

PLS 140 Introduction to comparative politics

Week 4 – September 7
Social movements

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Social movements

- ◉ An organized effort by a large number of people to **bring about** or **impede** social change.
- ◉ Differ in size but collective.
- ◉ A movement is not necessarily an organization.
 - > Ex: Occupy Wall Street has no leadership.
- ◉ But organizations can be part of a social movement.
 - > Ex: women's organization in gun regulations movement.
- ◉ Are different from political parties or interest groups in that they are not as hierarchic or bureaucratic.

Social movements and contentious politics

- ◉ Politics outside of parliaments.
- ◉ **Contentious politics** is the use of disruptive techniques to make a political point, or to change government policy.
- ◉ Based on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about conflictual issues, through the frequent use of various forms of mobilization.
- ◉ The collective challenges nourish **sustained** interactions with elites, opponents, and authorities.
 - > One-time events do not qualify as SM.

Social movements create social change

- ◉ Groups might attempt to create change
 - > Suffragettes, Occupy Wall Street, Arab Spring.
- ◉ To resist change
 - > anti-globalization movement, Manif pour tous.
- ◉ To provide a political voice to those otherwise disenfranchised
 - > Civil rights movements in the US.

Examples in KZ?

Other aims

- Many also tend to emphasize social changes in lifestyle instead of specific changes in public policy or for economic change.
 - > Ex: the Slow Food movement in opposition to the fast-food lifestyle that is found unhealthy and unsustainable.
 - > Diverse environmental activists: vegetarianism, veganism.

Emergence – It's about opportunities

- ◉ In response to situations of inequality, oppression and/or unmet social, political, economic or cultural demands.
- ◉ Breakdown in social control mechanisms and corresponding feeling of normlessness.
 - > Ex: decolonization, wars (WW2, Vietnam).
 - > Ex: urbanisation.
- ◉ The better the movements' symbols, networks resources, the easier it will be to exploit even modest opportunities.
- ◉ When successful, movements create opportunities for other movements, which can also borrow **repertoires of contention** from unrelated movements.

Repertoires of contention

- ◉ Set of various protest-related tools and actions available to a movement or related organization in a given time frame.
 - > Petitions.
 - > Gatherings.
 - > Demonstrations/Marches.
 - > Riots.
 - > Sit-ins.
- ◉ Repeated use of the same repertoire diminishes its effectiveness and thus encourages tactical innovation → radicalization? FEMEN?

John Lennon and Yoko Ono's bed-in against the Vietnam war



Are social movements left or right wing?

- ◉ Are left-wing groups more active?
- ◉ Right-wing groups already have the law on their side?
- ◉ They may be radical or conservative, highly organized or very diffused, they are all examples of social movements.
 - > Manif pour tous, Tea Party, Pro-Life movements, Westboro Baptist Church.

Manif pour tous (Demonstration for all) in France against the right for gay/lesbian couples to adopt children



Westboro Baptist Church in the USA



Main points from the Contentious politics (Conpol) article

- It involves contention: the making of interest-entailing on others.
- At least one party is the gvt/authority.
- Problem #1 is that the study of Conpol is fragmented between academic disciplines.
- Problem #2 Events studied in isolation from mass phenomena that are thought to produce them.

Main points from the Conpol article- **Movements**

- They rarely appear alone. They are part of cycles.
- Participants not only protest, they assert their own identities.
- Effective when 1- forge alliances with others, 2- are disruptive, 3- influence the electoral game, 4- pressure from external powerholders.

Main points from the Conpol article – **Collective identities**

- Acknowledge the importance of identity in collective behavior.
- Critique of the Rational Choice theory: People don't necessarily weigh the costs and benefits of their participation.
- They participate because they are embedded in social structures.

Main points from the Conpol article – **Institutional politics**

- No clear separation from institutional politics.
- Movements and political parties are not mutually exclusive.
 - > Ex: Front national in France
 - > Ex: Trump supporters.

Contentious politics (Conpol)

- (1) map the subfields of history, sociology, political science, and economics that deal with conpol;
- (2) produce a tentative synthesis of theory and research across those subfields;
- (3) identify scope conditions for causal analogies;
- (4) consider how forms and dynamics of popular struggle are changing today.