763, 37.835)	14.857*** (12.562, 17.151)
Observations	2,038	2,038
R ²	0.007	0.001
Adjusted R ²	0.006	-0.001
Residual Std. Error (df = 2034)	34.707	26.233
F Statistic (df = 3; 2034)	5.070***	0.617

Note: 0.95 confidence intervals between brackets.*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 1: Predicted Values of the Interaction Analysis



Note: different y-axis scales. Error bars depict 0.95 confidence intervals.

17-percent reduction in support among sympathizers. In contrast, our findings do not support the overarching notion that violent events decrease mobilization potential, neither in isolation (H1a and H1b) nor in interaction (H3a and H3b). That is, we do not observe any evidence of a reinforcing effect when both radical features are present. Violence during protest events

with radical-right participation does not induce different effects on sympathy for the protest or willingness to participate compared to scenarios involving only radical-right participants. These findings remain robust across alternative model specifications (see Appendix D.3) and continue to hold after controlling for relevant covariates, including political ideology (see Appendix D.2).

Note that our results underscore the importance of distinguishing between sympathy for the protest and willingness to participate. We show that supporters who are likely to take to the streets are unaffected by both scenarios, unlike those who merely express sympathy. For respondents inclined to participate in the anti-containment protest from the outset, the presence of violence or radical-right actors has minimal and non-significant impact. Individuals predisposed to participating in a protest are not deterred by violent actions or problematic coalitions. Consequently, even if the protest is characterized as ‘radical’, these protesters remain equally motivated to participate as they would in an event without radical actions and actors. Additionally, we explore heterogeneous effects of ideology in Appendix D.4. Overall, we find that individuals’ ideological self-placement is not a relevant factor in the demobilizing potential of radicality — neither when radical actors are present nor when the events are violent.

In the following, we complement our analysis with the UESD to further underline the robustness of our findings concerning the impact of radical-right actors and the use of violence in protests on expressing sympathy for the protests.

Unexpected Events during Surveys: Major Protests in August 2020

As highlighted before, we study two focal anti-containment protest events to understand the effect of violent protest behavior and radical-right involvement on protest support. Figure 2, Panel (A), depicts the estimated number of participants in anti-containment protests in Germany. Evidently, both events mobilized an exceptionally high number of protesters.

Panel B shows the media attention to the anti-containment protest. Following the events in August 2020, media and academic reports emphasized the movement’s intense radicalization tendencies, and security agencies began to officially monitor the *Querdenken* movement. These dynamics emphasize how, although the protest events were very large and partially heterogeneous, they were portrayed as radical both in terms of radical-right involvement and violent actions. The protest events received extensive press coverage and generated significant public attention. We leverage the media coverage and public attention as the drivers of the information diffusion mechanism behind the treatment of radical-right participation (first and second event) and of violent escalation (only in the second event).⁶ Panel (C) depicts the intensity of Google searches during the study period, reflecting the increase in public attention following the August 1 event and shortly before the August 29 demonstration. This is in line with the media attention patterns.⁷

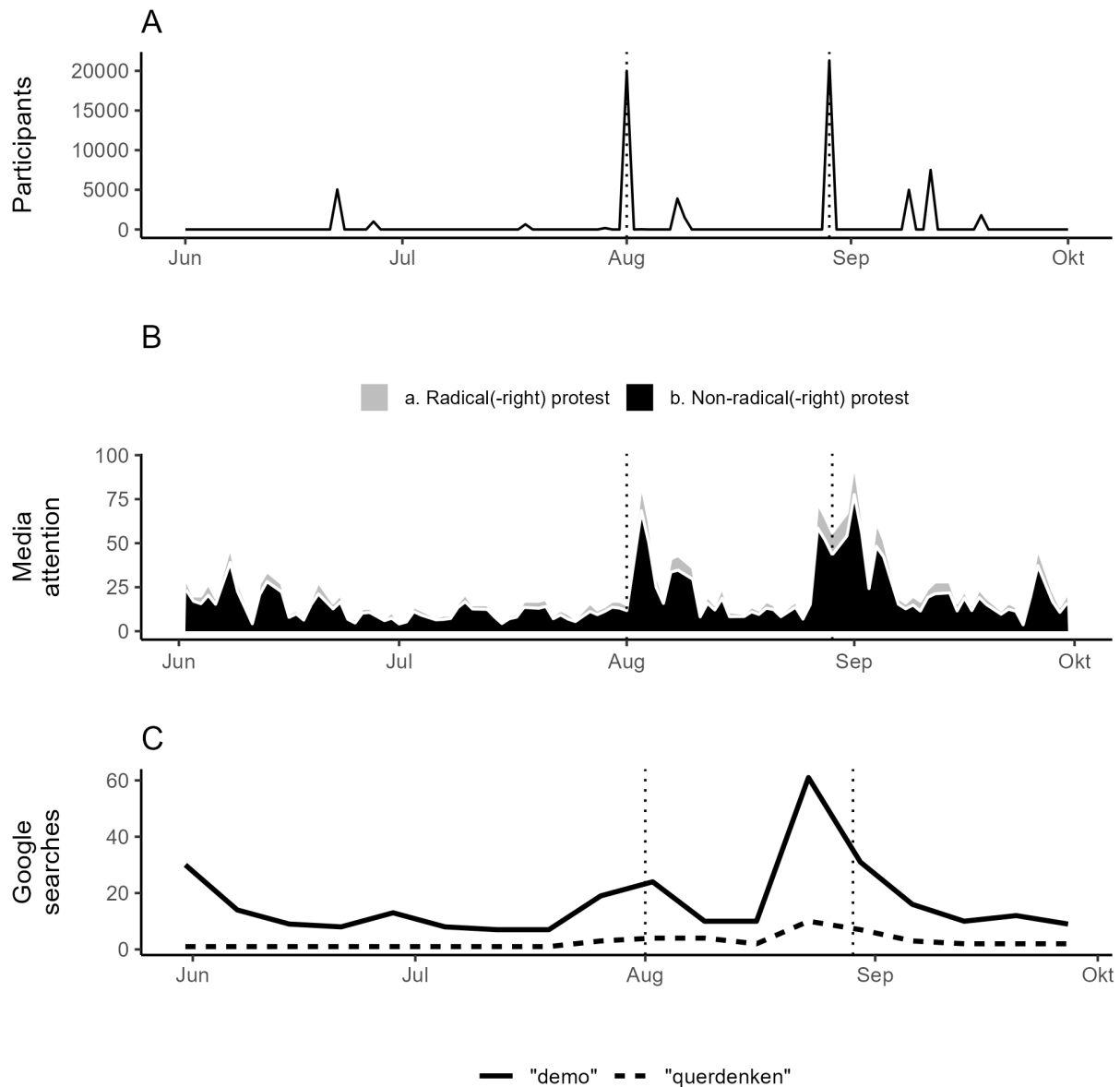
We now assess the impact of protests with violence and radical-right involvement on protest sympathy in the aftermath of the two events using OLS regression. Model 1 in Table 3 only includes the dummy variables that relate to the two relevant time points, namely the radical-right event and the radical-right and violent event. We include socio-demographic controls in Model 2 and ideological controls in Model 3.

Across the models, we find that the August 1 protest (radical-right involvement) had a substantially negative and statistically significant effect on sympathy for anti-containment protests. According to Model 1, the August 1 protest substantially decreased sympathy from 0.69 to 0.55 (-4.6 percentage points on the 4-point scale). In contrast, the radical-right and violent event of August 29 had a marginally small and statistically insignificant effect.

⁶While controlling for media consumption would strengthen our test of this mechanism (see for instance Brown & Mourão, 2021), our survey lacked such an item. Instead, we use Google Trends data as a proxy for public attention.

⁷External threat factors, like COVID-19 incidence and containment policies, remained constant and negligible throughout the evaluation period, allowing us to discount their impact on our results.

Figure 2: The Anti-COVID-Containment Protest: Protest Participants, Media Attention, and Public Resonance (2020)



Note: (A) Anti-containment protest participants based on PEA (Süddeutsche Zeitung). (B) Debate attention: share of reporting sentences on different sub-debates (*structural topic model*) on anti-containment protests in Germany based on five national and four regional news outlets. Topics related to the radical right: Querdenken/violence, radical right; non-radical-right topics: protest, Berlin/ Saxony/ Monday demonstrations, anti-containment protest, policing. (C) Google searches: relative terms based on GoogleTrends. Different y-axis scales.

In summary, the first protest with radical-right participation decreased sympathy for the protest, suggesting that the radical right largely remains stigmatized among the population.

Next, we examine support for the protests over time. Figure 3 shows the predicted values of protest support with week-fixed effects. This fine-grained perspective highlights the stable level of sympathy before August 1 and how, in the third week after the event (week 10), absolute support significantly drops to 0.55 (-4.8 percentage points). This trend continues until four weeks after the event (week 11), but the estimate is not significant, possibly due to the low number of observations. Although not statistically significant across all weeks, this analysis reaffirms the diminishing effect of radical-right involvement on protest sympathy, as observed on August 1. Furthermore, following the radical-right *and* violent event of August 29, we do not observe a further decrease in sympathy for protest, albeit it remains below the initial baseline levels. However, we are hesitant to draw conclusions from the August 29 event, as the effects of the first radical-right event on August 1 took time to manifest fully, and we lack further data.

To test the robustness of these findings, we conduct a bandwidth test (Muñoz et al., 2020), a placebo test (Muñoz et al., 2020), and an entropy balance matching analysis (Hainmueller, 2012) among socio-demographic co-variates across treatment periods to account for heterogeneity bias (Appendices E.3 to E.5). We also conduct additional analyses controlling for gender, ideology, and age due to imbalances in the sample (see Appendix E for specifications on power analysis, scales, and imbalance tests). Overall, the results consistently demonstrate the robustness of our findings.

Overall, these results align with the findings of the survey experiment study, while further reinforcing Hypothesis 2a: The presence of radical actors at a protest significantly and negatively impacts protest sympathy. Moreover, and in line with the results from the survey experiment, we also do not observe a reinforcing effect when both radical features are present, leading us to reject Hypothesis 3a. In sum, the evidence from the UESD reveals that the involvement of the radical right in protests significantly discourages sympathizers from endorsing anti-containment mobilization. In essence, co-mobilizing protests with radical-right actors appears to reduce protest sympathy, a noteworthy micro-level dynamic that has been

Table 3: Protest Event Intervention Effects on Sympathy for Anti-Containment Protests

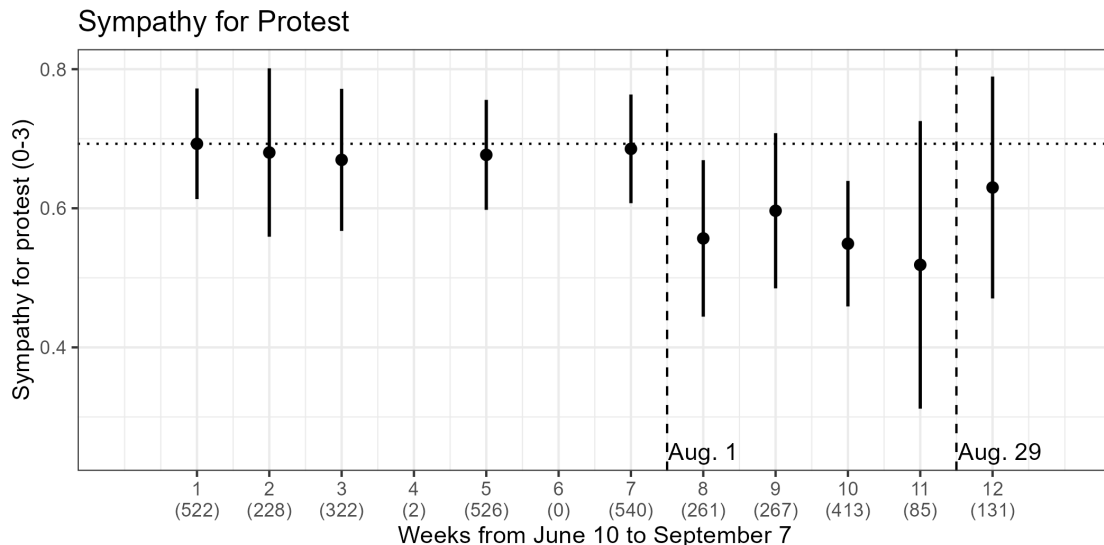
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Radical-R PE	-0.14*** (-0.21, -0.07)	-0.12*** (-0.19, -0.06)	-0.12*** (-0.19, -0.05)
Radical-R & violent PE	-0.04 (-0.20, 0.13)	-0.03 (-0.20, 0.13)	-0.05 (-0.22, 0.11)
Age		-0.01*** (-0.01, -0.01)	-0.01*** (-0.01, -0.01)
Female/diverse		-0.18*** (-0.24, -0.11)	-0.14*** (-0.20, -0.07)
Education mid.		-0.05 (-0.14, 0.03)	-0.05 (-0.13, 0.04)
Education high		-0.07* (-0.15, 0.01)	-0.03 (-0.12, 0.05)
Left-right 2			-0.10* (-0.21, 0.02)
Left-right 3			0.09* (-0.01, 0.19)
Left-right 4			0.22*** (0.10, 0.34)
Left-right 5			0.50*** (0.35, 0.64)
Constant	0.69*** (0.65, 0.73)	1.21*** (1.07, 1.35)	1.08*** (0.91, 1.24)
Observations	3,297	3,270	3,255
R ²	0.00	0.03	0.05
Adjusted R ²	0.00	0.03	0.05
Residual SE	0.94 (df = 3294)	0.93 (df = 3263)	0.92 (df = 3244)
F Statistic	7.44*** (df = 2; 3294)	15.04*** (df = 6; 3263)	17.64*** (df = 10; 3244)

Note: 0.95 confidence intervals between brackets. *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. PE = protest event. "Radical-R PE" dummy covers August 2 to 28; "Radical-R & violent PE" covers August 29 to September 2. Reference groups: Education low, and Left-right 1. Left-right self-placement categories: 0-2 = 1; 3-4 = 2; 5 = 3; 6-7 = 4; 8-10 = 5.

largely overlooked in the existing literature.

As mentioned above, the UESD carries some limitations. For instance, we lack statistical power to study the effects of radicality on likely protest participation. Additionally, following the first event, public debates may have shifted in a way that could have influenced public support for protests over time.

Figure 3: Protest Event Intervention Effects on Sympathy for Anti-Containment Protests over Time



Note: point estimates are predicted values based on Model 3, Table 3 with week-fixed effects instead of treatment periods. Week 1 starts on June 10 and Week 12 ends on September 7, 2020. Values in parentheses: weekly number of survey respondents. The horizontal dotted line represents the initial predicted support for protest (Week 1). Protest events (August 1, August 29) are represented by the dashed lines. Model in Appendix Table E.1.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we assess how different forms of radicality in the protest arena affect support in the context of a newly emerging right-authoritarian social movement. Specifically, we study the potentially demobilizing effect of expected violence and the participation of radical-right actors on individuals' sympathy for and potential participation in anti-containment protests in Germany. We adopt the distinction between sympathy and likely participation from classical works in social movement studies that differentiate between consensus and action mobilization (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987).

Empirically, we leverage recent real-world developments during the COVID-19 pandemic that gave rise to a regressive movement with an increasingly violent action repertoire and the strong involvement of organizations and participants from the radical right (della Porta, 2023). To study our questions, we combine natural and survey experimental data. Our multi-

step research design combines public opinion evidence from an unexpected event analysis of two major anti-containment protests in August 2020 with an experimental survey study. Furthermore, the results from a list experiment provide robust evidence that the observed attitudes and intended behavior toward the protest do not carry social desirability biases (for details, see Appendix F).

Our findings provide limited evidence for a demobilizing effect of radicality on protest support. Concretely, we point to two asymmetries concerning how radicality plays out in the protest arena: *First*, different aspects of radicality in the dynamics of protests affect mobilization differently. We found no effects on sympathy for the protest and potential participation when violence was expected at a protest. Radical-right actors' presence only made a difference in sympathy for the protests. We found lower levels of sympathy in individuals who observed radical-right involvement in anti-containment protests. *Second*, commitment matters. The effects of radical coalitions were also asymmetric, depending on the potential support group. We found no deterrent effect on highly committed individuals — their willingness to protest remained stable regardless of radical-right involvement or protest violence. It is crucial to distinguish sympathizers from potential protesters, who are likely more radicalized and less deterred by violence or radical actors.

Our findings contrast with studies suggesting that violent protests universally reduce sympathy for a movement and willingness to participate. Instead, they align with research emphasizing that such effects are context-dependent — the demobilizing impact of violence may vary across protester groups, levels of prior commitment, and the issues at stake. In a study on radical-right movements and antiracist counterprotesters, Simpson et al. (2018) demonstrate that violence by counterprotesters reduces support for antiracist groups, while white nationalist movements using violence do not experience this effect. The authors suggest this difference could be due to floor effects, where the limited supporters of white nationalism are generally more tolerant of violence. We believe that the lack of violent actions' effects on the support for the anti-containment protests we observe aligns with the experimental

evidence provided by Simpson et al. (2018) and can be explained by the right-authoritarian characteristics of this social movement. Furthermore, the *Querdenkers*' closeness to conspiracy theories, which we discussed above, might explain the null effects for violence. Evidence from the US has shown that belief in conspiracy theories is associated with increased endorsement of political violence (Vegetti & Littvay, 2022). Psychological studies have further emphasized how increased group identification can drive an individual's readiness to participate in violence, emphasizing a cyclical relationship, where participating in violent actions further increases group identification (Littman & Paluck, 2015).

The absence of a violence effect aligns with research emphasizing the role of protester characteristics. For instance, Huff and Kruszewska (2016) do not find an effect of violence on mobilization and emphasize the role of baseline measurements. Thus, they posit that the increase in support following violence may be "occurring within a small subset of the population that was perhaps already in favor of either the organization or their cause" (Huff & Kruszewska, 2016, p. 1800). Similarly, Wouters (2018, p. 421) emphasizes that '*some* protest features affect *some* observers differently.' He reveals that observer's identification with the demonstrators mediates how protest features influence support. Additionally, the impact of violence in protests can differ depending on individuals' connection to the movement. This connects to recent insights from the dissent-repression literature that similarly show that repression does not deterministically have a de-mobilization effect (Ritter & Conrad, 2016). In this context, protesters may choose to participate specifically in situations where they anticipate possible violent interactions linked to their mobilization activities. Furthermore, activists closely tied to the movement overlook violence; thus, violent tactics increase visibility and public support for the movement (Feinberg et al., 2020). Our research design, which differentiates between two individual-level outcomes, enabled us to test the impact of violence on respondents with different levels of commitment. While our results do not support such differentiation in the case of violence, we find a differentiated response regarding the presence of the radical right, reducing sympathy but not willingness to participate.

Our results resonate with recent studies on the radical right in advanced democracies, which suggest a shift toward mainstreaming, with the radical right dominating parliaments, public discourses, and civil society (Miller-Idriss, 2022). The parliamentary representation of the radical right can shift and erode norms, thus normalizing the radical-right (Valentim, 2021). An ideological refocus from nativism and anti-semitism to a conspirational and anti-establishment ideology facilitates the radical right’s influence on mainstream political outlets (Völker & Saldivia Gonzatti, 2024). These developments may lead committed protesters to co-mobilize with radical actors (Giugni et al., 2005). We suggest that the pandemic allowed radical-right actors to attract non-radical-right protesters. Thus, protest supporters deeply committed to the cause, already beyond the sympathizing stage and eager to participate, remained unaffected by coalition formations with the radical right.

Our multistep research design lends external and internal validity to our results and might motivate future work to integrate observational and experimental approaches in the field of contentious politics. Yet, we want to point out three limitations of our experimental setup. *First*, the natural experiment did not allow us to distinguish violence and the involvement of the radical right neatly. *Second*, when the survey experiment was fielded in February 2022, most of the German public had already been primed by specific media portrayals of the anti-containment mobilization. Therefore, our null results may reflect processes that occurred previously. Individuals may have already self-selected out of protest participation before February 2022 — meaning the pool of potential “support droppers” was likely depleted in advance. *Finally*, our *violent protest* treatment might have been biased by our formulation that *police forces* expected a high level of violence. Many supporters of the anti-containment protests expressed low levels of trust in political institutions and the police. This fact could have granted our treatment text less credibility, leading individuals to underestimate violence coming from the protest side. Additionally, the treatment text stated that violence “might” be involved, which potentially weakens the treatment effect among certain respondents. In the experimental design, the treatment text was intentionally formulated to avoid deceiving

respondents or implying that all anti-containment protests were violent.

Notwithstanding these limitations, our study contributes to the scholarly literature on two key features of radicality in protest. We highlight the diminishing demobilizing effect of radicality in the case of the anti-containment movement in Germany. This empirical insight aligns with recent developments of the global radical right that seeks to appeal to the political center through the mainstreaming of antisystem attitudes and claims (Miller-Idriss, 2022). The evidence is particularly noteworthy in the context of Germany, which is an unlikely case for such findings, given the recent history of stigmatization of the radical right. Thus, our study reveals a worrying development in an established democracy that may characterize other regressive movements in the future and pose a threat to democratic politics, especially in terms of radicalization of street mobilization. Moreover, our findings may inform studies on radicalization, shedding light on how different characteristics of radicality in protests affect individuals asymmetrically. The fact that sympathizers are more receptive to shifts in their attitudes when they observe radical coalitions during protests, while more committed potential protesters remain steadfast, is important for prevention efforts. This asymmetry underscores the need for practical preventive interventions that address weak and strong supporters of right-authoritarian movements differently.

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Appendices

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A Overview of Hypotheses and Empirical Tests

Table A.1: Overview of hypotheses and empirical tests

	Hypothesis	Tests	
H1a	The presence of violence at protest events will diminish individuals' sympathy for a movement	SE	-
H1b	The presence of violence at protest events will decrease individuals' willingness to protest	SE	-
H2a	The involvement of radical-right actors at protest events will diminish individuals' sympathy for a movement.	SE	UESD
H2b	The involvement of radical-right actors at protest events will decrease individuals' willingness to protest.	SE	-
H3a	The presence of violence and radical-right actors at protest events will diminish individuals' sympathy for a movement.	SE	UESD
H3b	The presence of violence and radical-right actors at protest events will decrease individuals' willingness to protest	SE	-

Note: SE = Survey Experiment; UESD = Unexpected Event During Survey Design

B Additional Information on Survey

The survey data used in the natural experiment is part of a substantial large-N rolling cross-sectional online study, specifically designed to investigate social and political attitudes linked to the Covid-19 pandemic. This survey study consisted of a total number of 24 Waves. Specific questions pertaining to attitudes towards anti-containment protests were introduced in *wave 8*. Thus, relevant for this study are the waves between *wave 8*, beginning on June 10th, 2020, and *wave 13*, ending on September 2, 2020. Subsequently, the survey experiment was conducted in the final wave, employing a larger sample size, determined by power calculations. In the questionnaire, the list experiment was conducted prior to the factorial survey experiment.

C Experiment Balance Tests

We conducted a further survey wave in February–March 2022 that included the survey experiment and the list experiment. Here, we blocked groups to create representative samples within the survey concerning age, gender, and education levels. For gender and age, we obtained the expected distributions based on population statistics. The randomization across treatment groups in the list and survey experiment is also balanced for both variables.

Table B.1: Timetable and Sample Size per Survey Wave

Wave	Fieldwork Start	Fieldwork End	N	Study
8	Jun 10, 2020	Jun 21, 2020	530	UESD
9	Jun 25, 2020	Jul 05, 2020	544	UESD
10	Jul 09, 2020	Jul 15, 2020	526	UESD
11	Jul 23, 2020	Jul 30, 2020	540	UESD
12	Aug 06, 2020	Aug 17, 2020	539	UESD
13	Aug 20, 2020	Sep 02, 2020	618	UESD
...	...	...	...	
24	Feb 12, 2022	Feb 25, 2022	2,038	Experiment

Note: In the UESD analyses, weeks refer to calendar weeks starting with the count in Wave 8 of the rolling cross-sectional survey. Therefore, Waves and weeks do not overlap. Survey waves 14 to 17 were conducted in November and December 2020 and included the sympathy for protest items. However, as previously argued, these waves were conducted too late for inclusion in the UESD analysis.

However, highly educated individuals were over-sampled with respect to the original blocked groups (Table C.1).

Table C.1: Education Level Distribution in the Sample

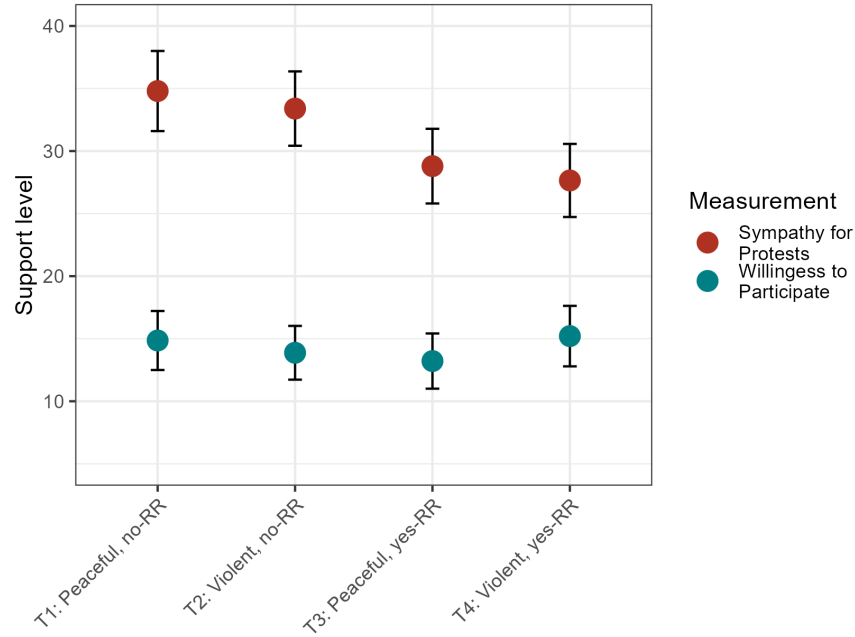
Group	N	Share
High education	721	0.36
Middle education	700	0.34
Low education	617	0.30

Although education distribution was balanced across the list experiment treatments, an ANOVA test reveals that we obtained different education group distributions across the survey experimental treatments at a moderately statistically significant level ($p = 0.053$). For this reason, we emphasize the importance of conducting additional OLS regression analyses for the survey experimental data while also controlling for some of these factors. The results confirm the notion of the simple models where the independent variable protest support is regressed on the treatments.

D Survey Experiment

Figure D.1 presents the results from the survey experiment in absolute mean values for sympathy for and willingness to participate in anti-containment protests. Tables D.3 and D.4 and Figures D.2 to D.5 present the regression with OLS specifications and further independent variables.

Figure D.1: Experimental Results



Notes: black lines depict 0.95 confidence interval of the means.

D.1 Sample Size by Treatment Group and Manipulation Checks

Table D.1: Sample Size by Treatment Group

Treatment	N
T1: Peaceful, no-RR	502
T2: Violent, no-RR	515
T3: Peaceful, yes-RR	517
T4: Violent, yes-RR	504

Table D.2: Manipulation Check – Violence

Comparison	Mean 1	Mean 2	p-value
T1-T2	2,48	2,37	0.01
T1-T3	2,48	2,20	< 0.00
T2-T3	2,37	2,20	< 0.00
T3-T4	2,20	2,21	0.90

Table D.1 presents the sample size by treatment group. The manipulation check analysis is portrayed in Table D.2. We compare the answers (t-tests of the mean levels) to the question ‘Wie hoch schätzen Sie das Gewaltpotential der beschriebenen Demonstration im vorherigen Szenario?’ (‘How much violence potential do you perceive in the just describe demonstration scenario?’). Answers ranged from ‘a lot’ (1) to ‘none’ (4). Overall, the violent event was perceived as indeed more violent than the peaceful event (statistically significant). The protest events including the radical right were perceived as even more violent than the ‘sole violent’ one. In short, the treatment manipulation worked to transmit the violent environment; the radical-right treatment had a similar and even larger effect on the violence potential perception.

D.2 Regression tables and Covariate Analyses

Table D.3: Covariate Analysis A

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Sympathy A	Willingness A
Violent Protest	−1.898 (2.100)	−1.202 (1.606)
Radical-Right Participation	−6.436*** (2.099)	−1.830 (1.606)
Violent Protest x Radical-Right Participation	0.961 (2.969)	3.248 (2.271)
Female and divers - dummy	−2.897* (1.518)	−2.278** (1.161)
Age	−0.420*** (0.059)	−0.264*** (0.045)
Vocational training - dummy	2.586 (2.218)	0.437 (1.697)
Left-right (0-11)	4.621*** (0.414)	2.962*** (0.317)
Children - dummy	5.106*** (1.626)	3.212*** (1.244)
Household income 750-1.500€	3.013 (3.235)	0.958 (2.474)
− 1.500-2.500€	−1.464 (3.142)	0.242 (2.403)
− 2.500-4.000€	−3.654 (3.086)	−2.699 (2.361)
− 4.000-6.000€	−5.419 (3.477)	−3.928 (2.659)
− > 6.000€	−7.766 (4.984)	−6.306* (3.813)
Constant	26.062*** (4.578)	10.332*** (3.502)
Observations	2,038	2,038
R ²	0.089	0.060
Adjusted R ²	0.083	0.054
Residual Std. Error (df = 2024)	33.341	25.503
F Statistic (df = 13; 2024)	15.118***	10.006***

Note:

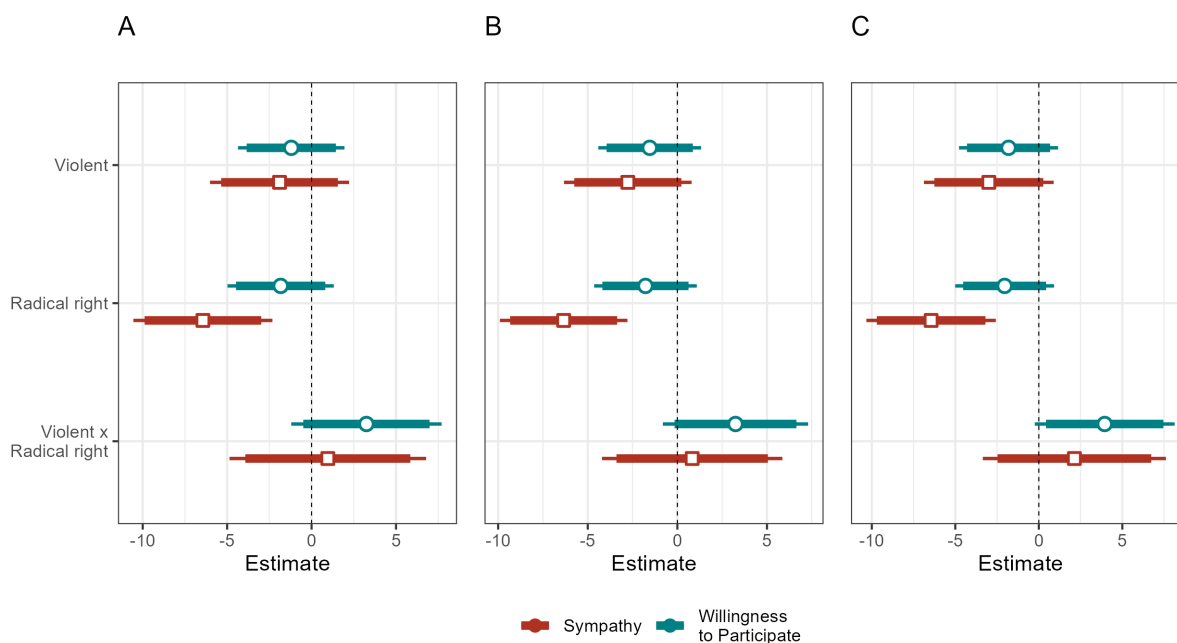
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table D.4: Covariate Analysis B and C

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Sympathy B	Willingness B	Sympathy C	Willingness C
Violent Protest	-2.764 (1.816)	-1.544 (1.462)	-2.995 (1.981)	-1.813 (1.513)
Radical-right Participation	-6.344*** (1.814)	-1.780 (1.461)	-6.449*** (1.976)	-2.047 (1.509)
Violent Protest x				
Radical-right Participation	0.827 (2.566)	3.244 (2.066)	2.128 (2.796)	3.945* (2.135)
Female and divers - dummy	-2.204 (1.344)	0.007 (1.082)	-1.858 (1.446)	-0.502 (1.105)
Age	-0.239*** (0.052)	-0.108*** (0.042)	-0.541*** (0.057)	-0.292*** (0.043)
Vocational training - dummy	1.183 (1.920)	-0.420 (1.546)	0.596 (2.090)	-0.740 (1.596)
Children - dummy	1.992 (1.411)	1.271 (1.136)	3.139** (1.541)	1.777 (1.177)
Household income 750-1.500€	2.598 (2.798)	0.007 (2.253)	2.576 (3.043)	0.733 (2.324)
- 1.500-2.500€	1.453 (2.722)	1.474 (2.191)	-0.446 (2.961)	1.270 (2.262)
- 2.500-4.000€	1.037 (2.683)	-0.274 (2.160)	-1.764 (2.919)	-0.945 (2.229)
- 4.000-6.000€	2.563 (3.036)	0.590 (2.444)	-2.707 (3.318)	-1.465 (2.534)
- > 6.000€	-0.767 (4.325)	-2.168 (3.482)	-1.211 (4.720)	-1.576 (3.605)
Left-Right Self-Placement	2.506*** (0.369)	1.575*** (0.297)		
Containment measure accept	-7.313*** (0.471)	-3.366*** (0.379)		
Democracy satisfaction	-2.853*** (0.507)	-1.356*** (0.408)		
Prob. apply violence	1.962*** (0.440)	4.496*** (0.355)		
Pro Free Market			3.184*** (0.464)	2.457*** (0.355)
Pro Solving Econ. Inequality			-0.511 (0.498)	-0.862** (0.381)
Pro Migrant Assimilation			0.794 (0.522)	0.686* (0.399)
Pro Refugee Rights			-0.789* (0.449)	0.630* (0.343)
Pro Limit Migration			1.676*** (0.522)	0.920** (0.399)
Anti-Semitic Attitude			1.912*** (0.460)	2.393*** (0.351)
Pro Homosexual Lifestyle			-1.640*** (0.531)	-2.385*** (0.405)
Pro Binding Referenda			4.774*** (0.478)	2.271*** (0.365)
Constant	66.375*** (4.591)	20.376*** (3.696)	22.686*** (6.049)	11.463** (4.620)
Observations	2,038	2,038	2,038	2,038
R ²	0.320	0.223	0.198	0.175
Adjusted R ²	0.315	0.217	0.190	0.167
Residual Std. Error	28.818 (df = 2021)	23.203 (df = 2021)	31.332 (df = 2017)	23.931 (df = 2017)
F Statistic	59.449*** (df = 16; 2021)	36.335*** (df = 16; 2021)	24.871*** (df = 20; 2017)	21.465*** (df = 20; 2017)

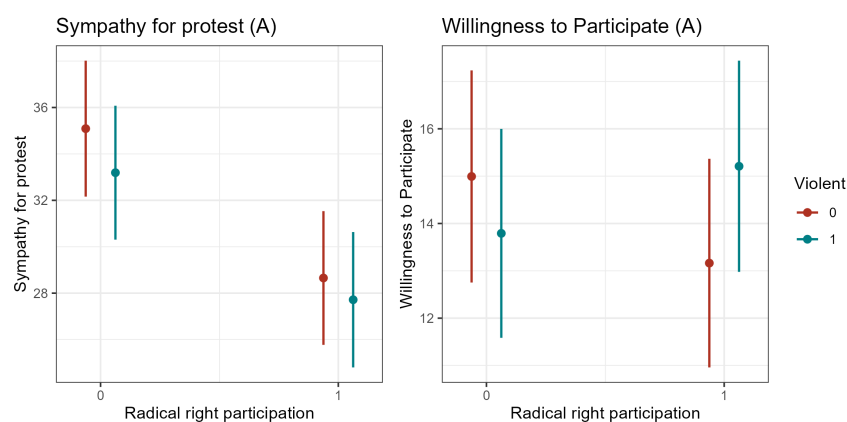
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure D.2: Regression Analysis Across Three Models



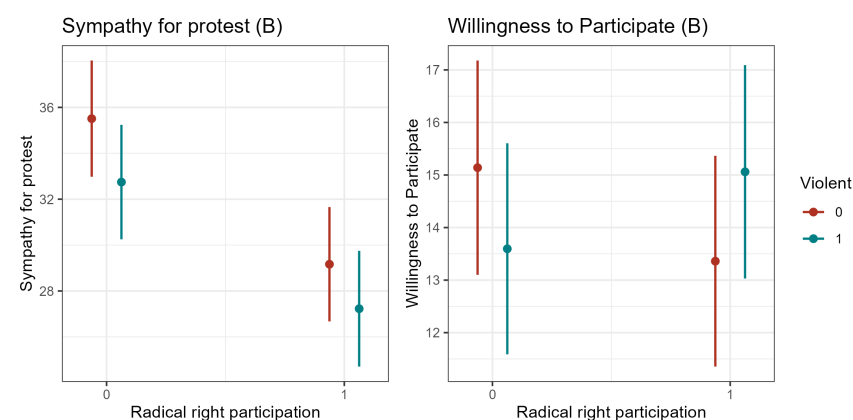
Notes: thin error bars depict 0.95 confidence intervals; thick inner-error bars depict 0.90 confidence intervals. Model A covers only socio-demographics; Model B covers left-right self-placement, containment measure acceptance, democracy satisfaction and probability to accept violence; Model C covers a battery of different political dimension preferences, ranging from preferences on economic state intervention to preferences on binding referenda.

Figure D.3: Predicted Probabilities of the Interaction Analysis of Models A



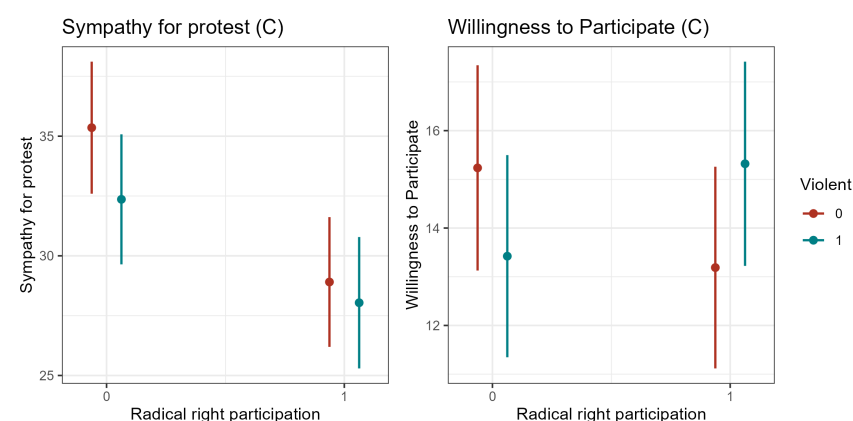
Note: different y-axis scales. Error bars depict 0.95 confidence intervals.

Figure D.4: Predicted Probabilities of the Interaction Analysis of Models B



Note: different y-axis scales. Error bars depict 0.95 confidence intervals.

Figure D.5: Predicted Probabilities of the Interaction Analysis of Models C

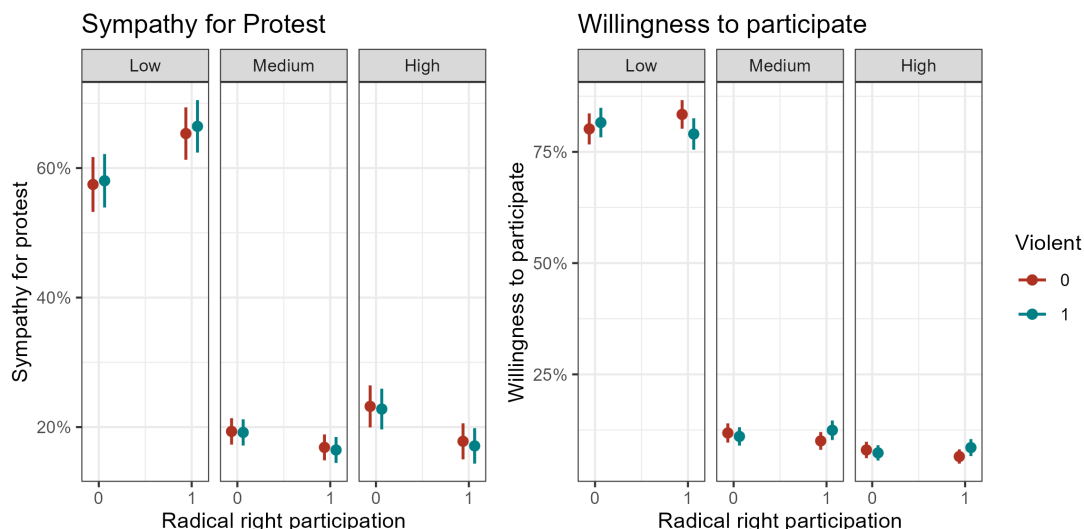


Note: different y-axis scales. Error bars depict 0.95 confidence intervals.

D.3 Robustness check with alternative model specification

While the numeric scale (0-100) used for our dependent variables provides valuable granularity, it may also introduce excess variability, which can inflate standard errors and make significant results harder to detect. To address this variability and as part of a robustness check, we recoded the variables into categorical groups (e.g., low, medium, high) and replicated our analysis using these categorical variables. Specifically, we applied two cut-off points to divide observations into three categories: (1) low levels of sympathy or willingness to participate (scores from 0 to 33), (2) medium levels of sympathy or willingness to participate (scores from 34 to 66), and (3) high levels of sympathy or willingness to participate (scores from 67 to 100). Using these new categorical variables, we estimated ordered logistic regression models and calculated predicted probabilities. The results visualized and presented below underscore the robustness of our findings to alternative model specifications.

Figure D.6: Predicted Probabilities of the Interaction Analysis Using Categorical Variables and Ordered Logistic Regression Models



Note: different y-axis scales. Error bars depict 0.95 confidence intervals. Low = 0-33; Middle = 34-66; High = 67-100

For the sympathy for protests variable, radical right involvement increases the likelihood of low sympathy while reducing the likelihood of medium and high sympathy. This suggests that radical right involvement negatively impacts sympathy for protests. However, probabilities remain consistent across violent and non-violent conditions, indicating little influence on respondents' sympathy for protests. Moreover, we do not observe an interaction effect. Concerning the willingness to participate variable, neither the radical right participation nor the violence condition appears to significantly affect respondents' willingness to participate.

D.4 Heterogeneous treatment effects across political ideologies

Previous research suggests that ideology may act as a moderating variable when examining the effects of violence on protest support. To explore this, we included a three-way interaction term in our analysis to investigate heterogeneous treatment effects across the political ideological spectrum. The main effect of the left-right ideology variable is significant and positive, indicating that as respondents become more right-leaning, both their sympathy for protests and their willingness to participate increase significantly. Neither violence nor radical-right involvement alone has a significant main effect on sympathy for or willingness to protest. The three-way interaction shows that the negative effects of radical-right involvement on sympathy is most pronounced among center and right-leaning individuals.

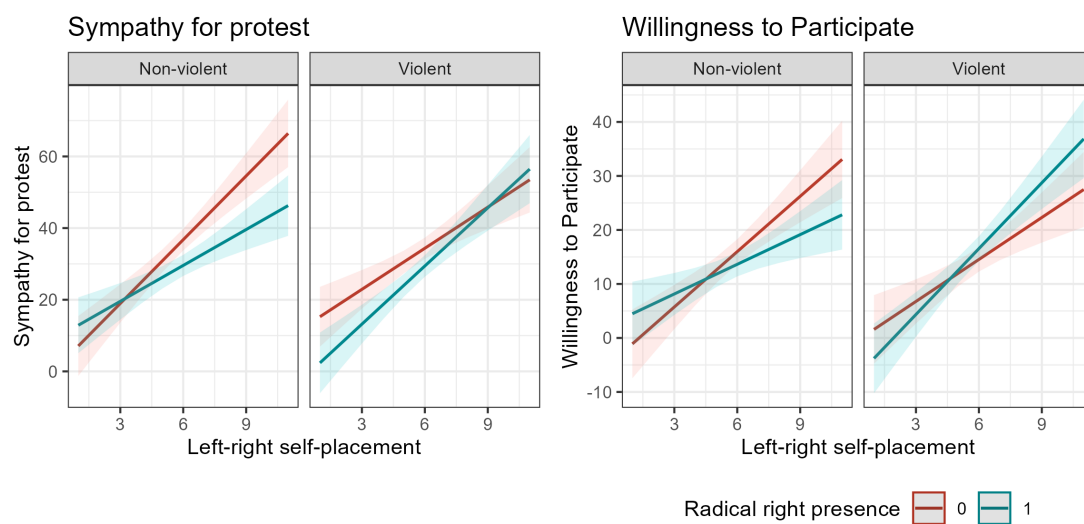
Table D.5: Three-way interaction effects of violence, radical-right involvement, and political ideology.

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Sympathy for Protest	Willingness to Participate
Violent Protest	10.273 (−3.728, 24.275)	3.499 (−7.171, 14.170)
Radical-Right Participation	8.380 (−5.146, 21.905)	7.159 (−3.149, 17.467)
Left-right self-placement	5.933*** (4.263, 7.604)	3.416*** (2.142, 4.689)
Violent Protest x Rad.-Right Part.	−22.850** (−42.389, −3.311)	−13.992* (−28.883, 0.899)
Violent Protest x L-R	−2.111* (−4.454, 0.233)	−0.825 (−2.611, 0.961)
Rad.-right x L-R	−2.594** (−4.848, −0.340)	−1.584* (−3.302, 0.134)
Violent x Rad.-right x L-R	4.181** (0.917, 7.446)	3.057** (0.569, 5.545)
Constant	1.160 (−8.760, 11.081)	−4.508 (−12.069, 3.052)
Observations	2,038	2,038
R ²	0.066	0.044
Adjusted R ²	0.063	0.041
Residual Std. Error (df = 2030)	33.703	25.685
F Statistic (df = 7; 2030)	20.452***	13.383***

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure D.7: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects Across Political Ideologies



Note: different y-axis scales. Shaded areas represent 0.95 confidence intervals.

E Unexpected Event During Survey Design

E.1 Power Analysis

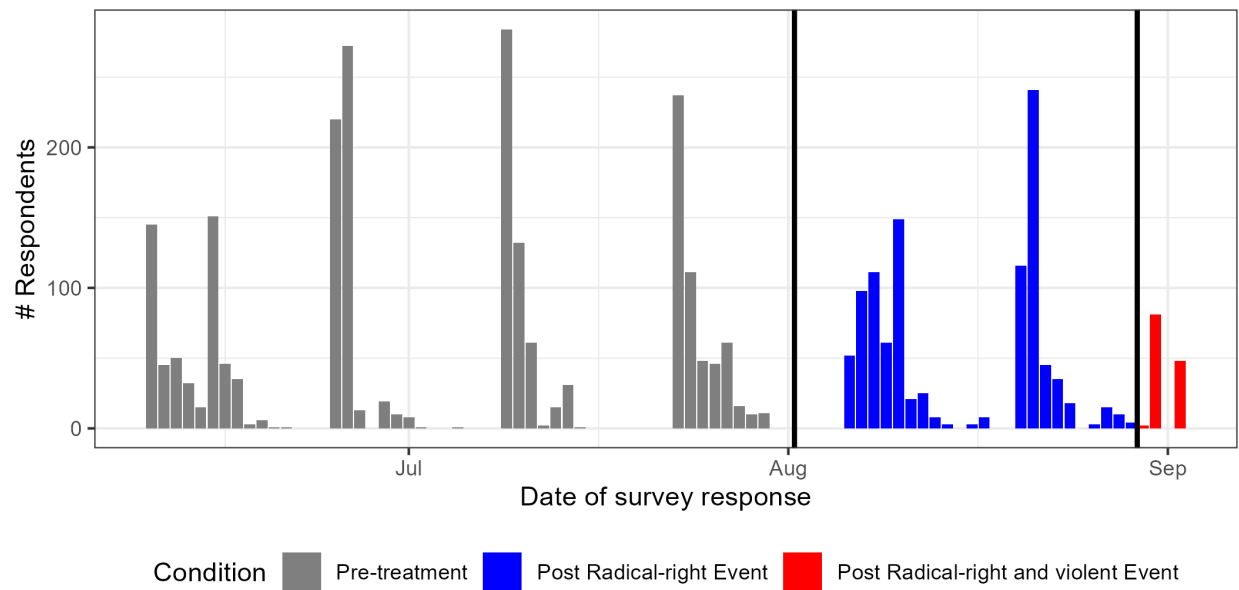
To assess whether our UESD setting and the sample splits before and after the two treatments offer enough statistical power to analyze the three periods, we run a simulation analysis. Although in chronological terms, the survey waves surrounding the UESD experimental context (summer 2020) were conducted prior to the survey experiment (February-March 2022), we had not conducted the former’s analysis before setting up and conducting the latter. Therefore, and for the purpose of clear expectations, we update the priors from the PAP with the results from the survey experiment. Overall, the effect sizes and standard deviations between both previous analyses do not largely differ and remain comparable. We still discuss below the power analysis in reference to our prior, naive expectations. The following calculations are based on the survey experiment.

Based on the mean and standard deviation from the sympathy for and willingness to protest (0-100) in the neutral treatment group (T1), we estimate whether our three different samples offer enough information to infer a causal effect. In total, the survey samples collected between June 10 and September 2nd, 2020, include 3,297 respondents asymmetrically distributed across treatment phases. The pre-treatment phase covers 2,140 respondents (64.9 %); the second phase following the protest event with radical-right participation on August 1 covers 1,026 respondents (31.1 %) (phase comparison 1 to pre-treated benchmark); and the last phase after the violent protest with radical-right participation from August 29 covers 131 individuals (4.0 %) (phase comparison 2 to pre-treated benchmark).

With respect to the effect sizes, we expected to encounter in the survey experiment – around -7 percentage points for both sympathy and willingness (see Pre-Analysis Plan and Gutting 2020) –, we update our priors and expect sympathy for protests to drop by around 7 p.p. when radical-right and violent protests take place, while we would expect a null or very small negative effect for willingness to participate (around -1 p.p.). Accordingly, we run different regression simulations for a proper range of effect sizes. We use half of the effect sizes as our standard error for the hypothetical effects, which reflects the pattern from the standard errors of the effects from the survey experiment. We conduct 1,000 simulations by effect size. Figure E.2 reveals that we cannot study the effect on willingness to participate in anti-containment protest with our UESD since there is less than 0.25 statistical power for the expected effect of either of the two phases to be compared. Assuming our prior naive expectation (much larger effects), this could be possible, but we refrain from conducting an analysis that might generate results under false negative bias.

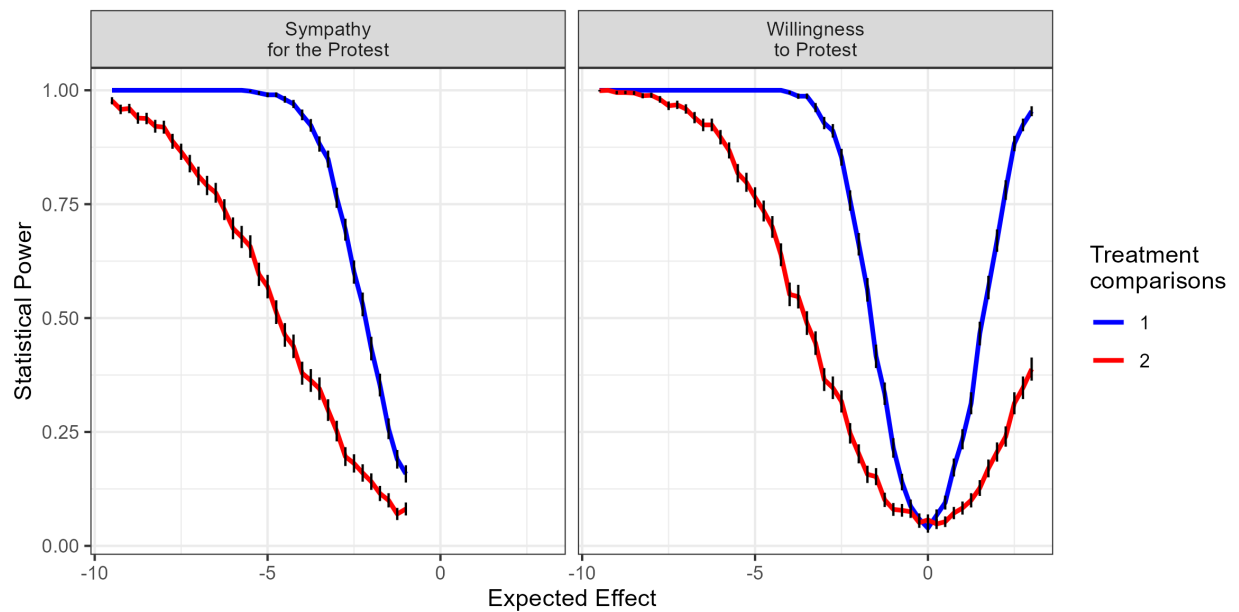
In the case of sympathy for anti-containment protests, we can carefully infer medium effect sizes (ca. - 7 p.p.) with a statistical power slightly above 0.75 in the case of the second phase comparison. For the first phase comparison, statistical power is near 1. Prior naive expectations from the PAP relate to an effect size similar to the updated priors. Therefore, we assume that these results equally apply to that scenario. Inferences about possible non-detected smaller effects (false negative) should be carefully drawn.

Figure E.1: UESD: Distribution of Respondents Over Time



Note: $N = 3,297$. Survey waves 8–13: 06/10-09/02/2020.

Figure E.2: UESD Experimental Power Analysis



Note: thin error bars depict 0.90 confidence intervals of statistical power from 1,000 regression simulations.

E.2 Weekly Analysis Regression

Table E.1: Protest Event Intervention Effects on Sympathy for Anti-Containment Protests over Time (Figure 3)

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>
	Sympathy for Anti-Corona Protest
Week 1 (reference)	
Week 2	−0.01 (−0.16, 0.13)
Week 3	−0.02 (−0.15, 0.11)
Week 5	−0.02 (−0.13, 0.10)
Week 7	−0.01 (−0.12, 0.10)
Week 8	−0.14* (−0.27, 0.00)
Week 9	−0.10 (−0.23, 0.04)
Week 10	−0.14** (−0.26, −0.02)
Week 11	−0.17 (−0.40, 0.05)
Week 12	−0.06 (−0.24, 0.12)
Age	−0.01*** (−0.01, −0.01)
Female/diverse	−0.14*** (−0.20, −0.08)
Education mid.	−0.05 (−0.13, 0.04)
Education high	−0.04 (−0.12, 0.05)
Left-right 2	−0.10* (−0.21, 0.02)
Left-right 3	0.09* (−0.01, 0.19)
Left-right 4	0.22*** (0.10, 0.34)
Left-right 5	0.50*** (0.35, 0.65)
Constant	1.09*** (0.90, 1.27)
Observations	3,253
R ²	0.05
Adjusted R ²	0.05
Residual Std. Error	0.92 (df = 3235)
F Statistic	10.40*** (df = 17; 3235)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

E.3 Varying Bandwidth

Table E.2: Varying Bandwidth Testing: Null Effect over Time

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>		
	Sympathy for Anti-Containment Protests		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Radical-R PE	−0.13*** (−0.21, −0.05)	−0.12*** (−0.20, −0.04)	−0.12*** (−0.20, −0.04)
Radical-R & violent PE	−0.03 (−0.20, 0.14)	−0.02 (−0.19, 0.15)	−0.05 (−0.22, 0.12)
Age		−0.01*** (−0.01, −0.01)	−0.01*** (−0.01, −0.01)
Female/diverse		−0.19*** (−0.27, −0.11)	−0.16*** (−0.24, −0.08)
Education mid.		−0.09* (−0.20, 0.01)	−0.10* (−0.20, 0.01)
Education high		−0.13** (−0.23, −0.03)	−0.09* (−0.19, 0.01)
Left-right 2			−0.06 (−0.20, 0.07)
Left-right 3			0.13** (0.01, 0.26)
Left-right 4			0.25*** (0.10, 0.39)
Left-right 5			0.60*** (0.42, 0.78)
Constant	0.68*** (0.62, 0.74)	1.23*** (1.06, 1.40)	1.08*** (0.88, 1.28)
Observations	2,223	2,208	2,196
R ²	0.00	0.03	0.06
Adjusted R ²	0.00	0.03	0.05
Residual SE	0.94 (df = 2220)	0.93 (df = 2201)	0.92 (df = 2185)
F Statistic	5.32*** (df = 2; 2220)	10.84*** (df = 6; 2201)	13.57*** (df = 10; 2185)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

E.4 Placebo Test

As Muñoz et al. (2020, p. 197) notes, “preexisting time trends, unrelated to the event of interest, could bias the findings,” which violates the excludability assumption. To mitigate this potential bias, researchers should investigate whether similar trends exist in the data prior to the unexpected event. One approach is to construct arbitrary points prior to the cutoff point, which should have no effect on the outcome variables. By comparing trends before and after these points, we can assess whether there are any preexisting time trends that may bias our findings.

Table E.3: Placebo Test: July 10, Previous Period

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>		
	Sympathy for Anti-Containment Protests		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Event treatment (placebo)	−0.01 (−0.09, 0.08)	−0.01 (−0.09, 0.08)	−0.00 (−0.09, 0.08)
Age		−0.01*** (−0.01, −0.01)	−0.01*** (−0.01, −0.01)
Female/diverse		−0.18*** (−0.26, −0.10)	−0.15*** (−0.23, −0.07)
Education mid.		−0.05 (−0.15, 0.06)	−0.03 (−0.14, 0.07)
Education high		−0.03 (−0.13, 0.07)	0.01 (−0.09, 0.12)
Left-right 2			−0.21*** (−0.36, −0.07)
Left-right 3			0.01 (−0.12, 0.13)
Left-right 4			0.08 (−0.07, 0.23)
Left-right 5			0.33*** (0.15, 0.52)
Constant	0.69*** (0.64, 0.73)	1.25*** (1.07, 1.42)	1.21*** (1.00, 1.42)
Observations	2,138	2,118	2,113
R ²	0.00	0.03	0.05
Adjusted R ²	−0.00	0.03	0.04
Residual SE	0.94 (df = 2136)	0.93 (df = 2112)	0.92 (df = 2103)
F Statistic	0.01 (df = 1; 2136)	11.98*** (df = 5; 2112)	11.53*** (df = 9; 2103)

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

E.5 Entropy Balance

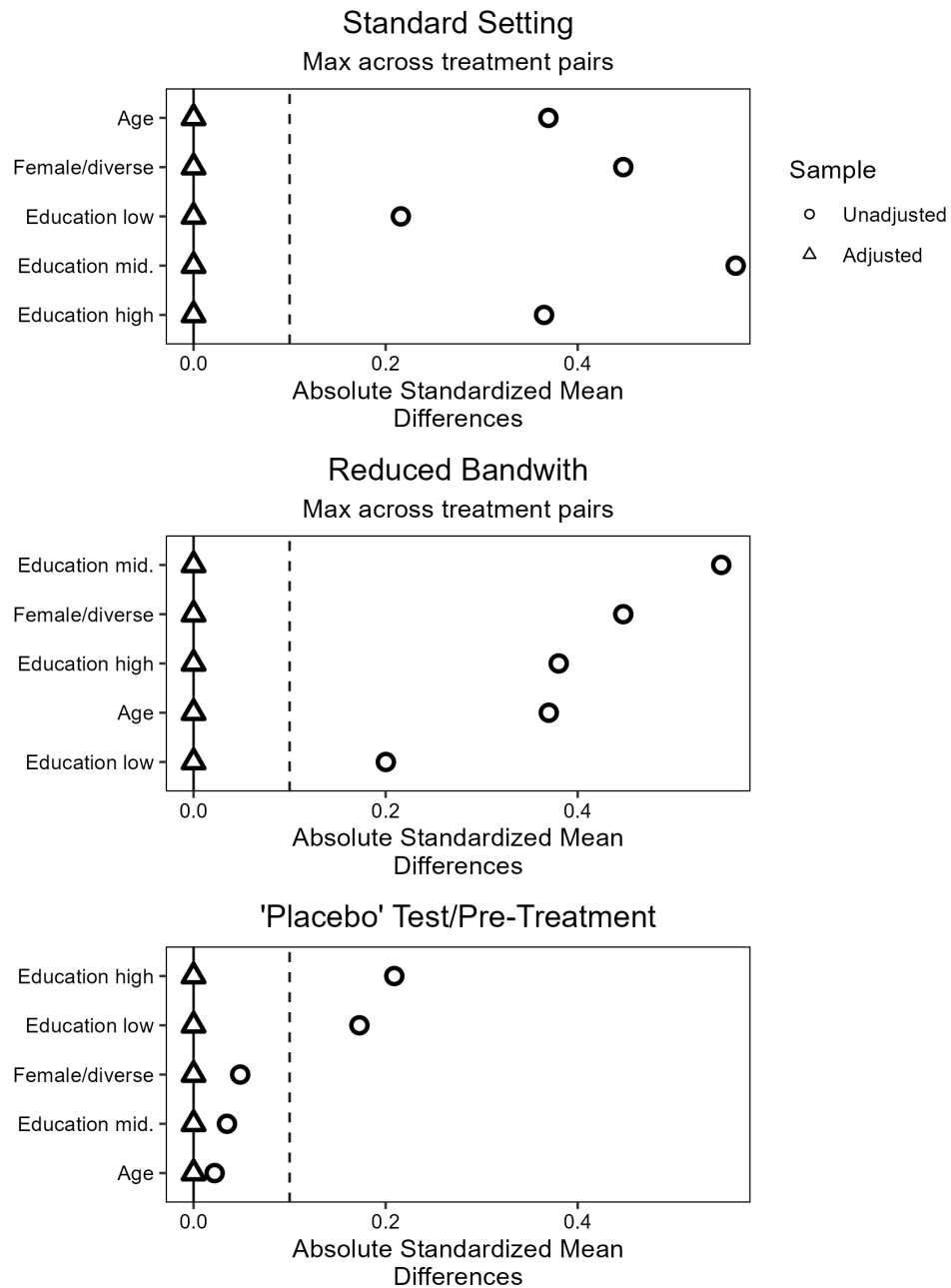
According to Muñoz and Anduiza (2019, p. 197), the UESD “might not always satisfy the ignorability assumption, even after narrowing the bandwidth around the date of the event.” To satisfy the conditional ignorability assumption and to improve covariate balance between treatment and control groups, researchers can use matching techniques, such as the entropy balancing method (Hainmueller, 2012). Entropy balancing is a preprocessing technique that balances control and treatment groups on observed covariates, using maximum entropy weights.

Table E.4: Entropy Balancing

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Radical-right event treated	−0.12* (−0.19; −0.05)	−0.11* (−0.20; −0.03)	
Radical-right & violent event treated	−0.05 (−0.27; 0.17)	−0.04 (−0.26; 0.18)	
Placebo July 10			−0.01 (−0.10; 0.08)
Constant	0.68* (0.64; 0.72)	0.68* (0.62; 0.74)	0.69* (0.64; 0.74)
R ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
Adj. R ²	0.00	0.00	−0.00
Num. obs.	3268	2208	2118
RMSE	0.94	0.95	0.94

Note: * Null hypothesis value outside the confidence interval. ***p<0.000. HC1 Robust SE. 0.95-CI in parentheses.

Figure E.3: Entropy Balancing



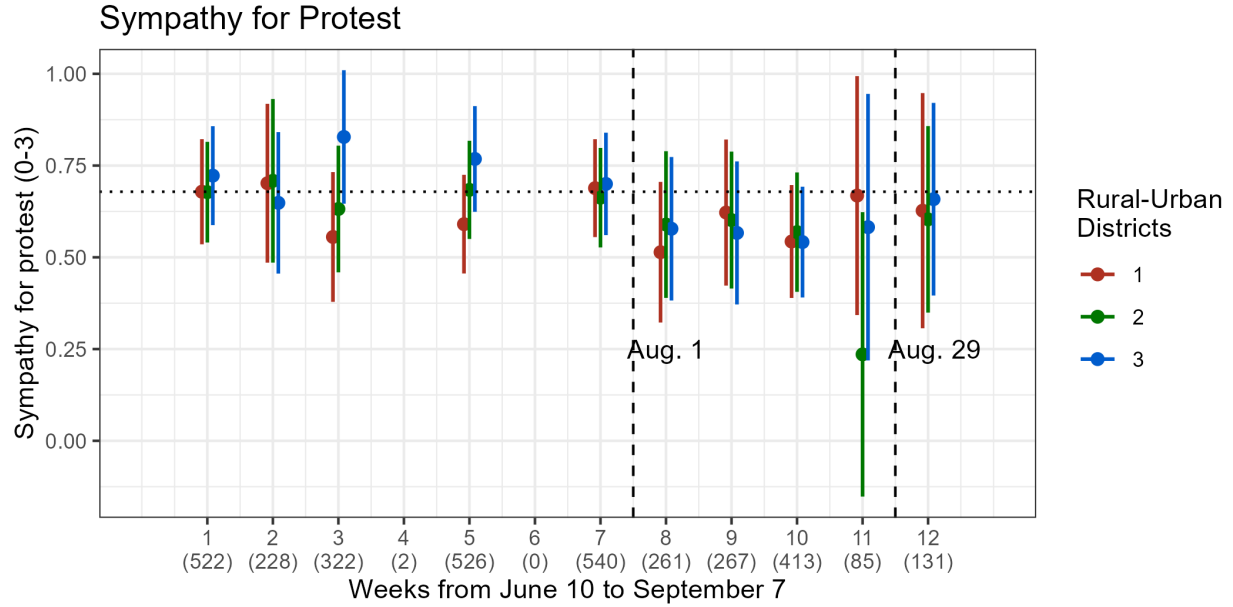
Note: plot generated with *love.plot()* from the R package *cobalt*.

E.6 Geo-based Robustness Checks

Under certain circumstances, geographical characteristics can influence individual-level perceptions of protest radicality. In our case, we study the effect of major protest events.

Although our survey item asks about protest sympathy overall, major protest events are less likely to occur in rural areas by definition. Therefore, the radicality of such large-scale protests might be perceived as less relevant for respondents from rural areas who are less familiar with and more distant from such events. We account for this dynamic by replicating the main UESD analysis from the manuscript and interacting the survey response weeks with a rural-urban categorical variable. Figure E.4 shows the results of the rural-urban robustness check. Overall, we do not find heterogeneous effects on protest sympathy over time based on the level of the county's rurality among the survey respondents. Unlike the main analysis, confidence intervals of the singular predicted values are larger due to the tertile group sizes. The results still indicate the relevant decrease in protest sympathy after the protest event of August 1.

Figure E.4: UESD x Rural-Urban Divide Check

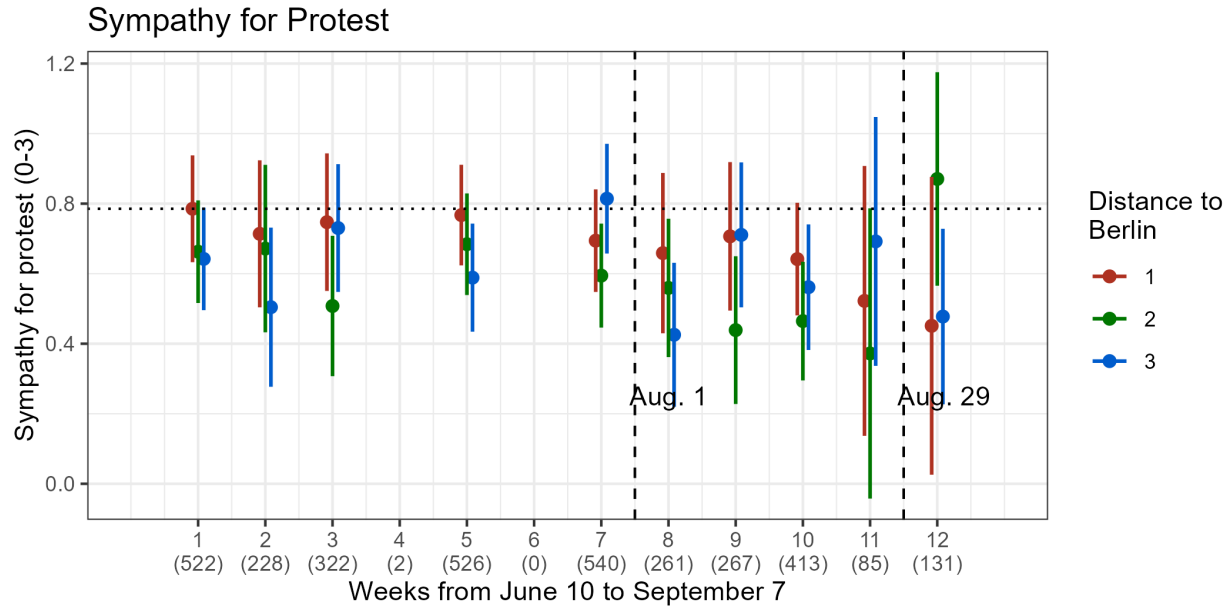


Note: Based on the population density (inhabitants/km²) of the respondent's county, we divide the survey respondents into tertiles. A value of 1 refers to the third of the most rural counties in the sample (red); a value of 3 refers to the third of the most urban counties (blue). $N_{counties} = 393$. The model specification replicates the main model in the manuscript and includes the tertile x week interaction. The model table is not shown.

Furthermore, how geographically close individuals are located to a protest event can impact how intensely they experience certain episodes of mobilisation. During the immigrant rights protests in the US in 2006, proximity to protest positively affected Latinos' perceived political efficacy (Wallace et al. 2014). Evidence from student protests in Chile shows that protest proximity effects are larger on "weak" attitudes (Pavlic 2021). Similarly, it has been

shown that more proximate terrorist attacks can influence individuals' weak attitudes related to the aims of the attack, such as affectedness and threat perceptions, more strongly (see Agerberg and Sohlberg 2021; Avdan and Webb 2019). The effects of proximity on rally-around-the-flag dynamics are, however, mixed. For these reasons, we conduct an additional robustness check considering the distance of the respondent's county to Berlin, the location of both major protest events. Figure E.5 shows the predicted sympathy for the protest based on the main model in the manuscript and considering a proximity proxy to Berlin (tertiles across counties). We do not find heterogeneous effects on protest sympathy over time based on the proximity levels of survey respondents' counties. Unlike the main analysis, confidence intervals of the singular predicted values are larger due to the tertile group sizes. The results still indicate the relevant decrease in protest sympathy after the protest event of August 1, especially considering the respective distance group comparisons. An additional analysis solely including an interaction with a Berlin dummy shows similar results (not reported); however, due to the small sample size in Berlin, confidence intervals are extremely large, and inferences are less clear.

Figure E.5: UESD x Proximity-to-Berlin Check



Note: Based on the km-distance of the respondent's county, we divide the survey respondents into tertiles. A value of 1 refers to the third of the closest counties in the sample (red); a value of 3 refers to the third of the most distant counties (blue). $N_{counties} = 393$. The model specification replicates the main model in the manuscript and includes the tertile x week interaction. The model table is not shown.

F List Experiment

To estimate a global measure of the true intention of respondents to participate in protests against the state’s anti-containment measures in Germany and to address social desirability bias concerns, we conduct a list experiment in the beginning of the survey. Protests against the containment measures have received widespread criticism as many participants ignored basic preventive measures such as wearing masks or social distancing. Moreover, the organizers of the protests have failed to distance themselves sufficiently from radical-right groups who featured prominently in many demonstrations. Due to the highly contested anti-system nature of the anti-containment protests, some respondents may have been reluctant to admit their support for the protests and may have refrained from expressing their willingness to participate in anti-containment protests may have been subject to social desirability bias, thus resulting in inaccurate estimates of the prevalence of attitudes. To address these potential social desirability bias concerns, we conducted a list experiment in the last survey wave (February 2022, $n = 2,038$). List experiments are designed to measure sensitive attitudes indirectly by presenting respondents with a list of items, only some of which are sensitive. When studying sensitive issues such as racial prejudice or support for extremist groups, list experiments can improve the validity of measurements by reducing non-response and social desirability biases (Blair et al., 2014). By asking respondents to indicate *how many items* on the list they agree with rather than which specific items they agree with, we can estimate the prevalence of the sensitive attitude without directly asking about it. Specifically, we present respondents with a list of four statements, three of which are non-central and one of which pertains to protest participation: The control group is presented with a three-item list: (1) *donating to a refugee aid organization*, (2) *voting*, and (3) *signing a petition against gender-neutral language*. The treatment group is additionally presented the sensitive item: (4) *participating in a protest against anti-pandemic measures*. Due to randomisation, the two have comparable opinions on the non-sensitive/non-central items, thus can determine the share of individuals in the treatment group who agreed with the sensitive item by comparing the mean scores of the control group and the treatment group.

Following a standard procedure for the analysis of list experiments (Ahlquist 2018), we calculate the estimates from the list experiment and compare it with the direct question item (Table F.1). On average, respondents in the treatment group, which had an added item about protesting against containment measures, agreed with 1.5 of the statements. In contrast, the control group agreed with an average of 1.4 statements. The difference, however, is not statistically significant. Furthermore, when comparing the estimated share of protesters using both direct and indirect list experiment measures, the observed minor difference of -0.8 percent remains non-significant. In short, we find that individuals in our sample do not under-report protest participation in anti-containment mobilization. Therefore, the absence of a social desirability bias found in the list experiment reinforces our results, suggesting that the reported levels of protest support and participation are accurate.

library

Table F.1: List Experiment Results

	Indirect Item: List Experiment		Direct item: Willingness to Participate	
	Mean	SE	Mean	SE
Mean no. of items in treatment group	1,5	0,040		
Mean no. of items in control group	1,4	0,027		
Estimated % of protesters	15%	4	16%	0,8
Difference indirect-direct	-0,8%	4		
N	2,038			