

PERSPECTIVES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

# SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN POLITICS

A COMPARATIVE STUDY, EXPANDED EDITION



CYRUS ERNESTO ZIRAKZADEH



## Social Movements in Politics

## PERSPECTIVES IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS

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By Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh

# **Social Movements in Politics**

**A Comparative Study  
expanded edition**

Cyrus Ernesto Zirakzadeh

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SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN POLITICS

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*For Vanessa and Daniel*

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P R E F A C E   T O   T H E  

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E X P A N D E D   E D I T I O N  

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This book is an exploration and application of contemporary social-movement theory. It is intended to familiarize advanced students in the social sciences with different ways that European and North American scholars since World War II have thought about social movements. A further aim is to promote reflection on similarities and differences between four social movements that captured worldwide attention during the 1980s and 1990s.

The first chapter elaborates three major theoretical traditions that for half a century have informed studies of social movements: (1) modernization theories, which stress the human costs of social change; (2) theories about organizational resources and political opportunities; and (3) identity-formation theories. The next dozen chapters describe the circumstances, ideological debates, and actions of West Germany's Greens, Poland's Solidarity, Peru's Shining Path, and Mexico's Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Using themes and questions from the three major theoretical traditions as springboards for reflection, the book offers a multidimensional picture of each movement that highlights (1) the recent social changes and national political situation that activists in each movement confronted; (2) the preexisting traditions of popular protest from which each movement drew symbols, leaders, and other resources; and (3) the competing social goals and political strategies and tactics that major factions in each movement espoused. The book's final chapter compares the four cases and juxtaposes the historical record with the representations of social movements made by each of the major theoretical traditions. The book ends with a call for a fourth theoretical approach to social movements that emphasizes their internal politics.

The extended case studies form the heart or core of the book. Complex descriptions of social movements informed by multiple theoretical traditions are valuable for several reasons. They can enhance one's resistance to simplistic generalizations and black-and-white judgments about popular protest. In addition, by mulling over others' efforts to control their destinies, we sometimes develop greater awareness of and self-confidence in our own political potential. Last but not least, we sometimes educe from

historical details new general lessons about the difficulties and advantages of current forms of nonelite politics.

As historical studies of social movements can affect the way one views oneself and one's political situation, a passive, distant approach may not be the best way to read this book. A reader probably will benefit more if, while reading, she or he asks: How do I think about social movements? Do I like them, fear them, or am indifferent to their existence? Do these accounts of the Greens, Solidarity, Shining Path, and the Zapatistas seem plausible to me, and why (or why not)? And finally, are there any social movements occurring near me at this time? If so, how are they being represented in the conventional press and by government officials, and what alternative interpretations does this book suggest?

I have been studying social movements and social-movement theorizing for 25 years. In addition to the numerous publications that are cited in the following chapters, I have benefited from ongoing conversations with Colin Barker, William Casper, Myra Ferree, Andrei Markovits, Michael McCann, and George Shulman. I thank the "Frontiers of Social Movement Theorizing" group within the American Sociological Association and the participants at the annual "Alternative Futures and Popular Protest" conferences in Manchester, England for holding international meetings where people who love to talk about social movements can exchange opinions, stories, and theories. Without these experiences, scholarship would be much less fun and rewarding.

The University of Connecticut has offered a supportive and pleasant setting for writing this type of book. The library's remarkable alternative press collection helped me piece together local "Left" histories for Germany, Poland, and Peru. My social science colleagues, especially Bob Asher, Betty Hanson, Henry Krisch, and Kent Newmyer, cheerfully shared scholarly references, empirical findings, and personal views about social movements in politics. Current and former graduate students continue to inspire me with their enthusiasm and curiosity. Several of my newest university colleagues—Mary Bernstein, Robert Fisher, Shareen Hertel, Nancy Naples, and Jeffrey Ogbar—are also students of social movements and have taught me fresh ways of conceptualizing what movements do and their possible *raison d'être*.

Writing a book can be a lonely experience if not for close friends who encourage perseverance and provoke smiles. Five such friends were involved at different stages in the preparation of the expanded edition of this manuscript: Garry Clifford, Kay Lawson, Daniela Melo, Betty Seaver, and, in particular, Barbara Zirakzadeh. Vanessa and Daniel Zirakzadeh have grown up and today live away from Barb's and my home. But I have fond memories of their childhood adventures and how they balanced my life as I wrote the first edition.

To all whom I've mentioned, a heartfelt thank you.

## A C R O N Y M S

### Germany

AL	Alternative Slate (of Berlin)
APO	Extraparliamentary Movement
AUD	Action Group for an Independent Germany
A3W	Action for a Third Way
BBU	Federal Association of Citizens' Initiatives for Environmental Protection
BUF	Federal Conference of Independent Peace Groups
CDU/CSU	Christian Democratic Party/Christian Social Union
FDP	Free Democratic Party
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GAZ	Green Action Future
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GLU	Green List for Environmental Protection
JUSO	Working Group of Young Socialists
KB	Communist League
KPD	Communist Party of Germany
NPD	National Democratic Party
SPD	Social Democratic Party
SDS	Socialist German Students' League
SPV-Greens	Alternative Political Alliance-Greens
USP	Environmental Protection Party

### Poland

KKW	National Executive Commission
KO	Citizens' Committees
KOR	Workers' Defense Committee
KPN	Confederation for an Independent Poland
KSS-KOR	Committee for Social Self-Defense-KOR
OPZZ	National Federation of Trade Unions
PPR	Polish Workers' Party
PSL	Peasant Party

PZPR	Polish United Workers' Party
RMP	Young Poland Movement
ROPCiO	Movement for the Defense of Human and Civil Rights
SdRP	Social Democracy of the Polish Republic
SKS	Students' Solidarity Committee
TKK	Temporary Coordinating Commission
UD	Democratic Union

### **Peru**

APRA	American Revolutionary Popular Alliance
CGTP	General Confederation of Peruvian Workers
CTP	Confederation of Peruvian Workers
ELN	National Liberation Army
IU	United Left
MIR	Movement of the Revolutionary Left
PCP	Communist Party of Peru
PCP-SL	Communist Party of Peru-Shining Path

### **Mexico**

CIOAC	Independent Confederation of Agricultural Workers and Peasants
CND	National Democratic Convention
EZLN	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
FLN	Forces of National Liberation
LP	Proletarian Line
MLN	National Liberation Movement
OCEZ	Emiliano Zapata Peasant Organization
PAN	National Action Party
PRD	Democratic Revolutionary Party
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PRONASOL	National Solidarity Program
UU	Union of Unions

### **Miscellaneous**

EEC	European Economic Community
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
UFW	United Farm Workers
UN	United Nations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

P A R T 1

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*How We Think about Social Movements*

## CHAPTER 1

---

### *Recent Traditions in Social-Movement Theorizing*

All mass movements generate in their adherents a readiness to die and a proclivity for united action; all of them, irrespective of the doctrine they preach and the program they project, breed fanaticism, enthusiasm, fervent hope, hatred and intolerance; all of them are capable of releasing a powerful flow of activity in certain departments of life; all of them demand blind faith and singlehearted allegiance.

Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer*

The term *social movement* connotes different things to different people. Many look upon the ideologically nonviolent and democratic U.S. civil rights movement as a quintessential social movement (Chong 1991). Some would select the German Nazi Party of the 1930s (Arendt 1951; Fromm 1941; Hoffer 1951). Others would apply the term to almost any formally organized group that periodically petitions the state for aid, such as Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (Judkins 1983; McCarthy and Wolfson 1988; Schwartz and Shuva 1992). Still others would think of social movements as largely unorganized, illegal, and episodic actions, such as ghetto riots, wildcat strikes, or spontaneous boycotts of unpopular taxes (Piven 1976).

This study looks at four late twentieth-century social movements that appeared in very different regimes: West Germany's Greens, Poland's Solidarity, Peru's Shining Path, and Mexico's Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Each is viewed from three perspectives: (1) in terms of the national, political, and social contexts that conditioned the movement's goals and strategies, (2) in terms of previous efforts by nonelites to change social and political conditions, and (3) in terms of the activists' own beliefs, and strategic and tactical decisions.

However, I first clarify the construction I put on social movement to prevent possible misunderstanding by readers and describe briefly some major postwar traditions of thinking about movements, for each tradition has greatly influenced my own reading of recent political events.

## What Is Meant by Social Movement?

Like *social class* and *political representation*, *social movement* is a term that various authors use idiosyncratically. I employ social movement whenever I discuss political phenomena that have at least three partially overlapping yet distinguishable characteristics.

First, a social movement is a group of people who endeavor to build a radically new social order. Here, I agree with J. Craig Jenkins (1981: 82), for whom a social movement is “a series of collective actions conducted to bring about change in social structures,” and is guided by “a vision, however dimly articulated, of the alternative order desired and of the basic measures necessary to put it into effect.” Participants in a social movement not only challenge decisions made by authorities and make demands on authorities but also try to make lasting, large-scale, and significant changes in the texture of the society. To borrow from movement analyst John Wilson (1973: 3), participants see themselves as engaged “in the building of new social worlds.”

Of course, not *every* person in *every* group that I ordinarily call a “social movement” wishes to transform the society in toto. Movements range widely in terms of proportion of participants who desire radical change. As Dennis Chong (1991) points out, in every social movement, some activists primarily seek immediate gratification and private benefits, such as an increase in local prestige, and are not deeply committed to long-term social change. Furthermore, participants in most movements want to preserve specific institutions. Peasant rebels in the Chiapas region of Mexico, for example, desire the continuation of a type of communal property known as an *ejido*. Still, a social movement differs from an interest group in that at least a plurality of participants in the case of a social movement seeks a far-reaching restructuring of their society.<sup>1</sup>

Second, when I use the term social movement, I have in mind political activity by people from a broad range of social backgrounds who, following current scholarly convention, I call the “nonelite.” They normally lack political clout, social prestige, and enormous wealth, and their interests are not routinely articulated or represented in the political system. For Cornel West (1993: 29), they have often been “culturally degraded, politically oppressed, and economically exploited.” Doug McAdam (1982: 36) deems them deprived of “any real influence over the major decisions that affect their lives.” William Gamson (1975: 140) says they lack “routine access to decisions that affect them.”

The foregoing descriptions do not imply that movement participants perceive themselves, their opponents, and their actions in classical Marxian categories, such as “proletariat,” “monopoly capitalism,” and “class struggle.” Indeed, most social-movement scholars agree that participants do *not* see themselves in such abstract terms. Frances Fox Piven (1976: 311–12), for example, notes that participants, although desirous of transforming a social situation in dramatic ways, often direct their actions toward visible targets,



such as local plant managers or particular landlords. Many of the scholars, nonetheless, believe that movement activists often perceive themselves both as being placed outside centers of power and as being embedded in exploitive relations, and that these perceptions are accurate.

The last distinguishing characteristic of a social movement is its confrontational and disruptive tactics, such as occupying buildings, boycotting businesses, and blockading streets. Movement activists, of course also employ scrupulously legal tactics, such as lobbying and lawsuits. But the mix of socially disruptive tactics and legal tactics differs from the mix used by most interest groups or political parties. The activists generally bend (if not break) the parts of the legal code having to do with public order and public safety. However, despite opponents' charges, social movements are never simply outlaw organizations; they are better seen as walkers on both sides of the legal fence.<sup>2</sup>

### **Are Movements Historically Significant?**

Many North American and Western European social theorists agree that the term social movements refers to nonelite attempts to remake societies through combinations of socially disruptive and nondisruptive tactics. Scholars disagree, however, on whether social movements significantly alter the course of society and whether they significantly help nonelites.

Early in the twentieth century, University of Chicago sociologist Robert Park interpreted social movements through an evolutionary framework and construed them as leaving policy and institutional legacies that subsequent generations often find useful and beneficial:

[E]very institution may in turn be described as a movement that was once active and eruptive, like a volcano, but has since settled down to something like routine activity. It has, to change the metaphor, defined its aims, found its place and function in the social complex. (1972: 22)

Park contended that the historical impact of a movement is inversely related to the utopian ambitions of its leaders. Some movement leaders seek to sweep aside almost every aspect of the society; others, more moderate, seek limited changes in selected institutions. European and North American labor movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example, were relatively "minor" and "slowburning" movements when juxtaposed to, say, the French Revolution. The labor movements succeeded in bringing about important changes in labor laws because of their modest aims. The French revolutionaries' radical ambitions, in contrast, spurred a counterrevolution that in the opinion of Park and some later scholars, for example, Crane Brinton (1938), undermined almost all of their short-term accomplishments.

During the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, many North American and Western European scholars agreed with Park's conclusion that social movements have significantly affected the course of history. Unlike Park, however, they believed that social movements were inimical to civility, democracy, and liberty. Even Park, who generally advanced an evolutionary theory of movements, deplored rash and impatient activists, and warned of a subset of social movements that he called "crowd movements," which usually disrupted without making positive changes (Park 1972: 47–8, 96). William Kornhauser (1959), for one, emphasized in his widely read book how certain types of movements unravel the social fabric and destroy desirable social arrangements. Other influential writers who routinely stressed the possible negative effects of social movements included Hannah Arendt (1951), Eric Fromm (1941), Eric Hoffer (1951), Seymour Martin Lipset (1955; 1960), and Arthur Schlesinger (1949)<sup>3</sup>. These authors typically depicted social movements derogatorily, dwelling on childish, immoral, and antidemocratic features. Their negative judgments were rooted in part in painful memories of National Socialism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, and McCarthyism in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

### **Modernity and Social Turbulence**

Postwar social-movement scholars explained the rise of social movements in terms of the pace and extent of contemporary social change. For the most part, they thought that societies everywhere were becoming much more urban, literate, bureaucratized, mechanized, and organizationally large-scale. All parts of the globe seemed to be converging toward the work experiences and lifestyles of northern England, the U.S. iron and steel belt, and southern California. Conversely, local communities, small workplaces, precapitalist forms of exchange, and voluntary associations appeared to be facing extinction.

Scholars read contemporary social movements as the social-psychological consequences of the rush to modernization. Most movement activists, it was argued, were recent urban immigrants from small towns and petite-bourgeois rural families (Fromm 1941; Lipset 1955). The newcomers to the city needed a psychological balm for the social dislocation and personal loneliness inherent in modern life. As daily life became noticeably more industrialized, bureaucratic, urban, and large-scale, people felt increasingly insignificant and normatively out of place. Furthermore, market dislocations, labor organizations, and big business threatened small merchants, independent artisans, and workers with small-town backgrounds. Uprooted, economically beset, and disconcerted by their declining social status, the urban immigrants approached movements as a therapeutic corrective, an environment in which they could safely unburden themselves.

The psychological appeals of movements were said to be many. At rallies and meetings, participants were systematically exposed to easily understood

ideologies that unmasked the hidden conspiracies behind their daily problems. Ideologues pointed to unfamiliar cohorts in cities—such as “Jews,” “bankers,” and “communists”—as ruthless enemies of petite-bourgeois values and small-town social structures. Traditional ways of life, meanwhile, were depicted as unproblematic and preservable, if not for the unprincipled conspirators. Except for the scapegoatism, the movement’s ideologies were thin in substance. Social-movement leaders, purportedly, failed to propose specific policies and institutional reforms that might solve the urban immigrants’ daily grievances and failed to discuss the benefits of modern life.

Postwar scholars explain the attraction of movements’ programs in terms of the paucity of community activities, neighborhood ties, and small-scale organizations (Kornhauser 1959). Modern culture (for example, mass media), modern education (for example, metropolitan school systems), and modernization of the workplace (for example, corporations with enormous factories at multiple sites) meant that small-scale institutions and groupings, which once had helped the individual deal with life’s exigencies, lost effectiveness and significance. Local union chapters, neighborhood churches, and extended families no longer protected individuals against illness, illiteracy, and hunger. Impersonal citywide and national organizations now ministered to people’s immediate needs, rendering it unnecessary for citizens to labor side by side in pursuit of common interests. At best, coworkers and next-door neighbors had a passing interest in others’ circumstances. City dwellers in general were unfamiliar with one another’s fates and were indifferent to much of the human travail about them. For a goodly number, urban life was increasingly private and somewhat lonely.

Because city dwellers were no longer involved in multiple local organizations that address proximate concerns, they lacked familiarity with public issues as well as practical political experience. Hence, they could not pragmatically assess a movement’s ideology. Instead of using common sense and accepting the paradox that there may exist many, and perhaps even logically incompatible, truths about how the world works, participants in a social movement would not deviate from the fixed “Truth” as delivered either in manifestos or by movement leaders. Furthermore, having subjectively lost a sense of community and objectively lost control over their lives, people in urban, industrialized, and impersonal environs were desperately seeking a new source of meaning, a way to regain dignity. As Arendt (1951: 323–34) put it, a member’s uncritical faith in a movement’s hate-filled ideology

can be expected only from the completely isolated human being who, without any other social ties . . . derives his sense of having a place in the world only from his belonging to a movement.

Or in the words of Hoffer (1951: 44),

A rising mass movement attracts and holds a following not by its doctrine and promises but by the refuge it offers from the anxieties, barrenness and meaninglessness of an individual existence.

Most social-movement scholars believed that movements and their scapegoat ideologies were threats to liberal democratic constitutional systems. Movement participants, deprived of firsthand experience with public affairs, trusted their leaders without qualification. Blind faith replaced common sense and independence of thought. Uprooted and insecure, participants were thought not to be open to judicious reasoning and to intelligent discussion of their circumstances and political options (Arendt 1951: 315–16, 352). They wanted someone to blame, an assurance that their older ways of life were valuable, and promises that modern social orders would not prevail. Hence, they were easily manipulated by the peddlers of nostalgia and scapegoat rhetoric.

Many scholars during the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s feared that contemporary social movements were not abnormalities but foreshadowings. It was argued that as the world became more and more “modern” (that is, more bureaucratic, industrialized, urbanized, secularized, commercially competitive, and migratory), market dislocations would continue, anomie would abound, and antimodern and violent social movements would become widespread. Fascism in Italy, Nazism in Germany, Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and McCarthyism in the United States thus not only were despicable but augured an era of impatient, enraged politics. To demonstrate that contemporary movements, such as Stalinism, were not simply the result of a uniquely charismatic leader or of a singular confluence of conditions, some researchers combed the historical record for other cases of social movements amid rapid change. Thus, Christian millenarianism during the Middle Ages was creatively reinterpreted as an expression of middle-class disorientation amid rapid urbanization, as was the Populist movement during the 1880s in the United States and the street violence in Paris during the French Revolution.<sup>5</sup>

### **Second Wave of Movement Theorizing**

Around the middle of the 1960s, an alternative view of social movements gained ascendancy. The new style of interpretation arose partly because a younger generation of movement specialists either had directly participated in recent movements for social justice and peace or had sympathetically observed such events as the Montgomery Bus Boycott (McAdam 1988). Participants in social movements did not seem overly intolerant, antidemocratic, or violent. To the contrary, the activists seemed remarkably pragmatic in their politics, civil in their interpersonal behavior, and thoughtful and articulate about their ethical principles and long-term goals. As James Rule (1988: 183) put it,

By the 1960s, a new generation of social scientists was responding, mostly sympathetically, to protest movements of blacks and university students. A theoretical view of movements and social contention as irrational, retrograde, destructive forces would no longer do.

The new generation of social-movement scholars were, generally speaking, mistrustful of “liberal-democratic” polities, of “free-market” economies, and of the spread of capitalism around the world (Gamson 1968; Perlman 1975). Many contended that the so-called liberal democratic states frequently violated citizens’ rights to privacy and obstructed citizens’ rights of dissent, association, and free speech. Many also maintained that “free-market” economies were, in fact, sophisticated systems of private power, day-to-day oppression, and endless exploitation, with big business enjoying benefits paid for by other classes. After 1970, the once nearly ubiquitous theme of social modernization disappeared from most academic writings on social movements, replaced by the new theme of structural inequality (political and economic).

According to most of the new social-movement analysts, in every known society a small group systematically influences decisions made in the political system and monopolizes the resources needed to create wealth. Occasionally, members of that elite may disagree among themselves about specific policies but generally harmoniously advance their common interest in reproducing current patterns of inequality in status, wealth, and power. The younger analysts argued that participants in social movements shrewdly calculate the probable costs and rewards of alternative courses of action and then act accordingly. Movement participants are *not* (contrary to the assertions of earlier analysts) blind dogmatists overwhelmed by rootlessness and general vulnerability. The decision to participate is made, usually, only after a person who is exploited or oppressed (1) has found the stated aims of the movement relevant to his or her immediate situation, and (2) has calculated the cost : benefit ratio associated with participation. Movement participation is a practical and considered activity, a form of “bargaining by riot” (Thompson 1971: 115–23) and “a continuation of politics by other means” (Garner and Zald 1985: 138) that is “deliberate and purposeful” (Piven 1976: 309).

One can discern within the second wave of scholarship three distinguishable traditions of theorizing, which for our purposes can be called “resource-mobilization theorizing,” “indigenous-community theorizing,” and “political-process theorizing.” Although each tradition focused on a different set of political processes and activities, all three rejected the sociological and psychological logic of the preceding generation of theorists and, instead, assumed (1) significant political and economic inequalities in all known societies and (2) the prudential nature of movement participation.

The resource-mobilization tradition emphasizes the role of leadership. It is said that in every society most people are unhappy with the status quo, are ignored and mistreated by their government, and suffer economic injustices. People, however, seldom form or join movements because they are cognizant that they lack adequate material and organizational resources with which to battle vested interests. A movement normally emerges only after a group or person with appropriate political experience, vision, and resources first organizes that constituency. A researcher should therefore study

organizers, often called “issue entrepreneurs,” who creatively bring resources from third parties to an aggrieved population (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

The emergence of the United Farm Workers (UFW) movement during the 1960s illustrates how one issue entrepreneur, César Chávez, attracted resources from established labor organizations, sympathetic consumers, and selected government officials (Zirakzadeh 2004). Prior to Chávez’s efforts, U.S. labor activists had looked upon California’s farm workers as almost impossible to organize because of their extreme poverty (which made them chary of risking even a day’s wages), the seasonal nature of their employment, the here-today gone-tomorrow nature of their lives (which militated against development of feelings of group solidarity), and the fact that many harvesters were Mexican citizens (a status that generated fears of deportation). In addition, farm owners had at their disposal compliant police forces and numerous vigilante groups. Lacking numerous key resources—such as time, money, legal expertise, judicially defensible rights, and even sound equipment for strikes—farm workers for decades had been unable to mount a successful challenge to the owners’ prerogatives, and understandably had become reluctant to join any movement organization. Chávez’s brilliance as an organizer was his ability to foresee the need to enlist financial, legal, and media support from such nonunion groups as the National Council of Churches, local university communities, and the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Patiently courting such contacts, he was able to launch an effective national boycott of California’s grapes and, ultimately, to win concessions from owners, despite their considerable local sources of power. According to one chronicler,

[S]tudents and clergy marched through grocery stores, harassing store managers, conducting “shop-ins,” and closing off entrances; liberal politicians, including two presidential candidates (Senators Kennedy and McGovern), joined prominent celebrities in endorsing the boycott; liberal clerics sermonized their congregations on the boycott; universities and Catholic schools cut off standing orders to grocers that continued to handle “scab” grapes; and millions of consumers shunned grapes and the grocery stores that continued to handle them. By the summer of 1970 the grape growers faced a closed marketplace. (Jenkins 1983: 65)

In the wake of the boycott’s surprising success, thousands of migrant workers, once notoriously difficult to recruit, themselves contacted the United Farm Workers’ offices, spontaneously launched their own marches and set up strike committees, and began to direct their own grievance committees on farms with UFW contracts. Thus, by mobilizing appropriate groups, Chávez helped establish a social movement among a highly discontented population.

The second tradition that developed after 1960 still lacks a convenient and widely used label but might best be called the “indigenous–community

approach.”<sup>6</sup> Indigenous-community thinkers explore how local-level social institutions, such as neighborhood clubs, union locals, and community churches, provide the organizational structures, communication networks, tactical ideas, and leadership training for later social movements (Adam 1987; Evans and Boyte 1986; Morris 1984; Tarrow 1994; Zirakzadeh 1991). Unlike the early postwar scholars who believed that modern life was increasingly lonely, indigenous-community theorists contend that the rhythms of modern life—particularly in industrialized cities—have produced a wealth of small-scale social interactions that facilitate the formation of indigenous social movements. For example, according to Tilly et al. (1975), modern European factory towns are hardly socially disorganized. To the contrary, large factories and their nearby residential districts contain numerous public spaces where every day people regularly meet, discuss common grievances, and plan collective actions. Aldon Morris (1984) likewise argues that the urban migration of southern African Americans resulted in the spontaneous growth of churches, schools, clubs, and other forms of local association that enabled previously isolated rural people to congregate, to discuss common grievances, and, ultimately, to plan collective actions. Political scientists Wayne Cornelius (1971) and Janice Perlman (1975) maintain that residents of rapidly growing Latin American cities routinely form associations to help satisfy physical needs (medical care, water, police protection) and social and emotional needs (recreational groups, sports clubs, choirs, libraries). Having observed hundreds of such associations, Cornelius and Perlman contend that theories of the profound social disorganization and loneliness of urban life grossly misrepresent city life in Latin America.

According to indigenous-community theorists, most urban dwellers belong to multiple nonpolitical associations, regularly attend local meetings, and communicate through numerous informal friendship networks. Because of such ties, individuals find political partners and allies with relative ease. Neighbors and coworkers are familiar with methods for raising funds, collecting materials, rallying interest, and building morale. Over time, a local leader cohort naturally emerges that is in constant communication with friends and neighbors, addresses local concerns and promotes local values, and, if the time seems right, organizes disruptive collective actions.

A subset of indigenous-community theorists explores how fledgling movements learn from one another’s political experience. Supposedly, the victory of one group often inspires nearby discontented groups and also provides models of useful strategies and tactics. In addition, every sizeable movement usually leaves in its wake a corps of practiced leaders, evocative symbols, and communication networks that a successor movement might use. Movements, in other words, do not spring full-blown from Zeus’s forehead but arise from long lineages of popular protest and small-scale politicking (Banaszak 1996; Tarrow 1989a, 1989b; Tilly 1978, 1986; Zirakzadeh 1989).

The third influential understanding of social movements that evolved after the late 1960s is today widely known as the “political-process

approach.”<sup>7</sup> Political-process theorists, such as Anne Costain (1992), Doug McAdam (1982), Joel Migdal (1974), John Duncan Powell (1971), Christian Smith (1991), and Joe Foweraker and Todd Landman (1997), hold that constitutions, national-level policy-making institutions and processes, and intra-elite struggles over power profoundly influence both people’s decisions to join movements and the strategies and tactics that a movement employs. For example, a fledgling movement has a better chance of attracting new participants and procuring resources if the nation’s constitution recognizes civil liberties and thereby allows spokespersons to hold assemblies, print and distribute literature, and demonstrate peacefully in public (Foweraker and Landman 1997). Another relevant political circumstance is the degree of unity and the number and nature of divisions within the governing elite. Some social problems and political arrangements, such as an economic depression or intense electoral competition, may spawn such deep disagreements among government officials that rival factions will be motivated to find allies among the nonelite. The temporary alliance between the northern wing of the U.S. Democratic Party and the civil rights movement during the early 1960s, for instance, brought many people into the movement because it seemed to have guardians in high places (McAdam 1982).

### **Fashioning Identities**

After the mid-1960s, fewer and fewer scholars saw social movements simply as uncalculated expressions of rage against modernity and only as threats to democracy. Growing numbers interpreted movements as pragmatic political responses by nonelites to objective social inequality, political oppression, and economic exploitation. Whereas the postwar generation of movements theorists viewed social movements with dread, the newer generation tended to view movements as opportunities to redistribute wealth and power and thereby to achieve democracy. Contemporary movements, such as the civil rights movement and the antiwar movement, were seen as evidence of increasing political health, not disease.

This was not the last word, however. In Europe, culturally sensitive approaches to the study of social movements appeared during the mid- and late 1960s and had attracted significant numbers of adherents by the end of the 1970s. A similar theoretical evolution occurred in both North and South America during the late 1970s and 1980s. For convenience, I shall call writers associated with this third major wave of social-movement theorizing “identity-formation” theorists.<sup>8</sup>

Identity-formation theorizing was developed and refined by scholars in diverse social science disciplines, including history (Evans 1979; Goodwyn 1978; Hill 1972; Kelley 1994; Thompson 1963), sociology (Breines 1982; Laclau 1985; Melucci 1985, 1988; Touraine 1981, 1985), anthropology (Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Kubik 1994), and political science



(Ackelsberg 1991; Apter 1987; Apter and Sawa 1984; Gaventa 1980). Although affiliated with different disciplines, these scholars shared the belief that “culture”—broadly understood as how we interpret social arrangements, how we see our places within those arrangements, and how we see our immediate opportunities, powers, and limitations—profoundly informs and shapes our political actions. Cognition and political action should not be treated as unrelated phenomena; political activity expresses and embodies cognition.<sup>9</sup> We may see, for example, a sudden rise in local unemployment as a problem deserving of public discussion and government action; however, we also might see a surge in unemployment as a temporarily inconveniencing but ultimately healthy “market correction” that should not occasion meddling. Similarly, whether we write a letter to a local newspaper criticizing a specific government policy depends in part on our presumptions about the efficacy of such an action and about our ability to influence others through our prose.

Although the details of the identity-formation argument vary from scholar to scholar, the basic position is as follows. We never view events directly but through intellectual prisms (or lenses) composed of our presumptions about our society and ourselves. The prisms give our observations meaning (e.g., whether we see crowds of people thrusting clenched fists into the air as principled protesters or a violent mob), shape our emotions (e.g., whether we are frightened or inspired by demonstrators), and determine whether in our political responses to social circumstances we are tolerant or outraged, passive or active, cooperative or confrontational. Although we may almost always believe ourselves to be completely open-minded, unbiased, and uncommitted to any cultural myth when thinking about public affairs, we never can escape our cultural presumptions. Indeed, we need our interpretive lens to organize our observations, to make judgments, to see alternatives, to predict consequences of imagined alternative courses of actions, and to determine what political actions (if any) are effective and appropriate. Cultural assumptions thus profoundly (and inevitably) influence both our understanding of our powers and our exercise of them.

Most identity-formation theorists further maintain that although people constantly receive ideas from the social environment—for example, from friends and family, from schools and churches, and from the mass media—the mind is hardly soft, formless clay upon which social forces impress ideas. Humans have the capacity to amend, sift, enhance, and reject the ideas that are presented to them. We both consume currently available ideas and produce fresh ideas about our situations and ourselves. True, many people and institutions teach us to view the world in particular ways, but to an important degree we also endlessly define and redefine our social identities.

One can discern two theoretical subapproaches within the literature on identity formation. First, some scholars emphasize the themes and images of what is sometimes called popular culture (Apter and Sawa 1984; Evans and Boyte 1986; Hill 1972; Kelley 1994) and argue that unconventional ideas and rival cultural traditions are being constantly developed by ordinary folks in everyday, prepolitical public spaces, such as churches, cafes, recreational

clubs, and street corners. When recruited into social-movement organizations, new members bring their own previously developed ideas that often differ from and clash with the ideas of the movement's titular leaders. For example, African Americans who joined the Communist Party in the 1930s accepted many Leninist ideas but also retained their earlier notions of black nationalism that party leaders strongly opposed. The upshot was a complex process of factional conflict, ideological compromise, and cultural cross-pollination within the party (Kelley 1994: 123–58). According to identity-formation theorists who emphasize popular culture, in order to understand a social movement's activities, goals, and popular support, one must be sensitive to the diversity of beliefs within popular culture and to the ideological conflict this generates within a movement. Scholars of this persuasion decry attempts to portray any movement as internally homogeneous and free of clashing ideas and corresponding factions.

The second subset of identity-formation theorists, whose position I sometimes call the “autonomous movement-culture approach,” hold that social movements themselves are “climates,” “environments,” or “atmospheres,” in which novel and subversive ideas are invented and nurtured. Movements resemble safe, nourishing hothouses where nonelites exchange ideas that elites deem silly, dangerous, or immoral. In addition, many social movements—because they tend to be understaffed and decentralized in organizational structure—must rely on part-time volunteers to run local-level projects and offices. The arrangements allow people who normally do not hold positions of authority to become experienced in running meetings and addressing crowds. Gradually, the grassroots volunteers acquire confidence in their own capabilities to act and think independent of elites, and begin to entertain audacious and (from the elites' perspective) sacrilegious ideas (Apter and Sawa 1984<sup>10</sup>; Breines 1982; Fantasia 1988; Goodwyn 1978; Kubik 1994).

Like most of the second-wave social-movement theorists, most identity-formation theorists contend that highly unequal distributions of power, status, and wealth exist in all known societies, including liberal democratic orders (Apter and Sawa 1984; Goodwyn 1978; Kelley 1994). According to identity-formation theorists, elites often try to legitimize inequalities of power and wealth by disseminating ideas about the advantages of the status quo and about the dangers of alternatives. The indoctrination takes myriad forms, including government manipulation of public-school curricula and big business' direct and indirect influence over the news media. Despite the efforts of elites at thought control, nonelites often question the representations of reality coming from the higher-ups. Social movements are one weapon in the ongoing struggles between elites and nonelites over how best to understand and appreciate social inequalities.

Some identity-formation theorists view the future with alarm because electronic means of communication have reduced the *hoi polloi's* opportunities to question elites' representations of reality (Edelman 1988; Gitlin 1980), as has the proliferation of scientific and legal jargons. U.S. historian

Lawrence Goodwyn (1978: 315) holds that because of distinctively modern cultural traditions,

Americans seem to have lost the capacity to think seriously about the structure of their own society. Words like “inevitability,” “efficiency,” and “modernization” are passively accepted as the operative explanations for the increasingly hierarchical nature of contemporary life.

Goodwyn’s pessimism is not yet endemic among identity-formation scholars. Most believe that today’s social structures—cities, for example—provide places where nonelites can freely mingle and exchange opinions (Melucci 1985, 1988). Secularization, literacy, and modern forms of communications (the airways, print, the Internet, and the like) further facilitate the development and dispersion of nonelite ideas. In sum, social-movement activity is likely to grow (not shrink) as news of novel programs of social change and successful tactics takes wings across cities, nations, and regions.<sup>11</sup>

### **From Theories to Observations**

In the following chapters, I draw on the above traditions (and subtraditions) of social-movement analysis to understand West Germany’s Greens, Poland’s Solidarity, Peru’s Shining Path, and Mexico’s Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Although a few commentators view the above waves of theorizing as not only different but logically incompatible (Evans and Boyte 1986; McAdam 1982), I treat them as complementary but certainly see different emphases and concerns. The first approach (of the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s) focuses on rapid, large-scale social change, emphasizes distinctively modern threats to economic security and social status, and views human beings as isolated, disoriented, and fearful. The second approach stresses politicking by indigenous communities, movement entrepreneurs, and elite factions, and views human beings as social beings, prudent calculators, and choice makers. The most recent, cultural approach focuses on beliefs about one’s self and one’s social and political situation, emphasizes educational experiences within social movements and society as a whole, and sees humans as susceptible to intellectual conversions and as constantly able to reinterpret their situations.

Each approach seems to partake of truth and seems to be worth keeping in mind when reconstructing the histories of social movements. The first reminds us that humans are reactive creatures who respond emotionally to changes in their environment. The second reminds us that humans contemplate consequences, benefits, and disadvantages associated with different available courses of action. The third reminds us that humans are interpretive and constantly reimagine their situations and identities.

None of the approaches seems by itself to provide a “full” or “complete” account of the social movements in politics, however. Each, indeed, may be

misleading and may give an overly deterministic, rationalistic, or voluntaristic picture of movement politics. Humans, after all, are not simply blindly terrified by harmful change, nor are they merely prudent calculators, nor are they only creative dreamers. But the assumptions about human nature and the general logic of each theoretical approach ring *partly* true, and therefore each approach seems potentially useful in thinking about social movements in politics.

The above theoretical traditions provide me with themes and questions to use in narrating the histories of the Greens, Solidarity, Shining Path, and the Zapatistas. Initially, drawing upon the insights of the first and second waves of social-movement theorists, I look closely at large-scale social changes in Germany, Poland, Peru, and Mexico and consider the specific discontents that components of modernization—for instance, rapid urbanization and industrialization, the evolution of big enterprises, business cycles, and the vagaries of the international economic order—generated. I also look at the political histories of the four countries and consider the limits and opportunities that each political system's constitution and patterns of intra-elite conflicts posed for peaceful, nondisruptive reform.

Next, I adopt a more mid-range view of each country and, using ideas of indigenous-community theorists and identity-formation theorists, look at the legacies left by previous organized efforts toward social change. As we see, the four movements were shaped and informed by earlier grassroots actions that provided experienced leaders, organizational resources, rallying calls and meaningful symbols, and lessons about practical politics.

Last, I recount each movement's activities (political and cultural) and some of the intramovement debates that preceded and followed them. I draw upon ideas of resource-mobilization theory and that of the identity-formation theorists to help understand the diversity of goals, priorities, and strategies within each movement and thereby view movements and their leaders as autonomously generating new ideas about tactics, goals, and immediate possibilities for social change.

The succeeding chapters, because they are informed by three very different theoretical traditions, will, when combined, provide multidimensional histories of the four movements. The multidimensional accounts are valuable because they help us reflect on how everyday people who do not hold public office periodically try to change their world and become agents in their own histories. From knowledge about the particulars, we can begin to generalize and form new hypotheses about how social movements in other times and places originated, developed, and interacted with other social and political forces.

Furthermore, when examining others' efforts to control their destinies, we sometimes change how we think about ourselves. From knowledge of other peoples' struggles, we sometimes acquire self-confidence in our own political potential; we sometimes gain practical wisdom about the difficulties and advantages of different forms of nonelite rebellions and nonrebellious