

Editorial

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In this first issue of 2021, we find ourselves still in this strange space of a viral pandemic that first emerged in 2019. Yet contentious politics persists in public places, and the present issue reflects *Contention's* continued efforts to publish interdisciplinary research-based articles from around the world.

We begin this editorial by discussing an important contribution to the Letters section from Ithaca's AK Thompson. In a series of ten theses, first presented at the inaugural panel of the Society and Protest Workshop at the CUNY Graduate Center in late 2020, Thompson argues for a research agenda which centres around Black freedom struggles and reassess the role of violence in social movements. The topic is crucially important, especially in a historical period in which democratic norms are retreating worldwide. We hope that this letter is the beginning of an open, creative discussion spanning different disciplines. We have included invited responses in this issue, first from Andrew G. Livingstone of the University of Exeter and followed by the combined reflections of Colin Wayne Leach and Cátia P. Teixeira. The invited responses reflect on Thompson's theses from different social-psychological standpoints, bringing psychological theories and evidence to bear on the issues of violence, collective action, and the struggle for social change.

Regarding the articles in this issue, we begin with "Parties, Movements, Brokers: The Scottish Independence Movement," by David McKeever from the University of Glasgow. This article examines the concept of "brokerage," which creates opportunities for minor groups to play a crucial role in mobilization. Taking the case of the Scottish independence movement, McKeever shows how under-resourced, peripheral groups took the lead in brokering the Nationalist movement.

In the following piece, "The Relationship between Dimensions of Collective Action, Introversion/Extroversion, and Collective Action



Endorsement among Women,” Social psychologists Adrianna Tassone and Mindi Foster examine the psychosocial benefits of collective action for minority group members. This article explores how personality traits may contribute to current understandings of what motivates collective action among women. The implications of utilizing personality profiles to enhance our understanding of why individuals engage in various forms of collective actions, are discussed in relation to the empirical findings.

In the third article, “Why ‘Dissident’ Irish Republicans Haven’t Gone Away: A Visual Study of the Persistence of ‘Terrorism,’” sociologist Robert W. White examines images from “dissident” Irish Republican events and discusses photo-elicitation interviews with activists who participated in these events. White’s findings show that the repertoire of “violent” organizations includes nonviolent political activity, and that the structures sustaining nonviolent activism also sustain organizations that embrace “terrorism.” Dissident Irish Republicans, the author concludes, are likely to persist into the foreseeable future.

Moving to the dynamics of the East Asian Twittersphere, Dedman’s and Li’s (a pseudonym) article, “Digitally Dismantling Asian Authoritarianism: Activist Reflections from the #MilkTeaAlliance,” examines the contested efforts of Chinese “techno-nationalists” who have attempted to shame public figures into supporting the Chinese Communist Party. As activist-researchers embedded in the #MilkTeaAlliance—a pan-Asian movement uniting users from Thailand, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—the authors argue that the hashtag campaign generates valuable affective and physical forms of “intra-Asian solidarity against authoritarianism in the region.” That one of the two authors must write the article using a pseudonym reinforces the importance of conducting more research and engaged work in this context.

There is hope on the horizon and potential for change, but significant challenges persist. Substantial populations remain aligned to reactionary populist identities, while mainstream European politics continues to pander to punitive right-wing policies that are “tough on crime” and on minority and peripheral communities. There is outright authoritarianism in action elsewhere, and despite a change of administration in the United States, the centuries-long struggle for Black emancipation shall continue. At *Contention*, we reaffirm our editorial stance of publishing empirical and theoretical research from the entire disciplinary spectrum addressing such crucial questions. During this global pandemic more than ever, we must thank associate editor Adrian Paukstat, the anonymous reviewers, and Berghahn’s staff, who with their efforts, support, and time have enabled us to complete this issue.