

# New Departures in the Comparative Study of Revolution

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Until the 1990s, studies of revolution were dominated by comparative/structural approaches, which derived their generalizations from a relatively small number of "great" revolutions. Focusing on societies with large agrarian populations and centralized bureaucratic states, these studies underplayed these revolutions' comparison with other types of revolution and with rebellions, mass movements, and cycles of protest. They also left unexplored the political process within revolutionary cycles and have been criticized for ignoring the cultural frames within which they occurred and the new cultural actors and themes surrounding them. This summer seminar will critically explore recent contributions to the comparative study of revolution which draw upon theories of social movements, political process, and cultural approaches, including the role of gender, religion, and ethnicity in evolutionary cycles. For further information write or e-mail:

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*Different forms of contentious politics such as social movements, revolutions, ethnic mobilizations, and cycles of protest share a number of causal properties, but disciplinary fragmentation has obscured their similarities. Recent work and this new Journal provide opportunities for comparison and synthesis. A network of researchers is undertaking a broad survey of contentious politics in hopes of producing an intelligible map of the field, a synthesis of recent inquiries, a specification of scope conditions for the validity of available theories, and an exploration of worldwide changes in the character of contention. Discussions of 1) social movements, cycles, and revolutions, 2) collective identities and social networks, 3) social movements and institutional politics, 4) globalization and transnational contention illustrate the promise and perils of the enterprise.*

Despite Machiavelli and Clausewitz, not all politics entails contention. People sometimes work in consensus, sometimes gather to celebrate shared memories, often institutionalize their political activities. *Contention* begins when people collectively make claims on other people, claims which if realized would affect those others' interests. Claims run from humble supplications to brutal attacks, passing through petitions, chanted demands, and revolutionary manifestos. Contention therefore depends on mobilization, on creation of means and capacities for collective interaction. In coming years, *Mobilization* will surely devote many pages to the issues we identify here, not because we speak of them now but because many scholars are coming to see them as crucial for the next round of theory and research. In a spirit of celebration—and no doubt a little contention as well—we here salute a new journal by laying out a program of inquiry into contentious politics.

We have adopted the term "contentious politics" rather than the familiar triad "social movements, revolutions, and collective action," not simply for economy of language, but because each of these terms connects closely with a specific subfield representing only part of the scholarly terrain this article traverses. We include collective interaction in contentious politics in so far as: 1) it involves contention: the making of interest-entailing claims on others; and 2) at least one party to the interaction (including third parties) is a government: an organization controlling the principal concentrated means of coercion within a defined territory. Social movements, cycles of protest, and revolutions all fall within this range of phenomena. Our broader canvas will help relate these

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phenomena, both to one another, to institutional politics, and to historical social change. This early statement advocates a systematic effort at theoretical and empirical synthesis spanning the various subfields germane to the study of contentious politics.

### SYNTHESIZING THEORY AND RESEARCH ON CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

Two features of the contemporary social sciences militate against scholarly synthesis and the cumulation of knowledge: (1) the increasingly insular, subfield-specific nature of scholarship; and (2) the difficulties inherent in and the lack of professional rewards encouraging efforts at theoretical/empirical stock-taking. Together they produce a proliferation of specialized scholarship that may add lines to vitae but little to general knowledge.

More than most areas of research, the study of contentious politics suffers from this malaise. The past twenty-five years have seen a veritable explosion of work, both historical and contemporary, in this general area. But that work has devolved into a number of highly specialized literatures in parts of at least four disciplines—sociology, history, political science and economics—with few opportunities to synthesize theory and research across these increasingly distinct scholarly communities. In recent years, "cultural studies"—an emerging set of insights from anthropology, literary studies, and cultural history—has entered the fray as well. The result has been a degree of fragmentation, of scholars talking past one another, and of different languages being used in different subfields to describe quite similar phenomena.

Consider the study of revolution as it has developed in American historical sociology in the last two decades. "Great" revolutions have usually been studied *sui generis*, which makes it impossible to say how they differ from less great ones and from rebellions, social turmoil, riots, and routine contention (Goodwin 1994, Tilly 1993). Their relationship to social movements or to the political process has seldom been broached (but see Goldstone, Gurr, and Moshiri 1991). The systematic study of "violence", which began in the wake of the ghetto riots of the 1960s, has often been looked at in isolation from the study of peaceful protest. Likewise for movement organizations: they are often studied in isolation from mass phenomena that are thought to produce them (see Oliver 1989). The study of great historical "events" has often proceeded in blissful indifference to the significant strides that have been made by quantitatively-oriented sociologists studying event histories (Olzak 1989b; Tarrow 1995). Strikes and industrial conflicts have produced their own specialty area, with little attention paid to the intersection between labor insurgency and political struggle (but see Franzosi 1995, Goldfield 1987, Johnston 1994, Perry 1993).

Recently, we and our colleagues have discovered an ideal vehicle for the kind of systemic synthesis that has been lacking in the study of contentious politics. It involves an unprecedented partnership between the Mellon Foundation and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Under its program of seminars in international studies to organize a three year seminar series, the foundation has granted funds to survey and synthesize those literatures that are most germane to the study of contentious politics. For its part, the Center has agreed to serve as institutional sponsor and site for the series and to convene a special project on the topic to be housed there during the third year of the project.

In combination, these generous resources will allow us to spend the first two years of the project intensively reviewing recent scholarship in the areas of social movements, comparative revolutions, nationalism, democratization, collective action, and related political processes. Year three will then turn to writing projects aimed at summarizing and synthesizing what we have learned through our comparative survey of the relevant scholarship and through contacts with colleagues and dissertation writers in each of these areas.

More important than the vehicle itself is our programmatic vision for the project and the intellectual aims that will guide our effort. We find ourselves dismayed by the fragmented subfield

structure that has come to characterize the study of contentious politics past and present. This malaise harms younger scholars, who frequently craft dissertations in isolation from others working in related terrain in other disciplines or under the influence of competing paradigms. Accordingly, we hope to survey and synthesize work across the diverse literatures that bear on contentious politics. If we promote conceptual standardization over the field as a whole, so much the better. But we aim chiefly at the identification of causal analogies—discovery that ostensible disparate political processes actually have similar causal properties. Four broad scholarly goals therefore guide our efforts:

*First*, we need to map the scope of contemporary scholarship relevant to an understanding of contentious politics. Practically speaking, this means identifying the set of subfields within history, sociology, political science, and economics in which scholarship germane to our topic is being conducted.

*Second*, having defined the relevant scholarly universe for our project, we hope to produce an initial synthesis of available theory and research across the various subfields germane to our concerns. At this preliminary stage of what is to be a collaborative and ongoing process, we are obviously not in a position to say anything definitive about this here. Instead, later in the paper, we will simply provide examples of the kinds of synthetic lines of inquiry we hope to explore over the next few years with our colleagues inside and outside the project.

*Third*, synthesis in hand, we will turn to the issue of the "scope conditions" for contentious politics: that is, how effective this synthesis—envisioned as a broad set of analytic concepts rather than a theory *per se*—is in explaining the nature and dynamics of contentious politics in different times and places. We suspect that current theories of contentious politics hold up best when applied to those settings—contemporary core democracies—that have been most intensively studied by specialists in social movements, and that they apply less well to other eras and regimes. Accordingly, in reflecting on what we think we have learned about contentious politics, we want to remain attuned to variations in context and to their hypothetical effects on the dynamics of collective action.

*Finally*, having taken the measure of the study of contentious politics in a variety of historical eras and regime contexts, we want to give serious thought to how the forms and dynamics of popular protest are changing in the context of what some have called the age of "globalization." We make no assumptions about these processes. Indeed, we remain skeptical about the strongest versions of the theory of globalization, especially those that depict the nation-state withering away in short order. What seems to us more plausible—and more intriguing—is the growth of transnational political exchange and the possible rise of a kind of regional polity (the European Union being a salient current exemplar) in which nations increasingly share sovereignty with a host of transnational and perhaps even subnational institutions. The interesting and important question is: What would contentious politics look like in the context of such a structure and how would it affect a crucial heritage of the consolidated state—the national social movement?

So much for our goals. In the article's remainder, we take up these aims in turn, sketching our provisional thinking on each of them and providing brief examples rather than exhaustive theoretical analyses or empirical presentations. We do so both to clarify our own ideas on these matters and to invite critical feedback at this early juncture of our collaborative project. We begin with a preliminary attack on the fundamental task of cataloguing inquiries into contentious politics.

### THE STUDY OF CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

Mapping the study of contentious politics could be done abstractly or epistemologically. If we took ontology as our mapping principle, for example, we could distinguish *methodological individualism*, with its reduction of social reality to the self-motivated actions of individual actors;

*phenomenological individualism*, with its parallel reduction of social reality to the consciousness of actors—individual or collective; *systems theories*, with collectivities—including the great collectivity called society—following autonomous and compelling logics; and *relational models*, with transactions, interactions, or social ties becoming the starting-points of analysis. Each of these views has strong representatives among analysts of political contention.

We could also use epistemology (from skeptical to positivist) as our starting point; causal structure (from fields of intersecting variables to rational decision-making), analytic traditions (eg., Marxist or Weberian), or even the scale of social units (from individuals to civilizations) as our bases of classification. We prefer, however, to offer hypotheses concerning the clusters of mutual awareness that would show up if we actually catalogued all scholarly studies of political contention published during the last few decades, then traced the sharing of concepts, arguments, methods, sources and citations that resulted. We mean, that is, to map currently connected literatures around our core concept of contentious politics.

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*A Map of Contentious Politics*

We imagine that such a map would have to contain four main clusters: 1) a huge, sprawling set of political histories grouped chiefly by time and place and bound by little explicit theorizing;<sup>1</sup> 2) more self-consciously theoretical studies of local, regional, and/or categorical social change in which contentious politics forms only one part of a larger causal matrix; 3) analyses of state-oriented politics as such; and 4) attempts to single out various forms of conflict and violence for explanation in their own terms. Within each of these clusters, here are names for likely subdivisions:

1. *political histories*: local, regional, and national monographs clustered chiefly by time, place, and population group;
2. *geographically- or categorically-defined social change*: work, gender, household, and neighborhood; race, ethnicity, and religion; class formation, class conflict, and class action; industrial conflict;
3. *state-oriented politics*: social movements; social networks, interest groups, parties, elections, and political influence; public life and authority; political identity, citizenship and nationalism; change in regimes, including democratization and state formation; revolution, rebellion, resistance, and protest; war, military power, imperialism, and international relations;
4. *conflict and violence per se*: banditry, crime, policing, and repression; violence, political and otherwise; collective action and contention in general.

Of course, such a map would resemble a galaxy more than a neat little solar system: instead of four well-defined planets, each with its coherent geography, we would find clouds of stars with streamers among them. Our taxonomy asserts only a scalar relationship within clusters: that, for

<sup>1</sup> This vast domain is usually thought of as the sole province of professional historians, but we should be aware, both of the degree to which historiography has become more explicitly theoretical in the last twenty years, and of the extent to which purely descriptive monographs animated by a passion for particular movements continue to be produced in sociology and political science. Important recent historical critiques and syntheses of historical work on contentious politics include Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 1994, Berlianstein 1993, Cooper 1994, Hamagan 1994, Rancière 1992, and Sewell 1992.

Does this imply that ethnic conflict does not involve social movements? That social movement theory has little of use to say about ethnic conflict? Or (as we suspect) that scholarly specialization has left many ethnic conflict scholars largely uninformed of recent advances in social movement theory? Conversely, social movement theorists from the West have generally chosen more bounded, less volatile movements to study than those based on ethnicity and religion. Lack of proximity is no excuse; the definitions used by social movement scholars clearly include ethnic conflict, yet few if any social movement theorists have applied their theories to these movements (race, in the form of the American civil rights movement, being the major exception.) Connecting the clusters would have great potential both for keeping scholars of ethnicity and social movements from talking past one another as well as for building a more theoretically integrated social science of ethnic movements.

In the long run, we want to fashion ideas that will span these diverse clusters and literatures; in the shorter run, however, we seek opportunities to link two or three smaller literatures at a time, in the hope of adducing more general principles as we go. We cannot know in advance all the lines of inquiry that will eventually be taken up in our collaborative project, but we have already proposed a number of topics that we want jointly to explore. In the next three sections, we sketch three paired "within-cluster linkages" to illustrate the kinds of syntheses that we hope to effect across the many literatures concerned with some aspect of contentious politics:

- 1) connecting social movements, cycles, and revolutions; 2) relating collective identities and social networks; 3) linking institutional politics and collective action.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, CYCLES, AND REVOLUTIONS

A social movement is a sustained interaction between mighty people and others lacking might: a continuing challenge to existing powerholders in the name of a population whose interlocutors declare it to be unjustly suffering harm or threatened with such harm. Precisely because contentious politics forms a continuous analytic terrain with no more than fuzzy boundaries, any definition of social movements will raise immediate objections from students of adjacent phenomena who concentrate on their similarities; this particular definition excludes collective claim-making by the mighty on the mighty, collective efforts at escape or self-renewal,

<sup>2</sup> Even so skilled an analyst of nationalism as Rogers Brubaker surveys recent nationalism in post-1989 Europe without a hint of social movement (see, e.g., Brubaker 1995).

and a number of other nearby phenomena which do, indeed, share important characteristics with interactions falling inside the boundary. We concentrate on dominant-subordinate relations based on the hypothesis that contention involving substantial inequality among protagonists has distinctive general features that bond social movements to revolutions, rebellions, and bottom-up nationalisms.

Public actions within a movement couple collective claims on authorities with displays asserting that the population in question and/or its mobilized representatives are worthy, unified, numerous, and committed. To some extent, numbers and commitment trade off with one another; displays of willingness to die or kill on behalf of a cause, for example, can make up for small numbers—which is why terrorist phases usually arise towards the end of the cycle, when mass commitment has already declined (della Porta and Tarrow 1986).

In these broad terms, social movements have existed at least since the time, millennia ago, when dissident religious cults and tribal rebels first arose against empires and established religions. But as Western parliamentary regimes arose during the nineteenth century, a special variety of social movement—the *national* social movement—formed, generalized, and rapidly became a standard fixture of national political struggles. Beginning in Britain in the eighteenth century and spreading first to America and the continent, then through print, missionary work, and colonialism to the Third World, the national social movement came to involve associations, symbolic displays, publications, meetings, marches, demonstrations, petitions, lobbying, and threats to intervene directly in formal political life (Tilly 1995b; Tarrow 1994). It still does today.

Participants in national movements make claims on authorities, but they also assert their own identities—or those of the populations for which they claim to speak—as worthy, weighty, and solidary actors. Indeed, the effectiveness of social movements in demonstrating the presence of—and shaping collective identities for—neglected social actors helps make up for their notorious inefficiency as ways of forwarding specific programs and claims. Historically, after all, butchering the tax collector has usually ended collection of a hated impost more immediately and definitively than writing petitions objecting to it in principle. Reliance on social movement strategies such as petitioning implies confidence that cumulative, largely nonviolent action will eventually make a political difference.

Cumulative nonviolent action only makes a difference, in fact, to the extent that it: a) forges alliances of conscience or interest with existing members of the polity, b) offers a credible threat of disrupting routine political processes, c) poses another credible threat of direct influence in the electoral arena, and/or d) elicits pressure on authorities from external powerholders. Social movement strategies therefore promise most where parliamentary politics, democratic institutions and durable political competition already exist.

Contrary to the opposition between "identity" and "interest" stressed by many interpreters of popular politics during the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. Cohen 1985), participants in national social movements have always asserted some sort of synthesis between identity and interest. From the labor theory of value's nineteenth century heyday onward, for example, organized workers have ordinarily claimed that their collective contribution to national production not only justified rights to proper treatment and fair returns from output, but also established their distinct—and worthy—identities. While some movements—for example, the women's movement and the gay rights movement—do "farming work" (Snow, Rochford, Worden, and Benford 1986) towards the recognition or change of collective identities, this is not an invention of the "new" social movements of the 1980s; on the contrary, we see "identity work" going on among many of the most interest-oriented groups of the early nineteenth century (Calhoun 1994; D'Amieri, Ernst and Kier 1990).

### Cycles and Repertoires

Instead of occurring separately issue by issue, national social movements have frequently arrived in cycles of claim making. Once "early risers" trigger the start of the cycle, more and more

claimants jostle for recognition and response. This continues up to a point of maximum intensity and is followed by a decline in the frequency, success, and civility of claims and claimants (Koopmans 1993; Tarrow 1989 and 1995). Multiple claimants include rival representatives of the same interests, defenders of established interests threatened by the new claims, advocates of adjacent interests, and parties to unrelated interests responding to opportunities for alliances or for pressure on beleaguered authorities. As a result, social movement activists spend much of their effort creating coalitions and attempting to fashion broader collective identities around them, battling for control of organizations, suppressing rival agendas, engineering expressions of unified support for their own programs, and negotiating with authorities.

Like collective contention in general, social movement actions take the form of repertoires: limited numbers of historically-established alternative performances linking claimants to objects of claims (Tilly 1978; 1995c; McAdam 1983). Major performances have included creation of special-interest associations or parties, public meetings, demonstrations, marches, electoral campaigns, petition drives, lobbying, forcible occupation of premises, publication programs, formation of public-service institutions, and barricade construction (Traugott 1995). These days, social movement activists can also create hotlines, appear on television programs, and organize electronic mail forums—often across national boundaries.

Repertoires do not belong to movement actors alone; they form the historical and contemporary interaction between protagonists and their opponents. Thus, the public demonstration—repressed as a threat to order as late as 1848 in Britain—had been accepted and regulated by police practice by the end of the nineteenth century. More recently, tactics practiced by the American civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s reflected the tug of war between repression and facilitation, as well as the strength of the movement and its strategic and tactical vision. Authorities respond to the diffusion of a new repertoire by repression, facilitation, and, in many cases, by developing strategies of social control that turn a new tactic into part of the conventional repertoire (McCarthy, Britt and Wolfson 1991; della Porta 1995).

Reflecting their very different instrumental and expressive logics, existing repertoires embody a creative tension between innovation and persistence. The instrumental efficacy of a repertoire derives largely from its novelty, its ability to catch opponents of authorities off-guard and to precipitate instances of public disorder costly to established interests. Repeated use of the same repertoire diminishes its instrumental effectiveness and thus encourages tactical innovation. This is the major reason for the escalation and radicalization of tactics in many movement campaigns, and leads to movements making concessions to their most radical fringes, condemning them to be successfully painted as "extremist" by their opponents and by the media.

But repertoires serve an expressive function as well, one whose logic encourages persistence rather than change. The expressive logic of the repertoire has rarely been acknowledged, but helps to explain why signature repertoires persist despite the instrumental premium on innovation. Especially during the early stages of a protest cycle, the tactical choices made by challenging groups express their identification with the earliest risers and signal a more inclusive and broader definition of the emerging struggle. In retrospect, scholars may see a cycle—especially a reform cycle—as a cluster of 6, 7, 8, . . . n discrete movements, but this view almost invariably distorts the perspective shared by participants at the time. In their view, they are but a part of a broad and rapidly expanding political-cultural community fighting the same fight on a number of related fronts. And a significant part of what links and defines these various groups as a coherent community is their persistent reliance on the same modular forms (Tarrow 1994; ch. 2; Tilly 1995b).

Movement cycles and repertoires are related in other ways as well. First, within a given cycle, themes, symbols and tactical innovations of individual actions and groups influence one another, as when American students borrowed the sit-in and other collective action frames from civil rights activists during the 1960s (McAdam 1988). Second, the intense interaction of a cycle generates opportunities and incentives to innovate that appear much more rarely and with greater

theorizing about contentious politics.<sup>1</sup> This emphasis was long overdue, given the distinctive character of modern life identified by countless social analysts (see for example, Berger and Luckmann 1967: 64). In premodern society, these two authors argue, social life was tightly circumscribed by a decided lack of geographic and social mobility. The practical effect of these constraints was to create a strong structural equivalence between the individual and the group. Indeed, in most times and places, the individual experienced life as a cradle-to-grave embedding in a single tribe or similarly insular group. As moderns we no doubt shudder at the thought of such a life—as well we should. The experiential limits of such a life would be anathema to us. And yet, for all the obvious deficits associated with such an existence, a lack of meaning and identity would probably not be counted among them.

All of this, argue Berger and Luckmann, began to change with the rapid rupture of the tight structural equivalence between the individual and the collective that characterized premodern society. Fueled by three trends—the spread of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and the rise of the modern nation-state—this transformation began in early modern Europe and accelerated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Analysts have long noted the timing and significance of these trends and the role they played in transforming political and economic life. Less often noted, however, are what might be termed the "ontological" changes occasioned by them. Quite simply, "modernity," the cluster of trends that "liberated" the individual from the insularity of pre-modern society, fundamentally altered the ontological structure and dynamics of social life. Meaning and identity became less a structural endowment of some stable "lifeworld" than a collaborative social accomplishment.

What has this to do with contentious politics? With the shift from premodern to modern life, popular politics became one of the principal sources for the construction of meaning and identity in social life. This, we take it, is an enduring lesson of E. P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class* (1964). By bringing it to light, Thompson liberated class analysis from its productivist cage; but he left aside non-class forms of collective identity formation and the specific relationship between collective action and collective identity.

But what agencies create new identities? As scholars of social movements, collective action, and revolutions, we have yet to fashion a truly relational micro-foundation to explain the formation of new and transformed collective identities. Some scholars have looked at the face-to-face interaction of small groups to find this process of collective identity building—what Melucci (1988) calls the "negotiation" of collective identities. But this micro-perspective isolates the face-to-face group from the larger movement of which it is a part and from its relationship to significant others: antagonists, allies, and the broader cultural agents that constrain and animate collective action (Snow and Benford 1992; Snow et al. 1986). Over the course of our project, we hope to make the relational formation of collective identities one of the prime goals for conceptual synthesis. Two current approaches provide clues.

*Rational Choice and Network Analysis*

Proponents of the rational choice perspective are correct to stress the importance of incentives to the study of individual activism. Where they fall short, in our view, is in their extremely narrow—and generally materialist—conception of incentives and their often anomic portrait of the individual. The image one emerges with is of an isolated outsider deciding whether

<sup>1</sup>The work of Alberto Melucci (1988, 1989) is a fount of much recent research. For a rich recent collection on identity politics, see Calhoun, et al. (1994). Actually, this strand of theorizing goes back further—and has more "structuralist" roots than recent "cultural turn" advocates recognize—to Pizzorno's explanation of the vitality and spontaneity of Italian worker insurgency in the late 1960s. See Pizzorno (1978) and the work inspired by him in Crouch and Pizzorno, eds. (1978).

risk outside such cycles. Third, the very movement of a cycle from an expansive to a contracting phase alters the strategic situations of all participants, thereby changing the relative attractiveness of different forms of interaction, not to mention the relative salience of other actors as models, enemies, rivals, or allies. Fourth, forms of action associated with successful gaming of support, gaining of publicity, or pressing of demands tend to generalize and become long-term additions to collective action repertoires. Those associated repeatedly and visibly with failure tend to disappear.

Social movements unfold within limits set by prevailing political opportunity structures; the formal organizations of government and public politics, authorities' facilitation and repression of claim-makings by challenging groups, and the presence of potential allies, rivals, or enemies significantly affect any polity's patterns of contention. Social movement organizations, for example, commonly create structures paralleling those of the powerholders at whom they are aiming their demands; on average, a highly centralized state generates more centralized movement organizations than a fragmented federal state (Kriesi, Duyvendak, Giugni, and Koopmans 1995). Yet in the longer run, social movement action also alters opportunity structures, notably by contributing to changes in modes of established claim-making, in forms of repression and facilitation by authorities, and in established political identities.

*From Movements to Revolutions*

These regularities in social movements suggest surprising parallels to revolutions. A revolution is a rapid, forcible, durable shift in collective control over a state that includes a passage through openly contested sovereignty. We can conveniently distinguish between revolutionary situations (moments of deep fragmentation in state power) and revolutionary outcomes (transfers of state power to new actors), designating as a full-fledged revolution any extensive combination of the two (Tilly 1993). The forms and themes of revolution vary significantly with political opportunity structures, for example, a) featuring dynastic contenders where dynastic succession normally supplies new rulers, and b) taking nationalist forms where the system of rule already operates through populations that claim distinct national identities.

Revolutionary situations resemble extreme cases of social movement cycles: as the split within a polity widens, all rights and identities come to be contested, the possibility of remaining neutral disappears and the state's vulnerability becomes more visible to all parties. Just as successful mobilization of one social movement contender stimulates claim-making among both rivals and allies, revolutionary claimants on state power incite offensive or defensive mobilizations by previously inactive groups. One group's actual seizure of some portion of state power, furthermore, immediately alters the prospects for laggard actors, who must immediately choose among alliance, assault, self-defense, flight, and demobilization. Consequently, rivalries, coalition-making, demand-making, and defensive action all spiral rapidly upward. Because of their penchant for seeing social movements and revolutions as separate genres, each with its own immutable laws, students of contention have not yet begun to explore these parallels and intersections among movements, protest cycles, and revolutions (but see Goldstone 1994).

IV. COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Another segment of our initial map will illustrate the problem of unrealized connections and the urgency of bringing together two different perspectives on contentious politics, collective identities and social networks. Spurred by constructivist and cultural approaches, the role of collective identity formation in social movements has recently become an important aspect of

or not to affiliate with a given instance of collective action "offered" by an entrepreneur of some sort. What this view misses is the degree to which individuals are already embedded and ontologically invested in various kinds of social structures and practices.

The failure of early collective choice theories to acknowledge and investigate this embeddedness of collective action distorted the process of recruitment and aggregation and left scholars insensitive to a whole class of incentives that would appear to be decisive in most instances. More recent theorists have recognized that there are different collective action problems and different solutions to them. The "rebel's dilemma," points out Mark Irving Lichbach, has a variety of different solutions (Lichbach 1995: xii). Lichbach takes rational choice theory a step closer to the embeddedness we see in mobilization processes. Among the solutions he envisages to the rebel's dilemma are markets, communities, contracts, and hierarchies.

For their part, network analysts of contentious politics have stressed social embeddedness and have marshalled impressive evidence of its role in mediating recruitment and aggregation into activism. (Gould 1991, 1993; McAdam 1986). But they have been "generally silent on the basic sociological dynamics that account for the reported findings... in most cases, no theory is offered to explain the observed effects" (McAdam and Paulsen 1993: 641). One is left with the disquieting image of the individual as structural automaton, compelled to act by the force of this or that social embedding. Network analysts of social movements will never fully account for the impressive effects their models predict without explicitly confronting the issue of incentives, motivations, and collective identities.

Progress can be made along these lines. Our earlier characterization of people "embedded and ontologically invested in various kinds of social structures and practices" suggests the tack we intend to take. Most people can be expected to take part in collective action which is rooted in those communities from which they derive meanings and identities critical to their lives and well-being. In offering this proposition, we make no assumption of conscious calculation on the individual's part. Even without consciously weighing costs and benefits, people can be expected to act to confirm or safeguard the central sources of meaning and identity in their lives, especially when models are available in the form of repertoires and claims embedded in the history of the group.

Examples are common in the recent historical literature on contentious politics. For example, it would be hard to account for the rapid mobilization and diffusion of the American civil rights movement without recognizing how firmly it came to be embedded in two institutions—the black churches and colleges—central to the lives and identities of black southerners (McAdam 1982: 12-31). In France, Roger Gould's (1990, 1991, 1995) findings of the high neighborhood participation in the Paris Commune can be interpreted in much the same light. By tapping into the structural sources of meaning and identity in people's lives, leaders of the insurrection that produced the Commune went a long way to insuring popular support for their cause.

Moreover (and here we turn to the identity-constructing potential of contentious politics), the two sets of events described above durably changed identities. While the American civil rights movement declined in the late 1960s, it fundamentally changed the meaning of being African-American. Similarly, although the Paris Commune was ruthlessly destroyed, it left behind it a new and more collectivist meaning for the term "republican," producing a deeper embedding of these ideas in the lower classes of Paris. And when Lenin's Bolsheviks adopted the name "Communists," the heritage of the Commune became international.

These examples contradict the traditional rational choice imagery of isolated individuals choosing—or defecting from—collective action, and help to explain why the vaunted free-rider problem may not be so problematic after all. Most movements do not arise because "outsiders" are induced to join the struggle; rather, they are aggregated out of the solidary and ontological commitments of the movement's primary mobilizing structures, which are in turn linked to communities of identity communicated through social networks.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS

Our earlier insistence on the continuities between movements, cycles, and revolutions, and, in the last section, on the embeddedness of collective action in communities and social networks underscores a more basic claim: that there is no fundamental discontinuity between social movements and institutional politics. Not only do we reject the argument that social movement activity is irrational; we argue that social movement activity is one strategic choice among others that actors make when it is the most appropriate response to their resources, their opportunities, and their constraints. Social movement activity is chosen as a situationally-determined alternative to a variety of other forms of behavior, ranging from unstructured collective action to interest group organization to activism within political parties and institutions.

While not controversial on its own, this assumption leads to several others:

First, that there are no inherently "social-movement-oriented" actors or groups, but only the situations, capacities, and constraints that give rise to social movement activity.

Second, as these situations, capacities, and constraints evolve, the same groups that pour into the streets and mount barricades may be found in lobbies, newspaper offices, and political party branches.

Third, these various types of activities may be combined in the repertoire of the same groups and may even be employed simultaneously.

Fourth, movements can cooperate with parties and interest groups; compete with them for support; or try to occupy the same political space that they do.

To put empirical flesh on our perspective, consider a phenomenon like the anti-immigrant movement, the French National Front. The Front is certainly a political party that contests elections, puts forward policy proposals, and seeks to gain public office. But it also reflects the diffuse presence of millions of French people who feel themselves deprived of representation and whose identity-in-formation as an anti-immigration movement is all too evident, both from the frequent physical attacks on immigrants and from the growing support for anti-immigrant policies recorded in surveys. If we conceptualized movements only as alternative and mutually-exclusive forms to parties, we would be forced to choose an identity for the National Front that ignored its dual face as movement and party and we would be forced to focus on only one level of activity while ignoring others that did not "fit" with our categorical choice.

Note the implications for researchers: studies focusing on movements alone, ignoring their place in the political struggle as a whole, cannot easily grasp their stunts in support, tactics, and goals for each of these is profoundly affected by their resources, opportunities and constraints—as well as by the other players in the political struggle (Kajest et al. 1995).

It may be objected that some movements are not "instrumentally-oriented"—like parties and interest groups—but are expressive and are oriented towards the cultivation of internal goals like the formation of collective identities (Cohen 1985; Melucci 1988). We respond, first, that parties and interest groups also have as a fundamental task the framing of collective identities; second, that movements' expressive activities involve the expression of both identity and interest; and that—in the presence of active, influential states—even self-regarding movements encounter state power at some points and adjust their strategies in response to it. Identities must be recognized to be validated, and states and their institutional appendages are the most symbolically powerful agencies of such recognition (Calhoun 1994: 21).

If we thought that social movements were simply aggregates of identities and interests, we might be inclined to study them through their documents, their public statements, and their internal negotiation of collective identities. But movements also couple collective claims on authorities with displays asserting that the population in question is worthy, unified, numerous, and committed. And this directs our attention to the public actions—the performances—that movements mount both to mark their claims on authorities and to create and maintain their constituencies. In

X

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other words, our conception of movements turns our methodological focus to the systematic, historically-structured study of contentious collective action.<sup>4</sup>

Using publicly available sources on claim-making and collective action can address the complex and changing relationships between social movements and institutional politics in the following ways: First, it can reveal which kinds of social actors tend to interact contentiously with states, elites, and other actors. Second, it can show whether and how these actors combine contentious forms of collective action with more conventional behavior within and around political institutions. Third, it can indicate the changes in resources, opportunities, and constraints associated with shifts between more and less contentious forms of collective action. Fourth, it can relate the actions of these actors to those of others during the same time periods, to examine the hypothesis above that cycles of protest produce similar collective action frames and a speedup of innovation in collective action across a broad range of social groups. Fifth, it can reveal the changes in patterns of collective action that produce revolutionary situations and the interactions between powerful people and challengers that transform these situations into revolutionary outcomes.

A number of questions are on the research agenda regarding the relations between social movements and institutional politics: Are social movements coming to resemble public interest groups? Has public protest become so widespread in the western world that it is general acceptance robs it of its disruptive quality—and therefore of its capacity to stimulate responses? And have the processes of globalization created a "global village" of social movements in which the theories created in the West can be applied to non-western countries and in which transnational social movements are forming that escape the confines of the national state? These questions take us to two closing conundra.

## TWO CLOSING CONUNDRAS

It may have occurred to the reader (it long ago occurred to the authors!) that much of the thinking that has gone into this paper thus far is based on the experiences of western parliamentary democracies in the age of the national social movement. But does this mean that the concepts we use here are only part of the real estate of the advanced industrial democracies of the West? Or only that they have not been systematically specified and operationalized for other periods of types of regime or for movements that transcend the nation state? Unfortunately, the fragmentation of the field of contentious politics is such that we are not yet in a position to propose even tentative answers to this question, but we would like to close by posing these questions more completely.

### *Scope Conditions in Contentious Politics*

Following reasonable intuitions about precipitating conditions for different sorts of contentious politics, students of *coups d'état* have concentrated their attention on countries in which military organizations enjoy considerable political autonomy; students of revolution, on capitalizing, industrializing agrarian regions; students of social movements, on western parliamentary democracies; and so on through a variety of connections between themes and cases. Overall, availability of evidence and locations of scholars have imparted a strong bias toward contemporary Western Europe and North America in existing work on political contention.

These locational and thematic linkages may be no more than an accident of where resources are concentrated or research problems are observed, but in principle, such phenomena as revolutions or social movements could vary so significantly in their actual operation from time

to time and place to place that no empirical regularities would deserve extrapolation. Two questions bedevil scope conditions: 1) to what extent do regularities in contentious politics vary by time and place, and 2) to what extent does the disproportionate attention to Western Europe and North America in the literature produce misleading generalizations about various forms of contention? Specialists in, say, Somalia, Bosnia, China, or Afghanistan must therefore ask which generalizations from previous work they can safely import into their own regions. Which conclusions depend so heavily on the peculiar cultures, histories, and political reforms of contemporary capitalist democracies that they will collapse outside their zones of origin?

This query calls up three answers:

First, we do not know the scope conditions for most current generalizations about political contention, and can only learn them through deliberate, careful comparison across time and space. (But we will surely not learn them by assuming *a priori* that non-western countries are inherently and unalterably different than the West, thereby resolving the "scope conditions" question by culturalist proclamation.) We might suppose that models of social movements and class conflict based on Western European experience and its extensions will break down when applied outside the range of relatively centralized, bureaucratized, and parliamentarized states, but we can only find out by testing them comparatively against models that have grown out of non-western experience (Boudreau 1995).

Second, sound causal analyses of political contention offer the promise of discovering principles not of uniformity but of variation—which is one of the reasons we do comparative work (Tilly 1984b). If, for example, we discover that both the precipitants and the forms of war depend on the prevailing organization of military power within each state and on relations between the dominant classes of potentially belligerent states, this finding challenges us to stipulate how different prevailing military organizations and international class relations than the ones we observe should affect the precipitants and forms of war. Findings concerning the impact of variable political opportunity structure on the character of social movements invite extrapolation and testing outside the parliamentary democracies on which they are currently based (Brockett 1991). In short, the counterfactuals we inevitably employ in exploring phenomena whose variation we observe ineluctably suggest explanations whose scope could easily surpass the range of our current observations. Once again, we can only try.

Third, both scope conditions and our current knowledge of them surely vary for different kinds of phenomena. Interest groups, parties, elections, and political influence-peddling almost certainly operate differently in Cambodia or Zaire than they do in Canada or the United Kingdom. Hence, exporting conclusions based on Anglo-Canadian experience elsewhere runs a double risk. But when it comes to political identity, citizenship, and nationalism, it is at least possible that these phenomena depend sufficiently on worldwide conditions to permit cautious generalization across continents, if not across historical epochs. And this takes us to our concluding conundrum—the "globalization" of movements.

### *Globalizing World and Transnational Movements?*

Not only does much of our knowledge of contentious politics come from the industrialized West: it comes from the last two hundred years—the heyday of what we have called the national social movement. We recognize (and have written about) the differences between this set of phenomena and what preceded it in Western history (Tilly 1983, 1984a, 1995b, Tarrow 1994), but we have only begun to consider, together with other specialists, the implications for contentious politics of what some are calling the "globalization" of politics.

<sup>4</sup> See McAdam (1982), Olzak (1989), Tarrow (1989), and Tilly (1995) for representative methodological discussions.

This is not the place to detail the various versions and properties of the globalization thesis. Its strong form<sup>5</sup> makes five claims:

First, the dominant economic trends of the late twentieth century have been towards international economic interdependence.

Second, economic growth of the 1970s and 1980s has brought citizens of the North and West and those of the East and South closer together, making the latter more aware of their inequality.

Third, global economic interdependence and international relative deprivation have contributed to spurring massive shifts of population from the South and East to the North and West. But because immigrants no longer lose touch with their country of origin and cannot hope for citizenship, they remain forever foreign.

Fourth, global communications can weave closer ties between core and periphery of the world system. Decentralized and private communications technologies such as computer networking have accelerated the growth of global interdependent communications.

Fifth, these structural changes have a cultural concomitant: that we live in a culturally more unified universe, one in which young people dress the same, ride the same skateboards, play the same computer games, and listen to the same rock music.

These changes result in the stronger version of the transnational social movement thesis, which has the following general characteristics:

First, the national political opportunity structures that used to exclusively structure collective action—and constrain it—may be giving way. The national state—incubator and fulcrum of social movements in the past—may no longer be the sole constraint or stimulant to movements. This is especially true where national politics have agreed to share sovereignty—as in the European Community—with emerging transnational (and, on occasion, subnational) political and economic institutions (Marks and McAdam, 1996).

The second putative effect is the declining capacity of governments to exert control over the national polity. The increasing fluidity of capital, labor, commodities, money, and cultural practices undermines the capacity of any particular state to control events within its boundaries" (Tilly 1995a: 1).

Third, the capacity to mount new forms of collective action is probably increasing too. Where electronic communication becomes a means for the propagation of movement information, there is an increased capacity for low-risk empowerment of people all over the world—what might be termed "easy riding on the internet" (Tarrow 1995).

Peaceful and virtually institutionalized forms of transnational collective action have accompanied this shift: from the student movement of the 1960s (McAdam and Rucht 1993) to the peace campaigns that spread across Europe and America in the 1980s (Rochon 1988) to the global environmental movement that links Green parties and movements across national boundaries (Dalton 1994) to non-governmental associations that provide resources to protect the rights and publicize the wrongs against indigenous peoples from Australia to Latin America (Brysk 1993; Yashar in press). These transnational groups are increasingly relevant to foreign policy and international politics (Keck and Sikkink 1994, Pagnucco and Smith 1993).

But the rapid spread of information, immigration and even militancy may not be enough to produce global movements. Both history and social movement theory suggest some caution. The historical reasons to be cautious about the strong version of the transnational thesis can be

<sup>5</sup> The strongest versions of the theory are put forward by political scientist James Rosenau, who sees a new phase of global turbulence growing up since the end of World War Two (1990), and by communications specialist Michael O'Neil, for whom a new age of transnational people power has been advanced by global television, fax machines, and electronic private media (1993).

summarized in two points: In the first place, the integration of the world economy is not exactly new. And in the second place, the spread of capitalism, communications, and the waves of immigration that resulted in diffused movements in very similar form and with similar goals around the world. It is enough to think of the Eastern European roots of the clothing workers' movement created in sweatshops on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the 1890s; or of the socialist and anarchist movements that were created by Italian immigrants in Chile and Argentina.

This takes us to the insights of social movement theory. If we have learned anything from the last twenty-five years of social movement research, it is that movements do not depend on interest or opportunity alone, but build on indigenous social networks in domestic societies. We argued earlier that it is more due to networks of people who are linked to each other by a specific interpersonal bond than to formal organization or individual incentives that collective action is aggregated. Advocates of the "strong" globalization thesis will have to show that transnational (and inevitably long distance) activist networks have the same effects as the face-to-face networks and resulting collective identities that have been at the basis of the national social movement.

Not all prospective movements have the resources to respond to transnational forces with proportional activism. Consider the labor movement: If only because capital is more mobile than labor, labor movements have been unable to respond effectively to the global economic interdependence that has restructured labor all over the world (Tilly 1995a). Even in Europe, where the European Union would seem to encourage transnational cooperation, organized labor has been unable to match the rate of multinational business growth with cooperation across national boundaries (Marks and McAdam 1996).

This is why a "weaker" version of the transnational social movement thesis may be more plausible than the strong one: one that does not imply that emerging transnational institutions or an expanded capacity for cross-national communication will automatically create transnational movements, but that they do provide new political opportunities and expanded resources that can turn indigenous social networks into national social movements. Where these networks are lacking, a globalized economy cannot create a social movement. Most relevant examples do not actually concern global movements with national chapters, but political exchange among allied actors whose contact has been facilitated by global economic integration and communication. In short, we do not know whether globalization will ultimately render the national social movement anachronistic, but if it does, we suspect that institutionalized politics, ongoing political interaction, and indigenous social networks will continue to structure the dynamics of contentious politics.

CONCLUSION

These represent our preliminary thoughts on the four topics we sketched at the outset of the paper and which will occupy our attention over the next several years. They leave pressing questions open: Do civil war, genocide, and interstate conflict belong to the same theoretical universe as social movements and revolutions? Do shirking, flight, and what James Scott calls everyday forms of resistance obey the same laws as overt collective contention? How much, and

<sup>6</sup> We need only look at Hobsbawm's *Age of Empire* to join him in thinking that, on the centenary of the French and American revolutions, the world had become "genuinely global" (1987: 13).

<sup>7</sup> Moreover, depending on movement organizations from advanced industrial countries is not the best way for activists in Third World countries to build indigenous movements. For one thing, their links with international environmentalists are often fragile or intermittent (Macdonald n.d.). For another, relations between the two actors almost always favor those with expertise and access to power over those they come to help. When they leave, their local allies may disperse or be more easily vulnerable to repression.

low, does collective contention alter the identities by which people manage their day-to-day social relations? Recent work has made such questions more urgent than ever, but we have avoided them in hopes of identifying problems that present knowledge makes more tractable.

As befits the current topography of the intellectual terrain we seek to traverse, then, our thoughts are necessarily fragmented, partial and, we hope, provocative. We have shared them in hopes of stimulating an ongoing dialogue, both with our colleagues on the project, and more diffusely with all who aspire to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of contentious politics. We invite your feedback and look forward to a prolonged and productive exchange. Let the conversation begin.

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Citizen movements were an important factor in triggering the peaceful East German revolution that abolished the communist regime and contributed to achievement of elementary civil rights that are taken for granted in Western democracies. However, the movements failed in their efforts to resist quick German unification via the largely uncontested transplantation of the West German institutional system to East Germany. This article analyzes why the movements could not achieve their aim of a new political order, in their view superior to Western type democracy—one that would guarantee radical democracy and extensive social rights for citizens. Drawing on three prominent perspectives in social movement research it is argued that both internal and external factors contributed to the failure of these movements. Although they might have avoided some minor tactical errors, they had few prospects for strongly influencing the course and result of German unification. Because this outcome was overdetermined, it is incorrect to suggest that the movements missed an opportunity to achieve their goal of radical democracy.

German unification was a unique historical event. The estranged parts of a previously united country, which had developed different institutions and cultures during the decades after World War II, united within a short and breathtaking period. Today, the process of unification has been largely completed. Essentially, West German institutions have been transferred to the East.<sup>1</sup> Most people in both East and West Germany welcomed this institutionalization of Western style democracy. There were groups in both countries, however, who opposed this outcome. They did not want the mere transference of West German institutions; instead, they wished to create new institutions allowing greater democracy, participation, and social rights for citizens.

For a brief period, between late 1989 and spring 1990, the so-called citizen movements were the main carriers of such hopes. Their dream was the creation of a new order that would expand elementary democratic rights (as they were secured in West Germany) as well as incorporate some elements of the former GDR—such as extensive social rights and some state ownership of property.<sup>2</sup> The core of these movements consisted of those activists who initially struggled to reform the communist regime. These activists cared little about German unification.

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<sup>2</sup> For a thorough analysis of the process of German unification, see Korte (1994) and Jarausch (1995). See also Czada (1994), Gros (1994), and Hancock and Welsh (1994).

<sup>3</sup> See the collection of citizen movements' declarations and programs in Schüddekopf (1990), Gransow and Jarausch (1991), Mueller-Enbergs (1992), and Mueckel and Guzeit (1994).

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