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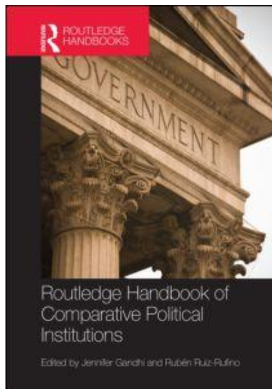

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POLITICAL MOBILIZATION AND INSTITUTIONS

Erica Chenoweth

Mobilization is a process by which passive individuals become active participants in social life by pursuing popular collective action toward a defined set of claims, interests, or goals (Tilly 1978).[1] Mobilization can take various forms ranging from protests to civil resistance to revolution to armed rebellion. It can also occur in various degrees of organization, from more spontaneous contentious episodes such as riots to direct actions coordinated by social movement organizations.

Scholars from various disciplines—primarily sociology and political science—have taken up mobilization, contentious politics, social movements, and civil resistance as primary objects of study. To many, mobilization is a process that people undertake when other alternatives (e.g. political parties, legislative representation, legal representation, and the like) are either blocked, compromised, usurped by other interests, or otherwise unavailable. The so-called Color Revolutions, in which mass protests erupted in response to alleged electoral fraud in semi-democracies, epitomize this take on mobilization (Tucker 2007; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Beissinger 2007). The Arab Spring, in which mass mobilization took place in many countries with few formal, legal channels for competitive political expression, provides another example. And in Europe, transnational, countermajoritarian institutions such as the European Central Bank or the European Commission have been important in generating public discontent and mobilization. In the latter case, citizens were organizing against agendas that they perceived as not legitimated through democratic processes. Thus one conventional view is that political mobilization occurs outside of formal institutions, and that mobilization is essentially a substitute for malfunctioning institutions (e.g. Özler 2013; Goodwin 2001). As Clemens argues, "Groups marginalized by existing political institutions have an incentive to develop alternative models of organization" (1993: 755). As such, we would expect the highest levels of mobilization to occur in times and places where widespread grievances prevail and few formal institutions exist through which to channel these grievances.

Yet one of the most interesting insights produced over the past five decades of scholarship is that mobilization is often quite common in countries with many formal, legal, viable institutions. Advanced democracies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany experience exceedingly high levels of mobilization—often in quite radical and disruptive forms—despite the existence of multiple, overlapping, and highly functional political, social, and economic institutions. Why do so many people pursue extra-institutional action when they have many institutional alternatives by which to express their grievances?

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This puzzle has motivated a wealth of scholarship focusing on more specific institutional arrangements in attempts to better understand why mobilization occurs in spite of institutions—as well as why different institutional arrangements might produce varying levels of mobilization (for a useful overview of competing approaches, see Amenta and Ramsey 2010). The primary theoretical argument comes from political opportunity structure (POS) approaches, which argue that mobilization occurs where it can, and that institutional contexts either constrain or create space for popular collective action. Most of this scholarship has been preoccupied with the question of how institutions affect mobilization, placing institutions as the independent variable. A smaller body of scholarship also examines how mobilization has affected formal institutions—particularly party politics, electoral practices, and legal frameworks. And numerous scholars have looked at both movements within institutions and institutions within movements as fruitful objects of inquiry.

In this chapter, I identify 14 consensus propositions regarding links between institutions and mobilization. I present these fourteen findings as testable hypotheses because while they are often taken for granted, further empirical testing is required to evaluate their robustness across a wider number of cases and historical periods. I then describe three major barriers to identifying more general causal patterns, including (1) a lack of conceptual precision in defining relevant "institutions" as objects of study; (2) a lack of global data on protest and mobilization that could yield generalizable empirical findings; and (3) a historical tendency to overgeneralize findings from a small number of Western cases. I conclude the chapter by suggesting a few substantive and methodological practices that may advance our collective understanding of relationships between these concepts.

The effects of political institutions on mobilization

The dominant institutional perspective on political mobilization is the POS approach. Broadly speaking the POS approach argues that both grievances and resources are inadequate to explain patterns of mobilization, since the ability to mobilize is often facilitated or constrained by the political and institutional environment in which the grievances occur. McAdam operationalizes political opportunity using four key indicators: the openness of the formal institutions, apparent divisions within the elite, elite alignments in government, and the state's willingness and ability to use repression (1996, 1999; see also Jung 2010: 27–8). Proponents of political mediation theory suggest that political party systems can affect the types of challengers that emerge, while the specific structures and policies of those states both help and hinder the challengers (Amenta and Zylan 1991: 250; Amenta 2006). In general, the broadest claims about institutional POS relate to differences across regime types, although scholars have also examined institutional variation within democracies (and, increasingly, autocracies) to see whether and why patterns of mobilization shift.

Regime type: democracy vs. autocracy

The most basic studies emphasize somewhat static structural attributes—such as regime type—to explain collective protest behavior. For example, POS approaches would expect a higher level of actual mobilization in democratic countries than in authoritarian regimes, since democracies are more open and tend to permit greater freedom of expression, assembly, and petition than authoritarian ones (Eisinger 1973). Indeed, Corcoran *et al.* (2011) indicate that political regime type (i.e. democracy vs. autocracy) strongly influences would-be activists' likelihood of mobilizing in protest activities. Using cross-national data from the World Values Survey, they find that people who express self-efficacy—or one's perceived ability to influence one's environment through personal action—tend to engage in collective action behaviors more often than people

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who express fatalism—or a sense of personal helplessness with regard to one's surroundings. In general, activists in democracies are more likely to see collective action as efficacious, whereas activists in less democratic societies are more likely to experience a sense of fatalism and, therefore, lower motivation to mobilize to pursue their interests. However, they also find that even citizens that express high levels of efficacy in less democratic countries are not as likely to engage in collective action as citizens in democratic systems. This may be because the personal risks to collective action are higher in societies where political institutions are more exclusive and repressive against political dissenters.

One of the most influential studies of protest patterns in democracies is Sidney Tarrow's 1989 work identifying different phases of the Italian protest cycle between 1965 and 1975. Using protest data gleaned from Italian newspapers, Tarrow identifies a prototypical protest in democratic regimes, which features relatively large and widespread yet disorganized collective action, the development of a more organized movement centralized by movement entrepreneurs, and subsequent repressive episodes and/or concessions. The movement then splits or fractures, participation declines, and the movement becomes more decentralized. Perhaps at this stage, a second generation of more radical members develops, calling for more radical behaviors as the different segments of the movement compete for a smaller market share of potential supporters.

Tarrow's analysis thus yields a variety of observable implications about contentious politics within democratic regimes. Importantly, however, Tarrow's study only evaluates a single case—Italy—which was a democracy throughout the period under study. Cross-national research, such as a recent study by Jung (2010), compares protest cycles across Western European countries while evaluating the impact of political opportunity over the course of the protest cycle. She finds that whereas political opportunities such as favorable government partisanship (especially right-wing parties in power) and increasing electoral competition can increase the likelihood of new social movement protest cycles, such factors do not well explain the decline of mobilization. Instead, she argues that protest cycles tend to end because of (1) the institutionalization of the social movement, or over-organization; and (2) internal competition within social movement organizations, which lead some members to radicalize and use violence, thus accelerating the demobilization process.

These insights yield two general propositions:

1. Democracies experience more mobilization than nondemocracies.
2. The interests represented among mobilizers in democracies are more diverse than those among mobilizers in nondemocracies.

Dichotomous distinctions between democracy and nondemocracy cannot explain the timing of waves of contentious politics, nor can they explain variation in mobilization patterns across democratic states. They also cannot explain mobilization in nondemocracies or hybrid regimes—a category of regimes attracting increasing interest since the end of the Cold War (Levitsky and Way 2010; Robertson 2010; Bunce and Wolchik 2011). These remaining puzzles have led scholars to evaluate the effects of political party configurations, electoral rules, and executive institutions on mobilization opportunities.

Political party configurations

Some recent scholarship has focused on the nature of movement demands as well as the composition of the government—particularly the configurations of political parties in power when the mobilization occurs (Goldstone 2003).

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Within democracies, the partisan orientation of the polity parties in power appears to be crucial. In their study of variation in the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, for example, Soule and Olzak (2004) find that states were more likely to ratify the amendment in response to mobilization when the states were highly electorally competitive, had historically adopted civil rights legislation in the past, and possessed Democratic Party allies in the state legislature. They also find that public opinion mattered—that ratification was more likely to occur where public opinion polls revealed higher tolerance for progressive social and economic roles for women. Essentially, mobilization for the Equal Rights Amendment was only effective in states that were already predisposed to this legislation—especially because of the representation of political parties that were ideologically aligned with the movement's goals.

Patterns of movement-allied party mobilization may vary by the institutional structure of the system. In the United States, leftist groups may mobilize more when Democrats control the Congress or the presidency because of high degrees of party fragmentation in the legislature. In Western Europe, on the other hand, leftist parties are most active when right-wing governments are in power. Kriesi, *et al.* (1995) argue that new social movements (comprising anti-war, environmental, gender, and LGBT-based movements, for example) are expected to be the most active when leftist political parties are in opposition. Even when leftist parties are in power, however, scholars expect some low levels of movement activity because extra-institutional mobilization is a feature of leftist political ideology, not just political opportunity per se.

In Western Europe, right-wing challengers, on the other hand, tend to mobilize the most when leftist parties are in power. Giugni *et al.* (2005) examine extreme right-wing protest in several European countries and find

> a clear negative correlation between electoral strength and the proportion of protest actions: the lower share of protests occurred in France, which is also the country with the strongest extreme-right party and the highest in Germany, which does not have a strong party.
>
> *(Giugni* et al. *2005: 157)*

Giugni, *et al.* emphasize the "discursive opportunities" that political marginalization provides to would-be mobilizers. Exclusion from the political process creates discursive opportunities for the movement to occupy a unique position in the polity. As such, lack of electoral representation through ideologically similar parties may produce higher levels of protest. This suggests that when right-wing parties are in power, extreme right-wing groups will not mobilize. When they do, however, they will do so using radical repertoires (Giugni *et al.* 2005; Koopmans 1993).

Taken together, these results suggest the somewhat counter-intuitive finding that leftist parties in power often face the most protest with the greatest variety of contentious challengers, whereas right-wing parties in power tend to face a high level of new social movement protest only (see also Jung 2010). This yields a third consensus pattern:

3 Leftist parties tend to face the highest level of mobilization, comprising both moderate leftist and extreme right challengers.

In authoritarian regimes, there is more controversy regarding the role of formal opposition parties. To some, the presence of formal opposition parties within autocratic legislatures may reduce mobilization, since most opposition activity is represented through such channels and such parties protect their positions within government by discouraging contentious collective action outside of approved channels (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor 2014). Others suggest that the presence

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of formal opposition groups helps to carve out and defend space for contentious politics, while increasing the capacity of challengers to engage in high-risk collective action (Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Robertson 2010). Often such mobilization is met with counter-mobilization, thereby producing cycles of upheaval within such regimes—particularly during or after elections (Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Robertson 2010; Tucker 2007). These observations point to two contradictory, testable hypotheses:

4 Autocracies with formal opposition parties face lower levels of mobilization than autocracies without formal opposition parties.
5 Autocracies without formal opposition parties face lower levels of mobilization than autocracies with formal opposition parties.

Such effects may vary considerably based on whether the autocracy is organized as a monarchy, military regime, personalist regime, or single-party regime (Geddes 1999; Geddes *et al.* 2014)—an area ripe for future research.

Electoral rules, legislative institutions, and executive institutions

The most comprehensive analysis examining the effects of electoral rules, party systems, and executive institutions on civil protest is a recent comparative study by Özler (2013). The key finding is that presidential systems are more prone to mobilization than parliamentary systems, that majoritarian systems are more likely to produce protest than proportional representation systems, and that political party fragmentation is associated with greater protest.

Presidential systems tend to feature more fragmented legislatures with less party discipline. As presidents attempt to form patronage relationships with individual legislators to advance their goals, citizens may resort to protest to recapture the attention of legislators. Parliamentary systems feature higher degrees of party discipline due to coalitional dynamics and the direct accountability of the executive to his or her coalition government. Thus citizens need not resort to short-term signaling such as mass protest to enforce accountability Özler (2013).

Majoritarian systems feature the highest levels of party fragmentation due to the fact that they typically produce two "catch-all" parties that aggregate many disparate interests. Thus multiple social cleavages overlap within each party, suggesting that voters can rarely select a party that meets all of their political, economic, or social demands. They may therefore press for these interests using collective protest. In proportional representation systems, on the other hand, voters can select political parties that align more closely with their particular interests, enhancing the degree of personal representation the voter perceives and lowering incentives to engage in costly collective action. Özler finds support for these propositions using cross-sectional data on 90 countries between 1978 and 2002.

The general relationships found by Özler (2013) do not hold in all cases. For example, in their study on changes in patterns of contentious politics over time in Switzerland, Hutter and Giugni (2009) identify Switzerland as a "weak state" in the sense that it has a "federal structure, proportional representation, multiparty coalition government with fairly undisciplined parties, weak public administration, and the presence of direct-democratic instruments" (430). They then argue that weak states such as Switzerland tend to facilitate social movement mobilization but that those movements tend to adopt a moderate "action repertoire" since the structure encourages institutionalized protest strategies rather than confrontational or extra-institutional ones (ibid.).

Of course, Hutter and Giugni's concept of "state weakness" is slightly different from others' conceptions. The latter identify Swiss institutions as weak because largely legitimate state

institutions have a light footprint, whereas more typical conceptions of state weakness focus on state capacity to internalize citizen demands, remain intact while managing crises, and quell ongoing dissent through limited uses of repression (Beissinger 2013; Hendrix 2010; Skocpol 1979). For example, Goldstone's (1991) seminal study on the origins of revolutions suggests that the simultaneous occurrence of financial crises, elite fractionalization, and population growth leads to mass mobilization, as state institutions fail to cope with increasing citizen demands and elite fractionalization signals to citizens that mobilization will be efficacious.

Still other studies argue that the institutional context affects social movements differently depending on their level of access to various stages of the legislative process and the tendency of legislators to select movement issues as worthy of attention. For example, in their study of the woman suffrage movement, King *et al.* (2005) find that mobilization can affect the likelihood of an issue appearing on the legislative agenda, but that at "each successive stage of the legislative process" there are "increasingly stringent rules" that limit the impact of social movement activity (1211). As a consequence, "legislators responded to suffragists by bringing the issue of woman suffrage to the legislative forum, but once suffrage bills reached the voting stage, differences in social movement tactics and organization did not have as great an impact" (1211).

This finding is related to Wisler and Giugni's (1996) institutional selection theory, which argues that political institutions tend to favor certain types of movements and constrain or exclude others. Movements that are seen as "pro-institutional" rather than "counter-institutional" may be more likely to successfully frame their issues to fit within existing discourses, allowing legislators to incorporate movement demands into the institutional process (85).

Nonetheless, in general, we can observe several consensus patterns:

6 Presidential systems experience more protest than parliamentary systems.
7 Majoritarian systems experience more protest than proportional representation systems.
8 Democracies with high levels of political party fragmentation experience higher levels of protest than democracies with lower levels of political party fragmentation.
9 States with low capacity experience higher levels of protest than states with high capacity.

Institutions and repression

A vast literature exists that evaluates the impact of repression and concessions on social movement behavior (e.g. Khawaja 1993; Lichbach 1995; DeNardo 1985; Rasler 1996; Davenport 2007; Moore 2000; Alimi 2009; Francisco 2009, 2010, among others). Few of these works specifically evaluate the ways that political institutions might alter incentives to engage in repression vs. concessions. Conventional wisdom suggests that in most democracies, restrictions on the executive lead to less repression and fewer violations of rights. Yet Davenport (2007) argues that the so-called "law of coercive responsiveness"—or the tendency of states to respond to mobilization with coercion—applies equally to democracies and nondemocracies. In fact, Della Porta (2006) and Davenport (2007) have argued that democracies can be exceedingly repressive toward social movements. Other scholars, however, have found that at least some features of democracy—particularly the requirement that officials maintain office through popular elections—may constrain the severity of repression (Carey 2006; Conrad and Moore 2010). Hence the consensus is that democracies may involve lower risks for those mobilizing with regard to repression, but risks remain in democracies nevertheless.

Insights from this literature suggest that mobilization in democracies is more likely to experience some level of accommodation, at least partially.

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10 Although some level of repression is assured regardless of regime type, protest in democracies is more likely to be accommodated than protest in nondemocracies.

In turn, partial concessions are likely to satisfy many citizens, reducing their willingness to engage in costly collective action and thereby reducing the size of the movement (see also Jung 2010).

The effects of mobilization on institutions

Although most social movement studies are primarily concerned with the origins of mobilization, some have also examined how contentious politics have transformed into or otherwise affected conventional forms of political action, such as party politics, lobbying, union organizing, and legal action (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007: 652; Clemens 1993). In fact, Schneiberg and Soule (2005) see institutions as no more than political bargains that result from contested political processes resulting from mobilization, disruption, concession, and co-optation.

Despite the fact that grassroots organizing often features prominently in democratic elections, surprisingly little scholarship has focused on the impact of mobilization on elections. Yet Schneiberg and Lounsbury (2007) argue that social movements can often evoke controversy and debate, resulting in new items being placed on the agenda and new frames through which activists can press for reforms (654). Social mobilization has certainly directly affected the extension of the franchise to women and minorities, for example, which has directly affected the process and outcomes of elections. Neither the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution, which extended suffrage to women, nor the 1965 Voting Rights Act can be fully understood without considering the impacts of the suffragists and the civil rights movements, respectively.

McAdam and Tarrow (2010) introduce six potential ways that social movement activity can influence elections. They find evidence that at least three of these—particularly the innovation of new collective action techniques, proactive movement mobilization, and movement/party polarization—were at play in the 2008 election of Barack Obama. McAdam and Tarrow (2010) suggest that social movements often provide key innovations to political parties seeking to challenge status quo politics. Grassroots organizing and the use of social media to communicate with supporters for get-out-the-vote drives, for example, may be a key linkage between mobilization and party politics. And Tucker (2007) argues that mobilization often occurs in response to electoral fraud, which can serve as a focusing event that allows people to overcome free-rider problems typically associated with collective action see also Bunce and Wolchik 2011).

With regard to legislative decision-making, McAdam and Su (2002) examine the effects of anti-war mobilization on American congressional action. Relying on data sources from American newspapers, they find that protests that featured violence or property damage by demonstrators tended to increase anti-war voting but delayed the pace of congressional action. Large demonstrations, on the other hand, had the exact inverse outcome: whereas they tended to speed up congressional action, they also tended to lower the likelihood of anti-war votes (696). This finding is consistent with Gamson's (1990) seminal study, which finds that movements that employed more "violent" or disruptive tactics were more likely to achieve political success than movements that employed more passive or institutional tactics.

In its most extreme form, mobilization can actually lead to the disintegration of state institutions. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) find that campaigns of civil resistance against dictatorships, against foreign military occupations, or for territorial secession were more likely to succeed when they used disciplined nonviolent action, whereas using violence actually reduced movement participation and delayed progress. Most of Chenoweth and Stephan's campaigns occurred

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in nondemocratic regimes and involved highly disruptive (albeit nonviolent) methods of noncooperation, such as strikes, boycotts, etc. Most prior scholarship on the effectiveness of mobilization focuses solely on American politics—especially the American Congress in McAdam and Su (2002)—and solely on reformist goals—such as anti-war, anti-nuclear, civil rights, or labor disputes. The distinction between protest and campaigns of civil resistance is nontrivial because symbolic demonstrations may have lesser political effects than highly disruptive resistance campaigns.

In general, although there is some disagreement regarding the effects that mobilization has on specific policy outcomes, several authors have found that the post-communist regimes with the most "rebellious civil societies" also emerged as the most successful and robust democratic systems (Ekiert and Kubik 1998), and Tarrow (1989) argues that even the most disruptive episodes of contention ultimately strengthened Italian democracy. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) similarly find that countries in which nonviolent mass campaigns have toppled existing regimes are much more likely to emerge as democracies than countries in which violent insurgencies have taken place. Existing scholarship generally agrees that mobilization enhances citizen empowerment, clarifies issues of public concern and crystalizes consensus around them, broadens associational life (Putnam 1994), demonstrates to elites that civilian movements have the capacity to disrupt the existing order in a way that makes elites more responsive to their demands, and provides a direct mechanism through which civilians can threaten to "correct" formal politics through extra-institutional channels.

11 Nonviolent mobilization tends to enhance the liberalization of democratic institutions.

Movements within institutions, institutions within movements

One interesting line of inquiry concerns the direct interaction between institutions and social movements, either by focusing on how social movements become active within existing institutional structures or looking at how social movements organize their own internal structures.

Movements within institutions

Take the example of social movements that exist within organizations. Various scholarship has shown that social movement "infiltration" of status quo-based institutions can be critical to the ultimate success of the movements. Indeed, one of the key insights from campaigns of civil resistance is that the ability of activists to produce loyalty shifts among regime insiders is a major source of success for these movements (Sharp 2005). This is because outsiders often face severe legitimacy dilemmas that make existing institutions resistant to change. Only when people within those institutions begin to align with the movement and its demands might the institution begin to consider reforms (Sharp 2005; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

Interactions between the movement and institutions can be more subtle but equally as effective in bringing about social change. For example, LGBT movement activities in the workplace are thought to be critical to the ultimate successes of the LGBT movement. Activists used their status as insiders to evoke frames like civil rights, fairness and equality, and corporate social responsibility to discuss these issues with colleagues and supervisors. As Schneiberg and Lounsbury describe, they also

> used casual mentions of partners' gendered names when sharing experiences of mundane activities and enacted non-stereotypical behavior to challenge stigma. They also

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> employed narratives of discrimination or inequality to highlight hypocrisies, evoking understandings that everyday routines produce injustice, and activating listeners' identities as non-prejudiced persons
>
> *(Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007: 656–657)*

This process normalized the claims that the LGBT movement was making accelerating changes in public opinion on these claims.

12 Movements that provoke loyalty shifts within existing institutions are more likely to succeed than movements that remain institutional "outsiders."

Institutions within movements

Considerable interest also exists concerning how the organizational structure of social movements affects their behavior. One of the most pressing questions concerns the effects of organizational structure on the movement's selection of nonviolent or violent methods of contestation. Research by Asal *et al.* (2012) finds that ethno-political organizations in the Middle East are more likely to splinter if they possess a factional or competing leadership structure and use violence as a tactic. Wendy Pearlman's (2011) comparative research on the Palestinian national movements, the Northern Irish nationalist movement, and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa suggests that movements may be more enduring and disciplined when they enjoy organizational cohesion as opposed to fragmentation. Her research reveals that social movements that possess leadership, internal institutions through which norms and rules are diffused and enforced within the movement, and a collective identity and vision of the future are more likely to remain unified and nonviolent than movements that lack these attributes. Her qualitative research design allows us to better understand the direction of causality with regard to fragmentation and the use of violence. She finds that organizational cohesion preceded movement decisions to use nonviolent methods, whereas decisions to use violence followed periods of organizational fragmentation.

Additionally, a consensus has emerged that internal competition among social movement organizations may be heightened in democratic countries relative to authoritarian regimes (Chenoweth 2013; Jung 2010; Tarrow 1989). Social movements can compete in authoritarian contexts, but the pressures to engage in tactical innovation and radicalization are often even higher in democracies. In democracies, movements must compete directly with rival organizations, political parties, and interest groups while appealing to a dwindling base of potential recruits and continually justifying the movement's existence even while political parties press for reforms that satisfy movement moderates.

13 Fragmented social movements are associated with a higher propensity to use violence.
14 Social movements are often more fragmented in democratic countries than in authoritarian countries, particularly in later phases of the protest cycle.

Why don't we know more about institutions and mobilization?

So far, I have identified 14 claims regarding links between institutions and mobilization that many researchers now take for granted. However, few of these propositions have been tested empirically over a wide number of cases and historical periods, meaning that they are somewhat provisional and contradictory. Progress in identifying general causal relationships has been

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stymied by several trends in the field, including: (1) a lack of conceptual agreement in defining relevant institutions and mobilization as objects of study; (2) a lack of global data on protest and mobilization that could yield generalizable empirical findings; and (3) a tendency to overgeneralize findings from a small number of Western cases. I also identify some promising trends that may help the field achieve progress.

Conceptual ambiguity

Conceptual ambiguity about what constitutes an institution and what constitutes mobilization means that empirical findings must be interpreted with a great deal of conceptual precision and care.

On the one hand, definitions of "institutions" are often exceedingly broad. Within social movement studies, institutional analyses include everything from formal political institutions to economic class to civil society to the "deep linkages [that] help shape interests in society and provide (or deny) resources to contending social actors" (Houtzager and Kurtz 2000: 394). In fact, many social movement organizations are themselves institutions in a loose sense. On the other hand, rigid definitions of institutions, which limit the definition to formal, named institutions, are similarly problematic. Relevant institutions are seldom rigid and monolithic entities. Instead, they are known to be fluid, non-monolithic, and seldom (if ever) fully self-contained (e.g. Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2007: 656–657; Sharp 2005; Koopmans 2005). Indeed, one of the major sources of success for nonviolent mass campaigns in the twentieth century was the ability of participants to leverage relationships they had with people within state security institutions. Scholarship that appreciates relational links between social movement organizations and institutions is promising in this regard. This is true even in regard to relationships across and between the movements themselves. Transnational waves of contention, such as the 1989 Eastern European revolutions, the Color Revolutions, and the Arab Spring indicate processes in which social mobilization is replicated or emulated across borders, sometimes in fairly portable or "modular" form (Beissinger 2007; Bunce and Wolchik 2011). Focusing on such relational aspects is admittedly difficult (but not impossible) because such relationships are often opaque until after major upheavals—especially in authoritarian contexts. More focus on the relational attributes of social movements and institutions may help scholars to better understand complex outcomes, such as unforeseen mass defections from state institutions, sudden reforms, institutional concessions, or new episodes of mass contention.

Similar conceptual issues arise with regard to mobilization. General historical patterns that emerge from observing mass nonviolent campaigns for independence, for example, are not necessarily applicable to protest cycles in democracies. Many scholars treat mobilization as simply protest, whereas there are many varieties of mobilization, including nonviolent vs. violent mobilization, organized vs. spontaneous mobilization, intra-institutional mobilization vs. extra-institutional action, and grassroots collective action vs. formal opposition mobilization. There are also varying degrees of mobilization—from single protest events to full-scale revolution—that make comparing results across studies quite difficult. One fruitful way to proceed might be to focus on the number of participants engaged in collective action rather than on event counts.

Social movement scholars have long called for more inter-disciplinary discussion, particularly between political scientists and sociologists (McAdam *et al.* 2001). I reiterate this call here, primarily as a way to agree upon consistent nomenclature that scholars can use to delimit the scope of research claims. One of the barriers to progress is the failure to analyze comparable units of analysis, conflating protest, protest cycles, social movements, and campaigns of civil disobedience. In the literature, these concepts seem virtually interchangeable, but each is conceptually different.

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Lack of global data

A second frustration for scholars interested in this topic is the lack of reliable cross-national time series data that can be used to evaluate more general relationships. As a consequence of this, even quantitative analyses are often limited to cross-sectional data, which can identify associations between variables but cannot establish the directionality of causal relationships between them.

Fortunately, protest data do exist for some countries during some time periods, and new techniques for obtaining data have yielded several global data sets as well (e.g. Salehyan *et al.* 2012; Chenoweth and Lewis 2013; Asal *et al.* 2008). The existence of multiple protest data sets from different regions or cases may tempt analysts to construct more universal measures of mobilization. Scholars must use caution when using these data, however, for several reasons.

First, because researchers do not use identical sources or inclusion criteria when collecting these data, so the existing data are seldom comparable across cases or times. Banks *et al.*, for example, are the only global data on protests, strikes, and riots from 1955 to 2012, but this research team has relied on a small sample of newspapers to glean protest and strike data. Moreover, these data appear as annual event counts, with the unit of analysis being the country-year. Salehyan *et al.*, (2012) on the other hand, identify events data in Africa from 1990 to 2011, with the unit of analysis being the event itself. The Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) data set's unit of analysis is the campaign-year and includes both mass nonviolent and violent campaigns from 1946 to 2006; however, the campaigns are limited to maximalist campaigns of regime change, anti-occupation, or secession with at least 1,000 observed participants (Chenoweth and Lewis 2013). And an organizational data set, Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior (MAROB), uses the organization-year as the unit of analysis but is limited to ethno-political organizations in the Middle East from 1980 to 2004 (Asal *et al.* 2008). Newer global data sets, such as the Integrated Crises Early Warning System (ICEWS), use automated coding and therefore may contain a high degree of overreporting errors; such data sets may be better viewed as trends data sets rather than as events data sets (Ward *et al.* 2013).

Second, those using data on protest events should be aware that these events are often collected from newspapers, which feature several important reporting biases. First, there is a well-documented violence bias, meaning that events in which protestors use violence or create property damage are more likely to be reported than events that are purely nonviolent. Second, mainstream media posseses a protest bias, meaning that they report on large protests and demonstrations more than they report on strikes, forms of mass noncooperation, and withdrawal of support. This misrepresents contentious politics as protest alone, whereas social movements are often using hundreds of methods of civil resistance at once (Sharp 2005). Newspapers also tend to have national elite biases, meaning that reporters tend to interview government officials at the national level rather than ordinary civilians at local levels, meaning that narrative frames about contentious politics are often shaped by the state's view. Finally, newspapers often feature an urban bias in their reporting, meaning that rural activities often go unnoticed and unreported. To complicate matters even more, newspaper data across democratic and authoritarian regimes is often difficult to compare because of deliberate concealment of protest events in authoritarian regimes.

Focus on Western democracies, a small-n bias, and generalizability

A third limitation in the existing literature is the fact that most consensus findings about the relationship between institutions and mobilization emerge from small-n case studies, most of which involve comparative studies of Western democracies. Indeed, many of the most important insights from social movement studies are based on research on the United States, which is a

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natural laboratory for social movement studies because of the diversity of institutional arrangements across its 50 states. Although invaluable for theory-building, extending theory and empirical implications from a limited set of (relatively similar) cases is highly problematic (George and Bennett 2005).

In recent years, the exclusive focus on Western democracies as objects of inquiry has begun to change. The apparent increase in contentious politics practices within autocracies has led to more research on protest politics in hybrid regimes (Robertson 2010; Osa and Corduneanu-Huci 2003), emerging democracies (Ekiert and Kubik 1998), authoritarian regimes (Rasler 1996; Schock 2005; Kurzman 1996, 2004; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), and highly repressive systems (Martin 2007; Alimi 2009). However, problems remain with collecting data on and specifying both the independent variable (Gandhi 2008) and the dependent variable under authoritarian conditions.

Nonetheless, many of the testable propositions identified in the literature necessitate more in-depth looks into authoritarian contexts. Improved understandings of contentious politics in authoritarian settings will allow scholarship to move toward comparative institutional analysis and away from blunt and static distinctions between democracies and nondemocracies. Mobilization in authoritarian settings may also enhance understandings of the important distinction between movements and counter-movements. Indeed, in authoritarian regimes, the study of counter-mobilization is perhaps just as important as the study of mobilization, particularly as states create or encourage counter-movements to preserve their own popular legitimacy (Robertson 2010).

Conclusion

Mobilization—especially protest—has numerous direct causes. In fact, there is considerable heterogeneity in the type, scale, and scope of mobilization that occurs within different institutions. Do certain institutions cause more mobilization than others? Does mobilization affect some institutions more than others? The existing literature offers some provisional patterns that help us to understand why mobilization occurs despite the presence of institutional alternatives. It seems clear that while institutions do not predetermine whether mobilization will occur, the current literature suggests that institutions may shape the form, ideology, scale, or scope of mobilization. The most important remaining challenge for researchers is to better specify the conditions under which institutions matter, while acknowledging that they are often static or, at best, exceedingly slow-changing (Koopmans 2005). Although barriers to progress in the field have been considerable, improved understanding about the general influence that political institutions have on mobilization will take place as scholars refine and expand existing data to test these propositions on a wider array of cases and time periods.

Note

1 In this chapter, I refer to mobilization, collective action, protest cycles, and social movements in the ways that the various authors discussed refer to them. As a consequence, these terms appear somewhat interchangeable. However, as I mention in the conclusion, more conceptual precision regarding these terms in both theory and applied research would advance collective knowledge about each of these phenomena.

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