Editorial

Benjamin Abrams and Giovanni A. Travaglino

Just as there are many repertoires of contention, there are also many repertoires of scholarship. Much of our writing on contentious politics utilizes one specific repertoire: the empirical research article. And yet, there is a plurality of forms through which we can advance scholarly knowledge on the subject of protest. This issue was devised, in a broad sense, as a celebration of that plurality. The articles in this issue offer a smorgasbord of scholarly work, highlighting the breadth of scholarly tactics that are available to academics and practitioners in the field of contentious politics.

The first article in this issue, “1968 – The Resonant Memory of a Rebellious Year,” by Donatella della Porta, offers a theoretical engagement with the role of memory in social movements, examined through the lens of the semicentennial of 1968. Della Porta draws together an extensive amount of European research by her collaborators and contemporaries on the subject in order to support its arguments—quoting (and translating) core elements of these contributions in order to highlight their relevance to contemporary debates.

The second article in this issue, Matthew Schoene’s “Protest Wave or Protest Spike? An Examination of European Protest Activity, 2008–2012,” deals with a more contemporary period of rebellion, the post-financial-crisis mobilization in Europe. Schoene argues that, while a period of unrest emerged in many European countries after the financial crisis, this unrest did not constitute a protest wave. Schoene’s contention is that protest waves should feature abnormally high levels of participation in contentious politics. Schoene tests this theory using multilevel mixed effects regression modeling across 22 European countries, and finds that protest in Europe resembled a set of discrete protest spikes rather than a broader wave.

The third article in this issue, “A State of Force: The Repressive Policing of Contention in Queensland under Frederick Urquhart,” by Paul Bleakley, shifts our focus from spikes of protest to spikes in repression, examining the rise of repressive policing in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Australia. Bleakley’s critical review article synthesizes a sporadic literature on the period to advance that this period—emblemized by the actions of one prominent officer: Frederick Urquhart—not only shaped the identity of policing in Queensland for the next century but also played a significant role in constructing a longer running aggressive and combative elite narrative about public protest in Australia.

As well as publishing academic articles, part of *Contention*’s core mission is to improve and extend dialogue between activists, organizers, and the academic community. Consequently, we publish work by activists, organizers, and practitioners of all forms of contentious politics alongside our regular academic articles. The fourth article in this issue—“How Can Social Movements Help Defend Democracy?”—is one such piece. This piece of “movement writing” is by Srdja Popović and Slobodan Djinovic—coheads of the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies, and cofounders of the “Otpor!” movement that ousted President Slobodan Milošević in 2000. The article discusses the most promising tactics in contemporary pro-democracy activism, drawing on the authors’ considerable experience working with activists across the globe. Popović and Djinovic argue that the efficacy of traditional nonviolent strategies has waned with respect to contemporary pro-democracy struggles—which often seek to defend institutions rather than to dismantle them—and advocates for a more creative, humorous approach to contention.

The fifth and sixth entries in this issue take the form of a scholarly debate. In *Contention* volume 5, issue 2, John Dunn provided an updated view of his theory of revolution. The piece attracted considerable attention from academics and practitioners, particularly from the humanitarian scholar Hugo Slim, who serves as head of policy for the International Committee of the Red Cross. Slim’s critique of Dunn’s view, “Regime Collapse and Revolution: A Response to John Dunn” contends that Dunn’s empirical observations on where and when revolutions occur is wrongly limited in time and space, drawing on the author’s weighty experience in the study of international armed conflict. Dunn, in his “Reply to Hugo Slim,” defends his idea of an “epoch of revolution” while engaging constructively with Slim’s critiques, furnishing his earlier arguments with additional detail and depth.

The final entry in this issue, by Benjamin Abrams, draws together Slim and Dunn's responses, considering the conceptual origins of their dispute and the implication of adopting each of their approaches to revolution. In "The End of Revolution, and Its Means," Abrams argues that Slim adopts the 'processual' approach to revolution which characterizes much work on the topic in the social sciences. In this vision of revolution, the term is understood to connote a particular means of regime overthrow. By contrast, Abrams notes that Dunn's vision of revolution is markedly 'programmatic': it refers not only to the means of regime overthrow, but also a distinct political end advanced by revolutionary protagonists. The article ends with a postscript, in which Abrams addresses the challenges and intricacies of the interview as a scholarly format.

This issue offers samples from the full spectrum of work *Contention* publishes, counting among its pages a theoretical piece, an empirical research article, a critical review article, a piece of movement writing by two highly engaged activists, and a scholarly debate between theorists and practitioners. While the overwhelming majority of work published in *Contention* takes the form of the empirical research piece, we believe that this issue showcases our commitment to also publishing high-quality academic and activist scholarship beyond the traditional comfort zone of the conventional research article.