

Violence as Politics

Violent Governments

With collective violence we enter the terrain of contentious politics, where people make discontinuous, public, collective claims on each other. By no means all contentious politics generates violence; our problem is precisely to explain when contention takes a violent turn. But all collective violence involves contention of one kind or another.

We can conveniently mark our crossing into contentious politics' territory by noticing when governments — more generally, individuals or organizations that control concentrated means of coercion — become parties to discontinuous, public, collective claims. Governments become parties to contention as claimants, objects of claims, or stakeholders. When leaders of two Muslim activist groups compete for recognition as valid interlocutors for all Muslims, for example, the governments to which the interlocutors would speak inevitably figure as stakeholders. Similarly, when miners strike against mine owners, government officials may avoid vigorous intervention (or even visible involvement) in the conflict, but government looms nearby as a setter of rules for collective bargaining, a supplier of police, and a possible mediator. Collective violence, then, is a form of contentious politics. It counts as *contentious* because participants are making claims that affect each other's interests. It counts as *politics* because relations of participants to governments are always at stake.

Nevertheless, violence and government maintain a queasy relationship. Where and when governments are very weak, interpersonal violence commonly proliferates in the populations under the nominal jurisdictions of those governments. Where and when governments grow very strong, violence among civilians usually declines. Politicians and political philosophers often advocate good, strong government as a bulwark against violent victimization. But all

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governments maintain control over concentrated means of violence in the form of arms, troops, guards, and jails. Most governments use those means extensively to maintain what their rulers define as public order.

In all governments, furthermore, some rulers also use violent means to further their own power and material advantage. When large-scale collective violence occurs, government forces of one sort or another almost always play significant parts as attackers, objects of attack, competitors, or intervening agents. International war is simply the extreme case — but, on the whole, the most lethal — of governmental involvement in violence. For these reasons, collective violence and nonviolent politics intersect incessantly.

Rulers, police, philosophers, and historians often distinguish between force and violence. Force, in this view, consists of legitimate short-run damage and seizure — which typically means that the persons who administer damage enjoy legal protection for their actions. Force might therefore include legitimate self-defense but not unprovoked aggression. In such a perspective, violence refers to damage that does not enjoy legal protection.

Will the distinction between force and violence serve our purposes? As citizens, all of us want to make some such distinction; we want to draw lines between right and wrong uses of governmental authority to seize and damage persons or their property. To varying degrees and with competing definitions of propriety, we also want governments to deploy their concentrated coercive means against improper uses of violence. For purposes of explaining violent interactions, however, the distinction between (legitimate) force and (illegitimate) violence faces three insuperable objections.

First, the precise boundary of legitimate force remains a matter of fierce dispute in all political systems. Just think of debates about what does or doesn't constitute proper police behavior in pursuing a suspect, about the rights and wrongs of capital punishment, or about permissible military actions against civilians in wartime. In the very course of initially peaceful demonstrations that turn violent, demonstrators and police are almost always contesting the boundary between legitimate and illegitimate uses of coercive means.

Second, in practical experience a long continuum runs from (1) duly licensed governmental actions whose propriety almost everyone accepts through (2) derelictions by governmental agents to (3) damage wrought with secret support or encouragement from some segment of some government. Consider FBI infiltration of violence-wielding black nationalist groups during the 1960s, American support for paramilitary forces in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua during the 1980s, or Muslim activists' attacks on New York's World Trade Center in 1993 and 2001; in all these cases, collective violence depended in part on the

collusion of governmental officials, domestic or foreign. Exactly where along that continuum could we reasonably locate a firm boundary between legitimate force and illegitimate violence? From whose perspective?

Third – and most important for this book's purpose – a large share of the collective violence in the episodes that people call riots, rebellions, or revolutions directly involves governmental agents as purveyors or objects of damage. Without including deaths inflicted or suffered by police and troops, we would have no way of explaining variation in the deadliness of different sorts of collective encounters. In the Paris Commune of 1871, for example, one set of estimates tells us that about 16,000 rebels died in street fighting with French national troops, the conquering national army executed another 3,500 rebels after street fighting ended, and in the process 880 members of the national army died (Chesnais 1976: 168). In evaluating the Commune's ferocity, we would surely want to include the estimated 16,880 deaths on both sides in street fighting, and might want to include the 3,500 executions as well. For purposes of explanation, it would be odd indeed to call one set of deaths an outcome of violence and another an outcome of legitimate force. If the rebels had won, would their violent acts have converted retroactively to legitimate force?

Not all collective violence, to be sure, consists of confrontations between authorities and citizens. Enough does, however, to require careful examination of authority–citizen interactions. No student of collective violence can afford to exclude actions of governmental authorities or interactions between governmental agents and nongovernmental actors. Indeed, we must eventually explain why regimes differ so greatly with respect to which forms and agents of violence they sponsor, legitimate, tolerate, or forbid.

This chapter identifies the political context for that great variation. After a brief introduction to regimes, it reviews the constitution of political actors, the special place of political entrepreneurs as connectors and organizers of collective violence, and the significance of specialists in violence such as police and bandits. It then turns to comparisons of broad types of regime, characterizes broad patterns of political interaction in different sorts of regime, and looks more closely at variation in kinds and intensities of collective violence in different types of regime. This review of political contexts should make it easier to understand how the organization of political life in general shapes the character of collective violence as well as how closely violent and nonviolent forms of political life interact.

Let us therefore adopt a simple set of conceptual tools for the work at hand. Once we have identified a government, we can search around that government for organized political actors that sometimes interact with the government. The

whole set of their interactions with each other and with the government constitutes a *political regime*. Within a regime, we can distinguish:

- agents of government;*
- polity members* (constituted political actors enjoying routine access to government agents and resources);
- challengers* (constituted political actors lacking that routine access);
- subjects* (persons and groups not currently organized into constituted political actors); and
- outside political actors*, including other governments.

These are, of course, whole categories of actors rather than single actors. Government-backed categorical boundaries separate them at two levels: overall, and then again within categories. Overall, for example, any government makes some distinctions between its own agents and polity members, typically putting governmental resources directly at the disposition of agents but requiring polity members to follow established procedures (formal applications, petitions, contracts, hearings, and the like) in order to gain access to similar resources.

Governments also sometimes accept or reinforce boundaries separating challengers from polity members by bargaining out who belongs to them and who has the right to speak for the challengers even while denying them routine access to governmental resources. During early stages of the 1960s civil rights movement, for example, U.S. government agents began talking with leaders of civil rights organizations without by any means recognizing them as speaking for African Americans at large. Later, organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People acquired a regular place in government-backed discussions of race relations, while the government continued to harass a number of black nationalist groups. Thus the distinctions among governmental agents, polity members, challengers, subjects, and outside political actors acquire legal standing.

Category formation is itself a crucial political process. Category formation creates identities. A social category consists of a set of sites that share a boundary distinguishing all of them from (and relating all of them to) at least one set of sites visibly excluded by the boundary. Category formation occurs by means of three different mechanisms: invention, borrowing, and encounter. *Invention* involves authoritative drawing of a boundary and prescription of relations across that boundary, as when Bosnian Serb leaders decree who in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a Serb and who not, then regulate how Serbs interact with non-Serbs. *Borrowing* involves importation of a boundary *cum* relations package already existing

elsewhere and its installation in the local setting, as when rural French Revolutionaries divided along the lines of Patriot versus Aristocrat that had already split Paris and other major French cities. *Encounter* involves initial contact between previously separate (but internally well-connected) networks in the course of which members of one network begin competing for resources with members of the other, interactively generating definitions of the boundary and relations across it.

But categorical boundaries appear within the major clumps of actors as well. Any particular government may, for example, have dealings with different polity members organized as local communities, religious congregations, military units, and categories of property holders. Furthermore, we will soon have to single out two overlapping sorts of political actors that figure prominently in collective violence: (i) political entrepreneurs whose specialty consists of organizing, linking, dividing, and representing constituencies; and (ii) specialists in deployment of violent means such as soldiers, police, thugs, and gang leaders. Distinctions among agents of government, polity members, challengers, subjects, and outside political actors simply start the analysis. They say that a significant divide separates those actors having routine access to government agents and resources from others (e.g., protesting national minorities) lacking that access.

Transactions among agents of government, polity members, challengers, and subjects constitute a *regime*. Public politics within a regime consists of claim-making interactions among agents, polity members, challengers, and outside political actors as well. Public politics includes tax collection, military conscription, individual voting, application for pensions, and many other transactions to which governments are parties.

Contentious politics consists of that (large) subset of public politics in which the claims are collective and would, if realized, affect their objects' interests. Contentious politics therefore excludes routine tax collection, reporting for military service, voting, and application for pensions. But any of these can become contentious if people mount collective resistance to them. In Old Regime Europe, for example, a significant share of all popular rebellions began with royal attempts to impose new or augmented taxes (Tilly 1993).

Some forms of public politics, furthermore, almost always involve collective contention; rebellions, revolutions, social movements, demonstrations, general strikes, and contested electoral campaigns illustrate the irreducibly contentious forms of public politics. Some contentious claim making, finally, takes the form of damage to persons or objects; rebels kill rulers, revolutionaries sack palaces, and so on. That is the subset of contentious politics whose variation we are trying to explain.

In Rwanda of early 1994, President Habyarimana's government based itself in the capital (Kigali) and exercised its contested jurisdiction through the rest of the country. Polity members included Hutu groups loyal to Habyarimana's faction, while challengers included both some dissident Hutu groups and fragmented Tutsi networks, some of them armed. On the boundary of challengers and outside political actors stood Tutsi militias that operated along the Rwandan border with Uganda. The Ugandan government itself, host to Tutsi militias and base for their raids into Rwanda, figured as a significant outside political actor.

The contention in question centered on competing claims for control of the Rwandan state and territory. In this case, the claims rapidly turned violent. Our task is to explain how and why such processes occur. In particular, it is to explain why violence varies so much in salience and coordination. Rwanda gives us a terrifying example of high salience and coordination together. But elsewhere — and even in Rwanda, most of the time before 1994 — collective violence occurs mostly in less salient and less coordinated versions. What accounts for that enormous variability?

Political Actors and Identities

The word "regime" summarizes interactions among governmental agents, polity members, challengers, and subjects. More precisely, it clumps myriad transactions among people into those categories and then abstracts mightily from them. As we will soon see abundantly, it matters whether people organize their interactions as aggrieved citizens, advocates of special interests, religious congregations, local communities, ethnic groups, suppressed nations, women, gays, veterans, or something else. The available array of political identities makes a difference.

Who acts? What sorts of people are likely to engage in contentious politics? What sorts of people, that is, are likely to make concerted public claims that involve governments as objects or third parties and that, if realized, would visibly affect interests of persons outside their own number? In principle, any concerted set of persons (within a given regime) to whom a definition of shared stakes in that polity's operation is available would qualify. In practice, beyond a very small scale, every actor that engages in claim making includes at least one cluster of previously connected persons among whom have circulated widely accepted stories concerning their strategic situation: opportunities, threats, available means of action, likely consequences of those actions, evaluations of those consequences, capacities to act, memories of previous contention, and inventories of other likely parties to any action. Many of the Hutu activists

who spurred Rwandan massacres of Tutsi and nonconforming Hutu during the spring and summer of 1994 belonged, for example, to a well-connected militia run by the president whose death prompted the bloodletting (Mamdani 2001).

In practice, furthermore, such actors have generally established previous relations — contentious or not — to other collective actors; those relations have shaped internal structures of the actors and helped generate their stories. In practice, finally, constituent units of claim-making actors often consist not of living, breathing individuals but of groups, organizations, bundles of social relations, and social sites such as occupations and neighborhoods. Actors consist of networks deploying partially shared histories, cultures, and collective connections with other actors. Note once again the centrality of Hutu militias as connectors in the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

Such actors, however, almost never describe themselves as composite networks. Instead, they offer collective nouns: they call themselves workers, women, residents of X, or United Front Against Y. Such *political identities* offer public, collective answers to the questions “Who are you?”, “Who are we?”, and “Who are they?”. As such, they are subject to constant challenge and negotiation. Who spoke for the Hutu, and who spoke for Rwandans at large, became questions of life and death in 1994.

Political identities assemble the following crucial elements:

boundaries separating “us” from “them” — for example, dividing Hutu from Tutsi;

shared *stories* about those boundaries — for example, Hutu stories about distinctive characteristics of Hutu and Tutsi, as well as origins of their differences;

social relations across the boundaries — for example, forms of addressing governing transactions between Hutu and Tutsi;

social relations *within* the boundaries — for example, signals among Hutu to indicate their common membership.

Political identities serve as springboards for claim making, but they do far more political work than that. To put a complicated process very simply, governmental agents sort political identities into legitimate and illegitimate, recognized and unrecognized. Some regimes tolerate special-interest associations such as Greenpeace or Boy Scouts as legitimate political actors, while others do not tolerate public nongovernmental associations of any kind. Even where organizations speaking for ethnic, religious, or racial categories have a legitimate right to exist, some organizations gain recognition as valid representatives of their ethnic, religious, or racial category while others gain no such recognition.

Political rights come into existence through struggles for recognition (Fowler & Landman 1997; Tilly 1998a).

The rise of nationalism strongly affected the character of such recognition struggles. Before the American and French Revolutions, people rarely demanded rights or claimed that others had obligations to them on the grounds of belonging to a distinct nation. People maintained loyalties to religious and cultural traditions, but in most cases they undertook collective action on behalf of those traditions only when someone else proposed to stamp them out or to take away rights attached to them. From the late eighteenth century, however, nationalism gained importance as a political principle: a nation should have its own independent state, and an independent state should have its own nation.

From this principle flowed two antagonistic versions of nationalism. *Top-down* nationalism claimed the right of existing rulers to impose their preferred definitions of national culture and welfare on subjects of their regimes. *Bottom-up* nationalism claimed the right of distinct nations within heterogeneous states to acquire political independence. Each fed the other; the more rulers tried to impose national cultures and obligations, the more distinct minorities clamored for independence. Because people had often organized networks of trust, trade, sociability, and mutual aid around religious and ethnic ties, top-down nationalism did not simply wound minority self-esteem; it threatened their means of day-to-day survival.

From the American Revolution onward, leaders of powerful states — notably the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic states — used the principle of self-determination to pick apart composite rival powers such as the Habsburg and Ottoman empires. Thus it became advantageous to minorities within all sorts of regimes to designate themselves as nations in the making, to create histories and practices validating that designation, and to ask for outside help in achieving independence. Enterprising ethnic leaders were quick to see that they could gain power by gaining recognition as representatives of valid nations and could easily lose power if someone else got there first. Since World War II, most large-scale violent conflicts across the world have involved some such claims.

Similar recognition struggles occur at a smaller scale on behalf of a wide range of other identities. As American gay and lesbian activists have learned, gaining legitimacy as a category of political actor entails significant costs and benefits (Bernstein 1997). Presenting your constituency as an unjustly excluded minority, for instance, requires stressing analogies with formerly excluded minorities; if successful, this gives the new minority access to already established rights. As competition among different would-be spokespersons for gay and lesbian interests illustrates, the stakes of recognition are also serious for particular

organizations and leaders: does ACT UP, for instance, speak for all American gays?

Much of what people loosely call "identity politics" consists of struggles over legitimization and recognition. The struggles take place within boundaries, across boundaries, over the placement and character of boundaries, around stories attached to those boundaries, and about relations between people sharing a common answer to the question "Who are you?" on one side and other political actors, including agents of government, on the other (Tilly 2002).

Political Entrepreneurs and Specialists in Violence

The mention of contemporary social movements should remind us of political actors whose voices have remained muted so far. Like their economic counterparts, *political entrepreneurs* engage in various forms of brokerage: creating new connections between previously unconnected social sites. But they do more than link sites. They specialize in activation, connection, coordination, and representation. They specialize in activating (and sometimes deactivating) boundaries, stories, and relations, as when Bosnian Serb leaders sharpened boundaries between Serbs and their Muslim or Croatian neighbors with whom Bosnians of Serbian lineage had long mingled, married, traded, and collaborated. They specialize in connecting (and sometimes disconnecting) distinct groups and networks, as when those same leaders integrated armed Serbian gangs into larger nationalist coalitions. They specialize in coordination, as when those leaders organized joint action on the part of those coalitions.

Political entrepreneurs specialize, finally, in representation, as when Bosnian Serb leaders claimed to speak for all Bosnians of Serbian lineage while demanding aid from Serbia in establishing Serbian political entities within Bosnia. In these ways, political entrepreneurs wield significant influence over the presence, absence, form, loci, and intensity of collective violence. When they promote violence, they do so by activating boundaries, stories, and relations that have already accumulated histories of violence; by connecting already violent actors with previously nonviolent allies; by coordinating destructive campaigns; and by representing their constituencies through threats of violence. After the fact, both participants and observers speak of deeply felt identities and age-old hatreds. But before and during contention, political entrepreneurs play critical parts in activating, connecting, coordinating, and representing participants in violent encounters.

By means of activation, connection, coordination, and representation, political entrepreneurs necessarily engage in inequality-generating opportunity

hoarding. They often engage in exploitation as well. They organize opportunity hoarding as they construct or activate us-them boundaries between their networks and outsiders, fend off rival claimants to coordinate and represent some or all of the same networks, draw necessary resources from those networks, and deploy those resources in ways that simultaneously forward collective claims, reproduce the structures they have built, and sustain their own power. Of course they often fail in one regard or another. If that happens, the failure often generates collective violence inside the coalition's boundaries as rival entrepreneurs and their factions battle for control of activation, connection, coordination, and representation.

When political entrepreneurs coordinate the efforts of a large coalition to the advantage of a smaller set within that coalition, their opportunity hoarding becomes a form of exploitation. These well-known risks of contentious politics deserve emphasis because they help explain why political entrepreneurs often promote collective violence when a cool reading of their whole constituency's interest prescribes disbanding, escaping, or lying low. They become specialists in activating boundaries that serve their own readings of collective advantage.

Political entrepreneurs complement and overlap with another significant type of political actor, the *violent specialist*. Every government includes specialists in violence, people who control means of inflicting damage on persons and objects. The cast of characters varies considerably by type of government but commonly includes military personnel, police, guards, jailers, executioners, and judicial officers. In my youth I served a term in the U.S. Navy as paymaster of an eight-ship amphibious squadron. When my staff and I went out to pay the troops, we strapped on loaded .45-caliber pistols to protect the cash we carried as we moved from ship to ship. Although we were far from crack shots, for those hours we became petty specialists in violence. (In fact, an unpleasant interchange with a naval base sentry during which I displayed my gun too prominently almost got me court-martialed. Even cowards like me become dangerous when supplied with heavy weapons.) Most governmental specialists in violence command greater coercive means and more extensive skills in using them than did my little band. They range from sharpshooters to bombardiers to executioners.

Plenty of specialists in violence, however, work outside of government. Some athletes — boxers, gladiators, bullfighters, and rugby players are obvious examples — specialize in doing damage. Armed guards, private police, paramilitary forces, guerrilla warriors, terrorists, thugs, bandits, kidnappers, enforcers, members of fighting gangs, and automobile wreckers sometimes enjoy governmental protection, but usually operate outside of government, even in defiance of

government. Before the rise of centralized states on the European model during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, indeed, innumerable specialists in violence exercised their trades in at least partial independence of governmental control through most of the world. Even powerful Chinese dynasties lived with warlords and bandits in their midst as well as with armed and predatory nomadic peoples along their edges. In Europe itself, private armies, mercenaries, local militias, bandits, and pirates all competed at some times and collaborated at other times with nominally national armies (Thomson 1994).

Lest we slip into thinking of violent specialists as driven by bloodlust, we should recognize that for most of them most of the time the ideal outcome of a political interaction is to manipulate others without damaging anything. The genuinely effective specialist deploys *threats* of violence so persuasively that others comply before the damage begins (Blok 2001; Cohn 1993). To be sure, an occasional demonstration of ruthlessness solidifies a specialist's reputation, and backing away from visible challenges damages a specialist's credibility. Real-life mafiosi (as distinguished from their cinematic simulacra) know this well; by threatening violence for noncompliance, they provide guarantees for contracts where courts and kin fail to guarantee them, but now and then mafiosi also display the requisite readiness to kill, maim, and steal (Blok 1974, 2001; Gambetta 1993; Varese 2001; Volkov 2002). For government-backed armies, precision parades and displays of weapons produce some of the same effects. Visible ability to inflict damage promotes power over and above anything that damage itself might accomplish.

The category of political entrepreneurs therefore overlaps with the category of violent specialists. At the intersection of the two we find leaders of mercenaries, international weapons merchants, regional warlords, military rulers, and many a political figure who disposes of his or her own armed force. Over the long run of human history, indeed, most important political figures have combined entrepreneurship with control of coercive means. Only during the last few centuries has the unarmed power holder become a common political actor.

Contemporary India provides striking examples of specialists in violence, some of whom are also political entrepreneurs. Psychiatric ethnographer Sudhir Kakar describes a *pehwan* (wrestler-enforcer) he met through a Muslim political boss in Hyderabad. Akbar, the *pehwan*, has a long police record, beginning with petty crimes when he was 20. He also joined the police for a while, only to end in prison for assaulting a police inspector. He now owns a hotel and three wrestling gymnasiums, but he makes most of his money from the "land business".

Baldly stated, "land business" is one of the outcomes of India's crumbling legal system. Since landlord and tenant disputes as well as other disputes about land and property can take well over a decade to be sorted out if a redress of grievances is sought through the courts, the *pehwan* is approached by one of the parties to the dispute to evict or otherwise intimidate the opposing party. The dispute being thus "settled," the *pehwan* receives a large fee for his services. In the case of well-known *pehwan*s with [gymnasiums] and thus a large supply of young toughs as students and all-purpose assistants, land business can be very profitable. (Kakar 1996: 60)

When both sides in a dispute hire their own *pehwan*s, the two enforcers usually get together and reach a settlement without open fighting; their joint forces then make it difficult for the aggrieved parties to resist the settlement. But when Hindus and Muslims take to the streets in Hyderabad, Akbar's athletes join the front lines on behalf of Muslim power. As Akbar boasts:

The impression is false that in every riot more Muslims than Hindus are killed. I can say with complete confidence that at least in Hyderabad this is not true. Here the Muslims are very strong and completely united. More Hindus than Muslims are killed in every riot. (Kakar 1996: 64)

Akbar is, of course, a certain sort of political entrepreneur who specializes in activation, connection, coordination, and representation. But Akbar and his young men are also specialists in violence. Studying India in the 1980s and 1990s, Paul Brass speaks of an "institutionalized riot system" including a wide array of violent specialists who operate under loose control of party leaders (Brass 1997: 13–20). Outside of riots, they act as guards and enforcers of various kinds. Within riots, they serve as coordinators and shock troops.

Vadim Volkov describes a Russian variant of specialists in violence who eerily echo their Indian counterparts. As markets opened up in Ekaterinburg during the late 1980s, members of sports clubs took to offering protection to merchants for regular fees. They specialized in exploitation with a vengeance; their control over violent means allowed them to draw tribute from shopkeepers' efforts. The founders of the Uralmashvskaya gang were "brothers Grigorii and Konstantin Tsyganov, the wrestler Sergei Vorobiev, the skier Alexander Khabarov, and boxers Sergei Terentiev and Sergei Kurdiunov" (Volkov 2000: 734; see also Volkov 2002, chap. 4).

Fending off other gangs, Uralmashvskaya fought its way to a position of economic and political power in the Ekaterinburg region. Its leaders became active political entrepreneurs. In 1996, for example, Khabarov organized the regional Workers' Movement in Support of Boris Yeltsin; for his services, he received a personal letter of thanks from reelected president Yeltsin and an engraved watch from the regional governor.

Local citizens, Volkov reports, still regard the association as a criminal gang. Yet he summarizes its career:

Uralmashvskaya racketeer gang has thus undergone the following evolution: Specialists in violence – former sportsmen – create an organization, a violence-managing agency that allows them to extract tribute from the local business by offering protection. Having established a kind of territorial control, the agency wages a war with competing violence-managing agencies. It survives and wins the elimination contest, expanding both in terms of territory and commercial opportunities. Having attained the monopoly position among informal enforcers, *uralmashvskaya* makes a conscious choice of economic policy of reasonable taxation and reliable protection of property, thus creating a relatively secure environment and competitive advantages for its business partners. (Volkov 2000: 741)

We see a criminal gang forming strong ties to the regional government; indeed, we see it becoming something like a government agency. Although organizations like *Uralmashvskaya* continue to carry on technically illegal activities, they engage increasingly in the provision of services that businesses themselves demand – protective services, contract enforcement, debt collection, and the like. Although they continue to recruit lower-level operatives from the worlds of thugs and thieves that formed in the prisons of the defunct Soviet regime and sometimes supply services to organizations mainly involved in theft or extortion, they differentiate increasingly from those worlds. Like governments engaged in nuclear deterrence, they specialize in the strategic *monopole* of their control over violent means (Volkov 2002, chap. 3).

The Ekaterinburg adventure may seem an odd case, a peculiar product of Russia's troubles during the 1990s. But, as Volkov says, it recapitulates a common historical process. Over and over again, effective nongovernmental specialists in violence have made alliances with governments, become parts of governments, taken over existing governments, or become governments on their own. Where (unlike Akbar's troops) Indian enforcers align themselves with regional ruling parties, they occupy positions broadly similar to that of *Uralmashvskaya*. The story of Robin Hood's bandits joining the English king's forces offers a parable of the same kind. In fact, the historical exceptions are the cases where the line between government and nongovernment specialists in violence has become well defined and impermeable.

Close observer Bill Berkeley views African collective violence as an extreme instance of the same phenomenon.

Ethnic conflict in Africa is a form of organized crime. The "culture" driving Africa's conflicts is akin to that of the Sicilian Mafia, or of the Crips and Bloods in Los Angeles, with the same imperatives of blood and family that bind such gangs together. Africa's warring

factions are best understood not as "tribes" but as racketeering enterprises, their leaders calculating strategy after the time-honored logic of Don Vito Corleone.

It is the stakes in Africa that are different – multiplied exponentially in circumstances where the state itself is a gang and the law doesn't exist. It is as if men like Vito Corleone seized control of not just "turf" on the margins of society, but of the state itself and all of its organs: police and army, secret police, the courts, the central bank, the civil service, the press, TV, and radio. (Berkeley 2001: 15)

Berkeley overstates the uniformity of ethnic conflict in Africa. As the case of Rwanda has already shown us, militias, guerrillas, and self-armed citizens sometimes play critical parts in Africa's collective violence in defiance of those who nominally run the state. Mercenaries such as the ruthlessly efficient South Africa-based Executive Outcomes have intervened with lethal effect in Sierra Leone and elsewhere (Shannon 2002). Yet, as Berkeley says, plenty of predatory violence occurs across Africa. Violent specialists – many of them noncitizens of the countries in which they operate, and some of them European mercenaries or adventurers – join Africa's organized crime syndicates without becoming their obedient servants.

In Latin America as well, specialists in violence have repeatedly seized or tipped the balance of power in whole countries. Central America has suffered especially from the frequent availability of external allies – including drug dealers, arms runners, and the U.S. government – for newly forming armed units, however unsavory. William Stanley describes the terrible year of 1980 in El Salvador, when assassins struck Attorney General Mario Zamora Rivas, Archbishop Oscar Romero, and many other opponents of paramilitary violence. Those killings were only the most visible:

These deaths were accompanied by almost twelve thousand others. Most were either captured and executed by the death squads or killed in wholesale massacres carried out by government forces in rural areas. With each major demonstration or labor strike, the popular movement lost dozens of supporters and key leaders. In a sense, the repression worked. Demonstrations grew smaller, and fewer people would outwardly identify themselves as being affiliated with leftist organizations. Yet the repressive state paid a high price: though the demonstrations and strikes gradually became smaller, there was a concomitant shift within the leftist opposition toward a military strategy. In May, the left began to move its militants into rural areas to develop a military structure; by September, this process was well advanced, though the groups still lacked arms; and by November, the left, now united as the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) had begun obtaining sufficient weapons to form an army. (Stanley 1996: 178)

The chilling experience of El Salvador makes several important new points about specialists in violence: they vary systematically in their proximity to (and sponsorship by) governments; they sometimes organize in opposition to existing

organizations of violent specialists; and no sharp line separates their politics from those of armed forces belonging to established governments. These points apply in South Asia, Russia, and Africa as well.

All over the world – for example, in Colombia, the Caucasus, Palestine, Liberia, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia – specialists in violence figure importantly in the larger-scale versions of collective violence. To be sure, violent specialists sometimes include or become fanatics, even suicide bombers. They also include many obedient servants of lawful states. But in any of their many guises, they often initiate violent political interaction, sometimes cause nonviolent political interaction to turn violent, and frequently determine the outcome of political interaction, violent or otherwise.

The complex but central position of violent specialists has three major implications for the study of collective violence. First, although it will help to start with distinctions among agents of government, polity members, challengers, and outside political actors, in closer looks at actual regimes and episodes we will have to recognize mobile and intermediate actors – political entrepreneurs and violent specialists prominent among them. No simple distinction between “insurgents” and “forces of order” can possibly capture the complex social interactions that generate collective violence.

Second, specialists in violence do not simply serve the interests of the larger entities (governments, parties, communities, ethnic groups, or others) with which they are currently aligned. They follow dynamics of their own. They regularly engage in exploitation and opportunity hoarding; sometimes at the expense of their own nominal employers or constituencies. At a minimum, any explanation of variations in collective violence will have to account for the acquisition and control of coercive means and skills by those specialists. Regimes differ significantly, furthermore, in the opportunities they offer and the places they assign to specialists in violence. We have no choice but to consider the care and feeding of violent means: recruitment and organization of military forces, supplies of weapons, ties between illicit trades and arms flows, taxation for war, hostage taking as a source of revenue, and employment of violent specialists by established political actors.

Third, the character of relations between governments and specialists in violence strongly affects the extent and locus of collective violence within a regime. Overall, collective violence rises with the extent that organizations specializing in deployment of coercive means – armies, police forces, coordinated banditry, pirate confederations, mercenary enterprises, protection rackets, and the like – increase in size, geographic scope, resources, and coherence. But democratic civilian control over violent specialists mutes those effects. Conversely,

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collective violence rises to the extent that the specialists escape democratic civilian control. (A valuable rule of thumb follows: if a regime's police force reports directly to the military rather than to civilian authorities, that regime is almost certainly undemocratic.)

When it comes to government-led deployment of coercion against challengers, collective violence increases further to the extent that violent specialists' organization offers opportunities for private vengeance and incentives to pre-emption. Where participation in organized violence opens paths to political and economic power, collective violence multiplies. Most notably, power seeking by violent specialists promotes the types of violent interaction I have called coordinated destruction and opportunism. Specialists in violence do not simply deploy damage for the pleasure of it or for the profit it brings them; they use violence and threats of violence to pursue projects of their own.

Over a wide range of collective violence, the interaction of violent specialists and political entrepreneurs with other political actors and with each other therefore deeply affects the extent, character, and objects of damage done. But the places of violent specialists and political entrepreneurs in public politics vary systematically by type of regime.

Variation in Regimes

Regimes vary in two ways that significantly affect the character and intensity of collective violence within them: in terms of governmental capacity and democracy. *Governmental capacity* means the extent to which governmental agents control resources, activities, and populations within the government's territory. It varies in principle from almost no such control (low) to nearly absolute control (high). As a practical matter, however, governments that do not exercise significant control over resources do not survive long. Instead, they collapse from internal pressures or adjacent governments overrun them. At the other extreme, no regime has ever come close to absolute control; even Hitler and Stalin at their heights fell far short of commanding all the resources, activities, and populations that existed somewhere within their regimes.

Democracy means the extent to which members of the population under a government's jurisdiction maintain broad and equal relations with governmental agents, exercise collective control over governmental personnel and resources, and enjoy protection from arbitrary action by governmental agents. Like their nondemocratic counterparts, the governments of democratic regimes engage in opportunity hoarding and exploitation; for example, every real democratic regime expends a significant part of its effort on keeping noncitizens away from

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The Politics of Collective Violence

its citizens' benefits. But the proportion of a democratic regime's population that actually shares the benefits of opportunity hoarding and exploitation is much larger than in nondemocratic regimes.

Over the five thousand years that governments at a larger scale than villages have run major parts of the world, in any case, the vast majority of regimes have operated with little or no democracy. Only over the last two centuries have any significant number of democratic regimes appeared. Even today, only a minority of the world's regimes combine relatively broad and equal relations of citizens with governmental agents, collective popular control over governmental personnel and resources, and substantial protection of citizens from arbitrary action by governmental agents.

Like governmental capacity, then, democracy is a matter of degree. Figure 2.1 sketches variation of regimes with regard to capacity and democracy. It shows both capacity and democracy as varying from 0 to 1; in each dimension, 0 represents the lowest level ever observed in history, 1 the highest. The diagram's lower left-hand corner combines low governmental capacity with little democracy. We can call that zone Fragmented Tyranny because in such a regime warlords, bandits, and other political predators typically work their ways in collusion with or in defiance of nominal rulers.

The diagram's upper left includes a zone of Authoritarianism: very high governmental capacity combined with little or no democracy. The upper right-hand corner contains Citizenship, in which governmental agents bind to whole categories of the population through relatively broad and equal rights and obligations. Citizenship overlaps with Authoritarianism, however, because in some regimes broad and equal citizenship rights and obligations couple with little or no effective popular control over the government as well as minimal protection against arbitrary governmental action. Those regimes establish not democracy but authoritarian citizenship.

On the whole, the proportion of all collective violence in which governmental agents are directly involved rises with governmental capacity; it is higher near the top than the bottom of Figure 2.1. (I am not speaking of the sheer quantity of collective violence – for example, the death rate from violent encounters – but rather of the share of all violent encounters directly engaging troops, police, officials, and other governmental agents. More on overall levels of violence later.) The proportion rises for several reasons:

- because higher-capacity governments monitor larger proportions of all claim-making interactions and then intervene (with sometimes violent consequences) in those interactions of which their agents disapprove;

Violence as Politics

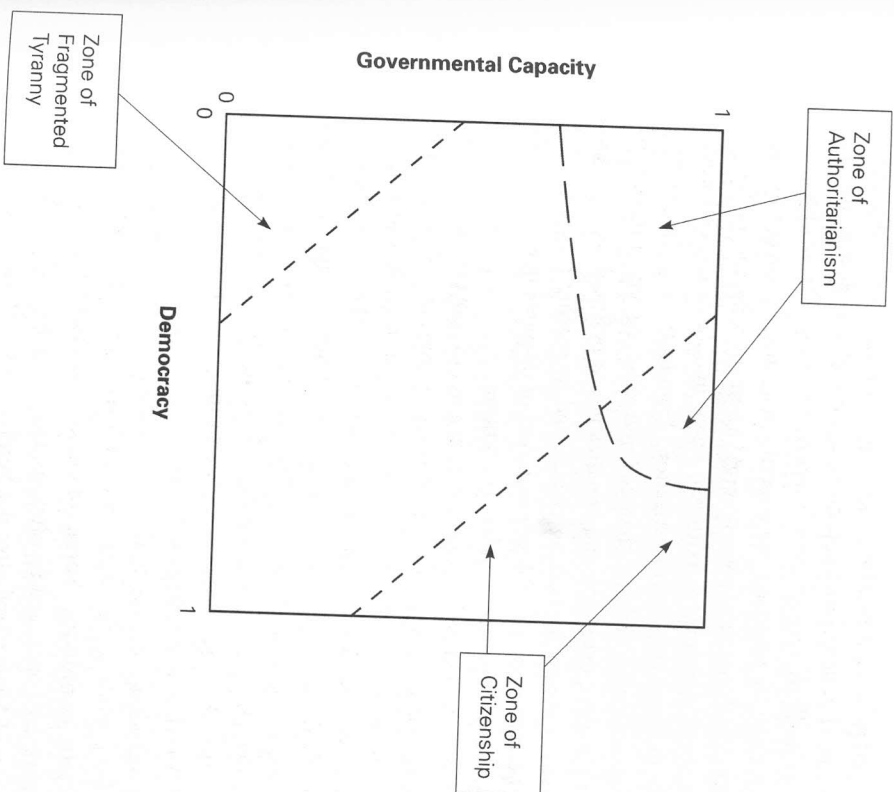


Figure 2.1 Types of Regime.

- because higher-capacity regimes monitor with particular closeness those political interactions in which nongovernmental specialists in violence engage;
- because higher-capacity regimes increase the likely costs to nongovernmental actors of using violent means to make their claims;
- because higher-capacity governments expand their shares of all existing violent means and attack independent concentrations of such means; and
- because higher-capacity regimes make extensive demands on others and back those demands with threats of damage.

A small current flows in the opposite direction: the forms of violence authorities call terrorism also concentrate in high-capacity regimes. When organized

but excluded political actors face high-capacity regimes, they often choose some combination of underground communication with clandestine physical attacks on persons and property of their rulers or enemies. This countercurrent does not come close to reversing the overall correlation of governmental capacity with direct involvement of governmental agents in collective violence.

What about democracy? With two major qualifications, collective violence generally declines with democratization. Democratic regimes, on the average, harbor less collective violence than undemocratic regimes. Broadening of political participation, extension and equalization of political rights, regularization of nonviolent means for making claims, and increasing readiness of third parties to intervene against violent resolution of disputes over claims all dampen the processes that generate violent contention.

Here come the qualifications. First, democratic governments themselves often employ violence against their external enemies as well as against excluded political actors and population categories within their jurisdictions. Although interstate war, punitive detention, and selective police brutality might wither away in ideally complete democracy, none of them disappears with really existing democratization (Chevigny 1999; Davenport 2000; Geller & Singer 1998; Gowa 1999; Huggins 1998; della Porta & Reiter 1998). The democratic United States, after all, herded Japanese-Americans into concentration camps during World War II (Korek & Rigoutot 2000).

Second, along the way to democratization, struggles often become *more* violent for a while as the stakes rise with regard to who will win or lose from democratic institutions. Surges of democratization often follow violent interstate wars, civil wars, and revolutions; cases in point include the partial democratization of Switzerland after the Sonderbund civil war of 1847, of the United States after the Civil War, of France after the Commune of 1871, and of Japan and Germany after World War II. Struggle both precedes and accompanies democratization.

Political Interaction under Different Types of Regimes

Regime control over claim making affects collective violence strongly, even indirectly. Governmental agents, polity members, challengers, and subjects interact in many different ways, most of which do not involve making of claims. People pay taxes, buy services, perform military duties, reply to censuses, draw pensions, and otherwise interact with governments most of the time without engaging in contention – without making discontinuous, public, collective claims. But sometimes political actors do make contentious claims on each other. Sometimes

those claims include inflicting damage on persons or property. At that point, the interactions become part of what we are trying to explain.

We might think of collective claim making as an interactive performance; like veteran members of a theatrical troupe, political actors follow rough scripts to uncertain outcomes as they negotiate demonstrations, humble petitions, electoral campaigns, expulsions of enemies, hostage taking, urban uprisings, and other forms of contention. Such performances link pairs or larger sets of actors, the simplest pair being one claimant and one object of claims. The actors in question often include governmental agents, polity members, and challengers as well, with challengers sometimes newly mobilizing from the regime's previously unmobilized subject population. In any particular regime, pairs of actors have only a limited number of performances at their disposal. We can conveniently call that set of performances their *repertoire of contention*.

In Great Britain of the 1750s, for example, the contentious repertoire widely available to ordinary people included

Attacks on coercive authorities: liberation of prisoners; resistance to police intervention in gatherings and entertainments; resistance to press gangs; fights between hunters and gamekeepers; battles between smugglers and royal officers; forcible opposition to evictions; military mutinies.

Attacks on popularly designated offenses and offenders: Rough Music; ridicule and/or destruction of symbols, effigies, and/or property of public figures and moral offenders; verbal and physical attacks on malefactors seen in public places; pulling down and/or sacking of dangerous or offensive houses, including workhouses and brothels; smashing of shops and bars whose proprietors are accused of unfair dealing or of violating public morality; collective seizures of food, often coupled with sacking the merchant's premises and/or public sale of the food below current market price; blockade or diversion of food shipments; destruction of tollgates; collective invasions of enclosed land, often including destruction of fences or hedges.

Celebrations and other popularly initiated gatherings: collective cheering, jeering, or stoning of public figures or their conveyances; popularly initiated public celebrations of major events (e.g., John Wilkes's elections of the 1760s) with cheering, drinking, display of partisan symbols, fireworks, and sometimes with forced participation of reluctant persons; forced illuminations, including attacks on windows of householders who fail to illuminate; faction fights (e.g., Irish vs. English, rival groups of military).

Workers' sanctions over members of their traders: turnouts by workers in multiple shops of a local trade; workers' marches to public authorities in trade

disputes; donkeying, or otherwise humiliating, workers who violated collective agreements; destroying goods (e.g., silk in looms and/or the looms themselves) of workers or masters who violate collective agreements.

Claim making within authorized public assemblies (e.g., Lord Mayor's Day): taking of positions by means of cheers, jeers, attacks, and displays of symbols; attacks on supporters of electoral candidates; parading and chairing of candidates; taking sides at public executions; attacks or professions of support for pilloried prisoners; salutation or deprecation of public figures (e.g., royalty) at theater; collective response to lines and characters in plays or other entertainments; breaking up of theaters at unsatisfactory performances (Tilly 1995).

Not all British claim makers, to be sure, had access to all these performances; some of the performances linked workers to masters, others linked market regulars to local merchants, and so on. In any case, the repertoire available to ordinary Britons during the 1750s did not include electoral campaigns, formal public meetings, street marches, demonstrations, petition drives, or the formation of special-interest associations, all of which became quite common ways of pressing claims during the nineteenth century. As these newer performances became common, the older ones disappeared.

How do repertoires shape contentious politics? Most obviously, they provide approximate scenarios – and choices among scenarios – for political interactions. With scenarios available, participants on all sides can generally coordinate their actions more effectively, anticipate likely consequences of various responses, and construct agreed-upon meanings for contentious episodes. They can construct those meanings both as episodes unfold and after the fact: although this episode began as an attack on a moral offender (the employer), it ended up as a turnout; this other episode began as a public celebration and ended as a faction fight, and so on.

The possibility of switching alerts us to the fact that performances vary in adjacency to each other – adjacency in terms of locales, participants, and types of action. During the eighteenth century, British collective seizures of food could mutate into turnouts only with great difficulty, but they easily turned into popular attacks on moral offenders such as price-gouging bakers and hoarding merchants. (Women frequently played leading parts in such episodes; they specialized in activating morally charged boundaries, stories, and relations.) Repertoires therefore provide templates for interaction, bases for collective memory, and switchpoints for collective struggle.

Interactions among claimants, including governmental agents, produce major alterations in contentious repertoires. At any given time, however, governments themselves react differently to the various claim-making performances currently available to claimants. We can make a rough distinction among performances that governments prescribe, those they tolerate, and those they forbid. *Prescribed* performances typically include ceremonies of allegiance (e.g., singing of national anthems) and transfers of resources (e.g., tax money and conscripts) to governmental control. *Tolerated* performances vary enormously from regime to regime, but they typically include filing of legal claims and organized responses to moral offenders. *Forbidden* performances likewise vary significantly among regimes, but always include violent attacks on rulers and governmental resources. The map of prescription, toleration, and interdiction differs among political actors as well; powerful actors can usually get away with performances that would land lesser actors in serious trouble.

Using these rough distinctions, Figure 2.2 lays out an argument concerning the relation between regime reactions and contentious politics as a function of variation in governmental capacity and degree of democracy. Remember that capacity and democracy refer to the regime defined by a country's national government rather than other subgovernments within it. Examples of each type in the figure might then include:

high-capacity undemocratic – China, Iran;
low-capacity undemocratic – Somalia, Congo (Kinshasa, formerly Zaïre);
high-capacity democratic – Germany, Japan;
low-capacity democratic – Belgium, Jamaica.

In each case, the large oval in Figure 2.2 represents all the interactions – claim-making or otherwise, violent or nonviolent – in which any pair of political actors within a government's jurisdiction ever engages. It then guesses at the range of interactions prescribed by governments, representing the likelihood that authoritarian (high-capacity undemocratic) regimes compel a wider array of performances than other regimes. It argues that the range of tolerated performances rises with democracy but declines with governmental capacity.

Democracy enlarges the range of acceptable interactions among political actors. It does so mainly because each newly established political actor brings into the political arena its own particular set of social connections and maintains at least some of them. High-capacity regimes, however, channel interactions into a narrower range than low-capacity regimes – both because government agents have more control of all interactions and because dominant constituencies

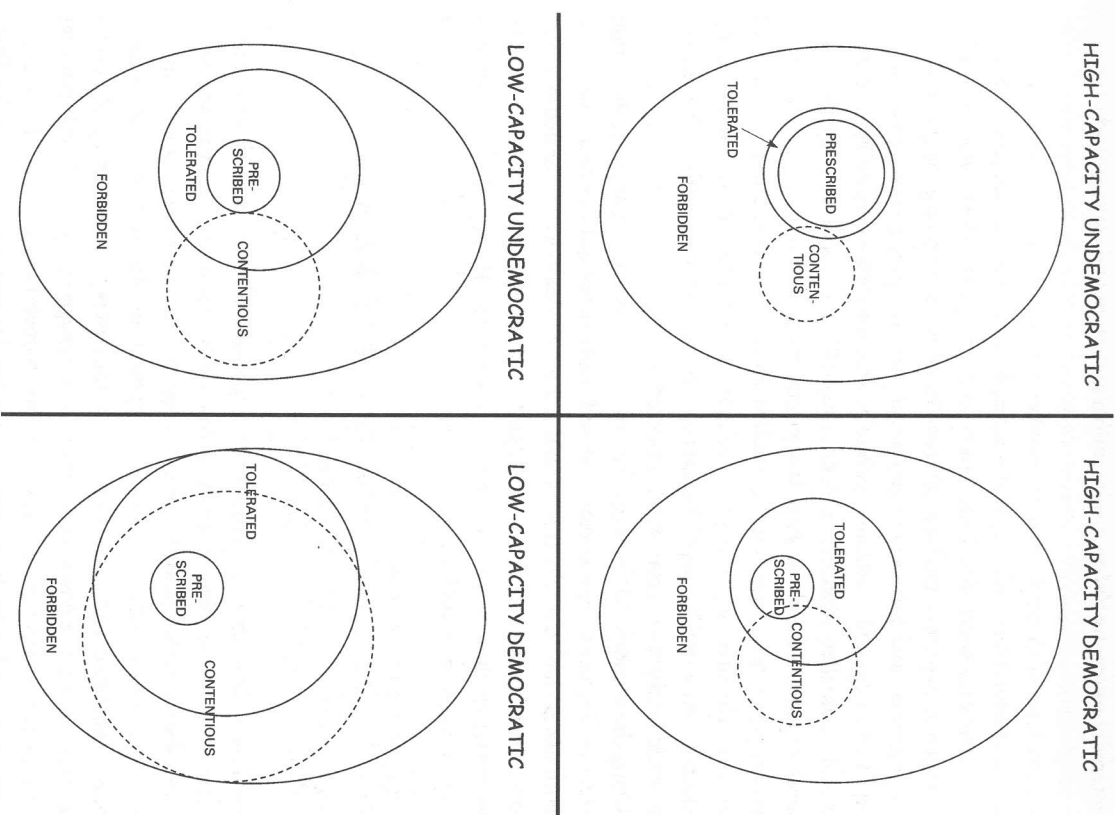


Figure 2.2 Configurations of Political Interaction under Different Types of Regime.

collaborate with governments in putting their stamp on acceptable and unacceptable ways of interacting in public. In Great Britain, we can date incorporation of the industrial bourgeoisie into the public politics of that increasingly high-capacity regime roughly at the Reform Act of 1832. Empowerment of the

bourgeoisie increased the importance of their favored means of collective action – through special-purpose associations and campaigns based on them – in British public politics, while rendering the older forms of direct action riskier and less effective. A wide variety of political performances moved from tolerated to forbidden.

Figure 2.2 continues by relating *contentious* interaction to other forms. It incorporates the idea that, in any actual regime, the repertoire of contentious performances is significantly narrower than the full range of interactions among political actors and usually smaller than the range of tolerated interactions; a number of interactions acceptable to the government occur without discontinuous, public, collective making of claims. But this varies by type of regime. Low-capacity regimes experience wider arrays of contentious interactions because their governmental agents lack means to control claim-making performances and also because their public politics includes more variable and particular relations among actors.

Undemocratic regimes make it difficult for anyone to make contentious claims in the course of prescribed performances, where people act directly under the eyes of authorities; the occasional royal assassination or seditious shout that happens during a solemn royal ceremony provides an exception proving the rule. (The exception proves the rule because in undemocratic regimes the rare claim-making violators of prescribed performances hardly ever escape unscathed.) Under democratic regimes, contentious claims sometimes appear in the course of prescribed performances, take shape in a wide range of tolerated performances, and spill over into forbidden performances, including major forms of collective violence.

What does this mean for individual types of regime? *Low-capacity undemocratic regimes*, Figure 2.2 declares, tolerate a relatively wide range of performances for lack of ability to police them; they concentrate control on prescribed performances and on showy public punishment of forbidden performances – when they can catch the performers. As a consequence, runs the argument, contentious politics in such regimes takes place mainly outside of prescribed performances but extends through a limited range of tolerated and forbidden performances, many of them oriented to partly autonomous centers of power within the regime's nominal jurisdiction. These generalizations are supposed to fit Congo-Kinshasa, Somalia, and regimes like them.

Low-capacity democratic regimes, in contrast, tolerate an even wider range of performances and forbid relatively few. In such regimes, according to Figure 2.2, contention occurs in the course of prescribed performances (e.g., in resistance to taxes and conscription), over most of the tolerated range, and well into the

zone of forbidden forms of claim making. Without government means to defend rights, enforce obligations, and contain conflicts, runs the argument, a wide variety of actors involve themselves in collective efforts to pursue interests by their own means. These generalizations are supposed to fit Belgium, Jamaica, and regimes like them.

High-capacity democratic regimes operate quite differently. They impose a relatively small number of prescribed performances but enforce them rigorously. They channel claim making energetically into a modest array of tolerated performances and forbid a wide range of technically possible forms of claim making. As a consequence, I suggest, contentious politics occasionally enters prescribed performances (e.g. via draft resistance), commonly occurs by means of tolerated performances (e.g. in public demonstrations), but sometimes borrows forbidden forms (e.g. clandestine attacks on government property). These generalizations are supposed to fit Germany, Japan, and regimes like them.

Finally, *high-capacity undemocratic regimes* prescribe an exceptionally wide range of claim-making performances, leave only a narrow range of tolerated performances, and forbid many (if not most) technically possible performances. The result of extensive monitoring and repression is to minimize the scope of contentious politics but also to push most of it into the forbidden range. The few tolerated performances receive extensive use, but collective claimants constantly run the risk of interdiction and/or retaliation. These generalizations are supposed to fit China, Iran, and regimes like them.

Regimes and Violence

Let us take a large leap: Assume that these arguments about contentious politics in general are correct. How can we stretch from them to explanations of variations in collective violence? From four strands we can fashion a makeshift bridge. First, the pattern of prescribed and tolerated performances within a regime significantly affects loci of violent claim making. In all sorts of regimes, a significant share of all collective violence occurs as an outcome of claim making that does not begin with violence; soldiers shoot down peaceful petitioners, nonviolent demonstrators start to break windows, participants in rival religious processions begin to rough each other up, and so on. Hence there is a rough correspondence between the occasions of nonviolent and violent claim making. In high-capacity *undemocratic* regimes, for example, we should expect to find a high proportion of collective violence beginning with forbidden performances. In high-capacity *democratic* regimes, in contrast, we should expect to find most violence originating in tolerated performances.

Second, in many regimes certain performances in the tolerated repertoire – most obviously violent rituals and some forms of coordinated destruction – directly entail inflicting damage on persons or objects. A significant share of the 1750-era British performances reviewed earlier had small-scale violence built into them.

Third, regimes that radically narrow the range of tolerated performances – which means especially high-capacity undemocratic regimes – drive claimants that have retained their own capacity to act collectively toward forbidden performances and thus toward encounters likely to have violent outcomes.

Fourth, differing configurations of prescribed, tolerated, and forbidden performances affect the likely prevalence of conditions promoting forms of violence in which damaging acts are salient rather than peripheral, high levels of coordination exist among violent actors, or both. As later chapters will show in detail, *salience* generally increases when (a) participants in political interaction are themselves specialists in violence, (b) uncertainty about an interaction's outcome increases, (c) stakes of the outcome for the parties increase, and (d) third parties to which the participants have stable relations are absent. Activation and suppression of different political identities (i.e., of bundled boundaries, stories, and social relations) directly affect conditions (a) to (d). But the ease of activation and suppression of various political identities depends in turn on the regime's array of prescribed, tolerated, and forbidden performances. Some regimes, for example, make it easy for representatives of lineages (including female representatives of lineages) to act publicly as such but almost impossible for women to act publicly as representatives of women.

The *extent of coordination* among violent actors increases as (e) political entrepreneurs create connections among previously independent individuals and groups, (f) authorities control the stakes – both rewards and punishments – of outcomes for participants, (g) categories dividing major blocs of participants (e.g., gender, race, or nationality) figure widely in routine social life, and (h) major participants organize and drill outside of violent encounters. Incorporation and separation strongly affect conditions (e) through (h).

Processes (a) to (h) do not map neatly into regimes; for example, though on average uncertainty runs higher in low-capacity regimes, even that generalization ignores the way that disasters and military losses make high-capacity regimes vulnerable to attack. But the configuration of prescribed, tolerated, and forbidden performances does affect processes (a) to (h); the tendency of low-capacity undemocratic regimes to repress forbidden performances incompletely and unpredictably, for instance, increases the salience of violence in

their contentious interactions. Both forbidden performers and violent specialists reach out to damage each other more immediately than under other regimes.

The argument of Figure 2.2 therefore has significant implications for a regime's extent of collective violence, and for who gets involved in it. Leaving aside government-initiated warfare, we should expect overall levels of violence to be higher in low-capacity regimes, whether undemocratic or democratic. We should also expect democracy to depress violence within domestic politics, if not necessarily in relations among governments. Thus the overall implications for levels of collective violence within politics look like this:

high violence – low-capacity undemocratic regimes;

medium violence – high-capacity undemocratic and low-capacity democratic regimes;

low violence – high-capacity democratic regimes.

If substantial shifts from type to type occur in the world, we should expect them to affect overall levels of collective violence. If high-capacity undemocratic regimes lose capacity – as happened widely in the disintegrating Soviet Union after 1985 – we should expect levels of violence to increase. If many regimes democratize without losing capacity, we might expect short-run increases in collective violence as struggles for control intensify, followed by long-term declines in violent encounters.

Type by type, we have some further expectations. In *low-capacity undemocratic* regimes such as Congo-Kinshasa and Somalia, we expect petty tyrants to use coercion freely, governmental officials to deploy violent punishments when they can catch their enemies, and means of violence to be widely distributed across other political actors. In *low-capacity democratic* regimes such as Belgium and Jamaica, we expect less involvement of governmental officials in violent repression but widespread spiraling of initially nonviolent conflicts into violence – because government agents do not serve as effective third-party enforcers of agreements, much less as inhibitors of escalation.

When it comes to *high-capacity democratic* regimes such as Germany and Japan, we expect low levels of violence in routine claim making as well as highly selective – and hence relatively rare – deployment of violent means by governmental agents. But in such regimes we also expect extensive involvement of government agents (as initiators, objects, or peacemakers) in the collective violence that does occur. Ironically, the net effect is to magnify the political impact of violence when it happens; each bit of damage dramatizes the significant political stakes over which participants are contending; and more so than in regimes where collective violence occurs every day.

Finally, *high-capacity undemocratic* regimes such as China and Iran should have widespread threats of violence by governmental agents, frequent involvement of governmental agents in collective violence when it occurs, but great variability in the actual frequency of collective violence, depending on the opening and closing of opportunities for dissent. In such regimes, as in the case of high-capacity democratic regimes, visible violence tends to broadcast the high political stakes of contention. Chapter 3 will by no means prove all these points, but at least it will show that collective violence does vary among regimes in ways that these arguments help explain.

Questions Recast

Our expedition into contentious politics leaves us with valuable results. We can now refine the questions about collective violence posed in the previous chapter. In principle, we are seeking answers to these large questions.

1. *Under what conditions, how, and why do people make collective claims on each other?* The remainder of the book draws on available answers to this big question, but it does not propose new answers except with regard to violent claim making. This chapter has offered a first look at how variations in political regimes and actors affect the character of collective claim making. It has also identified the construction and activation of different sorts of political identities as a crucial element in the forms taken by contentious politics.

2. *What causes different forms of political claim making to include or exclude violence?* Later chapters uncover no crisp general laws in this regard. In fact, they identify a middle ground where the difference between violence and nonviolence depends on unpredictable combinations of small causes. But the analysis does provide guidance for distinguishing between high-violence and low-violence social processes. This chapter has drawn special attention to the importance of political entrepreneurs, violent specialists, and regime controls over different forms of claim making. It has thereby raised further questions about how political actors acquire (or fail to acquire) coercive means and the skill to use them.

3. *When violent claim making does occur, what explains variation in the form, salience, and coordination of outright damage to persons and objects?* Here we arrive at the book's central problem. Building on the general ideas about claim making, regimes, and political actors laid out in this chapter, later sections look hard at change and variation in violent episodes in order to identify recurrent mechanisms and processes that in various combinations, sequences, and settings promote particular forms of violent claim making and inhibit others.

These three pressing questions will guide the next chapter's inquiry into trends and variations in collective violence. After that, they will help us round the spiral of violent rituals, coordinated destruction, opportunism, brawls, scattered attack, and broken negotiations. Eventually they will clarify how activation, suppression, incorporation, and separation interact to generate or inhibit violent contention.

3

Trends, Variations, and Explanations

A Violent Century

In absolute terms – and probably per capita as well – the twentieth century visited more collective violence on the world than any century of the previous ten thousand years. Although historians rightly describe China's Warring States period, Sargon of Akkad's conquests, Mongol expansion, and Europe's Thirty Years War as times of terrible destruction, earlier wars deployed nothing like the death-dealing armaments, much less the state-backed extermination of civilians, that twentieth-century conflicts brought with them. Between 1900 and 1999, the world produced about 250 new wars, international or civil, in which battle deaths averaged at least a thousand per year. That means two or three big, new wars per year. Those wars caused about a million deaths per year.

Assuming midcentury world populations of 0.8 billion, 1.2 billion, and 2.5 billion, the world death rate for large-scale war ran around 90 per million population per year during the eighteenth century, 150 per million during the nineteenth century, and over 400 per million during the twentieth (Holsti 1996; Tilly et al. 1995). Altogether, about 100 million people died as a direct result of action by organized military units backed by one government or another over the course of the twentieth century. Most likely a comparable number of civilians died of war-induced disease and other indirect effects.

To be sure, two world wars contributed mightily to twentieth-century totals; battle deaths in World War I amounted to about 10 million across all theaters, and battle deaths in World War II ran close to 15 million. But the 1990s alone brought virulent violence to the Caucasus, former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Rwanda, Congo-Kinshasa, Haiti, Colombia, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, and Laos. As we have seen, by itself