



FULLY
REVISED AND
UPDATED

SECOND EDITION

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

CHARLES TILLY & SIDNEY TARROW

Contentious Politics

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

SECOND EDITION

FULLY REVISED AND UPDATED

Charles Tilly & Sidney Tarrow

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States of America by
Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016,
United States of America

© Oxford University Press 2015

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Tilly, Charles.

Contentious politics / Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow. — Second revised edition.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-19-025505-3 (paperback)

1. Social movements. 2. Social conflict. 3. Political sociology. I. Tarrow, Sidney G.

II. Title.

HM881.T54 2015

303.48'4—dc23

2015005732

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

To Doug,
[Not so] Silent Partner

CONTENTS

List of Tables, Figures and Boxes *viii*

Preface to the Second Edition *xi*

PART ONE: Introduction

1. Making Claims 3
2. How to Analyze Contention 25

PART TWO: Repertoires, Regimes and Opportunities

3. Democracy, Undemocracy, and Change in Repertoires 49
4. Contention in Hybrid Regimes 75

PART THREE: Interaction and Mobilization

5. Contentious Interaction 97
6. Mobilization and Demobilization 119

PART FOUR: Movement and Lethal Politics

7. Social Movements 145
8. Lethal Conflicts 169

PART FIVE: Expanding Contention

9. Transnational Contention 193
10. Contention Today and Tomorrow 215

Appendix A: Concepts and Methods 235

References 245

Index 259

About the Authors 269

LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES AND BOXES

List of Tables

- 2.1 Modes of Suppression Employed by States and the Mass-Media 38
- 3.1 Types of Occupy Sites, September 17 to October 1, 2011 53
- 8.1 Number of Wars of Different Types Involving at Least a Thousand Deaths, by Decade, 1900–2007, and Number and Percentage of Total Killed in Civil Wars 182
- 10.1 “Occupy” and “Indignant” language in the mission statements of protesters in Europe and the United States 219

List of Figures

- 1.1 Ukraine, Crimea, and the Kerch Connection to Russia 6
- 1.2 Components of Contentious Politics 10
- 1.3 Protest Events in Germany, 1950–1990 18
- 2.1 Reported Killings of Black and White Teenage Men by Police, 2010–2012 27
- 2.2 African American Total Movement and Protest Events, 1946–1994 33
- 2.3 Sit-ins in the American South, February 1 to April 14, 1960 34
- 2.4 Sites of New Coordination 35
- 2.5 “Shantytown Protests” on American College Campuses, 1984–1990 42
- 3.1 Social Movement Actions in the United States, 1953–1980 51

3.2	Crude Regime Types	58
3.3	Freedom House Rankings for Selected Countries, 2012	66
4.1	Freedom House Rankings for Venezuela, 1972–2012	87
4.2	Protest Events in Venezuela, 1983–1999	88
4.3	Hong Kong Protests and Political Responses, August–December, 2014	92
5.1	Typical Actors in a Demonstration	99
5.2	Demonstrations and Violent Events in the Soviet Union and its Successor States, 1987–1992	105
6.1	Alternative Routes to Upward Scale Shift	126
6.2	Italian Contention, 1966–1973	129
6.3	Different Forms of Contentious Politics by Year in Guatemala, 1968–1984	132
6.4	Quarterly Presence of Reformist and Revolutionary Challenger Organizations in El Salvador’s Protest Events, 1962–1981	133
6.5	Rough Guide to the Pathways of the Arab Spring, 2011–2012	135
7.1	Oppositional Networks in Poland, 1980	151
7.2	Contentious Politics, Social Movement Campaigns, Social Movement Bases, and Institutions	159
7.3	News Events Initiated by Women’s Groups and Women’s Bills as Percentage of All Bills Introduced in the US Congress, 1950–1985	160
7.4	Typology of Transformations in Goal Orientations and Action Repertoires of Social Movement Organizations	164
8.1	Forms of Lethal Conflict	174
8.2	Ethnic Groups and Republic Boundaries in Yugoslavia, 1989	178
9.1	Number of Observer Nongovernmental Organizations to the UNFCCC	198
10.1	Income Inequality in the United States and Europe: 2000–2012	217
10.2	The Spread of “Occupy Wall Street,” September 17, October 1, 2011	218

- 10.3 Cities That Experienced On-Line and Off-Line Protests
in the Occupy Movement 221
- 10.4 Americans' Attitudes to Same-Sex Marriage, 1988 and 2012,
by Age Cohort 223

List of Boxes

- A.1 Major Descriptive Concepts in the Study of Contentious
Politics 236
- A.2 Major Explanatory Concepts in Contentious Politics 237
- A.3 Steps in the Mechanism-Process Approach to Explanation
of Contention 242

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

As the twentieth century ended and the new one was about to begin, the redoubtable David S. Meyer and I brought out a book that we hoped would reflect what the last few decades of research had taught us about contentious politics: that social movements had become ever more common since the 1960s; that this commonality was producing a growing familiarity with protest activity among ordinary people and their rulers; and that this general acceptance was leading—if it had not already led—to the routinization of contention—the rise of a *Social Movement Society* (1998).

Of these three claims, the first was correct; the second was partly right and partly questionable; and the third was clearly wrong. Although routine forms of protest like the public march and the demonstration continued to animate popular politics and to engage broader and broader sectors of the public, from the turn of the new century more intensive protests appeared in the United States, and more disruptive and more violent forms of contention began to explode across the globe. Not only that: governments—including the American government—were clearly not becoming better accustomed to dealing with protest and were developing more refined and aggressive forms of policing and surveillance.

Consider the following examples:

- In November 1999, thousands of demonstrators converged on the city of Seattle to protest against the meeting of the World Trade Organization, which they were certain would increase the growing inequality between the world's rich and poor.
- In September 2001 a group of Islamist militants took over four airplanes over United States airspace and flew them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, killing over 3,000 people.
- In Genoa, Italy, a few months later, police murdered a young man demonstrating against the G-8 conference that was meeting in that city.

- In 2002, in response to 9/11, the United States invaded Afghanistan, triggering ongoing civil strife both there and in neighboring Pakistan.
- A year later, a threatened American invasion of Iraq led to the largest peace demonstration in world history, with an estimated 16 million people attempting to stop the rush to war. As is well known, they failed, and the world is still reeling from the aftereffects of that invasion.
- In 2004 it emerged that Americans, under the unblinking eyes of higher officials, were routinely torturing Al Qaeda and other detainees in the prison of Abu Ghraib in Iraq and, as it eventually came out, in “dark sites” around the world.
- Also in 2004, a massive demonstration against a stolen election triggered a revolution in Ukraine, a former Soviet Republic that had gained its independence in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet empire.
- As we wrote, news began to break that the United States had developed an encompassing network of surveillance that was capable of sweeping up phone calls and Internet traffic from across the globe. This revelation was confirmed by Edward Snowden—a whistleblowing NSA contractor—in 2013.

Meyer and Tarrow’s book described the social movements they observed in the 1990s reasonably well. But like many other texts that grew out of the American tradition of contentious politics, *The Social Movement Society* specified the boundaries of contention too narrowly. That book analyzed a narrow spectrum of mainly-secular movements in the mostly-democratic countries of the global North during a period when the last major cycle of contention—that of the 1960s and 1970s—had declined and a new one had not yet begun.

The first edition of this book set out to examine a much broader range of forms of contention. In it, Charles Tilly and I attacked three analytical problems:

- First*, we believed that while social movements are a vigorous and important sector of contentious politics, they are not alone. Alongside and interacting with movements are riots, strike waves, rebellions, revolutions, civil wars, nationalist episodes, and ethnic strife—the kinds of episodes that we are increasingly faced with in the new century.
- Second*, we thought that if we wish to understand such phenomena, we will need a vocabulary for analysis that is narrower than the enunciation of general laws but broad enough to facilitate comparison among different forms of contention.

Third, forms of contention do not stand still: sometimes pacific forms of protest escalate into violence and revolutions; at other times violent forms of contention are normalized and give way to routine politics. We reasoned that studies that focus only on social movements are unlikely to capture those dynamics.

Contentious Politics argued that the best strategy in facing these three analytical problems was not to proceed movement by movement or episode by episode, but to identify the common mechanisms and processes—in different combinations, to be sure—that operate across the range of contentious politics and bring about change. This edition follows the same analytical strategy, but with some significant changes.

Since 2007, when we published *Contentious Politics*, the world has become even more contentious. Consider the following:

- In the United States in 2010 a conservative populist movement—the Tea Party—erupted against the policies and the person of the country’s first African American President, upsetting the internal equilibrium between moderates and conservatives in the Republican party and shifting the center of gravity of that party to the right.
- This was followed by the creation of a left-populist movement, Occupy Wall Street, which spread to street occupations in an estimated 180 cities around the United States and even abroad.
- At roughly the same time, beginning in Spain, what came to be called *indignados* movements diffused across Europe in protest against the draconian austerity policies that had been enforced on member-states of the European Union by the European Central Bank.
- In 2011, a wave of protest exploded against authoritarian governments in North Africa and the Middle East, leading to a military coup on Egypt, to civil wars in Syria and Yemen, and to a near-total breakdown of order in Libya. But as of this writing, despite the great hopes ignited by the so-called “Arab Spring,” a constitutional regime survives only in little Tunisia, where the movement began.
- A decade after the “Green Revolution” in Ukraine, which we wrote about in 2006, a new revolution ejected the country’s President; but this one led to a Russian takeover of the Crimea and to a separatist rebellion in the country’s east that continues as this preface is written.
- In mid-2014, students and democracy campaigners converged in a campaign for free elections in the city of Hong Kong, since 1997 under Communist Chinese rule.

- Later that year, police violence in Ferguson, Missouri, and Islamist terrorism in Paris, France, unleashed waves of peaceful demonstrations on the part of citizens outraged, in the first case, at what they saw as racial profiling and, in the second, in favor of free speech.

While making no attempt to “cover” all the major episodes of contention across the globe, this new edition draws on many of them to reinforce the message of the book. These range from the insurrections against Middle Eastern dictatorships to the civil strife and reactions that followed; from the “Occupy Wall Street” movement in the United States to the “Occupy Central” movement in Hong Kong; from digital contention and the struggle for same-sex marriage in the United States to armed conflicts on the border of the former Soviet Union.

After *Contentious Politics* was published in 2007, both authors continued to extend the approach they employed in new research and writing. Before he left us in 2008, Tilly published two key studies: *Regimes and Repertoires*, published in 2006, and *Contentious Performances*, which appeared two years later, shortly before he passed away. Sidney Tarrow has also been busy, publishing *Strangers at the Gates* in 2012, *The Language of Contention* in 2013, and *War, States, and Contention* in 2015, in honor of his late friend and collaborator. This edition draws on the recent work of both authors, expanding the horizons of the book beyond what we covered in the first edition.

This new edition will also draw upon the exploding number of specialized studies by other scholars in the broadening field of contentious politics by other scholars over the last decade in an effort to make them available to a student audience. It draws in particular on the work by Eitan Alimi, Javier Auyero, Donatella della Porta, Diana Fu, Michael Heaney and Fabio Rojas, and Neil Ketchley, none of whom has the slightest responsibility for the use I have made of their research. I am especially grateful to these colleagues for reading the parts of the manuscript that draw on their work and making sure I understood the nuances in the contentious episodes they describe. I also wish to thank Chan Suh, Yisook Lim, and Sarah and Susan Tarrow for their help in producing this edition of the book. Chris Tilly was an important source of moral support as I tried to catch up to the creativity and expertise of his father.

The book follows roughly the structure of the first edition, with theoretical propositions leavened by examples of empirical work and case studies in every chapter. Like the first edition, it does not stop with exposition: it regards the analysis of contentious politics not as an arcane art or an unattainable science but as a craft accessible to hard work and intelligent

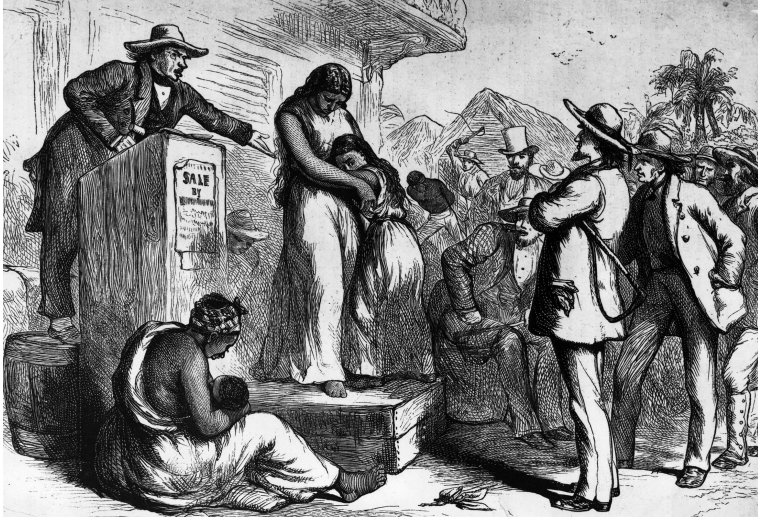
inquiry by students, as well as more senior researchers. There is also a new chapter that focusses on the global protests and transnational violence that have become an important feature of the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century. There is a new conclusion, which draws on three recent phenomena: the campaign for same-sex marriage, the movements that followed the financial crisis of 2008, and the use of social media for mobilization.

Sidney Tarrow
Ithaca, New York
February, 2015
Contentious Politics

Contentious Politics

PART ONE

Introduction



Circa 1830: A slave auction in America (photo by Rischgitz/Getty Images).

CHAPTER 1

Making Claims

When a young English divinity student named Thomas Clarkson won a Latin Prize with an essay on slavery at Cambridge in 1785, neither he nor his listeners imagined the effect it would have on slavery in the British Empire. But as he sat down at the side of the road on his way to London to take up a career as a Protestant minister, Clarkson reflected that if the horrors he had uncovered about slavery were true, “it was time some person should see these calamities to their end” (Hochschild 2005: 89).

Clarkson turned out to be that person. Together with a small band of antislavery advocates, he became the world’s first modern social movement organizer. He wrote thousands of letters, organized petition drives, and helped to launch the world’s first successful transnational movement. That movement eventually ended the vicious violence of the slave trade and led to the abolition of slavery around the Atlantic. It allowed English reformers to claim moral superiority over the newly independent but slaveholding United States. The antislavery movement went through many phases, suffered reversals during the repressive years of the Napoleonic wars, and required a savage civil war to end slavery in the United States. But it joined religious evangelicalism, the political emancipation of Catholics, and parliamentary reform to create the pattern of modern social movements in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England.

The movement that Clarkson and his friends started looks decorous and even conservative to us today. But they made their claims much as social movements still do. They stimulated the formation of committees, took out newspaper ads, encouraged the deposing of petitions, gathered evidence, and laid it before the House of Commons. Although the word *boycott* itself would not enter the language for another century, they

organized what was in effect a boycott of slave-produced sugar. Britain's antislavery activists also shocked the nation's conscience by displaying instruments of torture the slave owners used. In the process, they forged alliances with parliamentary and literary opponents of slavery such as William Wilberforce and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. They even sent Clarkson to help antislavery forces in France during the brief period when French republicans were interpreting the Rights of Man to include people of color (Drescher 1991).

It took almost twenty years for Britain's antislavery campaign to bring the Atlantic slave trade to an end and another three decades for slavery to end in Britain's colonies. But less than a year after Clarkson and the committee began their campaign, "Britons were challenging slavery in London debating societies, in provincial pubs, and across dinner tables throughout the country" (Hochschild 2005: 213). In the newly independent United States, opponents of the slave trade would eventually persuade Congress to make the trade illegal, and it took a civil war to end slavery in the South. Clarkson, his allies, his enemies, and public authorities on both sides of the Atlantic were building a social movement.

We could tell many different stories about antislavery. We could treat it as a moral tale showing what determination can accomplish in the face of difficult odds. We could think about it as an application of enlightened values, as an expression of religious zeal, or as English capitalists' attempt to promote free labor and free trade. We could see it as an early example of a transnational social movement, a phenomenon that has become important in this age of globalization (see chapter 9). Different observers of European and American antislavery campaigns have told all these tales, and more. Here we treat it as a dramatic example of *contentious politics*, of people struggling with each other over which political program will prevail. For another dramatic episode of contentious politics, fast-forward 228 years to the Ukrainian capital of Kiev.

THE UKRAINIAN FALL

In November 2013, a protest movement erupted against President Viktor Yanukovych's decision to cancel a long-planned agreement between his economically-strapped country and the European Union (EU). Yanukovych had been persuaded—his enemies would say “bought”—by Russian President Vladimir Putin to draw back from Europe by the inducement of a \$15 billion loan if his country joined a Russian-led trade group. European leaders responded that if Yanukovych accepted the

Russian offer, all bets were off for a Ukrainian link to the EU. Western Ukrainians—including most of the residents of the country’s capital, Kiev—were outraged by Yanukovych’s move. Protesters in Kiev soon occupied the “Maidan”—the city’s central square—evoking the country’s “Orange Revolution” of 2002 (Beissinger 2011). They called first for Ukraine’s association with Europe, then for an end to corruption, and increasingly for the President to resign.

Those protests were largely peaceful, and they soon “turned violent”—that is to say, the regime’s riot police turned on them, killing eighty-four protesters and arresting hundreds more. Outrage at the regime’s overreaction spread around the country and across Europe, and the Maidan occupation fell into a pattern of barricade building, police charges, occupation of government buildings, speeches by opposition politicians, and government warnings of fascist infiltration. What had begun as a largely peaceful protest movement rapidly militarized, with groups of young “hundreds” donning helmets and gas masks and carrying improvised shields against the increasingly ineffective, but no less brutal, police.

As the confrontations escalated, international actors mobilized on one side or another. In the West, French, German and Polish envoys tried to forge a compromise that would save Yanukovych’s face but give the protesters the link to the EU they wanted; in the East, Russian President Putin offered Ukraine a down payment on his promised loan and urged him to continue to stand fast against the protesters. The Russians then grudgingly agreed to the Europeans’ compromise proposal, but suddenly, as quickly as he had cancelled the original EU association deal, Yanukovych disappeared, only to reappear in the Russian Federation, claiming to have been overthrown by a coup d’état. (It later turned out that he had been abandoned by both army units and the special police forces on which he depended for his survival).

While the Maidan occupiers cheered jubilantly, opposition politicians set up an unelected provisional government, and accused Yanukovych of mass killing, threatening to take him to the International Criminal Court. In Washington, President Obama and Secretary of State Kerry cheered the advent of the provisional government, while in Brussels, EU Foreign commissioner Catherine Ashton spoke cautiously of a major injection of cash to bolster the country’s economy. But talk of internal democracy and external bailout was soon eclipsed by what happened in the Crimean peninsula of Ukraine between February 28 and March 2. (See map, figure 1.1.)

On those days, “little green men” in uniform began to appear at key points in the Crimea, an area that had been part of Russia since the time of Catherine the Great but was handed to Ukraine by Communist Party



Figure 1.1:
Ukraine, Crimea, and the Kerch Connection to Russia (photo by Lonely Planet/Getty Images)

chief Nikita Khrushchev in 1954, when the region was still part of the of Soviet Union. The peninsula was heavily peopled by Russian speakers and was the home of the Russian Black Sea fleet. Slowly, at first, and then increasingly insistently, Russian armed forces surrounded Ukrainian military facilities in the region, took over its Parliament, and the Kerch ferry crossing between the Crimea and Russia. Their identity became clear when Sergey Aksyonov, the newly-appointed Prime Minister of the Crimea, called for Russian intervention to protect the region’s citizens against armed attacks. Russian armored vehicles soon rolled across the border as the Russian Duma declared it the country’s duty to protect Russian-speaking civilians from attacks it claimed were coming from “fascists, nationalists, and anti-Semites” directed from Kiev. A full-scale military intervention, allied with internal pro-Russian demonstrations, was underway. And, in a plebiscite on March 16, a large majority of Crimean voters supported Crimea’s attachment to Russia.

In the wake of these events, western observers saw the Russian takeover as the start of the worst foreign policy crisis since the Cold War. In Brussels, the EU and NATO fulminated that the attack violated Russia’s

commitment to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity. In Washington, President Obama launched a devastating series of economic sanctions, while in Moscow the Kremlin propaganda machine revved up patriotic fervor to support the annexation. But more was still to come: For no sooner was the Crimean peninsula detached from Ukraine than war broke out between pro-Russian militants in the East of the country, aided by Russian troops, against the near-helpless agents of the Ukrainian state. Soldiers without insignias took over government buildings in twelve southeastern cities of Ukraine. They were helped by the inability of the new Ukrainian government to mount an effective response to their pressures and by the presence of 40,000 Russian troops, backed by a propaganda campaign beamed in from Moscow. A wave of domestic contention against a weak and corrupt state had brought the collapse of a government, an internal countermovement, and a partial military takeover by a neighboring state joined to a nationalist rebellion.

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS

What do the campaign against the slave trade in eighteenth-century England and the partial breakup and civil war in Ukraine in 2014 have in common? Although we can identify many differences, these were both episodes of what we call *contentious politics*. In both, actors made claims on authorities, used public performances to do so, drew on inherited forms of collective action (our term for this is *repertoires*) and invented new ones, forged alliances with influential members of their respective polities, took advantage of existing political regime opportunities and made new ones, and used a combination of institutional and extrainstitutional routines to advance their claims.

Contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actors' interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics.

Contention involves making claims that bear on someone else's interests. In everyday life, contention ranges from small matters such as which television show we should watch tonight to bigger questions such as whether your sister Sue should marry the man she is dating. But it also takes place in football matches, rival advertising campaigns, and struggles between cantankerous patients and irritable doctors.

In the simplest version of contention, one party makes claims on another. The parties are often persons, but one or the other can also be a group or even an institution; you can make a claim on your school or file a claim on the government for unemployment benefits. In the elementary version, we can think of one party as a subject (the maker of a claim) and the other as an object (the receiver of a claim). Claims always involve at least one subject's reaching visibly toward at least one object. You (subject) may ask a friend (object) to pay back the money he borrowed from you yesterday. But claims range from timid requests to strident demands to direct attacks, just so long as they would, if realized, somehow affect the object's well-being, the object's interests. Often three or more parties are involved, as when you demand that your friend pay you back the money he was about to hand over to another creditor. Contention always brings together subjects, objects, and claims.

Collective action means coordinating efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs. Football teams engage in collective action, but so do churches, voluntary associations, and neighbors who clear weeds from a vacant lot. When you go to school or to work for a big company, you enter an organization that is carrying on collective action. But most of the collective action involved occurs with no significant contention and no government involvement. The bulk of collective action takes place outside contentious politics.

Most contention also occurs outside politics. We enter the realm of *politics* when we interact with agents of governments, either dealing with them directly or engaging in activities bearing on governmental rights, regulations, and interests. Politics likewise ranges from fairly routine matters such as applying for a driver's license to momentous questions such as whether the country should go to war. But most of politics involves little or no contention. Most of the time, people register for benefits, answer census takers, cash government checks, or show their passports to immigration officers without making significant claims on other people.

The presence or absence of governments in contention makes a difference for three big reasons. First, people who control governments gain advantages over people who don't. Even where the government is weak, controlling it gives you the means of collecting taxes, distributing resources, and regulating other people's behavior. As a result, political contention puts at risk, however slightly, the advantages of those who currently enjoy governmental power.

Second, governments always make rules governing contention: who can make what collective claims, by what means, with what outcomes. Even weak governments have some influence over the prevailing forms of

claim making, and they resist anyone else's building up competitive centers of power within their territories.

Third, governments control substantial coercive means: armies, police forces, courts, prisons, and the like. The availability of governmental coercion gives an edge to political contention that rarely exists outside the political arena. In political contention, large-scale violence always remains a possibility, however faint. Contention connected to governments does resemble contention in families, sports, churches, and businesses in some regards. We will sometimes call attention to those parallels. But we single out government-connected contention because it has these distinctive properties.

Let us immediately rule out a few possible misunderstandings. Restriction of contentious politics to claim making that somehow involves governments by no means implies that governments must figure as the makers or receivers of contentious claims. On the contrary, as the book proceeds, we will encounter a wide range of contention in which nongovernmental actors are pitted against each other and make claims on religious, economic, ethnic, or other nongovernmental holders of power. Remember the story with which this chapter began? In both England and America, antislavery activists directed their claims first against slaveholders and only then against governments, which were drawn into the action because they either supported or opposed slavery and only they could resolve the legal and physical conflicts that slavery fostered.

As you move through the book, you will read sustained discussions of many such conflicts: American campus activism against South Africa's apartheid in the 1980s; changes in the repertoire of contention in the United States since the 1960s and in Argentina before and after the dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s; the rebellion of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, in the 1990s; nationalist and democratization protests in the breakup of the former Soviet Union; transformations of American women's lives by participation in feminist organizations; lethal conflicts in Northern Ireland and Sudan, and the revolution in Nicaragua; the transnational "Global Justice" movement and transnational Islamism; the struggle for marriage equality in the United States and the tumultuous Arab Spring that are ongoing as this book goes to press. All of these conflicts eventually drew governments—local or national—into the action, as did our initial story of the struggle against slavery in England. But they began by pitting nongovernmental actors against each other.

Let us be clear. We do not deny that processes much like those occurring in contentious politics also occur in nonpolitical settings. That is actually the point of distinguishing collective action and contention from

politics. We also do not deny that some forms of contention—such as religious movements—aim primarily at internal change within individuals. But even these frequently come into contact with governments—for example, when evangelical Christians attempt to incorporate religious values into the public school curriculum. Finally, sometimes a corporation that runs a company town, an international military force such as NATO, or an international institution such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization behaves much like a government. Those cases come close enough to our definition of contentious politics for this book to include them. Still, we focus our attention on the convergence of collective action, contention, and politics because the area of their overlap has distinctive—and potentially dangerous—properties.

Figure 1.2 shows how contention, collective action, and politics converge in contentious politics. Many scholars would draw different boundaries—for example, by treating collective action as the fundamental process. In that view, such episodes as antislavery in Britain and the conflicts in Ukraine in 2013–2014 qualify simply as special instances of collective action. Others define politics as consisting of struggles for power however and wherever they occur. They thus take in all of contentious politics, add to it struggles outside the range of government, but treat routine political transactions as something else. In this line of thought, many analysts distinguish between real politics—our contentious politics plus similar struggles outside political arenas—and public administration.

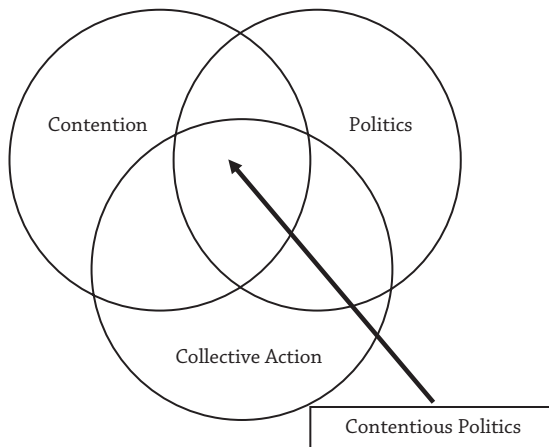


Figure 1.2:
Components of Contentious Politics

Many students of the subject use the term *social movement* to cover most or all of the overlap between contention and collective action, whether it happens in politics or some other arena. The same analysts often extend the term *social movement* to what we will call *social movement bases*: the social background, organizational resources, and cultural frameworks of contention and collective action. Our book provides plenty of evidence about social movements. But we recommend resisting expansion of the term to embrace most or all of contentious politics, its social bases, and its cultural contexts. Such an expansion has several drawbacks. First, it hampers comparison across different types of contention by collecting them under the same label. Second, if different forms of contention all count as social movements, that expansion makes it difficult to examine transitions among them.

Third, it obscures a fundamental fact: that social movements are a *historical*—and not a universal—category. As our story of British antislavery shows, the social movement as we know it took shape about two centuries ago, and it only became widely available as a means of popular claim making during the twentieth century (Tilly and Wood 2009). It emerged through episodes such as antislavery, found its feet in the early nineteenth century through labor and other struggles, and eventually became a staple of popular politics across the world's less authoritarian regimes during the twentieth century. American civil rights activism formed a social movement; so did the movement for same-sex marriage, which ends this book.

What qualifies as a *social movement*? We define a movement as a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities. But most forms of contentious politics are not social movements. Social movements combine (1) sustained *campaigns* of claim making; (2) an array of public performances including marches, rallies, demonstrations, creation of specialized associations, public meetings, public statements, petitions, letter writing, and lobbying; (3) repeated public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment by such means as wearing colors, marching in disciplined ranks, sporting badges that advertise the cause, displaying signs, chanting slogans, and picketing public buildings. They draw on (4) the organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities—*social movement bases*. As familiar as it has become to citizens of Western countries, this combination of campaigns, performances, and displays only took shape a few hundred years ago, and it is still rare or nonexistent through much of the contemporary world. The recent explosion of digital

activism we will see in chapter 10 may even be making social movements obsolete.

The second part of this book compares social movements to other forms of contention. Chapter 7 shows how movement forms of action figured in Poland's Solidarity movement and the American women's movement. These movements' combinations of public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment produced significantly less violent confrontation than the three forms of lethal conflict reviewed in chapter 8: ethnic-religious strife, civil wars, and revolutions. Social movement politics and lethal conflicts often co-occur and intersect in the same places, as chapter 4 will show.

CONTENTIOUS INTERACTION

Our two landmark episodes—British antislavery and the Ukrainian-Russian conflicts from 2013 on reveal intersections among contention, politics, and collective action. Though buffeted by the varying winds of reaction and reform, antislavery was a true social movement. Over a period of more than thirty years, its participants sustained a powerful campaign of contentious politics both within and against Britain's political institutions. The Ukrainian conflict ranged from a short-term movement coalition comprising masses in the streets and opposition leaders, to an armed struggle between militants and their state opponents with the backing of a foreign power. It led to the full-scale conflict between Russia and Ukraine, with the backing of its western supporters, that continues as this book goes to press.

When contention, politics, and collective action get together, something distinctive happens: power, shared interests, and government policy come into play. Claims become collective, which means they depend on some sort of coordination among the people making the claims. They also become political, at least by assuming the presence of governments as monitors, guarantors, or regulators of collective claim making and often more directly as subjects or objects of claims. In those circumstances, we will speak about groups that sometimes make claims as *political actors*. We will call the collective names that they give themselves or that other people give them—those workers, we citizens, us women, and so on—their *political identities*.

People often make collective claims on governments, and governments make claims on whole categories of people. Governments also involve themselves in how people outside government make claims on each other.

Sometimes they facilitate contention by opening opportunities for challengers but sometimes they suppress it: Lawmakers make laws banning some kinds of assemblies, police arrest unruly demonstrators, judges try people for seditious claims, and officials intervene when their clients or constituents are fighting collectively. The intersection of contention, politics, and collective action contains events ranging from local ethnic competition to great revolutions.

This book looks hard and systematically at that intersection. It lays out a simple set of tools for describing and explaining contentious politics in all its varieties. The tools consist of concepts and of causal connections among the phenomena singled out by those concepts. We make a rough distinction between *description* and *explanation*. *Description* consists of specifying what special properties and variations in contention deserve serious attention. *Explanation* entails showing what produces those special properties and variations.

The distinction between description and explanation remains rough; sometimes one special property or brand of variation helps to explain another. When we compare Ukraine's quasi-revolution with other mobilizations against authoritarian regimes, we actually move toward explanation by identifying relevant differences among the regimes and their oppositions. Chapter 2 takes up explanatory concepts more directly, and chapters 3 and 4 combine description and explanation by placing different forms of contention in different forms of regimes and examining the role of contention in regime transitions. But this chapter concentrates on concepts describing the interesting features of contention that deserve explanation.

What concepts? This chapter's concepts show how political actors make claims in the names of their political identities, identify various sorts of collective political performances, describe how contentious performances cluster into repertoires of contention, analyze how repertoires change, and apply those ideas to the United States since World War II. The rest of the book returns repeatedly to the United States. But it also draws on cases from Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia. As the book moves on, much of our descriptive work will involve connecting these concepts with each other.

How? The book shows how repertoires of contention differ between democratic and undemocratic *regimes*. The book explains what difference it makes whether contention takes place within existing *institutions*, outside them, or against them. It considers how *political opportunity structures* affect which political identities people bring into contention. It describes how social movements combine institutional and extrainstitutional forms of action. It shows that actors build on a broad set of *social bases* but that

these bases are not sufficient to explain *contentious interaction*, which depends on the triggering of a finite set of *mechanisms and processes*. The book reveals that a similar group of mechanisms and processes—for example, brokerage, certification, mobilization, demobilization, and scale shift—recur in different combinations with substantially different outcomes in revolutions, social movements, ethnic conflict, nationalism, civil war, and other distinct forms of contentious politics. Later chapters will treat all of these elements in detail.

This book presents an *interactive approach* to contentious politics. As Doug McAdam (1999) writes, “a viable model of the individual must take full account of the fundamentally *social/relational* nature of human existence” (xiii). Some students of contention give primary attention to its social bases—for example, to social networks, organizations, cultural predispositions, and the political and ideological traditions that nourish contention. While we give ample space to these bases of contention, we are primarily concerned with the mechanisms and processes that involve challengers with their targets, public authorities, and third parties like the media and the public in sequences of interaction. For example, when we turn to social movements in chapter 7, we focus on the mechanisms and processes that transform the bases of contention into social movement campaigns.

Putting these elements together will help us to resolve a fundamental paradox of contentious politics: its recurring combination of *variations and regularities*. Contentious politics features enormous variation in its issues, actors, interactions, claims, sequences, and outcomes from time to time and place to place. But it also displays great regularities in the ways that contention unfolds. We will see how similar mechanisms and processes produce distinctive political trajectories and outcomes depending on their combinations and on the social bases and political contexts in which they operate. We can begin to capture some of the recurrent, historically embedded character of contentious politics by means of two related theatrical metaphors and a military one: performances, repertoires, and campaigns.

- *Contentious performances* are relatively familiar and standardized ways in which one set of political actors makes collective claims on some other set of political actors. Among other performances, participants in Ukraine’s protest movement against President Yanukovich used mass demonstrations as visible, effective performances.
- *Contentious repertoires* are arrays of performances that are currently known and available within some set of political actors. England’s

antislavery activists helped to invent the demonstration as a political performance, but they also drew on petitions, lobbying, press releases, public meetings, and a number of other performances. Ukraine's Maidan protesters assembled in a public place, but they also built a tent city, defended it with shields against police repression, and attacked government buildings until the President and his entourage fled the country.

- *Contentious campaigns* are combinations of performances that “focus on a particular policy and usually disassemble when that policy is implemented or overturned” (Almeida 2014: 6). Observers sometimes refer to such campaigns as “movements,” but in many cases they involve arrays of actors, including movements, interest groups, political parties, the media, interested onlookers, and state agents, as we will see in chapter 5.

CLAIM MAKING AS PERFORMANCE

Once we look closely at collective making of claims, we see that particular instances improvise on shared scripts. Presentation of a petition, taking a hostage, or mounting a demonstration constitutes a performance that links at least two actors, a claimant, and an object of claims. Innovation occurs incessantly on the small scale, but effective claims depend on a recognizable relation to their setting, on relations between the parties, and on previous uses of the claim-making form.

Performances evolve over time. Consider how Clarkson and his colleagues used petitions to inundate Parliament with antislavery demands. One of the most traditional forms of making claims, petitions originally came from individual petitioners seeking benefits for themselves. They bowed before their lords to request personal exemption from military service or lowering of their excise tax. The British antislavery group turned the petition into an instrument for *mass* claim making, accumulating thousands of signatures on petitions to demand redress for others. This was the origin of the on-line petition of today.

Now think of the massing of protesters in the streets of Kiev in 2013. In the 1830s, British Chartists adopted the mass demonstration, then a new form, as they demanded political rights for working people (Thompson 1984). In the mid-nineteenth century, during what we remember as the 1848 revolution, such demonstrations traversed Europe on the part of workers, nationalists, middle-class reformers, and revolutionary socialists. That led to a known change in the repertoire of contention: By 2013,

Ukrainians knew exactly how to organize demonstrations that would challenge the rules, reinforce their own solidarity, and gain international support.

All forms of contention rest on performances, but performances range from direct assaults on others to theatricals staged for nearby or distant audiences (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004: 271; Tarrow 2011). In the eighteenth century, people mainly engaged in performances that were specific to their particular claims, such as seizing grain, invading landlords' fields, barricading their streets, and pulling down wrongdoers' houses (Tilly 2005). Think of the Boston colonists who attacked the home of an official charged with collecting the hated stamp tax in 1765, or of those who dumped tea into Boston Harbor in 1775. Both groups were engaging in *particular* performances.

But by the twentieth century, many contentious performances had spread around the world and become what we call *modular*: performances that could be adopted and adapted across a wide range of conflicts and sites of contention by a broad range of actors. Think again of the protest demonstration. It grew out of—and at first resembled—the religious procession to a place of worship. It turned contentious as demonstrators moved from a place of assembly to a site from which they could confront the targets of their claims. Later, it became the central form of action, mounted routinely to demonstrate a claim before the public. With the diffusion of mass media, that public expanded from neighbors who witnessed a demonstration passing beneath their windows to a wider range of citizens who could watch it on their television sets. By the twentieth century, it had become the major conventional form of contention used by claim makers across the world. By the early twenty-first century, as we will see, marchers protesting for free speech in Paris knew how to organize a demonstration and what they did not know, they quickly learned from social media.

More recently, reaching people through the Internet has become a favored means of mobilization (see chapter 10). For example, “hactivism,” the practice of infiltrating the computer of a transnational firm or a government to disrupt its routines, is becoming more and more common (Samuels 2004). So far the Internet's major role in contentious politics has been either (1) to assemble people in demonstrations at one site or (2) to coordinate demonstrations in many sites across a broad range of territory; and it may also be emerging (3) as a form of “connective action” itself (Bennett and Segerberg 2013). A good example of the Internet's first sort of use was the 1999 Seattle demonstration against the World Trade Organization. A major example of the second was the coordination of

demonstrations across the globe against the American invasion of Iraq in 2003. An example of the third was the “Occupy” movement of 2011–2012, which existed “online” as much as “offline.” None of these has done away with the classical set of contentious politics performances but they have progressively increased the ability of organizers to expand their reach. The petition, the demonstration, and the Internet-based call to action have become *modular performances*, generic forms that can be adapted to a variety of local and social circumstances.

The advantage of such modular performances is their dual generality and specificity. Seen generically, they have features that adapt to a wide variety of circumstances and have meaning to a wide variety of potential participants and audiences. American students demonstrate on college campuses, French farmers demonstrate outside the prefecture, Israeli settlers demonstrate beside the Wailing Wall, and Hong Kong democracy protesters demonstrate in Hong Kong’s business district—all are using some variant of the same modular performance.

But seen in particular circumstances, demonstrations offer a variety of facets that can be attached to local knowledge. Skillful organizers adapt the generic form to local circumstances, embedding a modular form such as the demonstration in the languages, symbols, and practices that make them compelling in those circumstances. This is but one specific version of the duality of similarities and differences that will show up throughout our book.

Of course, not all contentious performances are as orderly, theatrical, and peaceful as the demonstration. Take the confrontational forms of contentious politics that exploded in Western Europe and the United States during the 1960s. The Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States had dominated the early 1950s, restricting protest in general and confrontational protest in particular. But the African American awakenings of the mid-1950s and the 1960s, the student and antiwar movements of the late 1960s, the women’s and gay rights movements of the 1970s, the peace and environmental movements of the 1980s, the collapse of communism at the end of that decade, and the Arab Spring revolutions of 2010–2012 expanded all kinds of protest and particularly of confrontational and violent forms of contention.

Now think of how young protesters after the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri burned and overturned cars when a grand jury absolved a police officer of using unnecessary force (see chapter 2). They were using a performance that had become a standard part of the American urban repertoire that emerged in the riots of the mid-1960s against police violence. These two generations of protesters were not connected to each

other but the performance of burning cars during social unrest became a standard part of the American repertoire.

Finally, think of the occupation of public space organized by the “Occupy” movement in the United States and the “Indignation” protesters in Europe in response to the Great Recession of 2008–2013; they picked up on a performance that goes back to the nineteenth century and reached its peak in the sit-in protests of the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war era of the 1960s. The same performance with more profound implications was used by the occupants of Tahrir Square in Cairo in 2011, when they launched a revolutionary message that spread across the Middle East and North Africa.

Dieter Rucht has provided us with a running portrait tracing how different forms of contentious politics converged in one archetypical European country, Germany, over this period. Rucht and his colleagues examined contention from major newspapers for the years 1950–1988 for West Germany and for both halves of Germany over the following decade (2005). His findings show a dramatic increase in the numbers of protests in the 1960s and smaller, but still substantial, increases over the next three decades. Protests rose from a low of just over 1,100 in the 1950s to over 4,000 in the 1990s. Not only that: The mix of conventional, confrontational, and violent activities changed dramatically between the beginning of the West German Republic and the end of the century.

Although no linear trend appeared in the proportion of “demonstrative” protests (about 50 percent at the beginning and at the end of the

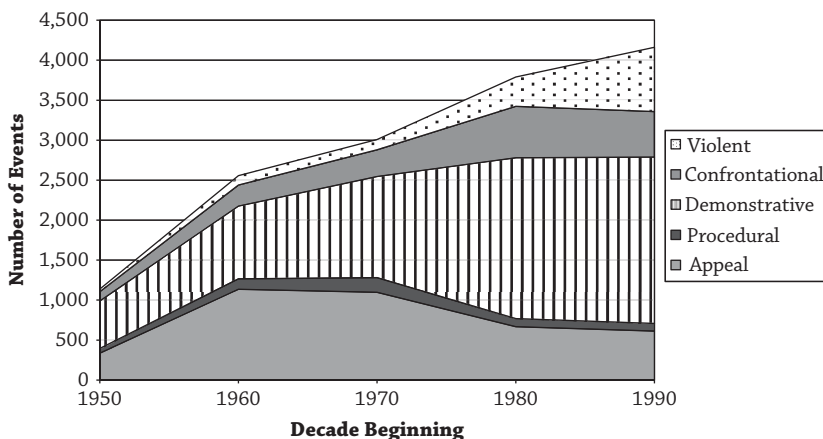


Figure 1.3:
Protest Events in Germany, 1950–1990
Source: Data provided by Dieter Rucht.

period), a net decline occurred in the percentage of routine expressions of claims, what Rucht calls procedural protests and appeals. In contrast, Rucht's evidence shows increases in the proportion of "confrontational" protests in the 1980s and of "violent encounters" in the 1990s. The declines correspond largely to the tactics of the peace movement, while the later increases in violence reflect the rise of right-wing anti-immigrant groups and of the absorption of East Germany. Figure 1.3 summarizes these data for West Germany through 1988 and for the expanded country between 1989 and 1990.

SOURCES OF REPERTOIRE CHANGE

This takes us to the factors that bring about changes in repertoires. We can distinguish two major kinds of process in repertoire change: the effects of periods of rapid political change and the outcome of incrementally changing structural factors. The first are more dramatic, sometimes produce lasting change, but are more easily routinized and repressed as authorities regain control of contention. Incremental changes are less dramatic, depend on factors that evolve more slowly, but can be more enduring.

With respect to periods of rapid political change, during major cycles of contention, the ordinary preference for familiar claim-making routines dissolves in spurts of innovation. American civil rights activists did not simply use the decorous old social movement forms they inherited but deliberately disrupted existing routines. Periods of rapid political change produce sequences of innovation in repertoires, and successive innovations largely account for the ebb and flow of movement activity (Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam 1983).

During such times of rapid political change, we find both actions and reactions. As each new round of claim making begins to threaten the interests of (or provide new opportunities for) political actors who had previously remained inactive, a spiral of contention ensues. Social movements engender countermovements. Challengers' allies appear and retreat. The state, at first thrown off balance by new forms of contention, eventually reacts and in some cases turns to repression. We will turn to "cycles" and "tides" of contention and to revolutions in chapter 6. The extreme case arrives in a revolutionary situation: a deep split in control of coercive means. During a revolutionary situation, every actor's interest is at risk, and many actors therefore mobilize for action. We saw exactly that shift in the Ukrainian conflicts of 2013–2014.

As we will argue, the major constraints and incentives for contentious politics are *political opportunity structures*, and most of these are local and national. But we think it is important to look beyond the nation-state at processes such as the shift of some kinds of contention to international institutions, the framing of local issues as the results of global problems, and the formation of transnational networks and movement coalitions. In chapter 9, we turn from the local and national patterns of contention that occupy most of our book to transnational diffusion and mobilization. A recent major change is globalization, the increasing economic integration of the planet.

In contrast to the effects of periods of rapid change, incremental changes in repertoires are less dramatic, but more decisive in the long run. The major causes of incremental change sort into three main categories:

- *Connections between claim making and everyday social organization.* For example, mothers bereft of bread for their children gather around the granary whose owner they suspect of hoarding flour. Land-poor peasants who believe that the landlord stole their land sometimes occupy it. And workers, whose one effective tool is the fact that their labor is necessary to make the wheels of production turn, strike to prevent employers from the successful pursuit of profit.
- *Cumulative creation of a signaling system by contention itself.* For example, over the past two centuries, French claim makers have drawn on a dense experience with contention. Three major revolutions, a revolutionary commune, more than a hundred years of strikes, barricades, marches, and demonstrations all lie under the surface of French contention today, to be drawn on, innovated upon, and replayed in endless permutations (Tartakowsky 2005; Tilly 1986).
- *Operation of the regime as such.* Regimes sort performances into prescribed, tolerated, and forbidden categories, dispensing threats and penalties to claimants who move onto forbidden ground. When Clarkson and his colleagues perfected the petition into a tool of mass mobilization, they did so in the context of a parliamentary regime that had recognized petitions as legitimate forms of collective action for centuries. But when French radicalism and Napoleonic arms were threatening Britain, reformers paid the penalty with imprisonment and worse. Chapters 3 and 4 deal in detail with the relations between regimes and forms of contention.

Repertoires draw on the identities, social ties, and organizational forms that constitute everyday social life. From those identities, social ties, and

organizational forms emerge both the collective claims that people make and the means they have for making claims. In the course of contending or watching others contend, people learn the interactions that can make a political difference as well as the locally shared meanings of those interactions. The changing interaction of everyday social organization, cumulative experience with contention, and regime intervention produces incremental alterations in contentious performances. At any given moment, however, that interaction promotes clustering of claim making in a limited number of recognizable performances, a repertoire.

Repertoires are the source of tactical performances that combine in protest campaigns. Campaigns can combine strikes, rallies, protest marches, boycotts, sit-ins, and obstructions. “Opposition groups or temporary alliances often piece together campaigns with a unifying set of slogans and specified goals” (Almeida 2014: 6). They sometimes plan organized violence, but, more typically, when violence occurs it is as the result of the interaction of protesters and the “forces of order.” Where social movements are sustained—as we will see in chapter 7—campaigns blend into longer sequences of contention, but where movements are weak—as in much of the Global South—campaigns tend to end when a particular policy is implemented or overturned.

WHAT’S COMING

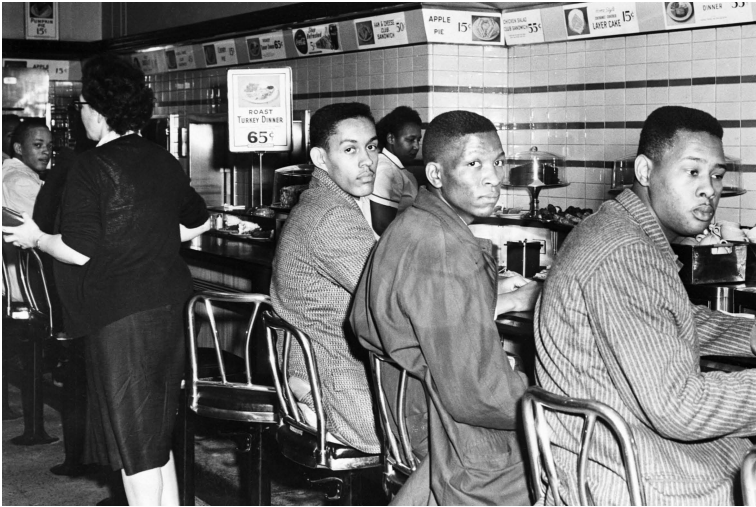
This chapter’s comparison of eighteenth century British antislavery with Ukrainian conflicts from 2013 on sent us on a fresh path across bumpy terrain. We have seen how contention, collective action, and politics overlap in contentious politics: interactive, collective making of claims that bear on other people’s interests and involve governments as claimants, objects of claims, or third parties. Social movements qualify as a form of contentious politics, but so do revolutions, civil wars, and a wide variety of other struggles this book takes up. In all these forms of contention, distinctive claim-making performances and repertoires vary from setting to setting and regime to regime. Some of those performances are modular; as with the street demonstration, they transfer easily from setting to setting and regime to regime. They build on social bases belonging to the setting or regime.

America’s changing contentious politics since 1955, for example, often involved some widely recognizable performances such as street demonstrations. But participants, claims, objects of claims, and forms all grew from particular features of the changing American regime. To explain

change and variation in repertoires, we must look at the current pace of political change in the regime at hand, identify incremental changes in the regime's social structure, then figure out how the two affect everyday social organization, people's cumulative experience with contention, and current operation of the regime. With those elements in place, we begin the adventure of explaining change and variation in the forms, participants, issues, objects, and outcomes of contentious politics.

What's next? First, a warning about what this book *does not* do. Despite illustrating its points amply from revolutions, social movements, military coups, civil wars, and other forms of contentious politics, it does not catalog these forms one by one and provide a separate set of generalizations concerning each of them. On the contrary, our aim is to identify parallels in the ways that apparently disparate forms of contention work, and show how their differences result from varying combinations and sequences of mechanisms in contrasting regime environments. Even the later chapters on social movements and large-scale lethal conflict serve mainly to show that similar causes and effects operate in these very different political processes.

The next chapter describes how we propose to study contention and contains a number of hints for students who want to carry out their own analyses. Chapters 3 and 4 connect contention to different types of regimes and the opportunities and threats they proffer, and relate regimes, opportunities, and threats to democratization and dedemocratization. Chapter 5 ("Contentious Interaction") examines how political actors form, change, make claims, and interact with each other. We then move on to political actors' mobilization and demobilization (chapter 6) before applying the analysis to social movements (chapter 7) and lethal conflicts (chapter 8). In chapter 9, we turn to transnational contention, and in chapter 10 ("Contention Today and Tomorrow") to movements against inequality to recapitulate the book's main lessons. The book ends with a reflection on how social media may be transforming contentious politics and with suggestions for how students can use this book as both scholars and citizens.



In an action soon widely adopted elsewhere, African American students from North Carolina A & T College peacefully occupy seats at the previously whites-only lunch counter of an F.W. Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina (1960). (Copyright @ Bettmann/CORBIS).