Ballots and Barricades: On the Reciprocal Relationship between Elections and Social Movements

Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow

Why do two cognate literatures—social movements and electoral studies—travel along parallel paths with little conversation between them? And what can be done to connect them in the future? Drawing on their work with the late Charles Tilly on *Dynamics of Contention* (2001), Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow examine two important studies that approach (but do not effect such a linkage), propose a mechanism-based set of linkages between elections and social movements, and apply their approach in a preliminary examination of the relations between the American anti-war movement after 9/11 and the Democratic Party.

Introduction

In 1996, in the wings of a conference organized to honor Charles Tilly, the authors sat down for breakfast with him to gripe about the field we had come to call "contentious politics."[1] Both the occasion and the griping were ironic: We represented three generations of practitioners of the approach that had come to be called "the political process model" in the world of social movement scholarship. Tilly had started the ball rolling with his landmark *From Mobilization to Revolution* in 1978. McAdam followed soon after with *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency,*[2] and Tarrow brought up the rear a decade later with *Democracy and Disorder.*[3] Yet here we were at a conference called to honor the founder of the political process approach, grousing about it, with Tilly himself leading the charge!

What was the problem and how did we propose to address it? We discovered that all three of us were troubled by the directions that American social movement studies have taken since their revival in the 1960s.

First, we felt that the social movement field was excessively centered on contemporary western, reformist movement organizations. We were also concerned that the field had become excessively "movement-centric," ignoring the interaction between movements and other parties to the conflicts they were engaging.

Second, we worried that the canonical approach, including our own work, was overly focused on static categories (e.g., political opportunity structure, organizational resources, movement frames), giving too little attention to the mechanisms that connect contention to outcomes of interest.

And third, we complained that, with few exceptions, scholars of cognate areas of political contention—social movements, strike waves, revolutions, civil wars—were working in cordial indifference to one another. Such segmentation prevented scholars working in these different domains from profiting from each other's work. Even more troubling, transitions from one form of contention to another—the *dynamics* of contention—were left in the hollows between these oddly segregated scholarly specialties.

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For comments on earlier versions of this paper and for useful sources, we are grateful to Carew Boulding; Russ Dalton; Michael Heaney and Fabio Rojas; David Karpf; Ruud Koopmans; David S. Meyer; the team of Patrick Coy, Greg Maney, and Lynne Woehrle; and the anonymous readers who labored through an earlier version of this paper for Perspectives on Politics.

doi:10.1017/S1537592710001234

The ultimate result of that breakfast was what we came to call "the DOC project"—for Dynamics of Contention—which produced a number of articles, written together, separately, and with other collaborators;[4] dissertations written by a number of talented graduate students;[5] and the book we called *Dynamics of Contention.*[6]

In that book; dissatisfied with the compartmentalization of studies concerning strikes, civil wars, revolutions, social movements, and other forms of struggle; we tried to identify causal mechanisms that recur over a wide range of contentious politics. Second, we were critical of single actor models that prevailed in the field, and third, we deliberately shifted attention to dynamic interaction among challengers, their targets, and relevant third parties. Skeptical that large, complex series of events (such as revolutions) conform to general laws, we broke them into smaller episodes from many parts of the world, using a logic of paired comparison within each chapter to tease out important variations in present or absent mechanisms that drove the episodes in one direction or another. We closed the book by disaggregating revolutions, nationalism, and democratization into what we took to be recurring mechanisms and tried to lay out a general program for the study of contentious episodes wherever they occur.

In the intervening years, the study of contentious politics has grown substantially. Our purpose in this essay is to reflect on this growth—and on our role in it. Such reflection is occasioned not simply by the passage of time, but also by the passing of our colleague, Chuck Tilly. As we contemplate moving forward our common research program in his absence, it seems especially useful for us to stand back from this research program and assess its contributions and limits.

Dynamics of Contention

When it appeared in 2001, *Dynamics of Contention* was hardly greeted with universal acclaim by the fraternity of social movement scholars. Given how critical we were of so many fundamental aspects of this scholarship, this tepid response was scarcely surprising. True, *DOC* was the subject of an authors-meet-critics panel at an APSA conference, of a symposium in *Mobilization,*[7] and of several discussion venues in the fields of sociology and social history. And it will be the subject of a ten-year anniversary symposium—again in *Mobilization.* But the critics—particularly within the social movement fraternity—were largely unconvinced by our arguments.

Scholars with sunk intellectual capital in a particular approach are always hard to convince, but part of the fault was our own. Instead of working out our theory carefully and putting it forward with a minimum of illustrations, saving the empirical applications for future work,[8] we foisted on our readers a 387-page book with eighteen case studies (count them!) arrayed across a range of regime capacities and regime types,[9] twenty-one pages of references, and a catalogue of over twenty mechanisms, many of which we tossed off with little attempt at explanation or operationalization. Some critics were especially upset that we "ended up with a long and open-ended list of dozens of mechanisms, which are not meaningfully related to one another within a broader theoretical framework."[10]

Yet, like the influence of our late and much-lamented collaborator (and in large part because of his towering reputation) *DOC* refused to go away.[11] And while social movement scholars were less than unanimous in their acclaim, the book continues to be widely cited in both political science and sociology and has struck a chord even in areas far removed from our expertise, like the sociology of education.[12] *DOC*'s influence on less proximate areas of research was exactly the kind of response for which we had hoped. For in undertaking the project, we had a number of goals in mind. These included:

- Encouraging a broader, interdisciplinary conversation regarding the dynamics of contention;
- Stimulating more comparative work on contentious politics, particularly outside the democratic West and in other historical epochs;
- Reaching beyond social movements to the largely distinct literatures on revolutions and civil wars; and
- Moving away from static, variable-based accounts of struggle to examine the dynamic processes and mechanisms that shape concrete "episodes of contention."

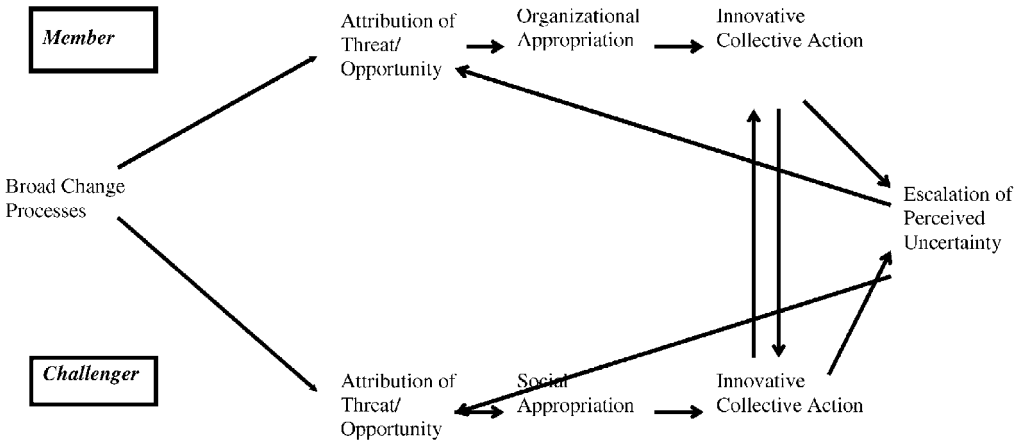
Mechanisms and Processes

As we look back on the near-decade since *DOC* appeared, we see progress on several of these fronts. There has been a remarkable proliferation (surely not all of it due to *DOC*'s impact!) of interdisciplinary work in the broad area we called contentious politics.[13] There has been an increasing volume of work on contention in other times and places, a few "footbridges" constructed between social movement research and scholarship on civil wars,[14] and slow but steady progress in specifying the role of dynamic mechanisms and processes in shaping contention.[15]

The latter progress has been particularly satisfying. Our friends from the rationalist persuasion were way ahead of us in insisting that political dynamics are best understood when they are seen as driven by mechanisms.[16] This distinguished their work from the correlational approach that had come to dominate the social sciences, especially once they began to apply game theory to unravel complex historical episodes. But because the rationalists insisted on a dogged methodological individualism, we thought they specified mechanisms too narrowly. We worried that their accounts only recognized mechanisms that pass through people's heads—what we called "cognitive mechanisms"—giving short shrift to two other kinds of mechanisms: environmental mechanisms, like resource

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592710001234 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 1
A dynamic, interactive framework for analyzing mobilization in contentious politics



depletion or enhancement,[17] and relational mechanisms, like brokerage.[18]

Environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms, we argued, combine into processes. A key theme of our book was the need to move beyond the narrative historical approach to explaining historical processes that has come to be called "process tracing."[19] We thus argued that historical episodes of contention can be systematically analyzed by disaggregating them into their constituent mechanisms and re-aggregating them as processes such as mobilization, scale shift, democratization, and revolution.

Three brief examples will illustrate the kinds of pedagogical claims we were making, drawing from the literatures on civil war, civil rights, and transnational contention.

The American Civil War: In friendly polemic with Barry Weingast,[20] we maintained in *DOC* that the onset of the American Civil War could best be understood as the concatenation of these three kinds of mechanisms. Weingast had focused specifically on Congress, and particularly on the breakdown of the Congressional bargain whereby the entry of new slave states to the Union would be balanced by the entry of an equal number of free states. The War, we maintained, resulted from a broader set of mechanisms: It occurred against the background of an *environmental* mechanism (the massive antebellum shift of population and voters from North to the new West), through a *cognitive* mechanism (the widespread interpretation of southern vs. northern westward expansion as a zero-sum game between slave agriculture and smallholder farming), and a *relational* mechanism (the brokerage of a coalition between free-soil seeking Westerners and antislavery Northerners to form the Republican Party). By focusing narrowly on the incentives of members of Congress, we felt, Weingast missed the importance of these broader mechanisms.[21]

Civil rights: A second example came from the history of the civil rights movement. Building on McAdam's previous work,[22] we sketched a dynamic, interactive framework for analyzing mobilization based on a series of interlocking mechanisms—the attribution of opportunity and threat, the social appropriation of existing organizational resources, and innovation in the forms of collective action.[23] And rather than focus only on the social movement, as most previous work had done, we insisted on the relations between authorities and challengers. Figure 1 outlines the interactive approach we took, which we strove to apply to all of the episodes we examined.

Transnational contention: Third, in subsequent work inspired by our collaboration with Tilly, we deepened the analysis of diffusion—a standby in the social movement literature, but one that usually focuses on horizontal diffusion from one actor or territory to another. We argued that some diffusion in some settings helps to shift the level of contention to higher or lower levels.[24] This was a distinction with a difference. While diffusion extends the geographical, social, and political scope of particular forms of contention at the same level, scale shift takes it into new venues, leads to encounters with different interlocutors, and may lead to either a greater or a lesser degree of intensity of conflict.

Our work on scale shift also gave us a new and different slant on what some were calling "global" social movements—the shift of scale from domestic to transnational politics.[25] For rather than seeing transnational movements as "global" and distinct from their domestic cousins, we saw them as extensions of domestic social movements and therefore impossible to understand apart from domestic opportunities and constraints.

Of course, our catalogue of mechanisms (many of them applied to fifteen different episodes and presented without empirical verification) was bound to leave many

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592710001234 Published online by Cambridge University Press

readers unsatisfied. And because these mechanisms intersected both with each other and with different empirical contexts, they would of course have divergent effects—a frustrating admission to those who were looking for general covering laws. Moreover, the mechanisms we introduced were bound to trigger the resentment of scholars who knew the episodes we sketched far better than we did. At the same time, our insistence on focusing on mechanisms, and on specifying those mechanisms in ways that went beyond the methodological individualism of the rationalist canon, struck a positive chord with many researchers.

Between Contention and Convention

But not all the news is so encouraging, particularly with respect to the ambition we had of bridging the study of nominally different forms of contention. For example, we hoped that scholars of civil wars would take seriously our focus on mechanisms such as escalation, scale shift, and brokerage. But Stathis Kalyvas, in his justly-praised book on civil wars, only took notice of the approach we employed to dismiss its relevance to violent conflict,[26] as if violence involved a completely different set of mechanisms than non-violent conflict.

Another discouraging example: Many students of the terrorist wave after 2001 returned to the reductionist social psychological models we were at pains to discard in *DOC,* rather than drawing on the findings from social movement research. A third disappointment was that our sometimes-labored paired comparisons of episodes of contention did not encourage very many scholars to go beyond the single country case studies that abound in the social movement literature.

What disappointed us even more was that *DOC* had little impact on the vast industry of election studies, particularly in the United States. We should not have been surprised. Because our emphasis was on the more disruptive forms of contention, we gave little attention to elections. But since elections and social movements are the two major forms of political conflict in democratic systems, our inattention to the connection between the two fields was a serious lacuna in *DOC,* as it is in the entire broad field of contentious politics. Few studies have examined the impact that citizens' protest behavior has on electoral outcomes.

Let us be clear: We do not claim that students of social movements never mention elections, nor that electoral scholars invariably ignore social movements. For example, a rich literature has developed on the "election corruption movements" that challenged several former state socialist governments and threatened others since the collapse of the Soviet empire.[27] Similarly, sociologists like Ron Aminzade, Edwin Amenta, and Jack Goldstone combined the study of disruptive protest with electoral contention in their historical narratives.[28] And scholars in the survey research tradition have analyzed the relations between conventional and unconventional political behavior.[29] More recently, students of American political behavior, like Daniel Guillion, have examined how citizens' unconventional political actions influence electoral outcomes.[30]

Our concern is that the relations between social movements and elections have seldom been specified in a systematic way that could set us on the road to predicting how movements affect elections and vice versa. We illustrate this with two of the most important studies on elections and movements to appear in the last 20 years in the United States and Western Europe: Adam Przeworski and John Sprague's *Paper Stones*[31] and Hanspeter Kriesi and his collaborators' *The Politics of New Social Movements in Western Europe.*[32]

In their book, Przeworski and Sprague examined the situation of working class parties in Europe early in the 20th century. These parties confronted an electoral dilemma: They could not come to power based on the demographic strength of the working class alone. As a result, they softened their electoral programs to appeal to an interclass constituency, in particular, to elements of the middle class and the peasantry susceptible to joining the workers in demanding structural changes to capitalist societies. As the authors write, "The quest for electoral allies forced socialist parties to de-emphasize that unique appeal, that particular vision of society, which made them the political expression of workers as a class, an instrument of historical necessity."[33]

Although some social democratic and labor parties did eventually come to power in some European countries, this was at first in times of war or crisis and usually in coalition with centrist or center-right parties. Why were these parties unable to translate their interclass appeals into political power? Przeworski and Sprague propose that softening their working class appeal in order to attract elements of the middle class and the peasants alienated those parts of the parties' working class base that sought fundamental change in class relations, leading these one-time supporters to either defect to extreme leftwing parties, abstain from electoral participation, or vote on the basis of other criteria—such as class, region, or ethnicity.[34]

Although we could quibble that Przeworski's and Sprague's deductive model failed to fit the electoral history of this or that European country (for example, the British Labour Party was *born* as an interclass party and the Italian Socialists depended from the beginning on a large peasant base), a more fundamental problem was that the concept of the working class *movement* was never specified in their book. While parties were specified as agents with electoral appeals, workers remained an amorphous principal, whose members responded to class appeals when this was the way socialist parties framed political conflict and responded to other framings when they did not. The

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592710001234 Published online by Cambridge University Press

concept of a working class movement, buttressed by organizational structures, a popular culture, and historical traditions was absent from their account.[35]

Scholars in Western Europe have been more careful to look at movements in relation to parties. In the vanguard were Hanspeter Kriesi and his collaborators. These scholars put forward a model of political opportunity structure for "new" social movements that included four components: "national cleavage structures, institutional structures, prevailing strategies, and alliance structures."[36] And rather than specifying these components statically (as if they were unchanging properties of each political system) they focused on both stable and changing elements of the political context—on "the short-term changes in political opportunities that may unleash political protest and that may contribute to its decline."[37]

Kriesi and his collaborators gave the party system a key role in determining whether and how social movements mobilize. They saw two main factors—the configuration of power on the left and the presence or absence of the left in government—as pivots around which movements maneuvered.[38] They argued that the mobilization of new social movements depends, among other things, on the degree of fragmentation of the party system, on the configuration of old and new left, and on whether the left is in or out of power.[39] But Kriesi and his collaborators were not as clear about the impact of elections *qua* elections on the reciprocal relations between movements and party systems.

Of course, parties contest elections, and so it might be assumed that by specifying class/party relations, both Przeworski and Sprague and Kriesi and his collaborators were tapping into election/social movement interactions. But as decades of electoral research in both Europe and America have shown, few citizens are deeply engaged in the party system as such. For most people, it is the proximate influence of the electoral *campaign*—and not the party system—that provides signals that guide them on public policy issues,[40] that tells them how to judge the political elite, and that identifies potential coalition partners.

Conversely, elections are occasions on which parties are made aware of the presence and strength of social movements and can change course in order to appeal to those constituencies. This suggests the need to specify the relations between election campaigns and social movements without reducing the former to aspects of the party system, as Kriesi et al. did, or reducing the working class to working class voters, as Przeworski and Sprague seem to have done.

We did not confront this double problem in *DOC*. That book's single-minded focus on the more disruptive forms of collective action left little room for elections or for movement/electoral interactions. This is a gap that we recognized and have begun to address in a recent paper that focuses empirically on the history of political contention over race in the American electoral regime.[41] In that paper, we try to show how in the history of civil rights in America, different mechanisms linked racial issues to electoral campaigns and electoral outcomes. Here, using examples (many taken from that paper), we illustrate these mechanisms and extend them briefly to the relations between the US peace movement and American elections in the last decade.

Six Linkage Mechanisms

We begin by specifying the mechanisms that we think link movement actors to routine political actors in electoral campaigns. We distinguish six such mechanisms and processes, but will focus on only three of them in our empirical example to follow:

- Movements introduce new forms of collective action that influence election campaigns.
- Movements join electoral coalitions or, in extreme cases, turn into parties themselves.
- Movements engage in proactive electoral mobilization.
- Movements engage in reactive electoral mobilization.
- Movements polarize political parties internally.
- Shifts in electoral regimes have a long-term impact on mobilization and demobilization.

Transferable innovations: Lacking commitments to voting blocs or institutional responsibilities to tie them down to the existing repertoire of contention, social movements are free to use innovative methods. These innovations can then be adopted by party campaign organizations—often in more institutionalized forms—as electoral tools. In fact, electoral campaigns often provide umbrellas under which social movements legitimately mobilize and apply collective action forms and frames that have grown out of more contentious interactions. For example, African-American politicians in the 1960s and 1970s drew on framings from the civil rights era to develop an electoral base.

Taking the electoral option: Movements frequently turn into political parties. At the extreme, we can even speak of *movement states*—that is, movements that came to power via elections. Of course, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy are not examples that movement scholars care to remember. But people often forget that the Republican Party, now seen as a bastion of unrequited conservatism, was born in the 1850s as an electoral offshoot of the abolitionist movement. Short of full-blown movement states, movements turning to the electoral option can exert considerable influence over domestic politics by running for office. The Greens came to political prominence in Europe in exactly this way.

Proactive electoral mobilization: Proactive electoral mobilization occurs when movement groups become active in the context of an electoral campaign. This is one of two general processes that Blee and Currier documented in

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592710001234 Published online by Cambridge University Press

their innovative ethnographic study of the behavior of social movement groups in Pittsburgh in the run-up to the 2004 presidential election.[42] Those groups who saw in the election either a "threat" or an "opportunity" to advance group interests increased their activity levels. On the other hand, those that perceived the election as largely irrelevant to their identity and mission as progressive grass roots groups remained inactive during the campaign. Although it is not generally remembered this way, the celebrated 1964 Freedom Summer project in the US civil rights movement was in fact another instance of proactive electoral mobilization. With an eye to the 1964 presidential election, organizers used the project not only to "freedom register" black voters, but to challenge the seating of the lily-white, regular Mississippi delegation at the Democratic Convention that summer.[43]

Reactive electoral mobilization: Reactive electoral mobilization involves escalating protest in the wake of an election. Although not unknown in democracies—consider the rash of protests in Florida in 2000 in the wake of the Bush/Gore standoff—this process is far more common in non-democratic countries, where voter intimidation and electoral fraud are more widespread.[44] Indeed, disputed elections have become one of the most common catalysts of protest movements in non-democratic states. In 2009 the Iranian elections were contested by the supporters of the opposition to President Ahmadinejad, resulting in the most vigorous and extensive street confrontations since the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979.

Movement/party polarization: As Zald and Berger argued long ago, movements are frequently formed within parties and other organizations.[45] Over the century or more since the advent of fully-fledged mass politics, there have been repeated splits within major political parties. As once-radical parties moved towards the median voter, leftwing leaders representing dissatisfied sectors of their electorates split off to either form new parties, buttress themselves within the labor movement, or descend into more violent forms of contention.[46] This was evident in a number of European countries in the 1960s when leftwing parties broke away from the main socialist party homes to form smaller and more radical socialist parties. Numerous instances of movement-inflected party polarization have also occurred in the US. Far and away the most consequential was the abandonment of the Democratic Party by southern "Dixiecrats" in response to what they viewed as the growing influence of the civil rights movement within the Party. Long the most loyal of Democrats because of their animus toward the Republican Party ("the Party of Lincoln"), the wholesale abandonment of the Democratic Party by southern whites in 1968 effectively dismantled the New Deal coalition and ushered in 40 years of Republican dominance in presidential politics.

Oscillations of electoral regimes: Over a longer time frame, processes of mobilization and demobilization are set in motion by enduring shifts in electoral regimes.[47] Consider the history of presidential politics in the 20th-century United States. We tend to think of the White House as the object of intense competition between the two parties every four years. And certainly the amount of time, energy, money, and verbiage spent on the campaigns reinforces this view. But seen through a long-term historical prism, things are not as competitive as the popular view would have us believe. All of the presidencies of the 20th century can be grouped into three generally stable electoral regimes:

- 1900–1932: Republicans dominate. Only Woodrow Wilson (1900–1932) interrupts the string of six Republican presidents.
- 1932–1968: Democrats dominate. Of the five presidents to serve during this period, only one, Dwight Eisenhower (1952–60), is a (centrist) Republican.
- 1968–2008: Republicans again dominate, occupying the White House for 28 of the 40 years of the period.

What does this have to do with social movement activity? *Everything*. The onset and solidification of an enduring electoral regime in the United States powerfully conditioned the prospects for successful mobilization by all groups in society. The period of Democratic dominance in the middle decades of the century was marked by the rise of the labor movement, considerable popular support for socialist and other leftist groups, the rise of the civil rights movement and, later, the full flowering of the New Left protest cycle. And the Reagan years saw the rise of the Christian right, the brief effervescence of the militia movement, a strong and sustained pro-life movement, and rising anti-immigration sentiment. The same may be happening in the Republican Party today.

Movements and Elections in the US: From Seattle to Obama

This takes us to the current conjuncture of movement/electoral interaction. While it would be hazardous on the basis of a single election to predict a realignment of American politics, we would submit that the 2008 election of Barack Obama only makes sense in the light of social movement activity, from the global justice movement born in Seattle at the turn of the new century to the anti-Iraq war movement of 2002–2004 to the grass roots, Internet-based movements to support the Howard Dean (2004) and Obama (2008) campaigns. These developments exemplify several of the mechanisms we outlined earlier linking movements and elections: (1) innovative techniques that were transferred from movements into election campaigns, (2) proactive movement mobilization, and (3) movement/party polarization.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592710001234 Published online by Cambridge University Press

First some background: As most of our readers will know, in the postwar period (1945–1970) the two major parties were stable political organizations, governed by a centrist, pragmatic electoral logic. In policy matters the parties were virtually indistinguishable in their preferences on the three most important issues of the day: Cold War foreign policy, civil rights, and the expansion of the welfare state. Movements in this period were few and far removed from the parties. As a result, scholars in the 1950s and 1960s often used the United States as their paradigm of a stable, pragmatic political system.[48]

The turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s began to change all that. Today the parties are not so much stable organizations as broad umbrellas under which various constituencies—including mobilized social movement wings—co-exist in uneasy alliances. As important components of the two parties, movements have challenged the centrist electoral logic that defined the parties in the postwar period, injecting extreme partisan ideologies and a concern for single issues into electoral politics. Candidates for office are now as likely to come from movement backgrounds as from recruitment through normal party channels, and public officials increasingly appear in traditional venues for protest demonstrations, like the steps of the US Capitol.

Over the past decade, a particularly rich interaction between movement politics and the electoral arena can be seen between the "global justice" movement of the turn of the century, the Dean campaign of 2004, and the Obama victory in 2008. A brief sketch of some of the critical turning points in this trajectory will help to place some of the mechanisms we outlined above in their contemporary context. First, the "quiet" of the period of the 1990s was broken in the latter part of that decade by a new wave of transnational protests, both in the United States and elsewhere, but the terrorist bombings of September 11, 2001 stilled much of this new wave of activism.[49] Then the advent of the Iraq War in early 2003 stimulated a revival of the classical American peace movement, turned global justice activists to antiwar activities, and led to the creation of a new wave of movement organizations.[50]

Those changes passed under the radar of most students of elections, but as the authors we cite below have argued, they had profound importance for the electoral process. First, the Dean primary campaign of 2004 injected a "movement-like" logic into the Democratic party, and Dean's loss of the nomination to John Kerry left many activists with a taste for political combat. Following this, the 2006 congressional campaign and, even more so, the primary campaign of Barack Obama revived the fortunes of the left, at least temporarily. Then Obama's 2002 opposition to the Iraq War and his careful embrace of peace-leaning themes helped to engage the energies and the expertise that had grown out of the peace movement. Finally, Obama's partial embrace of Bush-era policies on detention and his continuation of the Afghanistan war left many activists disillusioned. Whether this will produce a new movement/party polarization, it is too soon to tell.

At least three of the relational mechanisms we sketched above can be seen helping to drive this sequence of events:

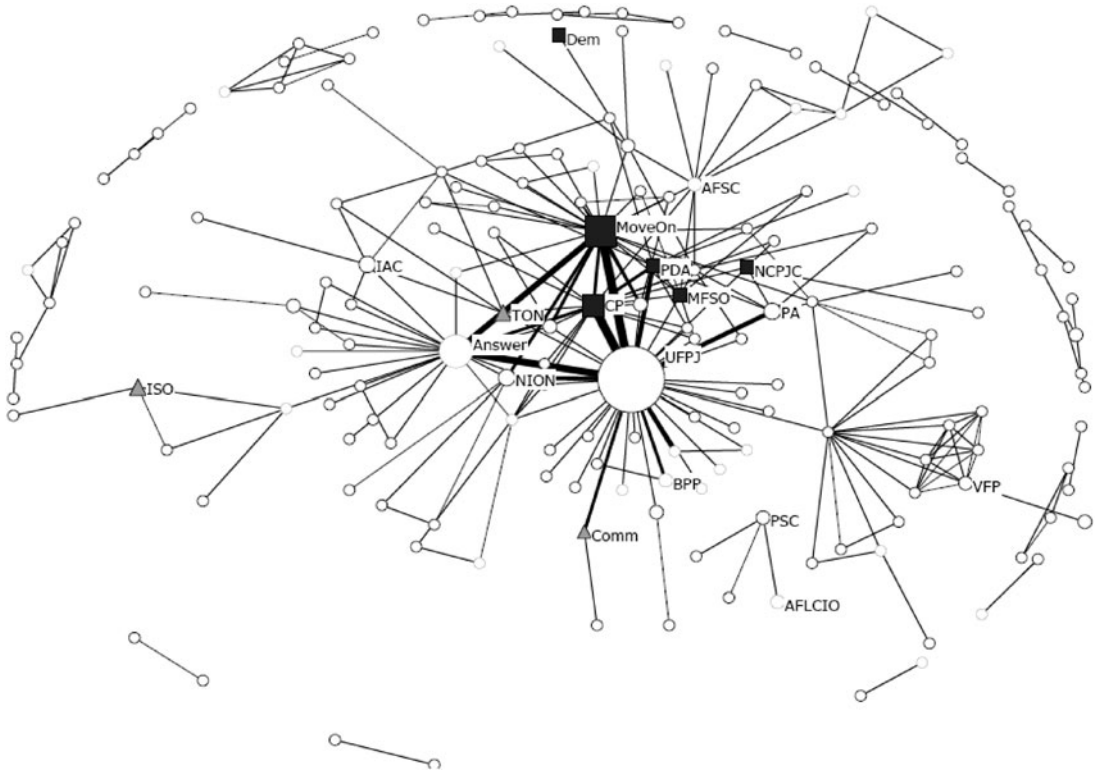
Innovative political performances: First at the anti-WTO "Battle of Seattle" and then elsewhere, the global justice movement injected a series of grassroots innovations in the social movement repertoire.[51] While European politics have been increasingly "Americanized," American politics have been increasingly inflected with new forms of movement activity, many of them revolving around mixtures of on-line and off-line mobilization.[52] Groups like Indymedia also demonstrated the use of the Internet for movement mobilization. This was brought to a new level of sophistication by MoveOn.org, which developed the practice of sending out e-mails with then-rare action-oriented links. As Thomas Streeter has noted, "Instead of just an electronic version of traditional political mailings, or links of the 'click here for more information' variety, Moveon's links enabled the reader to *do* something, such as sign a petition, send a letter to a politician, or vote on a policy direction."[53]

MoveOn first employed this interactive technique to support the senatorial campaign of Paul Wellstone in 2002, as the group was making its transformation into an anti-war organization. The method was then picked up by early blogger Jerome Armstrong, who directed people to a "Meetup for Dean" website. It was not long until Joe Trippi, an experienced Democratic operative who had joined the Dean campaign, picked it up to raise unprecedented amounts of money for the Dean operation.[54]

The major innovation was the capacity of Dean supporters to use the Internet to locate and meet other Dean supporters face-to-face.[55] Dean's labeling of himself as the representative of the "democratic wing of the Democratic party" was a deliberate attempt to attract younger voters, activists from the antiwar movement, and Democrats who were demoralized by the centrist trend in Democratic Party politics.[56]

The Obama campaign was quick to learn from the innovations of the MoveOn/Dean movement. "Ever since the TV era began in 1960," noted Trippi, "every single presidential campaign in America has been top-down. Only two have been bottom-up. One was Dean. The other is Obama."[57] Not only did Obama adopt Dean's fifty-state strategy; his organizing was greatly enhanced by new technologies like YouTube, Facebook, and MySpace. "We pioneered it and Obama perfected it," Trippi remarked.[58] Interestingly, neither the powerful Hillary Clinton organization nor the once-unstoppable Republican Party machine was able to absorb the lessons of the MoveOn/Dean model of grassroots campaigning.[59]

Figure 2
Network of antiwar activists, 2004–2005



Notes: Each shape represents one organization. Lines are co-contacts between organizations with thicker lines representing more contacts. Squares are organizations that lean Democratic; triangles lean toward a third party, and circles have no statistically significant lean. Source: Michael Heaney and Fabio Rojas. 2007. "Partisans, Nonpartisans and the Antiwar Movement in the United States." *American Politics Research* 35(4): 431–464, 442. Reproduced with permission.

Proactive electoral mobilization: Since the late 1990s, the proportion of Americans participating in protest activities increased overall, particularly among younger generations of voters.[60] These younger voters do not, however, flee from the party system, as might be supposed from earlier generations of activism. While many issue activists prefer to work outside the two major parties or turn to third parties, on the basis of their antiwar movement research Heaney and Rojas argue that "others recognize the potential to achieve their objectives through one or both of the major parties."[61]

In the past ten years, movement activists have increasingly mobilized in the electoral arena, broadly defined. This has included: (1) presidential campaigns that have been more movement-like than in the past, (2) the use of local elections (e.g., school board elections) to further movement aims, and (3) frequent recourse to ballot initiatives as another movement tactic. For example, after 9/11 brought intensified surveillance activities of movement groups by the federal and state governments, a Bill of Rights petition campaign rapidly diffused across the country.[62] This campaign began among small groups of progressive activists in New England but spread remarkably quickly to mainstream cities and regions of the country—unlike traditional models of diffusion across contiguous boundaries. When the antiwar movement began to expand in late 2002 and early 2003, activists began to turn to electoral venues in many of these communities.

The interpenetration of the antiwar movement with the party system emerges clearly from the research of Heaney and Rojas. Their surveys of antiwar activists show that individuals identifying themselves as Democrats were more likely to participate in a major lobbying campaign against the Iraq War than other members of the movement.[63] They conclude that "a sizeable percentage of social movement activists maintain dual loyalties to the movement and to a major political party," which they characterize as "a party in the street."[64] Figure 2 reproduces the network analysis carried out by Heaney and Rojas of 2529 antiwar activists between August 2004 and September 2005. It shows two major nodes of antiwar activity: one of them close to third parties (mainly the Greens) and the second closer to the Democratic Party.

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Movement/party polarization: As public anger at the September 11th attacks gave way to the patriotic fervor of the early Iraq War, antiwar activists faced a dilemma: Oppose every aspect of the rush to war and the public would condemn the movement as un-American; support the war and peace supporters would become despondent and wither away. The solution of the main trunk of the antiwar movement, a coalition called "Win Without War," was to embrace nationalist identities, when such identities presumably had wide resonance with a US public under unprecedented attack by outside terrorist forces. Woehrle, Coy, and Maney, in their study of peace movement organizations, found a persistent attempt by movement leaders to "harness hegemony"—as opposed to "challenging hegemony."[65] They conclude that "in the hyperpatriotic and repressive 9/11 period, PMOs harnessed nationalist ideas from the dominant symbolic repertoire to a greater extent than during other conflict periods."[66] The result was a relative *de*polarization between the symbols of the peace movement and the arguments of the Democratic Party.

But as the misrepresentations of the Bush-Cheney administration about weapons of mass destruction became ever more evident and the body bags began returning from Iraq—and especially after the disclosures of torture at Abu Ghraib—the antiwar movement gained a second wind and began, in Woehrle et al.'s words, "challenging hegemony." As long as Bush-Cheney remained in the White House, the movement uneasily occupied the same terrain as the Obama campaign. But once the election ended with an Obama victory, a process of polarization began slowly to set in. As James Dao wrote in late August 2009 in the *New York Times*:

> Anticipating a Pentagon request for more troops [in Afghanistan], antiwar leaders have engaged in a flurry of meetings to discuss a month of demonstrations, lobbying, teach-ins and memorials in October to publicize the casualty count, raise concerns about the costs of the war and pressure Congress to demand an exit strategy."[67]

At first blush, the mobilized power of the movement "wing" of an ascendant party would seem to be a wholly positive factor for those newly elected. And properly managed, the presence of mobilized movement supporters can aid and abet a party in power. The Obama website "Organizing for America" is an attempt to transform the campaign's movement wing into a collateral support base for government policy.[68]

But there is an inherent tension between the logic of movement activism and the logic of electoral politics that, at times, has compromised the ability of incumbent parties to retain power. Electoral politics turns on a centrist, coalitional logic. Movements, on the other hand, tend toward narrow—sometimes extremist—views and an uncompromising commitment to single issues. The threat here is as obvious as it is ironic. As a party attains power and hews to the center—as the Obama administration has already done—it runs the risk of setting in motion internal party dynamics corrosive of the centrist stance that was key to victory in the first place.

Some Conclusions

Using but one sector of movement activity—the antiwar movement after 9/11—in only one country—the United States—we have tried to indicate some crucial ways in which social movements and elections interact. It would take an entire book—perhaps a library of books—to demonstrate the same connections for other American movements or for movements and elections across the globe. In our companion paper, for example, we seek to show the workings of all six mechanisms in the history of racial politics in the US since the Civil War.[69]

But there are many examples of these dynamics. In his work on ethnic and racial protest in the United States, Guillion offers numerous examples of how such "unconventional political action" affected elections, executive decision-making, and elections.[70] In India, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is polarized between movement activists who provoke riots against Muslims in order to increase the vote of Hindus for their party and party organizers who want to transform the party into a catch-all organization appealing to moderate voters.[71] In Bolivia, as Carew Boulding's work demonstrates, the ascendancy of President Evo Morales and his Movement for Socialism has been closely linked to proactive social movement and NGO mobilization.[72] And in their forthcoming study of the "electoral model" of movement mobilization against semi-authoritarian regimes, Bunce and Wolchik demonstrate the role of foreign intermediaries (both state and non-state actors) in transforming movement mobilization into electoral strategies.[73]

Our goal here has not been to carefully analyze such situations or to furnish a full-blown theory, but, more modestly, to expand our work with Tilly on *Dynamics of Contention* into an area—movement/party relations—to which we gave far too little attention. We have also tried to suggest ways of bridging movement and electoral scholarship. We close with only the briefest summary of work in progress and with evidence that others are building more bridges between these two lively areas of scholarship.

First, an older tradition—historical statistical analysis in the mode of Stein Rokkan[74]—has recently been reinvigorated in American political science. Acemoglu and Robinson argue that suffrage expansions can be explained as an attempt to avoid revolution,[75] and Adam Przeworski has argued that such innovations seldom erase elites' advantages but "may leave enough room for the voters to assert themselves against all the [elites'] manipulation, to make their will prevail under the constraints."[76]. While neither

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study touches on social movements per se, their approach may allow us to see how electoral regime changes, like expansions of the suffrage, affect real or potential social movement activity.

Second, the original Columbia tradition of studying voting decisions as "embedded" social phenomena has been revived and improved upon by a group of scholars drawing on the insights of social network theory.[77] This work bears a strong family resemblance to the rich tradition of social network research in the social movement field,[78] affording another potential bridge between the two fields. In both fields of inquiry, nominally individual forms of political behavior have been shown to be powerfully shaped by ties to others. Heaney and Rojas' network analysis, cited above, is an example of the kind of linkages that may be demonstrated by network approaches to movements and elections.

Third, both electoral and movement scholars have begun to pay serious attention to the Internet as a tool of mobilization. The success of the Dean primary campaign in 2004 and the Obama primary and presidential campaign in 2008 both showed how movement activists can be mobilized into electoral politics through strategic use of the Internet. Movement and electoral scholars are close to pooling their resources to examine how the Internet may be erasing the boundary between movement activism and electoral politics.

We have already cited evidence of how technological innovations linking offline and online activism migrated from MoveOn's movement activities into the electoral arena. Others (for example, Lance Bennett's group at the University of Washington) are exploring the innovative claim that the Internet is not only an innovative form of communication but a new form of social movement organization, which is easily transferable to the electoral arena.[79]

The forms of movement/electoral interaction we have proposed above were induced from our work and that of others on contemporary national political systems, particularly the United States. In work in progress, both authors are trying to draw on our experience with *DOC* to specify and elaborate movement-like mechanisms in cognate fields. For example, McAdam is examining the politics of contention in local struggles over the siting of environmentally controversial infrastructure projects, while Tarrow has been investigating the parallels in the mechanisms of contention between episodes that vary as widely as revolutions and counter-terrorism.[80]

We have also spent a good bit of time since the publication of *DOC* trying to address the daunting challenges that confront those who would adopt the *DOC* program of research.[81] Here are two of the issues that emerged from that project:

The Internet and sustained social movements: In our work on "scale shift,"[82] we wondered aloud whether the wide range of Internet-based diffusion of contention has the same qualities as the narrower but more interpersonal diffusion more commonly studied in the diffusion literature.[83] The cost of the greater extension of Internet-based diffusion may be to lose the sustaining quality that social trust offers to more direct diffusion among people who know each other. If true, the Internet may produce more easily triggered episodes of contentious politics—for example, in the electoral arena—at the cost of sustained social movements.

Electoral politics and political violence: A second issue relates to the relationship between electoral politics and political violence. While social movement scholars have focused predominantly on western reformist movements, the biggest growth in collective action in the world today is in the area of political violence. Like the study of social movements, the study of political violence is seldom related to elections. Yet much of this violence occurs in authoritarian systems in which elections—however flawed or corrupted—take place and in some of which a process of democratization has been set in motion.[84] If reformist movements in representative systems influence elections, is there a contrary relationship between elections and political violence in authoritarian systems?

We do not have answers to offer to these questions, but in the spirit of this "Reflection" and of the *DOC* program in general, we would like to challenge scholars of electoral and movement participation, especially outside of the US, to confront such questions together as they seek to examine the links between movements and elections in very different political systems. As we do so, we envision our late mentor, friend, and collaborator, Charles Tilly, smiling wryly as we take up the Big Questions he left unanswered.

Notes

1 The conference produced a collective volume, *Challenging Authority,* edited by Tilly's former students, Michael Hanagan, Leslie Page Moch, and Wayne te Brake. It also was the venue of an infamous product by the authors and Ron Aminzade called "No, no, catnet: Charles Tilly and the practice of contentious politics."
2 McAdam 1999 (first published in 1982).
3 Tarrow 1989.
4 Our thinking about these matters is indebted to the colleagues with whom we worked in the "contentious gang" at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Ron Aminzade, Jack Goldstone, Elizabeth Perry, William Sewell Jr., and a group of talented then-graduate students. We are also grateful to Phil Converse for his faith in the project and to Bob Scott for patiently tolerating its sometimes interminable conversations at the Center. Although *DOC* received more attention and greater criticism,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592710001234 Published online by Cambridge University Press

two other products of that project were extremely important in our program's development: Ron Aminzade, *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (2001), and Jack Goldstone, *States, Parties and Movements* (2003).

5 Many of these students were part of the "contentious gang" at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. Much of their work is represented in Goldstone 2003.

6 McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001.

7 *Mobilization* 2003.

8 Part of the reason for this was the impatience of our mentor/collaborator to get on with other projects—of which there were many. For Tilly's list of books and articles subsequent to the publication of *DOC,* go to the SSRC website at www.ssrc.org/essays/tilly/resources. As he was fond of saying of the 1996 conference in his honor: "If that conference was a plot to get me to retire, that plot failed!"

9 See the figure on p. 80 of *DOC.*

10 Koopmans 2007,700. Unperturbed by the critics' impatience, Tilly once quipped, "McAdam is busily trying to build a bridge to other approaches. Tarrow is standing on the bridge, and Tilly is attempting to blow it up."

11 As of November 2009, Google Scholar listed 1,679 hits for the search terms "dynamics of contention + mcadam".

12 Binder 2002; Grindle 2004.

13 Google Scholar lists 6,400 hits for the search term "contentious politics", improbable until we consider that the term "social movements" elicits 377,000. Tilly first began using the broader term in his 1995 book, *Contentious Politics in Great Britain,* and 2,770 of the 6,400 "hits" for the term are associated with his name in Google Scholar.

14 Although emerging from the rational choice tradition, the work of civil war scholar Nicolas Sambanis bears a family resemblance to the perspective of *DOC.* See especially, Sambanis and Zinn 2003.

15 *Qualitative Sociology* 2008. For example, a forthcoming issue of *Mobilization* (Spring 2011) will feature a review and critique of the influence of *DOC* and of similar work in the general area of contentious politics.

16 See, for example, Bates et al. 1998; Elster 1989; and Hedström and Swedberg 1998.

17 McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, 25.

18 Ibid., 26.

19 George and Bennett 2005.

20 Weingast 1998.

21 McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, Chapter 6.

22 McAdam 1999.

23 McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001, 44 ff.

24 McAdam and Tarrow 2005.

25 Tarrow 2005.

26 Kalyvas 2006, 22.

27 Beissinger 2007; Bunce and Wolchik forthcoming.

28 Aminzade 1993; Amenta 2006; Goldstone 2003.

29 Barnes et al. 1979; Cain, Dalton, and Scarrow 2003.

30 Guillion 2009.

31 Przeworski and Sprague 1986.

32 Kriesi et al. 1995.

33 Przeworski and Sprague 1986, 50.

34 Ibid., 51.

35 Bartolini and Mair 1990.

36 Kriesi et al. 1995, xiii-xiv.

37 Ibid., xiv.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid., 80.

40 Selb et al. 2009.

41 McAdam and Tarrow forthcoming.

42 Blee and Currier 2006.

43 McAdam 1988.

44 Bunce and Wolchik forthcoming.

45 Zald and Berger 1978.

46 Della Porta and Tarrow 1986.

47 Tilly 2007.

48 Almond and Verba 1964; Lipset 2000.

49 Hadden and Tarrow 2007.

50 Cortright 2004; Meyer and Corrigall-Brown 2005.

51 Graeber 2009; Wood 2003.

52 Lipset 2000.

53 Streeter 2007, 7.

54 Ibid., 8.

55 Ibid., 9. See also Cornfield 2004, 69–80.

56 Karpf 2009a.

57 Quoted in Berman 2008, 2.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.; Karpf 2009b.

60 Caren, Ghoshal, and Ribas 2009.

61 Heaney and Rojas 2007, 433.

62 Vasi and Strang 2009.

63 Heaney and Rojas 2007, 446.

64 Ibid., 453.

65 Woehrle, Coy, and Maney 2008, 61–62.

66 Ibid., 164.

67 Dao 2009, 12.

68 For the link to "Organizing for America" go to barackobama.com.

69 McAdam and Tarrow forthcoming.

70 Guillion 2009.

71 We are grateful to Ron Herring for pointing out this interesting extension of the scope of our mechanism of party/movement polarization.

72 Boulding 2010.

73 Bunce and Wolchik forthcoming.

74 Rokkan 1970; Bartolini and Mair 1990.

75 Acemoglu and Robinson 2000.

76 Przeworski 2008, 23.

77 Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987; Zuckerman et al. 2007.
78 Diani and McAdam 2003; Gould 1993, 1995; McAdam and Paulsen 1993.
79 For a general outline of the work of Bennett and his collaborators on the relationship between the Internet and "civic engagement" visit http://ccce.com.washington.edu/.
80 Both projects are in their infancy, but readers with a curiosity for seeing a scholar attempt to expand the scope conditions of a existing paradigm might be interested in Tarrow 2009.
81 McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2008; McAdam and Su 2002; Tilly and Tarrow 2007, appendix A.
82 McAdam and Tarrow 2005.
83 Givens, Soule, and Roberts forthcoming.
84 Cederman, Gleditsch, and Hug 2009.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592710001234 Published online by Cambridge University Press