Boekbespreking van: Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics

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could it be interpreted as a case of free riding? On the other hand, given the high preparedness of the Swiss military, it is a very expensive form of free riding. How does one distinguish between the hypotheses?

Michael Nicholson

Sydney Tarrow, *Power in Movement. Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd edition. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1998. Hardback ISBN 0-521-62972-4 £ 40.00, USD 59.95; paperback ISBN 0-521-62947-0, £ 14.95 (USD 18.95).

The first edition of Sidney Tarrow's *Power in Movement*, published in 1994, received well-deserved praise as a rich synthesis of studies on social movements and a seminal contribution to the field. Although also useful as a textbook on, and a review of, the growing literature concerning protest, the book is the most complete attempt to develop a political theory of social movements. Tarrow is one of the founders of the so-called 'political process' approach to movements and author of path-breaking research on protest cycles. In *Power in Movement,* he refers to many and diverse historical cases in order to build hypotheses on the internal dynamics of movements as political actors, as well as their interactions with 'normal politics' – with the institutions from which they draw resources and which they hope, and often manage, to influence.

The revised edition takes into account in various ways the most recent developments in a still very dynamic field. First of all, in terms of empirical references, it enlarges the range of illustrative cases, especially in the direction of the social movements that emerged outside the Western world, in particular during and after democratization in areas of the world as different as Eastern Europe and South Africa. Second, from the theoretical point of view, the second edition addresses two new challenges. On the one hand the attempt to locate social movements inside a wider category of contentious politics, on the other the potential for the development of protest in political settings outside the nation-state.

The introduction to the volume, revised for the new edition, is devoted to the definition of social movements. Three main definitions can be found in the field. First, social movements can be identified substantially on the bases of what they do, as carrier of protest. In addition, they can be singled out on the bases of their organizational structure, as 'networks of networks'. Lastly, they can be conceived as common beliefs or interests. Although, as an author within the 'political process' approach, Tarrow prefers the first option, his definition goes beyond action, including also references to structures and values. Social movements are in fact defined as "those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (p. 2). While the first edition presents social

movements as "collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (1st edition, p. 4), the new edition draws the attention to the concept of 'contentious politics', on which the author is conducting research together with other colleagues. As Tarrow writes, "[c]ollective action becomes contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to the institutions, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims, and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge others or authority" (p. 3). What really distinguishes social movements is therefore their positions as sustained challengers of established authorities. The emphasis on peculiar forms of action seems instead somehow weakened in the second edition: the term "contentious action" is in fact often used as a substitute where the terms "protest" or "disruptive action" were used in the first edition.

The first chapter revisits rather than revises various contributions and approaches to social movements in order to single out their contribution to what Tarrow sees as "the most forceful argument of this study", namely, that "people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and then, by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, create new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention" (p. 19). Coherent with this stress on political opportunities and constraints, the first part of the volume is devoted to a fascinating analysis of the birth of modern social movements. Drawing from a large number of contentious forms of politics since the 18th century, Tarrow highlights the close relationship between the emergence of the nation-state and social movements. Following Charles Tilly, he shows how the territorial and functional process of centralization of political power, the granting of civic and political rights, as well as new technologies (in particular in the field of communications), allowed for the development of a new repertoire of collective action that was modular (in the sense that the same form could be used by different actors), national in scope, and based on autonomous organizations.

If the nation-state provided the context necessary for the development of social movements, it is, however, only in relatively recent times that social movements, as actors that can be distinguished from parties and interest groups, gained momentum. In the second part of the volume, the attention shifts to contemporary movements with the aim of illustrating the 'powers of movement'. The main 'power' of movement, Tarrow suggests, comes from political opportunities. Ordinary people pour into the streets, "when institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines" (p. 71). In agreement with most research since the sixties, Tarrow stresses that social movements in fact do not emerge just when there are grievances, but when there are opportunities to mobilize these grievances. Although political opportunities are most important, he recognizes the active role of those who seize these opportunities, the symbolic activity of assigning meanings to the external reality, and the practical activity of mobilizing resources into organized activity. The repertoire of action, cultural themes and social networks available in a society are the classical raw material that activists can use in their

mobilization processes. Tarrow, however, points especially to the role of contentious action itself in creating new repertoires, frames and solidarity. Contentious action, therefore, not only uses, but also reproduces resources for collective action.

In the third part, devoted to 'the dynamics of movements', Tarrow addresses the neglected issue of movement outcomes. A very interesting chapter is devoted to the cycle of contention. This is defined as phases of

> heightened conflict across the social system with a rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilized to less mobilized sectors; a rapid pace of innovation in the forms of contention; the creation of new or transformed collective action frames; a combination of organized and unorganized participation; and sequences of intensified information flow and interaction between challengers and authorities (p. 142).

During intense interactions with authorities and allies, and via diffusion processes, protest then reproduces protest. Besides, protest often produces reform – and this is the topic of another chapter – although rarely the reform for which the protesters had struggled.

Finally, as is discussed in a chapter devoted to 'transnational contention', protest spreads cross-nationally, giving rise to various forms of collaboration across borders. Tarrow remains sceptical about the idea of a new historical break after the creation of the modern social movements that accompanied the formation of the nation-state, and stresses, probably with good reason, that the nation-state shall remain for a long time the main target and broker of movement claims. Nevertheless, the addition of this new chapter to the second edition of *Power in Movement* reflects the recognition of the increasing role of transnational phenomena for social movements. The prediction is that, although truly global movements, with sustained interactions between transnationally integrated networks of protesters, will remain rare, loosely structured and temporarily limited forms of transnational collaboration are instead on the rise.

As this brief summary should have indicated, Tarrow develops many hypotheses on the past, the present and the future of social movements. Always accompanied by interesting and well-presented illustrations, they represent a stimulating contribution to further analysis and make this volume highly valuable reading for both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' to social movement studies. In general, the focus is more on action than on actors: the elaboration on the dynamics of a 'protest cycle' remains a dominant theme, while less attention is devoted to the mobilization strategies of social movement organizations. Moreover, the stress on the continuity in the modern repertoire of contention risks sometimes to reduce the attention from the most recent, quite relevant changes in the hystorically specific social movement family that has monopolized much of the research in the field since the sixties (the so-called left-libertarian movement family). Not only did social movements develop transnational links, they also – as Tarrow acknowledges at various points in the book – learned how to bargain

with the authorities; contributed to send their allies into governments; managed to have some of their activists hired as 'femocrats' or 'ecocrats' in the specialized bureaucracies established to deal with movement concerns and often directly with movement claims; built up professionalized lobbies, and succeeded in becoming the privileged market target for media and other firms. Protest, as disruptive action, has not become rare, but has become less and less dominant in the action repertoire of many of the social movements that are often quoted in Tarrow's book. Its is questionable whether the ecological or women's movements can still be defined as "actors that lack regular access to institutions" or present "new or unaccepted claims". Institutionalization or co-optation, however, are insufficient concepts to describe these new actors who, although not very similar to their predecessors in the seventies and the eighties, still differ clearly from interest groups or parties. The new emphasis on contentious politics that characterizes this edition satisfies the need, that is, I believe, widespread in the field, to go beyond established concepts and approaches, in order to take into account some of the more significant and recent changes in social movements. Maybe, if it was defined and developed better, the concept of contentious politics could contribute to this search for new frames of analysis the necessity of which *Power in Movement* stresses. However, this is a task that Tarrow leaves for future research.

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Wolfgang C. Müller and Kaare Strom (eds.), *Policy, Office, or Votes? How Political Parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999. Hardback ISBN 0-521-63135-1 £ 37.50, USD 59.95; paperback ISBN 0-521-63723-6 £ 13.95, USD 21.95.

Operating within the rational choice approach to the study of political parties, Müller and Strom have pulled together an interesting and useful study of how parties make hard decisions. Seeking to build upon earlier work by Kaare Strom, the editors and contributors ably demonstrate that party leaders face trade-offs in deciding what to do in a 'hard choice' situation.

The introductory chapter by Strom and Müller sets out the questions that the volume aims to answer: "How do party leaders make decisions on behalf of their organizations? What trade-offs do they face, and how do they resolve them? What are the constraints under which party leaders operate, both within their parties and in their larger environments?" (p. 1-2). The work assumes that party leaders work as 'political entrepreneurs' and that they face constraints on how they act to achieve their objectives. The rational choice tradition has established a well-defined set of objectives for political parties: office, votes, policys. Unlike earlier works in this tradition, the framework used here assumes that a political party is rarely a pure 'vote-seeker', 'office-