

Class 6: Aspects of Social Movement Activity

Organisation, strategies and tactics

Dr. Michael C. Zeller

Agenda for the day

- Opening notes
- A conceptual framework of *strategy*
- Poll: strategy formation and effect
- Temporality
- Tactics and effecting change
- Any questions, concerns, feedback for this class?

Opening notes



Presentations line-up

Date	Presenters	Method
4 Dec:	Daichi, Seongyeon, Jehyun	TBD
18 Dec:	Ayla, Tara, Theresa, Annabelle	TBD
15 Jan:	Luna, Emilene, Raffa, Sofia	TBD

A conceptual framework of *strategy*

- strategy defined
- elements of strategy
- drivers of strategy selection
- example from a non-violent but disruptive group
- example from a violent group



Basic, intuitive definition of *strategy*

strategy refers to the approach of an actor(s) to achieve their (political) objectives—connecting **actions** to **goals** (*means to an end*)

- extant definitions identify some elements, e.g.,
 - “a combination of a claim (or demand), a tactic, and a site (or venue)” (Meyer 2007, 82)
 - Ganz (2010, 9): targeting, tactics, timing
- many groups use **mixed strategies** of **violence** and **non-violence**

- informative element: **objective(s)** (*why*): what are the actor(s) goals? **minimalist** vs. **maximalist** objectives
- **target** (what/who) - what entity is being acted upon?
 - involves choice to commit resources to specific outcomes
- **tactics** (how) - types of collective action and their form
 - attempt to deploy *strengths*, exploit target's *weaknesses*
- **site/venue** (where) - what place or what forum type is action taken?

- informative element: **objective(s)** (*why*): what are the actor(s) goals? **minimalist** vs. **maximalist** objectives
- **target** (what/who) - what entity is being acted upon?
- **tactics** (how) - types of collective action and their form
- **site/venue** (where) - what place or what forum type is action taken?
- **timing** (when) - when are tactics employed against targets

What are the strategic elements of social movements that you know of?

Drivers of strategy selection

- **strategy** is be a product of (rational) choice

BUT...

- it is also a part **collective identity** (cf. Polletta and Jasper 2001)
 - strategy also involves *moral and emotional committments*

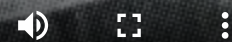
An example from the news...

How can we characterise the group's *strategy* here?

An example from 'the 43 Group'



▶ 0:00 / 1:26



An example from 'the 43 Group'

post-war Labour government, witnessing low-level fascist-party organising and agitation...

Beckman (2013):

On Tuesday May 21st [1946], [James] Chuter Ede, the Home Secretary, received a deputation from the JDC [Jewish Defence Committee, part of the Board of Deputies of British Jews] led by the Chairman, Gordon Liverman ... They listened to the deputation and said they would consider all the points raised, but nothing tangible happened.

documentary about 43 Group: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBusQBSCAHY>

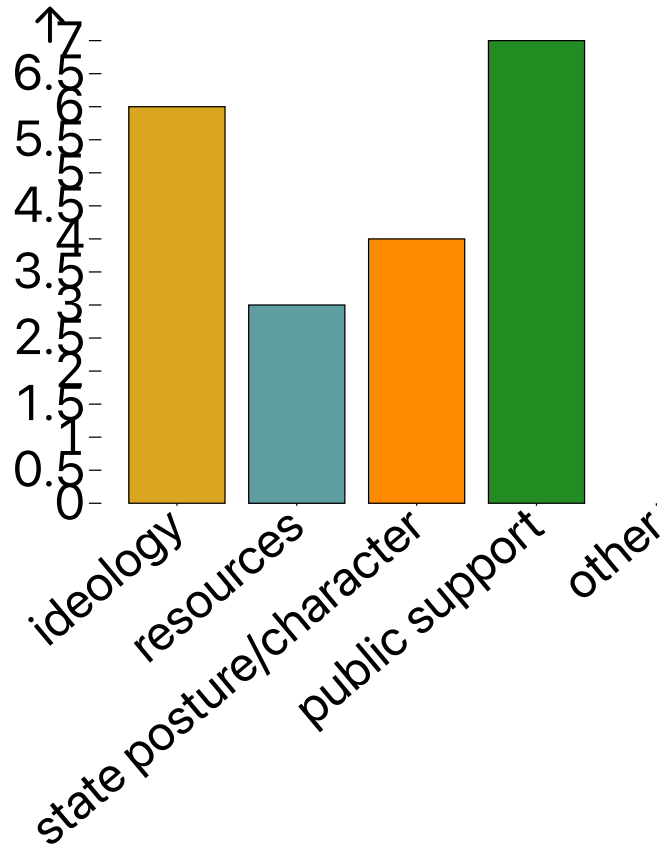
Poll: strategy formation and effect



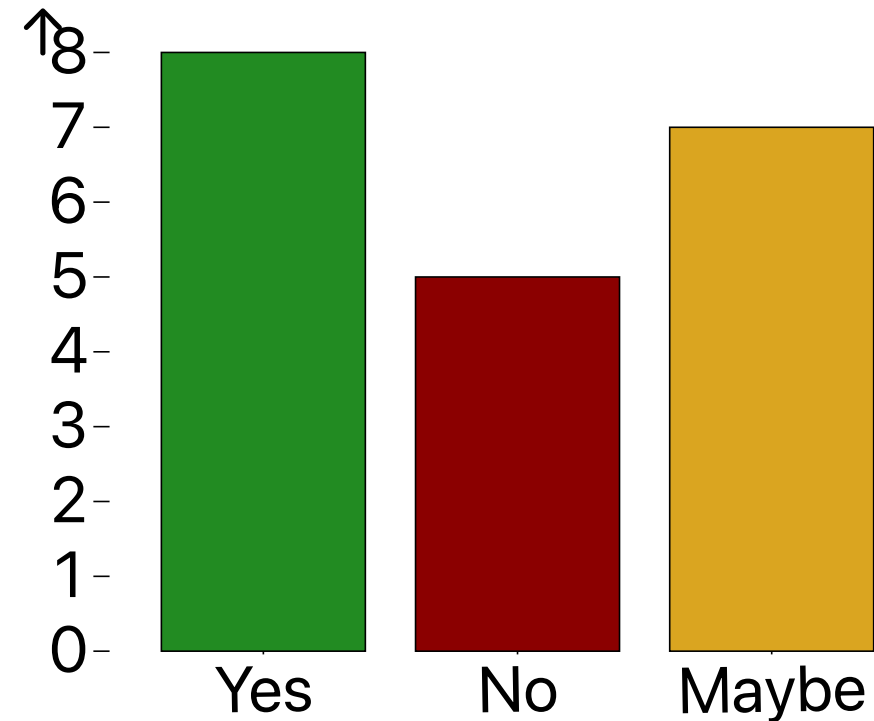
LUDWIG-
MAXIMILIANS-
UNIVERSITÄT
MÜNCHEN

Poll results (Respondents: 20)

most important factor shaping
movement org. strategy?



do maximalist goals require more
extreme strategies?



Poll results

Tactical frivolity (Bogad 2016)

more of a humanities/dramaturgical perspective on movements and their tactics

Temporality

- Grzymala-Busse (2011) on temporality
 - overview
 - definitions and examples
 - tempo and duration



Grzymala-Busse (2011) - overview

- **mechanisms**: “recurrent causal links between specified initial conditions and outcomes. Specific sequences (orderings) of mechanisms and events then constitute processes.”
- Fundamentals of temporality: how long events take (**duration**), how quickly they change (**tempo**), whether they speed up or slow down (**acceleration**), and when they occur (**timing**)

Grzymala-Busse (2011) - definitions and examples

Aspect	Definition	Examples
Duration	Temporal length of an event; how much time elapses between the start and end of an action or event	Time elapsed between the announcement that a new agency is founded and its demise, or the period between the takeoff of popular literacy and its full attainment
Tempo	Amount of change per unit of time (dist./time interval); frequency of the 'subevents' in a larger event, or between events in a process.	How much time elapses before each new state institution is established, between each new person gaining literacy
Acceleration (and deceleration)	Derivative of velocity with respect to time (direction vector/direction tempo); rate of change	Postcommunist privatization started to unfold very quickly, with a great deal of entrepreneurial activity and privatization auctions at the outset. In several countries, it then slowed down
Timing	Position on a temporal timeline (itself composed of some units of time, such as electoral cycles or years)	18th-century revolutions had pamphlets and word of mouth as their mobilizing techniques; 20th-century revolutions had television, radio, email, and cell phones at their disposal

Grzymala-Busse (2011) - tempo and duration

Faster

Slower

Shorter Radical processes: coups, revolutions, shock therapy, regime replacement, and some institutional creation (free elections)

Abruptly ending processes: threshold effects, bargaining, establishing some institutions (cf. postcommunist clientelism)

Longer Lengthy instability: revolutions and wars, cascades, predation, postcommunist civil society growth, political party fission

Gradual processes: demographic change, spread of literacy and nationalism, linguistic transformations, quasiparameter change

Tactics and effecting change

- connecting tactics to outcomes
- tactical innovation
- Spaßguerrillas
- Gene Sharp and nonviolence
- some fun examples



- Gamson (1990) found that violent social movements (incl. 'strikes and disruptive techniques') are more likely than nonviolent to achieve their goal
 - more effective in attracting attention and imposing costs on targets/opponents
 - similarly found by Cress and Snow (2000)
 - BUT... opposite found on regime-challenging movements by Chenoweth and Stephan (2011)
 - Opposite also found in U.S. campus policy by Rojas (2006)

- **social control hypothesis** (e.g., Piven and Cloward 1979)
 - disruptive protests/tactics allow movements to win concessions in exchange for ending protests/tactics (*coercion* mechanism)
- **mass mobilisation/social pressure hypothesis** (e.g., Chenoweth and Stephan 2011)
 - gaining enough (visible) support to pressure decision-makers into concessions (*consensus/demonstrative/persuasion* mechanisms)
 - implicit appeal to democratic norms

(necessity of) tactical innovation

- McAdam (1983): tactical interaction
 - movements *disrupt* as they mount a challenge
 - authorities/targets *adapt* to tactics, dulling their impact
 - movements *innovate* tactics to maintain effective strategy
- With responsive authorities/targets, **this cycle places high demands on movements**
 - (McAdam (1983) writes that by the end of the 1960s, U.S. black rights movement(s) had been made '*tactically impotent*')

- problem in student movement of unexciting and/or intimidating modes of activism
- Wolfgang Lefèvre (SDS leader):

‘Every event or demonstration should be inventively planned so that it is exciting and fun for students.’

- the ‘fun-fighters’ emerged from the *Sozialistischen Deutschen Studentenbund*
 - Fritz Teufel, Rainer Langhans advocate **playful tactics**
 - long legacy in German activism (e.g., ‘Front Deutscher Äpfel’)

Gene Sharp and nonviolence (Sharp 1973)

- ‘*political ju-jitsu*’ (using opponents’ strength against them): violent repression of nonviolent resistance strengthens resistance by creating sympathy for resisters



Tactics in practice, example

Tactics in practice, example

- 2016: U.S. state of Texas passes law allowing carrying handguns on university campuses
- at the same time, state 'obscenity laws' forbid bringing dildoes onto campus
- the 'cocks not glocks' campaign was born...



Student protesters with banners and dildos at the 'Cocks Not Glocks' protest (Picture: Rex)

Tactics in practice, example

‘We’re fighting absurdity with absurdity.’

Any questions, concerns, feedback for this class?

Anonymous feedback here: <https://forms.gle/AjHt6fcnwZxkSg4X8>

Alternatively, please send me an email: m.zeller@lmu.de

References

- Beckman, Morris. 2013. *The 43 Group: Battling with Mosley's Blackshirts*. New York: Perseus Press.
- Bogad, Lawrence M. 2016. *Tactical Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Chenoweth, Erica, and Maria J. Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Cress, Daniel, and David Snow. 2000. "The Outcomes of Homeless Mobilization: The Influence of Organization, Disruption, Political Mediation, and Framing." *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (4): 1063–1104.
- Gamson, William A. 1990. *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Ganz, Marshall. 2010. *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2011. "Time Will Tell? Temporality and the Analysis of Causal Mechanisms and Processes." *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (9): 1267–97.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414010390653>.
- McAdam, Doug. 1983. "Tactical Innovation and the Pace of Insurgency." *American Sociological Review* 48 (6): 735–54.
- Piven, Francis Fox, and Richard A Cloward. 1979. *Poor People's Movements*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Polletta, Francesca, and James M Jasper. 2001. "Collective Identity and Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (1): 283–305.

- Rojas, Fabio. 2006. "Social Movement Tactics, Organizational Change and the Spread of African-American Studies." *Social Forces* 84 (4): 2147–66.
- Sharp, Gene. 1973. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action (3 Vols.)*. New York: Porter S.
- Virchow, Fabian. 2013. "'Wem Die Strasse Gehört': Wunsiedel Als Symbolischer Ort Der Demonstrationspolitik Der Extremen Rechten." In *Wunsiedel Ist Bunt – Nicht Braun! Die Auseinandersetzungen Um Das Hess-Grab Verändern Die Politische Kultur*, edited by Julia Hasse, Gregor Rosenthal, and Joachim Twisselmann, 171–85. Bad Alexandersbad/Berlin: bfdt/BPgR.
- Zeller, Michael C. 2022. "Demobilising Far-Right Demonstration Campaigns: Coercive Counter-Mobilisation, State Social Control, and the Demobilisation of the Hess Gedenkmarsch Campaign." *Social Movement Studies* 21 (3): 372–90.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2021.1889493>.