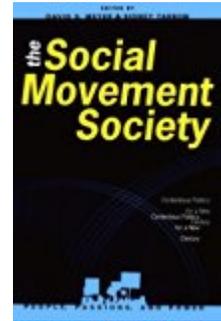


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Protest Politics: Institutionalization and Professionalization in the New Millennium

Protest Politics: Institutionalization and Professionalization in the New Millennium

This volume edited by Professor David S. Meyer and Professor Sidney Tarrow examines a very intriguing question: What is the nature and meaning of protest in advanced industrial democracies at the end of the twentieth century? Each of the articles in this volume analyzes this question from a different perspective. Some articles look at the prevalence and type of social protest while others investigate the reaction of governments and their agents to protest movements. This large variety of topics demands a wide assortment of methods. The methods in this volume range from the solidly quantitative to the intensely qualitative. This is not a criticism of the volume. Methodological pluralism is necessary when the topic contains so many dimensions. All of the articles address interesting theoretical issues and raise just as many questions as they seek to answer. This component of the volume makes it worth the effort. It can provide a rich source of questions on the nature of interest aggregation as democracies mature and move into the twenty-first century. This review briefly describes the contents of each article and then analyzes the conceptual and methodological approaches of the volume. It ends with an evaluation of the importance of these essays for understanding the way in which citizens relate to their government.

The volume begins with an article by Professors

Meyer and Tarrow that establishes the theoretical parameters of the topic. It looks at the various meanings of such concepts as protest and social movement and attempts to bring some coherence to the development of the topic. The authors do a very nice job of defining what they mean by institutionalization and identifying the factors that may lead to the institutionalization of protest politics in advanced democracies. They correctly, I believe, divide discussion of the issue into methodological and historical considerations. Methodological considerations deal with the practical concerns of actually studying the causes and dynamics of the social movement society while historical considerations address future trends in the development of social movements.

In Chapter Two, Professor Dieter Rucht analyzes the proliferation of protest in West Germany. He finds that the trend in West Germany is toward a "protest society" or a "movement society" because of the increase in the frequency of protests. He also finds that the number of violent protests is increasing. Professor Rucht's findings nicely set the stage for the work of Professor Matthew Crozat in the next chapter. The question here is whether or not an increase in the frequency of protest results in more acceptance of protest as a form of participation. Professor Crozat examines public opinion data from two decades to examine any changes in attitudes toward various forms of protest. While protest has become more widespread, attitudes have not kept pace. People have not become more accepting of protest even though their

societies participate in them more.

Professors John D. McCarthy and Clark McPhail look at the recent history of protests in the United States. They compare and contrast the practices of law enforcement officials in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic National Convention to current procedures. They find that the tactics of police have evolved from “escalated force” to “negotiated management” (p. 96). The comparison of the ’68 convention to the ’96 convention offers a unique opportunity to assess the evolution of law enforcement practices, although the inferences that can be made from such a comparison are limited. The authors do a fine job, however, of using these cases to develop a broader theory to explain the development of a “public order management system (POMS)” in the United States (p. 106). These inductions should provide students of social movements with various causal relationships to test and measure.

Professors Donatella della Porta, Olivier Filleule, and Herbert Reiter assess the cooperative strategies that develop between police and protesters, particularly in France and Italy. They apply the lessons learned in these countries to the situation in Latin America. They find that policing strategies evolve toward “mutual negotiation” rather than rely on the “menace of repression.” They note that such a trend only partly applies to Latin America. Police strategies for managing protest in these countries depend on the groups involved in the protest. Such selection raises an interesting question that occurs throughout the volume: If police use “mutual negotiation” with some groups and not with others, is it really protest in those cases where the movement has everything neatly arranged before hand with the police?

Professor Jan Kubik tackles a similar question in Chapter Six but focuses on the countries of Central Europe. The topic of social movements and their institutionalization opens up a variety of intriguing questions when asked in the context of emerging democracies in Central Europe. The important question addressed by this article centers on the desirability of protest in emerging democracies. Professor Kubik shows that protest itself can become a democratic institution and that emerging democracies need not forego protest to channel demands in a more “acceptable” fashion. Indeed, the institutionalization of protest, not its avoidance, may be necessary to ensure the long-term stability of the emerging democracy.

Professor Patricia L. Hipsher uses a “political process approach” to analyze how social movements develop and later become institutionalized. She looks at the cases of

Brazil and Chile to show that protest cycles occur as a response to changes in the external political environment. As the regime democratizes, the strategies of the movements conform to changes in the regime. Movements may or may not end up institutionalized in the regime depending on how political factors develop. This chapter richly describes the cycles of protest in Chile and Brazil during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The next chapter (Chapter Eight) tackles the difficult topic of actually governing. Social movements articulate demands but often have the luxury of never having to figure out how to create a government that can meet those demands. Professors Bert Klandermans, Marlene Roefs, and Johan Olivier rely on survey data of South Africans to measure generally the effect that success has on social movements. When a particularly large and impressive social movement achieves its aims and forms a government, supporters of the movement have the political terrain altered right under their feet (e.g. previous reasons for mobilization are lost or former enemies are now partners in governance). The authors find that despite substantive changes in the South African political terrain, the social movement society has not evaporated. Its persistence signals the need to look beyond simple political calculations when estimating the types of opportunities that draw individuals to protest movements.

Professor Mary Fainsod Katzenstein examines the assumptions at the heart of many of these chapters. Her questions focus on the meaning of institutionalization and the degree to which an institutionalized protest can claim the label of protest. She looks at these questions through the feminist movements in two distinct settings, both of which differ substantially on the dimension of institutionalization. Professor Katzenstein defines institutionalization of feminist activism as “the establishment of organizational habitats of feminists within institutional environments” (p. 197). The environments of feminists in the military and in the Catholic Church provide a marvelous opportunity to assess issues of “insider” and “outsider” in ways that mass movement literature often neglects.

The last chapter by Professors Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink outlines the components of transnational advocacy networks and show how they share many similarities with domestic movements. These networks do not necessarily have the same institutional shape as a social movement (e.g. they are highly mobile and represent principles more than concrete constituencies) but they do face issues of coordination and

organization. When they have overcome these obstacles, these networks have become significant players in political movements around the world. Scholars need to examine these networks because they provide a useful opportunity to theorize about the origins of movements and the connections between movements and state actors.

As I stated earlier, the range of issues and methods developed in this volume provides a little something for everyone. The volume does center on a few important issues so it is probably a little unfair to point out the issues that it neglects. However, I could not help but wonder throughout the volume how you would actually measure the effectiveness of protests and social movements. So many of the examples raised in the chapters rely on those movements that enjoyed a measure of success in bringing about some desired change (the 1968 protests in Chicago come quickly to mind). Yet so many social movements achieve little if any success in terms of actual policy change. Is there some other means for operationalizing success without connecting it to an actual policy outcome? A second issue has to do with the origin and training of so many of the actors in these social movements. The assumptions of some of the chapters seemed to indicate that these actors have very little to do with political parties or interest groups. When a particular political system faces challenges to the current configuration of institutions, it is easy to assume that the actors are from outside the traditional political institutions.

For example, political consultants in American politics now challenge the political parties for performance of particular functions. Some party theorists assumed that the rise of political consultants would undermine the party system. However, most of these consultants were trained and socialized within the very organizations that

the theorists said they would undermine. Cooperative arrangements between the parties and the consultants emerge because of this pattern of socialization. Perhaps the origin and training of elites within particular social movements bear some resemblance to this pattern.

I might also note that the pervasive assumption throughout the volume is that protest is universally good. The argument behind this assumption needs to be made explicit. The argument made in most chapters relies on a theory of democratic development and operation where social movements produce unmitigated good for the democratic order. However, it may not always be the case, particularly within various communitarian notions of democracy, that social movements produce such desirable outcomes. Finally, the ideas raised in this volume lend themselves to formal theorizing. Many of the chapters hinted at these theories when they addressed individual calculations for involvement or when they discussed issues of coordination between various agents. This approach was the only method not explicitly taken up in the volume and yet its assumptions permeate many of the theories developed in the chapters.

I found *The Social Movement Society* to be an intriguing collection of research. The book provides a solid and reliable foundation with which to begin to understand the profound changes that will affect democracies and democratizing regimes well into the next century. It also contains the kind of inter-disciplinary work that will increasingly characterize studies in these areas.

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