

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Contentious Politics: Social Movements, Political Violence, and Revolution

The logo for the Department of Political Science features a blue rectangular background. On the left side, there is a diagonal split between an orange triangle pointing down and a teal triangle pointing up. The text "DEPARTMENT OF" is in a smaller, light blue font, and "POLITICAL SCIENCE" is in a larger, bold, dark blue font.

DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Orvis and Drogus note that 2011 was a banner year for political protest;



Those who make
**peaceful
revolution**
impossible will make
violent revolution
inevitable

-John F. Kennedy

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

...from the “Arab Spring” to the “Occupy” movement to protests against economic policies in Spain, Greece, and Italy; citizens everywhere seemed to mass in the streets demanding change.

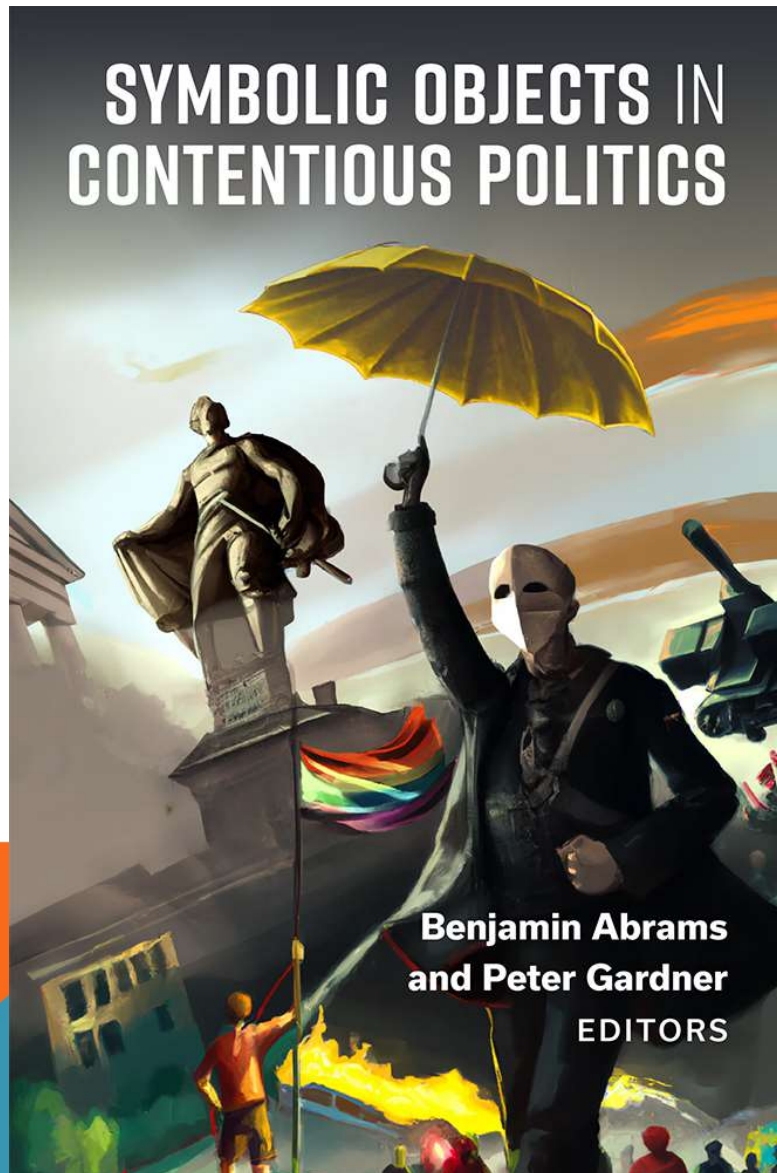


COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Although not all of those protests succeeded, they gave new impetus to a long-standing area of interest in comparative politics, what most scholars refer to as “*contentious politics*.”



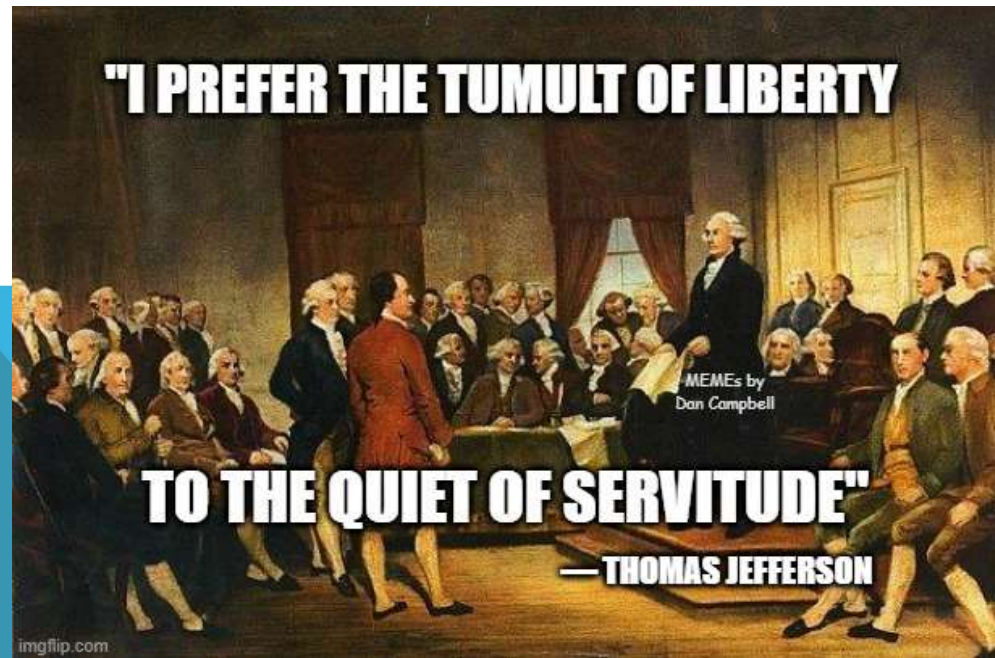
COMPARATIVE POLITICS



Contentious politics is political activity that is at least in part beyond institutional bounds.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Groups form over grievances and demand change; they may work via elections and other institutions as well, but the hallmark of contentious politics is extra-constitutional activity: petitions, protests, riots, violence, civil war, and revolution.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Contentious politics is ubiquitous. Although regime-threatening acts of political violence are relatively rare, protests are common.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

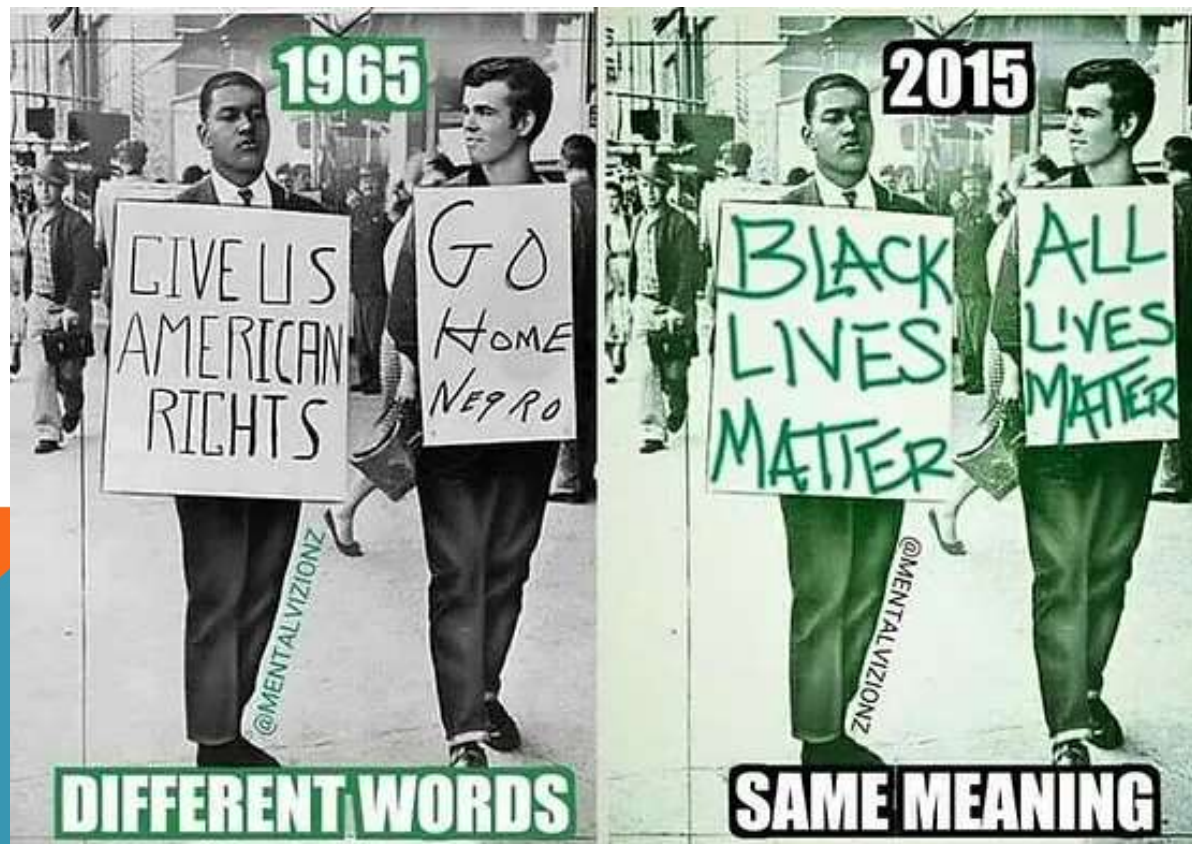


In contrast to most people's perceptions, protest is most common in wealthy democracies whereas serious violence and terrorism are scourges of poorer societies.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Key questions to ask:

1. How and why are people mobilized to participate in contentious politics?



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

2. How do social movements and other forms of contentious politics function, and what effects do they have on governments and policies?



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

3. What effects have globalization and the advent of Internet-based communications and social media had on contentious politics, a phenomenon highlighted in the 2011 protests?

some are posting on social media
some are protesting in the streets
some are donating silently
some are educating themselves
some are having tough conversations with friends & family

a revolution has many lanes — be kind to yourself and to others who are traveling in the same direction

just keep your foot on the gas

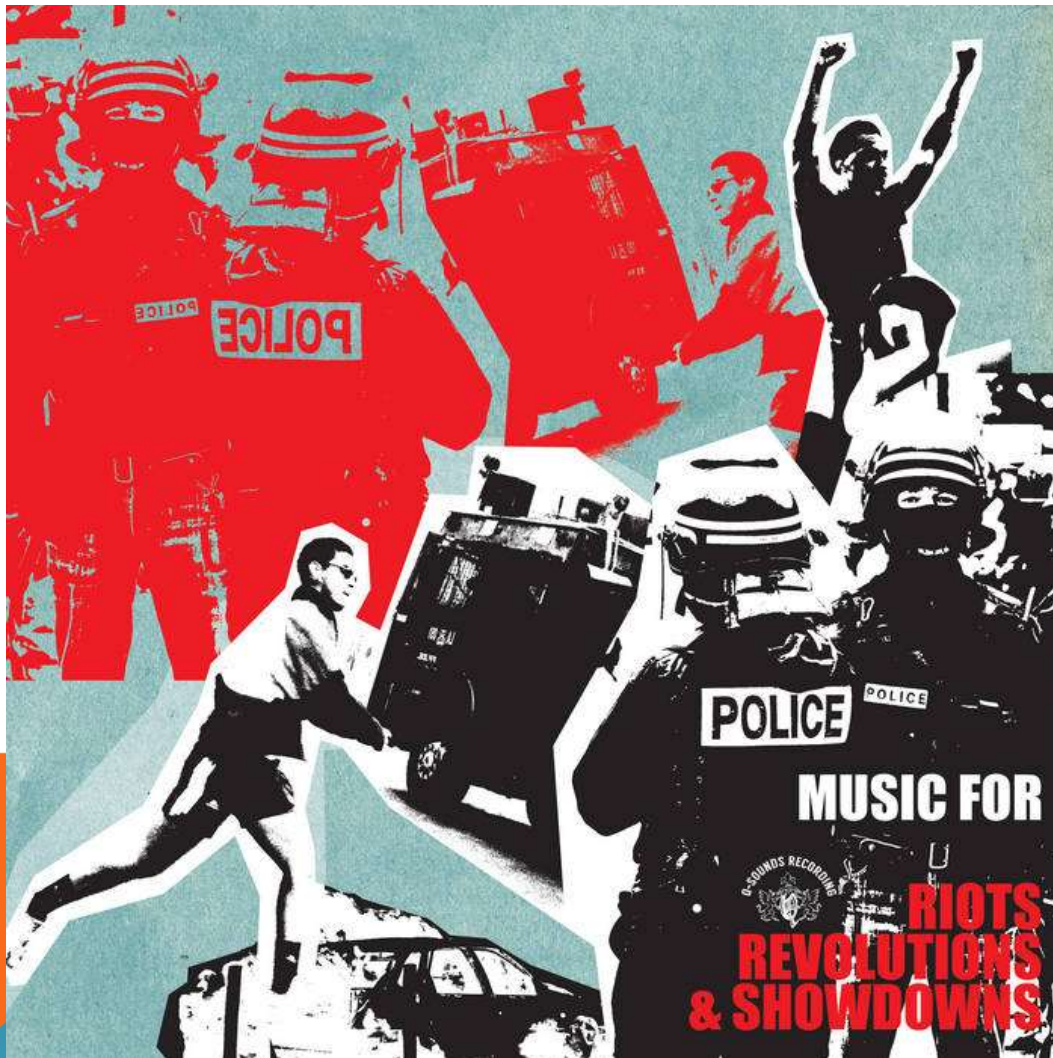


COMPARATIVE POLITICS

4. Why do politics sometimes turn violent and take the form of terrorism or civil war?



COMPARATIVE POLITICS



5. Why do revolutions – contentious political episodes that change regimes – arise?

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Framing Contentious Politics

Social Movements – Part of civil society; they have a loosely defined organizational structure and represent people who perceive themselves to be outside formal institutions, seek major socioeconomic or political changes, or employ noninstitutional forms of collective action.

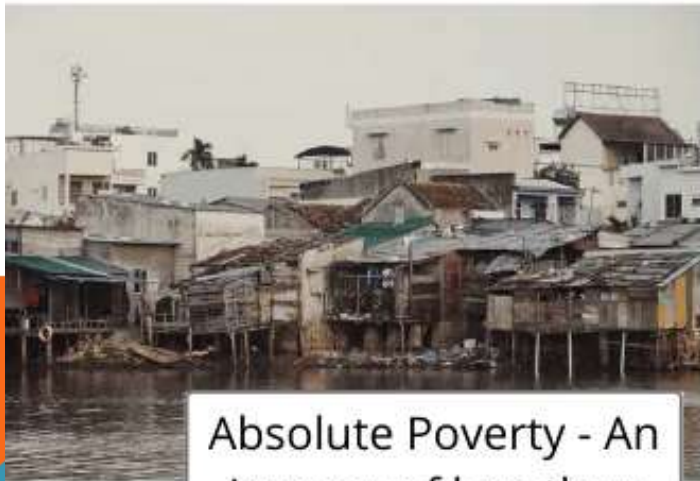


COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Relative Deprivation

A group's or individual's belief that they are not getting their share of something of value relative to others.

Absolute vs Relative Poverty



Absolute Poverty - An
Income of less than
\$1.90 per day



Relative Poverty -
60% of median
national income

COMPARATIVE POLITICS



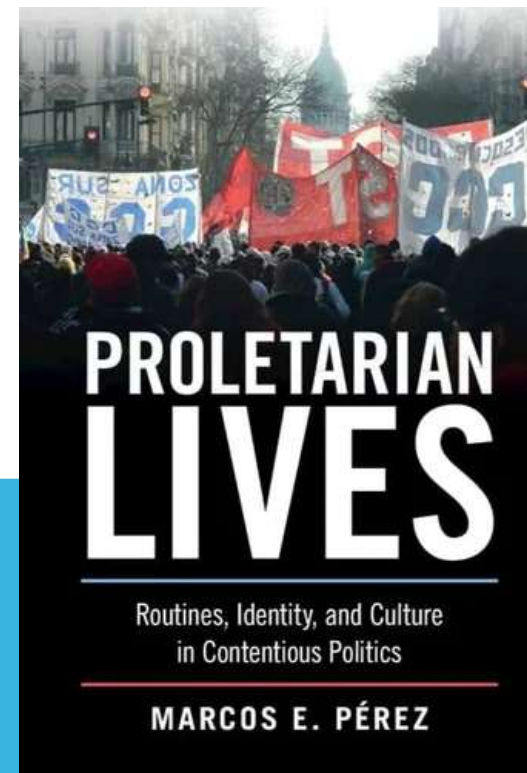
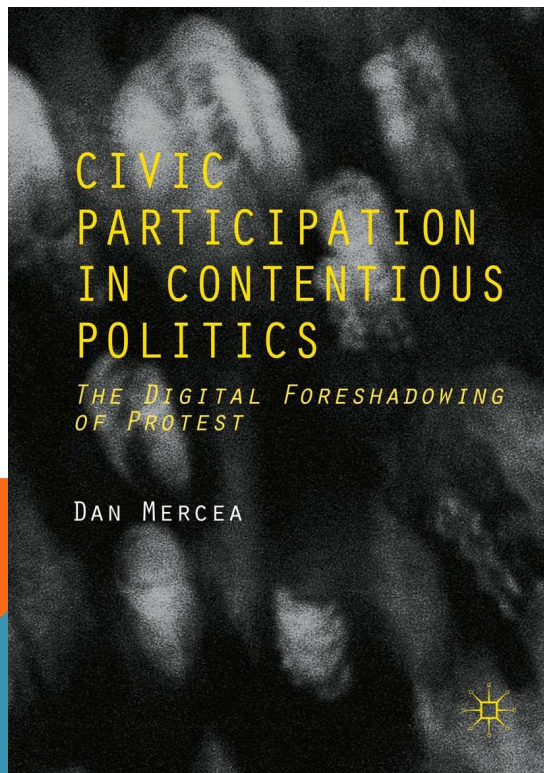
Political Opportunity Structure

The extent to which a regime is open to influence from social movements and other extra-institutional groups.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

How Contentious Politics Happen

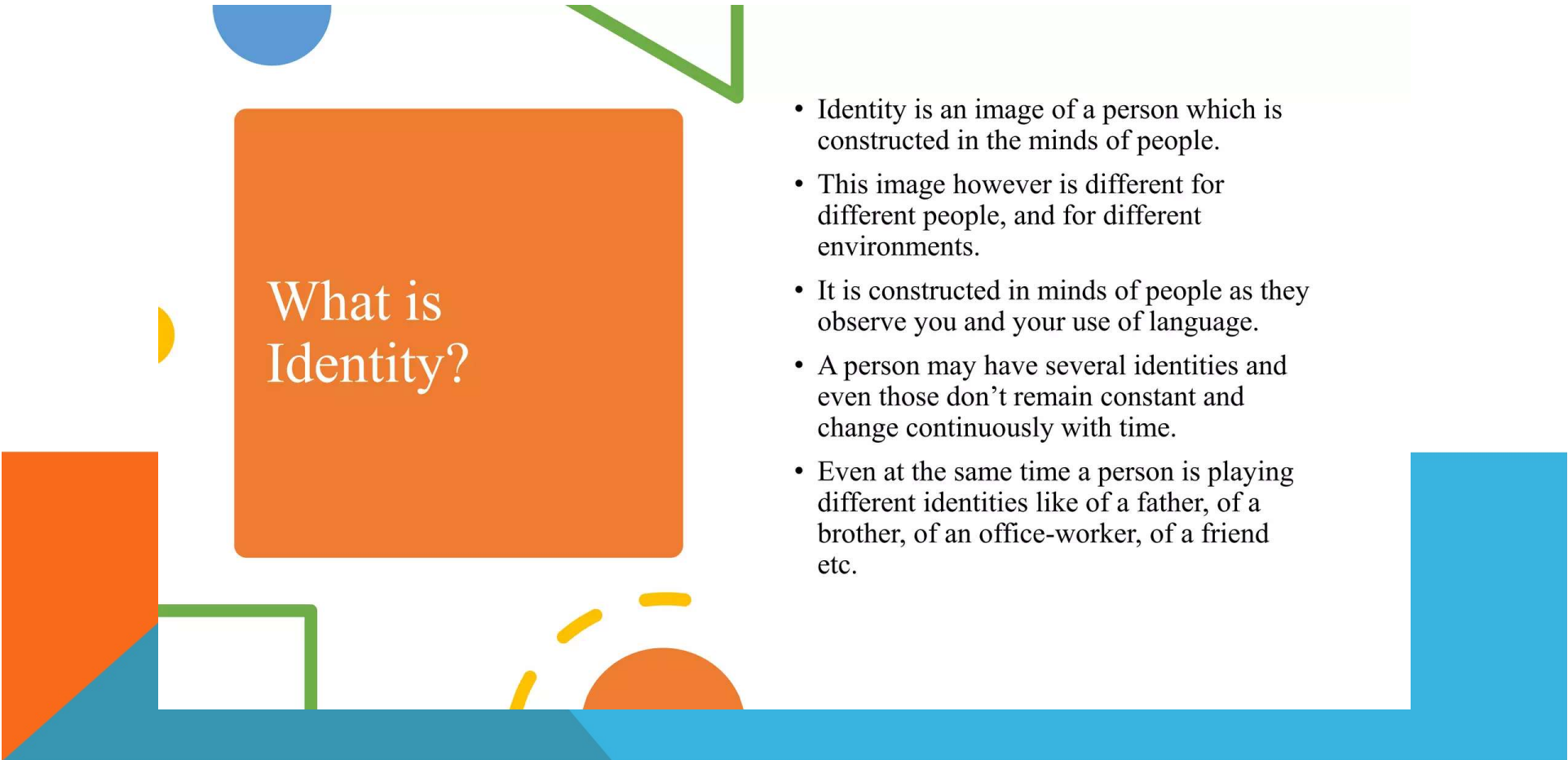
1. Strategies and Repertoires
2. Political Opportunity Structures



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

3. Discourse and Identity

4. New Communications Technology



What is Identity?

- Identity is an image of a person which is constructed in the minds of people.
- This image however is different for different people, and for different environments.
- It is constructed in minds of people as they observe you and your use of language.
- A person may have several identities and even those don't remain constant and change continuously with time.
- Even at the same time a person is playing different identities like of a father, of a brother, of an office-worker, of a friend etc.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

5. Transnational Activism (Global Justice Movement or GJM)



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Political Violence

Political Violence – The use of physical force by nonstate actors for political ends.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

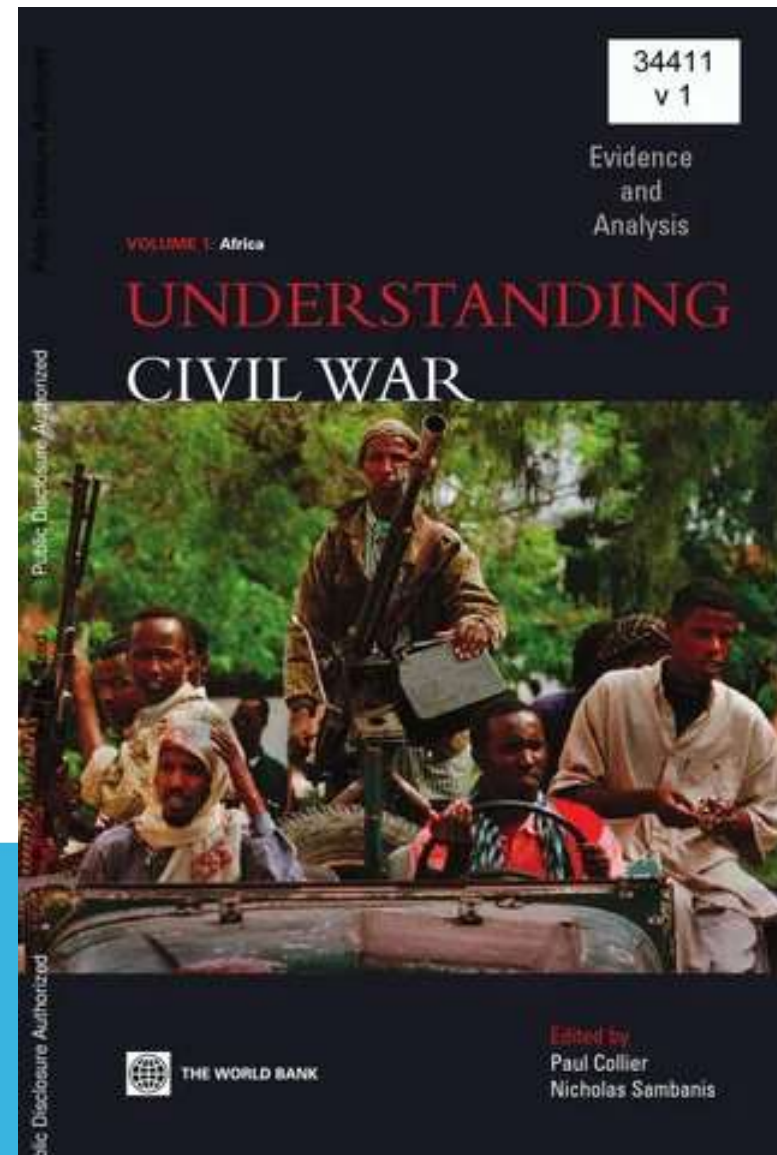
Security Dilemma – A situation in which two or more groups do not trust and may even fear one another, and do not believe that institutional constraints will protect them, increasing the likelihood that violence will break out between them.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Civil War

Two or more armed groups, at least one of which is tied to the most recent regime in power, fight for control of the state.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Terrorism

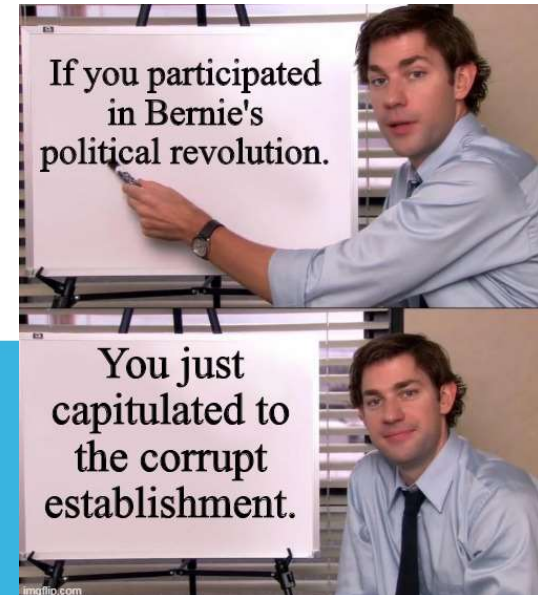
Political violence or the threat of violence by groups or individuals who deliberately target civilians or noncombatants in order to influence the behavior and actions of targeted publics and governments.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Revolution

Political Revolution – The fundamental transformation of an existing regime, instigated and primarily carried out by a social movement or armed group.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Social Revolution

A fundamental transformation of a regime and social structure, instigated and primarily carried out by a social movement or armed group.



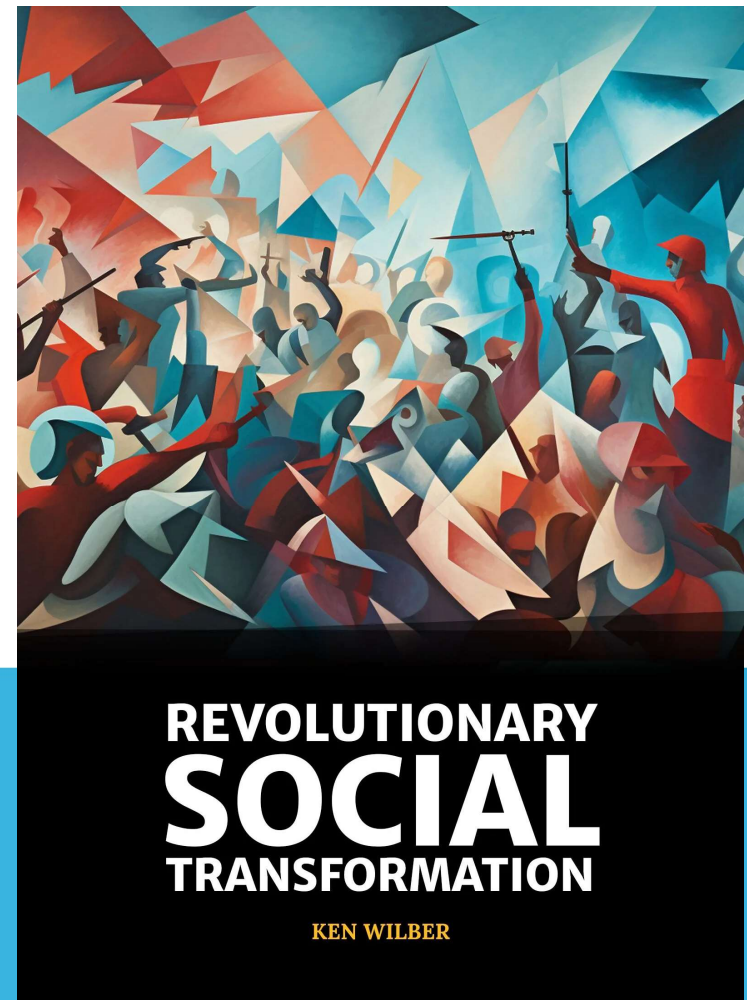
COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Concluding thoughts and questions...

IN THE LAST ANALYSIS, ALL
REVOLUTIONS MUST BE SOCIAL
REVOLUTIONS, BASED UPON
FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN
SOCIETY; OTHERWISE IT IS NOT
A REVOLUTION, BUT MERELY A
CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT.

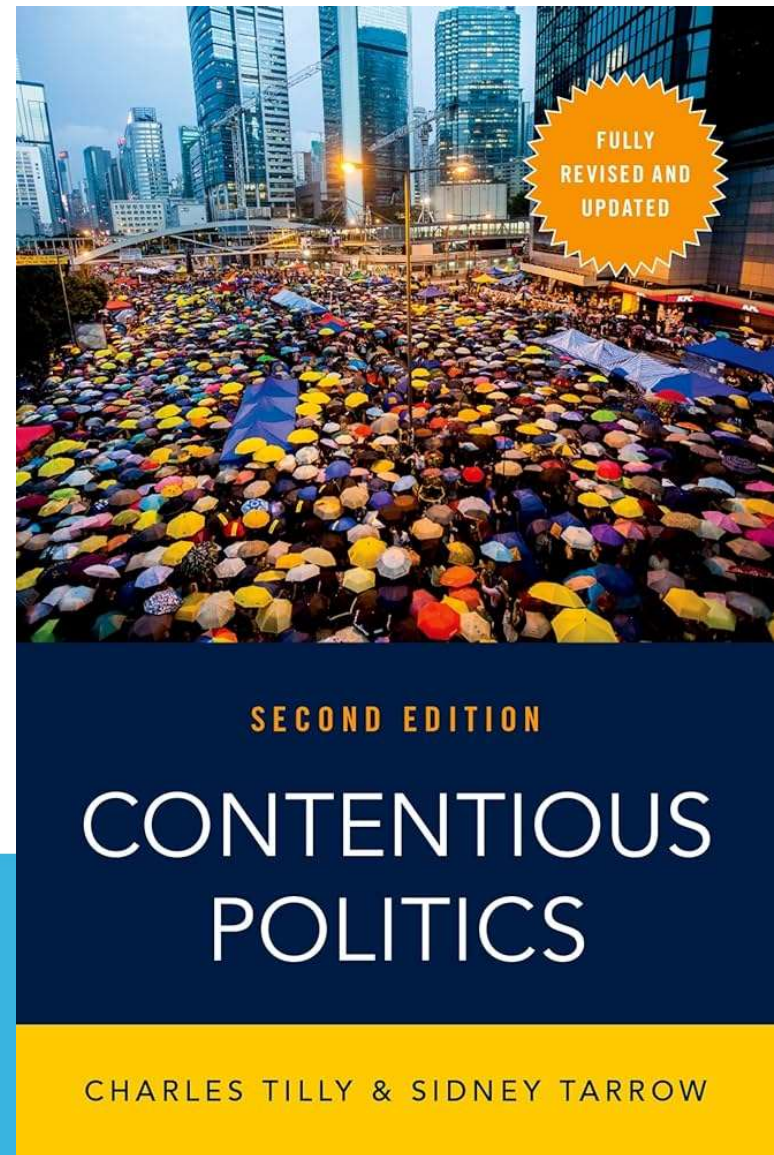
- SOONG CHING-LING -

LIBQUOTES.COM



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The study of contentious politics has helped transform our understanding of political action outside formal institutional bounds.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS



Starting in the 1960's, activists and scholars began to argue that such contentious political acts could enhance democracy.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Comparativists have examined individual motivations; internal group characteristics and dynamics; and the larger political, economic, and cultural context to try to understand contentious politics.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Although nonviolent forms of contentious politics are widely accepted as legitimate in democracies and as legitimate opposition to authoritarian regimes, political violence is not.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Ethnic and other types of identity movements can be particularly susceptible to becoming violent, in part because of the powerful connection between individuals' grievances and their identity.

REGIONAL, RELIGIOUS, & ETHNIC MOVEMENTS CHALLENGE COLONIAL/IMPERIAL BOUNDARIES

FREEMAN-PEDIA

QUEBECOIS
FRENCH-CANADIAN MOVEMENT TO SECURE AN INDEPENDENT STATE BASED ON QUEBEC-FRENCH-CANADIAN CULTURE. AFTER A BRIEF PERIOD OF VIOLENCE IN THE 1960s, THIS EFFORT WAS LED PEACEFULLY, LAST FAILING VIA REFERENDUM IN 1995.

BIAFRA
IGBO NATIONALIST MOVEMENT THAT SEEKS TO RECREATE THE SHORT-LIVED (1967-70) BIAFRA STATE IN NIGERIA. THIS MOVEMENT HAS BEEN ACCUSED OF VIOLENCE BY THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT WHILE ESPOUSING NON-VIOLENCE.

MUSLIM LEAGUE
GROUP THAT FORMED UNDER BRITISH RULE THAT ADVOCATED FOR A MUSLIM MAJORITY STATE (PAKISTAN) THAT RESULTED IN THE 1947 PARTITION OF INDIA.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Revolutions are the rarest form of contentious politics, meaning a particular set of circumstances must account for them, but it is not always easy to determine what those circumstances are.

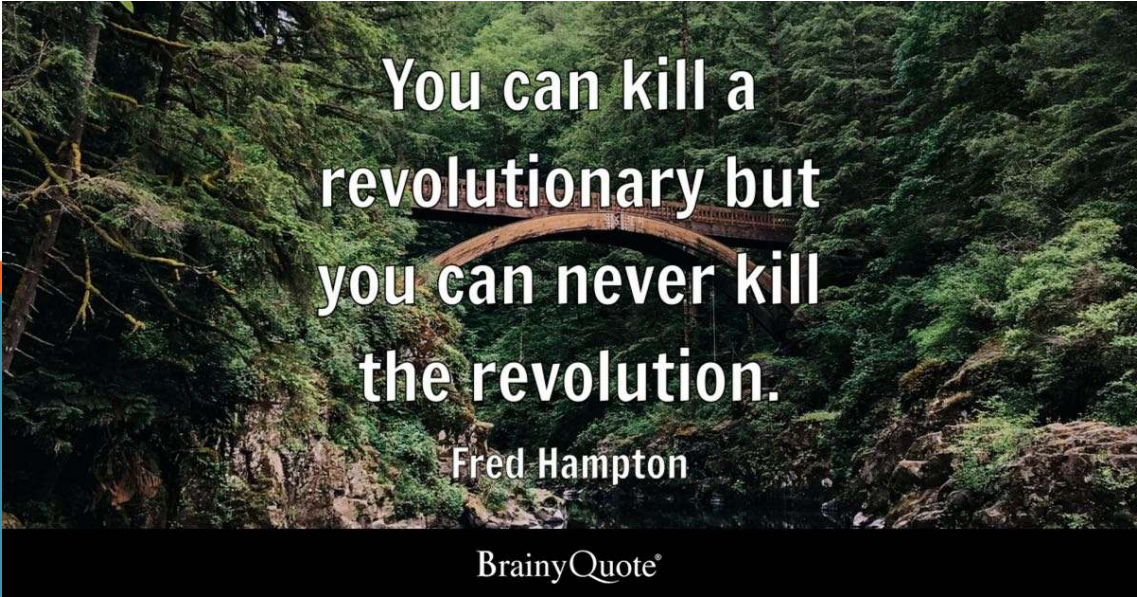
Revolutionaries do not make revolutions! The revolutionaries are those who know when power is lying in the street and when they can pick it up.

Hannah Arendt



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

A full range of political science theories have been employed to explain contentious politics. Theories focusing on *individual motivation*, both *psychological* and *rational actor*, try to understand the individual motivations behind contentious politics.



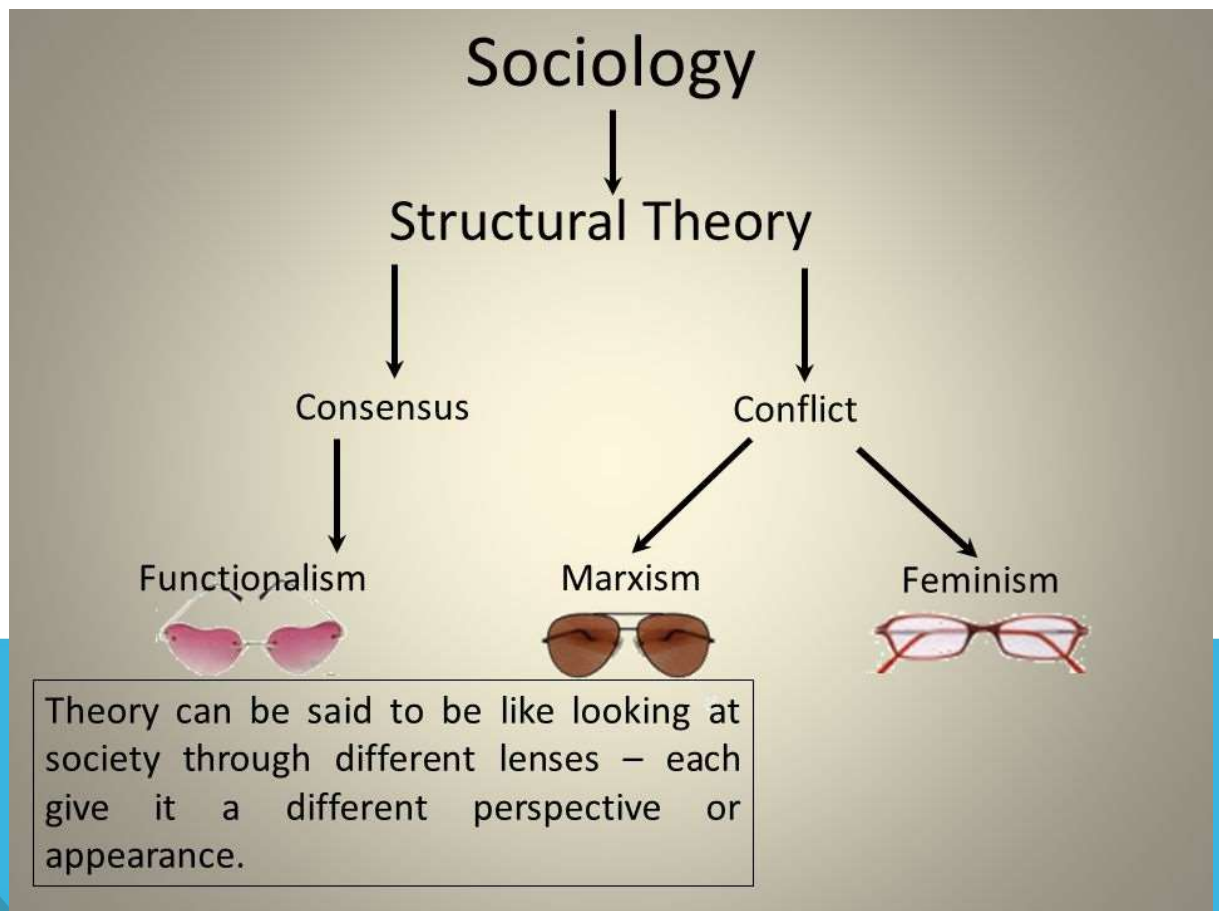
You can kill a
revolutionary but
you can never kill
the revolution.

Fred Hampton

BrainyQuote®

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Structural theories have been used as well, looking at the economic structure of society, the political opportunity structure, and the distribution of resources among groups to explain why some succeed while others fail.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Theorists using *cultural models* have sought to understand why particular symbols and language embedded in groups' repertoires are successful at mobilizing support and how these repertoires shift over time and place.

