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978-0-521-53713-1 - *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000*

Charles Tilly

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Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000

Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650–2000, analyzes relationships between democratization, de-democratization, and contentious politics. Building on recent theoretical innovations, *Contention and Democracy* uses a sustained comparison of French and British histories since 1650 as a springboard for more general comparisons across Europe. It goes on to demonstrate that democratization occurred as a result of struggles during which (as in 19th-century Britain and France) few, if any, of the participants were self-consciously trying to create democratic institutions. Favorable circumstances for democratization, it shows, vary from era to era and region to region as functions of previous history, international environments, available models of political organization, and predominant patterns of social relations. Many reversals – substantial phases of de-democratization – occurred in the European experiences surveyed.

Charles Tilly is Joseph L. Battenwieser Professor of Social Science at Columbia University. He has previously taught at the University of Delaware, Harvard University, the University of Toronto, the University of Michigan, and the New School for Social Research. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society. Among his many books are three recently published by Cambridge University Press: *Dynamics of Contention* (with Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow), *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (with Ronald Aminzade and others), and *The Politics of Collective Violence*.

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To my grandchildren

May they inhabit – and promote – a more democratic world

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Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics

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Preface

Readers blessed (or cursed) with long memories will recognize that this book enters a territory once traversed majestically by my teacher Barrington Moore, Jr. It differs from Moore's vividly inspiring *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* by concentrating on democratization and de-democratization, by resisting analyses that pass retroactively from outcome to origin, and by moving from close comparison of Britain and France to explanation of variation over Europe as a whole. Other admirers of Barrington Moore (e.g., Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber, and John Stephens) have commonly followed him by concentrating on explaining long-run outcomes – why different countries ended up with different sorts of political regimes. Although this book certainly traces the impact of particular histories on contemporary politics, its claim to attention rests instead on the identification of mechanisms and processes that promote, inhibit, or reverse democratization. It concentrates on trajectories rather than origins and destinations. Still, anyone who knows Moore's work will see how his emphasis on political consequences of struggle has carried over into his one-time student's efforts.

Let it be clear that, like Barrington Moore himself, I hold no dewy-eyed vision of actually existing democracies. Except for a few revolutionary moments, I know of no European national regime, past or present, in which a small number of rich and well-connected men – I mean men – did not wield disproportionate influence over the government. In every formally democratic regime of which I am aware, stigmatized minorities have lacked protection from arbitrary governmental action. I regard my own American regime as a deeply flawed democracy that recurrently de-democratizes by excluding significant segments of its population from public politics, by inscribing social inequalities in public life, by baffling popular will, and

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by failing to offer equal protection to its citizens. In this book “democratic” simply means less undemocratic than most other regimes – escaping to some extent from the petty tyranny and monolithic authoritarianism that have been the two usual forms of government throughout the world over the last 5,000 years.

Let me also signal three difficulties I faced in writing this book: multiple scales, diverse literatures, and subversive explanations. My resolution of those difficulties may bother some readers. First, multiple scales. The book’s analyses alternate among very different scales: the European continent as a whole over substantial periods of time, major European regions across centuries, entire countries over periods from twenty to 350 years, particular regions within the same countries (e.g., England, Ireland, and Scotland within the British Isles) during varying lengths of time, particular crises, episodes, and persons at specific points in time. At none of these levels did I assemble continuous, comprehensive evidence for all the relevant units. Once I dug into my investigation, I quickly abandoned an early plan to produce ratings of democratization for all European polities period by period from 1650 to 2000; I realized that the point was not to provide a neat, consistent explanation of a single variable but to follow a complex process across its many levels. As a consequence, the evidence presented shifts scale repeatedly, and remains incomplete at every scale.

Here is the second difficulty. The book draws on the vast and largely separate literatures of European history, democratization, and contentious politics. Specialists in those fields will most likely feel that I have slighted their favorite segments of those literatures, and thus appear to claim more originality for my observations and arguments than they deserve, not to mention avoiding objections that one analyst or another might raise against my descriptions and explanations. I regret that likelihood. But I consider the alternative – full citation and discussion of the relevant literature and its controversies – to be worse. It would produce a book twice as long and twice as dense. Writing a book about all of Europe since 1650, I have necessarily turned repeatedly to published articles, monographs, syntheses, handbooks, and encyclopedias in order to clarify events, to establish chronologies, and to identify places, events, or persons. Except when it seemed that readers would need reassurance or an opportunity to follow up some claim, however, I have cited such publications only when quoting them directly or drawing evidence from them that is not readily available elsewhere.

My decision to reduce citations and discussions of relevant literature also meant resisting the temptation to line up publicly on one side or another

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of existing controversies. Only practitioners of French history, for example, will easily recognize that Chapter 4 rejects much of the revisionism concerning the French Revolution and its aftermath promoted by my late friend François Furet. (The chapter even revives the idea of a bourgeois revolution, much reviled by a generation of French historians.) Since I have written extensively on European historiography, theories of contentious politics, revolutions, and democratization, readers who want to know where I stand in the big debates should have no trouble looking up my positions. Meanwhile, they will benefit from a less cluttered text in the present book.

My third difficulty concerned subversive explanations. Both common sense and the bulk of social science treat individual dispositions as the fundamental causes of social processes. Culturalists, phenomenologists, behaviorists, and methodological individualists alike converge on reconstruction of dispositions of individuals just before the point of action as the explanations of those individuals' actions, then propose to aggregate individual actions into social processes such as democratization and de-democratization. My years of complaints about the logic of explanation through individual dispositions have, alas, made almost no difference in prevailing practices. Instead of preaching, this book simply subverts prevailing practices, asking readers to consider whether its explanations provide accounts of European democratization and de-democratization superior to those currently on offer.

The book's explanations qualify as subversive in three regards: as first laid out in Tables 1.1 to 1.3, the mechanisms and processes proposed to explain democratization (1) treat dispositions chiefly as outcomes rather than causes, (2) privilege relational over environmental and cognitive mechanisms, and (3) insist that mechanisms such as brokerage operate at the same level as the social processes we are explaining rather than always moving to a more microscopic level on the model of chemical explanations for molecular processes. Even among the minority of social scientists who have developed an enthusiasm for mechanisms as explanations, these three positions qualify as subversive. In writing the book, however, I decided that since my exhortations had been doing little good, it would be better simply to go about my explanatory work and let readers judge the results, subversive or not. As a consequence, I have sometimes compared my explanations with others currently available, but have not wasted words calling attention to competing logics of explanation.

I have also suppressed the urge to expand each argument into questions of conceptualization, measurement, explanation, and theoretical elaboration.

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Some of my previous work has, for instance, conceptualized and compared revolutionary processes in painstaking detail, but this book settles for a simple characterization of its revolutions. Readers who feel that I pass too quickly through those terrains can find closely related but more extensive statements in these publications:

- 1993 *European Revolutions, 1492–1992*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- 1993 “Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834.” *Social Science History* 17: 253–280.
- 1995 “Democracy Is a Lake.” In George Reid Andrews and Herrick Chapman, eds., *The Social Construction of Democracy*. New York: New York University Press; Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- 1995 “To Explain Political Processes.” *American Journal of Sociology* 100: 1594–1610.
- 1997 “Parliamentarization of Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758–1834.” *Theory and Society* 26: 245–273.
- 1998 “Democracy, Social Change, and Economies in Transition.” In Joan M. Nelson, Charles Tilly, and Lee Walker, eds., *Transforming Post-Communist Political Economies*. Washington: National Academy Press.
- 1998 “Armed Force, Regimes, Contention, and Democratization in Europe since 1650.” Research Monograph 19, Center for the Study of Democracy, University of California, Irvine; available online at www.democ.uci.edu/democ.
- 1998 “Regimes and Contention.” Columbia International Affairs Online (CIAO) working paper, www.columbia.edu/sec/dlc/ciao/wps/sites/css.html.
- 1999 “Why Worry about Citizenship?” In Michael P. Hanagan and Charles Tilly, eds., *Expanding Citizenship, Reconfiguring States*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- 2000 “Processes and Mechanisms of Democratization.” *Sociological Theory* 18: 1–16.
- 2001 “Mechanisms in Political Processes.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4: 21–41.
- 2001 (with Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow), *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2001 “Democracy” (vol. 2), “Collective Action” (vol. 3), and “Social Class” (vol. 3). In Peter N. Stearns, ed., *Encyclopedia of European Social History*, 6 vols. New York: Scribner’s.

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- 2001 “Historical Analysis of Political Processes.” In Jonathan H. Turner, ed., *Handbook of Sociological Theory*. New York: Kluwer/Plenum.
- 2001 “Historical Sociology.” In *International Encyclopedia of the Behavioral and Social Sciences*. Amsterdam: Elsevier. Vol. 10, pp. 6753–6757.
- 2001 “Public Violence.” In *International Encyclopedia of the Behavioral and Social Sciences*. Amsterdam: Elsevier. Vol. 24, pp. 16206–16211.
- 2002 “Neuere angloamerikanische Sozialgeschichte.” In Günther Lottes and Joachim Eibach, eds., *Kompass der Geschichtswissenschaft*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- 2002 “Event Catalogs as Theories.” *Sociological Theory* 20: 248–254.
- 2002 *Stories, Identities, and Political Change*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- 2003 *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Close readers will notice that I have borrowed a number of ideas and facts (e.g., the calendars of revolutionary situations in Chapters 3–5, which come from *European Revolutions*) without attribution from these publications. Again, it would have encumbered the text without profit to provide citations of all my own previous statements on the book’s topics. More extensive overlap with previous publications occurs in two circumstances: (1) when I have adapted whole passages from earlier writings and (2) when I have published adaptations from the manuscript as I wrote it. As a result of one circumstance or the other, significant overlaps appear between portions of the book’s text and

- 1992 “Cities, Bourgeois, and Revolution in France.” In M’hammed Sabour, ed., *Liberté, égalité, fraternité: Bicentenaire de la grande révolution française*. Joensuu, Finland: Joensuu Yliopisto. University of Joensuu Publications in Social Sciences, 14.
- 1995 “Citizenship, Identity and Social History” and “The Emergence of Citizenship in France and Elsewhere.” In Charles Tilly, ed., *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1998 “Social Movements and (All Sorts of) Other Political Interactions – Local, National, and International – Including Identities. Several Divagations from a Common Path, Beginning with British Struggles over Catholic Emancipation, 1780–1829, and Ending with Contemporary Nationalism.” *Theory and Society* 27: 453–480.

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2000 “Struggle, Democratization, and Political Transformation.” In Waltraud Schelkle, Wolf-Hagen Krauth, Martin Kohli, and Georg Elwert, eds., *Paradigms of Social Change: Modernization, Development, Transformation, Evolution*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag and St. Martin’s.

Chapter 7, furthermore, greatly expands one of my contributions to Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), but also borrows text wholesale from that section of *Dynamics*.

For suggestions, information, criticism, and advice, I am grateful to Ron Aminzade, Wayne te Brake, Carmenza Gallo, Michael Hanagan, Sidney Tarrow, Nicholas Toloudis, Takeshi Wada, Viviana Zelizer, two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press, and audiences at the Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, Cornell University, the University of Geneva, and the American Sociological Association. Serving on Marc Lerner’s dissertation committee (see Lerner 2003) gave me welcome access to his incomparable knowledge of Schwyz, Zurich, and Vaud as well as his warnings against blunders in my rendering of Swiss history, but it also put me on my mettle not to poach a young scholar’s distinctive, valuable contribution to studies of European democratization. Stephanie Sakson contributed sure-handed editing, and Robert Swanson crafted a lucid index. The National Science Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences jointly supported two sojourns and multiple meetings at the center during which I formulated ideas for this book and wrote some of the text.

New York City

May 2003