

Composite protests of the distrustful – When left and right mobilize together

Current Sociology

1–19

© The Author(s) 2025



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/00113921251384680

journals.sagepub.com/home/csi**Priska Daphi** 

Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany

Larissa Daria Meier 

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Abstract

This article draws scholarly attention to composite protests of the distrustful – a recurring but so far under-researched type of political mobilization. We argue that the combination of three key characteristics is constitutive for this type of protest: the joint mobilization of (far-)right and left-wing groups, high levels of political distrust among its participants and a propensity for conspiracy narratives. We show how such protests reoccur across different issue areas in Southern and Western Europe since at least 2014. We call for more detailed scholarly engagement with this phenomenon not only due to its growing presence but also due to its potentially wide-ranging societal and political consequences, including the normalization of far-right discourses and ideas. As such, we need a better understanding of the conditions that facilitate composite protests of the distrustful and the impacts they may have. This, we contend, is fundamental to understanding current transformations of European political conflicts and protests and to shed light on key contemporary developments, such as challenges to liberal democracy.

Keywords

Conspiracy, far-right politics, ideological diversity, left-wing politics, movement coalitions, political trust, protest

Corresponding author:

Priska Daphi, Institute of Sociology, Justus Liebig University Giessen, Karl-Gloeckner-Str. 21E, Giessen 35394, Germany.

Email: priska.daphi@uni-giessen.de

Introduction

In recent years, observers have pointed to various heterogeneous protests they find hard to classify. This is due to the long-standing tradition to consider protests as part of distinct social movement families with strong ideological similarities – such as the left-libertarian movement family (Della Porta and Rucht, 1995). This heterogeneity has been most prominently discussed with respect to protests against measures to contain the Corona pandemic such as anti-vaxx and anti-lockdown protests (e.g. della Porta and Lavizzari, 2022). These protests brought together people with very different ideological orientations and world views. The participants also seem to share a general dissatisfaction with political institutions and a certain preference for conspiracy narratives. As a result, analysts had considerable difficulty categorizing them as left or right, progressive or regressive (e.g. Grande and Gonzatti, 2024). In this article, we argue that this is not a phenomenon limited to Corona-related protests. Instead, a number of heterogeneous protests emerged across Europe since the 2010s that share similar characteristics. We propose to call these protests composite protests of the distrustful and argue that such a classification is crucial to understanding contemporary dynamics of protest and political conflict.

Our goal is to draw scholarly attention to a protest type which, we argue, emerged and gained relevance in the protest arenas across Southern and Western Europe over the past decade. To do so, we start with specifying the three distinct elements that are constitutive for composite protests of the distrustful – the joint mobilization of (far-)right and left forces, high levels of political distrust and a preference for conspiracy narratives. We, then, show how in addition to the wave of protests during the Covid-19 pandemic a series of protests on diverse issues – ranging from social to agricultural issues to peace – share similar characteristics. We contextualize these composite protests of the distrustful in existing research on recent trends in political mobilizations. In a second part, we delineate the analytical merit of the concept by comparing it to related phenomena – in particular populist and far-right protests – and argue that while these are closely connected developments, they cover the phenomenon of composite protests of the distrustful only partially. We conclude by calling for more research into the conditions and consequences of these kinds of protests.

Diversity and coalitions in social movements

Most social movements involve coalitions – collaborations between different organizations and groups that pool resources to achieve common goals. Similarly, many protest events (or series of events) feature temporary, formal, and informal coalitions of actors who come together to plan and/or participate in an event (sometimes called event coalitions). Scholars have identified coalition work at both the movement and event levels across a wide range of thematic fields, including environmental activism, labor rights, peace movements, women's rights, civil rights, and global justice, among others (for a review of relevant works see, for example, Van Dyke and Amos, 2017). Furthermore, the importance of coalition work is illustrated by studies that document the effect of coalitions for movement success (Gamson, 1990; Johnson, 2008; Meier et al., 2025).

Diversity within social movements and protest is thus the normality rather than the exception. More often than not, protests bring a diverse crowd to the street (e.g. Daphi et al., 2021; Walgrave and Verhulst, 2009). This diversity has, in particular, been acknowledged in cases of sectoral cooperation, that is, alliances between organizations and groups working on a common issue (e.g. coalitions between different environmental groups), but is increasingly being empathized also for cross-sectoral cooperation. In cross-sectoral collaborations, groups and organizations cut across thematic boundaries and bring together actors working on different issues and, potentially, embracing different ideologies (Diani and McAdam, 2003) – also sometimes referred to coalitions of ‘strange bedfellows’ (Gilmore, 2010). Such cross-sectoral alliances have proven particularly efficient in achieving social change (Jones and Hutchin, 2001). Many existing studies focus on cross-sectoral protest collaborations between ideologically rather similar actors – often within one social movement family, such as collaborations within the left-libertarian movement family, for example, between unions and environmental groups (e.g. Daphi, 2017; Rose, 2018; Van Dyke, 2003) or with respect to libertarian and far-right groups cooperating (e.g. Skocpol and Tervo, 2020). And indeed, studies suggest that cross-sectoral alliances are more likely when there is significant overlap not only in issues and identities, but also in ideologies, as this makes collaborating easier (Van Dyke and Amos, 2017; Wang et al., 2018).

Occasionally, studies point to cases of protest collaboration across movement families, for example between progressive and centrist or conservative actors – as in the case of the 1980s peace movement in Europe (e.g. Cooper, 2025) or in the more recent cases of broad coalitions against the far right (e.g. Meier et al., 2025). However, some protests exhibit even greater ideological diversity, bringing together far-right groups in joint mobilization with centrists and left-wing actors. Such ideologically highly diverse protests deserve more scholarly attention – also because they have become a recurrent phenomenon in recent years as the next section will detail. Considering the role of shared ideologies as facilitators of coalitions, these cases present somewhat of a puzzle. While some prominent instances of such protests have been documented through individual case studies (see section ‘Composite protests of the distrustful in light of broader developments’), there is a lack of conceptual reflection and comparative empirical research on this type of alliance.

Composite protests of the distrustful: key characteristics and empirical manifestations

The last years have seen a growing number of protests that are characterized by a particularly high ideological heterogeneity. We propose to use the term ‘composite protests of the distrustful’ for these protests. These protests are marked by greater ideological divergence than the coalition types discussed in the previous section because far-right, centrists, and left-wing groups mobilize jointly. Hence, in composite protests of the distrustful groups from different movement families and opposite ends of the ideological spectrum – alongside more centrist actors – mobilize together. Joint mobilization can mean different degrees of collaboration and co-existence without (long-term) merging of groups: The joint mobilization of left and far-right groups can either occur in a narrow

sense in that groups from the left and the far-right co-organize and plan the event, or in a broader sense with people from both ideological camps participating. Such participation does not necessarily need to occur in equal numbers – one ideological camp may be smaller than the other. An organization from the progressive spectrum may for instance organize a rally where the far-right milieu is visibly present – as a relevant group not just with a few people carrying far-right symbols – or where actors from the far right take on a prominent role, for example as speakers. Crucially, groups from both ideological camps accept each other's presence – and in some cases even welcome it – even though they do not necessarily demonstrate in the same block. Such protest constellation may be temporary, that is, these protests may shift further to the right or to the left over time and lose their ideological diversity. For instance, in many countries, anti-lockdown protests developed from a more ideologically diverse constellation to right-wing mobilizations.

In addition to their ideological diversity, recent cases of composite protests of the distrustful often exhibit two additional features: their participants share very high levels of distrust in political institutions well beyond population averages and a propensity for conspiracy narratives and beliefs. Composite protests of the distrustful, hence, exhibit the following combination of three characteristics:

1. Joint mobilization of far-right, centrists, and left-wing groups;
2. Very high levels of distrust in political institutions;
3. Presence of conspiracy narrative and beliefs.

As we will discuss in the following, the three characteristics have been prominently discussed with respect to protests against measures to contain the Corona pandemic, such as anti-vaxx and anti-lockdown protests (e.g. della Porta and Lavizzari, 2022), but they can also be found in other protests across a wide range of issue areas.¹

Composite protests of the distrustful against Covid-19 measures

In various countries, the measures imposed by governments to contain the Covid pandemic's spread were opposed by protests. In particular, the lockdowns, requirements of interpersonal distance and vaccination plans raised harsh critique. These anti-lockdown and anti-vaxx protests took on very different forms across Europe and the globe (for an overview of Europe see, for example, Kriesi and Oana, 2023; Neumayer et al., 2024). While some events were clear cases of far-right protests, organized and populated by established far-right actors, many others brought together a variety of actors – often previously unconnected – **including left-wing and right-wing activists**. Such joint mobilization of people from different political leanings has for example been observed in the case of anti-lockdown protests in London (Ozduzen et al., 2023), in Italy (e.g. della Porta and Lavizzari, 2022) or Germany (Hunger et al., 2023). In Italy, for instance, the national umbrella organization *Fronte del Dissenso* (Dissent Front) – a key organizer of anti-containment protests, brought together left-wing actors, such as progressive splinter groups from the ideologically diverse populist party *Five Star Movement*, self-declared non-partisan actors, such as *Alleanza Stop5G* (opposing the 5G technology due to health concerns and conspiracy narratives), and far-right groups, such as *Noi con Trump* or

members from the far-right party *Lega* (della Porta and Lavizzari, 2022). In Germany, (radical) left-wing groups (e.g. *Rote Fahne News*) occasionally mobilized alongside esoteric groups, Life Reform movements (*Lebensreformbewegungen*), and members of anthroposophical communities, as well as individuals from far-right groups such as the far-right party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) and right-extremist *Reichsbürger* groups (Peter, 2020; Speit, 2021). In some cases, anti-containment protests over time turned more right-wing. For example, Hunger et al. (2023) observe that anti-containment protests in Germany gained more radical and more right-wing actors over time. With respect to the second characteristic of composite protests of the distrustful, many of the anti-containment protests showed very **high levels of political distrust**. As various studies, including protest surveys with protest participants, suggest, despite ideological differences, participants display a general dissatisfaction with political institutions and the mainstream media (see Ozduzen et al. (2023) on London, Koos (2021) and Nachtwey et al. (2020) on Germany). Finally, **conspiracy narratives were shared among many participants** in several, though certainly not all, composite anti-containment protests, for example in Southern Germany in the fall of 2020 (e.g. Koos, 2021; Nachtwey et al., 2020) and some places across Italy in 2020 and 2021 (e.g. della Porta and Lavizzari, 2022).

Composite protests of the distrustful beyond Covid-19

The combination of these three characteristics – the joint mobilization of (far-)right and left forces, high levels of political distrust and a preference for conspiracy narratives – is not unique to protests against Covid-measures, however. Nor is it limited to the last 5 years, as the following cases will illustrate.

2014: peace vigils in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. The last 10 years have seen a series of peace protests that can be classified as composite protests of the distrustful. In particular, the ‘vigils for peace’ (German: *Mahnwachen für den Frieden*) in 2014 in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland are a case in point. Protesting against the escalating conflict in Ukraine (which led to the annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014), these demonstrations brought together actor constellations that qualify as composite protests of the distrustful. First, they mobilized very heterogeneous groups. In contrast to other peace protests, such as the anti-Iraq war demonstrations in 2003, the vigils **included left-wing and right-wing groups** – as well as esoteric figures who wanted to bring about world peace through meditation. Some events, for instance, brought together members from traditional (left) peace groups, members from (radical) left groups (e.g. the *Interventionistische Linke*, *attac*), conspiracy theorists (most prominently the former radio host, Ken Jebsen) and members from far-right outlets, movements and parties, such as the magazine *Compact*, the right-extremist *Reichsbürger* movement or the right-extremist party *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland* (NPD) (Peter and Ludwig, 2014). Although the majority of participants did not belong to the far-right scene, the presence of far-right groups (sometimes also as organizers) was tolerated and sometimes welcomed. Several traditional, progressive peace groups and left-wing organizations distanced themselves from the protests due to the (anticipated or

prior) participation of far-right groups and prominent conspiracy adherents. Nonetheless, a number of prominent figures from traditional peace groups and left-wing organizations did participate (Daphi et al., 2014).² With respect to the second characteristic of composite protests of the distrustful, a protest survey conducted with participants in a vigil in Berlin in 2014 also showed that participants shared **very high levels of distrust** toward relevant democratic institutions: More than 95% of respondents said they had little or no trust in the federal government, in political parties, in the parliament and the media. A similarly high number of respondents was unsatisfied with how the political system in Germany works (93.9%) (Daphi et al., 2014). The vigils also displayed the third characteristic of composite protests of the distrustful: they markedly differed from other peace protests' criticism of militarization and war due to the **conspiracy narratives** with which key organizers and speakers interpreted the war: According to them, the Federal Reserve (US central bank Federal Reserve System) represented the central player in the Ukraine conflict. It was responsible for the USA's belligerent foreign policy and, as a 'private bank' promoted a 'debt money system' which fueled conflict (Daphi et al., 2014).

After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, another wave of protests related to war and peace erupted in Germany and beyond (Meier and Daphi, 2022). While classic pacifist events organized by the peace movements and left-libertarian mobilizations in solidarity with Ukraine dominated the protest landscape, there were multiple ideologically diverse demonstrations where left and right-wing groups joined forces³ and where participants displayed high levels of political distrust and some propensity for conspiracies.⁴

2018: the yellow vests in France. In addition to the issues of Covid and peace, composite protests of the distrustful can also be found in cost-of living protests. In particular, the Yellow Vest protests in France are a prominent example. Responding to grievances about raising fuel prices (partly due to new tax to co-finance France's sustainable energy transition) and costs of living, the Yellow Vest movement has sparked recurring protests in France between November 2018 and April 2019. Also in this case, the protests brought together social milieus across the **left and right political spectrum**. This also manifests in participants' voting choices: They supported candidates across the left-right spectrum (Guerra et al., 2019). Second, these protests feature very **high levels of political distrust**. Indeed, while the predominantly working class and lower middle class constituency mobilized based on the common experience of social insecurity, the rejection of party politics and the political class quickly emerged as another unifying characteristic (Guerra et al., 2019). In fact, protest surveys show that 98% of protesters believe that French democracy does not work well (Guerra et al., 2019). Finally, first evidence from general population surveys suggests that Yellow Vest participants displayed higher **levels of conspiracy thinking** and beliefs compared to non-protesters (Wagner-Egger et al., 2022). Overall, this indicates that many Yellow Vest protests can be characterized as composite protests of the distrustful.

Additional cases. The above cases cover just a selection of prominent cases of composite protests of the distrustful. In particular, there are some recent waves of protest mobilizations in Western and Southern Europe that also feature these characteristics. This includes the wave of farmers' protests in the later 2010s and early 2020s in Germany

and the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, France, and other European countries. While certainly not all of these protests were composite protests of the distrustful, initial research in different countries suggests that some protests indeed were as they brought together left and right groups and showed high levels of dissatisfaction with political institutions and a propensity to share conspiracy narratives (Dechézelles and Scotti, 2022; Heinze and et al, 2021; Van Der Ploeg, 2020). Other recent cases include protests against sustainable urban planning strategies across various cities that aim to establish short distances between core, every-day facilities. While detailed research on these mobilizations is lacking, first evidence suggests that some of the events display the three characteristics of composite protests of the distrustful (Darius and Urquhart, 2021; Marquet et al., 2025).

Composite protests of the distrustful in light of broader developments

The emergence of composite protests of the distrustful ties into more general developments and trends in political mobilizations in Southern and Western Europe, as the following will detail: (1) the protest arena increasingly becoming a domain of not only left-wing but also right-wing actors, (2) growing political mistrust in (some) protests that are not confined to people with right-wing orientations nor to ideological extremes, and (3) a propensity to rely on conspiracy narratives to make sense of political conflicts, which again is not confined to far-right actors or groups with radical ideologies.

The changing proportion of left and right-wing protests

The protest arena was long regarded as the primary domain of left-wing political forces. Such interpretation has been supported by the strong prevalence of left and progressive protest movements in the streets, in particular the so called new social movements in the 1970s and 1980s (Hutter, 2014; Kriesi et al., 1992). In contrast, far right challengers, while always present, rather mobilized in the electoral arena (Hutter and Kriesi, 2013). However, the view that protest mobilization was the primary preserve of the left and that far right extra-parliamentary activity can be reduced to violent events has been challenged by transformations in the protest arena since the 1990s which saw a steep increase in right-wing protests (Hutter and Weisskircher, 2022).⁵ Indeed, research on protest politics in the last two decades demonstrates that far-right protest mobilization has become a common occurrence across Europe (Castelli Gattinara et al., 2022). Recent movements such as Pegida in Germany, the Golden Dawn in Greece, or the Identitarian movements across Europe represent just the most visible examples of this transformation (Ellinas, 2020; Meier et al., 2025).

While protest activity on the right has increased, research on protest participants' ideological profiles demonstrates that people with progressive and left-wing orientations are still the more likely protesters overall, at least in Western and Southern Europe (e.g. Borbáth and Gessler, 2020; Dalton et al., 2010). Nonetheless, the ideological orientation of protesters has become more mixed as protest has become a domain of both left-wing

and right-wing actors. While these groups largely mobilize at separate events, in some cases they mobilize jointly – as is the case in composite protests of the distrustful.

Distrust in diverse protests

Scholarly and public observers point to peoples' increasing dissatisfaction with how representative democracies in South-Western Europe work (e.g. Landwehr et al., 2022). Scholars link this to different political developments such as a lack of representation or the increasing critical engagement of citizens (Landwehr et al., 2022). This growth of political mistrust can also be overserved in the protest arena, depicted as mobilizations of the 'disenchanted critics' (Daphi et al., 2021), the 'critical citizens' (Rosanvallon and Goldhammer, 2008), or as a 'revolt of the distrustful' (Grande and Gonzatti, 2024). In this context, some existing knowledge about the link between protests and political mistrust is reevaluated. For many years, comparative cross-country studies have shown that people participating in demonstrations tend to have less trust in political institutions than the average population (Dalton et al., 2010; Hooghe and Marien, 2013; Saunders et al., 2012). However, a recent strand of research points out – largely based on protest surveys – that mistrust in protests varies considerably not only between different kinds of protesters (e.g. Christensen, 2016; van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2018), but also between different types of protests: while some protests exhibit relatively high levels of political trust that are similar to population average, other protests are characterized by very low levels of political trust that are considerably below population average (Daphi et al., 2021).

Protesters with very low levels of political trust are not only confined to right-wing events, but also participate in left wing protests, as for example evidenced for the German occupy protests in 2011 (e.g. Décieux and Nachtwey, 2014). Relatedly, protest surveys also show that levels of political trust can be low on both sides of the political spectrum – in concurrence with studies into general determinants of political trust.⁶ Furthermore, while studies on protests support the overarching finding that links distrust to radical ideology (e.g. Kutiyiski, Krouwel, and Van Prooijen, 2021), that is, protesters with low levels of trust tend to position themselves more closely toward the left and right extremes (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2018), this is not always the case. Indeed, in a recent study on Germany, Grande and Gonzatti (2024) find that people with very low levels of political trust predominantly locate themselves in the political center – in the middle of the left-right scale (75%). Political mistrust, hence, does not seem to be confined to the radical fringes. And composite protest of the distrustful may be interpreted as an expression of citizens across the political spectrum who feel that existing democratic institutions do not adequately work and represent their claims and interests.

Conspiracy in protest

Recently, scholarly engagement with the role of conspiracy theories in social movements and political protest gained traction (e.g. Bertuzzi, 2021). Case studies demonstrate that in some recent political mobilizations, conspiracy narratives were relevant (but not dominant), such as most importantly in the anti-vaccination and Covid-19 measure protests,

(parts of) the Yellow Vest movement and (some) peace protests (see above). Recent studies also explore the role of conspiracy thinking in motivating violent collective action (Imhoff et al., 2021; Jolley and Paterson, 2020; Gkinopoulos and Mari, 2023). While more systematic research about the role of conspiracy thinking *across different* social movements and protest episodes is rare (Bertuzzi, 2021), findings from the broader political science literature on conspiracy theories provide some relevant clues with regards to which protesters will share conspiratorial ideas. Some studies find that conspiracy thinking is more prevalent among individuals with far-right attitudes and/or among those holding more radical ideas (Imhoff et al., 2022). Other studies, however, point out that conspiracy narratives are often difficult to position on the classic right-left political axis (Moore, 2016). Indeed, research indicates that, contrary to what exemplary evidence from the wave of corona protests may suggest,⁷ conspiracy theories do not seem to appeal only to people with (far-) right beliefs or ideologies, but individuals across the ideological spectrum can be drawn toward conspiratorial thinking (Uscinski et al., 2016). Furthermore, scholars suggest that conspiracy theories are more likely to emerge when trust in government is shaken (Moore, 2016; Sádaba Rodríguez and García Arnau, 2024), while conspiracy thinking in turn further weakens trust in political institutions (Einstein and Glick, 2015). Relatedly, conspiracy mentalities have been found more frequently among people with populist attitudes (Van Prooijen et al., 2022).

To sum up, these findings show how the phenomenon of composite protests of the distrustful fits well into broader developments. They underline that protests, political distrust, and conspiratorial thinking are not limited to one ideological camp – as is the case in composite protests of the distrustful. Furthermore, they point to how political distrust and conspiratorial thinking often co-occur and are not limited to ideological extremes. This provides a first idea of what brings far-right, centrists, and left-wing people together in joint protests. More research on the conditions under which composite protests of the distrustful emerge is required, though.

Analytical merits of delineating and studying composite protests of the distrustful

As shown above, composite protests of the distrustful are a recurring phenomenon in various regions and thematic areas that is interwoven with other socio-political developments. Their emergence and consequences therefore deserve scholarly exploration. To be fair, cases of what we call composite protests of the distrustful have been studied in previous work. Especially, the heterogeneity of Covid-19 related protests has received considerable public and scholarly attention. But so far, these protests have been studied on their own – without relating them to other similar cases. As we will elaborate in the following, studying these phenomena together as a particular type of protest offers crucial analytical advantages. In particular, we argue that distinguishing this type of protests from others – including populist and far-right protests – is crucial in order to be able to examine the conditions under which such protests occur and their consequences. Existing concepts do not cover the phenomenon sufficiently as they either address only a part of its defining characteristics (e.g. distrust) or address a different – albeit related

– phenomenon. In this vein, we will argue that composite protests of the distrustful are related to, but are not entirely captured by debates about current far-right movements, populism, or the meeting of extremes.

Populism and the convergence of extremes

Links between the political right and left spectrum have been discussed in various strands of research. One of them is the idea of the ‘meeting of extremes’ (or ‘horseshoe theory’) that holds that people with extreme ideologies share certain similarities in their fundamental critique of prevailing institutions and capitalism and their populism (McClosky and Chong, 1985). The overall theory however has been criticized as too simplistic and evidence has been limited and mixed (Hanel et al., 2019; Mayer, 2011), however its central propositions are still being employed (and tested) (e.g. Fagerholm, 2024; Van Elsas et al., 2016; Zacher and Shemla, 2024).

The phenomenon of composite protests of the distrustful is not adequately captured by a meeting of extremes, as these protests may include radicals on both sides of the ideological spectrum, but also include moderate and centrists, as the examples discussed above have shown. A mere focus on extreme stances also overlooks the relevance of political mistrust and conspiracy narratives occurring not only among radicals but also among moderates.

Related to the literature on the ‘meeting of extremes’, the vast literature on populism has also pointed to similarities between left and right. Populism in most definitions is understood as a phenomenon that can be found on both ideological shores – and (despite some differences) both sides share a strong anti-elitism that distinguishes between the ‘pure and unified people’ and the ‘corrupt elites’ (Mudde, 2004). Some scholars have used the term ‘populist’ also to describe certain types of movements or protests – even though this is not a widespread term in social movement studies. However, studies here either refer to left-wing populist protests (e.g. Aslanidis, 2016) or right-wing populist protests (e.g. Hellmeier and Vüllers, 2023); the joint mobilization of left and right-wing groups is not addressed systematically. Composite protests of the distrustful may often involve populist ideas – linked to their low trust in political institutions (an attitude strongly associated with populists’ anti-elitism). However, not all populist protests necessarily are composite as they may be – and in fact often are – limited to one ideological camp.

Current developments of the far right

As composite protests of the distrustful involve far-right groups, existing research on current developments in the far right is highly relevant to this phenomenon. Particularly relevant here is research on how particular parts of the far right (especially the part sometimes called the ‘new Right’) seek to align themselves with broader, more socially acceptable discourses, claims and campaigns to garner larger support – including in joining ideologically diverse protests as shown for the case of some recent peace protests in Germany (e.g. Weisskircher, 2025). Composite protests of the distrustful, however, should not be conflated with far-right or new-right mobilizations; they deserve to

be studied in their own right for at least two reasons: First, while composite protests of the distrustful may be a result or reinforcer of far-right alignment strategies, these two are not identical phenomena. These strategies most probably form part of the explanation of how composite protests of the distrustful come about: these protests can be the result of strategic and successful alignment attempts by far-right movements and parties (Weisskircher, 2025) – but such alignment strategies are not the sole condition for the emergence of composite protests of the distrustful (see, for example, the debate of the growing political distrust above). Similarly, composite protests of the distrustful may affect – and possibly increase – the success of far-right alignment strategies, but their implications go beyond this. Indeed, regardless of their origin, composite protests of the distrustful are likely to contribute more effectively and broadly to a (further) normalization of the far right. Existing research convincingly demonstrates that far-right actors, attitudes and discourse are increasingly penetrating democratic public spheres and are becoming more acceptable politically and socially (Golder, 2016; Wodak, 2021). Our hypothesis is that composite protests of the distrustful considerably contribute to this process – in the protest arena and beyond. The joint mobilization with its more positive coverage and less demarcations from the left may make their claims more widely acceptable.

Second, subsuming composite protests of the distrustful under the umbrella of far-right mobilizations⁸ overlooks these protests' distinct characteristics and the role these characteristics play in explaining their emergence. In fact, mobilization dynamics of far-right and composite protests can be expected to diverge considerably. For example, recruitment of participants and positive public reactions and media coverage may be easier in the latter case – as composite protests of the distrustful are less socially stigmatized than those of the far right. Furthermore, left-wing and progressive civil society actors may face more challenges when it comes to their responses to composite protests of the distrustful (e.g. in the form of counter-protests) in contrast to far-right protests. Reactions to composite protests of the distrustful may be diverse and create intense debates and possibly foster splits. For example, as composite protests include groups with similar issue preferences and/or concerns, some progressive groups may prefer cooperation than a clear demarcation leading other left groups to cease collaborating with them. In sum, the emergence of composite protests of the distrustful presents a challenge for leftist forces, as they not only confront far-right challengers in the protest arena, but must also develop strategies to navigate and respond to ideologically diverse events and movements.

To sum up, we argue it is worthwhile studying composite protests of the distrustful in their own right, as they differ in their dynamics and outcomes from other phenomena – even though they may be closely related.

Discussion and outlook

In this article, we have proposed to take a closer look at composite protests of the distrustful. For this purpose, we have defined these events as protests in which far-right, centrists, and left-wing groups participate jointly, and whose participants have little trust in political institutions and use conspiracy narratives to interpret socio-political

developments. Drawing on a series of illustrative examples, we have shown that composite protest of the distrustful is a recurring phenomenon over the last years in the Southern and Western European protest landscapes. It is not limited to the Covid-19 protest wave, but occurred before and after and covered diverse protest issues. We have furthermore demonstrated how this phenomenon ties in with broader political and societal transformations, which suggests that composite protests of the distrustful are here to stay as are protest mobilizations from the far right, growing political distrust and the spread of conspiracy theories. We argued that, while related to these developments, composite protests of the distrustful constitute a distinctive protest type and subsuming them as part of populist or far-right protests misses their specific mobilization dynamics and potential outcomes. In this sense, this type of protest is a phenomenon of our time, the causes and effects of which require and deserve more in-depth analyses.

New forms of ideological diversity are not limited to the protest arena. Developments in party politics suggest that cooperation between ideologically diverse and sometimes opposing forces may also influence political parties. Indeed, coalitions between far-right and left-wing parties are becoming more common (Bichay, 2024), while new parties are emerging that merge actors and positions from both extremes of the political spectrum, for example in Germany (with the party *Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht* founded in 2024) and beyond. This further reinforces our call for increased scholarly attention to ideologically highly diverse political mobilizations. Such ideological diversity poses considerable challenges to the left – as it requires time-consuming strategies to navigate and respond to ideologically diverse events and may drain mobilization capacity for progressive causes.

In proposing the term ‘composite protests of the distrustful’, we seek to encourage more research into the mobilization dynamics and consequences of this phenomenon. Our paper has pointed to some factors potentially explaining the emergence of this type of protest – such as the growing political distrust linked to a crisis of representation and growing far-right mobilizations – but more systematic research is required to explain under which conditions these protests emerge. As our illustrative case studies suggest, composite protests of the distrustful seem to be more prevalent in some countries than in others. First, we deliberately focused on Western and Southern Europe, because in Eastern Europe the protest landscape differs in several respects. In particular, far-right groups have been more prominent in protests than elsewhere (Borbáth and Gessler, 2020) and joint protests of far-right and left-wing groups is not a new phenomenon – also because the identification of certain claims and issues as left- or right-wing is not as straight forward in post-communist settings (Císař, 2022; Piotrowski, 2015). Second, our discussed cases seem to cluster in Northern/Western Europe – even though this is just a first impression, as we did not present an exhaustive list of cases. Nonetheless, this raises the question: In how far do national variations in how people evaluate government responses to crisis matter for understanding these differences? Is the strength of national far-right protest milieus relevant? Or, the strength of anti-far right coalitions? Furthermore, a detailed understanding of the consequences of composite protests of the distrustful would be essential. For example: To what extent do composite protests of the distrustful contribute to the normalization of the far right? Under which conditions do they perhaps have the opposite effect? Why do some composite events shift into far-right

mobilizations over time, and others do not? How do progressive movements and groups respond and interact with composite protests of the distrustful? Delineating composite protests of the distrustful as a specific type of protest is a prerequisite to addressing any of these questions.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research was supported by a grant by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), grant number 01UG2450JY.

ORCID iDs

Priska Daphi  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8216-1566>

Larissa Daria Meier  <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8382-2631>

Notes

1. The cases discussed are meant as illustrations and evidence of the re-occurring presence of such protests. It is not an exhaustive list and we actually suspect there to be more cases we are not aware of. Cases for this section have been identified based on existing studies of recent protests (with ideological diversity), the authors' long-term study of social movements in Northern Europe, as well as based on email-conversations with social movement scholars in Western and Southern Europe about potential additional cases (UK, France, Spain, Italy). For each selected (series of) protest fulfilling our criteria of composite protest of the distrustful, all existing studies were collected to reconstruct events and participants as best as possible. In addition, we also collected newspaper articles on each case based on Google and LexisNexis searches. We also drew on studies containing results from general (population) surveys.
2. A protest survey conducted at a vigil in Berlin in 2014 shows that 38% of respondents considered themselves left-wing, while 22% stated that they were part of the political center. Only 2% declared themselves right-wing – a surprisingly low number given the participation of prominent far-right groups and figures. But a conspicuously high number of respondents – 39% – declared their position to be neither right nor left wing, a number that existing studies suggest 'conceals' more participants with a right-wing agenda (Daphi et al., 2014).
3. An example of this is the 'Uprising for Peace' demonstration held on 25 February 2023, which was initiated by feminist Alice Schwarzer and former Left Party politician Sahra Wagenknecht. While both organizers distanced themselves from right-wing extremists in their speeches during and prior to the protest, they remained ambivalent whether more 'moderate' and often conspiratorial groups within the far-right spectrum were invited. Various actors from far-right circles mobilized and participated in the event. Notably, several prominent politicians from the AfD as well as leading publicists associated with the far-right magazine *Compact* were present. At the same time, in some instances protesters did try to limit

the participation and visibility of far-right activists during the event (e.g. by hindering them from distributing magazines) but in other instances they participated without interventions (Weisskircher, 2025), see also Beucker et al. (2023)

4. For example, an unpublished protest survey by the authors shows very low levels of trust in political institutions at a peace protest on the occasion of the first anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine on 2 February 2023 in Berlin. On conspiracy thinking see also Rathje (2022).
5. There is considerable variation across Europe, but aggregate data for Europe (2008–2018) demonstrates that far right protest mobilization has increased in the last two decades (Castelli Gattinara et al., 2022).
6. Studies on political distrust more generally have shown that there is no general cross-country link between left or right-wing orientation and political mistrust. Whether right-wing or left-wing individuals are more distrustful varies from one country to another (Newton, 2001).
7. Studies on populism and conspiracy theories generally suggest that there is a relationship between populist attitudes and conspiracy theories. These often focus on far-right populism, which may suggest that conspiratorial thinking is a problem of the right (e.g. Bergmann, 2018).
8. Some works on far-right protests include in their definitions of far-right protests not only protests that were organized by far-right groups, but also protests where far-right groups merely participated in (e.g. Castelli Gattinara et al., 2022). For the reasons elaborated above, a distinction may be analytically useful.

References

- Aslanidis P (2016) Populist social movements of the great recession*. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 21(3): 301–321.
- Bergmann E (2018) *Conspiracy & Populism: The Politics of Misinformation*. Cham: Springer.
- Bertuzzi N (2021) Conspiracy theories and social movements studies: A research agenda. *Sociology Compass* 15(12): e12945.
- Beucker POO, Joswig G and Litschk K (2023) Lasst mich bloß in Frieden. Mehrere zehntausend Menschen sind dem Aufruf von Schwarzer und Wagenknecht gefolgt. Die Tageszeitung, February 25. <https://taz.de/Kundgebung-Aufstand-fuer-Frieden/!5918192/> (accessed 06 September 2024).
- Bichay N (2024) Come together: Far-right parties and mainstream coalitions. *Government and Opposition* 59(3): 633–654.
- Borbáth E and Gessler T (2020) Different worlds of contention? Protest in Northwestern, Southern and Eastern Europe. *European Journal of Political Research* 59(4): 910–935.
- Castelli Gattinara P, Froio C and Pirro ALP (2022) Far-right protest mobilisation in Europe: Grievances, opportunities and resources. *European Journal of Political Research* 61(4): 1019–1041.
- Christensen HS (2016) All the same? Examining the link between three kinds of political dissatisfaction and protest. *Comparative European Politics* 14(6): 781–801.
- Císař O (2022) Postcommunism and social movements. In: Della Porta D, et al. (eds) *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, 1st edn. Wiley, pp.1–6. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470674871>
- Cooper AH (2025) *Paradoxes of peace: German peace movements since 1945*. University of Michigan Press.
- Dalton R, Van Sickle A and Weldon S (2010) The individual–institutional nexus of protest behaviour. *British Journal of Political Science* 40(1): 51–73.
- Daphi P (2017) *Becoming a Movement: Identity, Narrative and Memory in the European Global Justice Movement*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Daphi P, Rucht D, Stuppert W, et al. (2014) Montagsmahnwachen für den Frieden Antisemitisch? Pazifistisch? Orientierungslos?'. *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 27(3). DOI: 10.1515/fjsb-2014-0304.
- Daphi P, Haunss S, Sommer M, et al. (2021) Taking to the streets in Germany – Disenchanted and confident critics in mass demonstrations. *German Politics* 32(3): 440–468.
- Darius P and Urquhart M (2021) Disinformed social movements: A large-scale mapping of conspiracy narratives as online harms during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Online Social Networks and Media* 26: 100174.
- Dechézelles S and Scotti I (2022) Wild wind, social storm: 'Energy populism' in rural areas? An exploratory analysis of France and Italy*. *Rural Sociology* 87(Suppl. 1): 784–813.
- Décieux F and Nachtwey O (2014) Occupy: Protest in der Postdemokratie. *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 27(1): 75–89.
- Della Porta D and Lavizzari A (2022) *Waves in Cycle: The Protests Against Anti-Contagion Measures and Vaccination in Covid-19 Times in Italy*. Lecce: University of Salento.
- Della Porta D and Rucht D (1995) Left-libertarian movements in context a comparison of Italy and West Germany, 1965–1990. In Jenkins JC and Klandermans B (eds) *The Politics of Social Protest: Comparative Perspectives on States and Social Movements*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp.229–272.
- Diani M and McAdam D (eds) (2003) *Social Movements and Networks. Relational Approaches to Collective Action*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Einstein KL and Glick DM (2015) Do I think BLS data are BS? The consequences of conspiracy theories. *Political Behavior* 37(3): 679–701.
- Ellinas AA (2020) *Organizing against Democracy: The Local Organizational Development of Far Right Parties in Greece and Europe*, 1st edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fagerholm A (2024) Far left and far right party reactions to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *West European Politics* 48(4): 793–819.
- Gamson WA (1990) *The Strategy of Social Protest*, 2nd edn. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub.
- Gilmore S (2010) No permanent waves. In: Hewitt NA (ed.) *Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, pp.246–272.
- Gkinopoulos T and Mari S (2023) How exposure to real conspiracy theories motivates collective action and political engagement? The moderating role of primed victimhood and underlying emotional mechanisms in the case of 2018 bushfire in Attica. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 53(1): 21–38.
- Golder M (2016) Far right parties in Europe. *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1): 477–497.
- Grande E and Gonzatti D (2024) *A revolt of the distrustful? Political trust, political protest and the democratic deficit*. Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin Für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin, WZB Discussion Paper, No. ZZ 2024-603.
- Guerra T, Alexandre C and Gonthier F (2019) Populist attitudes among the French yellow vests. *Populism* 3(1): 1–12.
- Hanel PHP, Zarzeczna N and Haddock G (2019) Sharing the same political ideology yet endorsing different values: Left- and right-wing political supporters are more heterogeneous than moderates. *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 10(7): 874–882.
- Heinze RG, Bieckmann R, Kurtenbach S, et al. (2021) Bauernproteste in Deutschland: Aktuelle Einblicke und politische Verortung. *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 34(3): 360–379.
- Hellmeier S and Vüllers J (2023) Dynamics and determinants of right-wing populist mobilisation in Germany. *West European Politics* 46(5): 1024–1037.
- Hooghe M and Marien S (2013) A comparative analysis of the relation between political trust and forms of political participation in Europe. *European Societies* 15(1): 131–152.

- Hunger S, Hutter S and Kanol E (2023) The mobilisation potential of anti-containment protests in Germany. *West European Politics* 46(4): 812–840.
- Hutter S (2014) *Protesting Culture and Economics in Western Europe: New Cleavages in Left and Right Politics* (Social movements, protest, and contention, volume 41). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hutter S and Kriesi H (2013): Movements of the left, movements of the right reconsidered. In: Stekelenburg JV, Roggeband C and Klandermans B (eds) *The Future of Social Movement Research*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, pp.281–298.
- Hutter S and Weisskircher M (2022) New contentious politics. Civil society, social movements, and the polarisation of German politics. *German Politics* 32(3): 403–419.
- Imhoff R, Zimmer F, Klein O, et al. (2022) Conspiracy mentality and political orientation across 26 countries. *Nature Human Behaviour* 6(3): 392–403.
- Imhoff R, Dieterle L and Lamberty P (2021) Resolving the puzzle of conspiracy worldview and political activism: Belief in secret plots decreases normative but increases nonnormative political engagement. *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 12(1): 71–79.
- Johnson EW (2008) Social movement size, organizational diversity and the making of federal law. *Social Forces* 86(3): 967–993.
- Jolley D and Paterson JL (2020) Pylons ablaze: Examining the role of 5G COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs and support for violence. *British Journal of Social Psychology* 59(3): 628–640.
- Jones AW and Hutchin RN (2001) Coalition form and mobilization effectiveness in local social movements. *Sociological Spectrum* 21(2): 207–231.
- Koos S (2021) *Die 'Querdenker'. Wer nimmt an Corona-Protesten teil und warum? : Ergebnisse einer Befragung während der 'Corona- Proteste' am 4.10.2020 in Konstanz*. ipb Working Paper.
- Kriesi H, Koopmans R, Duyvendak JW, et al. (1992) New social movements and political opportunities in Western Europe. *European Journal of Political Research* 22(2): 219–244.
- Kriesi H and Oana I-E (2023) Protest in unlikely times: Dynamics of collective mobilization in Europe during the COVID-19 crisis. *Journal of European Public Policy* 30(4): 740–765.
- Kutiyski Y, Krouwel A and Van Prooijen J-W (2021) Political extremism and distrust: Does radical political orientation predict political distrust and negative attitudes towards European integration? *The Social Science Journal* 58(1): 1–16.
- Landwehr C, Saalfeld T and Schäfer A (eds) (2022) *Contested Representation: Challenges, Shortcomings and Reforms*, 1st edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McClosky H and Chong D (1985) Similarities and differences between left-wing and right-wing radicals. *British Journal of Political Science* 15(3): 329–363.
- Marquet O, Anguelovski I, Nello-Deakin S, et al. (2025) Decoding the 15-minute city debate: conspiracies, backlash, and dissent in planning for proximity. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 91(1): 117–125.
- Mayer N (2011) Why extremes Don't meet: Le Pen and Besancenot Voters in the 2007 French presidential election. *French Politics, Culture & Society* 29(3). DOI: 10.3167/fpcs.2011.290307.
- Meier L and Daphi P (2022) Friedensbewegung und Krieg: Warum konnte die Ostermarschbewegung kaum von der öffentlichen Empörung über den russischen Angriffskrieg auf die Ukraine profitieren? *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 35(4): 580–595.
- Meier LD, Dollbaum JM, Daphi P, et al. (2025) Resisting the far-right: Explaining divergent counter-mobilization trajectories in two German cities. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 30(1): 13–32.
- Moore A (2016) Conspiracy and conspiracy theories in democratic politics. *Critical Review* 28(1): 1–23.

- Mudde C (2004) The populist zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition* 39(4): 541–563.
- Nachtwey O, Schäfer R and Frei N (2020) Politische Soziologie der Corona-Proteste. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/zyp3f>
- Neumayer E, Pfaff KG and Plümper T (2024) Protest against Covid-19 containment policies in European countries. *Journal of Peace Research* 61(3): 398–412.
- Newton K (2001) Trust, social capital, civil society, and democracy. *International Political Science Review* 22(2): 201–214.
- Ozdutzen O, Aslan Ozgul B and Ianosev B (2023) ‘Institutions of governance are all corrupted’: Anti-political collective identity of anti-lockdown protesters in digital and physical spaces. *Social Movement Studies* 23(6): 676–694.
- Peter E (2020) Corona und Verschwörungstheoretiker. Mit Grundgesetz gegen den Verstand. Die Tageszeitung, March 31. <https://taz.de/Corona-und-Verschwoerungstheoretiker/!5675712/> (accessed 28 March 2025).
- Peter E and Ludwig K (2014) Neue Montagsmahnwachen. Spontan für Frieden. Die Tageszeitung, June 23, 2014. <https://taz.de/Neue-Montagsmahnwachen/!5039394/> (accessed 23 March 2025).
- Piotrowski G (2015) What are Eastern European social movements and how to study them? *Intersections* 1(3). DOI: 10.17356/ieejsp.v1i3.42.
- Rathje J (2022) Warum Querdenker Putins Krieg verteidigen. Jan Rathje im Gespräch mit Axel Rahmlow, Deutschlandfunk Kultur, March 5, <https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/jan-rathje-krieg-ukraine-verschwoerung-100.html> (accessed 06 March 2024).
- Rosanvallon P and Goldhammer A (2008) *Counter-Democracy: Politics in an Age of Distrust* 1st edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose F (2018) *Coalitions Across the Class Divide: Lessons from the Labor, Peace, and Environmental Movements*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Sádaba Rodríguez I and García Arnau A (2024) Teorías de la conspiración y crisis globales: retos para la teoría sociológica. *Revista Española de Sociología* 33(2): a222.
- Saunders C, Grasso M, Olcese C, et al. (2012) Explaining differential protest participation: Novices, returners, repeaters, and stalwarts. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 17(3): 263–280.
- Skocpol T and Tervo C (2020) *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-trump Resistance*. New York: Oxford university press.
- Speit A (2021) Herkunft der Impfgegner und Querdenker. Antimoderner Reflex mit Tradition. Die Tageszeitung, November 27. <https://taz.de/Herkunft-der-Impfgegner-und-Querdenker/!5815438/> (accessed 28 March 2025).
- Uscinski JE, Klofstad C and Atkinson MD (2016) What drives conspiratorial beliefs? The role of informational cues and predispositions. *Political Research Quarterly* 69(1): 57–71.
- Van Der Ploeg JD (2020) Farmers’ upheaval, climate crisis and populism. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 47(3): 589–605.
- Van Dyke N (2003) Crossing movement boundaries: Factors that facilitate coalition protest by American College Students, 1930–1990. *Social Problems* 50(2): 226–250.
- Van Dyke N and Amos B (2017) Social movement coalitions: Formation, longevity, and success. *Sociology Compass* 11(7): e12489.
- Van Elsas EJ, Hakhverdian A and Van Der Brug W (2016) United against a common foe? The nature and origins of Euroscepticism among left-wing and right-wing citizens. *West European Politics* 39(6): 1181–1204.
- Van Prooijen J, Rodrigues TC, Bunzel C, et al. (2022) Populist gullibility: Conspiracy theories, news credibility, bullshit receptivity, and paranormal belief. *Political Psychology* 43(6): 1061–1079.

- van Stekelenburg J and Klandermans B (2018) In politics we trust. . .or not? Trusting and distrusting demonstrators compared: Trusting and distrusting demonstrators compared. *Political Psychology* 39(4): 775–792.
- Wagner-Egger P, Adam-Troian J, Cordonier L, et al. (2022) The yellow vests in France: Psychosocial determinants and consequences of the adherence to a social movement in a representative sample of the population. *International Review of Social Psychology* 35(1): 2.
- Walgrave S and Verhulst J (2009) Government stance and internal diversity of protest: A comparative study of protest against the war in Iraq in eight countries. *Social Forces* 87(3): 1355–1387.
- Wang D, Piazza A and Soule SA (2018) Boundary-spanning in social movements: Antecedents and outcomes. *Annual Review of Sociology* 44(1): 167–187.
- Weisskircher M (2025) Far-right movement-party activism as strategy: Germany's 'peace movement' during Russia's war against Ukraine. *Acta Politica* 60(1): 118–138.
- Wodak R (2021) *The Politics of Fear: The Shameless Normalization of Far-right Discourse*, 2nd edn. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Zacher H and Shemla M (2024) Political ideology and attitudes towards Israel in Germany in the aftermath of the 10/7 massacres: A test of horseshoe theory. *Israel Affairs* 30(5): 963–977.

Author biographies

Priska Daphi is Professor of Sociology and Conflict Sociology at Giessen University, Germany, and Editor-in-Chief of Social Movement Studies. Her research explores conflicts about globalization, migration, climate change, and peace with a particular interest in social movements, civil society, and collective memory.

Larissa Daria Meier is an Assistant Professor in Conflict Sociology at Trinity College Dublin. Her main research areas are political conflict and social change, with a particular focus on political violence, social movements, civil society, and the far right.

Résumé

Cet article attire l'attention des chercheurs sur les manifestations composites des sceptiques, qui constituent un type de mobilisation politique récurrent et pourtant peu étudié jusqu'à présent. Nous estimons que la conjugaison de trois caractéristiques clés est constitutive de ce type de manifestations : la mobilisation conjointe de groupes de droite (et d'extrême droite) et de groupes de gauche ; une forte méfiance des participants à l'égard de la politique, et leur propension aux théories du complot. Nous montrons comment de telles manifestations se reproduisent dans différents domaines en Europe du Sud et de l'Ouest depuis au moins 2014. Nous appelons à des recherches plus approfondies sur ce phénomène, non seulement parce qu'il s'agit d'un phénomène de plus en plus présent, mais aussi en raison de ses conséquences sociétales et politiques potentiellement importantes, y compris celle d'une normalisation des discours et des idées d'extrême droite. À ce titre, il nous faut mieux comprendre les conditions qui favorisent les manifestations composites des sceptiques, et leurs répercussions potentielles. Cela nous paraît fondamental pour appréhender les transformations actuelles des conflits et des manifestations politiques en Europe et mieux comprendre certaines tendances contemporaines clés, notamment les menaces qui pèsent sur la démocratie libérale.

Mots-clés

coalitions de mouvements, complot, confiance politique, diversité idéologique, mobilisation, politique de gauche, politique d'extrême droite

Resumen

Este artículo llama la atención de los investigadores sobre las protestas mixtas de las personas desconfiadas, un tipo de movilización política recurrente pero poco investigado hasta la fecha. Se argumenta que la combinación de tres características clave es constitutiva de este tipo de protesta: la movilización conjunta de grupos de derecha (y extrema derecha) y de grupos de izquierda, altos niveles de desconfianza política entre sus participantes y una propensión a las narrativas conspirativas. El artículo muestra cómo estas protestas se suceden en diferentes cuestiones en el sur y el oeste de Europa desde al menos 2014. Se apela a un análisis académico más detallado de este fenómeno, no solo por su creciente presencia, sino también por sus posibles consecuencias sociales y políticas de amplio alcance, incluyendo la normalización de los discursos e ideas de extrema derecha. Por tanto, se necesita una mejor comprensión de las condiciones que facilitan las protestas mixtas de los desconfiados y sus posibles impactos. Se sostiene que es fundamental para comprender las transformaciones actuales de los conflictos y protestas políticas europeas y para entender mejor algunas tendencias contemporáneas clave, como los desafíos a la democracia liberal.

Palabras clave

coaliciones de movimientos, confianza política, conspiración, diversidad ideológica, política de extrema derecha, política de izquierda, protesta