
CHALLENGING the POLITICAL ORDER

New Social and Political
Movements in Western Democracies

Dalton & Kuechler

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New Social and Political Movements in
Western Democracies

Edited by Russell J. Dalton and
Manfred Kuechler

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Preface

The recent flowering of new movements concerned with environmentalism, women's rights, peace, consumerism, and the other pressing issues of advanced industrial societies has affected the political order of most Western democracies. This development stimulated an extensive series of historical and descriptive essays on these movements, which often made dramatic claims about the societal or political importance of these movements. To their supporters, these new social and political forces are seen as the vanguard of a new society; to their critics, new social movements represent a fundamental threat to the social and political order. The goal of this book is to examine these claims and determine what is "new" about these new movements.

In recent years, a new round of systematic, often comparative, theory-testing research has begun. Recognizing the potential theoretical and political importance of these new movements, private research foundations and government agencies on both sides of the Atlantic have sponsored detailed studies of these new social interests and their actions within the political process.

To consolidate this burgeoning literature on new social movements and assess the progress research has made, Russell Dalton and Wilhelm Bürklin jointly submitted a proposal to the National Science Foundation (INT 85-21364) and the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* for a research seminar; Dalton and Bürklin developed the conference themes, secured separate national funding, and invited the conference participants. Approximately two dozen scholars who are actively engaged in relevant research projects met in Tallahassee in 1987 to compare findings and debate the significance of these movements. This volume presents a subset of the research reports presented at this conference, focusing on the impact of new social movements on the established political order of advanced industrial societies. Several additional chapters were solicited for the book to develop this topic more fully.

We intentionally brought together scholars with different methodologies and different perspectives on these movements; we wanted to provide a forum for comparing research findings, and this diversity of views is well represented in this collection. After considering rival theories of the origins of these new movements (presented as the first section of this volume), most of our discussions focused on the role of new social movements within the political process of Western democracies. We explored the widespread belief that new social movements are isolated from established interest groups and routine channels of interest representation, producing a propensity toward a potentially destabilizing pattern of unconventional political action. Another section of this study considers whether new social movements are weakening the structure of party government in Western democracies (partisan dealignment) or creating new political forces which will restructure party cleavages (partisan realignment). In addressing these questions, the book provides a firm vantage point for judging the implications of new social movements for the political order of Western democracies – and our view is more moderate and sanguine than most of the early theoretical and political literature.

Because of his growing involvement in a new study of the political and cultural basis of economic success in the newly industrializing countries of East Asia, Bürklin was unable to oversee the preparation of this volume. It was therefore agreed to shift the editorial responsibilities to Russell Dalton and Manfred Kuechler who were both at Florida State University at the time. Willi Bürklin is a contributor to the introductory chapter; his efforts in organizing the conference and his advice throughout the preparation of this manuscript deserve our recognition and appreciation.

In compiling this book we are also indebted to the participants of the conference. We would especially like to thank those who contributed their wisdom and insights to our discussion – Jim Fendrich, Scott Flanagan, Bill Gamson, Jost Halfmann, Larry Isaac, Roger Karapin, Ellis Krauss, Franz Lehner, Andrei Markovits, Margit Mayer, Lester Milbrath, Joyce Mushaben, Helmut Norpoth, Karl-Dieter Opp, Karlheinz Reuband, Dietrich Tränhardt, and Ed Walsh – but who are not represented in this volume. The financial support of the National Science Foundation, *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, and the College of Social Sciences at Florida State University was essential to the success of this project. Russell Dalton received additional support for this work under a National Science Foundation grant (SES 85–10989). We would also like to thank Herr Grünhagen at the University of Kiel for his assistance with the German preparations for the conference, Robert Rohrschneider for his efforts in organizing the conference in Tallahassee, and Mary Schneider at Florida State University for her help in preparing the book manuscript. Joel Krieger, David Held, and Valerie Aubry provided the support and assistance that helped us through the publication process; the mark of a good publishing team. Finally, book editors are something like symphony

{ conductors: we receive the applause for the work of others – thus we want to thank the artists in our orchestra for their contributions (and their tolerance of our advice for revisions), and remind the reader that the book is really their accomplishment.

RJD, Tallahassee
MK, New York City

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Part I

Introduction

The Challenge of New Movements

RUSSELL J. DALTON, MANFRED
KUECHLER, and WILHELM BÜRKLIN

The challenge that new movements pose to the political order in Western democracies springs from within. It is not a revolutionary attack against the system, but a call for democracies to change and adapt. The challenge comes from individuals and new social groups demanding that democracies open the political process to a more diverse and citizen-oriented set of interests. It manifests itself in the proliferation of citizen-interest lobbies and single-issue groups in America, civic associations in France, *Bürgerinitiativen* in West Germany, and citizen-action groups in other industrial democracies. The challenge also arises from the new issues and political demands these citizen groups are bringing into the political process.

At least briefly, we can provide an overview of the origins of this challenge, tracing the emergence of new movements to a variety of sources that have affected most Western industrial societies. One contributing factor dates back to the student movement of the 1960s. The halcyon days of the early 1960s quickly gave way to critical protests against the goals of Western society and the functioning of the democratic political process. Students at Berkeley embroiled the campus in turmoil over the issues of free speech and civil rights; a conflict over administrative regulations at a small university outside Paris escalated into the May Revolts and brought France to the edge of collapse; student protests in Berlin again gave the city the appearance of a war zone. Like the revolutionary fever of 1848, student rebellion spread among Western industrial democracies.

Although the student movement began to dissipate within a few years, it marked the beginning of a broader wave of social change that has affected virtually all advanced industrial democracies. The novelty of the student movement was not so much the issues it raised, but in broadening the discourse on these matters from elite debate to a mass movement – and with this broadening of participation the content of the debate often grew beyond the narrow ideological discourse of the students. The general public developed political interests beyond traditional economic and class issues

But student protest movements are hardly new.

to a range of new social, cultural, and quality of life issues that emerged from the modernizing process occurring in these societies (Inglehart, 1977, 1989). A new style of political action developed, as citizens shifted from traditional methods of interest representation to a more participatory political style (Barnes, Kaase et al., 1979; Jennings and van Deth, 1990).

This volume focuses on the new social and political movements that act as manifestations of these new political forces. A host of new environmental groups were formed in North America and Europe during the early 1970s; a new, more assertive women's movement joined the earlier women's groups; consumer and self-help groups multiplied throughout the 1970s; and these groups were joined, at least temporarily, by a revitalized peace movement in the early 1980s. These new groups are now important and contentious actors in the political process of many Western democracies. These organizations translate the public's changing values and issue interests into a potential political force; they channel the energies of the movement; and they decide on the political goals and strategies of the movement.

Although environmental, feminist, peace organizations and other new social movements take on a wide variety of forms, several analysts claim that at the core of these groups is a *qualitatively new* aspect of citizen politics in Western democracies (Brand et al., 1986; Melucci, 1980; Touraine, 1983; Van der Loo et al., 1984; Capra and Spretnak, 1984). Drawing upon the New Left ideology of the student movement and the unconventional political tactics of student protests, many of these new groups apparently represent a fundamental change from the prevailing social goals and political style of Western industrial democracies. No single group fully typifies this new type of interest representation, but its essential characteristics are visible among various groups within the environmental, women's, and peace movements. West German sociologists coined the term "Neue soziale Bewegungen" to describe this phenomenon (Brand, 1982; Brand et al., 1983), and the term "New Social Movements" (NSM) entered the English research vocabulary as an identifier for this new type of interest organization.

The NSM concept probably originated among West German social scientists because these movements marked a dramatic new development for West German society that captured the attention of political observers, and because the German movements accentuated the traits identified with the new social movement concept. The spread of citizen action-groups (*Bürgerinitiativen*) in the 1970s, the development of national umbrella groups such as the BBU (*Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz*), and eventually the formation of the Green Party in 1980 created an extensive network of new social groups. The political actions and rhetoric of the West German movements also loudly proclaimed that these were groups unlike other interest groups or previous social movements.

While the West German movements may provide the most visible examples of the new social movement phenomenon, similar developments exist in most other industrial democracies. A well-developed structure of environmental groups, self-help organizations, women's groups and other

new social movements exists in the Netherlands. The Dutch environmental movement, for example, is one of the most vibrant in Europe, and the Dutch peace movement was one of the most effective national groups in opposing the stationing of new NATO nuclear missiles in the early 1980s. The Danish social movements display a rich diversity, including a strong core of student-oriented and unconventional political groups; and these movements have achieved notable success in mobilizing popular support and influencing governmental actions. In more muted form, the British, French, and Belgian movements display similar political orientations. In this instance, as in the case of the labor movement, the American social movements may be the deviant case. The broad ideological *Weltanschauung* that exists among activists in European social movements (old and new) is often less developed in America, although some American environmentalists, feminists, and peace groups have developed this new political orientation (Capra and Spretnak, 1984; Freeman, 1975).

It is claimed that new social movements challenge the contemporary political order on several fronts. On the ideological level, these movements advocate a new social paradigm which contrasts with the dominant goal structure of Western industrial societies (Dunlap and van Liere, 1978; Milbrath, 1984; Raschke, 1985). New social movements also illustrate a style of unconventional political action – based on direct action – that contrasts with the traditional neo-corporatist pattern of interest intermediation in many contemporary democracies. Even the organizational structures of these movements are supposedly unique, stressing participatory decision-making, a decentralized structure, and opposition to bureaucratic procedures. Thus, it is claimed that new social movements challenge the basic goals, structure, and organizational style of Western industrial democracies.

Both the supporters and critics of new social movements are quick to acknowledge this challenge. Leaders of environmental parties across Europe openly declare that they represent a party of a new type, qualitatively different from all other parties. The political theory and rhetoric of new social movements often proclaim their anti-establishment views with unbridled enthusiasm (e.g., Bahro, 1986; Kelly, 1984; Porritt, 1984). The political opponents of new social movements may be even more vocal in stressing the challenge these groups pose to Western industrial democracies. A frequent criticism, especially among conservative politicians, holds that new social movements are simply a front for revolutionary and anti-system political groups (Langguth, 1984; Fogt, 1987; Kaltefleiter and Pfaltzgraff, 1985). Even the more thoughtful academic critics of new social movements have often resorted to alarmist claims. Michel Crozier and his colleagues (1975) maintain that the social forces represented by new social movements do not represent a challenge to democracies but a *Crisis of Democracy*. Samuel Huntington (1974, 1981) claims that Western democracies suffer from an “excess of democracy,” and unless the demands and political activities of new social movements and similar groups are restrained, the democratic order is vulnerable to collapse.