

POLS 103 A

Comparative Politics

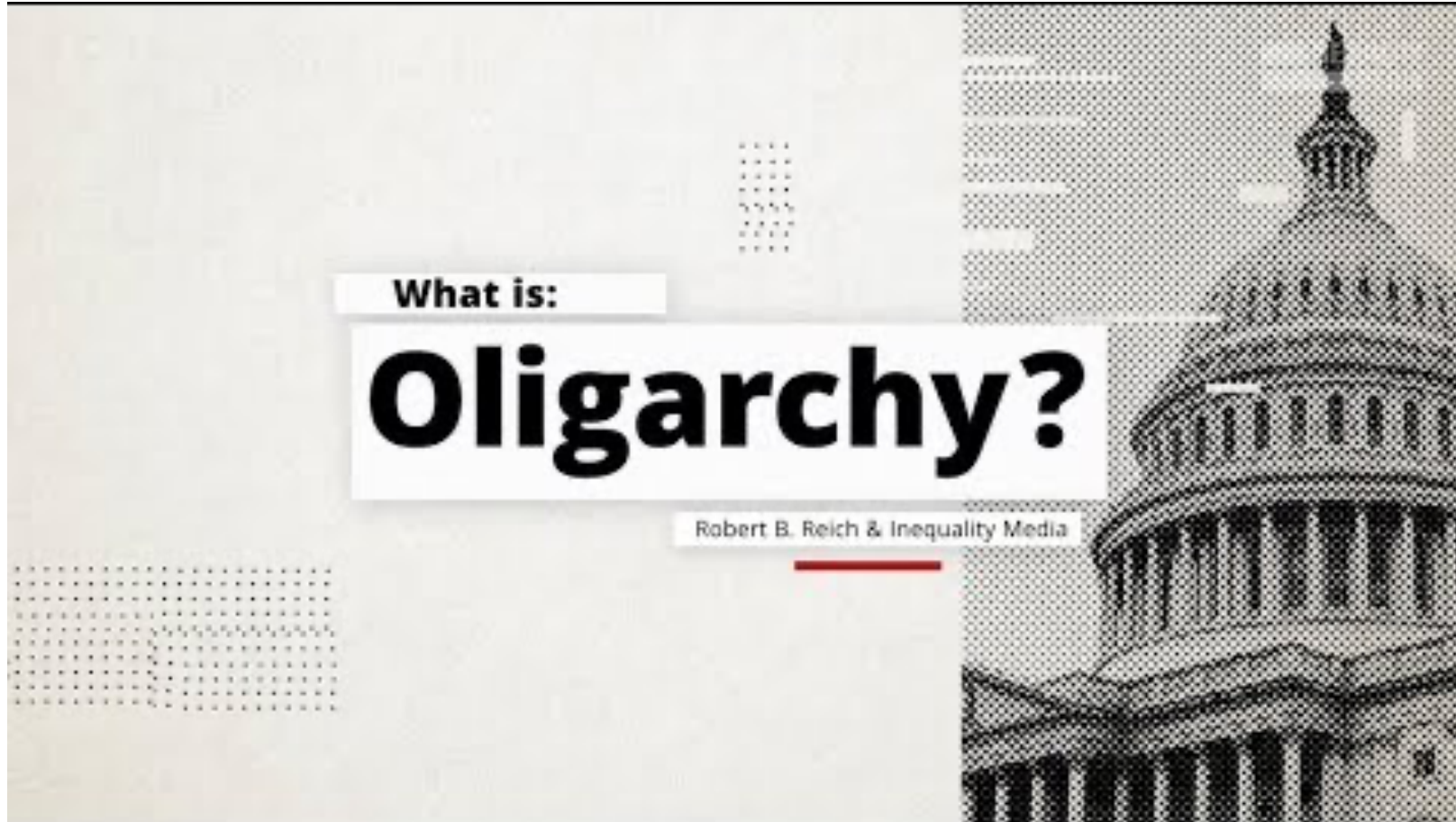
Class 21:

Contentious politics

Recap

- Representation, interest articulation, and interest aggregation:
 - Elections
 - Political parties
 - Interest groups

Oligarchy



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inBWp13C7H8>

The iron law of oligarchy

- Robert Michels
- Inevitability of the rule by an elite
= oligarchy
- Why?



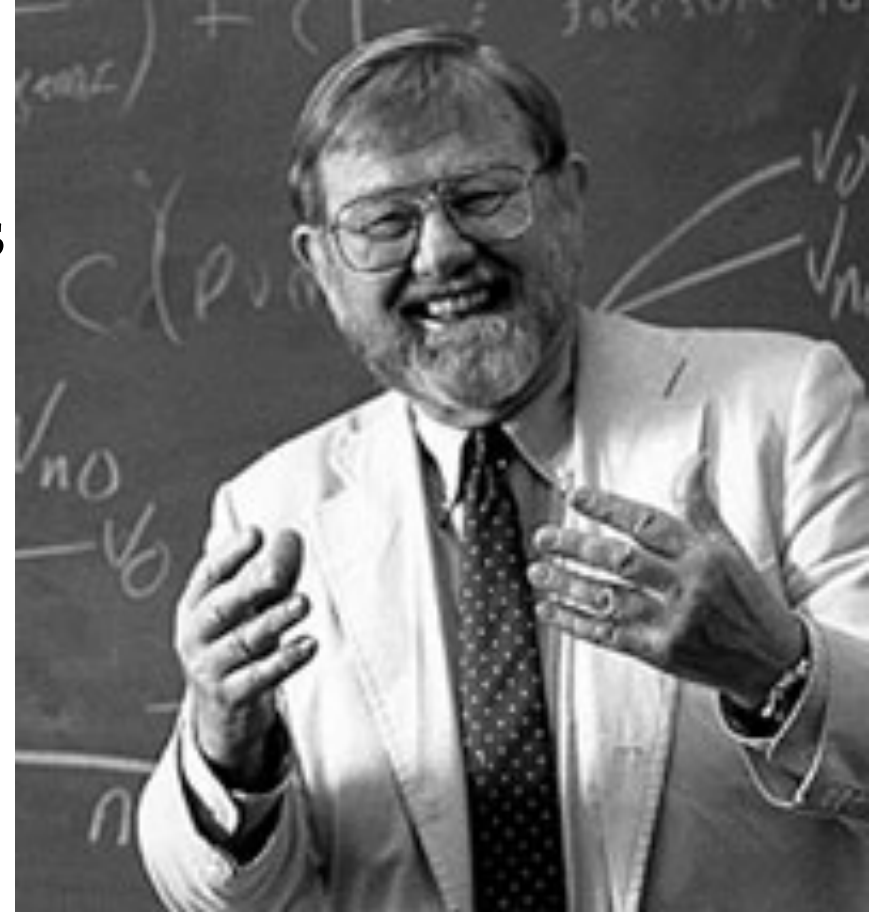
The iron law of oligarchy

- Robert Michels
- Inevitability of the rule by an elite = oligarchy
- Why?
 - Necessity of delegation of power to individuals in complex organizations (e.g. states, parties, interest groups) →
 - Dominance of a 'leadership class'
 - Michels, Robert. 1915. *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. New York: The Free Press.



Distributional coalitions

- Mancur Olson
- Accumulation of special interests → political dominance of special interests (distributional coalitions) → slower economic growth
- E.g. UK vs. Germany and Japan after World War II
 - Olson, Mancur, 1982. *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities*. New Haven: Yale University Press.



What can society do to
counteract the rise of
oligarchy?

What is contention?

Contention

- *Pursuit of collective goods outside of formal political institutions*

Types of contention

- Social movements
- Revolutions:
 - Political
 - Social
- Coups d'état
- Insurgencies and civil wars
- Terrorism
- Everyday forms of resistance

Types of contention

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 - *Sustained organized collective action oriented towards a goal of social change*
- Revolutions:
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Types of contention

- Social movements:
 - *Sustained organized collective action oriented towards a goal of social change*
- Revolutions:
 - *Attempted or accomplished large-scale structural change*
 - Political
 - Social
- Coups d'état
- Insurgencies and civil wars
- Terrorism
- Everyday forms of resistance

Types of contention

- Coups d'état:
 - *Non-electoral change of government undertaken by or with the support of the military*
- Insurgencies and civil wars
- Terrorism
- Everyday forms of resistance

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 - *Non-electoral change of government undertaken by or with the support of the military*
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 - *Rebellions against the government (insurgencies)*
 - *Military conflict between domestic actors (civil wars)*
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- Everyday forms of resistance:
 - *Unorganized efforts to resist or obstruct authority*

Is populism a type of
contention?

Contentious politics in South Africa

- African National Congress (ANC):
 - In power since 1994
 - Founded in 1912 to defend the rights and freedoms of black South Africans
 - Campaigns for:
 - Universal suffrage
 - End of apartheid (introduced in 1948)



Contentious politics in South Africa



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJOU9YYMzpw>

What type(s) of contention did the ANC practice?

Contentious politics in Russia

- Russian Empire (1721-1917), ruled by emperors (tsars)
- World War I (1914-1918)
- Russian Provisional Government (1917)
- Russian Soviet Republic (1917-) → Soviet Union (1922-1991)



Contentious politics in Russia



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1Y102Iq15c>

What type(s) of contention did
Russia experience in the
1910s?

Contentious politics in Russia

- February Revolution—political revolution
- October Revolution—coup d'état or political revolution
- Civil war (1917-1922)
- Social revolution:
 - Nationalization and restructuring of industry
 - Collectivization of agriculture
 - Annihilation or exile of nobility, bourgeoisie, and rich peasantry (kulaks)
- State terror: Great Purge



Contentious politics in Russia



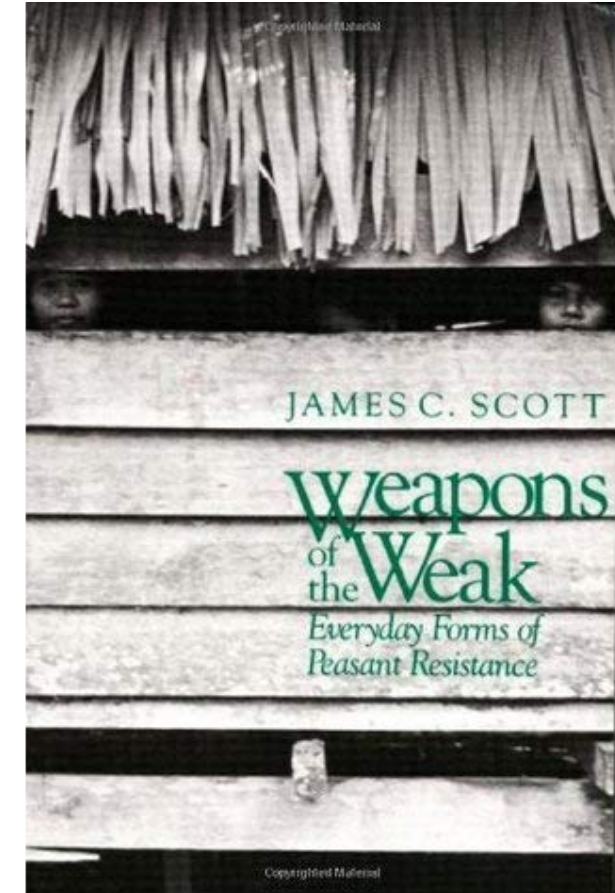
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYFZawos3v0>

Contentious politics in Russia

- Videos on:
 - Collectivization: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L1p-LmXm3s>
 - Collapse of the Soviet Union:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pqt3U48MfcY>

Everyday resistance

- James C. Scott
- Everyday acts of the subaltern:
 - Foot-dragging, sarcasm, passivity, laziness, slander, misunderstandings, disloyalty, avoidance, theft
- Everyday forms of rural class conflict in Malaysia
- Infrapolitics
 - Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.



What explains the incidence
of contention?

Explanations of contention

- Relative deprivation
- Political opportunities and mobilization
- Rational choice
- Framing

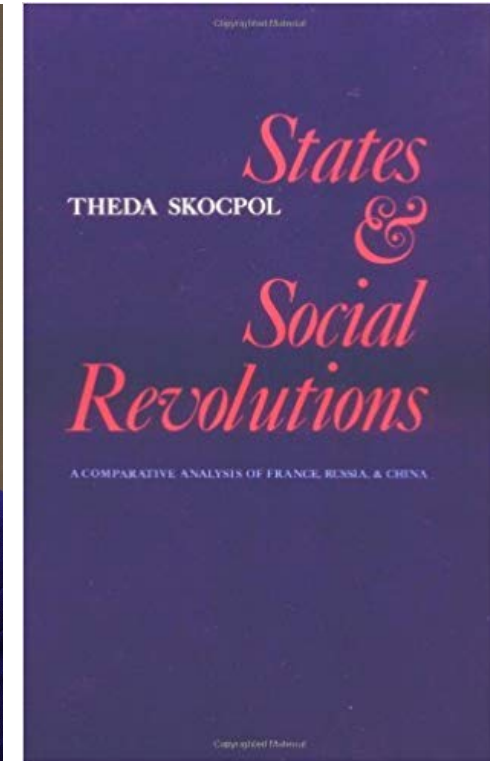
Relative deprivation

- Ted Gurr
- Relative deprivation: discrepancy between:
 - Goods and conditions to which people believe they are entitled and
 - Perception of frustrating circumstances
- Relative deprivation → frustration → anger → civil violence
 - Gurr, Ted. 1968. "Psychological Factors in Civil Violence." *World Politics* 20 (2): 245–78.



Political opportunities and mobilization

- Theda Skocpol
- Necessary conditions for revolution:
 - State collapse and breakdown →
 - Elite division
 - Peasant mobilization
 - Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

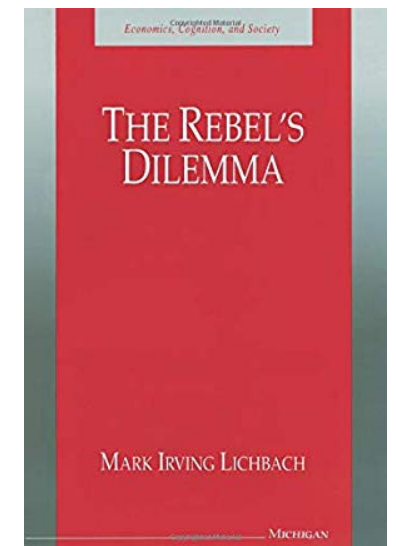


Rational choice

- Mark Lichbach
- Incentives to freeride:
- → Irrationality of rebellion:

	Participate	Do not participate
Revolution succeeds	Share in collective benefits	Share in collective benefits
Revolution fails	Face personal costs	Face no personal costs

- Solutions:
 - Market: expansion of benefits and probability of winning, reduction of costs of engaging in dissent, improvement of productivity of tactics
 - Community: common values
 - Social contract: self-government, tit-for-tat, mutual exchange
 - Hierarchy: imposition of cost-sharing, creation of selective incentives
 - Lichbach, Mark. 1995. *The Rebel's Dilemma*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.



Framing

- Rationality
- Collective action and collective action problems
- Preference falsification



Which of the explanations of contention best explain the Russian and South African experiences of contentious politics?

What explains the war in Syria?

NEWS

Why is there a war in Syria?

🕒 25 February 2019

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Syrian civil war



(Mostly) civil war in Syria



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CoL0L_DbuQQ

Can the prominent scholarly explanations help us to make sense of the war in Syria?

Takeaways

- Contention:
 - Types:
 - Social movements
 - Revolutions
 - Coups d'état
 - Insurgencies and civil wars
 - Terrorism
 - Everyday forms of resistance
 - Explanations:
 - Relative deprivation
 - Political opportunities and mobilization
 - Rational choice
 - Framing

Next week

- Review class
- Last day to submit written work on Wednesday, April 29
- Final exam:
 - Two parts:
 - Essay, due at 10 am on Monday, May 4
 - Short answers, 9-10 am on Monday, May 4