

**SOCI 360**  
**SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

**POLITICAL**  
**PROCESSES**  
**AND THE**  
**ANTI-WAR**  
**MOVEMENT**

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**(DR. K)**



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**Social Movement Theories**

**Political Process Theory (PPT)** (conflict theory)

**McAdam, Tilly (mid-1990s)** (p78-79)

- i. Social movements rely on the political environment being 'favorable' (p 78)
- ii. Activist organization can be intense, but without political opportunity it will not happen (p 79)
- iii. Similar to RMT in acceptance of RAT (p 80)
- iv. Democratization goes hand in hand with social movements (p 82)
- v. Critique: Creates a circular argument - if movements are successful we interpret political environment to be favorable; if not, then the "environment" is interpreted as unfavorable.



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**Social Movement Theories**

**The Political Process Model**

The Political Process Model suggests that a combination of three factors can be used to explain any social movement:

1. **Political opportunities** (the objective, external, structural factors)
2. **Economic analysis** of mobilizing structures (organization & resources; *RMT*)
3. **Cultural frames** (the subjective, agency-related, cultural factors)

They can be used in various combinations, e.g. political opportunities crucial to initial emergence, but organization, resources and frames central to struggle thereafter.



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## Political Process Theory: Three Factors

Writing on political process theory as a perspective, Doug McAdam said this:

"The **political process model** represents **an alternative** to both the classical and resource mobilization perspectives. Rather than focusing exclusive attention on factors internal or external to the movement, the model describes insurgency as a product of both. Specifically, three sets of factors are identified as shaping the generation of insurgency. It is the confluence of expanding **political opportunities**, indigenous **organizational strength**, and the presence of certain **shared cognitions** within the minority community that is held to facilitate movement emergence. Over time these factors continue to shape the development of insurgency in combination with **a fourth factor: the shifting control response** of other groups to the movement."

· Doug McAdam. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.



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## Political Process Theory: A Conflict Approach

The political process theory, which was developed as an alternative to the dominant Resource Mobilization Perspective, rests on the idea that social movement participants are individuals who possess limited power in society and thus seize the opportunity, through **a cycle of contention** (or punctuated periods of protest and revolt among disaffected masses) to use social movements to champion their grievances during periods of abrupt social changes when the state's authority might be weakened. McAdam's political process theory is heavily influenced by Karl Marx's view on power, as stated in his own words: "**...The political process model is more compatible with a Marxist interpretation of power. Marxists acknowledge that the power disparity between elite and excluded groups is substantial but hardly regard this state of affairs as inevitable. Indeed, for orthodox Marxists, that which is inevitable is not the retention of power by the elite but the ascension to power by the masses.**"

—Doug McAdam. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.



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## Integrated Political Process Theory: The Politics of Mass Society (again)

A branch of PPT has also tried to enhance "**mass society theory**" (Kornhauser 1959) by examining macro-level institutional political processes. Particularly, the relation of socially powerful 'elites' and the masses of 'followers' is important:

**Inaccessible elites:** lack of intermediate buffers between masses and elites (democracy helps to break down these "buffers"). ex: corruption-free voting, right of protest, free-speech, public comment periods on legislation, etc.

**Available masses:** lack of integration into local associations and collectivities (alienated/marginalized/'massified') ex: no participation in local government, lack of community connection

**Available masses** (alienated from the establishment political system) are swept into mass movements (MAGA, Qanon, etc.) that can threaten the political power of inaccessible elites (Clinton, Biden, Obama, Jeff Bezos, etc.). Social media mediates.

Example: **Political opportunities** were 2016 & 2020 elections, Wikileaks, BLM



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## Kornhauser's "The Politics of Mass Society"

(social conflict theory)

"Elites" refer to the "ruling class" – those with political power, economic wealth, and cultural respect.

"Availability" (of non-elites) refers to the degree to which people are connected (through, say, social media) and can organize.

"Accessibility" of elites refers to the perceived ability of non-elites to effect the decision-making of the ruling class.

		Availability of Non-Elites	
		Low	High
Accessibility of Elites	Low	Communal Society	Totalitarian Society
	High	Pluralist Society	Mass Society

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## Anti-Vietnam War Movement

- ▶ **War** is sometimes one of the most politically divisive actions a government can take. Often, those opposed to war organize into **protest groups and sometimes even destabilizing networks of violent actors** typically divorced from the original movement.
- ▶ The political situation in the mid to late 1960s was exactly the kind of **"favorable condition" of political opportunity** that McAdam and Snow talk about in their political process theory of social movements and how they take their course.

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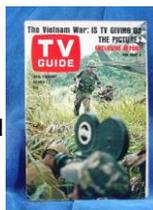
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## Anti-Vietnam War Movement

- ▶ Americans initially supported the war, but as the war dragged on, **support diminished**.
  - Americans suspicious of what military was telling them;
  - Vietnam was the first televised war;
    - People could see facts for themselves
  - **"Credibility Gap"**
    - Americans not sure they could trust Johnson administration.



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## Anti-Vietnam War Movement

### Teach-Ins

- Faculty members and students at U. of Michigan
  - Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)** is formed here
- Later, national teach-ins develop
  - 100,000 anti-war demonstrators get involved
  - Political Issues:**
    - Vietnam is a civil war, not in U.S.'s interest to be there
    - South Vietnam government corrupt, U.S. should not support



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## Anti-Vietnam War Movement

### Anger at the draft invoked December 1969

- Almost 2/3 of drafted men were non-college students
  - College students could wait until graduation if drafted
- Those who could not afford to go to college made up 62% of battle deaths
- African-Americans 10% of the population
  - Made up 20% of combat-related deaths



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## Anti-Vietnam War Movement

### America becomes polarized over the war

- Hawks**
  - U.S. must stay and win the fight in Vietnam
- Doves**
  - U.S. must withdraw from Vietnam immediately
- Country evenly split between both camps



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## 1968: The Pivotal Year

### ▶ The Tet Offensive

- North Vietnamese and Vietcong launch surprise attack on American bases in South Vietnam
- Vietcong almost wiped-out
- North Vietnam scores big political victory
  - Proved they were not on verge of collapse
- Gen. Westmoreland asks for 209,000 more troops
  - American **media begin to turn negative** on the war



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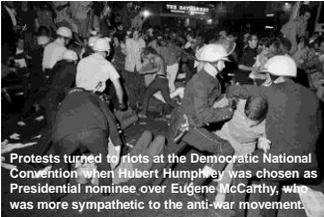
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## 1968: The Pivotal Year

- ▶ President Johnson and the war are unpopular
- ▶ Johnson *does not* run for a second term
- ▶ **1968 Election:**
  - **Richard Nixon** (Republican)
    - Promised to end the war and bring stability back



Protests turned to riots at the Democratic National Convention when Hubert Humphrey was chosen as Presidential nominee over Eugene McCarthy, who was more sympathetic to the anti-war movement.

- **Hubert Humphrey** (Democrat)  
Unpopular because he supported Johnson in the war
- **George Wallace** (Independent)  
Reactionary who tried to attract those who felt threatened by civil rights movement and social unrest in the country.

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## 1968: The Pivotal Year

- ▶ 37<sup>th</sup> President: **Richard Nixon** (1969–1974)



In 1970, four college students were killed by the National Guard at **Kent State**. The **Weathermen** (a splinter group of SDS) were bombing public buildings, including the Senate and the Pentagon. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, **Nixon ended the war in 1973**, not too long before he resigned in disgrace after being linked to the break-in and burglary of the Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate hotel in Washington, D.C.

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