

ISSN 1751-8229

Volume Fifteen, Number One

Protest as an act of love

Martin Bekker, University of Johannesburg, South Afrika

Abstract: In a world filled with “ambient violence”, public protest is a vital signal of shared discontent. The essential compulsion at the heart of protest, however, is conventionally not recognised for what it is: solidarity with those suffering injustices.

Amid authorities’ often-fierce efforts to curtail gatherings of people whose experiences of injustice propel them into the streets, a sharp rise in public protests has been perceived since the early 2000s. Thousands of column inches dedicated to reporting on protests are rivalled in volume only by the reams of academic theories produced around causes. Despite this overabundance of discourses, it often remains unclear what protest, at heart, constitutes. That is, what are we talking about when we talk about protest, and why does this question matter? In this paper I consider the constituent parts of protest formation in the abstract, including grievances, gestures, and tactics, among other. Developing these constituent parts reveals protest to be, first and foremost, a manifestation of a nonhegemonic ethical commitment to justice, requiring courage and coordination, and whose outcome is always contingent, that is, an act of love. I also reflect on the nature of protest as a direct political action that sits on a continuum that ranges from opposition politics to civil war. This continuum offers a graded view ranking expressions of discontent by severity of outcome.

Background

The world is engulfed by protests. From the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and mobilisations against neoliberalism in Chile, to perpetual protest in places such as South Africa and Hong-Kong, and not excepting the current global Black Lives Matter interventions, protest has, I claim, become the defining social action of the post-2008 global dispensation. Millions awake daily to a world they experience as fundamentally unjust. Injustice, as an enduring ambient violence, is manifested in personal experiences of abuse; by hardship, landlessness and unemployment that are outcomes of systemic inequalities; or, for the employed, by the exploitative nature of jobs carried out in the humiliating face of proximate wealth; or hidebound racial biases baked-into social systems, cast into view via social media. Notwithstanding thousands of column inches of reporting on protest, rivalled in volume by reams of academic theories around causes, it often remains unclear what a protest, in essence, constitutes. In other words, despite an overabundance of discourses, none sufficiently reflect on what we talk about when we talk about protest, or why this question matters.

While stewards of the state often portray protests (and protesters) as “the problem”¹, we have long understood protests as weapons of the weak, at once signalling desperation and civil discontent. However, this signal has emancipatory potential, the discontent it transmits often underscoring the state’s failures to achieve the “welfare”, “development” or even “happiness” implied in both official rhetoric and

¹ Exemplified by Donald Trump’s tweets, in response to protests after the police killing of a black unarmed civilian, labelling protestors “THUGS” and “looters” (Trump 2020).

political-party electoral campaigns. Meaning that protest – and the discourse around it – have the potential to threaten the social order and those benefiting from the status quo. Further, protest’s emancipatory potential may foreshadow a desire whose object transcends mere integration of a neglected community into the state’s vision of society or rectification of an aberrant corporate law, and rather orients towards actual revolution. Protests thus represent a censure of the state and the condition of society, and, I assert, an act of love, insofar as the gesture seeks to enhance fairness, as a typically subaltern impulse within the Imaginary order.

Returning to the lack of consensus on what protest actually is: with protest – and its cognates, chiefly demonstrations, marches, pickets, disturbances, riots and insurrections – so quotidian and socially important, Havercroft (2020) rightly asks, “why is there no ‘just riot’ theory”? The answer might be that there is not a paucity of discourses, but an overabundance, without any realm sufficiently reflecting on what we talk about when we talk about protest, and why this matters.

Since the second half of the 20th century, different disciplines and discourse communities have commented on protest, asking why men rebel within the confines of their epistemic communities. These include the continental philosophical tradition’s interest in “biopolitics” and “resistance as dialectical”; psychological studies on “motivation”, “threshold phenomena” and “group dynamics”; sociological works on “social movements” and “deviance”; economists’ interest in “incentives”; demographers’ concern regarding mismanagement of the “demographic transition”; political scientific attention towards “internal conflict” and “civil resistance”; and military scientists’ study of “grey wars”.

In what follows, I advance a unifying, clarifying and compassionate theory of protest. I do this by placing protest within the larger context of what I call direct political action (or political resistance), and presenting a stylised scheme of relationships for its theoretical components. Drawing lightly upon Lacanian theory, I also will show how control of the meaning of a *protest event* is always-already lost (i.e., the gaze of the other cannot be assumed to be as the gaze of the self, of course). Moving from a wide-lens to a close-up view, I finally introduce a set of imbricated notions, its components comprising personal concerns; collective

grievances; trigger events; actors; protest gestures; protest tactics; and levels of tumult: the appreciation of which presents an opportunity of reconsidering the shadowy theoretical coordinates of protest.

1. Transcendental frames

Protest as “direct political action”

To begin, the distinction between direct and indirect political action must be made. Indirect political actions refer to “politically mediated” actions, or those spanning the breadth of electoral politics, but also including diplomacy, negotiation, and arbitration. *Direct political actions* – of which protest is a subcomponent – refer to actions taken by a group or individuals highlighting or addressing a social or political problem themselves, as opposed to relying upon institutionalised intervention by authorities (Moore and Woolley 2016). Direct political action therefore also includes Tilly’s formulation of “contentious politics”; that is, “the use of disruptive techniques to make a political point” (Tilly 2017: 92), or Klandermans’ “unconventional political participation” (Klandermans 2003).

The most basic form of direct political action could be said to be the protest. Protest is a social action and a political strategy. It is *social*, in the Weberian sense of reacting against certain social conditions, and in the sense of being performed for objectification and interpretation by the neighbour (c.f. Gilbert 1992). It is *political*, inasmuch as it relates its performance to prevailing power relations and modes of resource allocation. It is a *strategy*, insofar as it seeks to alter social relations in some way, and does so by causing some deviance from everyday civic routines.

With these notions in mind, I consider a common formulation of protest² as a ‘disruptive direct action of collective interest, in which claims are made against some other group, elites or authorities’ (Tarrow 1989: 359), elegantly widened to ‘a popular mobilisation in support of a collective grievance’ by Runciman *et al.* (Runciman *et al.* 2016: 19). Like other forms of direct political actions, protest manifests along a

² In Tarrow’s understanding, a “protest event”

“continuum of contestation” (Della Porta and Diani 2015), which itself extends from opposition politics to rebellions, revolts, terrorism, and civil war. I claim this continuum is best understood not as a one-dimensional range between peaceful and violent actions, but as a complex, multidimensional field. Let us now briefly consider elements of that continuum.

On one end of the continuum we find opposition politics, or organised political parties seeking to alter resource allocation and patterns of state-level recognition, but generally supportive of the present social order (i.e., proposing progressive or conservative steps, not revolutionary change) and upholding the norm of nonviolence.

Sitting somewhere in the middle are rebellions and revolts, which are instances of direct political action by subnational groups openly resisting the social order, where the established authority is seen as responsible/complicit in prevailing conditions. While rebellion seeks to undermine established authorities (whether through peaceful actions like civil disobedience or nonviolent resistance, or violent ones such as sabotage or terrorism), a revolt seeks to overthrow authorities and the social order, which all but necessarily involves extra-legal violence, and is thus typically labelled terrorism by established authorities (Heywood 2014: 412). The leaders of both rebellions and revolts regard the prevailing authorities as illegitimate. As such, revolt and the violent strain of rebellion are sometimes located as “irregular wars” (of which terrorism and insurgencies are subsets), formally described as violent subnational struggles over influence and political resources (Hoffman 2009, see also Cunningham and Lemke 2014: 334).

At another extreme of the continuum is civil war. A war between citizens of the same country, it uses overt violence with the clear goal of taking control of a country or region to achieve independence or change government policies. What separates terrorism from civil war often comes down to scale: a single gunman cannot wage

civil war, and at a certain scale, a state can dismiss a region as “terrorist”,³ while disinterested parties similarly refer to “rebels”.

Whether violent or not, direct political actions operate with varying goals. For instance, some protest actions seek to draw attention to a cause *without* removing established authorities, while others – truer to the “terrorist” label so readily applied by a state intending to incite fear – may be entirely void of a political project.

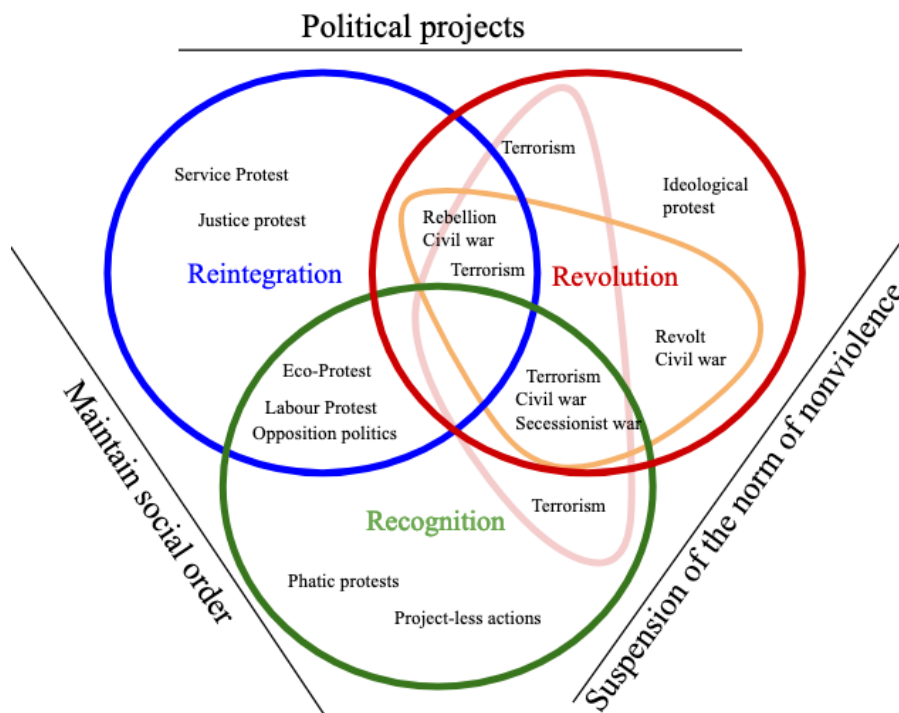


Figure 1: Stylised depiction of selected political actions

Visualizing this continuum, Figure 1 plots political actions and strategies within the three schemas of (1) recognition (by official political parties and agents); (2) reintegration (into official politics); or (3) revolution (i.e., the obliteration of certain political institutions with the aim of establishing an alternative utopia). While there is overlap between the three, we see that actions that are not revolutionary are nominally comfortable with maintaining the present social order, while those not

³ How Russian and Western media respectively comment on Chechen “freedom fighters” is instructive (see for instance Souleimanov and Ditych 2008)

interested in recognition may be considered political projects. Meanwhile, actions not aiming to maintain the present order are free from the constraints of the norm of nonviolence.

The above classification (i.e., recognition, reintegration, revolution) has at least two significant implications. The first is that terms like rebellion and revolt must be used with trepidation, not simply owing to their emotive associations (rebels, rebel fighters or forces, revolutionaries, insurgents, insurrectionists, and, ultimately, terrorists) that may muddy conceptual waters, but also, and primarily, because some protest is a form of rebellion. At the same time, much of the category of revolting/rebellion involves no protest whatsoever.⁴ The other implication is that civil war and protest cannot be seen as unrelated. The “continuum of contestation” is nonlinear, and civil discontent often moves along it such that civil war can be linked to the escalation of violent protests (Bodea and Elbadawi 2007: 2) and protests can easily coincide with civil war. Instead of this being a proto-causal argument, it is a reminder of a complex relationship between different elements of contestation, and, to paraphrase Shaheen and Hayo (2015), that the categorical distinction between protest and violent direct political actions is often assumed, but not demonstrated.

Protest is sometimes excluded from discourses on political conflict both in military studies and international relations, where violent political conflicts must cross a threshold of a set number of “battle” deaths per year to qualify for consideration (as evidenced by definitions in the work of, among others, Collier, Hoeffler, and Rohner 2009; Østby, Nordås, and Rød 2009; Porto and Francis 2008). Similarly, datasets

⁴ For example, Greenpeace activists, sometimes described as “eco-terrorists” (e.g., Eagan 1996). Perhaps a better example of post-ideological protests is discussed by Žižek, who considered the Paris *banlieue* riots in 2005 as such a case – a protest with no particular demands, and an absence of any utopian prospect. This post-ideological protest was, however, an insistence on recognition, Žižek claims. As such it is paradigmatic with what Lacan called a *passage à l’acte* – ‘an impulsive movement into action which can’t be translated into speech or thought and carries with it an intolerable weight of frustration’. Such protests are, in Žižek’s terminology, *phatic* – they serve as an attempt to check the communication channels (much as a polite but meaningless greeting does, what one passes a stranger) not to convey specific meaning (Žižek 2009: 63).

⁴ There is a wealth of recent scholarship on rebellion formation, rebel organisation, rebel alliances, rebellion fractionalisation (Warren and Troy 2015), and datasets (such as Polity IV) which all use “revolt/rebellion” in the conventional sense i.e., as cognates of “rebel fighters”.

(e.g., the Correlates of War Project, the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, and Polity IV) tend to classify civil conflicts based on a corresponding metric of deaths.

While the measure may be questioned, the real problem is the neglect of instances that do not cross the threshold, resulting in arguably the biggest part of political conflict being excluded from consideration by scholars of civil war (as argued by Kaldor 2013). As such, significant political upheavals are ignored, as are the contextual insight they offer, owing to overly restrictive definitions that rule out instances with a low body count (Mundy 2011). The effect of this myopia is far-reaching, including misinterpreting the factors causing civil conflicts, but extending as far as recent ruminations that contemporary international relations may have a poor grasp on ‘what war actually is’.⁵ This ontological crisis is seemingly corroborated by epistemological unease, as evidenced by the slew of terminology introduced since 2000 (e.g., “New Wars”, “New New Wars”, “Grey Warfare”, “High-Intensity Participation”, etc.).

Towards “an act of love”

Notwithstanding the above, protest’s nature as a direct political action, on a continuum with civil war and rebellion, belies the quintessence of protest, for the simple reason that it never asks why people protest in the first instance, nor how the concerns of individuals progress to protest events.

In the 1970s, Hirschman explained that social actors have essentially two possible responses to untenable unfairness or dissatisfaction: “exit or voice”.⁶ In the political context, one can exit (move or emigrate, perhaps), or exercise voice (vote, or failing that: campaign, protest, or promote revolution) (Hirschman 1970). This argument’s pedigree goes back at least to Clausewitz’s canonical definition of war, which, in detailing the salient dimensions of warfare, in fact gets close to describing *most* direct political actions. War, Clausewitz (1832: 71) famously suggests, is (1) a

⁵ The most overt admittance of this nature may be Hew Strachan, an Oxonian military historian, who suggested that ‘one of the central challenges confronting international relations today is that we do not really know what is a war and what is not’ (Hew in Betz 2012: 25).

⁶ With ‘loyalty’, essentially “putting up with”, later added.

continuation of political commerce, (2) and part of a series of political acts which should not be seen in isolation, (3) which aims to modify (political) reality, part of which includes (4) disarming the enemy. Moreover, war is (5) a serious and risky endeavour, requiring (6) courage and organisation, (7) necessitating the utmost use of force, and (8) leading to a result that is never absolute.

Removing points 4 and 7, and permitting a slight rephrasing, I argue that, by the same logic, *protest* is a continuation of political commerce, and part of a series of political acts, which should not be seen in isolation, and aim to modify political reality. Protest is also a serious and risky endeavour, requiring courage and coordination, and one whose outcome is never absolute.

Protest is, however, not merely politics by other means, but nobler. While protest, as paradigmatic forms of direct political action, bears witness to events, policies, or conditions that are experienced as repression, neglect, or injustice, it is a contextually rational response, but it is also a reactive counterweight,⁷ a necessary checking of social communication channels⁸, or part of an emancipatory project, enacted to *change* a prevailing violation and establish what is anticipated to be a more humane or just social order. In this mode, courage and coordination are exerted to better the beneficiaries' quality of life, not to lower the quality of life of another. Understood this way, protest is not merely altruism, but an outflow of care and compassion towards another. Put differently, protest is an act of love.

Apropos of love: in place of the standard scholarly squeamishness at the term, Cornel West reminds that "...justice is what love looks like in public... [j]ustice being not just in solidarity with dominated peoples, but of actually having a genuine love and willingness to celebrate with and work alongside those catching hell..." (West 2011: 96)

⁷ '...to expose heartlessness, or show solidarity to those crushed by it.' (Chomsky 2012: 12).

⁸ Phatic, perhaps, but ultimately transcendental to change.

While numerous conceptions of the relationship between protest and power exist,⁹ I argue that claiming protest as prototypically an act of love does not mean that protest should have an uneasy association with violence: protests react against inhumanity, and often violently so. It is not uncommon for love to motivate violent acts. Nevertheless, the violence attending protest – whether by design or as response to provocations (such as police brutality) – is not analogous to other elements of the continuum, such as, say, violence in civil war, as the former seeks to remove suppression, while the latter may view subjugation as part of the ideal outcome.

In sum then, three points. First, protest is necessarily against something (i.e., it is always-already *reactive* to overt or ambient violence) – whether racism, exploitation, the lack of dignity owing to government neglect or poor services, or another injustice – and that something may be as abstract as the “negative peace”¹⁰ of inequality, or the systemic violence of global capitalism.¹¹ Second, protest is an instrumental device in the category of power relations (i.e., it involves an expression against a political reality or perception), and usually seeks to alter those relations in some way. Third, people protest when other means of political participation are restricted or perceived as ineffective (i.e., protest generally is a political action of last resort).¹²

Regarding protest as politics of last resort, the idea of protest as a continuation of politics ‘by other means’ is contentious, owing to other political

⁹ For example, Von Holdt claims that one can extend this argument to posit protest as a political discourse the aims of which are to *empower*, not to *overpower*. This dimension of standing outside hegemonic structures, and not included in a project seeking to become it (which presents a conceptual discontinuity with opposition politics and rebellion/revolting) is the foundation of thinking of protest as *subaltern* (2012). However, this social-psychological shibboleth, suggesting “grievances and aspirations” distinguish protests from say civil wars, has the drawback that it is demonstrably false. Many countries, no less the US, see many protests by members of political parties, who earnestly believe their party to be better equipped to govern the ruling party at the time.

¹⁰ Galtung introduced the idea of “negative peace” (in a Hegelian triad with “positive peace” and “violence”), as a social condition characterised by structural violence (1990).

¹¹ Some have pointed out that capitalism is, by design, violent, albeit abstract and systemic (e.g., Žižek 2015; 2009: 12).

¹² It is important to acknowledge protest as a politics of last resort, rather than a continuation of politics ‘by other means’, given how often other political avenues are ineffective, or simply unavailable in the first instance (Tilly 1977)

avenues becoming ineffective, or not being available in the first instance (Tilly 1977). This limited register of social technologies is frequently described as a set of “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985) , or “resources of the powerless” (Lipsky 1968) – although characterisations of protest ranges from “strategic” (e.g., Samuel 2013) to “delinquent” (e.g., Kepplinger 2009).¹³

All told, protests should thus be unpacked to be understood as the mobilisation of direct political actions by members of a less-powerful group against a more powerful group whose behaviour has in some way deteriorated living conditions or perceptions thereof, leading to collective *grievances* among the less powerful group. ‘Those who are mobilised’ could be called the *actors*,¹⁴ as groupings of people or organisations, formal or informal, which focus on specific political or social issues. *Actors* also define protest type; they may indicate a neighbourhood or an association representing a geographic community, or a group of people united by national-level concerns; they may equally be a community of workers or a union representing labourers across an industry. *Community protests* are thus protests mobilising community-based *actors*, and *Labour-related protests* occur when work-based *actors* are mobilised.

2. What makes a protest?

Visiting the subcomponents of protest help not only reveal the nature of the phenomenon, it will ultimately beg the question of whether conventional theories of protest hold true. For this, I now narrow the lens, and consider the constituent parts of protest formation. Figure 2 provides a simplified view of the constituent parts discussed in this section – concerns, triggers, *grievances*, *gestures*, *tactics*, and *protest events* – which may develop into “protest arcs”.

¹³ Others include Williams’ “radical forms of participation” (2006), “violent politics” (Addison 2002), and Mitra’s “complementary channels of participation” (1991). Protest is also described as a non-routine behaviour (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 165), anti-social behaviour (Ngwane 2011: 35), insurgent behaviour (Mottair and Bond 2012: 5), and unacceptable behaviour (Posastiuc 2013: 3). In line with the “weapons of the weak” thesis, several scholars claim that disruption is one of the few interventions available to the politically marginalised (Chambers, Piven, and Cloward 1977; Raleigh 2015).

¹⁴ I use this at the expense of “movements”.

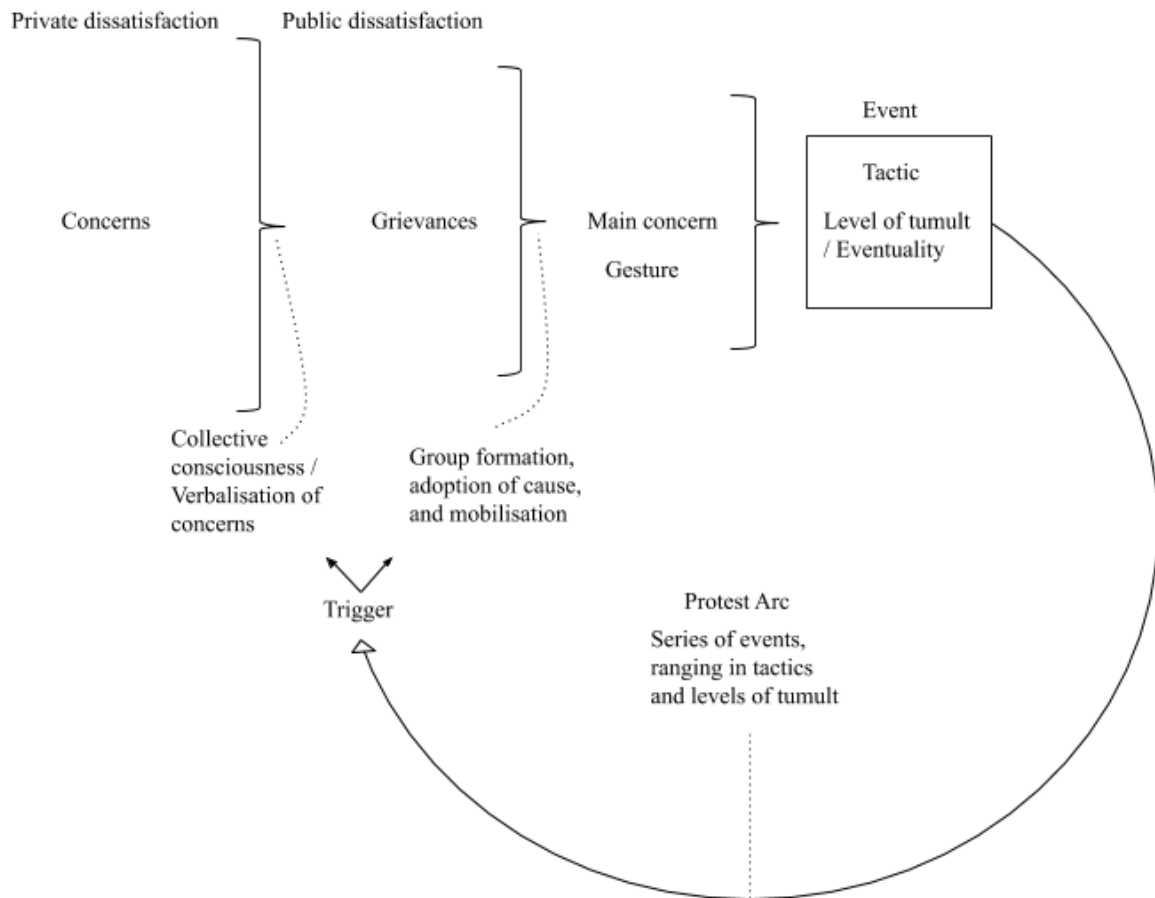


Figure 2: Stylised depiction of the interrelation between the processes leading to protest arcs

What follows below works toward a simple formulation: that an agglomeration of individual concerns may coalesce and form collective *grievances*, and that collective *grievances* – which concern fictitious commodities and thus fall under the ambit of the state – carry the potential for collective action.

Grievances

If *concerns* are individual anxieties or fears springing forth from the disconnect over how things are versus how they ought to be, *grievances* can be understood as

shared articulated dissatisfactions about perceived injustices.¹⁵ While both concepts contain elements of ethical judgements, concerns manifest as emotions, making them notoriously hard to capture (Gratz and Roemer 2004).¹⁶ Further complicating matters is that those emotions – and our endless stream of anxieties and hopes – exist in a subject always-already cast into a context of “ambient violence”. A potent reformulation of Pericles’ dictum that all humans are subject to political systems, whether interested in them or not, is the Heideggerian concept of *geworfenheit* (“thrownness”) – being subject to social systems and material conditions. Marx (1852: 1) offers an analogous observation on the inescapable reality of contextual inequity: ‘Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past’.

Ambient violence refers to the ever-present violations to moral ideas of goodness, fairness, and justice (e.g., Thompson 1971) and may lead to concerns and, eventually, *grievances*.¹⁷ To rephrase, if *concerns* are “the anxieties of individuals”, then *grievances* can be seen as the agglomeration of these. Moreover, *grievances* are born of the mismatch between expectations and reality in the distribution of public goods and factors of production, and operate at the group level,¹⁸ whether a family, clan, geographic community, or virtual community (union, religious group, work colleagues). In fact, by generating a shared social identity,¹⁹ *grievances* may also “create” a community (Tajfel *et al.*, 1979).

Once the combination of identifiable *grievances* and contextual inequities becomes sufficiently unbearable (this is not to say easily articulated), conditions for

¹⁵ cf. ‘...feelings of dissatisfaction with important aspects of life such as housing, living standard, income, employment, health care, human rights, safety, and education’ (Klandermans, Roefs, and Olivier 2001: 42).

¹⁶ Moreover, the link between combinations of *grievances* and the will to action may be overdetermined.

¹⁷ When social norms are violated, groups and individuals are willing to incur nontrivial costs to sanction such violence, an allowance that may be explained at the neural-physiological level (e.g., De Quervain *et al.* 2004) or the group level.

¹⁸ Classical theories of rebellion (understood in the conventional sense, i.e., taking up arms) talk about “shared grievances” (Gurr 1970).

¹⁹ This forms the basis of both identity-based conflict (Murshed and Gates 2005) and class-based conflict (Tilly 1977).

protest may be said to be “ripe”.²⁰ In other words, protests do not occur without “relative frustration” (Allal and El Chazli 2012). While scholars generally agree that collective action is the outcome of perceived injustice, the nature of the link between *grievances* and direct political action is, as a rule, poorly formulated. Among others, political scientists Blattman and Miguel state that ‘the economic motivations for conflict are better theorised than psychological or sociological factors’ (2010: 18). Part of the problem is likely to be related to the need to approach *grievances* econometrically, or at least as “label-able” and countable.²¹

The above allows for four short elaborations. First, although economic considerations are vital and relatively easy to enumerate and metricise, they are by no means the only concerns that develop into *grievances*. The insight from the moral economy literature is that any norm, when violated, may lead to unacceptable conditions. The second consideration is that *grievances* are complex: they may appear in clusters, are never uniformly experienced, and can be described with reference to feedback loops, nonlinearity, emergence and the language of complex systems. A third point concerns how *grievances* are metricised (typically by using proximate measures). The “greed versus grievance” debates of the 1990s and early 2000s (initiated by Collier and Hoeffler) is an influential example, where proxies such as local “cultural diversity” were used as an indicator of “countrywide grievances” (a move roundly criticised [e.g., Bensted 2011; Keen 2012; Nathan 2003]). Lastly is the consideration that moral goods (such as recognised rights), public goods, and the state-created factors of production²² – land, labour, and livelihood inputs – are functions of the dominant ideology or mode of production, and the distribution of all private goods, common-pool resources, club goods, and public goods are also allocated or regulated by the state (Samuelson 1954: 19). The significant and often

²⁰ Arnson and Zartman (2005); for a discussion of the concept of ripeness in the contexts of conflict resolution, see Zartman (1991). Apropos the South African protest, using an Afrikaans expression for “fed-up”, *gatvol*, Duncan enumerates instances of communities crossing a mental threshold, whereafter direct action appears the likely outcome (Duncan 2016).

²¹ The metrification of social sciences means that, parallel to the trend of commodification, there is also a preference to present the richness of human sentiments and morality (including love, beauty, humour, adventure, compassion, hope, solidarity, and duty) into “incentives” or “utility”. This is what Gramsci (1971) called “economism” – the fallacy of presenting causes as immediately operative when in fact they function indirectly.

²² Owing to this “created” or “legislated” quality, these are also referred to as “fictitious commodities”.

unrecognised implication hereof is that all protest relates to the state.²³ I further develop this argument below.

Three orders

When social conditions are ripe for protest, or when a *trigger* moment precipitates physical intervention, actions tend to follow. However, there is a gap between the intended signal and the actual performance. To explore this, I now consider an aspect of psychoanalysis.

According to Lacan's theory of subjectivity, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real are the three orders that structure human existence (Wegner 2009). Using the analogy of a game of chess,²⁴ the Imaginary order is operative in understanding a pawn to signify a foot-soldier. Thus, the Imaginary is the register of definitions, of that-which-is-simulated, or what one *imagines* others to be or objects to mean. Returning to the chess analogy, one deals with the Symbolic order when considering the rules of the game and the structure and setup of the board (Feldstein, Fink, and Jaanus 1995: 70). Our intersubjective relations, ideological conventions, and most importantly, linguistic communication, constitute the Symbolic. With the world carved up by language, and with social events mediated by customs, laws, norms, and rituals, the human subject is thus "trapped" as a subject within the Symbolic order (Zalta *et al.* n.d.). The contingent circumstances left out by the interplay between the Symbolic and the Imaginary is the Real. In the chess example, the actual playing of the game by two persons – with ill-conceived strategies, but also the phone call that interrupts the game and the dog that upsets the pieces (which become part of "what happened during the game of chess") – constitutes the Real. The Real thus implies some dysfunction of the other orders. Thus while the Symbolic and the Imaginary

²³ Of course, state neglect may be bad, but state persecution is arguably worse. One has to consider both state *incompetence*, such as when public infrastructure is not built or maintained (poor roads in parts of Louisiana, say), and state *competence* (e.g., the creation of Apartheid Bantustans) as conditions to be resisted.

²⁴ I borrow this analogy from Žižek (2006).

structure reality (though never completely), the remainder is the Real (Lacan 2001: xi). Let us now consider how these orders relate to protest.

Triggers, gestures, tactics, and events

As intimated above, protest is not only reactive. Involving the potentially restrictive and/or disincentivising qualities of courage and coordination, a protest *event* – a move that implies opportunity costs incurred and risks undertaken – requires *actors* to overcome the collective action problem. Indeed, collective action problems – the associated costs reducing the possibility of any individual undertaking a certain action alone, despite the fact that people may benefit from it – are offered as a main explanation for why people who share serious concerns about their socio-political conditions continue living under repression instead of rebelling.

The collective action problem often is overcome when the magnitude of the grievance becomes unbearable, or a “grievance saturation point” is reached. However, the notion of “creeping normality” (Diamond 2005) offers a strong argument for how conditions, when altered gradually over time, are accepted or tolerated, almost no matter how dire they become. That is, the same changes occurring in a single step would be experienced as a shock, offering those rejecting social conditions a strong rallying cry towards mobilisation. Thus small changes, or simply harrowing conditions that have “always been this way” may not be enough to catalyse direct action.

Triggers

A compelling concept is that of the *trigger* event, an occurrence that, once breached or met, catalyses the protest *event's* occurrence (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002: 80). As illustrated in Figure 1, *triggers* may add to *ripeness* (i.e., the interface of concerns and *grievances*), or may be an event that catalyses mobilisation (i.e., the interface of grievance and action). I contend that such events typically are not, *strictu sensu*, a sudden worsening of conditions, but rather incidents revealing the true nature of the social system. This “seeing conditions for what they are” is Lacan’s second step of subjectivation: the *trigger* presents the consummation

of the grievance-response nexus unto the Symbolic order, and summons the necessity of a *gesture*.

Among possible examples, a *trigger* may be a police-killing of an unarmed civilian, a summary dismissal of a colleague, or an interrupted water supply to a community – respectively validating the impunity of the police, demonstrating management’s racism, or confirming the incompetence of a municipal manager.

Trigger events also offer up a perpetrator, which may be the actual source of dissatisfaction, a metonymic figurehead, or scapegoat of convenience, without which mobilisation is difficult, if not unlikely. Without the ripeness (i.e., propitious conditions to mobilise) that comes with a collective grievance, *trigger* events are likely to remain personal tragedies. At the same time, without a *trigger* event, a collective grievance around unjust conditions may never precipitate action. The effects of *triggers* are unpredictable: it is easy in hindsight to cite emotionally arresting sparks in rooms long-laden with gunpowder – for example, the murder of Khalid Said (Egypt, 2010) or the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi (Tunisia, 2010) – less so to determine a *trigger* in advance.

Gestures

Somewhere upon crossing the threshold from individual concerns to collective *grievances* – a process that may slowly evolve from communal disquiet, or be suddenly precipitated by a traumatic trigger event – the seed for direct political action is planted. The nature of this seed can be thought of within the coordinates of the Imaginary order. Differently put, when some conspiracy of circumstances evokes the need for a category of actions that represent a rejection of those circumstances, the “idea of rejection” operates, in the Lacanian sense, at the Imaginary level. Once this option finds hospitable ground, and the question moves from ‘why are things this way?’ towards ‘what are the actions that can be taken?’, we have reached into the Symbolic order.²⁵

²⁵ Explaining the principle behind this two-stage transition, Lacan in fact mentions the idea of protest. In *Écrits*, the Symbolic function is presented as the point at which ‘...a man who works at the level of production in our society...’ sees his reality differently, and begins to ‘consider himself to belong to the

Thus the Symbolic order question ‘what are the actions that could be taken?’ opens a catalogue of possible protest *gestures*. To categorise those protest *gestures*, I return to our Clausewitz-derived formulation of protest, which included ‘...requiring courage and coordination’, and which understands protest as a function of social capital. Using the measure of social resources the *gesture* (in the abstract) might require, I distinguish and visually locate *gestures* on a Cartesian plane (see Figure 3 below). Measuring the social resource of *coordination*, the y-axis measures the degree to which a *gesture* requires prior arrangements to be made, or the “level of coordination” involved. The x-axis, considering the social resource of *courage*, measures the degree to which the *gesture* may hurt the participants, or the “danger of harm to self” that may reasonably be associated with the *gesture*.

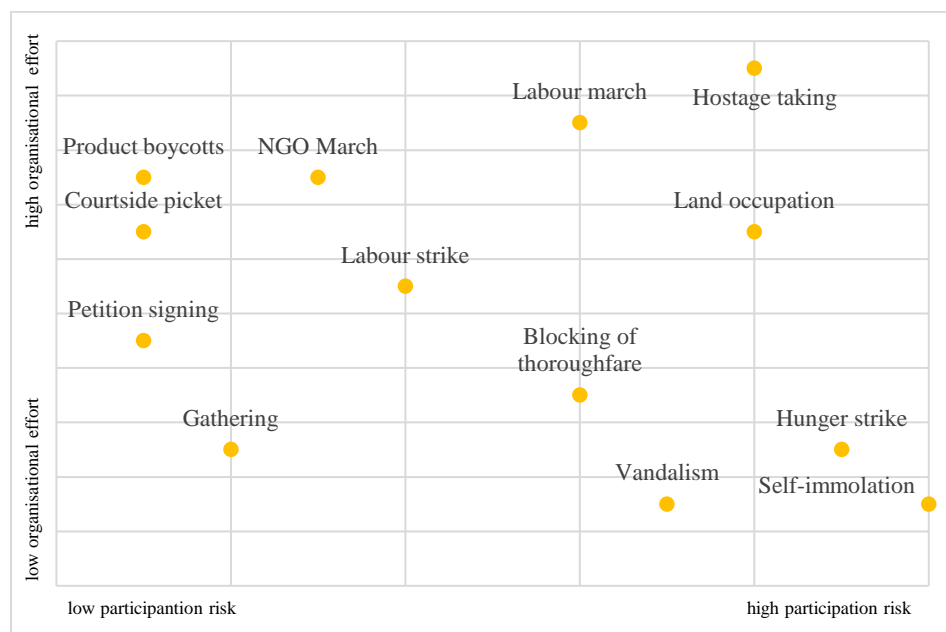


Figure 3: Stylised gesture plot

Deploying types of social capital to define a *gesture*, Figure 3 offers a novel depiction of protest repertoires, and reveals the varying levels of coordination and/or courage a *gesture* requires.

ranks of the proletariat... (at the first stage, and once this identity is internalised, can move to the second stage where) in the name of belonging to [it], he joins in a general strike’ (Lacan 2001: 61-2).

Tactics

An abstract *gesture* becomes a *tactic* upon enactment. Thus, *tactics* are the means of signalling to other parties, the wider community, and state, the severity of the *grievances* experienced by those acting out the *gesture*. While certain *tactics* imply disruption or violence, *tactics* that are orderly do not guarantee that the *event*, when it takes place, will be orderly or non-violent. Differently put, the *tactic* is the Symbolic intention performed, and includes all the messiness of geographic particularities, actual turnout, and general human disorder (e.g., changed plans, rogue factions, weather, responses by authorities, and all other contingent factors): in other words, the Real. Of the concepts developed so far, the enunciated content of *tactics* is the easiest to observe and measure (as opposed to emotions and intentions); as such, formal studies of protest, especially the tradition of Protest Event Analysis, rely heavily on this construct.

The event

Finally, we arrive at the event. An *event*²⁶ is the occurrence of one or more *tactics*, akin to what Favre (1990) calls a “protest moment”. For example, a single *event* may involve the display of banners, a gathering, a march, *and* the handing-over of a list of *grievances*. As with everything operating within the order of the Real, the *event* is a performance for the gaze of the Other; as such, its enactment equates loss of “control over”, inasmuch as the *event* (including unintended dimensions) is never hermetically nor hermeneutically sealed, but is reported and interpreted from the outside, and repeatedly revisited, guaranteed to be misinterpreted.²⁷

²⁶ There are, of course, other conceptions of the event. Mine is more restrictive than that of Chaos theory, where all events are significant since everything is interconnected in a web. Contrariwise, my position is more generous than the formulation of events as only those occurrences which are so significant that one is forced to question the nature of one’s web of meaning, as Žižek would have it. To Žižek, ‘an Event is not what happens in reality but something that shapes our subjective perception’ of the Real, some intervention into social and ideological relations which ‘transforms the entire symbolic field’ (Žižek 2014: 6). Instead, an event, as I formulate it, is an act or interconnected series of acts which alter the politico-symbolical field. When a *gesture* has taken place, we have an event.

²⁷ In the way that all of history has a hermeneutic life of its own, i.e., that events are interpreted through iterations of symbolically mediated practices (Dilthey 2010).

The *event*, which presents a rupture from the appearance of social normality, also becomes a social fact, to which authorities must respond – knowing that a non-response is a reaction in itself. While theorists suggest that a true *event* will inevitably be met with attempted repression, a full set-theoretical exploration of the *event* is beyond the scope of this paper (e.g., Badiou 2007).

A mobilised group's chosen tactic does not necessarily determine the level of violence of the actual event. Of course, if the tactic is essentially violent (e.g., an attack on an official) violence is pre-baked into the event. However, if the gesture is not essentially violent (e.g., a march), how the corresponding tactic plays out as an event is contingent. The counter-tactic used by the target or authorities is a key factor in this emergence: if police attack a large but peaceful march, there is some likelihood that marchers will retaliate in a way that will be declared violent (Alexander and Pfaffe 2014: 207; for statistical proof of this, see Ives and Lewis 2020).

Arc

A protest arc (also called a wave²⁸) is a series of protest *events*, happening over time, and addressing a related set of social concerns. It is an especially helpful concept when considering that protests are generally not once-off happenings, but are clustered spatiotemporally. The image of the arc – evoking a start, middle, and end – intimates that the collection of related *events* is somehow distinct from previous *events*, and is thus more accurate than terms like “episode” or “series”, which neglect the rise-and-fall dynamic of protest arcs that eventually culminate in temporary dénouement or abeyance (Castells 1983: 215-288).

While the protest arc is the extent to which the present work surveys and develops protest theory, it is of course not the biggest picture. Protest arcs are, at the meta-level, structured within “big projects”, or struggles. Clusters of protest arcs may be theorised as waves (e.g., Almeida 2008) or cycles of protest, emphasising

²⁸ Rosa Luxemburg (Luxemburg 2003: 61), among others, wrote about the power of the “revolutionary wave”, where a series of revolutions occurs in various locations within a similar timespan in different countries: ‘The most precious thing... in the sharp ebb and flow of the revolutionary waves is the proletariat's spiritual growth.’

instances of ‘heightened conflict across the social system’, with ‘intensified interactions between challengers and authorities which can end in reform, repression and sometimes revolution’ (Tarrow 2016: 153). Such waves may even be international in nature, acting in a quasi-contagious manner, as was witnessed in the so-called Arab Spring of 2012-2016.

3. Discussion

Above, we have seen how protests develop: however, the above characterisation is a provocation towards the standard canon. One explanation for theories emanating from the global North resisting the idea of protest as love, if not ignoring protest from within entire discourse communities, is owing to the way protests are “packaged” by Social Movement Theory. However, loosening these epistemic shackles may allow for a fairer, if not more realistic, conception of direct political actions in general.

Social Movement Theory, viewed from the South

While the standard canon of Social Movement Theory (SMT) is tacit in the conceptual development presented thus far, I have not evoked mass society theories or theories of collective behaviour by name, and have used *actors* instead of “movements” to refer to individuals or organisations that mobilise vis-à-vis political or social issues. I do nevertheless owe a debt to SMT, not only in *how* I conceive of movements²⁹ (which informs my understanding of *actors*), but also for the *process* by which a group acquires collective control over the necessary resources to overcome collective action problems (i.e., resource mobilisation) (Tilly 1977: 10). However, SMT is not without problems.

²⁹ The most-cited definition of a Social Movement is ‘a group of people acting together in pursuit of common interests’ (Tilly 1977: 14) or more elaborately, ‘organisational structures and strategies that aim to empower oppressed populations to mount challenges and resist the more powerful elite’ (Glasberg and Shannon 2010: 150), the latter definition putting more emphasis on the collective aim. Social movements, according to the classic definition, must have an identity, an adversary, and a societal goal or vision of a better social order (Touraine, 1988).

Firstly, SMT is unclear (at least a priori) about what stage of the stylised protest formulation process the movement forms. A movement may be borne out of the *event*, meaning that once an *event* (or second *event*, depending on one's definition) occurs, we are dealing with a movement. The movement may, however, form earlier: at the moment of the *trigger* (making it transcendental to *event* formation) or even earlier – perhaps at the transition from concern to grievance. It is plausible that movements in fact *facilitate* the formation of the *grievances*, and of course, the presence of multigenerational civil organisations, trade unions, political parties, separatist groups, etc. suggest that many social movements predate their present members, who “found” them as always-already there.

A second problem is the sometimes overlooked fact that throughout history many protests have occurred without a social movement present (Piven and Cloward 1977, Engels and Muller 2019). There is abundant evidence of protest arcs without a body answering to the definitions of SMT anywhere in the picture. While alternative projections of SMT onto such “non-orthodox” protests have been explored, this appears a fudge: what if one is not so much interested in non-social movements as in the possibility of non-movement *events*?

The third problem is that the SMT-frame may be inappropriate to evaluate non-Western protest *events*. Mamdani, Mkandawire and Wamba-dia-Wamba have shown how the structural settings problematised SMT-based lenses within the African setting (1988). More recently, Runciman (2016) argued that the concept of social movements would benefit from being “decentred” from its Eurocentric baggage. That “baggage” includes an analytically constraining organisation-oriented approach that sacrifices the view of contingent, context-specific processes and the experiences of everyday life in order to maintain a fiction of movements as stable political “agents”. Notwithstanding recent claims that social movements in Africa are not principally different from those in other regions (Engels and Müller 2019), reality is messier than agent-based thinking permits, and *events* in the global South are ostensibly less bound in traditional Western notions of movement history, hierarchy,

and the societal triumvirate of government-business-civil society.³⁰ Moreover, collective action outside of movements, as they are typically defined, may be more effective than collective action organised through social movement organisations (Piven and Cloward 1977). Like Cox and Nilsen (2007), Runciman suggests an improved approach would be simply to consider a spectrum of organisational and non-organisational forms that may mobilise people into counter-hegemonic collective action,³¹ dynamically shaped by varying cultural, historical and socio-economic factors, all of which reside in the icy shade of global capitalism. This is therefore not to discard SMT outright,³² but to comment that one should take care not to perpetuate – and further reify – SMT’s fictions.

The Role of the State

The final salient consideration is that protest cannot be de-linked completely from the sovereign state in which it occurs.³³ Because power and social relations are structured not only between humans, but at the level of society (Althusser 2006), social structures regulate how roles and statuses, and ultimately actions, manifest. Thereby, protests are often directed at a party other than the state, but the *context* of the protest is indelibly coloured by the context of history, culture, and especially the

³⁰ Part of the problem, Runciman explains, is the chasm between scholarly abstractions which purport to neatly theorise direct political actions, on the one hand, and the understanding and interpretations which the activists-as-subjects-of-academic-inquiry hold of themselves and their actions. She cautions scholars about essentialism, and romanticism, suggesting they be more aware of ‘the messy and often contradictory realities of social movement activism’ that often implies ‘fragmented forms of resistance across a diffuse range of identities and interests’ and apparently illogical and nonlinear counter-hegemonic challenges (2011: 609-612).

³¹ ‘...disruptive power... (which resides) outside of formal organisations’, lay at the heart of the success of ‘poor people’s movements’ (Chambers *et al.* 1979).

³² As elsewhere, the contemporary academic landscape sees frequent exhortations to decolonise discourses and curricula (e.g., Heleta 2016). Perhaps the decentring of SMT presents a modest contribution to this ideal.

³³ This claim – that protest and the state are linked – is contentious: it assumes that the fully-formed state is always-already there. Such a lens discounts political conflict in ancient times. That said, one could make a case that the slave revolt in Egypt (205-186 BCE), or the *secessio plebis* of 494 BCE in ancient Rome, or any number of other premodern events, should be considered acts of protest. However, while many examples of gatherings, demonstrations, boycotts, disobedience, mutinies, rebellions, assassinations, and wars may be enumerated, one may claim that there is an important distinction between resistance to power (the Foucauldian “imperative”) and resistance to perceived injustice. For this distinction to hold, justice cannot mean “interest of the strong” (e.g., Thrasymachus, nor can it rely upon a metaphysical claim (the veracity of which is subject to competing dogma), but has to be derived from the mutual agreement of (almost) everyone concerned, that is, the idea of a Grotian-Hobbesian-type social contract.

operative legal framework. To wit, states with laws proscriptive of public protest will still include dissatisfied people, but the observer may not witness any protest.

In particular, for direct political action to be labelled “protest”, one requires a system of rule of law, since rule-of-man systems are, by design, unjust, insofar as those holding power largely decide the outcome of conflict. Thus, for a direct political action to be a protest, three preconditions must be met:

- a) Rational-legal domination: a political order not determined by charismatic decree or traditional authority (O’Neill 1986; Owen and Strong 2004).
- b) A modern state: a set of governing and supportive institutions that have sovereignty over a definite territory and population insofar that the authority of the ruling regime is largely tied to legal rationality, legal legitimacy, and bureaucracy.
- c) Inclusion into the modern world order:³⁴ the presence of at least some private property, wage labour, voluntary exchange, a price system, and a measure of competitive markets. Note that this does not present modernism as anathema to class rule. Wolpe (1986) reminds us that, on the contrary, the capitalist project is a specific instrument of the maintenance of class rule.

If one accepts the above conditions, protest should be regarded as a purely modern phenomenon, where the modern state has in one entity consolidated social, political, and economic function. This Hegelian “secular deity” presents its stated goal as the defence and expansion of public welfare, and rests on a social contract based on codified or implied rights. It is only when a state exists to extend rights (instead of mere “oughts”), that protest – about the rights extended by the state, their protection and expansion – can occur.

³⁴ Modernity here indicating the Foucauldian historical category marked by the ‘questioning or rejection of tradition; the prioritization of individualism, freedom and formal equality; faith in inevitable social, scientific and technological progress, rationalisation and professionalisation, a movement from feudalism (or agrarianism) toward capitalism, industrialization, urbanization and secularization, the development of the nation-state, representative democracy, public education...’ (Foucault 1977: 170–77).

Conclusion

Martin Luther King famously commented that “rioting is the language of the unheard”. Protest remains a weapon of the weak in the face of perceived injustice, used never as first resort. In light of this, Havercroft’s appeal that we need a “means of assessing the validity of a particular riot after the fact, so that we can then determine what the appropriate means of responding” (2020), is an example of how easy it is to misread the process of protest formation. Instead, this reflection argues that individual concerns, invoked amid the background violence of neoliberalism and systematic racism, snowball into shared grievances, which may be catalysed by a trigger event into the idea of a response, which in turn may precipitate a set of tactics. The idea of the response (or gesture) and the planned action, map onto the Imaginary and Symbolic orders, respectively. Havercroft’s suggestion, that we can determine the validity of a protest event by looking exclusively at what happened in the event, falters by disregarding the inherent complexity of social interactions. That is, if violence occurs during the protest event, this may very easily be reactive (operating in the order of the Real) rather than intended (i.e., Symbolic).

The exploration of the subcomponents of protest formation and their interrelations (from individual grievances all the way to the state’s multi-layered roles in social relations) not only underscored the contingency of the protest event, when it occurs, but also problematised dominant models unfairly burdened by “Northern” Social Movement Theory

Historical change, so often the result of upheaval and struggle, happens on the level of the particular, with “the universal in the background”. I shared my hope for clarity when considering ‘what we talk about when we talk about protest’, suggesting a scheme of conceptual relations for various direct political actions – including civil war, rebellion, and terrorism. I established that protests can be viewed as having at least one of three aims – reintegration, recognition, or revolution, and developed the interrelations of these narratives. Teasing out the definition of protest, I locate it as politics by other means, and, at root, as a commitment existing in the same ethical category as necessary obligation, that is, love. This non-hegemonic dimension distinguished protest as enticingly subaltern. This dimension, and the fact

that it typically does not involve “battle deaths”, means that it generally falls outside the purview of military studies (and even largely outside the study of International Relations), revealing a significant analytical blind-spot in both. I have argued for a definition of protest – ‘a popular mobilisation in support of a collective grievance’ – and explained that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the actors, not the grievances, should guide definitions of types of protest.

In the end, this work is socially pessimistic, at least over the short run. The global tide of protest will ebb only when either the underlying pressures are removed through a large restructuring of social relations, about which the stewards of state power appears reluctant, or when countries’ leaders find ways to close down the public space that allows for the current forms of protest in the first instance.

References

- Addison, M. (2002) *Violent Politics: Strategies of Internal Conflict*. London: Palgrave.
- Alexander, P and Pfaffe, P. (2014) 'Social Relationships to the Means and Ends of Protest in South Africa's Ongoing Rebellion of the Poor: The Balfour Insurrections'. *Social Movement Studies*, 13(2), pp.204-221.
- Alexander, P. (2013) 'Marikana, Turning Point in South African History'. *Review of African Political Economy*, 40(138): 605-619.
- Allal, A and El Chazli, Y. (2012) *Figures du Déclassement et Passage au Politique dans les Situations Révolutionnaires Égyptienne et Tunisienne*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Almeida, P. (2008) The sequencing of success: Organizing templates and neoliberal policy outcomes. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 13(2): 65-187.
- Arnson, C.J. and Zartman I.W. (2005) *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
- Badiou, A. (2007) *Being and Event*. Paris: A&C Black.
- Bensted, R. (2011) 'A Critique of Paul Collier's "Greed and Grievance" Thesis of Civil War'.

African Security Review, 20(3): 84-90.

Betz, D. (2012) 'Cyberpower in Strategic Affairs: Neither Unthinkable nor Blessed'. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 35(5): 689-711.

Bodea, C and Elbadawi, I.A. (2007) *Riots, coups and civil war: Revisiting the greed and grievance debate*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Brinton, C. (1938) *The Anatomy of Revolution*. Boston: W W Norton and Co.

Castells, M. (1983) *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chambers, C.A., Fox Piven, F. and Cloward, R.A. (1977) *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Chomsky, N. (2012) *Making the Future: Occupations, Interventions, Empire and Resistance*. New York: Penguin.

Clausewitz, C. (1832) *On War*. Oxford: Oxford World's Classic.

Collier, P, Hoeffler, A and Rohner, D. 2009. 'Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War'. *Oxford Economic Papers* 61(1): 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpn029>.

Cox, L and Nilsen, A.G. (2007) 'Social movements research and the "movement of movements": Studying resistance to neoliberal globalisation'. *Sociology Compass*, 1(2), pp.424-442.

Cunningham, D.E. and Lemke, D. (2014) Beyond civil war: A quantitative examination of causes of violence within countries. *Civil Wars*. 16(3), pp.328-345.

de Quervain, D.J.F, Fischbacher, U., Treyer, V. and Schellhammer, M. (2004) 'The Neural Basis of Altruistic Punishment'. *Science*, 305(5688): 1254.

Della Porta, D. and Diani, M. (eds). (2015) *The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Della Porta, D and Diani, M. (2006) The study of social movements: recurring questions, (partially) changing answers. *Social movements an introduction*. Cambridge: Blackwell

Publishing.

Diamond, J. (2005) *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. New York: Penguin.

Dilthey, W. (2010) *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works, Volume IV: Hermeneutics and the Study of History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Duncan, J. (2016) *Protest Nation: The Right to Protest in South Africa*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press.

Eagan, SP. (1996) 'From Spikes to Bombs: The Rise of Eco-Terrorism'. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 19(1): 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576109608435993>

Engels, B and Müller, M. (2019) 'Northern Theories, Southern Movements? Contentious Politics in Africa through the Lens of Social Movement Theory'. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 37(1): 72-92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2019.1607967>

Favre, P. (1990) *La Manifestation*. Paris: Presse de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques.

Feldstein, R, Fink, B and Jaanus, M. (1995) *Reading Seminar XI: Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Paris Seminars in English*. New York: SUNY Press.

Flippo, EB. (1976) *Principles of Personnel Management*. London: McGraw-Hill.

Foucault, M. (1977) *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Galtung, J. (1990) 'Cultural Violence'. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27(3): 291-305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343390027003005>

Gilbert, M. (1992) *On Social Facts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gramsci, A and Hoare, Q. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Gratz, KL and Roemer, L. (2004) 'Multidimensional Assessment of Emotion Regulation and Dysregulation: Development, Factor Structure and Initial Validation of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale'. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*,

26(1): 41-54. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOBA.0000007455.08539.94>

Gurr, T.R. (1970) *Why Men Rebel*. New York: Routledge.

Havercroft, J. (2020) Why is there no just riot theory?.

Heleta, S. (2016) 'Decolonisation of Higher Education: Dismantling Epistemic Violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa'. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 1(1): 1-8.

Heywood, A. (2014) *Global Politics*. Oxford: Macmillan International Higher Education.

Hirschman, A.O. (1970) *Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations and States*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hoffman, F.G. (2009) 'Hybrid Warfare and Challenges'. In *Joint Force Quarterly*, 1(52): 339–48.

Jasper, JM. (1997) 'The Pleasures of Protest'. In *The Art of Moral Protest*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Kaldor, M. (2013) 'In Defence of New Wars'. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(1): 4. <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.at>

Keen, D. (2012) 'Greed and Grievance in Civil War'. *International Affairs*, 88(4): 757-777. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2012.01100.x>

Kepplinger, H.M. (2009) Systemtheoretische Aspekte politischer Kommunikation. In *Politikvermittlung* (pp. 9-26). VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Klandermans, B and Staggenborg, S. (2002) *Methods of Social Movement Research*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Klandermans, B, Roefs, M and Olivier, J. (2001) 'Grievance Formation in a Country in Transition: South Africa, 1994-1998'. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 64(1): 41-54.

Klandermans, P.G. (2003) 'Collective political action'. In Sears, DO, Huddy, L and Jervis, R (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology* (pp. 670-709). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lacan, J. (2001) *Ecrits: A Selection*. Paris: Routledge.

Lipsky, M. (1968) 'Protest as a Political Resource'. *American Political Science Review*,

62(4): 1144-1158.

Luthans, F, Luthans, K.W and Luthans, B.C. (2004) 'Positive Psychological Capital: Beyond Human and Social Capital'. *Business Horizons*, 1(47), pp.45-50.

Luxemburg, R. (2003) *The Accumulation of Capital*. London: Routledge.

Mamdani, M, Mkandawire, T and Wamba-dia-Wamba. (1988) 'Social Movements, Social Transformation and Struggle for Democracy in Africa'. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 23(19): 973-981.

Marx, K. (1852) 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte'. *The Marx-Engels reader*. [1978] London: Norton.

McMichael, P. (2012) *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*. Oakland: Pine Forge Press.

Mitra, S.K. (1991) 'Room to Maneuver in the Middle: Local Elites, Political Action and the State in India'. *World Politics*, 43(03): 390-413. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010400>

Moore, K and Woolley, K. (2016) 'Direct Action'. In Ritzer, G (ed.) *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, (pp. 1-6). Oxford: John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165518.wbeosd067.pub2>

Mottiar, S and Bond, P. (2012) 'The Politics of Discontent and Social Protest in Durban'. *Politikon*, 39(3): 309-330.

Mundy, J. (2011) 'Deconstructing Civil Wars'. *Security Dialogue*, 42(3): 279-295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010611405378>

Murshed, S.M. and Gates, S. (2005) 'Spatial-Horizontal Inequality and the Maoist Insurgency in Nepal'. *Review of Development Economics*, 9(1): 121-134.

Nathan, L. (2003) 'The Frightful Inadequacy of Most of the Statistics: A Critique of Collier and Hoeffler on Causes of Civil War'. *Constructive Approaches to Community and Political Conflict*, 12(5): 5-36.

Ngwane, T. (2011) *Ideology and Agency in Protest Politics: Service Delivery Struggles in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal.

O'Neill, J. (1986) 'The Disciplinary Society: From Weber to Foucault'. *British Journal of*

Sociology, 37(1): 42-60.

Opp, K-D. (2009) *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements: A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique, and Synthesis*. London: Routledge.

Østby, G, Nordås, R and Rød, J.K. (2009) 'Regional Inequalities and Civil Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa'. *International Studies Quarterly*, 53(2): 301-224.

Owen, D.S. and Strong, T.B. (2004) *Max Weber: The Vocation Lectures*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

Piven, F.F. and Cloward, R.A. (1977) *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed. How They Fail*. New York: Random House.

Porto, J.G. and Francis, D. (2008) 'The Mainstreaming of Conflict Analysis in Africa: Contributions from Theory'. In Francis, D (ed.), *Peace and Conflict in Africa* (pp.46-67). London: Zed Books

Posastiuc, C. (2013) 'The Use of Network Metrics in Building Intelligence Early Warning Systems. The Structural Conduciveness Index'. *International Review of Social Research*, 3(3), pp.63-70.

Raleigh, C. (2015) 'Urban Violence Patterns Across African States'. *International Studies Review*, 17(1), pp.90-106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/misr.12206>

Runciman, C, Alexander, P, Rampedi, M, Moloto, B, Maruping, B, Khumalo, E and Sibanda, S. (2016) *Counting Police-Recorded Protests Based on South African Police Service Data*. Johannesburg: Centre for Social Change.

Runciman, C. (2016) Mobilising and organising in precarious times. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. 36(9/10), pp. 613-628.

Samuel, C. (2013) *The Problems of Protest and the Persistence of Domination: Social Movement Theory and Bourdieu's Economy of Practice* (Doctoral dissertation: Queen's Univeristy).

Samuelson, P.A. (1954) 'The Pure Theory of Public Expenditure'. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 36(4): 387-389.

Scott, J.C. (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

- Shaheen, S and Hayo, B. (2015) *Social Uprisings: Conceptualization, Measurement, Causes and Implications*. Doctoral dissertation: Philipps-Universität Marburg.
- Shoemaker, P, Tsan-Kuo Chang, J and Brendlinger, N. (1987) 'Deviance as a Predictor of Newsworthiness: Coverage of International Events in the US Media'. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 10(1): 348-365.
- Simon, H.A. (1990) 'Bounded Rationality'. In Eatwell, J, Milgate, M, and Newman, P (eds.) *Utility and Probability* (pp. 15-18). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Slovo, J. (1997) *Slovo, the Unfinished Autobiography*. New York: Ocean Press.
- Souleimanov, E. and Ditych, O. (2008) 'The Internationalisation of the Russian–Chechen Conflict: Myths and Reality'. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 60(7): 1199-1222.
- Tajfel, H., Turner, J.C., Austin, W.G. and Worchel, S. (1979) 'An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict'. In Hatch, MJ and Schultz, M (eds.). *Organizational Identity: A Reader* (pp.56-65). Washington, DC: Academic Press.
- Tarrow, S. (1989) *Democracy and Disorder: Social Conflict, Political Protest and Democracy in Italy, 1968-1988*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tarrow, S. (2016) 'The People's Two Rhythms: Charles Tilly and the Study of Contentious Politics. A Review Article'. *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, 38(3): 586-600.
- Thompson, E.P. (1971) 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century'. *Past & Present*, 50: 76-136.
- Tilly, C. (1977) *From Mobilisation to Revolution*. Boston: Addison-Wesley.
- Tilly, C. (2017) 'Contentious Performances'. In Castañeda, E and Schneider, CL (eds.) *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics and Social Change: A Charles Tilly Reader* (pp. 92-99). New York: Taylor and Francis.
- Trump, D.J. (2020) Available at <http://www.twitter.com/realdonaldtrump>. Accessed: 29 June 2020.
- van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T. and Spears, R. (2008) 'Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three socio-psychological perspectives'. *Psychological bulletin*, 134(4): 504.

- von Holdt, K. (2012) 'The Violence of Order, Orders of Violence: Between Fanon and Bourdieu'. *Current Sociology*, 61(2): 112-131.
- Wang, D.J. and Piazza, A. (2016) 'The use of disruptive tactics in protest as a trade-off: the role of social movement claims'. *Social Forces*, 94(4): 1675-1710.
- Wegner, P.E. (2009) 'Greimas avec Lacan, or, From the Symbolic to the Real in Dialectical Criticism'. *Criticism*, 51(2): 211-245.
- West, C. 2011. Prophetic religion and the future of Capitalism Civilisation" in Butler, J., Habermas, J., Taylor, C. and West, C., *The power of religion in the public sphere*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Williams, J.J. (2006) 'Community Participation: Lessons from Post-Apartheid South Africa'. *Policy Studies*, 27(3): 197-217.
- Wolpe, H. (1986) 'Class concepts, class struggle and racism'. In Rex, J and Mason, D (eds), *Theories of race and ethnic relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Cambridge.
- Žižek, S. (2006) *How to Read Lacan*. Manchester: Granta.
- Žižek, S. (2009) *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. New York: Profile.
- Žižek, S. (2014) *Event: Philosophy in Transit*. London: Penguin.
- Žižek, S. (2015) *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*. London: Verso.