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Master's thesis

*Desperate Times Invoke Desperate Measures:  
 Support for Political Violence is Greatest when  
 Societal Discontent and Political Cynicism are  
 Combined*

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No

Yes, please explain below the deviations

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## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

### Abstract

The current research included two studies to assess whether societal discontent and political cynicism were related to support for violence against the government. In study 1, a sample of Dutch respondents (n = 1197) filled out a questionnaire on societal discontent and political cynicism, and indicated their level of support for violence against the government and non-violent political behaviours. Strong relationships for both societal discontent and political cynicism with support for violence against the government were found. Both these relationships were stronger than those for non-violent political behaviours. Furthermore, an interaction between societal discontent and political cynicism was found, such that the relationship between political cynicism and support for violence against the government was stronger when societal discontent was high. In study 2, semi-structured interviews with two political activists were conducted about their interpretation of the antecedent factors of support for violence against the government in the Netherlands. Three emergent themes from these interviews are discussed. Together, the studies indicate that groups who feel politically disconnected may support the use of violence as a strategic tool for societal change when non-violent political strategies are deemed inefficient.

Word count: 186

**Desperate Times Invoke Desperate Measures: Support for Political Violence is Greatest when Societal Discontent and Political Cynicism are Combined**

“This is criminal behaviour, and we won’t go looking for deeper sociological explanations or causes”, said Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte (Nederlandse Omroep Stichting, 2021) a day after riots erupted in the city of Rotterdam following government announcements of persisting Covid-19 restrictions. While rioting should rightfully be condemned, Rutte’s statement lacked reflection about the potential consequences further government regulations may have in a time characterized by an already strenuous relationship between the government and its people. Apart from the Covid-19 pandemic, the Netherlands has endured various socio-political challenges that have further tested the relationship between the government and its people in recent years. These include scandals about racism in the administration overseeing child benefit (causing the fall of Rutte’s third cabinet in early 2021), poor compensation for earthquake victims in the province of Groningen, and lacking communication with farmers following the imminent and necessary nitrogen expulsion decrease in the agricultural sector. It is therefore no surprise that trust in the Dutch government has recently plummeted to 40%, its lowest value since 2013 (Sociaal en Cultureel planbureau, 2021). With many of the aforementioned challenges still finding themselves at the top of the political agenda, it is unlikely that this trend has changed since October 2021.

Apart from the Netherlands other Western countries have also seen violent protest movements directed towards their governments, often supported by radical-right politicians (e.g. the yellow vests movement in France and the storming of the US Capitol building). These examples highlight that in recent years, numerous socio-political challenges have been paired with the use of violence by citizens against their governments with the aim of influencing

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

politics. However, research on political violence has thus far predominantly focused on the underlying psychological motives and characteristics that trigger individuals to engage in such violent behaviours. Additionally, these research lines predominantly revolve around contexts of Muslim-extremism (Kruglanski et al., 2014) and (increasing one's in-)group status (Tausch et al., 2011). In contrast to these approaches, the current research specifically aims to assess why citizens *support* the use of violence against the government instead of non-violent political behaviours.

Studies about why citizens supports the use of violent strategies to influence politics have been close to non-existent since the social movements of the 1970's and 1980's. The current study re-assess this citizen-government relationship as doing so is relevant for two main reasons. First, because it is important to investigate whether recent trends of socio-political strife, paired with violence, can be associated with support for such behaviour amongst general citizens. If this association is found, this could suggest the emergence of a broad violence-tolerating social movement, similar to those in the 1930's and late twentieth century. Second, because recent research already suggests that support for political violence is prevalent: A study from the Netherlands finds that 30 percent of Dutch citizens agree its government should be overthrown, and 21 percent think it should be dealt with using strong measures, including violent ones if necessary (Gootjes et al., 2021)<sup>1</sup>. In another study of similar fashion, the statement "when politicians destroy the country, citizens should use threats to get them back on the right track" was supported by 19.4 percent of respondents, and only 31.0 percent indicated to 'strongly disagree' with the statement (van 't Riet, in press). The full scale, including extraordinary

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<sup>1</sup> 'agreeing' with the statements meaning that participants indicated that they 'agreed somewhat' or 'strongly agreed' with the item or statement on a 5 point-Likert scale (strongly agree – strongly disagree), thus scoring above the neutral mid-scale option. This cut-off is used consistently throughout this paper.

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

harshly worded items (e.g. “some problems that citizens have with the government could be solved with a few well-aimed bullets” and “sometimes physical violence is the only way to stop a bad government”) only had a slight support of just over 5 percent. Nevertheless, while van ‘t Riet concludes that it does not seem like a political storm is imminent in the Netherlands, the study finds other alarming levels of support for political violence. The most harshly worded item, “some problems that citizens have with the government could be solved with a few well-aimed bullets” was condemned to the fullest by 77.9 percent of respondents. However, the remaining 22.1 percent did not do so. Considering that the item implied the use of directed, lethal violence against politicians, having more than one fifth of respondents not fully condemning such behaviour is cause for serious concern.

The current study aims to assess whether generalist and negative attitudes about society and politics, *societal discontent* and *political cynicism*, are related to support for violence against the government in comparison to other, non-violent forms of political behaviour. This is done by synthesizing findings from a quantitative survey study (N = 1197) with two interviews with Dutch socio-political activists. Following this, societal and theoretical implications of support for political violence are discussed, and suggestions for further research on political violence support are proposed.

### **Political Violence**

As the current study assesses citizens’ *support* for political violence against the government specifically, it is appropriate to discuss what constitutes of *political violence* as a construct in the literature<sup>2</sup>. Political violence has been defined as “the deliberate collective

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<sup>2</sup> The current study focuses on support for violence against the government, which is a form of political violence. Therefore, the former term will be applied structurally throughout this paper when the current study is the main focus, whilst the latter will be applied when describing violent political behaviour as a broader concept.

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

attempt to use force against persons or objects for political reasons” (Sageman, 2017, p.14). As such, the scope of behaviours one may consider being politically violent is wide, including riots, the harassment of politicians and institutional employees, attacks on law enforcement, and terrorism. Studies of political violence have become particularly abundant since the infamous terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Initially, the behaviour was described as being reserved for individuals with specific characteristics, that follow pre-determined and step-wise pathways towards radicalization (for an overview, see McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). This view, however, has not been corroborated by an abundance of research. Instead, violence is increasingly regarded as a strategic method of political behaviour for any group that aims to influence society and politics (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006). For instance, acts of political violence can affect public discourse by provoking opponents into extreme behavioural responses, disrupting societal and political systems (Hornsey et al., 2006; Louis & Taylor, 2002).

**Understanding the Relevance of Support for Political Violence.** Understanding the antecedent factors of support for political violence is important. While most individuals that support political violence never end up engaging in it themselves (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017), whether they do or do not can be contingent on the level of perceived support for such behaviour amongst their social networks. For instance, conversations within the family about (past) parental participation in political violence, such as fighting the police, has been related to participation of (those parents’) children (Cornejo et al., 2021; González et al., 2020). Other research finds similar relationships, indicating that friends, social connections and groups can determine whether an individual decides to engage in violent or non-violent political behaviour (Dahl & van Zalk, 2016; Kruglanski et al., 2014, 2017; Jasko et al., 2016, 2019). While these

relationships focus mainly on the role of family and close social, support for political violence amongst general citizens may be a significant motivator for the actual behaviour as well.

### **Support for Political Violence: Political Cynicism and Societal Discontent**

Research thus far indicates that violent political behaviour can become an attractive form of political engagement when groups feel exclusion from, or a loss of significance within, the political system (Kruglanski et al., 2013, 2014; Tausch et al., 2011; Schwarzmantel, 2010). Indeed, groups who perceive their low-status position as stable in society may engage in violent ‘nothing-to-lose’ behaviours to affect this position (Tausch et al., 2011; Becker & Tausch, 2015; Scheepers et al., 2006). Other studies (conceptually) replicate this, finding that feelings of anomia<sup>3</sup> are positively related to intentions to display political violence in an undergraduate sample (Adam-Troian et al., 2020). Importantly, and in line with research that regards political violence as strategic rather than irrational (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2006), it is not only politically threatened and intimidated groups that support violent strategies. When groups find their peaceful political behaviours such as social protests to be unsuccessful, they sometimes add the use of violence to their behavioural repertoire (Lizzio-Wilson et al., 2021).

In short, when the conventional political routes towards societal change are deemed inefficient, people may opt to support non-conventional behaviours such as support for political violence to reach their goals. As such, the current study includes a measure that represent the feeling that politicians consciously and purposefully ignore the wishes of the people they are supposed to represent: *political cynicism*. In line with previous research, it is expected that (H1) greater levels of political cynicism are related to greater levels of support for violence against the government.

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<sup>3</sup> Described as feelings of meaninglessness, powerlessness, isolation, self-estrangement and normlessness

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

Apart from negative perceptions about politics and democracy, support for political violence is also related to a broad and negative belief about society as a whole (Gootjes et al., 2021), a belief termed *societal discontent*. Notably, societal discontent refers specifically to the perception of an individual about the state of society, and is not necessarily reflective of an individual's perception of his/her personal circumstances. Due to its broad and latent definition, it has been measured and labelled in a variety of ways (e.g. 'negative zeitgeist', see van der Bles et al., 2015; 'societal pessimism', see Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018 and Steenvoorden, 2015). However, as these varying measures have been found to correlate strongly and reflect similar attitudes, applying societal discontent as an umbrella term for the concept has been deemed legitimate (Gootjes et al., 2021)

Societal discontent has shown significant relationships to various types of political behaviour, including public support for political violence (Gootjes et al., 2021) and extreme voting behaviour (van der Bles et al., 2015, 2017). Indeed, citizens who believe that society is headed in the wrong direction may be more inclined to change it, with violence if perceived necessary. Consequently, it is hypothesised that in the current study (H2) greater levels of societal discontent are related to greater support for violence against the government.

*Combining Societal Discontent and Political Cynicism.* While societal discontent and political cynicism represent two separate perceptions, it is possible that experiencing both in concert may further increase support for political violence. Indeed, individuals without faith that politicians will make changes through conventional routes (political cynicism) may be more likely to support political violence if they also deem society to be in decline (societal discontent). In a situation where change is deemed impossible yet necessary, supporting political violence may be a rational strategy more so compared to a situation where change is deemed impossible



but unnecessary (high political cynicism and low societal discontent), or where change is deemed necessary but also possible (high societal discontent and low political cynicism). As such, the current study assesses whether support for political violence is greater for people that score high on both societal discontent and political cynicism by testing an interaction model.

### **Supporting Violence Against the Government over Non-violent Political Behaviours**

While it is expected that societal discontent and political cynicism will be related to support for violence against the government, no research has assessed the strength of their relationships in comparison to non-violent, conventional political behaviours. Making this comparison however, is of importance to be able to interpret the relationships between the predictors and support for violence against the government (Gootjes et al., 2021). After all, being sceptical about the state of society and the conventional routes towards societal change may motivate individuals to become politically active in a variety of ways, including conventional and non-violent ones. Thus, the current research includes a diverse scope of non-violent political behaviours that individuals may support or (intend to) engage in as a result of elevated societal discontent and political cynicism. These are *political participation*, *support for democratic innovations*, and *willingness to participate in democratic innovations*<sup>4</sup>.

By including the non-violent political behaviours, it can be assessed how societal discontent and political cynicism relate to various forms of political activity. As the predictors reflect negative perceptions about society and politics, higher scores may indicate a lack of faith in the effectiveness of non-violent and conventional routes toward change. Consequently, individuals may turn towards other behaviours to achieve societal change (Tausch et al., 2011;

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<sup>4</sup> The measures include actual behaviour, support for a behaviour, and willingness to engage in a particular political behaviour. For conciseness, the term ‘non-violent political behaviours’ will be used consistently throughout this paper when the three measures are summarised in concert.

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

Kruglanski et al., 2013; Jahnke et al., 2022). Therefore, it is expected that (H3) the relationships of societal discontent and political cynicism with support for violence against the government are stronger than the relationships of societal discontent and political cynicism with the non-violent political behaviours.

### **The current research**

**Study 1.** The first study is a quantitative survey study of Dutch citizens. Linear regression models of quantitative data from the Netherlands will reveal how societal discontent and political cynicism relate to violence against the government. Apart from this relationship, the current research additionally measures how societal discontent and political cynicism relate to non-violent political behaviours. This allows for the comparison of relationships of support for violence against the government with non-violent political behaviours. Additionally, an interaction model is tested to assess whether support for violence against the government is greatest for individuals with high scores on both societal discontent and cynicism.

**Study 2.** The second study consists of semi-structured interviews with Dutch socio-political activists, whose responses during the interview will be analysed thematically. By identifying emergent themes in these interviews, it can be assessed whether the theoretical concepts in study 1 match the perceptions and experiences of socio-political activists from study 2.

The findings of both studies will first be discussed in separate sections, and then synthesized in a general discussion to answer three hypotheses. These are that (H1) societal discontent is related to support for violence against the government, (H2) political cynicism is related to support for violence against the government, and (H3) the relationships of societal discontent and political cynicism with support for violence against the government are stronger

than the relationships of societal discontent and political cynicism with the non-violent political behaviours.

### **Study 1: Survey Research of Dutch Citizens**

#### **Method**

**Participants.** The participant sample in study 1 was a subset sample of a survey study conducted in nine European countries in December 2021 and January 2022. The sample for the current study, consisting of all Dutch respondents, thus consisted of 1197 individuals who completed the survey (originally 1202, but five respondents were removed due to item non-response, see results section). Participants were aged between 16 and 91 ( $M = 50.4$ ,  $SD = 17.2$ ) and 51 percent ( $n = 607$ ) of respondents were female. In the sample, 7.0 percent ( $n = 84$ ) indicated being part of an ethnic minority group. Education levels were measured by having respondents indicate their highest attained educational degree on a seven-point scale (1 = primary school education, 7 = master's degree). Responses were divided into lower (1-2; primary and lower secondary education), middle (3-4; higher secondary education and apprenticeships) and higher educated (5-7, Bachelor's degree and beyond). After categorising, the sample contained 21.7 percent lower educated ( $n = 260$ ), 43.9 percent middle educated ( $n = 526$ ) and 34.3 percent higher educated ( $n = 411$ ). Participants were also asked about the level of urbanity of their home environment based on five different categories. Out of the respondents, 2.9 percent ( $n = 35$ ) lived in rural areas, 32.1 percent ( $n = 384$ ) in a village, 28.5 percent ( $n = 341$ ) in a town, 14.5 percent ( $n = 173$ ) in a suburb and 22.1 percent ( $n = 264$ ) in a city. The survey lacked a question on the exact level of income. However, to still have a measure of income level, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they felt they could live comfortably with their current income on a 1 - 5 Likert scale (1 = very difficult, 5 = very easy,  $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ).

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

**Power.** Sensitivity analyses in G\*Power revealed that with .95 power, the sample size was sufficient for detecting small effect sizes of  $f^2 = .01$  for the current analyses.

**Procedure.** The sample was gathered using online participant platform Ipsos online panels between December 8 and January 12. Respondents received an incentive (bonus points for Ipsos) after completing the survey.

### Measures

**Societal Discontent.** Societal discontent was measured using seven items (see appendix A for all items of each scale). Four items about general collective threats were answered on a five-point Likert scale (1 = “Not at all”, 5 = “A great deal”) with items such as “to what extent are you worried about the state of the economy of your country?”. Three items were derived from the declinism scale (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2016), answered on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) with items such as “more and more rules and regulations fence us in (traffic regulations, rules about behaviour in public places...); soon we won’t be allowed to do anything any more”. The societal discontent scale had a Cronbach’s alpha score of .79 ( $M = 2.83$ ,  $SD = .81$ ).

**Political Cynicism.** Two items were used to measure political cynicism. One, “elected officials talk too much and take too little action” was derived from the populism scale by Akkerman et al., (2014). The other item, “the established politicians who claim to defend our interest, have often betrayed the people”, is a combination of two items measuring non-essentialist populism from Spruyt et al. (2016). Both items were answered using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree) and correlated with  $r = .58$  ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ).

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

**Support for Violence Against the Government.** The scale for support for violence against the government was constructed using three items. All items were answered using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). One item was drafted specifically for the current study; “violent action against the government is needed to bring about real change” ( $M = 1.54$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). The other two items were derived from Gootjes et al. (2021): “we need more aggressive action against the government if it continues to refuse to listen” ( $M = 2.61$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ) and “government is functioning so poorly that it would be best to overthrow the entire system” ( $M = 2.30$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ). With the items combined, the scale had a Cronbach’s alpha score of .77 ( $M = 2.15$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ).

**Political Participation.** Political participation was measured using five items derived from the European Social Survey (2018), answered on a three-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = often). Participants indicated to what extent they had engaged in political activities in the past 12 months such as contacting a politician or signing a petition. Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .70 ( $M = 1.30$ ,  $SD = .34$ ).

**Support for Democratic Innovations.** The support for democratic innovations scale was constructed using five items, each answered on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much). Respondents indicated their support for statements such as “increasing the number of binding referendums, citizens have the right to vote for or against a specific proposition and parliament is obliged to follow the citizens’ decisions”. The scale had a Cronbach’s alpha score of .75 ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = .81$ ).

**Willingness to Participate in Democratic Innovations.** The scale for willingness to participate in democratic innovations was constructed using five items similar to the ‘support for democratic innovations’ scale. All items were answered on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Very

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

unlikely, 5 = very likely) where participants indicated how likely it would be, given the possibility, that they would “vote in a binding referendum” (example item). Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .83 ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = .92$ ).

### Results

**Analytic strategy.** First, missing data were analysed (see below). Then, four linear regressions were conducted, each containing societal discontent and political cynicism as predictors, and one of the respective outcome variables (support for violence against the government, political participation, support for democratic innovations, and willingness to participate in democratic innovations). For all analyses, effects of age, gender, education level, urbanity level and minority status were controlled for. First, main effect relationships between societal discontent and political cynicism with support for violence against the government were tested to assess H1 and H2. Then, the relationship of societal discontent and political cynicism with the non-violent political behaviours were analysed. To assess H3, predictors and outcome variables in these analyses were standardised to allow for the comparison between violent and non-violent political behaviours. Finally, an interaction model was tested.

**Missing Data.** Out of 1202 respondents, five had missing data. Four respondents had missing data for the support for violence against the government scale. Each of these were assessed separately, revealing that all had failed to answer one or two items of the three-item scale (forced response was not programmed for the support for political violence scale due to ethical reasons). Because the respondents’ entries on the support for political violence scale reflected both high and low scores, it is unlikely that the non-responses were related to independent factors. As such, the four respondents were excluded from the dataset. Finally, one

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

respondent lacked a response on the ethnic minority/majority item, and was therefore removed. Consequently, 1197 respondents were included in the final analyses.

**Model Assumptions.** To check whether any model assumptions of linear regression may have been violated, figures were plotted for the main effect and interaction models on support for violence against the government (appendix B) after the analyses described below were conducted (the assumption of independence was met based on the sampling method of the Ipsos panel). The figures showed no substantial support for violations of any of the assumptions.

### Main Analyses

Zero-order correlations between the predictors and outcome variables are presented in table 1. Predictors and outcome variables were standardised prior to the analyses to allow for comparison between regression coefficients. Table 2 shows all regression coefficients.

**Table 1**

*Zero-order correlations of predictors and outcome variables.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Societal discontent	1.00					
2. Political cynicism	.58	1.00				
3. Support for political violence	.61	.50	1.00			
4. Political participation	.16	.12	.23	1.00		
5. Support for democratic innovation	.45	.36	.45	.26	1.00	
6. Willingness to Participate in Democratic Innovation	.11	.13	.13	.28	.34	1.00

*Note.* All correlations were significant with  $p < .001$

**Table 2***Main effects of standardised predictors on standardised outcome variables*

<b>Political participation</b>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>95% CI</i>	Model <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Societal discontent	.14	.04	< .001***	.07 – .21	.10
Political cynicism	.03	.03	.40	-.04 – .10	
<b>Willingness to participate in democratic innovations</b>					
Societal discontent	.06	.04	.08	-.007 – .14	.05
Political cynicism	.11	.04	.003**	.04 – .18	
<b>Support for democratic innovation</b>					
Societal discontent	.34	.03	< .001***	.28 – .41	.23
Political cynicism	.15	.03	< .001***	.09 – .21	
<b>Support for political violence</b>					
Societal discontent	.45	.03	< .001***	.39 – .50	.44
Political cynicism	.22	.03	< .001***	.17 – .28	

**Support for political violence.** Main effects of both societal discontent and political cynicism on support for violence against the government were found, supporting H1 and H2. Respondents with greater levels of societal discontent showed elevated support for violence ( $B = .45$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < 001$ ,  $CI [.39; .50]$ ), and greater levels of political cynicism were also related to higher levels of support for violence ( $B = .22$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < 001$ ,  $CI [.17; .28]$ ).

**Support for political violence compared to non-violent behaviours.** Hypothesis 3 states that the relationship of societal discontent and political cynicism are stronger with support for political violence than with non-violent political behaviours. To test H3, confidence intervals of support for violence against the government for societal discontent and political cynicism were compared to coefficients of non-violent political behaviours.

*Societal Discontent.* The findings supported H3 for societal discontent. The relationship between societal discontent and support for violence against the government was stronger than the relationships between societal discontent and the non-violent political behaviours. For these



## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

non-violent behaviours, political participation and support for democratic innovations were significant, while willingness to participate in democratic innovations showed no significant relationship with societal discontent.

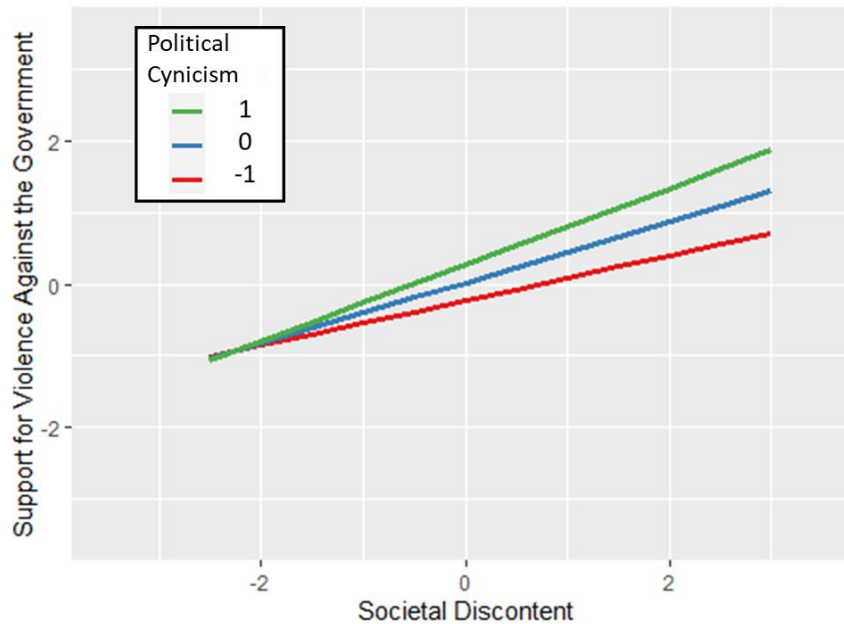
*Political Cynicism.* For political cynicism, the findings also supported H3. Political cynicism was related to support for political violence, and this relationship was also stronger than the relationships with the non-violent political behaviours. Out of these, only support for and willingness to participate in democratic innovations were weakly related to political cynicism, while political participation was not.

### **Analysis of Interaction Societal Discontent and Political Cynicism**

**Interaction on support for violence against the government.** An interaction model was tested between societal discontent and political cynicism on support for violence against the government (for consistency, here too the outcome variables and predictors were standardised prior to the analysis). The interaction effect was significant ( $B = .11$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CI = [.06/.16]$ ). Figure 1 shows the plotted interaction effect, visualizing that individuals with greater societal discontent will be more inclined to support violence against the government when they also have greater political cynicism.

**Figure 1**

*Interaction effect of societal discontent and political cynicism on support for violence against the government.*



*Note.* For this figure, and all other interaction figures, the respective dependent variable is found on the y-axis. The three lines represent levels of political cynicism, with the green line (predominantly the highest level in the graph) represents individuals that scored one standard-deviation above the mean on political cynicism. The blue line represents the mean, and the red line represents individuals with one standard deviation below the mean.

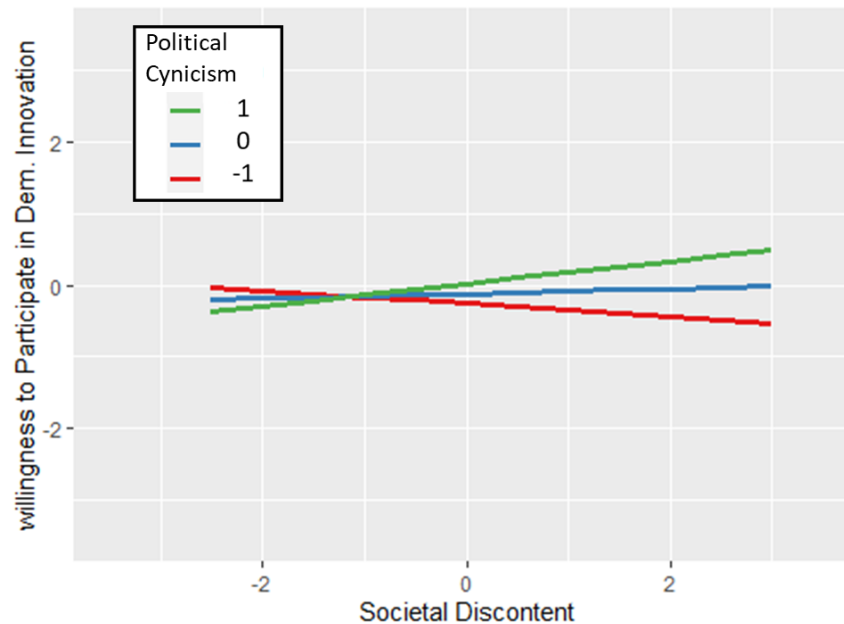
**Interaction of non-violent political behaviour.** The interaction between societal discontent and political cynicism was also tested for the non-violent political behaviours. While not significant for political participation and support for democratic innovation, the interaction was significant for willingness to participate in democratic innovations ( $B = .12$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $p <$

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

.001,  $CI = [.07/.18]$ ). Figure 2 visualizes the effect and shows that, similar to the previous interaction effect, individuals with elevated societal discontent are more willing to participate in democratic innovations when they also have greater political cynicism. See appendix C for figures of all four interaction effects, including the non-significant ones, next to each other to allow for comparisons between the interaction effects.

### Figure 2

*Interaction of societal discontent and political cynicism on willingness to support democratic innovations.*



*Robustness of interaction effects.* To solidify the robustness of the interaction effects, identical analyses for both effects were conducted on the full dataset including the nine European countries (also including the current data from the Netherlands). For the full European sample ( $n = 11287$ ), the interaction effect on support for violence against the government was significant

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

( $B = .05$ ,  $SE = .007$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CI = [.03/.06]$ ; see appendix D for figures of all interaction effects, allowing for comparison to the figures of the Dutch data in appendix C). The interaction for willingness to participate in democratic innovation was also significant for the complete European sample, with ( $B = .04$ ,  $SE = .008$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CI = [.03/.06]$ ).

### Discussion

**Support for violence against the government.** As predicted, societal discontent and political cynicism were related to support for violence against the government, and these relationships were stronger than those with the non-violent political behaviours. While the main effects of societal discontent and political cynicism are interesting on their own, their substantial interaction ( $b = .11$ ) on support for political violence is striking: Individuals that experienced elevated societal discontent and political cynicism in concert were more likely to support violence against the government than others. This suggests that societal groups that desire change, yet see no evident strategy to do so within the existing political system, are more likely to support the use of violent measures. As such, support for violence against the government may be a strategic and deliberate consideration for such groups in society.

In this light, reaching out towards politically displeased and disconnected groups seems a priority for governments. Making the vast majority of a country's population content about the state and direction of society seems a daunting task indeed. However, attempting to re-connect and hear those groups who have lost faith in politics may be a more plausible, yet vital course of action to take for Western governments to nurture non-violent democratic societies.

Apart from finding the interaction effect, the current study corroborates the relationship between societal discontent and support for violence against the government found by Gootjes et al. (2021). Additionally, it adds that it is stronger than the relationship with non-violent political

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

behaviours. This means that people who are unhappy about the state and direction of society do not just become politically active in a general sense. Rather, they may support the use of violence against governments as a means for societal change over other forms of political behaviour.

Apart from support for violence being related to negative perceptions about society, a similar relationship was found for political cynicism. In doing so, the current study extends how similar concepts such as nothing to lose perceptions (Tausch et al. 2011), loss of significance (Kruglanski et al. 2013) and feelings of exclusion from the political system (Schwarzmandel, 2010; Adam-Troian et al., 2021) are related to violent political behaviour (and as found in the current study, support for such behaviour as well). When people feel that governments do not act on their behalf, or when engaging in conventional political routes to societal change seems useless, support for violence against that very political system becomes a reasonable and tolerable strategy. This is further supported by the fact that the current study found political cynicism to be more strongly related to support for violence against the government than any of the non-violent alternatives.

**Non-violent political behaviours.** In addition to the relationships with support for violence against the government, the relationships of societal discontent and political cynicism with each of the non-violent forms of political behaviour are worth discussing. For political participation, societal discontent was significant, whilst political cynicism was not. Indeed, being discontent about society should direct an individual towards partaking politically in order to make a change, whilst political cynicism should direct an individual away from using that system. For willingness to participate in democratic innovations on the other hand, political cynicism was found to be related, and societal discontent was not. The former, again, can be regarded an expected finding, as individuals that are cynical about the state of politics should be

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

more interested in participating in other innovative forms of politics. Indeed, the effect of political cynicism on willingness to participate in democratic innovations was (just about) greater than the 95 percent confidence interval on political participation (table 2). While societal discontent had no significant relationship on its own, an interaction effect was found. For individuals with greater levels of political cynicism, willingness to participate in democratic innovations was greatest when they also scored higher on societal discontent. Support for democratic innovations was related to both societal discontent and political cynicism, with the former effect being substantially stronger.

**Societal discontent and political cynicism.** Apart from the interesting relationships, the current study cements societal discontent and political cynicism as relevant yet distinctive constructs in two ways. First, the current study finds that holistic and vague perceptions about society and politics can explain substantial amounts of variance in support for violence against the government. Second, it affirms that societal discontent and political cynicism, while related ( $r = .58$ ), are distinctive constructs, evident by their varying relationships with the different forms of political behaviour in the current study. As such, the two constructs may be useful to be included in future studies on similar topics as well.

### **Study 2: Interviewing Socio-Political Activists**

Study 2 consisted of two interviews with Dutch socio-political activists to better grasp why individuals could support the use of violence against the government. The main aim of the interviews was to assess whether experiences from activists in practice would support the quantitative approach in study 1.

### **Method**

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

**Participants.** Various political activists were invited to participate by e-mail based on their roles in societal movements and organisations. Eventually, two socio-political activists (from hereon referred to as the ‘interviewees’) agreed to participate, and were interviewed in a neo-positivist manner (Roulston, 2010). This approach was selected to maintain focus on the role of societal discontent and political cynicism on support for violence against the government, while still leaving room for other potential antecedents of violence to come up during the interview. The identity of the interviewees is kept anonymous.

The interviewees were two climate activists from the Netherlands. Both interviewees were approached via e-mail, using a standardised invitation letter inviting them to participate. Attached to the email was the research information form. Participants were informed that upon participation, their responses would be de-personalised (full anonymization could not be guaranteed, based on the interviewees responses during the interview), and that they would receive no compensation for their participation. The purpose of the study was described to the participants with no information being withheld. The first interview was conducted near the home of interviewee 1 in May, 2022, and the second interview was conducted at the home of interviewee 2 in June, 2022.

**Researcher Positionality.** The researcher interviewing (hereon the ‘interviewer’) the participants was Bart Kranenborg, a research master student of the University of Groningen. The interviewer has a keen interest in politics and political movements, and has experience from university course work about protest movements and interviewing. The interviewer and the interviewees shared no contact history prior to the interviews, and no conflicts of interest were identified.

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

**Data Collection.** An interview protocol (appendix E) was designed to function as the foundation for the interviews. In line with the suggested method for careful construction of interview protocols in qualitative research (Castillo-Montonya, 2016), feedback was provided and a mock-interview was conducted. Feedback on the interview protocol was provided by dr. T Kuppens and prof. Dr. T. Postmes. The mock-interview was hosted with a political scientist of the University of Nijmegen. The final interview protocol was constructed based on the feedback, and notes following the pilot interview. The interviews were conducted only in presence of the interviewer and the respective interviewee, and while each interview was planned to take approximately 25 minutes, both took approximately 35 minutes.

The majority of interview questions were asked open, and follow-up questions deviating from the prescribed interview protocol were asked either for clarification of a response, or when a follow-up question was expected to lead to interesting and relevant responses related to the research question. Participants began the interview by describing their role in their respective societal organisation and were then asked for their reaction to, and interpretation of, the extensiveness of public support for violence against the government in the Netherlands (approximately a quarter of Dutch respondents; Gootjes et al., 2021). Following this, interviewees were asked about three topics, namely (1) why they perceived that people may support violence against the government, (2) how people that support such violence differ from those who do not support it, and (3) how people that engage in such violence may differ from those who do not engage in it (note that ‘people’ here refers to the general public, and not necessarily members of the interviewees affiliate organisations). Both interviews were recorded using a basic, offline recording tool on the interviewers phone and manually transcribed by the interviewer.



**Analytic Strategy.** Both interview transcripts were read repeatedly, after which codes for sections of the transcripts were formulated. Then, themes for each interview were constructed based on an iterative process of re-reading and further coding. The result of the analysis, the main emergent themes, are presented below.

### **Emergent Theme 1: Distance between Government and Disadvantaged Groups**

A central theme why people may support political violence consisted of the distance between politics and people. This was based on the fact that (1) disadvantaged groups have few to no ways to affect their situation, and that (2) the political system makes it difficult even for well-meaning politicians and civil servants to help people in need. According to the interviewees, this is particularly prominent for disadvantaged people in society that have difficulties making socio-political changes because they lack the verbal skills and abilities required. The combination of these, and why it may make people resort to violent ideas, was described by the interviewee in interview 1:

“People who have been let down by the government have to deal with civil servants who hide behind all kinds of non-understandable rules, where listening to what is really going on with you is no longer what happens, but instead, whether you check the boxes needed for me to be able to give you support. At that point it feels like you talk to a robot. The opposition no longer sees me as a human being [...] all those probably well-meaning civil servants who do their best but are bound to rules, [...] if then you already had a short fuse and you’re not so good with words, well, then a violent reaction is what happens”

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

In the second interview a similar trend was described. The interviewee stated that the extent to which support for violence against the government is prevalent in the Netherlands was “not surprising, because I feel that many people are frustrated, they feel powerless” and that it is “a real offload of emotion and desperation, having no control of your situation but also suffering under it”. At the same time, the interviewee also described how she viewed this as a symptom of the socio-political system:

“Personally I don’t hold people or individuals accountable, not even politicians, although I do believe they could have reacted differently, but I see that they also are stuck in an ideology, a story that they think is best”

In both interviews, these and similar explanations were given that highlight the contrast between the power of politicians and the advantaged, and the lack of methods disadvantaged groups have to affect their situation. Additionally, both interviews highlighted the role of a dysfunctional societal system in which advantaged groups benefit over the backs of disadvantaged groups.

### **Emergent Theme 2: Violence-tolerating Climate**

A second theme was the emerging development of a societal climate that tolerates, or even promotes the use of violence. The underlying factors for this development were described to be social media, as well as the use of violent rhetoric of politicians. In interview 1, the interviewee described that “discussion on Twitter and Facebook get out of hand much faster, than discussions between two people drinking a cup of coffee at a table, it does something to people. It makes the use of aggressive language much easier.” In the same interview, the

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

interviewee also described how we currently live in a societal climate that endorses the use of violence for groups that are not part of our society. He also indicated that extreme right-wing politicians encourage violence, and that violence is framed as a way of solving problems in popular media culture. Additionally, the interviewee described how a violence endorsing climate can be an important factor in determining whether people actually engage in violent behaviour or not, a sentiment also described by the interviewee in interview 2.

### **Emergent Theme 3: Violence as a Powerful Tool for Societal Change**

A third emergent theme was that violence can be regarded a tool for societal change, in particular for disadvantaged groups who feel that conventional routes do not work. In interview 1, the first interviewee highlighted this by stating that:

“Whether you want it or not, violence gives you a form of power. And when you, as a group of people with very little power in one way or another want to force a very powerful institution to do something, well yes then it is very enticing to use a method that grants you a lot of power” and “When you are busy with, in your perception, a fight for survival, and you experience that non-violent methods are neglected and have no effect, then yes at some point people become desperate and search for other means”.

Indeed, the interviewee in the second interview described that “we have much to thank because of violence. It has already led to many large societal changes. I think it can be a very quick way to make changes happen”.

### **Further Topics**

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

Apart from the three main emergent themes, the interviewees both indicated that there is no clear common definition of political violence. As such, they argue, it is important to clearly define what people understand under the concept. They add also that, what people define as violent behaviour is often contingent on their own socio-cultural positionality and the position of the group that has engaged in a particular behaviour that may or may not be deemed violent. Interviewee 1 described this with a comparison between farmer protests in the Netherlands and protests by anti-racism activist group Kick Out Zwarte Piet:

“You notice that the farmers protests, what happens there. They use things sometimes of which I say, yes those are forms of violent behaviour, and still they had enormous support within their own community and got away with it. While Kick Out Zwarte Piet, when you look at their demonstrations, completely non-violent [...], are regarded as very violent in public opinion. There is an enormous discrepancy. It is really their position in society. Young black males are seen as violent. Farmers as one of our own.”

### **Discussion**

The goal of the interviews was to better understand why people could support political violence, and to assess whether experiences of activists were largely in line with the theoretical and quantitative approach in study 1 (the latter which is discussed in the general discussion section). The overarching narrative from the interviews points towards violence against the government as a functional and effective way of achieving societal change for disadvantaged groups, especially when other means are ineffective and when the use of violence is tolerated or even encouraged by the social network. These factors, combined with the interviewees sceptical

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

sentiments about the negative direction of society, suggest that support for violence against the government may increase further in the near future. In particular, this may be the case if disadvantaged groups continue to feel disconnected from politics. Considering that support for violence against the government can be an important factor for people to actually engage in violent behaviour (Dahl & van Zalk, 2016; Kruglanski et al., 2014, 2017; Jasko et al., 2016, 2019), further acts of violence in the near future in the Netherlands seem plausible. In fact, since the interviews of the current study were conducted, additional disruptive farmers protests in the Netherlands have taken place, even culminating to an incident with police firing live ammunition towards a tractor (Nederlandse Omroep Stichting, 2022).

It is vital that the interpretation of the emergent themes is done in light of the sociocultural backgrounds of the interviewees: both interviewees in the current study were climate activists, and the experiences on which they based their answers during the interview were likely rooted in the broader climate activist movement. While this does not delegitimize their responses, it does mean that the results of the interviews lack a wide socio-cultural gaze. Therefore, future interview research about support for violence against the government should include a wide array of political and cultural backgrounds to improve participant diversity and increase generalizability.

### **General Discussion**

The current research studied how societal discontent and political cynicism are related to support for violence against the government in the Netherlands with two studies. In a survey with a representative sample from the Netherlands, previously found relationships between support for violence against the government and societal discontent were corroborated (Gootjes et al., 2021; van 't Riet, in press), and found to be stronger than relationships with non-violent

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

methods. Political cynicism, conceptually similar to measures that have been related to political violence (Kruglanski et al., 2013, 2014; Tausch et al., 2011; Schwarzmantel, 2010, Adam-Troian et al., 2020) was also found to be more strongly related to support for violence against the government than non-violent methods. The most intriguing finding however, was the interaction between societal discontent and political cynicism: support for violence against the government was strongly related to political cynicism, if elevated levels of societal discontent were also present. Finally, two interviews with socio-political activists were conducted, indicating that violence may be used as a strategic tool for societal change when other methods seem futile. As such, the interviews by and large supported the quantitative approach in study 1.

Should we be worried about extensive support for violence against the government, knowing that most people who support such behaviour will likely not end up engaging in it themselves (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017)? Support for violent behaviour among social networks has been identified as an important factor for determining whether individuals that consider using violence actually do so (Dahl & van Zalk, 2016; Kruglanski et al., 2014, 2017; Jasko et al., 2016, 2019). Therefore, despite the current study's use of broad and generalist descriptions of violence, substantial prevalence of support for such behaviour is worrying. Indeed, substantial support for generalist concepts of violence against the government may in fact be more dangerous than minimal support for concrete behaviours, as generalist support may be enough to inspire actual violent behaviour. As stated by the interviewees, there is no consensus on what constitutes of political violence explicitly. Therefore, generalist support for violence (e.g. people saying the government should be overthrown) may be interpreted by potential perpetrators as a condonement for more specific, radical acts (e.g. physically attacking government officials or politicians). This may become even more imminent when the society

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

finds itself in a violence-tolerating climate, which is currently the case according to the interviewees. Therefore, substantive support for generalist attitudes on violence against the government should be treated seriously.

An additional point of concern to take from this study, is that people indicate feeling disconnected from politics (evident by its relationship with political cynicism from study 1 and emergent theme 1 from study 2). Combined with the notion that violent measures are powerful and strategic tools for such groups to be heard (emergent theme 3), this suggests that support for violence against the government is likely to continue to grow. This is particularly the case, when taking the current socio-political challenges the Netherlands into account, combined with the potentially precarious role of substantial perceived support for generalist concepts of violence in society. Therefore, violence against the government in the Netherlands should not come wholly unexpected, in particular if disadvantaged groups in society continue to lack political representation that gives voice to their opinions and needs.

### **Suggestions for future research**

Future research could benefit from gaining a better understanding of what political violence constitutes of, and as such, should more frequently ask about concrete behaviours. Generalist items such as the ones used in study 1 of the current research can still be relevant by representing ambiguous sentiments. However, understanding to what extent people support a range of concrete behaviours may shed more light on the severity and threat that substantial support for violence poses. Such a list of behaviours should be comprehensive, ranging from (for instance) posting insults directed to politicians online all the way to acts of intentional physical harm of politicians.

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

An additional suggestion concerns studying the antecedents of societal discontent to unravel why it is so strongly related to support for violence against the government. Whilst the link between support for such violence and political cynicism is relatively direct, the link underlying the relationship with societal discontent is not. Nevertheless, in the current study, societal discontent showed stronger effect sizes for support for violence against the government than political cynicism. Therefore, disentangling this concept could help researchers understand why people hold negative sentiments about the state and direction of society, and why it is so strongly related to support for violence against the government. Additionally, to further understand the distinction between societal discontent and political cynicism, it is recommended that future research on support for violence against governments includes these measures simultaneously.

### **Conclusion**

The current research assessed how societal discontent and political cynicism relate to support for political violence amongst Dutch citizens. Finding that there are substantial relationships, it can be concluded that abstract and generalist sentiments about the state of society and politics can be a driving factor for support for violent action. In particular, it is individuals that are unhappy about the state of society, and that simultaneously have no faith in the conventional ways of influencing its politics, who are most likely to support violence against the government. While political violence is a broad concept indeed, that is dependent on context and group membership, the extent to which people indicate support for it is cause for concern. This, as even generalist support for violence against the government can be an important driving factor for others that are considering engaging in violent action. With the socio-political challenges that the Netherlands and other nations face, and will likely continue to face in the near



## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

future, the further development of a movement that supports the use of violence as a meaningful strategy to achieve social change is not a possibility, but a plausibility. The findings of the current study (in concert with other research) indicate that governments and political institutions must be aware of the distance they find themselves in, in relation to disconnected and displeased groups in society. In doing so, they must take responsibility in bridging this gap to prevent further support for, and potential escalation of the use of, violence against governments.

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van 't Riet, J., (in press) De stilte voor de storm? Een onderzoek naar tolerantie jegens politiek geweld in Nederland.

## Appendix A

## List of All Items Included in Scales

Table 3

Table including all items and answer options used in each scale.

Scale	Items
Societal discontent	<p>Items 1 – 4 answered on a 1 – 5 Likert scale, 1 = Not at all, 5 = A great deal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To what degree are you worried about the state of the economy of your country?</li> <li>2. To what degree are you worried that core Dutch values are being undermined?</li> <li>3. To what degree are you worried that the Netherlands is a dangerous place to live?</li> <li>4. To what degree are you worried that the Netherlands will be negatively affected by immigration?</li> </ol> <p>Items 5 – 7 answered on a 1 – 5 Likert scale, 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. people don't respect each other anymore.</li> <li>6. More and more rules and regulations fence us in (traffic regulations, rules about behaviour in public places...); soon we won't be allowed to do anything any more.</li> <li>7. Ever more enterprises will move to low-wage countries, threatening employment in the Netherlands.</li> </ol>
Political cynicism	<p>Items answered on a 1 – 5 Likert scale, 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The established politicians who claim to defend our interest, have often betrayed the people.</li> <li>2. Elected officials talk too much and take too little action.</li> </ol>
Support for violence against the government	<p>Items answered on a 1 – 5 Likert scale, 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Violent action against the government is needed to bring about real change.</li> <li>2. We need more aggressive action against the government if it continues to refuse to listen.</li> <li>3. Government is functioning so poorly that it would be best to overthrow the entire system.</li> </ol>



RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

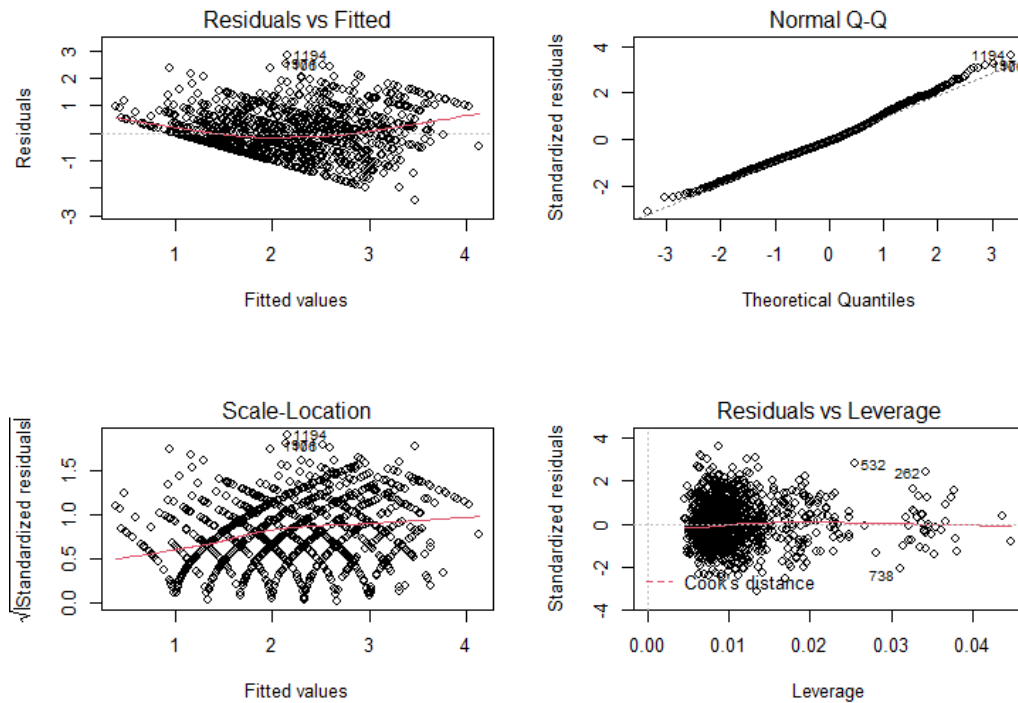
<p>Political participation</p>	<p>Items answered on a 1 – 3 Likert scale, 1 = Never, 3 = Often, having been asked “During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contacted a politician, government or local government official?</li> <li>2. Worked in a political party or action group?</li> <li>3. Signed a petition?</li> <li>4. Taken part in a lawful public demonstration?</li> <li>5. Posted or shared anything about politics online, for example on blogs, via email or on social media such as Facebook or Twitter?</li> </ol>
<p>Support for democratic innovation</p>	<p>Items answered on a 1 – 5 Likert scale, 1 = Not at all, 5 = Very much, having been asked “Could you indicate to what extent you think each of the following reforms could improve the way democracy in the Netherlands works?”:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasing the number of binding referendums.</li> <li>2. Increasing the number of consultative referendums.</li> <li>3. Increasing the number of binding citizen assemblies.</li> <li>4. Increasing the number of consultative citizen assemblies.</li> <li>5. Replacing the parliament consisting of elected politicians by a parliament consisting of randomly selected citizens.</li> </ol>
<p>Willingness to participate in democratic innovations</p>	<p>Items answered on a 1 – 5 Likert scale, 1 = Very unlikely, 5 = Very likely, having been asked “If you were given the possibility, how likely is it that you would undertake the following activities in the future?”:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasing the number of binding referendums.</li> <li>2. Increasing the number of consultative referendums.</li> <li>3. Increasing the number of binding citizen assemblies.</li> <li>4. Increasing the number of consultative citizen assemblies.</li> <li>5. Take up a seat in parliament as a randomly selected citizen.</li> </ol>

Appendix B

Plots of model assumptions for main effect, and interaction model of support for violence against the government

Figure 3

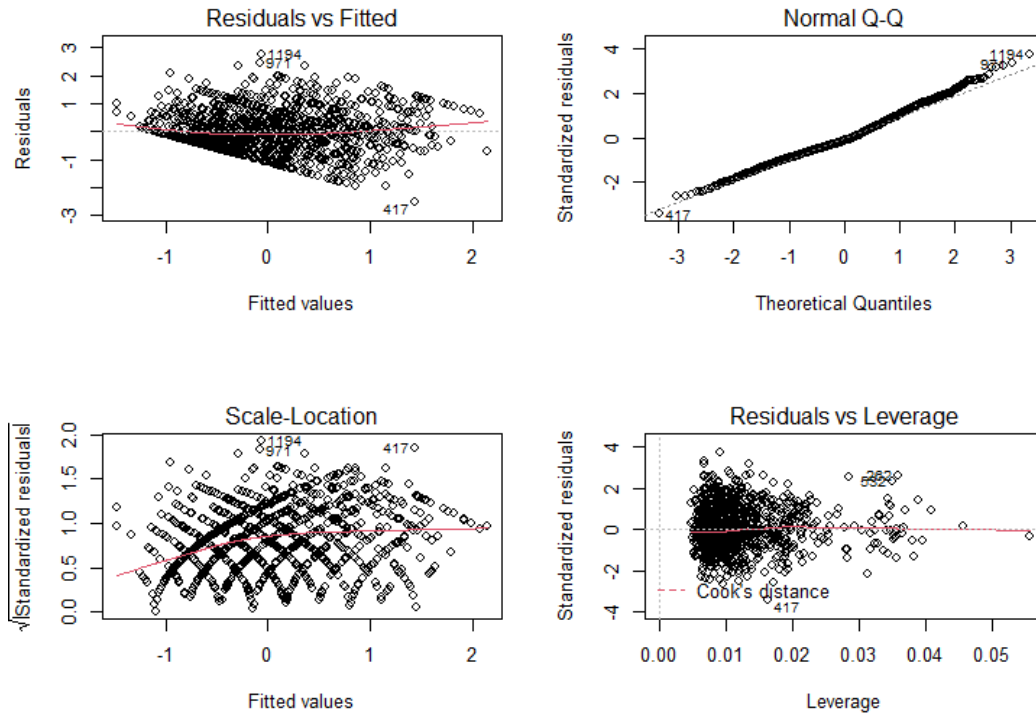
Plots of model assumptions of main effects model of support for violence against the government.



Note. No substantial deviations of normality (top-left) and linearity (top-right) were found. While variances are not completely homogenous (indicated by the slightly sloped red line in the bottom-left figure), the effect is minimal. Additionally, no substantial leverage points were identified (bottom-right). Thus, there is no strong evidence that the assumptions are violated.

**Figure 4**

*Plots of model assumptions of interaction model of support for violence against the government.*



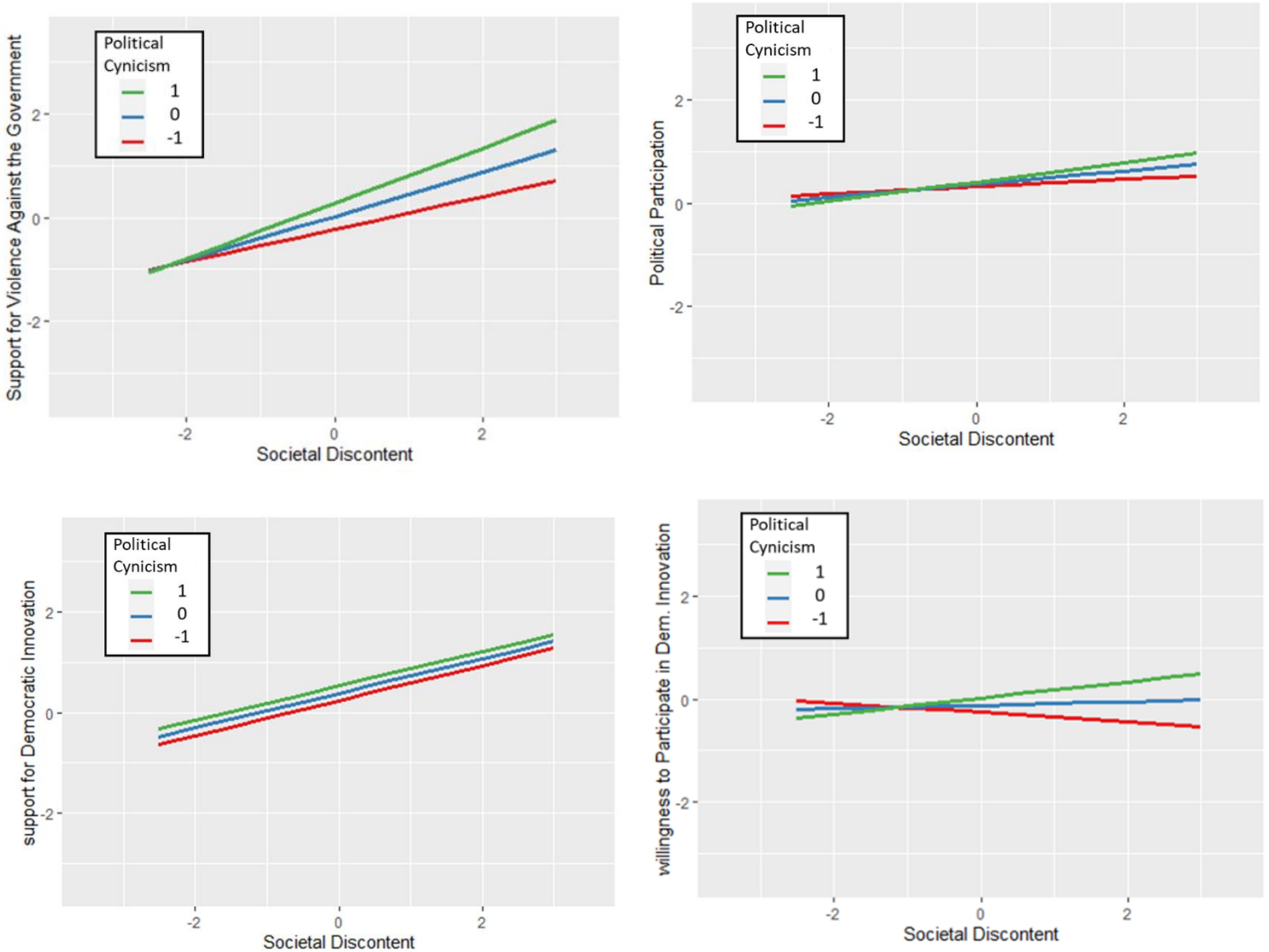
*Note.* The assumption checks of the interaction model indicate similar patterns compared to the main effects model. Despite a slightly sloped curve in the homogeneity of variances plot (bottom-left), there is no strong evidence that the assumptions have been violated.

Appendix C

Interaction figures of all outcome variables

Figure 5

Interaction figures of all outcome variables on the Dutch sample used in main analysis.



Note. The four figures give an indication of the similarities and differences between the interaction effects on the four outcome variables. Clock-wise, starting at the top-left, the dependent variables are support for violence against the government, political participation, support for Democratic Innovation, and willingness to Participate in Dem. Innovation.

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

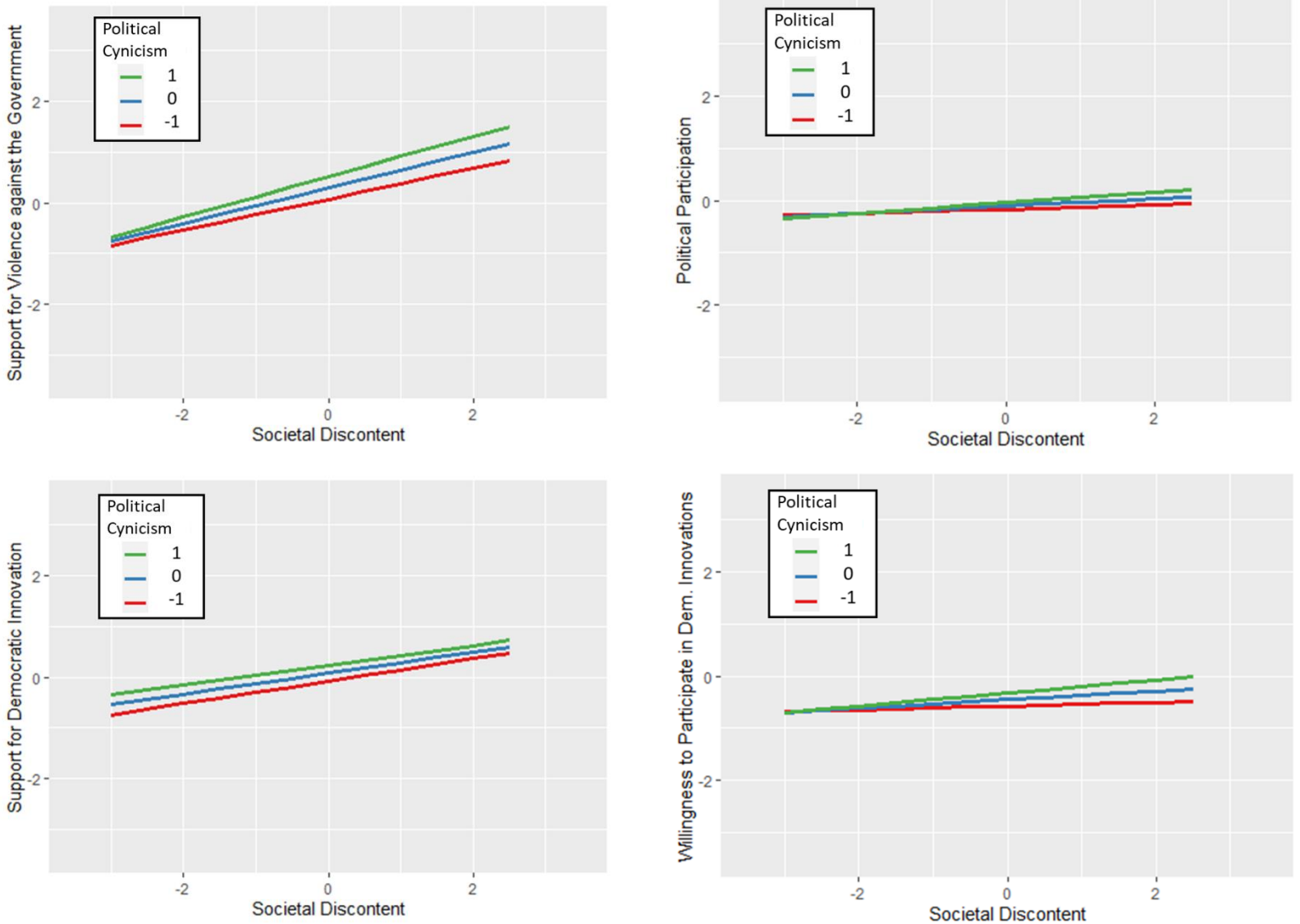
willingness to participate in democratic innovation and support for democratic innovations. Note that the interaction effect of political participation was just about non-significant, with the  $p$ -value being exactly 0.05.

Appendix D

Robustness plots of significant interaction effects of full European sample

Figure 6

Interaction figures of all outcomes for robustness checks of the main analysis.



Note. The four figures of the robustness analysis, conducted based on the data of the full European sample. Clock-wise, starting at the top-left, the dependent variables are support for

## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

violence against the government, political participation, willingness to participate in democratic innovation and support for democratic innovations. The figures and relationships show the findings from the full sample are similar to those of the Netherlands.

## Appendix E

### Interview Protocol for Study 2

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#### “Waarom Steunen Mensen Geweld Tegen de Overheid?”

PSY-2122-S-0327

#### Interview protocol

##### Vorbereiding

*Het interview volgt een neo-positivistische aanpak. Voorafgaand aan het interview krijgt de deelnemer het informatieformulier van het onderzoek, en het geïnformeerde toestemmingsformulier.*

1. U heeft het informatieformulier over het onderzoek gelezen. Heeft u verdere vragen of opmerkingen over het onderzoek?

*Wanneer de vragen van de deelnemer naar tevredenheid zijn beantwoord ondertekend de deelnemer het geïnformeerde toestemmingsformulier. De onderzoeker start de geluidsopname.*

##### Introductie

2. [Start interview en overzicht]  
Bedankt voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek. Het doel van dit onderzoek is beter te begrijpen wat de achterliggende redenen van steun voor geweld tegen de overheid zijn. Wij hopen hier door middel van dit interview een beter beeld van te krijgen. Het interview zal ongeveer 25 minuten duren. Maar, we beginnen met een korte introductie.
3. [Korte introductie van de interviewer]
4. Wij hebben u gevraagd om deel te nemen aan dit interview omdat u lid bent van een maatschappelijk actieve organisatie/beweging. Kunt u kort toelichten welke organisatie/beweging dit is?
  - a. Wat voor rol heeft u zelf binnen de organisatie/beweging?

##### Steun voor gewelddadige methodes

We beginnen met enkele vragen over de achterliggende redenen voor steun voor geweld. Daarna vraag ik ook naar de verhouding tussen steun voor geweld en steun voor niet-



## RELATING DISCONTENT AND CYNICISM WITH POLITICAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

gewelddadig gedrag, en als laatste vraag ik over hoe mensen die geweld steunen mogelijk verschillen van mensen die zelf deelnemen aan geweld tegen de overheid. Nu volgen de vragen over steun voor gewelddadig gedrag tegen de overheid. Wij definiëren politiek geweld als de opzettelijk poging om geweld te gebruiken tegen mensen of objecten om politieke redenen. Recent onderzoek laat zien dat meer dan een kwart van de Nederlandse bevolking geweld tegenover de overheid steunt. Dit gaat dus specifiek over mensen die het gedrag steunen, maar er niet per sé zelf aan deelnemen.

5. Wat vindt u van dit aantal mensen?
  - a. Had u dit aantal verwacht? Waarom wel/niet?
6. Wat zijn volgens u de redenen dat mensen geweld tegen de overheid steunen?
  - a. Ziet u steun voor dit gedrag als een algemene reactie op hoe mensen kijken naar de staat van de maatschappij? [societal discontent]
    - i. [eventuele verdere toelichting] Vindt u dat de maatschappij de goede of de slechte kant op gaat?
  - b. Ziet u steun voor gewelddadig gedrag tegen de overheid als een specifieke reactie gericht op ontevredenheid over... [political cynicism]
    - i. de Overheid?
    - ii. Politici?
    - iii. Wat is uw oordeel over het functioneren van de overheid?
7. Zijn er volgens u nog andere redenen waarom mensen geweld tegen de overheid steunen?

De volgende vragen gaan over de verhouding tussen het steunen van geweld tegen de overheid in verhouding met niet-gewelddadig politiek gedrag. Daaronder verstaan wij bijvoorbeeld vreedzaam protest en het tekenen van petitie's.

8. Waarom denkt u dat mensen steun voor gewelddadige methodes hebben in plaats van steun voor 'conventionele' methodes? (e.g. vreedzaam protesteren of het tekenen van petitie's)
  - a. Wat hopen mensen volgens u met deze steun te bereiken?
  - b. Hoe denkt u dat de doelen die mensen met steun voor geweld willen bereiken verschillen van de doelen die mensen willen bereiken met conventioneel gedrag?
9. Hoe denkt u dat mensen die dit geweld steunen verschillen van mensen die dit niet steunen?

De laatste vragen gaan over verschillen en overeenkomsten tussen steun voor geweld tegen de overheid, en deelnemen aan geweld.

10. Waarom denkt u dat mensen die zelf gewelddadig methodes gebruiken tegen de overheid daarvoor kiezen boven 'conventioneel gedrag'?
  - a. Wat hopen mensen volgens u met gewelddadig gedrag tegen de overheid te bereiken?
11. Hoe denkt u dat mensen die meedoen aan gewelddadig gedrag verschillen van mensen die dit niet doen?

12. In hoeverre is steun voor geweld onder de algemene bevolking belangrijk voor mensen om potentiële gewelddadige daden tegenover de politiek te plegen?
13. Zijn er volgens u nog andere redenen waarom mensen deelnemen aan geweld tegen de overheid?

### **Afronden**

14. We hebben met u besproken waarom u denkt dat mensen steun uitten voor het gebruik van gewelddadige methodes tegenover de overheid. Voordat we het interview afronden, zijn er nog opmerkingen of meningen over deze onderwerpen die wij nog niet hebben besproken die u zou willen delen?
15. Zijn er nog opmerkingen die u tijdens het interview heeft gezegd die u zou willen aanpassen of terugnemen?

Bij dezen wil ik u enorm bedanken voor het meewerken aan dit interview! Indien u interesse heeft, delen wij graag de overkoepelende bevindingen met u wanneer het onderzoek afgerond is in juli.

*De geluidsopname wordt gestopt, en het interview wordt afgesloten.*

--- Einde interview ---

### **Richtlijnen vervolgvragen voor interviewer**

Vervolgvragen zijn mogelijk wanneer

- Een deelnemer niet een volledig antwoord geeft op de vraag (ter verduidelijking).
- Een deelnemer een antwoord geeft dat indiceert dat een vervolgvraag tot interessante antwoorden kan leiden die ook van waarde zijn voor het beantwoorden van de onderzoeksvraag (ter verdieping).