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What Are They Shouting About?

"On thinking of the events that have happened since the beginning of the week," confided Parisian bookseller Siméon-Prosper Hardy to his journal on July 17, 1789, "it is hard to recover from one's astonishment" (BN Fr 6687 [Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Fonds Français, no. 6687]). It had, indeed, been quite a week in Paris; that week's pages of Hardy's neatly penned journal contain extraordinarily vivid portraits of contentious politics. No such tumults had shaken Paris since the Fronde of 1648–1653. From the time when the Third Estate's representatives to the Estates General in Versailles declared themselves a national assembly on June 17, detachments of royal troops had been gathering around the Paris region. On several occasions, however, whole companies had refused to use their arms against civilians or had even joined in popular attacks on troops that remained loyal to the king. By early July, signs of great division were appearing within the regime.

When the king dismissed popular finance minister Jacques Necker on July 11, mass marches and gatherings began to overflow Parisian streets. That night people sacked tollgates on the city's perimeter, then danced around the ruins. During the next few days, electoral assemblies, their provisional committees, and their hastily formed militias began running much of Paris. Meanwhile, bands of Parisians broke into prisons and other public buildings, freeing prisoners, seizing arms, and taking away provender stored within.

On the 14th of July, searches for weapons continued. According to Hardy's account:

People went to the castle of the Bastille to call the governor, the marquis Delaunay, to hand over the weapons and ammunition he had; on his refusal, workers of

the faubourg St. Antoine tried to besiege the castle. First the governor had his men fire on the people all along the rue St. Antoine, while making a white flag first appear and then disappear, as if he meant to give in, but increasing the fire of his cannon. On the side of the two drawbridges that open onto the first courtyard, having pretended to accept the call for arms, he had the gate of the small drawbridge opened and let in a number of the people who were there. But when the gate was closed and the drawbridge raised, he had everyone in the courtyard shot, including three of the city's electors . . . who had come to bargain with him. Then the civic militia, indignant over such barbarous treatment of fellow citizens, and backed by grenadiers of the French guard . . . accomplished the capture of the castle in less than three hours. [BN Fr 6687; for a more detailed and accurate account, see Godechot 1965]

During that day Parisians killed not only the Bastille's governor but also the Arsenal's powder-keeper, two veterans of the Invalides who had fired on invaders there, and the chairman of the city's Permanent Committee. Over the next few days, delegations from many parts of the region, including members of the National Assembly and dissident royal troops, ceremoniously committed themselves to the Parisian cause. On the sixteenth and seventeenth, the king himself recalled Necker, withdrew troops from the region, and, on foot amid deputies and militiamen, made a symbolically charged pilgrimage to the Parisian Hôtel de Ville. The threatened king had another thirty-odd months to live, most of them as nominal head of state. Yet by July 16, 1789, France entered a long and tortuous period of contentious politics.

Contentious Politics

To call the events of 1789 "contentious politics" may seem to demean a great revolution. This book aims to demonstrate that the label "contentious politics" not only makes sense but also helps explain what happened in Paris and the rest of France during that turbulent summer. The book before you also examines the relations between two variants of contention – contained and transgressive – as they intersect in major episodes of struggle. Further, it shows how different forms of contention – social movements, revolutions, strike waves, nationalism, democratization, and more – result from similar mechanisms and processes. It wagers that we can learn more about all of them by comparing their dynamics than by looking at each on its own. Finally, it explores several combinations of mechanisms and processes with the aim of discovering recurring causal sequences of contentious politics.

What Are They Shouting About?

By contentious politics we mean:

episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.

Roughly translated, the definition refers to collective political struggle. Of course, each term in such a definition cries out for further stipulations. The term "episodic," for example, excludes regularly scheduled events such as votes, parliamentary elections, and associational meetings – although any such event can become a springboard for contentious politics. Again, we take "public" to exclude claim making that occurs entirely within well-bounded organizations, including churches and firms. Despite obvious parallels between some struggles occurring inside and outside these boundaries, we concentrate here on those having manifestly political ramifications.

Nevertheless, we can hear the objections: Doesn't this definition demarcate an impossibly broad field of study? And what of politics within institutions that break out of the boundaries of their rules or make claims that challenge existing norms and expectations? Let us take up these objections in turn.

Is all of politics contentious? According to a strict reading of our definition, certainly not. Much of politics – the majority, we would guess – consists of ceremony, consultation, bureaucratic process, collection of information, registration of events, and the like. Reporting for military service, registering to vote, paying taxes, attending associational meetings, implementing policies, enforcing laws, performing administrative work, reading newspapers, asking officials for favors, and similar actions constitute the bulk of political life; they usually involve little if any collective contention. Much of politics takes place in the internal social relations of a party, bureau, faction, union, community, or interest group and involves no collective public struggle whatsoever. The *contentious* politics that concerns us is episodic rather than continuous, occurs in public, involves interaction between makers of claims and others, is recognized by those others as bearing on their interests, and brings in government as mediator, target, or claimant.

What about definitional breadth and contention within institutions? Is this subset of politics still too sprawling and amorphous to constitute a coherent field of inquiry? We are betting against that supposition. Let us

put the matter starkly. The official inquiry and later impeachment proceedings against Richard Nixon belong within the same definitional universe as the so-called Mau Mau rebellion of Kenya in the 1950s. Both qualify, in our terms, as *episodes of contention*. Such episodes constitute the terrain of our investigations.

We do not claim that these episodes are identical, nor that they conform to a single general model. They obviously differ in a host of consequential ways. Yet we group them under the same definition for two reasons. First, the study of political contention has grown too narrow, spawning a host of distinct topical literatures – revolutions, social movements, industrial conflict, war, interest group politics, nationalism, democratization – dealing with similar phenomena by means of different vocabularies, techniques, and models. This book deliberately breaches such boundaries in a search for parallels across nominally different forms of contention. It searches for similar causal mechanisms and processes in a wide variety of struggles.

Second, we challenge the boundary between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized politics. The Nixon impeachment inquiry operated almost exclusively within legally prescribed, officially recognized processes for adjudicating such conflicts. Mau Mau did not. We recognize this difference. We will, indeed, soon use it to distinguish two broad categories of contention – contained and transgressive. But even as we employ the distinction, we insist that the study of politics has too long reified the boundary between official, prescribed politics and politics by other means. As an unfortunate consequence, analysts have neglected or misunderstood both the parallels and the interactions between the two.

Reification reached its peak in American social science during the 1950s and 1960s by creating a sharp disciplinary and conceptual distinction between conventional and unconventional politics. Political science claimed "normal" prescribed politics as its bailiwick, leaving social movements (in William Gamson's ironic phrase) to "the social psychologist whose intellectual tools prepare him to better understand the irrational" (Gamson 1990: 133). Sociologists claimed movements as their chosen terrain, frequently ignoring their complex relations to institutional politics. Over the past thirty years, this neat disciplinary division of labor has largely dissolved. Yet we are left with a language and a set of categories (revolution, social movement, interest groups, electoral politics, and so on) reproducing the original duality.

What Are They Shouting About?

Boundaries between institutionalized and non-institutionalized politics are hard to draw with precision. More important, the two sorts of politics interact incessantly and involve similar causal processes. Coalitions, strategic interaction, and identity struggles occur widely in the politics of established institutions as well as in the disruptions of rebellions, strikes, and social movements. The underground war waged by Richard Nixon that resulted in the botched Watergate break-in and the resulting impeachment inquiry stemmed, in large part, from Nixon's hostility to the antiwar movement and other movements of the New Left. Similarly, Mau Mau had its origins, not in some spasm of anticolonial violence, but in a circumscribed conflict involving a set of four legally constituted political actors: Kenya's colonial authorities, British officials, Kenyan nationalists, and Kenya's white settler community. Virtually all broad social movements, revolutions, and similar phenomena grow from roots in less visible episodes of institutional contention. Excavating those roots is one of this book's central goals.

Contained and Transgressive Contention

We begin by dividing contentious politics into two broad subcategories: *contained* and *transgressive*. (We prefer this distinction to the more familiar one between "institutional" and "unconventional" politics because it allows us to emphasize transgression within institutions as well as the many routine activities of external challengers.)

Contained contention   refers to those cases of contention in which all parties are previously established actors employing well established means of claim making. It consists of episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims, (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants, and (c) all parties to the conflict were previously established as constituted political actors.

Transgressive contention   consists of episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims, (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the

claimants, (c) at least some parties to the conflict are newly self-identified political actors, and/or (d) at least some parties employ innovative collective action. (Action qualifies as innovative if it incorporates claims, selects objects of claims, includes collective self-representations, and/or adopts means that are either unprecedented or forbidden within the regime in question.)

This book's cases fall overwhelmingly on the transgressive side of the line: They usually involve either formation of new political actors, innovation with respect to new political means, or both. We deploy the distinction contained/transgressive for two reasons. First, many instances of transgressive contention grow out of existing episodes of contained contention; that interaction between the established and the new deserves explicit attention. Second, substantial short-term political and social change more often emerges from transgressive than from contained contention, which tends more often to reproduce existing regimes. Or so we argue.

For the sake of clarity, this book concentrates its attention on contentious episodes involving transgressive contention. We stress sorts of contention that are sporadic rather than continuous, bring new actors into play, and/or involve innovative claim making. For further simplification, our sustained examples come chiefly from episodes in which national states were direct participants or significant parties to the claims being made. This focus on national, as opposed to local or regional, contention springs primarily from practical concerns. Episodes of national contention more often produce the requisite volume of scholarly materials than do localized events. This does not mean, however, that our alternative analytic program applies only to periods of broad national contention. Suitably modified, it also applies to local, sectoral, international, and transnational contention.

Our strategy is to examine comparatively the causal processes discernible in fifteen major episodes of contention, and component mechanisms of those processes. We illustrate our approach to mechanisms and processes in this and the next chapter with respect to three such episodes – the French Revolution, American civil rights, and the Italian protest cycle – returning to them later in the book for the sake of their relative familiarity. In Chapter 3, we describe our strategy of paired comparison more fully. For now, suffice it to say that the strategy rests on detailed analyses of multiple episodes whose primary requirements were that (a) they involved substantially different varieties of contention within significantly different sorts of regimes, (b) they lent themselves to analytically

valuable comparisons, and (c) there exist sufficient scholarly materials to make sense of the events in question.

Let us return to the distinction between continuous and episodic processes. Public politics can involve conflicting claims but proceed within incremental processes. The controversies over slavery we examine in Chapter 6, for example, were fought out largely within congressional debates through most of their forty-year history. Conversely, well-institutionalized forms of politics are often episodic, as when the Swiss doubled their electorate in 1971 by admitting women to the vote. The combination of conflicting claims and episodic action attracts most of our attention.

We emphasize that combination not because it is the only site worthy of interest but because it often:

- creates uncertainty, hence rethinking and the search for new working identities
- reveals fault lines, hence possible realignments in the body politic
- threatens and encourages challengers to take further contentious action
- forces elites to reconsider their commitments and allegiances, and
- leaves a residue of change in repertoires of contention, institutional practices and political identities in the name of which future generations will make their claims.

What's News?

This book identifies similarities and differences, pathways and trajectories across a wide range of contentious politics – not only revolutions, but also strike waves, wars, social movements, ethnic mobilizations, democratization, and nationalism. In recent years, specialized scholars have made substantial advances in describing and explaining each of these important contentious forms. On the whole, they have paid little attention to each other's discoveries. Students of strikes, for example, rarely draw on the burgeoning literature about ethnic mobilization. Students of ethnic mobilization return the compliment by ignoring analyses of strikes. Yet strong, if partial, parallels exist between strikes and ethnic mobilization, for example in the ways that actions of third parties affect their success or failure and in the impact of previously existing interpersonal networks on their patterns of recruitment.

Again, students of social movements, ethnic mobilization, religious conflict, worker-capitalist struggles, and nationalism have independently discovered the political salience of rituals in which adherents to one side or another publicly display symbols, numbers, commitment, and claims to disputed space. Yet these specialists hardly ever notice their neighbors' work, much less undertake systematic comparisons of rituals in different settings. A historian knowledgeably locates attacks on Muslims and Jews in the social structure of fourteenth century Aragon, for example, but draws no guidance whatsoever from anthropologists' and political scientists' contemporary studies of similar categorical violence (Nirenberg 1996; for missed parallels see, e.g., Brass 1996, Connor 1994, Daniel 1996, Roy 1994). Again, an anthropologist's richly documented study of parades and visual displays by Ulster activists draws extensively on anthropological and rhetorical theory, but quite ignores analogous performances elsewhere in the British Isles and Western Europe perceptively treated by geographers, political scientists, sociologists, and historians (Jarman 1997; for relevant studies see, e.g., Baer 1992; Brewer 1979–1980; Butsch 1995, 2000; Davis 1975; della Porta 1998; Fillieule 1997; Lindenberger 1995; Plotz 2000; Steinberg 1999).

Like many of its European counterparts, the Ulster study identifies a phenomenon that cuts across nominally different forms of politics. Observers tend to associate public displays of uniforms and other explicitly political symbols with government-prescribed politics, because of their frequent use by authorities to advertise state power. But similar displays of uniforms and symbols sometimes form crucial features of hotly fought contention. Indeed, parody of official ceremonies in forms such as hanging in effigy or coronation rituals often provides readily recognizable drama for dissidents. Under repressive regimes, authorized public ceremonies and holiday celebrations frequently provide occasions for making of claims, however fleeting, whose statement elsewhere would put the claimants at high risk to detection and punishment. Similarly protected times and spaces attract claim making over a wide variety of contention (Polletta 1999). Much of this book's effort goes into the identification of such parallels, connections, and variations.

From Polity Model to Dynamics of Contention

But that happens in later chapters. For now, we must ask how to identify actors in contentious politics, their claims, the objects of those claims, and

responses to claim making. Of the many names in which people sometimes make claims, why do only a few typically prevail as public bases of contentious interaction in any given time and place? What governs the course and outcome of that interaction? Why and how do people move collectively between action and inaction? We adopt two initial simplifications in order to clarify connections between our analyses of contentious politics and studies of political life in general.

Our first simplification is to start from a static conception of political settings before moving to dynamic analyses. Figure 1.1 presents a simple static model of political settings in which contention occurs. Regimes, as schematized there, consist of governments and their relations to populations falling under their claimed jurisdictions (Finer 1997). Singling out constituted collective political actors (those that have names, internal organization, and repeated interactions with each other in the realm of public politics), we distinguish:
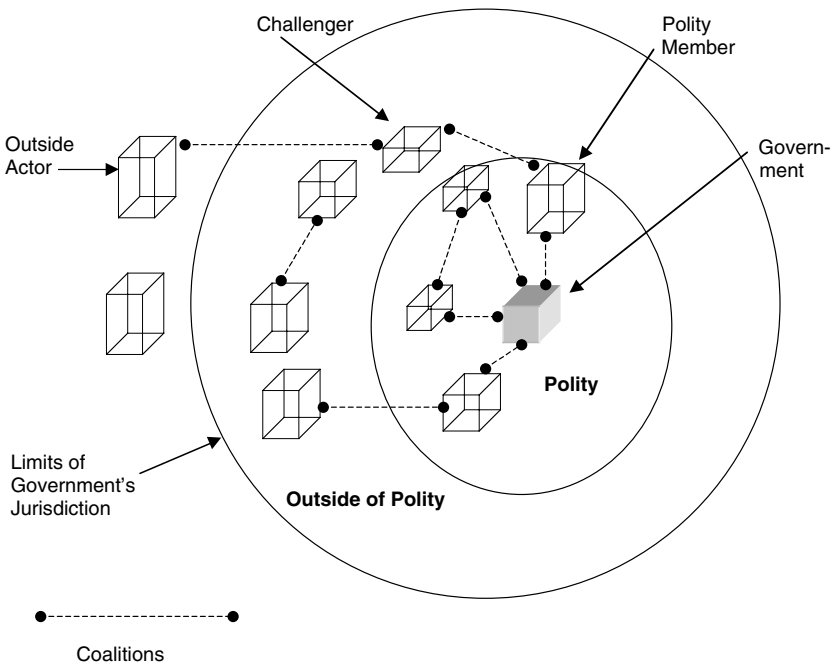

Figure 1.1. The Simple Polity Model

agents of government
polity members (constituted political actors enjoying routine access to government agents and resources)
challengers (constituted political actors lacking that routine access)
subjects (persons and groups not currently organized into constituted political actors), and
outside political actors, including other governments.

Public politics consists of claim making interactions among agents, polity members, challengers, and outside political actors. *Contentious* politics consists of that (large) subset in which the claims are collective and would, if realized, affect their objects' interests. *Transgressive* contention is present when at least some parties employ innovative collective action and/or at least some of them are newly self-identified political actors. To make such a model represent dynamic political processes effectively, we must put each of the actors into motion; allow for multiple governments and segments of government; show coalitions as subject to growth, decline, and incessant renegotiation; and represent construction, destruction, or transformation of political actors explicitly.

Our second simplification concerns political actors. We will soon discover that movements, identities, governments, revolutions, classes, and similar collective nouns do not represent hard, fixed, sharply bounded objects, but observers' abstractions from continuously negotiated interactions among persons and sets of persons. Since every person only displays a small portion of her wide-ranging physiological states, cognitive conditions, behaviors, and social connections in any particular situation, even persons are much less fixed and bounded than ordinary language suggests. Moreover, any particular person often plays parts within more than one political actor, sometimes participating as a worker, sometimes as member of a religious congregation, and so on. To get our analysis started, nevertheless, we assume that political actors consist of sets of persons and relations among persons whose internal organization and connections with other political actors maintain substantial continuity in time and space. Later we relax that confining assumption, examining ways that boundaries blur, organization changes, and political position shifts. Our serious effort in that direction begins in Part II.

How, then, shall we move from static to dynamic analysis? We must battle on two fronts at once: with respect to what we explain and to how we explain it. Social *processes*, in our view, consist of sequences and

combinations of causal *mechanisms*. To explain contentious politics is to identify its recurrent causal mechanisms, the ways they combine, in what sequences they recur, and why different combinations and sequences, starting from different initial conditions, produce varying effects on the large scale. We begin in the next chapter with the familiar process of mobilization and its component mechanisms. We will quickly discover that mobilization is not an isolated process: It intersects with other mechanisms and processes – such as creation and transformation of actors, their certification or decertification, repression, radicalization, and the diffusion of contention to new sites and actors in complex trajectories of contention. Our book takes as its principal objects of explanation a range of dynamic processes. Instead of seeking to identify necessary and sufficient conditions for mobilization, action, or certain trajectories, we search out recurrent causal mechanisms and regularities in their concatenation.

This program is demanding. It obliges us to adopt some economizing devices:

First, we do not claim that we have information on all the world's politics. Instead, we sample from a reduced grid of regime characteristics derived from our mapping in Chapter 3.

Second, we do not give equal attention to all the reified forms of contention that are potentially comparable, concentrating instead on social movements, nationalism, revolutions, and democratization.

Third, we will consider ourselves successful if we are able to identify – instead of merely asserting – some specific mechanisms and processes that recur across contentious politics' many forms;

Fourth, we hope to start the process of explaining these specificities with respect to several partial sequences; but we will not complete it in this volume.

Covering Laws and Recurrent Causes

Our emphasis on recurring mechanisms and processes does not mean that we intend to pour all forms of contention into the same great mold, subjecting them to universal laws of contention and flattening them into a single two-dimensional caricature. On the contrary, we examine partial

parallels in order to find widely operating explanatory mechanisms that combine differently and therefore produce different outcomes in one setting or another. To discover that third parties influence both strikes and ethnic mobilization by no means amounts to showing that the origins, trajectories, and outcomes of strikes and ethnic mobilization are the same, any more than identifying similarities in memory processes of mice and men proves mice and men to be identical in all regards. To discover mechanisms of competition and radicalization in both the French Revolution and in the South African freedom movement is not to say that the Jacobins and the African National Congress are the same. We pursue partial parallels in search of mechanisms that drive contention in different directions. Only then, and in Part III, do we examine how mechanisms combine in robust political processes.

We proceed through a series of paired comparisons. We call attention, for example, to similarities between the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya and the Philippine Yellow revolution of 1986; in the mechanisms that drove Hindu–Muslim conflict in South Asia and South Africa's democratization in the 1990s; between the breakdown of the antebellum American polity in 1860 and the collapse of Franco's regime in Spain. We compare the unfolding of revolutionary situations with the expansion of social movements, episodes of democratization, and strike waves. At the same time, we identify historically specific features in different kinds of contentious politics, for example how the previous history of social movements in a given country shapes that country's next round of contention, and how its routine institutional processes intersect with sequences of contentious, episodic politics. Though we aim to go beyond that agenda and challenge it, we start from the bedrock of findings and approaches that developed out of the movements of the 1960s in Western Europe and the United States.

The Classic Social Movement Agenda

During the 1960s and 1970s, much of the best North American and European work concerning these questions concentrated on social movements, then assimilated other forms of contention to prevailing explanations of social movements. Attention focused on four key concepts: *political opportunities*, sometimes crystallized as static opportunity structures, sometimes as changing political environments; *mobilizing structures*, both formal movement organizations and the social networks of everyday life; *collective action frames*, both the cultural constants that orient participants and those

they themselves construct; established *repertoires of contention*, and how these repertoires evolve in response to changes in capitalism, state building, and other, less monumental processes.

This line of thought grew from a quadruple critique of prior research traditions. First, social historians were launching what many of them called "history from below" as an intellectual rebellion against the emphasis on elites and high politics that prevailed in earlier historical writing. With their social science allies, many social historians sought to reconstruct political experiences of ordinary people, ground those experiences in routine social life, and challenge the dismissal of popular politics as irrational reactions to stress or temporary hardship. Second, in a similar vein many social scientists rejected the prevailing conception of mass movements and similar phenomena as collective behavior, as a confusion of common sense by fads, delusions, demagogues, and crowd influence. Third, the historians and social scientists in question combated official interpretations of civil rights activism, student movements, worker mobilization, and other popular politics of the 1960s as impulsive, irresponsible outbursts of self-indulgence. Fourth (and in partial reaction to the first three lines of thought), Mancur Olson (1965) and other rational action theorists countered simple assertions of rationality on the part of protesters. They made two telling observations about analysts of popular protest. Those analysts (a) had ignored the fact that many, perhaps most, sets of people who share a grievance or interest fail to act on it and (b) lacked a plausible theory of the conditions or process under which people who do share an interest organize and act on it.

One major form of these critiques soon took the name "resource mobilization," a term epitomized and publicized by the work of John McCarthy and Mayer Zald on American social movements and their organizations. Resource mobilization models emphasized the significance of organizational bases, resource accumulation, and collective coordination for popular political actors. They stressed similarities and convergences between social movements and interest group politics. Read twenty or thirty years later, early resource mobilization models exaggerate the centrality of deliberate strategic decisions to social movements. They downplay the contingency, emotionality, plasticity, and interactive character of movement politics. But at least they draw attention to the significance of organizational processes in popular politics.

Drawing precisely this element from resource mobilization thinking, a second current soon emerged within this stream of thought. "Political

process" analysts moved away from their confreres by stressing dynamism, strategic interaction, and response to the political environment. (At different stages, all three authors of this book played parts in the development of political process thinking, as well as in the criticism of the simpler resource mobilization model.) Historical work on the political process produced investigations of the forms of claim making that people use in real-life situations – what has come to be called "the repertoire of contention." For political-process theorists, repertoires represent the culturally encoded ways in which people interact in contentious politics. They are invariably narrower than all of the hypothetical forms they might use or those that others in different circumstances or periods of history employ. More recently, scholars reacting to the structuralism of these earlier studies have drawn on social-psychological and cultural perspectives, adding a fourth component to studies of social movements: how social actors frame their claims, their opponents and their identities. They have argued cogently that framing is not simply an expression of preexisting group claims but an active, creative, constitutive process.

In an academic version of the identity politics this book analyzes extensively in later chapters, analysts sometimes drew boundaries among themselves, observers sometimes detected separate schools of thought, while still other observers attended only to the boundary separating these related lines of thought from rational action and collective behavior. It would do no good to exaggerate the distinctions among enthusiasts for resource mobilization, political process, repertoires of contention, and framing. In fact, by the 1980s most North American students of social movements had adopted a common social movement agenda, and differed chiefly in their relative emphasis on different components of that agenda.

Figure 1.2 sketches the classic agenda in that vein. With varying degrees of emphasis on different elements and connections, investigators – ourselves included – regularly asked:

1. How, and how much, does social change (however defined) affect: (a) opportunity bearing on potential actors, (b) mobilizing structures that promote communication, coordination, and commitment within and among potential actors, (c) framing processes that produce shared definitions of what is happening? Example: under what conditions, how, and why does the expansion of capitalist property relations in an agrarian population expose different segments of
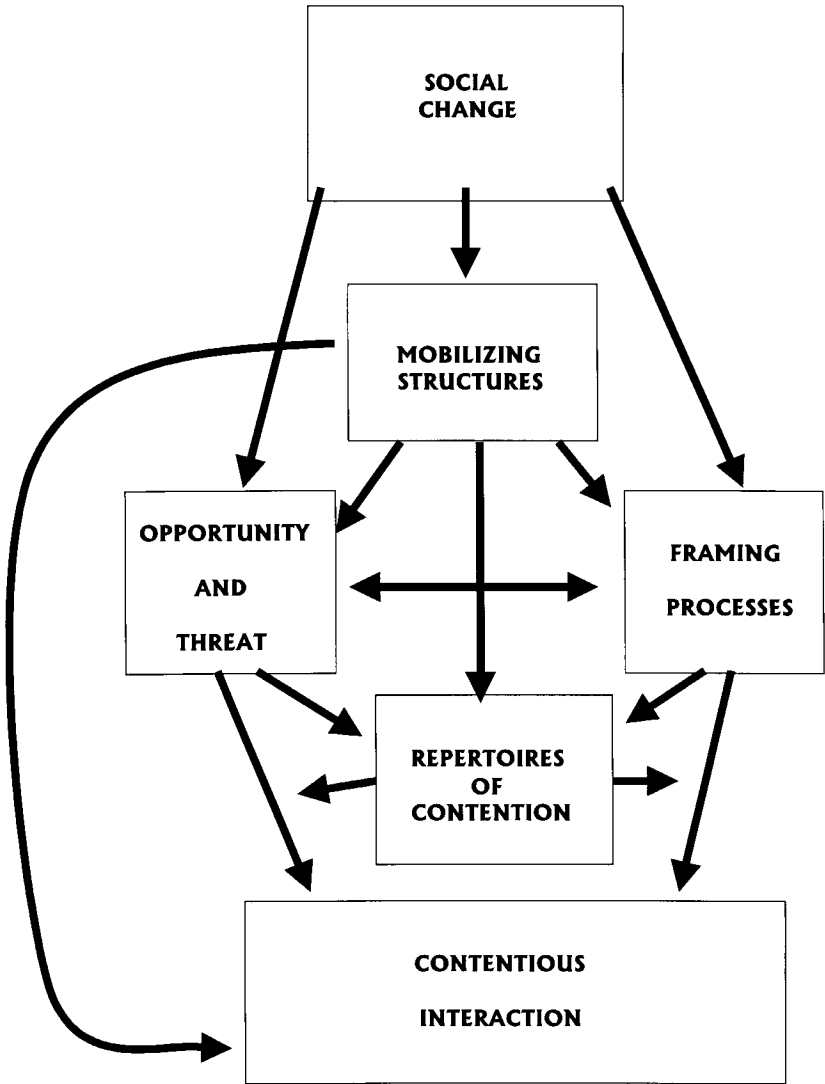
Figure 1.2. The Classic Social Movement Agenda for Explaining Contentious Politics

that population to new opportunities, transform politically potent connections among people affected by the changes, and alter available definitions of what is happening?

2. How much and how do mobilizing structures shape opportunity, framing processes, and contentious interaction? Example: Does the creation of new markets for commodities and labor alter the opportunities to which participants in those markets are exposed as well as the way that shared definitions of what is possible or probable emerge?

3. How much and how do opportunity, mobilizing structures, and framing processes determine repertoires of contention – the array of means by which participants in contentious politics make collective claims? Example: To what extent, and how, do attacks of capitalists on communal property, formation of extensive markets, and emergence of shared ideas concerning exploitation promote the creation of new forms of popular politics such as machine-breaking?

4. How much and how do existing repertoires mediate relations between opportunity and contentious interaction, on one side, between framing processes and contentious interaction, on the other? Example: Does the fact that a given population has a long tradition of public shaming ceremonies for reprobates affect the sorts of opportunities, and the available interpretations of those opportunities, to which members of that population respond collectively?

In the next chapter, we return to this agenda as a source of ideas for explaining the process of mobilization. For now, it is enough to say that it served the field of social movement studies well by stimulating much empirical work, but also by providing a reasonable, if overly structural and static, baseline model of social movements. It worked best as a story about single unified actors in democratic polities; it worked much less well when it came to complex episodes of contention, both there and especially in nondemocratic states. Furthermore, by packing more of its cause-and-effect relations into its underspecified arrows than in its labeled boxes, it provided still photographs of contentious moments rather than dynamic, interactive sequences. Both because it is a static, cause-free single-actor model and because it contains built-in affinities with relatively democratic social movements politics, it serves poorly as a guide to the wide variety of forms of contentious politics outside the world of democratic western

polities. Even in the United States, the model proved partial, overly focused on a limited range of activities.

Consider the American Civil Rights movement, as seen in Greenwood, Mississippi, during the early 1960s. A base of white supremacists, Greenwood lay in the Mississippi Delta's plantation country. During a year that began in the spring of 1962, Greenwood went from intermittent assertion of black rights to swelling (and ultimately quite effective) mobilization. Although many members of Greenwood's black community gave tacit and material support, during that first year, as Charles Payne reports, "the viability of the movement hinged largely on the ability of young organizers to win the confidence of yardmen and maids, cab drivers, beauticians and barbers, custodians and field hands" (Payne 1995: 133). Civil rights activists from elsewhere worked closely with local people, gradually building up networks of mutual trust as they organized around voter registration but faced harassment from local authorities on every front.

It was intense, dangerous work. An idea of the intensity and danger comes from a field report by Joyce Ladner, who later became a major analyst of race, politics, and family life in the United States. Ladner spent the last week of March 1963 in Greenwood during the spring break from her studies at Tougaloo College:

Sunday, March 24: In the evening, someone torched the Council of Federated Organizations office, where she had worked all day.

Monday, March 25: She salvaged office records left by the fire, then prepared for an evening mass meeting.

Tuesday, March 26: Ladner spent the day doing general office work; that evening, the home of Dewey Greene, Sr., (long-time NAACP member with children active in civil rights) was shotgunned.

Wednesday, March 27: Protest march against the shooting, confrontation with mayor, civil rights workers attacked by police dogs and arrested, another mass meeting.

Beside excitement and danger, it also involved boring routine and institutional processes:

Thursday, March 28: Moving temporary headquarters, taking people to register for the vote, teaching citizenship class, group of marchers

attacked by police with dogs, then a mass meeting with well-known local and national leaders.

Friday, March 29: citizenship class, voter registration, confrontation with police (one arrest), and mass meeting.

Saturday, March 30: office work and canvassing for registration (Payne 1995: 168–170).

"In concentrated form," remarks Payne, "Ladner's report captures both the mundane and the dramatic sides of the movement at that point. In the course of one week, she had met three national officers of civil rights groups, had met organizers from across the South, had been exposed to one burning, one shooting, and numberless acts of police violence and intimidation, in-between typing a lot of stencils and stuffing a lot of envelopes. She was also seeing a Black community responding to more repression with more activism – with more mass meetings, with daily marches" (Payne 1995: 170). What analysts often lump together as a single civil rights movement consisted of numberless acts, including not only police violence and confrontation, but also day-by-day creation and transformation of connections among people as well as routine political interactions within and around institutions.

If a single week of 1963 in Greenwood, Mississippi, displays such complexity, compressing the entire civil rights movement into the boxes in Figure 1.2 may provide a convenient checklist of questions to ask, but it cannot yield compelling explanations. What happened inside those boxes? What causal processes do the arrows represent? In order to answer those questions, we have to first call upon other intellectual resources.

Intellectual Resources

If we step back from narrow concentration on the classic social movement agenda and look around, we find other intellectual resources as well as an obstacle to their use. The new resources consist of four overlapping but competing lines of explanation for contention. The obstacles were the significant incompatibilities in the ways followers of those various lines have gathered evidence and assembled explanations. Although the names themselves generate controversy, we can call the four main traditions structural, rationalist, phenomenological, and cultural.

What Are They Shouting About?

Structural analyses   in their purest form, impute interests and capacities to whole collectivities – communities, classes, sometimes even those vague collectivities people call societies. They then explain the behavior of individuals and groups primarily through their relation to the collectivities in question. Methodologically, structuralists commonly concentrate on demonstrating that participation and action within episodes of contention conform to divisions of social organization to which the theories of structure and change at hand assign distinctive interests and capacities.

Rationalist analyses   sometimes impute direction to collectivities such as firms and states, but mostly focus on deliberate choices made by individuals in the light of previously defined interests, resources, and situational constraints. Since the 1960s, rationalists have pursued a program of explanation that competes directly, and often self-consciously, with the structural program. Within such fields of contention as industrial conflict and electoral politics, rationalists have often predominated. In practice, rationalists often focus on evidence that individuals, or collectivities considered as if they were decision-making individuals, make crucial choices (e.g., whether to join a collective action or abstain from it) conforming to their imputed interests, resources, and situational constraints.

Phenomenological approaches   likewise concentrate on individuals (although sometimes individuals writ large), plumbing their states of awareness for explanations of involvement in contentious politics. Many phenomenological analysts emphasize identity questions, answers to the interrogations "Who am I?", "Who are we?", "Who are you?", or "Who are they?" In carrying out their research, phenomenological analysts typically scrutinize utterances and texts (sometimes including symbols, objects, and practices considered as texts) for their implications concerning consciousness. Students of ethnic mobilization, nationalism, religious conflict, and identity-affirming social movements have frequently made phenomenology the fulcrum of their explanations.

Cultural approaches   overlap with phenomenology as they often lodge culture in individual minds. In their pure form, however, such approaches attribute causal power to norms, values, beliefs and symbols that individuals experience and absorb from outside themselves. Cultural analysts have given special attention to two sets of circumstances: explicit organization

of contentious action on behalf of ideologies or other well articulated belief systems and action based on membership in culturally distinctive communities. Like phenomenologists, cultural analysts often engage in hermeneutic treatment of texts. They also sometimes interpret structures such as kinship and trade networks in the style of ethnographers who are more concerned with the meaning than with the topology of those structures.

The labels structural, rational, phenomenological, and cultural, to be sure, designate tendencies rather than neatly segregated camps. Most actual analyses of contentious politics locate themselves in one or two of these categories, but employ some ideas from the others (Goodwin, et al. 1999; McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1997). The best rational action analysis, for example, focuses on the structural properties and effects of markets, firms, or states as it closes in on how individuals make decisions within them. The line of analysis called "collective behavior" concentrates on phenomenological changes that occur within aggregates of people, but in its most compelling versions incorporates structural and cultural constraints on the likelihood that such phenomenological changes will occur. Many structural analysts draw on rational choice or phenomenology when trying to explain how critical shifts in contentious interaction occur. In recent years, however, a number of analysts coming from different perspectives have begun to adopt what we call a "relational" perspective.

The Relational Persuasion

We come from a structuralist tradition. But in the course of our work on a wide variety of contentious politics in Europe and North America, we discovered the necessity of taking strategic interaction, consciousness, and historically accumulated culture into account. We treat social interaction, social ties, communication, and conversation not merely as expressions of structure, rationality, consciousness, or culture but as active sites of creation and change. We have come to think of interpersonal networks, interpersonal communication, and various forms of continuous negotiation – including the negotiation of identities – as figuring centrally in the dynamics of contention.

Something similar has happened to rational action analysts, who increasingly conceive of principal-agent problems, relations to third parties, multiparty games, and similar relational phenomena as strongly affecting initiation, processes, and outcomes of contentious politics. As

a consequence, ironically, both confrontations and collaborations between structural and rational analysts are becoming more frequent (see Lichbach 1998; Lichbach and Zuckerman 1997). The "analytic narratives" proposed by Robert Bates and colleagues (Bates, et al. 1998), for example, generally start from a rationalist perspective, but incorporate multiple relations among political actors. As that study shows, nevertheless, three large gaps continue to separate relational approaches from most rational analysts.

The first gap is ontological. It entails a choice between (a) considering individual minds as the basic, or even the unique, sites of social reality and action and (b) claiming that social transactions have an efficacious reality that is irreducible to individual mental events. The methodological individualism of choice (a) focuses explanation on crucial decisions and their rationales, while the relational realism of choice (b) focuses explanation on webs of interaction among social sites. This book gives ample attention to individual action, but assigns great causal efficacy to relational processes.

The second gap is epistemological and logical, the choice between (c) construing explanation to consist of subsuming low-level empirical generalizations under higher-level empirical generalizations, which at the summit cumulate to covering laws and (d) recognizing as explanation the identification of causal chains consisting of mechanisms that reappear in a wide variety of settings but in different sequences and combinations, hence with different collective outcomes.

In the first view, general accounts of contentious politics would show that all instances of contention conform to laws embodied in recurrent situations, structures, and sequences. Here we would find similarities between analyses of contention and physical mechanics. In the second view, no truly general accounts are practically attainable, but strong if selective recurrent mechanisms and processes appear across ostensibly different varieties of contention. Here we would find resemblances between analyses of contention and molecular biology. This book bets on the second view.

The third gap is historical and cultural. The choice runs between (e) assigning no importance to history and its accumulation into the shared understandings and practices we call culture except insofar as they translate into specifiable interests, resources, and constraints on decision making and (f) supposing that the historical and cultural setting in which contention occurs significantly affects its mobilization, actors, trajectories,

outcomes, and concatenations of causal mechanisms. As contrasted with a pure rationalist view in this regard, we think of contentious processes as sufficiently embedded in history that within concrete social settings the vast majority of actors, actions, identities, mobilization processes, trajectories, and outcomes that are logically possible – or have even happened in broadly similar settings elsewhere in history and culture – do not materialize. Common properties across historically and culturally distinct settings do not consist of similar large structures and sequences but of recurrent causal mechanisms concatenating into causal processes. These are what we hope to reveal through the interactions we observe in the episodes of contention this book takes up.

Causal Mechanisms, Causal Processes, Contentious Episodes

Our book shifts the search away from general models like rational choice that purport to summarize whole categories of contention and moves toward the analysis of smaller-scale causal mechanisms that recur in different combinations with different aggregate consequences in varying historical settings. Let us draw rough distinctions among social mechanisms, processes, and episodes:

Mechanisms are a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations.

Processes are regular sequences of such mechanisms that produce similar (generally more complex and contingent) transformations of those elements.

Episodes are continuous streams of contention including collective claims making that bears on other parties' interests.

Let us turn first to our conception of mechanisms, which draws on a distinguished, but long-dormant tradition in sociology, and then to processes and episodes.

Merton's Mechanisms

Our interest in social mechanisms goes back to Robert Merton, who defined them as "social processes having designated consequences for

designated parts of the social structure" and thought the main task of sociology was to identify such mechanisms (1968: 43–44). While political scientists have always paid attention to institutional mechanisms, rather statically conceived, few sociologists or political scientists took up Merton's challenge to look at dynamic *social* mechanisms until the 1990s, when Jon Elster (1989) and Arthur Stinchcombe (1991) turned to the theme.

Elster focused on the internal "social cogs and wheels" that specify the relations between variables or events (1989: 3). "Mechanisms," wrote Stinchcombe, are "bits of theory about entities at a different level (e.g., individuals) than the main entities being theorized about (e.g., groups) which serve to make the higher-level theory more supple, more accurate, or more general" (1991: 367). Both the Stinchcombe and the Elster view differed from the classical "covering law" model advocated by Hempel and his followers. Following Elster and Stinchcombe, Hedström and Swedberg then chose to specify mechanisms linking variables to one another rather than to focus on the strength of correlations between them that has become the stock in trade of quantitative social science and causal modeling (Hedström and Swedberg 1998: 8–9).

We follow Hedström and Swedberg in this persuasion. We see mechanisms as delimited sorts of events that change relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations. Yet, we part company from them when they conclude that the core idea of the mechanism approach is and must be "methodological individualism" – albeit its weaker and less holistic version (Hedström and Swedberg 1998: 12–13). Their conclusion leads to a focus only on mechanisms that operate at the individual level – such as the "self-fulfilling prophecy" – or on the "network effects" and "bandwagon effects" that derive from it. With such individual-level processes, scholars like James Coleman and Mark Granovetter have made great progress; but they severely limit our ability to interpret collective processes like the ones involved in contentious politics.

Within contentious politics, we can impose a rough distinction among environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms.

Environmental mechanisms mean externally generated influences on conditions affecting social life. Such mechanisms can operate directly: For example, resource depletion or enhancement affects people's capacity to engage in contentious politics (McCarthy and Zald, ed. 1987).

Cognitive mechanisms operate through alterations of individual and collective perception; words like recognize, understand, reinterpret, and classify characterize such mechanisms. Our vignettes from Paris and Greenwood show people shifting in awareness of what could happen through collective action; when we look more closely, we will observe multiple cognitive mechanisms at work, individual by individual. For example, commitment is a widely recurrent individual mechanism in which persons who individually would prefer not to take the risks of collective action find themselves unable to withdraw without hurting others whose solidarity they value – sometimes at the cost of suffering serious loss.

Relational mechanisms alter connections among people, groups, and interpersonal networks. Brokerage, a mechanism that recurs throughout Parts II and III of the book, we define as the linking of two or more previously unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites. Most analysts see brokerage as a mechanism relating groups and individuals to one another in stable sites, but it can also become a relational mechanism for mobilization during periods of contentious politics, as new groups are thrown together by increased interaction and uncertainty, thus discovering their common interests.

Environmental, cognitive, and relational mechanisms combine. In Chapter 6, for example, we will see how the onset of the American Civil War occurred against the background of an *environmental* mechanism (the massive antebellum shift of population and voters to the West); through a *cognitive* mechanism (the widespread interpretation of southern vs. northern westward expansion as a zero-sum game); and a *relational* mechanism (brokerage of a coalition between free-soil-seeking Westerners and antislavery Northerners). We give some attention to environmental mechanisms such as population growth and shift, proletarianization and urbanization, but pay more attention in our narratives to cognitive and relational mechanisms.

How will we recognize a relevant social mechanism when we see one? In general terms, when a mechanism is at work, we see interactions among the elements in question altering the established connections among them. Consider the familiar mechanism in contentious politics that we call "signaling." In a risky situation, participants often scan each other for signs

of readiness to incur costs without defecting, modulating their behavior according to estimates of the likelihood that others will flee. As would-be marchers mill before a demonstration, for example, exchanges of words and gestures signal their degrees of determination, self-possession, and fear. Veteran demonstrators and skilled organizers project confidence to less experienced participants. In most circumstances, that form of signaling reduces the likelihood that the inexperienced will run away. If, however, demonstration veterans recognize the lineup of glowering troops as dangerous and show their fear, signaling actually promotes defection. The mechanism is essentially the same, the outcome significantly different.

Mechanisms and Processes

Mechanisms seldom operate on their own. They typically concatenate with other mechanisms into broader processes (Gambetta 1998: 105). Processes are frequently recurring causal chains, sequences, and combinations of mechanisms. Processes worth singling out here involve recurrent combinations and sequences of mechanisms that operate identically or with great similarity across a variety of situations. Part III takes up the analysis more systematically than the book's earlier sections. Starting from the well-known macro-processes of revolution, democratization, and nationalism, Part III examines the concatenation of mechanisms into narrower processes such as actor constitution, polarization, and scale shift. We will find such robust processes recurring in wide varieties of contentious episodes.

Mechanisms and processes form a continuum. It is arbitrary, for example, whether we call brokerage a mechanism, a family of mechanisms, or a process. In this book, we generally call it a mechanism to emphasize its recurring features. At one end of the continuum, a mechanism such as "identity shift" – alteration during contentious claim making of public answers to the question: "Who are you?" – qualifies as a narrow-end mechanism. At the continuum's other end, democratization cannot possibly qualify as a single mechanism. It clearly involves multiple mechanisms that combine differently in various concrete experiences. Chapter 9 sketches a process theory of democratization involving combinations or sequences of mechanisms producing moves toward (as well as away from) democracy.

A preview of the mechanisms and processes appearing in Chapter 2 will illustrate what we have in mind:

- mobilization, a familiar process we elaborate first in Chapter 2, concatenates a number of interacting mechanisms, starting from the environmental ones that have been broadly labeled "social change processes" passing through mechanisms such as attribution of opportunity and threat, social appropriation, framing of the dispute, and arraying of innovative forms of collective action. Using the civil rights movement as our benchmark here, we will explore how concerted attention to these mechanisms can put mobilization into motion
- another family of mechanisms is what we call "political identity formation." As in the case of mobilization, some of these mechanisms are cognitive and some relational. The establishment of political identities involves changes in the awareness within the persons involved as well as within other parties to those identities, but it also involves alterations in connections among the affected persons and groups. Later chapters track regularities in the process of political identity formation, observing how different combinations and sequences of the same small set of mechanisms produce significantly different variants on that process, hence significantly different outcomes, in revolutions, nationalist mobilizations, democratization and social movements. Chapter 2 moves from mobilization to illustrate the mechanism of identity shift from our benchmark case of the French Revolution
- both sets of processes come together in the trajectories of contention, alongside a family of mechanisms typically associated with protest cycles, revolutions, and other forms of contention. We complete Chapter 2 by using our third benchmark case, Italian contention, to illuminate how the mechanisms of repression, diffusion, and radicalization operate within complex episodes of contention

Episodes

We seek to get causal mechanisms and processes right by locating them within episodes of contention. Episodes are not merely complicated processes. They always involve two or more processes. However narrowly we delimit the episode called the Parisian revolution of July 1789, we always discover some combination of mobilization, identity shift, and polarization, three very general but distinct processes and mechanisms in contentious politics. The explanatory agenda becomes clear. It consists of

- identifying contentious episodes or families of contentious episodes having some problematic feature
- locating the processes within them that constitute or produce the problematic feature
- searching out the crucial causal mechanisms within those processes

Thus we can examine a set of episodes in which people respond to increased repression by striking back at their enemies instead of fleeing or subsiding into passivity. In such episodes we frequently find the processes of mobilization and polarization occurring together. Within those processes we will find such mechanisms as collective attribution of threat and reinforcement of commitment producing crucial effects. In this way, we can begin to fashion a causal account of resistance to massive threat.

To treat an entire stream of confrontations as a single episode allows us to think through similarities and differences with conflict streams that have occurred elsewhere or in the same system in different historical moments. France's having had revolutions in 1830, 1848, and 1871 that resembled in some ways the one in 1789 does not make all French revolutions identical, but it does make their comparison interesting. That France, Germany, Italy, and the United States had peaks of contention in 1968 does not make them part of One Grand Movement, but it raises the issue of whether similar mechanisms and processes were activated in each – not to mention drawing attention to the relations among them.

Regarding an entire stream of confrontations as a single episode poses enormous problems. Many scholars have thought of revolutions, wars, social movements, massacres, demonstrations, tax rebellions, food riots, and other such episodes as self-contained entities, while others have proposed generalizations concerning their typical sequences, forms, origins or outcomes. Our idea goes beyond those approaches in four related ways:

- First, we treat the idea of recurrent uniformities in whole episodes as a dubious hypothesis to be tested with care, rather than assumed at the outset. In our work, we have detected variable sequences and combinations of mechanisms and processes.
- Second, we see episodes not as natural entities but as observers' lenses, bounded and observed according to conventions established by participants, witnesses, commentators, and analysts of past episodes. We insist on self-conscious creation of comparability in

delineating episodes, as well as the recognition that the principles of that delineation – long or short, in small areas or large, through a top-down or bottom-up vision – significantly affect which mechanisms and processes become visible.

- Third, we consider the naming and labeling of episodes to be consequential political acts in their own right, part of what we must eventually explain. For participants or their successors to decide that an episode qualifies as a revolution or as a huge riot makes a difference to the identities activated, allies gained or lost, governmental measures the episode triggers, and readiness of other citizens to commit themselves in the course of later political action.
- Fourth, we see such episodes not as linear sequences of contention in which the same actors go through the repeated motions of expressing preestablished claims in lock-step, but as iterative sites of interaction in which different streams of mobilization and demobilization intersect, identities form and evolve, and new forms of action are invented, honed, and rejected as actors interact with one another and with opponents and third parties.

We employ mechanisms and processes as our workhorses of explanation, episodes as our workhorses of description. We therefore make a bet on how the social world works: that big structures and sequences never repeat themselves, but result from differing combinations and sequences of mechanisms with very general scope. Even within a single episode, we will find multiform, changing, and self-constructing actors, identities, forms of action and interaction, as a glimpse at our third benchmark case reveals.

By the early 1960s, Italy's postwar economic "miracle" was coming down to earth. As the supply of cheap labor from the South began to dry up, Cold War tensions eased, secularization eroded Catholic political dominance, and the contradictions built into its growth model began to sharpen. A spurt of industrial conflict in the early 1960s warned that changes had to be made. A brief reprieve occurred as Socialists entered the government, leaving their Communist allies isolated in opposition (Ginsborg 1989: ch. 8). Reforms followed, but each attempted reform either triggered a right-wing backlash (as did the nationalization of electricity), or opened the floodgates to broader contention (as did the passage of a modern industrial relations law).

When the explosion came in the late 1960s, a surprise was in store for those who had feared a Communist-led working class onslaught. The

What Are They Shouting About?

1967–1968 wave of protest began with a social actor outside the PCI's traditional subculture: the middle-class student population. It was significant of the new identities emerging in the student population that the earliest outbreaks of insurgency took place in both the secular Universities of Turin and Pisa and Catholic centers of learning in Milan and Trento. Indicative of the remaining potency of Italy's Marxist subculture, the insurgents framed their demands in workerist terms. But their links to the industrial working class were weak. The main force of university-based rebellion subsided by 1969 (Tarrow 1989).

A second wave of contention began even before the first one was spent. From the start, Italy's 1968 was marked by violent clashes between extreme left and right – and by both against the forces of order which, however, appeared to the leftists to be soft on the rightists. A major turning point in the new cycle of violence was the bombing of the Bank of Agriculture in Piazza Fontana in Milan, followed by "the accidental death of an anarchist" in police custody and the assassination of the police official thought responsible for his death. Fed by both new recruits from the high schools and by police repressive tactics, this new wave evolved into the terrorist attacks on industrialists, state officials, and journalists in the early-to-mid-1970s (della Porta 1990).

The year 1969 also saw the rise of a third, and largely autonomous wave of contention. Stimulated by the students' example, by the new industrial relations law then under discussion, and the external factor of the Vietnam-era inflation, contention spread to the factories (Franzosi 1995). The "Hot Autumn" was at first limited to the large factories of the North, but it was especially violent among the new wave of semi-skilled "mass" workers who had entered the workforce in the "miracle" years of the 1950s. Skilled workers and white-collar workers who had enjoyed higher wages responded to the successes of the mass workers by demanding the preservation of wage differentials. Unions, anxious not to be outflanked, quickly took hold of working class insurgency and moved sharply to the left in their demands and their ideology.

These streams of mobilization interacted in different ways with public politics. For all three sets of actors, splits in the elite exacerbated conflict and created opportunities for contention. But the University students' movement was dealt with through a combination of dispersed repression and pallid educational reform. The industrial workers gained new rights of participation and major wage increases, and the terrorist threat was met by concerted repression. Eventually, the political class closed ranks in a

coalition of national solidarity that included the parties of the Left to restore economic growth and defend the state from its enemies.

How we see this episode will differ according to whether we focus on the students of 1968 – in which case Italy does not look very different from any of the other countries that experienced student rebellions in that year; on the industrial workers' movement – which described a much longer parabola and was far more contained than the student movement; or on the violent end of the period, whose actors were different and whose forms of action far more transgressive. Not only that: we will find different mechanisms and processes at work according to which sector of contention we focus on or which period of the cycle we examine. That we will see clearly in the next chapter.

Our Agenda

In this study, a search for explanatory mechanisms and processes takes the place occupied by the checklist of variables – opportunity, threat, mobilizing structures, repertoires, framing – we saw in the classic social movement agenda. Although we helped promote the agenda displayed in Figure 1.2, we mean this book to go well beyond it. The problems posed by each box and arrow in the diagram recur throughout the chapters to come. But we seek more adequate ways of dealing with such phenomena as formation of political identities, mobilization of different actors, fragmentation or coalescence of collective action, and mutation of the paths taken by ongoing struggles. We seek, for example, to lodge interpretive processes firmly in the give-and-take of social interaction rather than treating them as autonomous causal forces. Because of the urge to get causal connections right, we reject the effort to build general models of all contention or even of its varieties. Instead, within each major aspect of contention we search for robust, widely applicable causal mechanisms that explain crucial – but not all – features of contention.

Seen as wholes, the French Revolution, the American civil rights movement, and Italian contention look quite different from each other; the first toppled a national regime and reordered relations among all its political actors, the second introduced into a surviving national regime a bit more political equality and a powerful set of precedents for political claim making, while the third – despite its high level of violence – led to little palpable change in political practice. Yet when we take apart the three

histories, we find a number of common mechanisms that moved the conflicts along and transformed them: creation of new actors and identities through the very process of contention; brokerage by activists who connected previously insulated local clumps of aggrieved people; competition among contenders that led to factional divisions and re-alignments, and much more. These mechanisms concatenated into more complex processes such as radicalization and polarization of conflict; formation of new balances of power; and re-alignments of the polity along new lines.

Those are the sorts of connections we seek in this book. Our project is not to identify wholesale repetitions of large structures and sequences, but to single out significant recurrent mechanisms and processes as well as principles of variation. Our general strategy is the following:

- recognize that in principle contention ranges among wars, revolutions, social movements, industrial conflict, and a number of other forms of interaction that analysts have ordinarily conceived of as *sui generis*
- elaborate concepts calling attention to these similarities; call upon the major concepts developed out of the study of social movements in western democracies since the 1960s to make a start
- improve on those concepts by critique and autocritique, then by applying the product of critique and autocritique to other settings and periods of history
- across these settings and periods, look for recurrences not among whole phenomena but among mechanisms revealed within these phenomena – for example, parallels between the mechanisms of brokerage in social movement cycles and revolutionary situations
- examine how these causal mechanisms combine into longer chains of political processes, for example how identity shift and brokerage combine in episodes of nationalism. From identification of such processes, create not general theories of contention but partial theories corresponding to these robust causal similarities
- establish scope conditions with regard to time, space, and social setting under which such partial theories hold and those in which they do not. Ask, for example, whether transnational mobilization mirrors the same international mechanisms as mobilization at the national or local levels

- treat discontinuities in those scope conditions – for instance, the discovery that explanations built into social movement theories coming from liberal democracies apply badly outside such regimes – not as cultural roadblocks but as challenges to undertake new theories and comparisons

The present book is no research monograph. Despite its innumerable examples and its sustained presentation of cases, it works with its evidence primarily to advance and illustrate new ways of thinking about contentious politics. For this reason, it often features schematic summaries of episodes rather than deep explorations of their foundations. Never, never do we claim to have provided comprehensive explanations of the contentious events the book examines. We seek to establish illuminating partial parallels and use them to identify recurring causal processes. We hope thereby to inspire new ways of studying contentious politics.

Mobilization, Actors, Trajectories

We group these problems provisionally under three broad headings: mobilization, actors, and trajectories, categories which will guide our efforts in the next chapter and in Part II:

- With respect to *mobilization* we must explain how people who at a given point in time are not making contentious claims start doing so – and, for that matter, how people who are making claims stop doing so. (We can call that reverse process *de*mobilization.)
- With regard to *actors* we need to explain what sorts of actors engage in contention, what identities they assume, and what forms of interaction they produce. Fortified by these contributions, we elaborate an approach to actors as contingent constructions as well as an approach to contentious interaction in terms of repertoires that vary as a function of actors' political connections.
- When it comes to *trajectories*, we face the problem of explaining the course and transformation of contention, including its impact on life outside of the immediate interactions of contentious politics.

Relations among mobilization/demobilization, actors, and trajectories will preoccupy us throughout the book. To what extent, for example, do certain political actors display distinctive mobilization patterns that produce standard trajectories? When provisional committees and militias

formed all over France in the summer of 1789, to what extent and why did mobilization, struggle, and transformation in one locality resemble their counterparts in Paris or in other localities? How regular were the patterns by which black southerners got involved in civil rights, and how much did those patterns determine the course and outcome of civil rights struggles? And for all their inventiveness, did Italian workers of the 1960s move from inaction to action or back in ways so predictable that the trajectory of one struggle usually resembled that of the last?

In Part II of the study we move from our three touchstone cases to a broader set of paired comparisons designed to force the analysis toward connecting mobilization, actors, and trajectories. In the course of those comparisons we single out recurrent causal mechanisms and processes affecting mobilization, action, trajectories, and their interaction in a wide variety of settings and types of contention.

Eventually that effort will require us to abandon the distinctions among mobilization, actors, and trajectories that organize the book's first part. Questions about who acts, how they move between action and inaction, or what trajectories their actions follow turn out to be just that: good questions. Their answers dissolve the questions in two ways. First, we discover that the same array of causal mechanisms and processes operates in the three ostensibly separate spheres. Then we find that each is simply a different way of looking at the same phenomena. Mobilization questions become trajectory questions once we stop assuming a sharp discontinuity between contention and all other politics, trajectory questions become questions about actors, identities, and actions once we start examining how interactions among sites change as contention proceeds. Thus, as we move into Part III, we take down the scaffolding within which we built Parts I and II.

Parts II and III use their comparisons differently. Part II searches for causal mechanisms and processes that produce similar effects in a wide variety of contentious politics. It does so by matching obviously different sorts of episodes, then showing that identical mechanisms and processes play significant parts in those episodes. Chapter 3 explains that strategy in greater detail. Holding provisionally to a division among mobilization–demobilization (Chapter 4), actors (Chapter 5), and trajectories (Chapter 6), the analyses in Part II yield an inventory of nine wide-ranging mechanisms.

Part III adopts a different strategy. Abandoning distinctions among mobilization, action, and trajectories, it turns to three varieties of

contentious episodes for which conventional names and separate literatures exist: revolution, nationalism, and democratization. The aim is threefold: first, to show that the sorts of mechanisms and processes identified in Part II actually help explain salient differences between contrasting episodes within such categories as revolution, nationalism, and democratization, then to establish that similar mechanisms and processes actually recur across such broad types of contention, and, finally, to examine whether recurring processes are regularly composed of the mechanisms we identify them with in our cases. Examined in detail, revolutions, nationalism, and democratization result from similar causes in different settings, sequences, and concatenations.

Here, then, is how our book works. The following chapter (Chapter 2) sets the book's explanatory problems. It uses our three touchstone cases to examine mobilization, actors, and trajectories. Chapter 3 concludes Part I by laying out the map of our comparisons and the logic behind them. Chapter 4 begins Part II with the mobilization process in the Mau Mau rebellion and the Philippine Yellow revolution. Chapter 5 compares the construction and politicization of Hindu–Muslim conflict and its implications for mobilization and trajectories with similar mechanisms and processes in South Africa. In Chapter 6, we trace the trajectories of American antislavery and Spanish democratization to explicate how identities were transformed and mobilization formed in those episodes. We then sum up our conclusions concerning intersections of mobilization, actors, and trajectories before dissolving those distinctions.

Part III of the study takes up three distinct literatures regarding contention – revolution, nationalism, and democratization – in view of the paths our quest has followed. The goal of that concluding section is to emphasize the commonalities as well as the differences in those forms of contention through an examination of the explanatory mechanisms and political processes we have uncovered in Parts I and II. To do that, we make two integrative leaps, moving (a) outward from the classical social movement agenda that has dominated research on contentious politics in the United States during recent years and (b) across a variety of methods. We accomplish those leaps chiefly by showing how the same sorts of causal mechanisms we identified in Part II reappear in the course of revolutionary processes, nationalist claim making, and democratization.

In terms of the classic social movement agenda, we offer new answers to old questions. Before concerted contention begins, whose opportunity, threat, mobilizing structures, repertoires, and framing processes matter,

and how? Of the many names in which people sometimes make claims, why do only a few typically prevail as public bases of contentious interaction? What governs the course and outcome of that interaction? How does participation in contention itself alter opportunities, threats, mobilizing structures, repertoires, and framing processes? Questions of this sort make clear that the classic approach to social movements concentrates on mobilization and demobilization; it provides relatively weak guides to explanation of action, actors, identities, trajectories, or outcomes. Even within the zone of mobilization, it works best when one or a few previously constituted political actors move into public contention. To understand broader and less structured processes of contention, we must develop an expanded research agenda.

Let us insist: Our aim is not to construct general models of revolution, democratization, or social movements, much less of all political contention whenever and wherever it occurs. On the contrary, we aim to identify crucial causal mechanisms that recur in a wide variety of contention, but produce different aggregate outcomes depending on the initial conditions, combinations, and sequences in which they occur. We start with what we know best, or think we know: three episodes of modern western contention in France, the United States, and Italy. We move from there to systematic comparison of cases we know less well. In the book's final section, we take up revolution, nationalism, ethnic mobilization, and democratization to identify interactions and parallels among them. If we have succeeded, readers will leave this book with refreshed understanding of familiar processes and a new program for research on contentious politics in all its varieties.