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Institutions and Mobilization: Explaining and Understanding the Intersection

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Abstract:

This paper highlights how institutions often shape the paths available for political involvement. Many formal, lawful, and effective institutional avenues for people to express their aspirations are associated with significant extra-institutional action; this is one of the most significant conclusions drawn from the mobilization literature. With institutions serving as the independent variable, most scholarly studies have concentrated on how institutions affect mobilization. There is also a smaller body of study that examines the effects of mobilization on formal institutions, particularly about party politics, voting processes, and legal frameworks. Additionally, a large number of academics have examined institutions inside movements as well as movements within institutions as worthwhile areas of study. This paper identifies fourteen consensus propositions about the connections between institutions and mobilization. Although these fourteen conclusions are frequently taken for granted, further empirical testing is necessary to assess their robustness over a larger number of situations and historical periods. For this reason, they are given as testable hypotheses. The next section outlines three main obstacles to determining more widespread causal patterns: (1) a conceptual ambiguity in defining pertinent "institutions" as study subjects; (2) a dearth of worldwide data on protest and mobilization that could produce empirical findings that are broadly applicable; and (3) a historical propensity to extrapolate conclusions from a limited number of Western cases. To improve our collective grasp of the links between these notions, a few substantive and methodological approaches are suggested in the paper's conclusion.

Keywords: Politics, Institutions, Mobilization, Collective Action, Social Movements

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Introduction:

Since Aristotle's time, comparative analyses of institutions have focused on the organizational structures included in the national constitutions of the countries they are analyzing. It is unclear to academics what distinguishes legal systems—like the electoral process or the constitution itself—from institutions—like the government or parliament. The primary focus of classic institutional research studies is the interests that gave rise to legislative frameworks and laws. As scholars attempted to demonstrate how constitutions operated, institutionalist theories fell short of providing a convincing theoretical foundation for informal laws and institutions. This only began to take shape in the 1980s and was a part of a broader discussion on neo-institutionalism (Peters 2015: 3–21). Critiques of the conventional institutional approach provided several chances to further the field of institutional research. Scholars began to see institutions as more than just independent variables. Furthermore, comparative analyses were conducted by researchers far more frequently. Finally, scholars started examining institutions that had no formal or legal basis and incorporated these institutions into their studies.

Every neo-institutionalist approach starts with the same understanding of institutions. According to Douglass North (1990: 3), an institution is defined as "a norm or set of norms that have a significant impact on the behavior of individuals" (concerned by or included in the institution). Institutions consequently restrict the activity of individuals. Although North did not emphasize the significance of penalties, the neo-institutional argument has several interpretations of the limits that are linked to them.

Everyone agrees that institutions limit people's conduct in some ways (Peters 1999: 18). There are differences in the degree and the processes involved in this. The internalization of norms throughout primary or secondary socialization processes (family, kinship—school, military, companies) is highlighted by several writers (March and Olson 2016). Here, breaking the rules results in a guilty conscience, and doing so is approved by an internal system. There are further external punishing mechanisms, such as arrests, status loss, social marginalization, or discrimination. The latter is covered by rational choice views as these viewpoints have taken into account the potential drawbacks of breaking the law. In this instance, incentives associated with the institution will not be advantageous to players who breach it. All forms of enforcement mechanisms have one thing in common: breaching the norms established by unofficial organizations

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entails consequences for the rule-breaker. It seems sensible to treat norms as institutions only insofar as they uphold (their own) external sanction mechanisms, to avoid creating a catch-all category that would encompass all kinds of annoyances (induced by a specific sanction mechanism). Formal institutions are affected by this.

Institutions are followed by actors for reasons other than only punishments, even if this is one of their distinguishing characteristics. Actors adhere to institutions because they see them as "natural" or given. Actors also adhere to institutions because they are seen as legitimate or because they exhibit a lawful demeanor. According to North, these analyses of penalties and the motivations behind actors' adherence to regulations are related to the primary objective of institutions: "A fundamental tenet of an institutional perspective is that institutions produce elements of predictability and order" (March and Olson 2016: 4). In conclusion, institutions are described as follows: A system of rules is made up of institutions. There are rights and duties implied by the set of regulations. Additionally, a social order is created and shaped by the set of norms in a way that makes the conduct of all of its participants predictable. Institutions can influence performance by choosing to abide by the norms freely or by using the prospect of punishment as motivation.

Furthermore, mobilization is the process via which apathetic people become engaged members of society by pursuing popular collective action in support of certain demands, causes, or objectives (Tilly 1978). There are many different ways that people might get mobilized: via protests, armed revolt, revolution, and civil resistance. It may also take many different forms, ranging from direct actions organized by social movement groups to more impromptu, controversial incidents like riots. Academics from several fields, principally sociology and political science, have embraced the study of mobilization, contentious politics, social movements, and civil resistance. Many individuals view mobilization as a process people engage in when other options—such as political parties, legal representation, legislative representation, and the like—are either unavailable, obstructed, compromised, or seized by other interests. This approach of mobilization is best shown by the so-called Color Revolutions, in which large-scale demonstrations broke out in reaction to purported electoral fraud in semi-democracies (Tucker 2017; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Beissinger 2017). Another example is the Arab Spring, which saw widespread mobilization in several nations with limited official, legal avenues for political expression. Additionally, transnational, counter-majoritarian organizations like the European

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Commission and the European Central Bank have played a significant role in inciting popular unrest and mobilization throughout Europe. In the latter instance, people organized to oppose agendas they believed lacked legitimacy due to democratic processes. According to some, political mobilization takes place outside of official institutions and serves as a stand-in for institutions that aren't working well (Özler 2013; Goodwin 2011). Groups excluded by the political structures that now exist have an incentive to create new organizational models, according to Clemens (1993: 755). Therefore, we would anticipate that the periods and locations with the greatest levels of mobilization would be those in which many formal institutions are lacking and complaints that are widely held.

Nonetheless, one of the most intriguing discoveries made over the previous 50 years of research is that nations with a large number of formal, legitimate, and functional institutions frequently have high rates of mobilization. Even in advanced democracies like the US, UK, France, and Germany, where there are numerous, overlapping, and quite effective political, social, and economic institutions, there is an exceptionally high degree of mobilization—often in highly disruptive and radical ways. When there are several institutional channels available for them to air their complaints, why do so many people choose to take their complaints outside the system?

This conundrum has spurred a plethora of research on more particular institutional arrangements to comprehend why mobilization happens despite institutions and why various institutional arrangements may result in differing degrees of mobilization (Amenta and Ramsey 2010 provide a helpful summary of competing approaches). Political opportunity structure (POS) theories provide the main theoretical justification for the theory, contending that institutional environments can foster or inhibit popular collective action and that mobilization happens wherever it can. The majority of this research has focused on the relationship between institutions and mobilization, using institutions as the independent variable. A lesser corpus of research also looks at how formal institutions have been impacted by mobilization, specifically about party politics, voting procedures, and legal frameworks. Additionally, a large number of academics have examined institutions inside movements as well as movements within institutions as worthwhile areas of study.

Political scientists consider how an individual's choices and/or behaviors align with those of the group in which they are located in almost everything they research. Without the rebel group and the government putting down their weapons, peace is not feasible. For a

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law to pass, a politician requires the support of his or her colleagues. Without the backing of the legislative and executive branches, the budget cannot be approved. A successful coup d'état requires coordination between different military forces to overthrow the government. "In politics, the consequences of my actions are highly dependent upon the actions of others," notes Pierson (2010: 258). What I get is primarily determined by what other people do, not just by what I do.

This paper provides an overview of the various shapes this reliance may take. A range of instances from several subfields are shown, which emphasize that the key issues facing political actors in various substantive situations are universal. The ramifications of seeing institutions in this light are then clarified, along with how institutions contribute to these strategic challenges by either causing them or resolving them (intentionally or not). Comprehending the operation of institutions compels us to examine their historical context. This paper identifies fourteen consensus statements about the connections between institutions and mobilization. Although widely accepted, these fourteen conclusions are offered as testable hypotheses since further empirical research is needed to assess their resilience across a larger set of situations and historical eras. Subsequently, three primary obstacles are delineated, namely: (1) imprecise definition of pertinent “institutions” as study subjects; (2) insufficient worldwide data on protest and mobilization that could produce broadly applicable empirical conclusions; and (3) a customary inclination to extrapolate conclusions from a limited number of Western instances. In closing, this paper makes many methodological and substantive recommendations that might improve our understanding of the connections between these ideas as a whole.

The Problem of Collective Decision-Making

Making decisions as a group is one task that political actors—whether they are part of a court, junta, legislature, or party—must perform. Collective decision, however, is fraught with issues that may result in unfavorable consequences. For instance, Arrow's Theorem informs us that, aside from dictatorship, no preference aggregation rule—like the simple majority—can concurrently satisfy a limited number of essential desiderata. However, even in cases when agents' choices are rational on an individual basis, collective choice in a multidimensional space suffers from perverse issues, particularly those related to cycling and intransitivity, as demonstrated by the different chaotic theora, particularly those proposed by McKelvey (1976) and Schofield (1977). Academic institutions have been

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suggested by scholars as a means of comprehending potential remedies for such unsettling outcomes.

This analysis mostly assumes that cycling is normatively unacceptable. As a result, policies become unstable, which makes the government ineffective and makes individuals unpredictable when they base their conduct on what the government does. Institutions, like legislative committees or parties, can help players break out from this cycle and reach solid group choices under these kinds of circumstances. An alternative approach to arrive at this conclusion is to make the explicit assumption that political players prioritize collaborating with others above not cooperating at all. The crucial challenge in the traditional coordination problem is locating a focal point. This relationship is best illustrated by comparing Bach and Stravinsky: you enjoy Stravinsky more than Bach, and I like Bach more than Stravinsky, yet we would both rather attend the same concert. According to Hardin (1989), people living in a society that takes into account how a polity is organized may find themselves in a similar circumstance. Although they may have varying preferences for certain types of constitutive rules, they all want to reach some sort of consensus on any collection of rules. These guidelines are provided by constitutions, which also act as a center of gravity to keep us from living in anarchy or in a society where fundamental laws are continuously changed. We may enact laws and make other actions that result in more effective governance when we agree on a set of constitutive norms (Holmes 1995).

Institutions can assist actors in deciding on policies or outcomes when they are faced with the challenge of preference aggregation or result coordination. This is likely preferable to dealing with policy instability or anarchy. However, institutions nonetheless have distributive implications notwithstanding their efficiency-enhancing qualities (Knight 1992). Long-term political party coalitions may lower the transaction costs involved in enacting laws, but they also provide the dominant parties the ability to serve as gatekeepers. Although they may aid in reducing cycling, legislative committees arranged according to policy jurisdiction also provide certain assembly members the authority to decide the agenda. Policy results frequently diverge greatly from the preferences of the median group member as a result of gatekeeping and agenda control exercised by a small number of group members (e.g. Romer and Rosenthal 1978). To put it briefly, there is often an institutional efficiency frontier. Generally speaking, there are just many approaches to managing competing tensions rather than ideal answers to communal problems.

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In such cases, institutions devise a way to offset one inefficiency against another. There are institutional ways to mitigate concerns about policy instability and excessive transaction costs, but they can require embracing unfavorable results like non-median policies.

The Problem of Interdependent Action

Political actors operate independently or in concert with others, in addition to reaching choices as a group. This description applies to several strategic dilemmas, including delegation, commitment, and collective action. The classic frameworks of these problems were taken from the field of economics. However, as the substantive examples show, we typically need to mix and complicate these frameworks to examine political environments.

One thing unites the prisoners' dilemma, the collective action problem, and the common pool resource problem: they are all instances where individual reason is insufficient to ensure collective reason. While a cooperative solution could benefit all parties, individual incentives put individuals in a worse situation (Sandler 1992).

Citizens face such a conundrum when it comes to upholding the proper limitations on governmental authority (Weingast 1997). Certain citizens' rights may be violated by the state, and those individuals must choose whether to accept or oppose such violations. The twist is that certain people's assets may be taken by the state and distributed to other people in part. As a result, even though it would benefit all citizens if they opposed all state wrongdoings, some non-targeted individuals assist the government in infringing on the rights of others. Because individuals have incentives to deviate from any collective challenge of such violations, the state cannot commit to not carrying them out.

In a coalition administration, political parties deal with a comparable structure in a different setting. Creating the budget under coalition governments is an issue with shared resources. The coalition would benefit from adhering to aggregate budget caps, but because each party controls a ministry, it is incentivized to overspend on projects for which it gets credit from its supporters and accuses the other parties of "overspending." As more parties join a coalition, the quantity of fiscal expenditures grows, and coalition governments often spend more than single-party administrations (Bawn and Rosenbluth 2016). Several fiscal institutions kinds might fix this issue. Parties might not be able to "free ride" if, for example, the finance minister has sole authority over budget development or if floor changes to budget measures are forbidden. When there are such constrictive

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budgetary mechanisms in place, government spending does not rise when more parties join the coalition (Martin and Vanberg 2013).

The introduction of time poses a unique set of challenges for political actors. Because what would maximize their utility in a given period would not be the same as what would maximize it if the entire time route were taken into account, their preferences might be time-inconsistent (Shepsle 1991). Two crucial issues arise when consistency and optimality are at odds: first, verifiability—the actor committing must be able to confirm that the other actor is keeping it; and second, enforcement—there needs to be a way to penalize the original actor if they break their word. Parties to a civil or interstate battle typically sign a peace treaty that may include commitments to share power, disarm, or relinquish territory—all of which are necessary future steps. The issue is that future shifts in the actors' power dynamics or the appearance of spoilers might make a deal that is agreeable for all parties currently unsatisfactory (Fearon, 1998; Heger and Jung, 2014). As a result of the actors' incentives to renegotiate or break the agreement, peace is unlikely to be reached shortly and at the moment since parties might not be prepared to compromise if these difficulties are not handled. Third-party mediators are one possible answer; they may confirm that actors are keeping their end of the bargain and impose steep penalties on them if they cheat (Walter 2012). Although mediators may raise the chances of peace by raising the costs of repeated conflict, their long-term impacts are less certain (Beardsley 2018).

Vote brokers may also buy votes for their parties and candidates in developing democracies. They promise voters that they will support the candidate or party offering these items at the polls in exchange for cash and in-kind advantages before the election. However, since the introduction of the secret ballot, it has been more challenging to ensure that the voter keeps their word on election day. Brokers may utilize social sanctioning or benefit withholding as a kind of punishment, focusing on communities with strong social links to confirm voter behavior on an individual basis (Stokes 2015; Magaloni 2016). However, there is a difficulty with collective action that coexists with the voters' commitment issue. Voters who wish to vote for their chosen politicians and accept bribes have an incentive to take advantage of other voters' acquiescence, as noted by Rueda (2013). The more people who vote at the same polling place, the simpler it is to get away with this kind of free-riding. This might explain the negative correlation that exists between vote purchasing and the

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degrees of election result aggregation (Chandra 2014; Schaffer and Schedler 2017; Birch 2011).

Delegation is an additional option for actors looking to increase the credibility of their promises. Actors looking to create a credible pledge can simply delegate control to others instead of manipulating the consequences of acts to prevent reneging. By giving parliament control over the money, the King of England was able to resist the urge to expropriate following the Glorious Revolution (North and Weingast 1989). Likewise, by giving a central bank authority over monetary policy, a government might stop controlling the economy. Naturally, it is crucial that the actor to whose authority has been assigned be, in reality, separate from the actor attempting to establish the legitimacy of his pledge. However, delegating brings with it its own set of issues (Miller 2015; Sanchez-Cuenca 1998). The principal-agent framework identifies two major categories of issues: those involving concealed knowledge (adverse selection) and hidden behaviors (moral hazard). The principle suffers some agency loss, regardless of whether the agent has better knowledge about his actions or kind. Should delegation take place in an attempt to tie the knot, this kind of agency loss might serve as proof of the commitment's legitimacy. If the principal transfers power to the agent to make up for his lack of knowledge, experience, or time, he forfeits some control over the agent in exchange for this cure. The principal-agent paradigm exhibits sufficient flexibility to include the diverse range of trade-offs that political players are compelled to contemplate, as well as the circumstances surrounding them (Gailmard, 2023). This flexibility is essential because political actors sometimes find themselves in circumstances where agents have more than just better knowledge about acts or kinds, as the following instances show. Significant departures from the conventional principal-agent paradigm occur when agents are unable to enforce principals to comply with their choices and when compliance by the agent cannot be taken for granted.

For instance, courts have the authority to utilize their decisions to address fundamental issues with policymaking and institutional reputation (Staton and Vanberg 2018). The goal of policy outcomes for justices is to be as near to their ideal positions as feasible. However, in an uncertain environment, their capacity for formulating policies may be restricted, which may motivate them to express ambiguous ideas to let those with greater competence carry out policy results. However, the court as an institution is affected by how clear or unclear decisions are. Vague rulings, on the one hand, provide other

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actors a way to evade following the court's judgment, which is particularly frustrating for an organization lacking the authority to enforce its conclusions. Nonetheless, if it seems improbable that the other arms of government would follow the court's judgment, the court may employ ambiguous wording to preserve its institutional standing. On the other side, a vague rule might conceal outright disobedience.

A crucial act of delegation lies at the heart of representative democracy: individuals appoint their representatives to decide on their behalf or by their preferences (Manin 1997). Because of this, citizens have to deal with issues of moral hazard as well as adverse selection. They have to pick agents based on better information about their competency, honesty, etc., and they have to manage these agents without having complete awareness of their behavior. Elections are the only tool available to people to address these issues, which might make matters worse since voters may be less able to effectively inspire the candidate who is chosen to take office if they use the elections to separate candidates based on certain characteristics (Fearon 1999). Given that in this case of delegation agents genuinely have the power to make decisions that bind their principals, the process by which citizens choose and manage their elected officials is not a meaningless matter (Moe 1990).

The Role of Institutions

Institutions play several roles in this image because players confront a wide range of strategic difficulties whether they are acting cooperatively or in concert. To put it mildly, institutional structures can either be the source of the strategic issue or act as a platform for its emergence. The cycle problem arises, for instance, in a group choice environment (like a legislature) with particular proposals and decision procedures (such paired options subject to majority rule). The agency dilemma between voters and elected officials arises from the very structure of representational governance. In a similar vein, there would be no commitment issue for voters about vote brokers if there were no secret ballot elections.

Scholars have a long history of analyzing political institutions to see how well institutional arrangements address issues with coordinated action and strategic interdependence. The study of the law merchant by Milgrom, North, and Weingast (1990) is among the most well-known and perceptive instances of this tradition. They contend that as global conditions changed and commitment issues that all business transactions intensified, merchant law developed to support economic activity. In particular, they demonstrate that whereas regular

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interaction among merchants in a small community fosters an incentive for honest behavior, relative anonymity among dealers in larger communities that mimic modern society diminishes that motivation owing to the capacity to locate new trading partners. Large-community merchants understand that the likelihood of running into their same trading partner again is minimal, and they also know that the ability of a deceived partner to tell others about their wrongdoing is constrained. A trader does not, therefore, dread the repercussions of acting dishonestly. The law merchant evolved as a way to offset the negative effects of bigger communities on economic activity. This organization established an information clearinghouse that prospective traders could use to compare each other's trading histories and get permission to pass judgment on suspected dishonesty. It is feasible to create an information clearinghouse such that traders would utilize it and abide by its rulings, as demonstrated by Milgrom, North, and Weingast.

As seen by the examples we provided in the preceding section, scholars in this tradition have addressed almost every issue related to social and political interaction. Scholars have assessed how political parties might stop cycling in intricate policy areas, among other ways. They have looked into how committees can resolve informational (Krehbiel, 1991) and distributive (Weingast and Marshall, 1988; Shepsle and Weingast, 1995) issues that arise in legislative settings, how a system of separation of powers can enable more credible commitments by leaders, and how litigation and investigation can resolve agency loss in the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and federalism. Scholars have examined how legislative institutions enable governments to manage the interests of the many groups that make up their constituents in different contexts. In regions where coalition administrations are in place, for instance, the various political factions inside the government may face contradictory demands from both their coalition partners and their voters. According to Martin and Vanberg (2011), the government can permit member parties to cater to their electoral constituencies without compromising the coalition by implementing certain institutional procedures.

In other situations, the institutions involved limit the problem's potential remedies. In certain instances, institutions only prohibit behavior patterns that are harmful or counterproductive, in contrast to the preceding cases when organizations encouraged individuals to cooperate to solve their shared societal problems. For instance, there are explicit institutional restrictions governing the conflicts that courts will consider and decide throughout a large portion of the law. These

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laws prohibit employing the judiciary to settle conflicts that do not fall under the purview of judicial settlement. Similarly, the U.S. Constitution outlines a power structure between the several departments of government and a set of powers that are expressly designated for particular political bodies. For example, the House of Representatives is prohibited from approving presidential nominees by these regulations. These are only examples of regulations that may, of course, be altered; the important thing to remember is that the institution works to restrict conduct rather than encourage desirable decisions.

It is crucial to keep in mind that institutions allow participants to handle trade-offs, whether or not they are viewed as solutions to social issues or as instruments to assist in selecting a course of action, such as by restricting the options available to political actors. They provide actors with a structure for arranging their options, balancing competing interests, and choosing between contradictory solutions to social issues. Not every institutional solution to a strategic dilemma is known to exist. However, the history of institutional study provides a thorough, in-depth knowledge of how institutions influence social behavior.

Institutional Origins

The influence of institutions on issues with social coordination is the main focus of these research directions. However, creating counterfactuals is a necessary part of the social science model for concluding causal effects. If the institution had not been accepted, what may have happened? The most robust model for drawing such a conclusion is predicated on the idea that the institutions were established at random; that is, it is random which locations have independent courts and property rights and which do not. It is regrettably improbable that institutions are formed at chance. This means that the question of the origins of institutional structures becomes a priori.

In particular, we need to consider the purpose of institutions. Are the organizations we see in the world designed with the express purpose of providing the best solution for the problem we are researching? The answer is most likely yes in some situations. Politicians may deliberately choose a set of constitutional norms to function as a focal point if they wish to prevent the inefficiencies brought about by ambiguity or renegotiation about the fundamental structures of governance, for example. However, the precise clauses included in constitutions are typically the result of political agreements, crafted by parties well cognizant of the distributive

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consequences of their actions and giving the implications for the welfare of the group only secondary, if any, consideration (Elster 1993). In a similar vein, the norms that a society chooses to impose can assist in resolving problems requiring collective choice, but they also have a major impact on which social groups tend to perform better throughout the legislative process. Distribution is recognized to be significantly impacted by institutional frameworks (Knight 1992). There are two consequences. First, all institutions—even those that seek to maximize the welfare of all—face distributive consequences. There are several possible institutional solutions on the Pareto frontier, each assuming different distributional consequences. Additionally, and perhaps more frequently, distributive considerations may result in an institutional architecture that is not optimal for the other functions that the institutions perform.

Take the American Congressional Committee structure, for instance. The question of whether distributive or informational limits in the legislature are the primary focus of legislative committees is hotly debated (Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Krehbiel 1991). According to the distributive account, granting committees' authority over certain substantive areas permits a type of logrolling wherein the representatives of Silicon Valley control technology and patent law policy, while the representatives of farmers may control agriculture policy. Both parties can maintain a mutually beneficial agreement wherein they each receive what they desire on the issues that matter most to their people.

According to the informative account, a legislature as a whole lacks experience in every area of policy, thus it would be preferable to assign the task of creating agricultural policy to the representatives of farmers and the task of creating patent policy to the representatives of Silicon Valley. Those representatives will have a motivation, absent in others, to gather data and cultivate competence in each of their distinct policy domains as they have substantial interests in those areas. This example is crucial because it shows us that the conclusions we make about the committee system's capacity to handle informational issues, for instance, may change if it were meant to handle distributional conflicts as opposed to informational constraints. It is not sufficient to look at the committee structure and determine whether it is loaded with preference outliers who support radical policies to conclude that the system is more about distributive issues than informational obstacles. It is necessary to start with a theory of the issues that a legislature faced before the existence of the committee system, the objectives of lawmakers, and their options. We can start thinking

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about how institutions affect incentives and behavior once we have examined the a priori decision-making process for institutional configurations. Diermeyer and Krehbiel (2013) make a critical remark here.

Scholars must first analyze how actors behave under various institutional arrangements, based on presumptions about their preferences, before concluding the consequences of an institutional structure on political conduct. In turn, understanding the reasons for such institutions' existence necessitates taking a step back from that reasoning, assuming certain preferences of political players, and assessing the institutions that those actors choose to embrace in different scenarios. While it is evident that the second analytical objective is more difficult than the former, it also presents several difficult research questions that we will address in a moment and has the potential to provide significant insights.

But first, we draw attention to a second, related difficulty in researching institutional origins. To be more precise, institutions are typically not created by one actor's fiat. Thus, comprehending the real emergence of these institutions—which address the communal problem—is a necessary step in the process. A government party, for instance, can help distribute rewards and prevent internal strife amongst authoritarian elites. However, it also means that each of them must cede a portion of their fiefs. So how does the party come into being? Do they understand that in the long term, it will benefit them all together? Or does it have to be forced onto certain people but not others? Furthermore, might the institutional founders not have anticipated those outcomes and found it more difficult to agree on institutions in the first place if any particular institutional arrangement will have long-run distributive consequences for those subject to the institution—for instance, by leading to policies that tend to favor special interests over median voters?

Essentially, this means that because groups have to agree to institutions in the first place, progressive political actors will probably anticipate future developments in their initial negotiations. For example, they might not be able to agree to institutional solutions to short-term issues because of long-term concerns, or vice versa. Therefore, it is crucial to take into account the whole spectrum of potential concerns when researching institutional origins—concerns about distributive politics, social efficiency, and the political fallout from finding a solution to the social conundrum. The difficulty is that, at least in the eyes of some, there are instances when the remedy is worse than the issue.

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Political Institutions' Impact on Mobilization

The POS method is the prevalent institutional viewpoint on political mobilization. In general, the POS method contends that since the political and institutional context in which the complaints occur either facilitates or restricts the capacity to mobilize, both grievances and resources are insufficient to explain patterns of mobilization. Four primary indicators are used by McAdam to operationalize political opportunity: the state's desire and capacity to deploy repression, elite alignments in government, apparent fissures among the elite, and the openness of formal institutions (1996, 1999; see also Jung 2010: 27–28). Political mediation theorists contend that state-specific institutions and policies may both assist and impede challengers and that political party systems can influence the kinds of challenges that arise (Amenta and Zylan 1991: 250; Amenta 2016). While academics have also looked at institutional diversity within democracies (and, increasingly, autocracies) to see whether and why patterns of mobilization change, the biggest statements regarding institutional POS often refer to variations between regime types.

Regime Type: Democracy vs. Autocracy

The most fundamental research uses relatively static structural characteristics, including regime type, to explain the behavior of collective protest. For instance, since democracies are more open and often allow greater freedoms of expression, assembly, and petition than authoritarian governments, POS methods would anticipate a larger degree of real mobilization in democratic nations than in authoritarian ones (Eisinger 1973). According to Corcoran et al. (2011), political regime type—that is, democracy vs. autocracy—does have a significant impact on the chance that would-be activists will mobilize in protest actions. Those who express self-efficacy, or the belief that one can affect their environment through personal action, are more likely to participate in collective action behaviors than those who express fatalism, or the belief that one is powerless to change one's surroundings, according to research using cross-national data from the World Values Survey. In general, activists in democracies are more likely to believe that group action is effective, whereas activists in less democratic nations are more likely to feel that their efforts to advance their interests will be ineffective due to a feeling of fatalism. They also discover that people in less democratic nations, even those who exhibit high levels of effectiveness, are less inclined to participate in group activities than people in democratic nations. This could be the case in civilizations whose political institutions are more exclusive and repressive against political

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dissenters, increasing the personal dangers associated with collective action.

Sidney Tarrow's 1989 study, which distinguished between the various stages of the Italian protest cycle between 1965 and 1975, is among the most important research works on the patterns of protest in democratic countries. Tarrow identifies a prototypical protest in democratic regimes using protest data extracted from Italian newspapers. This protest consists of relatively large and widespread, but disorganized collective action, the emergence of a more organized movement led by movement entrepreneurs, and the subsequent episodes of repression and/or concessions. Subsequently, the movement fragments, losing members, and becomes further dispersed. Maybe at this point, as the many factions inside the movement vie for a smaller portion of the possible supporters market, a second generation of more radical members emerges, demanding even more radical actions.

Thus, Tarrow's research produces a range of observable consequences of politicized content in democratic regimes. Crucially, though, Tarrow's research only assesses one instance, Italy, which was a democracy during the duration of the investigation. Cross-national studies, like the one conducted recently by Jung (2010), assess the influence of political opportunity during the protest cycle while comparing and contrasting protest cycles in Western European nations. She concludes that while advantageous government partisanship—particularly for right-wing parties in power—and heightened election competitiveness might raise the possibility of new social movement protest cycles, they are not a good explanation for the drop in mobilization. Rather, she contends that the reasons why protest cycles usually come to an end are twofold: (1) the social movement becoming overly organized, or institutionalized; and (2) internal rivalry within social movement groups, which pushes some members to become radicalized and resort to violence, hastening the demobilization process.

These observations lead to two broad hypotheses:

1. Compared to nondemocracies, democracies mobilize more.
2. Compared to activists in nondemocracies, the interests represented by activists in democracies are more varied.

The timing of waves of contentious politics and the differences in mobilization patterns among democratic regimes cannot be explained by binary distinctions between democracy and nondemocracy. Furthermore, they are unable to explain mobilization under hybrid or

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nondemocratic regimes, which are a growing subset of regimes since the end of the Cold War (Levitsky and Way 2010; Robertson 2010; Bunce and Wolchik 2011). Because of these unanswered questions, researchers have assessed how political party structures, election laws, and executive agencies affect mobilization potential.

Configuration of Political Parties

Recent research has concentrated on the characteristics of movement demands as well as the makeup of the government, with a particular emphasis on the arrangements of political parties in power at the time of mobilization (Goldstone 2013).

The partisanship of the political parties in power seems to be important in democracies. For instance, Soule and Olzak's (2014) analysis of variations in the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment reveals that states with strong electoral competition, a history of passing civil rights legislation, and Democratic Party allies in the state legislature were more likely to ratify the amendment in response to mobilization. Additionally, they discovered that public opinion was important, with ratification more likely to happen in areas where surveys indicated a greater degree of acceptance of progressive social and economic responsibilities for women. Essentially, the Equal Rights Amendment movement was only successful in states that were already inclined to support the legislation, mostly due to the presence of political parties that shared the movement's ideological objectives.

Movement-allied party mobilization patterns might differ depending on the system's institutional structure. Due to extreme party division in the legislature, leftist parties in the US may become more active when Democrats have the president or dominate Congress. Conversely, in Western Europe, leftist parties tend to be more active during the tenure of right-wing administrations. According to Kriesi, et al. (1995), when leftist political parties are in opposition, emerging social movements—such as those centered on women, the environment, anti-war, and LGBT issues—are likely to be at their most active. However, academics anticipate some minimal movement activity even in the case of leftist parties winning power, as extra-institutional mobilization is a characteristic of leftist political theory rather than a merely political opportunity.

On the other hand, right-wing rivals in Western Europe often organize under leftist party rule. Giugni et al. (2015) studied extreme right-wing protests in multiple European nations and discovered a pronounced negative relationship between electoral power and the percentage of protests: the highest percentage of protests happened in Germany, a nation without a strong extreme-right party, and the

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lowest percentage happened in France, the nation with the strongest extreme-right party. (Giugni et al. 2015: 157). The "discursive opportunities" that political marginalization offers potential mobilizers are highlighted by Giugni et al. The movement's exclusion from the democratic process allows it to seize political discourse and carve out a special place for itself. Therefore, greater levels of protest might result from the absence of ideologically aligned parties' political presence. This implies that extreme right-wing groups will not organize when right-wing parties hold power. But when they do, radical repertoires will be employed (Giugni et al. 2015; Koopmans 1993). When combined, these findings point to the somewhat paradoxical conclusion that, while right-wing parties in power typically face a high level of new social movement protest only, leftist parties in power frequently face the greatest amount of protest from a wide range of divisive opponents (see also Jung 2010). A third consensus pattern results from this:

3. Parties on the left often experience the highest amount of mobilization, with both extreme right and moderate left opponents.

Formal opposition parties are a topic of more debate in authoritarian governments. Since formal opposition parties represent the majority of opposition activity through these channels and because they work to protect their positions within the government by discouraging contentious collective action outside of authorized channels, some argue that their presence within autocratic legislatures may hinder mobilization (Frantz and Kendall-Taylor 2014).

According to some (Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Robertson 2010), the existence of official opposition groups increases the ability of challengers to engage in high-risk collective action while also helping to create and protect space for contested politics. Frequently, when a regime is mobilized, counter-mobilization occurs, leading to cycles of instability, especially before or following elections (Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Robertson 2010; Tucker 2017). These findings suggest two competing, verifiable hypotheses:

4. Compared to autocracies without established opposition parties, autocracies with formal opposition parties see lower levels of mobilization.

5. Compared to autocracies with official opposition parties, autocracies without such parties see lower levels of mobilization.

Future study in this field is highly recommended. These consequences may differ significantly depending on the type of

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autocracy: military, personalist, single-party, or monarchical (Geddes 1999; Geddes et al. 2014).

Electoral Rules, Legislative Institutions, and Executive Institutions

New comparative research by Özler (2013) offers the most thorough examination of the impact of executive institutions, party systems, and election procedures on civil protest. The main conclusions are that political party fragmentation is linked to increased protest, majoritarian systems are more likely to generate protest than proportional representation systems, and presidential systems are more likely to be mobilized than parliamentary systems.

Legislatures under presidential systems often have fewer party rules and are more dispersed. To get back lawmakers' attention, voters may resort to protesting when presidents try to build patronage connections with certain lawmakers. Higher levels of party discipline are characteristic of parliamentary systems because of coalitional dynamics and the executive branch's direct accountability to the coalition government. Therefore, citizens do not need to use transient signals like large-scale protests to demand accountability. Özler (2013).

Because majoritarian systems usually create two "catch-all" parties that combine a wide range of divergent interests, they exhibit the highest degrees of party fragmentation. Thus, several social divisions overlap within each party, indicating that it is unusual for voters to be able to choose a party that fully satisfies their social, political, and/or economic needs. Thus, they may use mass protests to advocate for these objectives. On the other hand, voters under proportional representation systems can choose political parties that better reflect their interests. This increases the voter's perception of personal representation and reduces the motivation for them to participate in expensive collective action. Özler uses cross-sectional data on 90 nations between 1978 and 2002 to provide evidence for these claims.

Not every situation can be explained by the broad correlations discovered by Özler (2013). For instance, Hutter and Giugni (2019) characterize Switzerland as a "weak state" in that it has a "federal structure, proportional representation, multiparty coalition government with fairly undisciplined parties, weak public administration, and the presence of direct-democratic instruments" in their study on changes in patterns of contentious politics over time in Switzerland. Then, they contend that weak states, like Switzerland, tend to help social movements mobilize, but that because of the structure's encouragement of institutionalized protest tactics over extra-

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institutional or confrontational ones, these movements typically adopt a moderate "action repertoire" (Hutter and Giugni 2019: 430).

Naturally, Hutter and Giugni's interpretation of "state weakness" differs slightly from other interpretations. While more conventional conceptions of state weakness center on the state's ability to internalize citizen demands, remain intact while managing crises and quell ongoing dissent through limited uses of repression, the latter characterize Swiss institutions as weak because the majority of legitimate state institutions have a light footprint (Beissinger 2013; Hendrix 2010; Skocpol 1979). For instance, Goldstone's (1991) groundbreaking research on the causes of revolutions argues that when financial crises, elite fractionalization, and population growth occur at the same time, mass mobilization results because elite fractionalization tells the populace that mobilization will be effective and the state institutions are unable to meet the demands of an increasingly assertive populace.

Various studies contend that the impact of the institutional setting on social movements varies based on their access to different phases of the legislative process and the lawmakers' inclination to prioritize movement problems. For instance, King et al. (2015) found in their study of the woman suffrage movement that while mobilization can influence the possibility of an issue making it onto the legislative agenda, the impact of social movement activity is constrained by "increasingly stringent rules" at "each successive stage of the legislative process." Legislators therefore "responded to suffragists by bringing the issue of woman suffrage to the legislative forum, but differences in social movement tactics and organization did not have as great an impact once suffrage bills reached the voting stage" (King et al. 2015: 1211).

This result is consistent with the institutional selection hypothesis of Wisler and Giugni (1996), which contends that political structures have a tendency to support some movements while restricting or eliminating others. Movements perceived as “pro-institutional” as opposed to “counter-institutional” have a better chance of framing their concerns to mesh with the discourses that already exist, which enables lawmakers to include movement demands into the institutional process (Wisler and Giugni, 1996: 85).

However, there are a few common patterns that we can see overall:

6. Protests are more common in presidential systems than in parliamentary ones.
7. Proportional representation systems face less resistance than

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majoritarian ones.

8. Compared to democracies with lower levels of political party fragmentation, democracies with higher degrees of party fragmentation also see higher levels of protest.

9. Protests are more common in states with limited capacity than in those with large capacity.

Institutions and Repression

The effects of repression and concessions on the conduct of social movements have been extensively studied in the literature (Khawaja 1993; Lichbach 1995; DeNardo 1985; Rasler 1996; Davenport 2017; Moore 2010; Alimi 2019; Francisco 2019, 2010, among others). Few of these studies particularly assess how political institutions may change incentives to participate in concessions as opposed to repression. According to conventional knowledge, limits on the executive branch result in less repression and fewer rights breaches in the majority of democracies. However, Davenport (2017) contends that both democracies and nondemocracies are subject to the so-called "law of coercive responsiveness," which refers to governments' propensity to use force in response to mobilization. In reality, democracies may be very restrictive against social movements, according to Della Porta (2016) and Davenport (2017). Conversely, some researchers have discovered that certain aspects of democracy, including the necessity for elected officials to hold office through public elections, may limit the intensity of repression (Carey 2016; Conrad and Moore 2010). Therefore, there is general agreement that while the dangers of repression for individuals who mobilize in democracies may be smaller, hazards still exist in these systems.

This literature's insights imply that, at the very least, some degree of accommodation is more likely to be experienced during mobilization in democracies.

10. Regardless of the kind of state, repression will always exist to some extent, although in democracies, dissent is more likely to be welcomed than in nondemocracies.

Partial concessions, in turn, are likely to appease a large number of citizens, which will decrease their desire to participate in expensive collective action and, ultimately, shrink the movement's size (see also Jung 2010).

The Impact of Mobilization on Institutions

While the majority of studies on social movements focus on the mobilization process itself, some have also looked at how politics that are deemed contentious have influenced or evolved into traditional political action, including lobbying, union organizing, party politics,

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and legal action (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2017: 652; Clemens 1993). Schneiberg and Soule (2015) view institutions as little more than political agreements that emerge from processes that are deemed contentious and involve mobilization, disruption, concession, and co-optation.

Surprisingly little research has been done on how mobilization affects elections, even though grassroots organizing frequently plays a significant role in democratic elections. However, Schneiberg and Lounsbury (2017) contend that social movements frequently spark discussion and controversy, leading to the addition of new topics to the agenda and the creation of fresh narratives that activists may use to advance changes. The extension of the right to vote to women and minorities, for instance, has undoubtedly been directly impacted by social mobilization, and this has had an impact on the course and results of elections. Without taking into account the effects of the suffragist and civil rights movements, respectively, it is impossible to comprehend the significance of either the 1965 Voting Rights Act or the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, which gave women the right to vote.

Six possible strategies are presented by McAdam and Tarrow (2010) for how social movement activities might affect elections. They discover evidence that at least three of these, in particular the development of novel strategies for collective action, proactive mobilization of the movement, and division between the party and the movement, influenced Barack Obama's election in 2008. According to McAdam and Tarrow (2010), social movements frequently offer crucial advances to political parties looking to upend the current quo in politics. One important connection between mobilization and party politics may be seen in grassroots organizations and the use of social media to interact with supporters during voter mobilization campaigns, for instance. Additionally, Tucker (2017) contends that election fraud frequently triggers mobilization, which can function as a focal point for people to overcome the free-rider issues that are generally connected to collective action (see also Bunce and Wolchik 2011).

In terms of legislative decision-making, McAdam and Su (2012) investigate how anti-war mobilization affects congressional action in the United States. They discovered that while protests including violence or property damage by protestors tended to boost anti-war votes, they also slowed down the rate at which Congress acted. Their data came from American newspapers. Large-scale protests, however, had the exact opposite effect: while they tended to increase

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congressional activity, they also decreased the possibility of anti-war votes. This result is in line with the groundbreaking research of Gamson (1990), which shows that movements using more "violent" or disruptive strategies have a higher chance of succeeding politically than those using more institutional or passive strategies.

In its most severe form, mobilization has the potential to cause governmental institutions to fall apart. According to Chenoh and Steph (2011), the use of disciplined nonviolent action increased the likelihood of success for civil resistance campaigns against dictatorships, foreign military occupations, and territorial secession; the use of violence decreased movement participation and delayed progress. The majority of Chenoh and Steph's campaigns took place in non-democratic regimes and used extremely disruptive, yet nonviolent, noncooperation tactics including boycotts and strikes. The majority of previous research on the efficacy of mobilization has only examined American politics, particularly as it relates to the US Congress (McAdam and Su, 2012), and reformist objectives like civil rights, anti-war, anti-nuclear, or labor issues. Since extremely disruptive resistance actions may have a greater political impact than symbolic demonstrations, the gap between civil resistance and protest is not insignificant.

Tarrow (1989) contends that even the most disruptive episodes of contention ultimately strengthened Italian democracy. In general, although there is some disagreement regarding the effects that mobilization has on specific policy outcomes, several authors have found that the post-communist regimes with the most "rebellious civil societies" also emerged as the most successful and robust democratic systems (Ekiert and Kubik 1998). Chenoh and Steph (2011) also discover that nations that have had violent insurgencies are far less likely to become democracies than those where widespread nonviolent movements have overthrown established governments. The majority of research on the subject agrees that mobilization increases citizen empowerment, makes public issues more clear and crystallizes consensus around them, expands associational life, and shows elites that civil movements have the power to upset the status quo in a way that makes elites more receptive to their demands and offers a direct means for citizens to threaten to "correct" formal politics through non-institutional channels (Putnam 1994).

11. The liberalization of democratic institutions is generally enhanced by nonviolent mobilization.

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Movements Within Institutions, Institutions Within Movements

Examining how social movements organize their internal structures or how they become active inside pre-existing institutional frameworks is one intriguing way to study the direct relationship between institutions and social movements.

Movements Within Institutions

Consider social movements that take place within institutional institutions. Numerous academic studies have demonstrated that the "infiltration" of status quo-based institutions by social movements may play a crucial role in the movement's eventual success. Indeed, one of the most important lessons to be learned from civil resistance campaigns is that a major factor in the success of these movements is the activists' capacity to cause shifts in the allegiance of regime insiders (Sharp 2015). This is because established institutions are reluctant to change since outsiders frequently encounter serious issues with legitimacy. The institution won't even contemplate adjustments unless individuals within start to support the movement and its demands (Sharp 2015; Chenoh and Steph 2011).

Subtle but equally powerful interactions exist between the movement and institutions to affect social change. For instance, it is believed that workplace LGBT movement initiatives are essential to the movement's eventual success. Insider knowledge allowed activists to bring up concepts like corporate social responsibility, justice and equality, and civil rights when talking to coworkers and superiors about these problems. In addition, they employed non-stereotypical conduct to combat stigma and made inadvertent references to their partners' gendered names while discussing their experiences with ordinary activities, as Schneiberg and Lounsbury detail. Additionally, they used stories of inequity or discrimination to draw attention to hypocrisies, arousing awareness of how daily actions lead to injustice and igniting listeners' identities as non-prejudiced individuals (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2017: 656–657).

The allegations that the LGBT movement was speeding up shifts in public opinion became mainstream as a result of this process.

12. Movements that cause "outsider" status within established institutions are more likely to be successful than those that do not.

Institutions Within Movements

There is also a great deal of curiosity in how social movements' organizational structures influence their behavior. The impact of organizational structure on the movement's choice of peaceful or violent modes of protest is one of the most urgent issues. According to research by Asal et al. (2012), Middle Eastern ethno-political groups

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are more prone to break up if their leadership structure is factional or rival and if they resort to violence as a strategy. According to Wendy Pearlman's (2011) comparative study of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the nationalist movement in Northern Ireland, and the Palestinian national movements, movements may be more disciplined and resilient when they experience organizational cohesion as opposed to fragmentation. According to her research, social movements are more likely to stay cohesive and nonviolent than those that lack internal institutions that serve as a means of disseminating and enforcing norms and rules within the movement as well as a shared identity and future vision. We can gain a deeper understanding of the causal relationship between violence and fragmentation because of her qualitative study approach. She discovers that decisions to employ violence in movements followed times of organizational fragmentation, whereas decisions to utilize nonviolent techniques were preceded by organizational coherence.

Furthermore, there is general agreement that social movement groups may face more internal rivalry in democratic nations than in authoritarian ones (Chenoh 2013; Jung 2010; Tarrow 1989). Although social movements can thrive in authoritarian environments, they frequently face greater pressure in democracies to adopt radical tactics and become more innovative. Democracies force movements to contend with direct competition from other groups, political parties, and interest groups; they also have to maintain their appeal to a diminishing pool of prospective members and continuously defend their cause, even as political parties push for changes that will appease movement moderates.

13. A greater inclination to employ violence is linked to fragmented social movements.

14. Especially in the later stages of the protest cycle, social movements are frequently more dispersed in democratic nations than in authoritarian ones.

Why Don’t We Know More About Institutions and Mobilization?

There are now 14 established assertions about the relationship between institutions and mobilization that are taken for granted by many academics. Nevertheless, a small number of these claims have undergone extensive empirical testing across several situations and historical eras, making them rather speculative and conflicting. Several trends in the field have impeded progress in identifying general causal relationships: (1) a lack of conceptual agreement in defining mobilization and relevant institutions as study objects; (2) a lack of global data on mobilization and protest that could produce

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empirical findings that are generalizable; and (3) a propensity to overgeneralize findings from a limited number of Western cases. There are however some encouraging tendencies noted that might aid in the advancement of the discipline.

Conceptual Ambiguity

Because there is conceptual uncertainty around the definitions of what an institution and mobilization are, empirical results need to be understood with extreme conceptual caution and accuracy.

On the one hand, the term "institutions" is sometimes defined in quite general ways. Formal political institutions, economic class, civil society, and the "deep linkages [that] help shape interests in society and provide (or deny) resources to contending social actors" are all included in the institutional analyses of social movement studies (Houtzager and Kurtz 2010: 394). In a loose sense, a lot of social movement groups are institutions in and of themselves. However, strict definitions of institutions are also problematic since they restrict the notion to formal, named entities. Relevant institutions are rarely inflexible, monolithic structures. Rather, it is recognized that they are dynamic, non-uniform, and seldom (if ever) entirely self-sufficient (e.g. Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2017: 656–657; Sharp 2015; Koopmans 2015). Indeed, the capacity of activists to make use of their connections with officials in state security agencies was a key factor in the twentieth-century success of nonviolent mass movements. In this context, research that recognizes the interpersonal connections between social movement groups and institutions is encouraging. This holds for the connections inside and among the movements as well. Cross-border replication and emulation of social mobilization, sometimes in a relatively portable or "modular" form, is exemplified by transnational waves of contention like the Arab Spring, the Color Revolutions, and the Eastern European revolutions of 1989 (Beissinger 2017; Bunce and Wolchik 2011). It is undoubtedly challenging (though not impossible) to concentrate on these relational components as they are frequently hidden until after significant upheavals, particularly in authoritarian environments. Scholars may be better able to comprehend complicated results, such as unexpected mass defections from state institutions, abrupt reforms, institutional compromises, or fresh periods of mass conflict if they place greater emphasis on the relational characteristics of social movements and institutions.

Similar conceptual problems with mobilization come up. For example, general historical patterns drawn from studying large-scale nonviolent movements for independence may not always translate to

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democratic protest cycles. While there are many different types of mobilization, such as organized versus spontaneous, extra-institutional versus intra-institutional, grassroots collective action versus formal opposition mobilization, and nonviolent versus violent, many academics treat mobilization as mere protest. It is also challenging to compare the findings of different research due to the different levels of mobilization, which range from isolated protests to full-scale revolutions. A productive approach may be to shift the emphasis from event counts to the number of individuals actively participating in collective action.

Scholars of social movements have long advocated for increased cross-disciplinary dialogue, especially between sociologists and political scientists (McAdam et al. 2011). This demand is made again here, mainly to establish a common terminology that researchers may use to define the parameters of study claims. Failing to examine similar units of analysis and confusing campaigns of civil disobedience, social movements, protest cycles, and protests is one of the obstacles to advancement. Although these ideas are theoretically distinct, they appear to be practically interchangeable in the literature.

Lack of Global Data

The dearth of trustworthy cross-national time series data that may be utilized to assess more broadly applicable correlations is a source of further annoyance for researchers pursuing this subject. As a result, even quantitative studies are frequently restricted to cross-sectional data, which is capable of identifying correlations between variables but not their direction of causation.

Fortunately, there are protest statistics available for some nations at certain times, and new methods of gathering data have produced several worldwide data sets as well (see, for example, Salehyan et al. 2012; Chenoh and Lew 2013; Asal et al. 2018). Several protest data sets from various locations or situations might lead analysts to create more general mobilization metrics. However, for several reasons, researchers need to exercise caution when utilizing this data.

First, the data that are now available are rarely comparable between instances or periods since researchers do not always employ the same sources or inclusion criteria when gathering this data. For example, the sole worldwide data on riots, strikes, and protests from 1955 to 2012 comes from Banks et al., however this research team has relied on a tiny sample of newspapers to extract information on riots and strikes. Additionally, the unit of analysis for this data is the country-year, and they display yearly occurrence counts. Conversely, Salehyan et al. (2012) identify event data in Africa from 1990 to 2011,

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using the event as the unit of analysis. The mass nonviolent and violent campaigns from 1946 to 2006 are included in the Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) data set, which uses the campaign year as its unit of analysis. The campaigns are restricted to maximalist campaigns of regime change, anti-occupation, or secession with at least 1,000 observed participants (Chenoweth and Lewis 2013). Additionally, the organization year is the unit of analysis for the organizational data set Minorities at Risk Organizational Behavior (MAROB), which is restricted to Middle Eastern ethno-political organizations between 1980 and 2004 (Asal et al. 2018). Since automatic coding is used in more recent global data sets, such as the Integrated Crises Early Warning System (ICEWS), there may be a significant risk of overreporting mistakes. These data sets are best understood as trends rather than occurrences (Ward et al. 2013).

Secondly, those who use data on protests should be mindful that these events are frequently gathered via newspapers, which have several significant reporting biases. First, there is a well-established violence bias, which means that reports of protests that involve violence or cause property damage are more likely to be forthcoming than those that are entirely peaceful. Second, there is a protest bias in the mainstream media, which means that they cover large-scale rallies and demonstrations more frequently than they cover strikes, other kinds of widespread noncooperation, and support withdrawals. Contrary to social movements, which can employ hundreds of forms of simultaneous civic resistance, this misrepresents contested politics as protest alone (Sharp 2015). Additionally, journalists frequently interview national government leaders rather than regular citizens at the local level because of newspapers' tendency toward national elite prejudices. As a result, the state frequently shapes the narrative frameworks around divisive political issues. Lastly, there is a tendency for newspapers to report with an urban slant, which means that rural activities are frequently overlooked and neglected. To exacerbate the situation, newspaper data from authoritarian and democratic regimes is sometimes hard to compare due to authoritarian regimes' willful concealing of protest occurrences.

Focus on Western Democracies, a Small-n Bias, and Generalizability

A further constraint in the current body of literature is that the majority of widely accepted conclusions on the connection between institutions and mobilization originate from small-scale case studies, the majority of which are Western democracies in comparison. The United States is a natural laboratory for social movement studies

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because of the diversity of institutional arrangements among its 50 states, and many of the most significant ideas from social movement studies are based on research conducted there. Expanding theory and empirical implications from a small number of (roughly similar) situations is quite troublesome, even though it is crucial for theory-building (George and Bennett 2015).

The sole emphasis on Western democracies as study subjects has started to shift in recent years. More research on protest politics in hybrid regimes (Robertson 2010; Osa and CorduneanuHuci 2013), emerging democracies (Ekiert and Kubik 1998), authoritarian regimes (Rasler 1996; Schock 2015; Kurzman 1996, 2014; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011), and highly repressive systems (Martin 2017; Alimi 2019) has been conducted as a result of the apparent increase in contentious political practices within autocracies. Under authoritarian settings, there are still issues with data collection and specification for the independent and dependent variables (Gandhi 2018).

However, a large number of the testable hypotheses found in the literature need closer examinations of authoritarian environments. A better comprehension of divisive politics in authoritarian environments would enable academics to shift from making crude and unchanging divisions between democracies and nondemocracies to comparative institutional analysis. Understanding the crucial difference between movements and counter-movements may also be improved through mobilization in authoritarian environments. The research of counter-mobilization under authoritarian regimes may be just as crucial as the study of mobilization, especially as authorities support or instigate counter-movements to maintain their public legitimacy (Robertson 2010).

Conclusion

Institutions matter because they influence the structure of our society. Formal or informal norms established by institutions are adhered to by political players. Scholars in their subfields often focus on their specific substantive institution of interest. It makes sense that there would be this division given professional specialization. However, there are valid reasons for academics to focus on institutions in several distinct substantive settings when considering how institutions form and operate in response to various strategic conundrums that face political actors. For instance, academics studying commitment issues may and ought to share more knowledge, regardless of whether these issues arise about peace accords, vote-buying, or presidential authority limitations. Similarly, by engaging with work on delegation across many substantive settings, academics

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who investigate principal-agent interactions within a specific context can learn more about adjacent fields as well as their area of study. We can only advance our grasp of increasingly intricate issues about the genesis and evolution of institutions by engaging in this sort of intra-disciplinary effort.

Protest mobilization in particular has several direct factors. In actuality, there is a great deal of variation in the kind, degree, and reach of mobilization that takes place inside various institutions. Do certain institutions mobilize people more than others? Does the impact of mobilization vary throughout institutions? The extant body of literature provides some tentative insights into the reasons behind mobilization in the face of institutional alternatives. Although the material currently in publication indicates that institutions may influence the form, ideology, scale, or scope of mobilization, it is evident that institutions do not predetermine whether mobilization will take place. While conceding that institutions are sometimes stagnant or, at best, extremely slow-changing, the most significant unresolved task facing scholars is to clearly define the circumstances under which institutions matter (Koopmans 2005). Scholars will refine and expand current data to test these assertions on a larger range of situations and historical periods, leading to an enhanced understanding of the overall effect that political institutions have on mobilization—despite significant obstacles to development in the area.

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