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New Activists or Old Leftists?: The Demographics of Protesters

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This chapter analyzes the sociodemographic profile of the February 15 demonstrators. Who are they, in terms of age, sex, education, social class, and religion? Since this cannot be answered without a comparative yardstick, we can narrow down our quest to the specificities of the February 15 protesters when compared to other social groups. In more precise terms: Are the peace protesters typical new social movement supporters? Are they emblematic Old Left activists? Or do they, in contrast, mirror the population as a whole and, as such, represent an example of protest normalization? The comparative design of the book begs for an additional descriptive question: To what extent are the protesters' sociodemographic profiles different in the eight countries under study? The answer to this permits us to make headway with a causal question: How can we account for the differences in demonstrators' profiles in these countries? After all, these people demonstrated against the same issue on the same day, shouting the same slogans, carrying the same billboards, and relying on the same action repertoire.

The sociodemographic makeup of protest events may vary considerably. Sometimes, protesters are rather homogenous. This is true, for example, when distinct social groups, such as farmers, defend their economic existence by means of protest. In other cases, protest groups express broad concerns that potentially affect large segments of the populace, if not humankind as a whole, for example, human-induced climate change or the risk of nuclear war. In these cases, we can expect the protesters to be recruited from different social backgrounds and to hold diverging ideological beliefs. As broad and heterogeneous as such protests may be—it is unlikely that they are representative

of the population as a whole. From many surveys, we know that in the aggregate people who are politically active—and more specifically those who participate in protest actions—tend to be younger, better educated, and male (Norris 2002). Of course, the degree of deviation from the average population does vary greatly depending on the issue at stake. Also, the form of protest has an impact on recruitment. It is well known that in violent protests young men are strongly overrepresented. The organizers of protests, as well, may have a differential effect on recruitment patterns. We can expect that protesters following the call of broad alliances of diverse groups will be more heterogeneous when compared to those organized by radical groups from the political fringe. In addition, the location and timing of a protest action may have an impact on its social composition; for example, apart from strikes, workers rarely protest during the week, and elderly people do not tend to travel long distances to participate in protests. Finally, we can also expect that the tools and channels for mobilization affect the composition of the participants: calls via the Internet will not, or will only indirectly, reach those not hooked to the net (Internet users tend to be young and well educated). In sum a set of structural and situational factors determine recruitment. General assumptions and predictions are likely to be inadequate concerning specific protest events.

First, in terms of the February 15 protest in 2003 against an imminent war in Iraq, we can reasonably hypothesize the sociodemographic profile of the protesters. Relative to other issues that directly pertain to specific social groups, this is a matter that affects people in moral terms without having immediate consequences on their daily lives. Hence, we expect protesters to be relatively heterogeneous regarding age, sex, education, social class, and religion. With regard to past peace protests, however, this general expectation must be differentiated. From many studies on peace movements and peace protests in the second half of the twentieth century, we know that participants tend to be male and younger and better educated than the rest of the population (Norris 2002). Chapter 4 in this volume focuses on two previous waves of peace protests and makes this point regarding the eight countries in this study; demonstrators against cruise missiles in Europe in the 1980s and protesters against the Gulf War in the 1990s were highly educated and typically middle class. As far as the period since the student revolt in the 1960s is concerned, peace protesters in Western countries in general share the specific features of what characterizes the activists and constituents of the so-called new social movements. Young, well-educated people from the human-service sector with liberal or leftist attitudes are strongly overrepresented among new social movement constituencies. Compared to the population as a whole, this

activism is predominantly male-dominated. Women are better represented, though, compared to other kinds of political activism (e.g., within parties). Previous peace activism research, thus, leads us to expect that February 15 activists are rather heterogeneous, as we may have anticipated, but still be dominated by the “usual suspects.”

Second, the story of February 15, is more complicated. Chapter 1 showed that the events were coordinated and staged by an international network of movement organizations, most of which originated within the so-called global social justice movements. It was on the European Social Forum meetings of these movements that the protest was set up and organized. Although the global justice movements are closely associated with the typical new social movement sector, they explicitly attempt to bridge these movements with the Old Left, that is, the labor movement and the traditional left-wing political parties with their working-class supporters (male, older, lower degree of education, active in traditional industrial sectors). In many countries, indeed, labor unions and traditional left-wing parties engage in the struggle for global justice; they are represented in the movement’s central agencies and contribute substantially to the movements’ mobilization potential (see chapter 8 concerning parties and chapter 10 concerning unions). Especially when it comes to peace activism, the Old Left shows a significant track record, at least in Western Europe; in the United States, the peace movement had weaker links with the Old Left. Chapter 4 elaborates this in more detail. Pre-1960s peace protest in Western Europe was basically carried by the Old Left and also during the big marches against cruise missiles in the early 1980s labor unions and left-wing parties did their part. As chapter 4 shows, in some of these countries it was the Old Left’s mobilization machinery—wherever it was in the opposition—that contributed to the impressive peace protest wave of the 1980s. More than the environmental movement or the third-world movement—two other emblematic examples of the new social movements—in many countries the peace movement has been a coalition movement focused on mass mobilization and drawing support from a broad range of movement organizations. The movement’s organizational backbone was most of the time diverse, with different organizations (temporarily) joining forces to further peace protest. In sum: contemporary and historical considerations lead us to expect that the February 15 protesters will not only consist of the typical new social movement constituent but might also be characterized by a strong presence of the Old Left. Both hypotheses boil down to the expectation that these protesters will not be representative of their respective populations but will consist of very specific segments of them.

However, in many countries, the political constellation regarding the war

on Iraq—in particular that, as shown in chapter 3, in many countries opposition to the war was not confined to the Left but was dispersed throughout the whole political landscape—suggests the opposite hypothesis: February 15 brought a fairly representative sample of citizens to the streets. As we saw in chapter 1, many media accounts emphasized the protesters' high internal diversity and portrayed them as coming from a wide range of political and social backgrounds. This corresponds with the thesis of “normalization of protest” that has gained scholarly support since the late 1990s. It states that protest is becoming ubiquitous, just another strategy employed by citizens to defend their interests, and that there is an ongoing evolution of increasing diversity on the streets (Fuchs and Rucht 1994, Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). The context in which the February 15 protest took place in many countries might indeed have been conducive to such normalization. First, this foreseeable war against the Iraqi regime was highly disputed among the leaders and populace in the Western world and beyond. That—according to various surveys—an overwhelming majority in most European countries opposed the war implied that the mobilization potential was not only large but also included people from different social strata and with different ideological leanings (chapter 3). While antiwar mobilizations during the second half of the twentieth century mobilized politically progressive groups, whereas the mainstream was either undecided or tended to be on the other side, the recruitment pool for this particular antiwar mobilization was extremely large and thus, almost by definition, very heterogeneous in terms of its socio-demographic profile. Moreover, that quite a few national governments were skeptical or even frontally opposed to war leads us to expect a large degree of heterogeneity among the protesters. In such a situation, protest was less likely to be perceived as outsiders challenging the establishment; both opponents and supporters of incumbent governments could be expected to participate.

Thus, three contradicting heuristic hypotheses can be established: first, February 15 was, in terms of the participants' sociodemographic profile, a typical new social movement event (young, better-educated people working in the human services sector); second, it was a typical Old Left event (older, less schooling, from industrial sectors); and third, it was neither of these but rather a case of large internal diversity and normalization.

The comparative design of the present study might lead us to conclude that all three hypotheses are true at the same time, though in different countries. The context in which the protests took place, in fact, differed extensively among countries. Chapter 3 showed that there were substantial differences among the eight nations in terms of the political stance of the incumbents and the opposition, in public opinion vis-à-vis the war, and in the way the

war was covered in the mass media. Chapter 2 established that the countries under study differ not only vary regarding issue-specific aspects but, more fundamentally, in terms of their openness to challengers and protest and the strength of what was called the “progressive movement sector.” For example, the degree of pacification of the labor issue varies across countries, and so does the strength of the new social movements. All these factors can be expected to affect the demonstrators’ sociodemographic profile.

Who Are the February 15 Participants?

Bivariately analyzing the composition of the February 15 demonstrators, we see that men and women were present almost equally in the antiwar demonstrations (see Table 5.1). In most countries women were slightly in the majority. In Belgium, however, there was a striking overrepresentation of men. On the other side of the spectrum, In the United States, two-thirds of the protesters were female. In Italy, Germany and, especially, Switzerland, the number of young demonstrators is much higher than the average. In these countries, about one-third of the participants were students. In Spain and in the United States, the youngest cohort is underrepresented: only one out of ten participants was a student. The U.S. demonstrations counted as many young people as they did those over sixty-five, which is quite unusual for a protest march. One thing is very clear for all of the countries we studied: the average antiwar protester is highly educated. In almost every case, the category of participants with a university degree is the largest. Again, Switzerland and the United States are the most extreme cases. Switzerland has a large number of demonstrators with lower educational degrees, many of these being young people yet to receive high school diplomas. The United States, however, had a spectacular 93 percent of demonstrators with higher education (non-university or university). The professional categories are more difficult to compare. The Spanish protesters differ from the other countries because far more of them are office and manual workers. The demonstrators overwhelmingly worked in health, education, care, and research, and, to a lesser extent, private services. Only a modest number of people worked in the industrial sector. Of course, these sociodemographics are correlated (not shown in table). Female protesters, for example, have slightly higher educations, are younger, and are more active in the service sector than men. It is not surprising that the younger people among the demonstrators, those who had not yet completed their studies, have a significantly lower degree of education than other protesters.

Table 5.1 reveals that in all countries every major group in society was represented to some extent. The February 15 protests unquestionably attracted

Table 5.1. Basic sociodemographic features of February 15 demonstrators in eight countries (percent)

| | US | UK | SP ^a | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | Average |
|-----------------------------------|-----|------|-----------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| Sex | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 37 | 46 | 48 | 50 | 45 | 49 | 57 | 47 | 47 |
| Female | 63 | 54 | 52 | 50 | 55 | 51 | 43 | 53 | 53 |
| Age | | | | | | | | | |
| 0–24 | 11 | 16 | 13 | 27 | 19 | 31 | 23 | 26 | 21 |
| 25–44 | 35 | 38 | 48 | 46 | 36 | 39 | 38 | 36 | 39 |
| 45–64 | 43 | 39 | 36 | 25 | 38 | 26 | 35 | 31 | 34 |
| 65+ | 11 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 |
| Education | | | | | | | | | |
| None and primary | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Lower secondary | 1 | 7 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 23 | 5 | 10 | 9 |
| Higher secondary | 6 | 15 | 15 | 41 | 31 | 26 | 21 | 25 | 23 |
| Non-university higher | 15 | 9 | 18 | 6 | 23 | 13 | 27 | 3 | 13 |
| University | 78 | 67 | 58 | 40 | 37 | 30 | 46 | 61 | 52 |
| Profession | | | | | | | | | |
| Manual worker | 6 | 8 | 31 | 9 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 8 |
| Office worker | 16 | 12 | 40 | 21 | 38 | 32 | 47 | 27 | 27 |
| Professional, independent | 34 | 37 | 1 | 12 | 10 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 16 |
| Manager | 6 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Not working | 15 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 16 | 13 | 17 | 18 | 14 |
| Student | 12 | 20 | 10 | 32 | 21 | 35 | 22 | 32 | 24 |
| Other | 10 | 4 | 6 | 14 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 7 |
| Work sector | | | | | | | | | |
| Industrial | 17 | 12 | – | 18 | 11 | 17 | 12 | 13 | 15 |
| Private services | 21 | 11 | – | 14 | 23 | 14 | 19 | 25 | 18 |
| Health, education, care, research | 42 | 47 | – | 27 | 43 | 33 | 37 | 44 | 38 |
| Government | 6 | 5 | – | 16 | 11 | 9 | 20 | 12 | 11 |
| Charity | 12 | 11 | – | 6 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 4 | 9 |
| Other | 2 | 14 | – | 19 | 0 | 19 | 2 | 2 | 9 |
| N | 666 | 1116 | 448 | 1002 | 528 | 629 | 503 | 769 | 5661 |

Note: ^aSpanish respondents were not asked about work sector.

people from all pockets of society and can, overall, be considered heterogeneous events. Yet the table also illustrates that the internal diversity of the protest differed from country to country. To account for these differences in internal diversity and to synthesize this diversity in one measure, we calculated fractionalization indexes (Table 5.2). A fractionalization index conveys the chance that two randomly drawn individuals fall in two different categories of a variable. The higher the index, the more diversity there is. Since the index is dependent on the number of categories of a variable, it cannot be used for comparisons between variables (with different categories) but merely between countries.

Table 5.2 shows notable differences among countries. The U.S. protesters, for example, are the least diverse concerning sex and education. Those from Spain are least diverse in terms of age, those from Belgium in terms of profession, and those from Switzerland are most likely to come from the same economic sector. Aggregated internal diversity, averaging the five fractionalization indexes for each country, is more or less similar across countries, though some differences exist. The U.S. and UK demonstrators seemed to have been the most homogenous, leading to the lowest fractionalization indexes, while the Swiss and Dutch were substantially more diverse internally.

Only by comparing the sociodemographic characteristics of the protesters with those from the population in general can we assess whether the February protesters were a fair sample of their respective populations. In the United States, for example, protesters' educations may be higher simply because U.S. citizens in general are better educated than their European counterparts. We relied on demographic statistics published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations for sex, age, and education and calculated differences in proportional presence of the categories in Table 5.3.

Large proportions of men and women protested against war, with the United States featuring a majority of female and Belgium a majority of male protesters. In general, we find a slight overrepresentation of women, which corresponds with previous findings that women have since long started to catch up with their male counterparts in terms of protesting (Jennings and Van Deth, 1990). All but the oldest age categories were overrepresented. Youth, however, is not more overrepresented than young adults and adults. Younger groups are most overrepresented in Italy and Switzerland, while older groups were most represented in the United States. Reasons for the globally enduring underrepresentation of older people on the streets are multiple: people in their seventies probably have less protest experience (generation effect) and have to overcome more physical barriers to join protest marches (age

Table 5.2. Fractionalization indexes for sociodemographic features of antiwar demonstrators in eight countries

| | US | UK | SP | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | Total |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| Sex | .412 | .497 | .500 | .499 | .495 | .500 | .49 | .498 | .498 |
| Age | .668 | .673 | .653 | .622 | .685 | .683 | .678 | .702 | .685 |
| Education | .365 | .515 | .656 | .603 | .710 | .765 | .669 | .554 | .651 |
| Profession | .696 | .691 | .708 | .749 | .691 | .729 | .639 | .678 | .726 |
| Work sector | .732 | .718 | — | .810 | .728 | .711 | .762 | .792 | .772 |
| Total (average) | .575 | .619 | .657 | .629 | .662 | .678 | .648 | .645 | .666 |
| N | 666 | 1116 | 448 | 1002 | 528 | 629 | 503 | 769 | 5661 |

Note: The formula to calculate fractionalization is $1 - \sum S_{ki}^2$. The index measures the probability that two randomly drawn individuals belong to different categories of a variable. Each term S_{ki} is the proportion of demonstrators with a certain feature.

Table 5.3. Over- and underrepresentation for sex, age, and education: Subtraction of share (percent) of protesters and share of population in the same category

| | US | UK | Sp ^a | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | TOTAL |
|---|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sex | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | -12 | -3 | -1 | +1 | -4 | -1 | +8 | -2 | -1.8 |
| Female | +12 | +3 | +1 | -1 | +4 | +1 | -8 | +2 | +1.8 |
| Age | | | | | | | | | |
| 15-24 | -7 | +1 | -5 | +13 | +4 | +17 | +8 | +13 | +5.5 |
| 25-44 | -4 | +1 | +11 | +10 | -3 | +2 | +2 | -1 | +2.3 |
| 45-64 | +16 | +10 | +10 | -4 | +9 | -4 | +6 | +0 | +5.4 |
| 65+ | -4 | -12 | -17 | -19 | -10 | -15 | -15 | -12 | -13.0 |
| Education (25-64) | | | | | | | | | |
| Lower secondary or lower | -12 | -31 | -53 | -45 | -28 | +12 | -36 | -5 | -24.8 |
| Higher secondary | -47 | -28 | +1 | +10 | -13 | -42 | -14 | -44 | -22.1 |
| Tertiary | +59 | +59 | +52 | +36 | +41 | +29 | +50 | +49 | +46.9 |
| Total (average difference) ^a | 19.69 | 16.11 | 15.69 | 14.28 | 12.61 | 12.72 | 16.36 | 13.72 | 13.21 |
| N | 666 | 1116 | 448 | 1002 | 528 | 629 | 503 | 769 | 5661 |

Note: ^aThe average weighed difference was calculated as follows: the absolute differences per category were aggregated within each variable and divided by the number of categories of that variable. These weighed average differences were then averaged over the three variables.

Source: Sex and age population data are based on the Demographic Yearbook (2002) of the United Nations. The education data are based on OECD statistics for the population aged between 25 and 64

effect). A comparison with the population in terms of education shows clearly that protesters in all countries had higher educations than the average citizens. Individuals with tertiary (university and non-university) education degrees were especially strongly overrepresented among the demonstrators. In terms of schooling, hence, the antiwar protesters are hardly representative, least so in the United States and the United Kingdom. Averaging demonstrators' representativity, we calculated average differences between the demonstration and corresponding population categories in every country: the lower this figure, the more demonstrators resemble their populations. Protesters in the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Belgium were less representative of their respective populations at large than the those in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany.

In sum: people protesting imminent war were not representative of the populations of their countries. They were somewhat younger, slightly more female, and especially much better educated than the average citizen. This hardly is surprising; social movements defend certain interests and are rooted in corresponding population segments. Social movements that are able to mobilize true cross-section of the population have yet to be invented. Since movement support is not evenly present in all population segments, it is no revelation that neither is movement participation evenly present. A movement can only mobilize people who agree with its goals, and supporting the movement in word (attitudes) is something other than supporting it in deed (Klandermans 1984). Our next question then is this: Were the demonstrators at least exemplifying the war-opposing segments in their respective populations?

To compare antiwar activists with antiwar supporters in the respective populations, we need population data. We draw upon a population survey carried out by European Omnibus Survey (EOS) Gallup Europe between January 21 and 27, 2003, only a few weeks before the February 15 protests actually took place (EOS Gallup Europe 2003). All seven European countries covered in this book are included in the poll; the United States, unfortunately, is not. Chapter 3 presents the general results of this survey, suggesting massive antiwar sentiment among European citizens. In this chapter, however, we are only interested in the sociodemographic profile of these war resisters. To compare the population's antiwar segment's sociodemographics with the features of the movement activists, we must first determine movement support. What was the mobilization potential? What was the "official" stance of the peace movements? This is difficult to determine. Peace movement officials would probably reject war in any case. Since many EOS Gallup Poll questions were hypothetical and since some questions concerned motives for war and not the justness of war, we decided that opinions about U.S. intervention

in Iraq without UN resolution best captured the stake and aim of the antiwar protest. We are aware that relying on one single question to delineate mobilization potential is a problem, as it artificially reduces the scope of the movement. In the seven European nations of this study, no less than 79 percent of the populace rejected war without UN approval. Consequently, we narrowed the movement's mobilization potential down to the people who *completely* disagreed with an intervention without UN backing and considered this still very large group of 54 percent as the mobilization potential of the movement. Who were those people?

The mobilization potential in the seven countries is characterized by a slight overrepresentation of women; a remarkably older composition, with the fifty-five and older group being the largest; having higher education although not being overeducated; relatively small shares of professionals and manual workers; especially high shares of non-professionally active citizens; and, finally, citizens with clearly left-leaning political stances. Thus, at first glance, the antiwar supporters look like the actual protest participants. Table 5.4 contains the differences between these groups based on the subtraction of their proportional presence. A negative figure means that this group is underrepresented among the actual protesters: this category was more present among the antiwar supporters than among actual movement participants. Hence, negative figures suggest a mobilization deficit: more people of this category supported the movement's claim than actually showed up at demonstrations. Positive figures mean the opposite, namely that relatively more activists than supporters were present.

The results in Table 5.4 must be interpreted with caution, since some EOS-Gallup categories did not completely match ours. In addition, the Gallup Poll samples were small and therefore prone to random errors. Only large differences merit our attention. The general picture is clear and confirms the literature about mobilization biases and political participation thresholds. Advanced age seems to be a very tough barrier for mobilization: in the oldest groups, it was not successful. Low education, too, is a formidable barrier; people with a higher degree of education are strongly overrepresented, and all other categories are underrepresented. Since the profession categories were recoded on a less reliable base and the differences do not seem that large, we must be extremely careful when interpreting these results in particular. The gender factor did not have much impact either. The most striking mobilization deficit, though is among right-leaning people. A considerable amount of them supported the antiwar claim; yet they are very strongly underrepresented at the actual protest events. This suggests that mobilization for February 15 mostly targeted left-leaning people and that supporters from the Right

Table 5.4. Mobilization deficit: comparison of protest potential and participants at the February 15 protests

| | US ^a | UK | SP | IT | NL | SW | BE | GE | TOTAL |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sex | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | - | -4 | -3 | +4 | +0 | -5 | +11 | -1 | -1 |
| Female | - | +4 | +3 | -4 | +0 | +5 | -11 | +1 | +1 |
| Age | | | | | | | | | |
| 15-24 | - | +5 | -10 | +4 | +8 | +19 | +8 | +15 | +6 |
| 25-39 | - | +8 | +11 | +9 | +1 | +1 | +1 | +0 | 4+ |
| 40-54 | - | -2 | +13 | +6 | -1 | -9 | +10 | +5 | +3 |
| 55 and older | - | -12 | -14 | -20 | -8 | -11 | -18 | -20 | -14 |
| Education (years) | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 or fewer | - | -15 | -16 | -28 | -3 | +21 | -3 | -11 | -7 |
| 16-20 | - | -44 | -20 | +5 | -11 | -21 | -39 | -46 | -25 |
| 21 or more | - | +59 | +36 | +24 | +12 | +1 | +42 | +57 | +33 |
| Profession | | | | | | | | | |
| Self-employed | - | +39 | -7 | +6 | -1 | +3 | +4 | +6 | +12 |
| Employee | - | -28 | +17 | -3 | +8 | -17 | +12 | -2 | -5 |
| Manual worker | - | -4 | +21 | -3 | -5 | +0 | -6 | -7 | -2 |
| None | - | -6 | -31 | +0 | -2 | +14 | -9 | +3 | -4 |
| Political position | | | | | | | | | |
| Left | - | +24 | +23 | +43 | +22 | +34 | +30 | +25 | +30 |
| Center | - | +2 | -6 | -13 | +12 | -21 | +7 | +9 | -2 |
| Right | - | -27 | -17 | -28 | -34 | -13 | -37 | -34 | -28 |
| Total (average) | | | | | | | | | |
| N | 666 | 1116 | 448 | 1002 | 528 | 629 | 503 | 769 | 5661 |
| | | 25.22 | 18.50 | 17.89 | 12.31 | 15.87 | 20.99 | 23.21 | 16.10 |

Notes: "Protest potential" is defined as the segment of the population completely disagreeing with the statement "The U.S. should intervene militarily even if the United Nations does not give its formal agreement."

^aNo comparable data on U.S. public opinion was available.

were not reached and/or attracted. For a more in-depth analysis of the mobilization process of February 15, we refer to chapter 9.

People protesting against imminent war on Iraq may not have been representative of the entire protest potential, but they may have been typical for peace protesters in general. Therefore, we can compare their sociodemographic profiles with those of people active in previous peace protests. Unfortunately, past major and cross-national surveys on specific peace protests are not available. However, some population surveys have been carried out in various countries and at various times—surveys that included questions on participation in or support of peace movements. While most of these cannot be compared across countries because the wordings of the questions differ, four Eurobarometer surveys, conducted in 1982, 1984, 1986, and 1989 in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, and Britain, can be used for our purposes. Although these surveys serve as a reasonable basis for comparing peace activists in the 1980s and in the early twenty-first century, one methodological caveat should be underlined. In 2003, we surveyed protesters on the spot, regardless of whether they considered themselves part of a peace movement. In the Eurobarometers, people were not approached as participants in a specific peace protest but were asked questions, usually in their homes, about their relationship with the peace movement (along with several other movements). The survey asked whether people approved the “anti-war and anti-nuclear weapons movement” and whether they were members of or might join it. We classified those respondents as actual activists who approved strongly or somewhat and considered themselves members of such a movement. In addition, we classified as potential activists those who approved strongly or somewhat and said they might join the movement. We compared the sociodemographic characteristics of actual activists (usually low numbers) and potential activists (higher numbers) on a country-by-country basis, combining the four Eurobarometer surveys. Because the results for activists and potential activists were similar, we decided to put the two groups into one single category. Table 5.5 compares these 1980s potential and actual peace activists with 2003 actual peace activists.

The comparison yields substantial differences between the 1980s (potential and actual) and 2003 actual peace activists. Considering gender, there is no univocal pattern, but the divergences in education and age are flabbergasting. Most remarkable, especially in the United Kingdom and Belgium, is the great proportion of highly educated protesters in 2003 compared to the earlier peace activists. This tremendous difference cannot be explained sufficiently by the growing proportion of highly educated people in the intervening two decades. It is likely not coincidental that the distribution of age

Table 5.5. Sociodemographic characteristics of (potential) peace movement activists in the 1980s and actual antiwar protesters in 2003 (percent)

| | Belgium | | Netherlands | | Germany | | Italy | | United Kingdom | |
|------------|---------|------|-------------|------|---------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|
| | 1980s | 2003 | 1980s | 2003 | 1980s | 2003 | 1980s | 2003 | 1980s | 2003 |
| Sex | | | | | | | | | | |
| Male | 54.7 | 57.0 | 44.8 | 45.0 | 48.5 | 47.0 | 52.0 | 50.0 | 48.2 | 46.0 |
| Female | 45.3 | 43.0 | 55.2 | 55.0 | 51.5 | 53.0 | 48.0 | 50.0 | 51.8 | 54.0 |
| Education | | | | | | | | | | |
| Low | 21.5 | 4.0 | 21.4 | 6.0 | 38.9 | 1.4 | 53.5 | 3.5 | 32.4 | 3.8 |
| Middle | 55.7 | 22.6 | 47.5 | 34.1 | 46.8 | 34.8 | 30.2 | 49.8 | 49.9 | 19.8 |
| High | 22.8 | 73.4 | 31.1 | 59.9 | 14.3 | 63.7 | 16.0 | 46.6 | 17.7 | 76.4 |
| Age | | | | | | | | | | |
| Young | 39.2 | 22.8 | 23.9 | 18.8 | 31.5 | 25.7 | 36.3 | 26.6 | 35.3 | 15.7 |
| Middle | 54.7 | 61.1 | 60.1 | 58.2 | 51.7 | 53.2 | 48.4 | 64.4 | 48.8 | 58.8 |
| Old | 6.1 | 16.1 | 15.9 | 23.0 | 16.9 | 21.1 | 15.3 | 9.1 | 15.8 | 25.5 |
| Left-right | | | | | | | | | | |
| Left | 23.8 | 76.8 | 80.8 | 65.4 | 46.7 | 76.9 | 53.3 | 90.6 | 42.1 | 76.3 |
| Center | 46.2 | 20.0 | 17.1 | 13.9 | 43.1 | 22.1 | 38.5 | 7.7 | 50.7 | 22.4 |
| Right | 30.1 | 3.2 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 10.2 | 1.0 | 8.2 | 1.7 | 7.2 | 1.2 |

Source: Eurobarometer surveys 1982 (17), 1984 (21), 1986 (25), and 1989 (31a). The number of respondents varies by item. The combined number of respondents in the four Eurobarometer surveys is approximately 4,000 per country.

groups among the 1980 and 2003 peace activists differs strikingly; in all five countries, the proportion of young peace activists dropped considerably. Perhaps many peace activists of the 1980s, who then were predominantly coming from the young and middle generations, became reactivated in 2003—altering that year's age balance in favor of the middle and older groups. Our data support this interpretation to some extent; there is a linear and significant relationship between age and previous peace activism. The older February 15 protesters were much more likely to have participated in previous peace protests. Another explanation, of course, is that we compare very different groups from the 1980s and from 2003. Potential activism is something completely different than real activism.

Until now we have only indirectly answered the central question underlying this chapter. We have not given a comprehensible answer to the question of how the February 15 demonstrators can be typified best: as the usual new social movement suspects, as the typical Old Left activists, or as a representative sample of the population? All analysis so far clearly shows that February 15 may have been internally diverse, but that demonstrators were not at all a fair sample of the population. Most analysis also suggests that February 15 was, above all, a classic new social movement event with a high proportion of women and an overrepresentation of relatively young, highly educated people working in the service economy. Although supported by the traditional Old Left in many countries, as chapter 3 shows, our antiwar demonstrators globally did not share the typical characteristics of the Old Left activists. Protesters who were male, older, less educated, and industrial workers were strongly underrepresented. Unfortunately, a direct comparison between other new social movement and Old Left protest activists based on surveys similar to the one this volume draws upon does not exist, since surveying people at demonstrations is relatively new. However, we have at our disposal a similar dataset containing participants in six other large demonstrations staged in Brussels, Belgium (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). The Belgian surveys covered most of the biggest demonstrations held in Brussels during the 1998–2001 period, which were staged by typical Old Left agencies, new social movements, and difficult-to-classify organizers. The profile of the Belgian February 15 demonstrators is clear: they are typical new social movement protesters, strongly resembling, for example, the antiracist and global justice demonstrators while systematically differing from all other demonstrators in the Belgian dataset. In particular, the similarity between the February 15 and antiracist activists corresponds strikingly. These Belgian data, thus, strongly suggest that February 15 was a typical new social movement event. Of course we cannot generalize this finding based on evidence for a

single country. The evidence presented earlier, though, suggests that the Belgian February 15 demonstrators certainly were no outliers but resembled the antiwar protesters in the other seven countries. Though this is not conclusive proof, it corroborates our basic finding that February 15 was not, as massive and impressive as the event may have been, extraordinary in terms of the kind of people who participated. Rather, demonstrators resembled the typical new social movement's constituents in advanced industrial democracies at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

How to Account for the Differences among Countries?

Having higher degrees of education, being younger and female, working more in the health, education, care, and research sectors, the February 15 demonstrators were not representative of their respective populations. As stated, they very much look like the typical new social movement supporter. This very general conclusion, however, has to be more nuanced when one turns to the demonstrators in the eight countries under study. Although they had much in common, we detected differences among countries. All demonstrated on the same day, for the same reason, making the same claim, but they did not share the same sociodemographic characteristics. Why? The whole range of comparisons pursued above shows that, ultimately, countries do make a difference. Variations among countries cannot be accounted for simply by differences in population compositions or dissimilarities among the war-opposing segments in their publics. We will rely here on two of the factors introduced in chapter 3: the eight countries' political constellations regarding the Iraq issue and public opinion vis-à-vis war. The phenomenon to be explained here is the degree of diversity of the demonstrators in the eight nations in contrast to the degree of their correspondence to the typical new social movement activist. Since diversity is easier to measure, we can reformulate our explanatory question as follows: Why was there more diversity among February 15 protesters in some countries than in others?

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 best capture the differences in diversity; they contain comparative fractionalization indexes and deviations of antiwar protesters compared to the entire population. Both tables roughly point in the same direction: the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany witnessed more internally diverse protest than the United Kingdom, Italy, and the United States, though there is no clear-cut dichotomy between these two groups of countries. Belgium and Spain show a less consistent pattern, with Tables 5.2 and 5.3 contradicting each other. The evidence, hence, suggests that the political stance of the government, anti- or pro-war, might have played a role in determining the protesters' profiles: in countries with governments explicitly

and strongly supporting the Iraq War, turnout is less diverse and dissembles the population as a whole. This makes sense: participating in antiwar protest in these circumstances might be considered as opposing the domestic government and challenging the incumbents, which might deter government supporters from participating even if they do not support the government on this particular issue.

Remarkably, the two most internally diverse countries were the most difficult to classify in our crude anti- or pro-war scheme: the Dutch government was only halfheartedly in favor of war—it had dissolved, and new government negotiations were underway—while the Swiss government was only weakly it. The Netherlands and Switzerland certainly witnessed the most heterogeneous crowds of all eight countries, given their highest fractionalization, which pointed to the most absolute diversity (Table 5.3), the lowest deviation showing large resemblances to the population as a whole (Table 5.3), and with the smallest mobilization deficit (Table 5.4). This is all the more striking since the level of protest in these countries was relatively small, as each had only modest turnouts, as chapter 1 reveals. This suggests that, apart from the simple pro-war/antiwar scheme, a complementary explanation might be valid: if governments do not express themselves clearly but take an intermediate position, participating or not participating in the demonstration can be considered neither challenging nor supporting government. Consequently, opposition and government parties could mobilize for the demonstration, bringing a highly diverse crowd to the streets.

How are people's attitudes linked to the government's stance and, subsequently, to diversity? Unity or discord among the population might play a role. Especially when a country actively participates in a war and bears the burden of war, people tend to be divided: patriotic feelings are in balance with antiwar attitudes. This might lead to polarization. In such a situation, it is not likely that a diverse constituency takes to the streets, because resistance and support for the war are not randomly spread over the population but concentrated in certain population segments. This certainly was the case in the United Kingdom and the United States. Chapter 3, indeed, makes it clear that—although largely opposing the war—UK public opinion was more divided and much more in favor of the war than all the other six European countries under study. U.S. public opinion supported the war but was divided as well. So government position determines the protesters' profiles directly by deterring or not deterring government's supporters, and indirectly, by means of its polarizing effect on public opinion. This might be an explanation for the more homogeneous protesters' profiles in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Finally, the presence or absence of elite allies or the mobilizing role of oppositional parties (and civil society) challenging the incumbent war supporting party may also have a role in the population's relation to the government stance on the war. The question is whether the political opposition is willing and able to mobilize against the government's support of war. Ability depends on the strength of the party's own mobilization machinery, while willingness depends on the party's intent to link the antiwar issue with a more general criticism of the government. What happens if the opposition, in this case left-wing, goes ahead full force with mobilizing against war and, thus, against government? The issue becomes yet another battlefield between incumbents and challengers; it loses its capacity to unite people of different political and societal leanings and, as a result, the people showing up are not diverse but correspond to the constituency of the (left-wing) opposition. In other words: the war issue primarily becomes domestic politics, with the usual cleavage between government and opposition parties. Therefore, the Spanish population's relative nondiversity is due not to disagreement within the majority of the populace but the mobilizing role of the opposition and the resulting reinforced abstention of government supporters from protest. Note that in the United States, because its administration initiated the war and because the country would bear its costs in human lives, the Democrats—the challenging party—did not take the lead of the antiwar protest but rather decided to rally around the flag (see chapter 3).

In summary, we believe three factors to be crucial in explaining the diversity of the protest: government loyalty stopping some people from protest against the government they support, division among the populace, and the (in)capacity of intra- und extra-parliamentary opposition to reach beyond its own constituency. If government loyalty is activated, public opinion is divided, and the oppositional forces are unable to bridge traditional cleavages, diversity will be lowest. Diversity is largest if government loyalty is only latent, public opinion is converging, and the opposition is not perceived as the driving force to mobilization. All three factors are ultimately caused by the initial position vis-à-vis the war taken by the incumbents. Governments could take four different positions regarding the war on three dimensions: clear or unclear position, supporting or the opposing war, supporting in words; supporting in deeds. Table 5.6 summarizes this logic.

The Netherlands and Switzerland belong to the first type, Germany and Belgium to the second, Spain and Italy to the third, while the United States and the United Kingdom represent the fourth type. The United Kingdom is more difficult to classify, however, since there clearly was oppositional mobilization, though situated within the governing Labour Party.

Table 5.6. Government position and intermediary factors leading to different levels of protest diversity

| Government position | Intermediary factors | = Diversity |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| (1) Unclear | Division in public opinion | – |
| | Active government loyalty | – |
| | Mobilizing opposition | – |
| (2) Clear: Opposing war | Division in public opinion | – |
| | Active government loyalty | – |
| | Mobilizing opposition | – |
| (3) Clear: Supporting war with words | Division in public opinion | – |
| | Active government loyalty | + |
| | Mobilizing opposition | + |
| (4) Clear: Supporting war with deeds | Division in public opinion | + |
| | Active government loyalty | + |
| | Mobilizing opposition | – |

Conclusion

We started with three heuristic hypotheses about the sociodemographic profile of the protesters on February 15. Are they largely diverse, thus coming close to representing the overall population? Do they resemble the Old Left constituency? Or are they emblematic of the new social movement adherents? Based on various ways of comparing the protesters with other groups, among which are potential peace activists and participants in other kinds of protests, we conclude that the new social movement pattern strongly prevails. Contrary to the newspaper reports cited in chapter 1 and the claims by many organizing groups, the demonstrators did not mirror the population at large. Still, we identified differences among countries that, as one could expect, can be attributed to the specific political context, for example, the position of the government toward the war and the reaction and composition of the oppositional forces in a given country. Thus, the very fact of the identical point of reference and the similarity of claims basically brought together the same kind of people in the countries under study, though national context modified their profile.

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