# 8 Protest and protesters in advanced industrial democracies. The case of the 15th February global anti-war demonstrations[i]

*Joris Verhulst and Stefaan Walgrave*

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## Introduction

Social and political protest is a means by which groups or segments of a given society try to influence public discourse and political decision-making on a variety of issues. In recent years, it has evolved from an 'unconventional' to a 'normalized' form of political action in the Western world. More and more social and political organizations dealing with diverging issues seem to turn to protest as a legitimate and obvious way to display their grievances, and as a common stage in ongoing campaigns (Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Norris, 2002; Norris, Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2004). And thus, more and more people take part in these protests. Assuming that participation optimists are right when they say that protest activism does not substitute for, but rather supplements traditional political participation (like voting) (Norris, 2002), this trend surely benefits a country's democratic quality, and it is a very strong indicator of the strength of national civil society.

Yet, in the last few decades political decision-making has progressively been shifting from the national to the global level, and political claims-making is steadily catching up. Increasingly, movements worldwide join their forces in the staging of transnational protest events and ongoing campaigns, aimed at national and international authorities and corporations. Movement scholars did not let this level shift go by unnoticed, and transnationalism steadily became a key field in the study of social movements (see among many others: della Porta, Kriesi and Rucht, 1999; Smith, Pagnucco and Chatfield, 1997; Smith and Johnston, 2002; Tarrow, 1998). All kinds of social movement-like phenomena are presently studied under the transnational movements' label, yet the most of interest to us here are the transnational social movement *networks* to which Tarrow (2002), Della Porta et al. (1999) and Duyvendak and Koopmans (1995) refer. These are primarily rooted in and confined to their national political contexts, but coordinate their actions to bring about transnational collective action. Their transnational character lies in "… *the links among non-state actors – most notably, in this context, mobilization by contentious social movements that crosses borders*" (Tarrow, 2002: 4). For some scholars, the originality of the present day transnational contention is exactly that it can bypass national political opportunities. Gathering resources, membership and even mobilization can be truly transnational activities, these authors claim (Smith, 1997). Yet, all movements have "… *both a domestic and an international political environment*" (Oberschall, 1996: 94), and "… *nation states are still the principal actors in international relations, and the national political context continues to constitute a*

*crucial filter which conditions the impact of international change on domestic politics*" (della Porta and Kriesi, 1999: 4), and "… *national political opportunity structures affect the variable likelihood of transnationalism*" (McCarthy, 1997: 256).

It is exactly this dichotomy that defines the object of study of this article. Transnational contention is defined as: "the coordinated struggle of actors and organizations from more than one society against a state, international economic actors, or international institutions" (Tarrow, 2002:7). So to what extent is transnational protest to be considered as truly transnational contention? To what extent do national contexts play a role when it comes to protest goals and targets, and to the kinds of people that are attracted to engage in protest? In tackling these questions, our case will be one of the most recent and most notable examples of such a transnational protest event: the 15th February 2003 (in short: F15) protests against war in Iraq. On that day, millions of people worldwide took to the streets to voice their discontent and to try to prevent the invasion of Iraq in a day of global mass demonstrations. Taken altogether, these were the largest and most momentous transnational anti-war protests in human history (Epstein 2003: 109), all occurring on one single day. In the US the F15 demonstrations were the largest since those against the Vietnam War. In Europe they outshone the 1991 anti-Gulf war protests by far. In some countries, like Spain and Italy, they even dwarfed the 1980s protest against NATO nuclear armament in Europe, which had long been considered an unprecedented wave of political protest (Rochon 1988). Politicians,

commentators, scholars, and even movement members and leaders worldwide were startled by the amount and immensity of the F15 demonstrations. Furthermore, throughout the globe, these protests were all very much alike concerning protest trigger, issue, target and action repertoire, and, obviously, protest timing. Slogans like 'Not in My Name' and 'No War on Iraq' could be heard and read in the streets of cities in all continents. According to many, a 'new superpower' had stood up: since 15th February there were 'two superpowers on the planet: the United States and World Public Opinion (Cortright, 2004: xi)' The fact that the timing, trigger, issue, goal and action repertoires of the 15th February protests seem to have been identical throughout the world makes it an exceptional and unique example of a truly transnational protest event, and many characteristics of the protests and of their organization, might lead us to find this to be true indeed. Conversely, there are several important obvious differences between countries (for example the extreme differences in mobilization levels between e.g. Italy and Belgium), which prove that national circumstances do still matter in some way. Furthermore, the different waves of worldwide, or at least European-wide, peace protest in the past have been strongly determined by the specific national political contexts (Ruzza and Bozzini, 2003); the peace movement has always been a reactive movement and more sensitive to national opportunities than many of its new social movement colleagues.

**Data And Methods**

To grasp F15 in its full essence, we need information on the actual F15 protest participants in different countries. We obtained that information from the F15 protesters themselves, by the use of protest surveys. Interviewing participants at protest demonstrations is not a common research technique. Favre and colleagues even speak of 'a strange gap' in the sociology of mobilizations (Favre, Fillieule and Mayer, 1997). To the best of our knowledge, few studies have used this approach. Most elaborate is the work of the French research team including Favre, Mayer and Fillieule, who developed a method designed to offer all participants an equal opportunity of being interviewed, and which was later refined by van Aelst and Walgrave (1999). In December 2002, a group of social movement scholars in eight nations (Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Italy, the UK and the US)[ii] began forging a network in order to survey the expected antiwar demonstrations to be staged in the next few months. They agreed on a common questionnaire and a field work method. In all eight countries, except for Italy, the actual survey process to establish a random sample of demonstration participants was twofold. First, fieldwork supervisors counted the rows of participants, selecting every Nth row, to ensure that the same number of rows was skipped throughout. Then a dozen interviewers selected every Nth person in that row and distributed questionnaires to these individuals during the actual protest march. The selected participants were asked to complete the questionnaire at home and to mail it back. Yet, the Italian team followed another sampling track and interviewed participants on trains on their way to the demonstration in Rome. In a

later study, we will carefully compare the outcome of the Italian field method with the results of the other country's approach.

This International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) carried out on 15th February covers a random sample of demonstrators engaged in eleven different demonstrations in eight countries involving 6,753 respondents in total. The overall response rate for the postal survey (Italy with its 100 per cent not included) was more than 53%, with no country's response rate lower than 37%, which is satisfactory for an anonymous survey without reminders.

**15th February: Timing, Set-UP and Organization**

The US plans to invade Iraq have been obvious since early 2002, when President Bush gave his famed speech on the 'Axis of Evil', a 'thread of threat' constituted by the countries of North Korea, Iran and Iraq. From that time on, debates in US Congress and UN Security Council led to the respective authorization of an attack of Iraq in October 2002 by the US Congress and the approval of UN Resolution 1441 in November 2002. In this resolution Iraq was forced to fully cooperate with UN weapons inspectors, but it did not contain the legitimization of an eventual use of force. UN weapon inspectors were installed in Iraq, but did not get enough cooperation from the Iraq government. In late January, the leaders of eight European countries issued a joint statement in all major European newspapers to promote the invasion of Iraq. By then, the first armed skirmishes had already

taken place and had resulted in the first deaths of Iraqi civilians. Near the end of January, it became very clear that war was imminent.

The common slogans, identical date and action repertoires of the F15 worldwide protests did not just appear out of thin air. They were the fruit of months of intensive contacts and preparations. Starting as a European initiative, the call for major demonstrations of 15th February 2003 was launched at the Florence European Social Forum (ESF) in November of the year before. One month later, the transatlantic bridge was forged at a subsequent ESF preparatory meeting, where the newly-found American peace group, United for Peace and Justice, was present, which would become the driving force behind the F15 protest on American soil, and was also to be an avid player in the international coordination. After this second meeting, intense contacts between the different national (umbrella) organizations through a few consecutive European and World Social Forums as well as by means of intensively used e-mail circuits, kept the idea of F15 very much alive. As already mentioned, by the end of January, war seemed inevitable, and it became clear that the demonstration date that was set several months earlier would be ideal. According to the Belgian leader of the peace group 'Vrede' ('Peace')[iii], the final true go-ahead for the set-up of mass demonstrations was actually triggered on February 5, when the US Secretary of State presented the US evidence of the Iraqi arsenal of weapons of mass destruction; evidence the authenticity of which was contested. So, although the mobilizations were carefully planned and coordinated, it was the presentation of dubious evidence that really

triggered them. To conclude: initiated because of the fear for war, and triggered by the effective prospect of war, all protests were planned on the same day, 15th February. Although many smaller protest gatherings took many other forms, the standard action form was that of peaceful[iv] protest marches, which took place simultaneously in all large cities throughout the West.

**National Contexts**

Worldwide or global protest evidently means protest throughout different places in the world. Different protest loci also imply, amongst other things, different protest cultures, opportunities and cycles; different issue-relevance and different targets, all of which could have their impact on who would take to the streets. In this section, we will focus on two aspects that had an immediate relevance for differences between different countries in the F15 protests and protesters: the official national government positions towards the possibility of war, and national protest cultures. We have elaborated on the different positions of government and opposition before (Verhulst and Walgrave, 2006); we present a brief resume of these findings here.

Looking at the different national governments' stances on war, we could more or less place our countries on a spectrum from an official pro-war position to an official anti-war stance, with the US being the most anxious to take up the arms and Germany being the most reluctant to do so. In the US, the governing party

(Republicans) supported war, as did part of the opposition (Democrats). For the most avid follower of the US in its war race, the UK, governing party Labour (the only centre-left government with pro-war attitudes) was divided on the issue, as was the opposition (split between the pro-war Conservative party and the anti-war Liberal Democrats). In all three war-supporting countries, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands, which are ranked according to their degree of active involvement, government was unanimously in favour of war but received full resistance from all opposition parties. The Netherlands, however, was an exceptional case, since, the national ruling coalition had split up and a general election was held, but at the time of the protests it was still unable to form a new Cabinet and the old Government continuing to rule. In the three remaining countries, government as well as opposition unanimously opposed the possibility of war, though tacitly in Switzerland, moderately pronounced in Belgium and with international voice in Germany.

A second important country variable is constituted by the variation in protest culture and political climate in the countries surveyed. This is a very complex matter that goes far beyond the scope of this chapter, but European Social Survey and World Value Study[v] evidence can give us some clue of the national protest climate in the eights countries under study. Not the general lifelong indication (that also includes once-in-a-lifetime protesters, 60‘s student protesters and 80’s anti-missile protest participants), but the differences in actual protest levels in the one-year period before F15 are of interest to us here. There is a lot of variation on

this country variable too; the least active protesters in 2001 were the Dutch (3%) and the British (4%) populations; most active were the Spanish citizens: 16 % of them had taken part in a lawful demonstration in the past year. The Germans and Italians (both 11%) were more than averagely active; the Swiss and Belgian somewhat less. When we interpret these numbers in protest terms, they could be regarded as indicators of a phase in a national protest cycle. In Germany, Italy and most of all Spain, protest was 'up'; in Belgium and Germany it was more or less stable (or average); in the Netherlands and the UK, protest seemed to have reached rock bottom in the period under study. Did these differences in national contexts have their effects on who took to the different streets in our eight countries? That is the question that we will tackle in the rest of this chapter.

## Inside the F15 protests: dissent or dissenting protesters

### *Socio-demographics of the F15 protesters*

The 15th February protesters were predominantly relatively young to mid-aged men and women with higher education, employed as office workers in the more 'soft' professional sectors. They were, on the whole, the classic example of new social movement (NSM) protesters (Norris 2002; Norris et al 2004; Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). But between countries, we find some striking differences: only in Belgium the men outnumbered the women, in all other countries the opposite was true, with an exceptional 63 per cent of women in the US. In addition, the American protesters were hyper-educated and relatively older (more than half of

them was over 45), and mostly professional workers. On the other end we find the Swiss and Spanish protesters: the Swiss were the youngest and least educated because of a large amount of youngsters and students; the Spanish were also somewhat younger, less educated, and disproportionably many of them were manual workers. Apart from the relatively low educational level of the Dutch protesters, they, as did the Italian, Belgian, German and British protesters, had commensurable socio-demographic profiles that link up with the expected NSM profile. Three countries really stand out: the American protesters with an extreme new social movement profile, the younger and (thus) less educated Swiss demonstrators, and the Spanish protesters that seem to be least fitting the NSM profile. Obviously, these socio-demographic variations have specific origins like for example specific mobilizing structures. Looking at these differences, we could presume that the American protesters were predominantly mobilized through new social movement organizations; the Spanish relatively more trough labor unions, and the Swiss through youngsters' organizations. But first, let us have a look at some more data of the F15 protesters.

*TABLE 1:* Socio-demographic profiles (in %) of the F15 protesters (N=5710)

| | | War initiating countries | | War supporting countries | | | War opposing countries | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | US | UK | SP | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | Ave |
| | *N:* | *705* | *1129* | *452* | *1016* | *542* | *637* | *510* | *781* | |
| **Sex** | Male | 37 | 46 | 50 | 48 | 45 | 49 | 57 | 47 | 47 |
| | Female | 63 | 54 | 50 | 52 | 55 | 51 | 43 | 53 | 53 |
| **Age** | 0-24 | 11 | 16 | 27 | 13 | 19 | 31 | 23 | 26 | 21 |
| | 25-44 | 35 | 38 | 46 | 48 | 36 | 39 | 38 | 36 | 39 |
| | 45-64 | 43 | 39 | 25 | 36 | 38 | 26 | 35 | 31 | 34 |
| | 65+ | 11 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 |
| **Education** | None & primary | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| | Lower second. | 1 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 6 | 23 | 5 | 10 | 9 |
| | Higher second. | 6 | 15 | 41 | 15 | 31 | 26 | 21 | 25 | 23 |
| | Non univ higher | 15 | 9 | 6 | 18 | 23 | 13 | 27 | 3 | 13 |
| | University | 78 | 67 | 40 | 58 | 37 | 30 | 46 | 61 | 52 |
| **Profession** | Manual worker | 6 | 8 | 31 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 8 |
| | Office/professional worker | 50 | 49 | 41 | 33 | 48 | 36 | 53 | 42 | 43 |
| | Manager | 6 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| | Not working/ student | 15/12 | 13/20 | 12/10 | 11/32 | 16/21 | 18/32 | 17/22 | 13/35 | 14/24 |
| | Other | 10 | 4 | 6 | 14 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| **Work** | Industrial | 17 | 12 | - | 18 | 11 | 13 | 12 | 17 | 15 |
| | Private services | 21 | 11 | - | 14 | 23 | 25 | 19 | 14 | 18 |
| | Health, education, care | 42 | 47 | - | 27 | 43 | 44 | 37 | 33 | 38 |
| | Government | 6 | 5 | - | 16 | 11 | 12 | 20 | 9 | 11 |
| | Charity | 12 | 11 | - | 6 | 10 | 4 | 10 | 8 | 9 |
| | Other | 2 | 14 | - | 19 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 19 | 9 |

SOURCE: International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) 2003, coordinated by M²P, University of Antwerp.

Knowing who demonstrated on F15, the question now is: what was it that drove people onto the streets on 15th February? Who or what were the protests targeted on, what were the protest goals; how did the participants feel about politics in general and about the possibility of war in particular?

*Issue-related attitudes and general political attitudes*

"What are we fighting for?" was a popular slogan used by the American peace movement after the war had started on 20th March 2003. Yet it is the question "Who are we fighting against?' that is vital for protest organizers. Very often, the issues on which protest demonstrations are organized are not straightforward, and protestors often attribute the blame for their grievances on many actors and institutions. This is the case not only for the Global Justice Movement, but also for national and transnational peace movements: in both cases the issues and grievances have become relevant because of geopolitical developments and a globalized economy.

Whereas the transnationalist thesis would suppose one joint target, things are likely to be somewhat more complicated. It is reasonably to assume that government's positions on war in our eight nations are closely related to the different protest targets. In the three war-opposing countries, for example, there was no need for protestors to convince their own governments. So, were the demonstrations in these countries purely expressing solidarity with their counterparts in less peaceful countries? Or did these demonstrators intend to target world public opinion and world leaders? Although we did not include any specific question on protest targets, we do have some variables that might give us a clue.

*TABLE 2:* Protest targets and usefulness of the F15 protesters (% agree) (N=5710)

| | War initiating countries | | War supporting countries | | | War opposing countries | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | US | UK | SP | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | Ave |
| *N:* | *705* | *1129* | *452* | *1016* | *542* | *637* | *510* | *781* | |
| Demo will raise understanding of public opinion | 83 | 84 | 84 | 90 | 78 | 84 | 77 | 83 | 4 |
| This demo raises the chance that a war can be prevented | 65 | 65 | 60 | 52 | 55 | 49 | 67 | 63 | 60 |
| Satisfied with own government's efforts to prevent war | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 38 | 84 | 68 | 24 |

SOURCE: International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) 2003, coordinated by M²P, University of Antwerp.

The demonstrators' satisfaction with their government's effort to prevent a war is obviously related to the stance these governments took in the war debate. For the protesters in the five countries that were actively initiating or supporting war, this satisfaction was close to zero. In Switzerland, the government position of tacit opposition to the war did not suffice for the F15 demonstrators; the more pronounced oppositional position of the German and Belgian governments, however, was very much appreciated by their national demonstrators. Logically, the more discontent exists on the way the government is dealing with the object of grievance, the more it will be regarded as a target of protest.

In general, over sixty per cent of all F15 protesters believed in the 'efficacy' of the F15 demonstration they took part in. That is, they believed that the protest would improve the chances that outbreak of war could be prevented. Only in Switzerland, the Netherlands and Italy did this figure fall to about one in two. These are interesting results: there were no huge differences in perceived efficacy

between protesters that were satisfied and those that were dissatisfied with the efforts of their own government to prevent a war. This means that, although there are no clear national protest targets, protestors do conceive of their protest effort as instrumental in achieving their goals, not mere acts of solidarity with protesters elsewhere. The impact they wished to make was at a transnational level, and not necessarily via their own national government.

The same unifying slogans were chanted in all major cities in the Western world on 15th February showing the connection and solidarity between the different protests in the different countries. Slogans like “No War in Iraq”, “No Blood for Oil” and “Not in our Name” served as a common master frame for F15 (Koopmans, 1999). Ruzza and Bozzini (2003) systematically analysed the official discourses of the major 15th February movements in most of the countries under study here and established clear and strong similarities between the organisers’ issues and goals, mainly consisting of a new form of moral and legalistic anti-Americanism. The question now is whether this organizational frame was reflected in the motivation of the protesters themselves. Did they share the same aims and did they define the Iraq War issue in the same way? The ubiquity of common slogans and logos would make us expect this to be the case, but the national differences in targets and turnouts make this claim appear less obviously true, not least because targets and goals are logically interrelated. In Table 3, we have put together several protest goals, and in Table 4 several demonstration themes.

*TABLE 3:* Protest goals of the F15 protesters (%-age 'put as first goal') (N=5710)

| | War initiating countries | | War supporting countries | | | War opposing countries | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | US | UK | SP | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | Ave |
| *N:* | *705* | *1129* | *452* | *1016* | *542* | *637* | *510* | *781* | |
| "The [country] government must seek to a diplomatic solution to the conflict with Iraq" | 72 | 58 | 33 | 25 | 56 | 32 | 49 | 44 | 47 |
| "The [country] government must renounce all U.S. military plans against Iraq" | 17 | 15 | 31 | 35 | 20 | 23 | 21 | 15 | 22 |
| "[country] should in no circum-stances give support to any acts of war in Iraq and the region" | 12 | 25 | 30 | 37 | 20 | 32 | 21 | 36 | 27 |
| "The [country] government must urge the Security Council to lift the embargo on Iraq" | 1 | 4 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 15 | 9 | 9 | 6 |

SOURCE: International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) 2003, coordinated by M²P, University of Antwerp.

The protest goals in Table 3 were propagated by many national F15 organizers on their websites in their mobilizing campaigns. We asked our respondents to rank these goals in order of importance. It is clear that, although all protesters wanted to prevent war, their preferred means to do so (or maybe their sense of reality) differed considerably. Clearly, American and, to a lesser degree the British and Dutch protesters were most keen on a diplomatic solution of the conflict. On the following two goals, which point out active support to, and involvement in a possible war, all three countries' protesters score below average. So, in their views war seemed to be more justified in relation to the other countries, but first all diplomatic means should have run out. Somewhat the opposite was true for, again, the Spanish and Italian demonstrators. They were not as much concerned with diplomatic solutions for the conflict; they just did not want their governments to be *involved* in any acts of war. Again, this shows that the targets were in the first place national governments, and that targets and goals are closely related.

The Swiss obviously wanted their government to give more voice to their non-support. The Belgian and German protesters were first and foremost concerned with a diplomatic solution to the crisis; on top of that the Germans by no means wanted their government to give any kind of support to such a war.

In Table 4 we present an overview of the anti-war attitudes of the F15 protesters. Some of these propositions most demonstrators seemed to agree on: in all countries, large majorities of the protesters believed that war has economic motives (getting hold of oil supplies), and practically none of them (between two and seven percent) approved of war that served to bring down a dictatorial regime. Inter-country variation is also low on the proposition that the US were conducting a crusade against Islam (on average 41 per cent of the protesters believed this was true; in Spain nearly one in two). On average 11 per cent of the protesters believed that war would be justified when authorized by the UN Security Council; with the Italian and Swiss protesters disagreeing the most strongly with this proposition. In the US and the UK, about one in six demonstrators thought this would be justified indeed. The protesters in the different nations more or less agreed on these four propositions. They were the shared frames of the anti-war mobilization.

*TABLE 4:* Anti-war attitudes of the F15 protesters (% agree) (N=5710)

| | War initiating countries | | War supporting countries | | | War opposing countries | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | US | UK | SP | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | Ave |
| *N:* | *705* | *1129* | *452* | *1016* | *542* | *637* | *510* | *781* | |
| A war is justified to bring down a dictatorial regime | 3 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 5 |
| A war against Iraq is justified when authorized by the UN Security Council | 15 | 17 | 10 | 5 | 14 | 6 | 11 | 8 | 11 |
| War is always wrong | 42 | 44 | 88 | 82 | 67 | 79 | 79 | 74 | 67 |
| This is a racist war | 48 | 40 | 26 | 31 | 24 | 35 | 31 | 30 | 34 |
| The USA is conducting a crusade against Islam | 37 | 42 | 48 | 42 | 45 | 42 | 45 | 37 | 41 |
| Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime are a threat to world peace | 31 | 27 | 17 | 21 | 41 | 23 | 20 | 28 | 26 |
| The Iraqi regime must be brought down to end the suffering of the Iraqi people | 20 | 52 | 58 | 39 | 76 | 56 | 42 | 45 | 47 |
| The USA wants to invade Iraq to secure national oil supply | 85 | 83 | 83 | 86 | 79 | 82 | 91 | 85 | 85 |

SOURCE: International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) 2003, coordinated by M²P, University of Antwerp.

Yet, confronted with four other questions, respondents answered in more diverging ways. Protesters in the UK, and most of all the US, were more likely to see a possible war as being based on racist grounds than those in the other countries. On the other hand, both countries' demonstrators were less likely to agree with the idea that war is always wrong. Whereas in the other countries on average 78 per cent of the protesters agreed with this, in the US and UK this was the case for less than half. This confirms the finding of Table 3 that in both these countries, the F15 demonstrators took to the streets less out of pure pacifism, which could in fact point to more instrumental intended outcomes of their protest participation. The Dutch protesters also took an exceptional position on some propositions. They were the most concerned with the negative influence of the

Iraqi regime on world peace (41 per cent of them believed that Iraq posed a threat for world peace) and on the Iraqi people (76 per cent agreed that they should be delivered from their regime, though, not by means of war). There was far from general agreement on this latter issue among American protesters - only one in five thought that the Iraqi people would benefit from regime change.

In spite of many similarities, we also find a lot of variance in the anti-war attitudes of the protesters in the different countries. The American, British and Dutch protesters again had attitudes that diverged from the other countries. Yet, it is not easy to account for these differences. Maybe a closer look at more general attitudes of the F15 protesters can tell us somewhat more.

*TABLE 5*: General political attitudes (in %) of the F15 protesters (N=5710)

| | | War initiating countries | | War supporting countries | | | War opposing countries | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | US | UK | SP | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | Ave |
| | *N:* | *705* | *1129* | *452* | *1016* | *542* | *637* | *510* | *781* | |
| Interest in politics | A lot | **94** | 78 | 69 | 86 | 55 | 70 | 53 | 83 | 75 |
| Left-Right self-placement | Far left | 21 | 14 | 19 | **44** | 17 | 27 | 14 | 14 | 22 |
| | Left | **64** | 63 | 61 | 46 | **64** | 58 | 62 | 63 | 60 |
| | Centre | 15 | **22** | 18 | 8 | 17 | 14 | 20 | **22** | 17 |
| | (Far) Right | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | **3** | 1 | **3** | 1 | 2 |
| Political Efficacy[vi] | (higher = more) | 2.8 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 2.2 | **3.2** | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 2.8 |
| System Support[vii] | High | 18 | 15 | 34 | 3 | 42 | **45** | 36 | 31 | 26 |
| | Intermediate | 20 | 20 | 23 | 6 | 26 | 26 | **27** | 23 | 20 |
| | Low | 62 | 65 | 43 | **91** | 32 | 30 | 37 | 43 | 54 |

SOURCE: International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) 2003, coordinated by M²P, University of Antwerp.

On the whole, the F15 protesters considered themselves to be leftists. They were all very much interested in politics, yet in the US this was the case for nearly all protesters, in the Netherlands and Belgium this was true for only about half of them. On average about 4/5$^{th}$ of all F15 demonstrators positioned themselves as being (far) left. In Italy however, exactly twice the average number of people considered themselves to be far-left. The Italian protesters were also the ones with the lowest belief in the political efficacy of their action and the lowest support for the way the political system in their country operates. In sum, the Italians seemed to have the most radical political beliefs of all the F15 protesters.

*Political behaviour and organizational embeddedness*

As is clear from Table 6, F15 protesters converted their left views into left votes, with almost all of them voting for left and green parties. The Belgian demonstrators seemed to be the greenest voters of all; the American protesters have cast the most moderate votes. In the UK, some of the F15 demonstrators had already reprimanded their Labour government (that most 'fits' their profile) by voting for Liberal Democrats, who took up an anti-war stance and Conservatives who did not. The Italian protesters appeared to have the most extreme political values, and translated their beliefs into voting massively for far-left parties.

Apart from voting, which is the most institutionalized form of political behaviour, the F15 protesters were also very experienced in all sorts of (collective) protest repertoires. In all countries, nearly all of them had engaged in more conventional

political action in one way or another. The Italian protesters had the most radical action profiles, followed by the Spanish and Swiss. Four out of ten Italians had engaged in violent action, squatting houses and/or the occupation of public buildings. The Spanish and Swiss protesters were also more than averagely involved in non-conventional and radical action repertoires. In the other countries, radicalism occurred at a more or less uniform lower level. A similar pattern was revealed for past experience in protest participation: Spain and Switzerland displayed an average rate of newcomers to protest, whereas in Italy, where a high proportion of protesters had already taken to the streets ten or more times, newcomers were underrepresented. On the other end of the spectrum we found many first timer protestors in the Netherlands (55%), the UK (50%), and the US (30%) and overall, these three countries had far less frequent protesters. For the Italians, this radical action profile tallies with their more radical political attitudes as described above. For the other countries, things are less clear. Organizational membership and recruitment may provide a more enlightening approach to this phenomenon.

Indeed, since F15 was indeed the outcome of ongoing efforts of substantial groups of contemporary civil society, the question remaining is: in what way and to which degree was civil society (in this case, movements in general) represented on the streets? Were people mobilized through similar mobilizing structures in the different countries? Was there a comparable degree of organizational embeddedness of protesters across all countries?

*TABLE 6*: Relevant political behaviour (collective action experience) and specific organizational embeddedness of the F15 protesters (N=5710)

| | | War initiating countries | | War supporting countries | | | War opposing countries | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | US | UK | SP | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | Ave |
| | *N:* | *705* | *1129* | *452* | *1016* | *542* | *637* | *510* | *781* | |
| Political Behaviour | | | | | | | | | | |
| Political Action[viii] | conventional | 99 | 96 | 91 | 94 | 93 | 98 | 94 | 96 | 95 |
| | non-conventional | 15 | 16 | 28 | 27 | 12 | 28 | 11 | 17 | 20 |
| | radical | 6 | 6 | 13 | 40 | 6 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 15 |
| Protest experience | first time | 30 | 49 | 21 | 9 | 54 | 26 | 22 | 23 | 27 |
| | 2-5 | 49 | 39 | 53 | 33 | 36 | 47 | 54 | 43 | 44 |
| | 6-10 | 12 | 6 | 12 | 22 | 4 | 14 | 14 | 15 | 13 |
| | 10+ | 9 | 6 | 13 | 36 | 5 | 13 | 10 | 19 | 16 |
| Voting behaviour | Far left | 0 | 13 | 27 | 45 | 34 | 2 | 6 | 24 | 18 |
| | Green | 33 | 11 | 3 | 7 | 39 | 21 | 56 | 37 | 25 |
| | Social-democrats | 65 | 40 | 58 | 44 | 20 | 73 | 26 | 36 | 44 |
| | Christian-democrats/ Conservatives | 1 | 13 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 6 |
| | Liberal-democrats | 0 | 24 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| Specific organizational embeddedness | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Active** organization member (yes) | | 85 | 76 | 54 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 58 | 71 |
| Active Member of: | | | | | | | | | | |
| -Peace organization | | 28 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| -Transnational Org. *(NoGlobal; Anti-racist; Human rights; 3d World)* | | 41 | 29 | 34 | 27 | 45 | 47 | 42 | 17 | 33 |
| -Interest Representation Org. *(Pol. Party; Union; Neighbourhood group)* | | 68 | 43 | 34 | 40 | 44 | 43 | 48 | 32 | 41 |
| -NSM Org. *(Women; Environmental)* | | 49 | 26 | 13 | 18 | 44 | 53 | 41 | 36 | 41 |
| -**Social** Org. *(Charities; Cultural and Educational; Church and Religious)* | | 71 | 59 | 21 | 35 | 46 | 53 | 41 | 36 | 41 |
| -Youth Org. *(Sports; Student)* | | 27 | 29 | 23 | 30 | 37 | 33 | 26 | 19 | 26 |
| Informed about demonstration by: | | | | | | | | | | |
| - ads/flyers | | 18 | 39 | 13 | 16 | 22 | 17 | 28 | 32 | 23 |
| - posters | | 41 | 23 | 33 | 15 | 29 | 31 | 34 | 31 | 29 |
| - organization | | 26 | 22 | 12 | 31 | 20 | 20 | 31 | 18 | 23 |
| - website | | 25 | 25 | 6 | 7 | 16 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 13 |
| - mailing list | | 26 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 5 | 12 | 6 | 9 |
| Member organizing organization (yes) | | 13 | 11 | 17 | 31 | 22 | 21 | 24 | 16 | 20 |
| Attended demo with fellow members (yes) | | 16 | 12 | 9 | 21 | 11 | 10 | 19 | 12 | 14 |

SOURCE: International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) 2003, coordinated by M²P, University of Antwerp.

About seven out of ten F15 protesters were active members of one kind of organization or another, with Spain and Germany falling below average and the US well above average. Globally, new social movements, social organizations (charities, religious and cultural) and interest representation groups (political parties and trade unions) were all more or less equally represented, closely followed by transnational organizations, youth organizations and, to a very small degree, peace groups. These latter were firmly represented in the American protests (with more than a quarter of the demonstrators being an active peace group member). When we take a look at the columns of Table 6, we see that, leaving aside peace and youth groups, no specific kind of organization was able to dominate the streets in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and the Netherlands. In Italy and Spain there were very few new social movement members protesting; and in the UK and the US, interest representation and social organizations predominated.

The relatively high amounts of first timers in the UK, US and the Netherlands are not the result of a lesser organizational embeddedness. On the contrary, organizational membership among British and Dutch protesters' were about average, and in the US membership was in fact the highest of all, with American demonstrators more than averagely actively involved in all types of organizations. The low and average membership levels in Spain and Italy confirm the finding that organizational embeddedness is not related to protest frequency. Italians were the most likely to be mobilized through an organization rather than through

websites and other media, and they were most likely to attend the demonstration with fellow-members of their organization. They were also most likely to be members of organizations directly involved in organizing the action (nearly one in three); which may also be part of the explanation for radical profile of the Italian protestors.

**Conclusion and Discussion: an inside view on transnational mobilizing**

In this chapter we have been scrutinizing the mechanisms by which the 15th February protests came into being, and how they were translated into the different national contexts. Our analyses show that a transnational protest event like F15 by and large mobilizes the same kind of people throughout the West. Yet, it is also clear that there were many differences between protesters from different countries. How can we explain these phenomena?

Let us start with the American and British protesters. Americans were the oldest and the most highly educated of all the protestors, with the highest proportion of women. British protestors were scored second highest on all three of these dimensions. They shared beliefs about the war (not all war, but *this* war, was wrong and could only be justified if all diplomatic means had run out) and they had a relatively high number of newcomers among their ranks. The American protesters most closely resembled the socio-demographic profile of a typical new social movement. Their high degree of organizational embeddedness supports and

explains this finding. Only this specialized group was able to pass the high participation threshold set by the lack of a supportive domestic political environment in the USA. The British and the Dutch[ix] protesters match those of the Americans on many socio-demographic characteristics, on anti-war attitudes and on organizational affiliations. In all three countries, especially in the Netherlands, the number of new protestors was very high. In the UK and the Netherlands[x] this latter observation is not all that surprising, given the fact that protest had reached an absolute low, so that large mobilizations inherently presuppose newcomers. This low protest cycle stage and consequently the high number of first-time protesters may have led similar people onto the streets in both countries. Furthermore, there was a similar political context of divided elites in both countries, with the Dutch government dissolved and an internally divided governing party in the UK, which can be assumed to have a similar effect on protestors' perception of their political efficacy.

The Italian story was very different. The Italians' leftist views and voting, as well as their lack of support for the political system in Italy, could point to the fact that the Italian demonstration was more than just an anti-war demonstration, but served equally to vent the protestors' discontent with the Berlusconi government. The Italian protesters had the most experience with all kinds of (radical) action repertoires. This could be explained by the protest cycle in Italy which produced a high national level of protest experience, and by the fact that the Italian demonstrators were the most likely of all to be recruited through organizations.

The Spanish protesters followed a similar pattern, with strongly increasing protest experience (albeit lower than the Italians). Yet, socio-demographically they were more diverse than the Italians, and organizational embeddedness was relatively low in Spain. These were protesters that were surfing the national protest wave, in a climate where protest is an obvious way of displaying discontent. The conflict between the Spanish Government and the opposition over the war was plainly reflected in the demonstrators' political beliefs and behaviour (left voting), but combined with a relatively high level of support for their domestic political system shows that these were anti-government protesters not anti-state protestors. Once again the Spanish protest seems to have gone beyond anti-war feelings and are just as much aimed at national government *tout court*.

The Swiss protesters' profile matched that of the Spanish on many variables, yet we do not have a ready explanation for that. It seems as if the Swiss government's silent opposition to the war provoked the same mobilizing mechanisms as did the overtly pro-war attitude of the Spanish government. Belgium and Germany display a less distinctive profile, but their protesters' lack of clear, national targets, and their contentment with their national governments' positions on the war had no effect on their own perception of the protest's political efficacy. It appears that the demonstrations in Belgium and Germany were not merely collective signs of solidarity, but in fact transnational efforts for true change in a pressing issue in international relations.

The 15th February 2003 protests were the largest transnational and coordinated surge of simultaneous demonstrations around the world. If there has ever been a transnational mobilization, this was the one. If there has ever been something as transnational civil society at work, it was on 15th February and the weeks and months before that. We have seen how it was carefully planned and initiated, first as a European initiative, then later crossing the Atlantic, and eventually pervading the world. With the extensive use of the Internet, and building on the dynamics of the European and World Social Fora, social movement and civic organizations from all over the world joined their forces to mobilize as many people as possible on this same day, all using the same banners and promoting the same slogans. The results of these efforts were unique, with millions of people taking to the streets in what seemed to be one global demonstration. Yet, in each country, the position taken by the government and the opposition on the war, as well as the stage of the national protest cycle had their effects on the kinds of people who demonstrated. Thus, transnational protest is profoundly shaped by national circumstances.

## Notes

[i] This chapter is based on three congress papers, respectively presented in Marburg (ECPR General Conference 2003) Corfu (CAWM, 2003) and Uppsala (ECPR, Joint Sessions of Workshops 2004).
[ii] Respectively coordinated by Stefaan Walgrave, Bert Klandermans, Dieter Rucht, Michelle Beyeler, Manuel Jímenez, Mario Diani and Donatella della Porta, Wolfgang Rüdig and Lance Bennett.
[iii] Non-published personal interview by the authors, December 2004).
[iv] The only exceptions were the Greek demonstrations in Athens and Thessalonica, where a more violent atmosphere and drastic police intervention set a far more dramatic tone.
[v] ESF 2001-2002; WVS 2001. We lack US data on the second variable (actual protest experience in the past 12 months).
[vi] This variable was constructed by taking the mean of the answers on several survey questions, all on a five-point scale ( (1) completely disagree – (5) completely agree). The questions were (*coding reversed for scale construction): 'I don't see the use of voting, parties do whatever they

want anyway*', 'Most politicians make a lot of promises but do not actually do anything*', 'In politics, a lot of things happen that are undisclosed*', 'People like myself do have an influence on what the political authorities do', 'Political parties are only interested in my vote, not in my ideas and opinions*', 'When people like myself voice opinions to politicians, these are taken into account'.

[vii] This variable was constructed with mean of the answers on two survey questions, all on a five-point scale ( (1) completely disagree – (5) completely agree). The questions were: 'I admire the way our political system is organized', 'Most of our politicians are very competent people who know what they are doing'. Subsequently, the variable was recoded as follows: 1-2,75: 'low'; 2,76 -3,24: 'intermediate'; ,25-5: 'high'.

[viii] A respondent is categorized as having taken part in **conventional** action, when he/she has indicated to have engaged in at least one of the following activities: contacted a politician; contacted an organization or association; contacted a local or national civil servant; worn a pin or hung a flyer/poster/sticker of a political campaign; signed a people's initiative or referendum; signed a petition; taken part in a product boycott; bought a product for political, ethical or ecological reasons; made a donation; contacted or appeared in the media.

A respondent is categorized as having taken part in **non-conventional** action, when he/she has indicated to have engaged in at least one of the following activities: set up a petition or gathered signatures for a petition; take part in a strike; raise funds.

A respondent is categorized as having taken part in **radical** participation, when he/she has indicated to have engaged in at least one of the following activities: engaged in a sit-in; engaged in the occupation of a public building/school/university; engaged in the squatting of houses/abandoned areas; engaged in violent forms of action.

[ix] with the exception of their score on education

[x] we lack data for the US

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