CHAPTER 3
Imagine that you are walking in a crowd of peaceful protesters. Your group is asking for the basic political right to vote for the candidate of your choice for national office. Ahead of you is a line of heavily armed troops who are blocking your march. Although you are engaged in a nonviolent protest, you know that brutal force has been used against groups like yours in similar situations. What is your next step?

In this politically charged instant, one tiny woman moves forward. She walks alone up to the armed troops who aim their weapons directly at her. But no one is ordered to fire or to seize her, and she walks through the troops. You and the others are emboldened to follow her. Do you step forward?

In a country with a repressive and abusive military regime, one person stands tall, although she is only 5 feet 4 inches and weighs less than 100 pounds. Aung San Suu Kyi is a powerful voice for human rights and democratic freedom in Myanmar (some, including the United States, still call it Burma), a country of 48 million in Southeast Asia. This woman is classified as a national security threat by the military junta that has controlled the government of Myanmar since 1962. How can one woman stir up so much anxiety within a military leadership that seems all-powerful and uses extensive violence to subjugate its citizens?

Suu Kyi’s first major public speech occurred in 1988 when she addressed nearly 500,000 protesting citizens who had begun a prodemocracy movement that year. Thousands of students participated in these protests, and many citizens risked their jobs and personal security to join her party, the National League for Democracy. When the party won control of the legislature in a 1990 election, Suu Kyi was designated as the prime minister-elect. However, the military dictatorship refused to turn power over to her and the democratically elected representatives. Suu Kyi was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts, although the government would not allow her to accept it.
To intimidate and weaken the members of the opposition movement, the military placed Suu Kyi under house arrest. She has been confined to her own house and prevented from making public speeches or meeting other political leaders for most of the last two decades. Suu Kyi has been attacked by a mob of government goons and accused of tax evasion, leading to brief imprisonment. But she remains visible and refuses to give up the struggle for political and human rights. Others in Myanmar have been inspired to resist the regime. The prime minister was arrested in 2004 after proposing a “road map to democracy” and allowing Suu Kyi to speak in public.

Many citizens in Myanmar live quietly, intimidated by the ruthless actions of the military and hoping to go unnoticed. But others continue to engage in courageous actions. The Karen people, an ethnic minority, have resisted violently for 6 years, demanding autonomy in eastern Myanmar. Opposition politicians speak out for change and call for fair elections. Massive demonstrations for democracy were held again throughout the country in 2007, drawing more than 100,000 peaceful protesters, which included large numbers of Buddhist monks. The government responded with troops who arrested, beat, and bullied those who were demonstrating, even raiding pagodas to arrest monks. Some protesters were sentenced to 65 years in prison. The regime put Suu Kyi on trial again in 2009 and sentenced her to 18 months of house arrest, after an American swam to her riverfront home to talk with her. The international community observes the political activities in Myanmar with concern but takes little direct action.

Most political actions by individuals and groups have complicated and complex motivations. The political actions of the military junta, Aung Sung Suu Kyi, and other pro-democracy protesters in Myanmar are prime examples of attempts to control or shape agendas and events in a society. If you were a citizen in Myanmar, would you have the commitment and courage to stand up against a repressive system? More realistically, have you taken any meaningful political actions within the last year? What is the most risky political action you have ever taken?

Chapter 2 considered the nature of people’s political beliefs. Ultimately, the more important issues regarding the individual in politics might focus on what people do politically, not merely what they think. For instance, in the incident at Burger King described at the beginning of Chapter 2, the most relevant questions from the perspective of the political world, even more than what you thought, would be: What did you say? What did you do?

In this chapter, we examine the prominent modes of actual political behavior that people engage in. We focus on groups as well as individuals because many individuals, such as Aun San Suu Kyi, realize that they can be more effective politically if they act with others rather than alone. Thus, instead of engaging in a lonely act of protest, a person could join a huge demonstration; instead of writing a letter requesting a change in public policy, a person could join an organization that speaks for thousands of people.

Broadly, political participation is the term that is applied to all of the political actions by individuals and groups. The explicit objective of most political participation is to influence the actions or selection of political rulers (Nelson 1993: 720). What
is the range of behaviors that a person might undertake in the political world? At one extreme are people who are obsessed with politics, see political implications in most of life’s actions, are constantly involved in political discussion and action, and want to make political decisions for others. At the other extreme are people who have absolutely no interest in politics, pay no attention to political phenomena, and engage in no politically relevant actions. (In some instances, such as not voting in an election to indicate dissatisfaction, not doing something can also be a type of political participation.)

The first half of this chapter focuses on this full range of individual political actions. The second half examines the nature and activities of two major forms of political groups: interest groups and political parties. Both individuals and groups share some modes of activity, but the actions of groups can also be analyzed by some additional dimensions because of their size and structure.

INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL ACTIONS

Modes of Political Activity

There are various ways to classify the modes of individual political action. Empirical studies of political participation consider both the more conventional forms of activity, such as voting, campaigning, contacting officials and participating in civic groups as well as the less conventional actions, such as protesting and even terrorism (Verba and Nie 1972, 1975; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Dalton 2006).

Figure 3.1 classifies the modes of individual political action in terms of two dimensions. The horizontal dimension considers the extent to which the action is generally viewed as more or less conventional. While there are differences in what various people would consider conventional, there is definite variation from left to right. The second (vertical) dimension reflects the extent to which the individual engages in the political action, ranging from never to occasional to frequent to pervasive, for the
person who truly lives and breathes politics. Figure 3.1 suggests labels for those who are associated with certain domains of political actions. At the four (corner) extremes are those who are totally apathetic about politics, those who have made a full-time vocation of politics as elected officials, those revolutionaries who are passionately committed to transforming the existing political system, and those who are provoked into a rare but highly unconventional action. While we will explore some of these types of political actors and actions throughout this book, we can characterize a few of the main types here. Although most individuals can be labeled by their dominant activity, a particular individual might operate in different action domains at various times (Dalton 2008: chs. 3, 4; Rueschemeyer, Rueschemeyer, and Wittrock 1998; Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995: ch. 3). For example, an elected official will almost certainly vote, a revolutionary might vote, and a conventional voter might at some point be mobilized to participate in an unconventional action, such as a violent demonstration.

The categories in Figure 3.1 are elements of a taxonomy. When you attempt to classify units by some criteria, you are engaged in taxonomic analysis (as discussed in the Appendix). Recall Aristotle’s comment that all thinking begins in comparison. In political science, many comparisons begin in taxonomies. Developing a taxonomy is often the first stage in political analysis because it sorts cases into a small number of groups in order to reduce complexity, to facilitate comparative analysis, and to aid the development of generalizations. Because the categories in a strong taxonomy do not overlap, Figure 3.1 is a loose taxonomy. You will find numerous taxonomies in this book (e.g., the types of party systems, democracies versus non-democracies, the Global North and Global South). No single taxonomy is used in all political analyses because each taxonomy emphasizes different aspects of the political world. It will be your decision whether any particular taxonomy seems useful.

Political Activists

Many of us are particularly interested in the extraordinary actions of the political activists who seem to “live politics,” even though the more routine modes of political action (listed in the middle and bottom of the left side of Figure 3.1) constitute the vast majority of actual political behavior. Political activists might hold government office, or spend many hours furthering a political idea or leader, or even risk their freedom and life in the pursuit of a dramatic change in the political order. At least three different types of political activists can be identified: foot soldiers, extremist-activists, and political leaders.

Foot soldiers. Foot soldiers are those activists who do the basic work of politics. They link the government and the top political leadership to the masses by performing tasks such as raising money for candidates or political issues, working in the local offices of political leaders, communicating the views of top leaders to citizens, and regularly voicing their opinions to political leaders. In most countries, foot soldiers are members of political parties or groups with a political mission, although such membership is not necessarily synonymous with political activism.
Extremist-activists. Extremist-activists are outsiders who are willing to engage in extensive, unconventional political action in pursuit of their vision of an ideal political outcome, which would require a dramatic shift in the nature of the existing system. “Extremism” is a subjective and relative concept; a person is politically extreme only in comparison with some standard position, typically the broad center of the existing political order. Like foot soldiers, extremist-activists might engage in some conventional political activities. However, what distinguishes them is the willingness to engage in intensive modes of unconventional political action. Some individuals can be classified as extremist-activists if their political goals or tactics locate them on the margins of the existing political system and political culture. Two examples are those who participate in the actions of an environmental activist group such as Earth First! in the United States and those who engage in violence against immigrants within their country.

Political analysts have focused considerable attention on individual extremist-activists who are the most unconventional and fully engaged, the revolutionaries. A revolutionary is a person who desires to overthrow the existing political order and to replace it with a very different one, using political violence if necessary (see Chapter 12). Some revolutionaries, such as Mao Zedong (China), Fidel Castro (Cuba), Ayatollah Khomeini (Iran), and Nelson Mandela (South Africa), eventually attained leadership roles in their political system after years or even decades of struggle. (Two examples are featured in Compare in 4) Others, including Che Guevara (Cuba, then Bolivia) and Steve Biko (South Africa), died in the struggle and became martyrs to those committed to revolutionary change.

Many extremist-activists are radical versions of foot soldiers, serving as the members of organizations such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC); Osama bin Laden’s worldwide al-Qaeda (“the Base”) network; and ETA, the Basque separatist group in Spain and France. But an increasing proportion of the extremist-activists operate as members of small, relatively independent groups, and occasionally there is a “lone wolf” extremist who acts almost completely alone (Sageman 2008). There is strong contemporary interest in extremist-activists who are willing to use any tactics and any level of violence to achieve their goals. These individuals are often labeled as terrorists because of their extreme tactics, and particularly their willingness to direct violence against those who are not actively engaged in political struggle (for more details, see Chapters 4 and 12). Most extremist-activists operate in relative obscurity, eventually burning out and dropping out, being captured by the state, or dying as a result of political violence.

Political leaders. Many of us are fascinated with ultimate political activists such as Hugo Chavez, Adolf Hitler, Barack Obama, and Mao Zedong. These top political leaders are distinctive because they succeed in capturing supreme political power within a government and using it with extraordinary energy and effect (whether good or bad). Their titles vary by country and level of government and include chairman, chancellor, dictator, governor, king, mayor, president, prime minister, and supreme leader, among others. A top political leader might put his substantial political power and position to admirable purposes, might implement reprehensible policies, or might accomplish almost nothing. These political leaders have been the subject of more descriptions, analyses, and evaluations than any other type of actors in the political world. They will frequently be the subjects in this book.
PART TWO Political Behavior

Political Participation Studies

After categories of political action are established, a basic research question is, How many people participate in each category, both within and across various national political contexts?

The most reliable comparative empirical data on political participation across many countries measure voting in national elections. Table 3.1 provides these data for selected countries. A striking observation about these figures is the huge variation in voting levels, ranging from a reported 99 percent in Vietnam to only 28 percent in Egypt. Notice the very high voter turnout in countries such as Vietnam, Cuba, and North Korea. In such countries, voting is primarily a symbolic act that is supposed to express support for the existing political leadership, not an action in which citizens select their leaders. In some countries, voting is mandatory (e.g., Argentina, Australia, Singapore). In some, those in power either engage in election fraud to ensure victory (Zimbabwe, possibly Iran) or repudiate the vote if the outcome is not favorable (as in Myanmar when Aun Sun Suu Kyi won). These variations in voting alert us to a general problem in cross-national analyses of micropolitical data—the same action or belief might have quite different meaning and significance in different settings.

It is even more difficult to do empirical, cross-national comparisons for modes of individual political participation other than voting. The same act can vary in meaning in different political and cultural environments. For example, the significance and potential personal risk of a public political protest are far greater for a person in North Korea than in South Korea, and greater in both those countries than for someone in Sweden.

The most consistent finding in recent comparative research on participation is clear: Apart from voting, which is a political act done by many/most citizens, high
levels of persistent political activity tend to be uncommon in most political systems. Research reveals that less than 10 percent of the population (and in many countries, considerably less) are political activists who engage in a high level of the more demanding forms of political action, such as top leadership, protest, or extensive partisan political work (Dalton 2008: tables 3.3–3.5; Rueschemeyer, Rueschemeyer, and Wittrock 1998; World Values Survey 2004, 2006). In contrast to these political "gladiators," even in an open democracy like the United States, about one-fifth of the adult population engages in no political activity and another one-fifth do little more than vote (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995: 50–54, 72–74).

A second broad finding is that some citizens are willing to engage occasionally in more activist modes of political participation. While very few citizens participate in violent protests against people or property, there is evidence that a significant number

### TABLE 3.1
Voting Participation in Selected Countries: Percentage of Eligible Adults Voting in Most Recent Major National Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Turnout</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95–100</td>
<td>Australia, Cuba, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90–94</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85–89</td>
<td>Chile, Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–84</td>
<td>Brazil, France, Italy, Sweden, Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75–79</td>
<td>Belarus, Cambodia, Palestine (territory), South Africa, Spain, Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70–74</td>
<td>Argentina, Germany, Ghana, Mongolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65–69</td>
<td>Costa Rica, Finland, Japan, Russia, Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60–64</td>
<td>Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Portugal, South Korea, Swaziland, Ukraine, United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–59</td>
<td>Canada, India, Iraq, Mexico, Syria, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–54</td>
<td>Iran, Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–49</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–44</td>
<td>Colombia, Pakistan, Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–39</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–34</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–29</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–24</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–19</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–14</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–9</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0–4</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, www.idea.int/vt
of people do perform certain, less-conventional political acts, including some actions that require considerable effort or risk. For example, in about half of the countries for which World Values Survey data are available, 15 percent or more of the citizens have engaged in at least one “challenging act” (e.g., a lawful demonstration, boycott, or building occupation) (Danziger 2009: table 3.2). Compare in 3 and Table 3.2 examine the levels at which the citizens of 10 countries engage in a range of more and less conventional forms of political participation.

Although systematic, comparative data on less democratic and nondemocratic countries are limited, it seems that the reliance on nongovernmental channels and the incidence of unconventional political behavior are greater (and vary more substantially) there than in democratic systems. In some less-democratic countries, state repression deters the great majority of citizens from participation. And there are also countries characterized by “de-participation” because the political leadership has weakened or even eliminated the mechanisms that enable citizens to engage in political actions (Nelson 1987: 116–120).

**GROUP POLITICAL ACTIONS**

The actions of Aung San Suu Kyi offer a compelling example of the impact that one extraordinary person can have on the political world. However, even this totally dedicated political activist understood that there is power in numbers. Thus, she worked with many other citizens to establish and build the National League for Democracy, a movement that steadily gained supporters and organized into a political party that
stands up against the military dictatorship. Similarly, college students and Buddhist monks are among those individuals emboldened by the willingness of their peers to join them in the streets, demanding change. In almost every situation, a political agenda is furthered most effectively when many people support it.

Most people tend to feel that they are relatively powerless in politics when acting alone. But if a person joins with many others in a political group, it is possible that the group can exercise influence in the political world because of the group’s numbers, organization, and capabilities. Groups are extremely important in politics because they are often the major mechanism through which individuals are linked to the political system—hence their label as “linkage institutions.” Some political groups, such as a major political party like Myanmar’s National League for Democracy, can have wide-ranging goals and a huge membership. Other groups, such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), are more narrowly focused in their objectives and have limited membership. And extremist groups, such as al-Qaeda, might have few members but can still pursue extensive, radical agendas. The rest of this chapter describes the nature and activities of various kinds of political groups and political parties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Discuss Politics Often (%)</th>
<th>Often Attempt to Convince Friends on Political Issues (%)</th>
<th>Contact a Politician or Civil Servant to Express Views (%)</th>
<th>Donate Money to Politician or Issue (%)</th>
<th>Boycott or “Buycott” Products for Political or Ethical Reasons (%)</th>
<th>Attend Political Meeting or Rally (%)</th>
<th>Took Part in a Demonstration (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil (2,000)</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada (1,211)</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile (1,505)</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico (1,201)</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland (1,277)</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia (1,789)</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden (1,295)</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Respondent reports behavior within the last twelve months.

An individual might engage in a variety of political actions, and Figure 3.1 suggests that these can range in frequency and conventionality. How much do individuals engage in various political actions? Are there differences in levels of participation across different countries? Table 3.2 provides data for such comparisons, from the International Social Survey Programme, in which 1,200 to 2,800 individuals in each of 37 countries reported their recent political actions to survey researchers. What observations do you think are supported by the comparative data in Table 3.2 for the 10 countries selected?

First, would you conclude that most people are not very active in politics? On the one hand, there are some instances of relatively high participation. Between 20 and 30 percent of those in four countries donated money to a political cause in the past year. In half the countries, between 10 and 16 percent often engage in political discussions and/or have attended a political meeting during the past year. And in more than one-third of the cells in the table, at least 10 percent of the individuals engage in these political acts, which require effort far beyond merely voting or paying attention to politics. On the other hand, these interpretations can be turned on their head. Is 10-30 percent participation on only a few of these actions particularly high? Fewer than one in 10 individuals participated in these political acts in about two-thirds of cells in the table. There is only a single instance where as many as one in three individuals engaged in any of these political actions (Swedes boycotting). These data seem somewhat ambiguous about whether most people in these countries are not highly active in politics.

Second, do the data support the conclusion that there are substantial cross-national differences? As you scan the columns, the percentages within each type of political action probably do not seem dramatically different from one country to the next. For example, the participation levels for those often attempting to convince friends on political issues range only from about 5 to 16 percent. However, the difference ratios between the country with the highest and the country with the lowest proportion who engage in each political action is at least 3:1 for almost every action and the ratios are much greater for some actions. For example, only 0.8 percent of Poles took part in a political demonstration in the past year, compared to 7.4 percent of Mexicans. And more than one in five Americans contacted political actors to express their views, compared to only one in 40 Poles. More than 10 times as many Swedes as Filipinos engaged in a boycott, and 10 times more Americans than Brazilians donated money to a politician or political issue. Overall, the cross-national differences on every one of the seven political actions seem quite substantial.

Third, do the data support the view that some countries are more participatory in general? Three countries seem particularly low in participation levels: Poland, Russia, and South Africa. Each is among the three countries with the lowest levels of participation on the majority of the political actions, and none of them are among the top three on any activity. In contrast, the United States is one of the top three countries on the level of participation for six of the seven modes of political activity—every action except taking part in a demonstration (on which the United States is fourth). Canada and Mexico are top three on four of the different modes of political action. Canada, Mexico, Sweden, and the United States are never among the bottom three on any political action.
Americans, in particular, appear more politically active than might be expected from recent discussions of the low level of political participation in the United States. The data in Table 3.2 recall a conclusion in the classic book, *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba 1963), which termed the United States the most “participatory political culture” in the study. And while it is not possible to explain these cross-national variations in participation levels without further analyses, it is interesting that the three least participatory countries in Table 3.2 (Poland, Russia, and South Africa) all have recent histories as highly repressive regimes that punished political dissent ruthlessly. In sum, there is evidence here that some countries are substantially more or less participatory than others.

Like many studies of comparative political data, the data in Table 3.2 can be analyzed in different ways and can lead to somewhat different knowledge claims. For example, Table 3.2 only reports those who often discuss politics but it might also consider those who occasionally discuss politics. In another example, the table focuses only on a single year instead of several years or another year in which the political dynamics might be different. And might the cross-national differences be greater or smaller if other countries were selected for analysis? The analyst makes a variety of decisions in how data like these are presented and interpreted. This does not mean that the data can be manipulated to produce any conclusion you want, but it should caution you that it is important to be very thoughtful and consider multiple alternative interpretations as you examine this type of data.

**FURTHER QUESTIONS:**
1. Overall, do you conclude that these data support the generalization that most people in these countries are not very active in politics?
2. What type(s) of political activity seem to be the best measures of the level of political participation by average citizens?

As an analytic concept, a group can be defined as an aggregation of individuals who interact in order to pursue a common interest (see also Chapter 9). It is the pursuit of a common interest that is most crucial to this definition because the individuals do not necessarily interact directly with one another. The factor that distinguishes a political interest group from other groups is that the common interest the group pursues is a political objective—an interest in a particular policy or action that might be taken. A distinction is usually made between political interest groups and political parties, although both types fit under our general definition of political group. A political group enters the special category of political party when the group seeks not merely to influence political decisions, but also to place its members in the actual roles of government, such as chief executives and legislators. Although this distinction can become rather fuzzy among the most politically active groups, we shall treat political parties as a category different from other types of political interest groups.

**POLITICAL INTEREST GROUPS**

**Activities of Political Interest Groups**

All political interest groups share the common objective of attempting to influence the allocation of public values. But such groups can employ a variety of strategies to achieve this purpose (Baumgartner and Leech 1998).
Political action. The most direct methods to achieve political objectives involve some form of political action. Such action might be taken by all group members or by some members who formally or informally represent the entire group. Depending on the political system, this might entail voting and campaign activities to influence the selection and action of political authorities. Or the group might attempt to communicate its interest to political actors by techniques such as letters, personal contacts, petitions, rallies, or political violence.

Provision of material resources. Political interest groups can also provide goods or services to political actors. Such a strategy assumes that providing goods and services will influence decision makers to be more favorably disposed toward the interests of a group. Each political system develops its own rules about the methods and amounts of money or goods that can be given legitimately to political actors. The line between legal and illegal provision of money and goods varies dramatically across political cultures. In some political systems, all it takes to shock people is the revelation that an interest group has given a political actor a small gift, but in many political systems, it requires a multimillion-dollar kickback to a politician to upset citizens and provoke action.

In most countries where there is some transparency in political contributions by private groups, the amount of money involved is substantial. In 2008, for example, interest groups contributed $3.3 billion to lobby government officials and candidates in the United States (Center for Responsive Politics 2009). Most such contributions are legal, although some are problematic; for example, in 1997, the Democratic Party returned more than $1 million to questionable donors, and President Clinton was widely criticized for “renting the Lincoln bedroom” for overnight visits in the White House.
House by big contributors. In South Korea, it is estimated that legislative candidates in contested seats spend 10 times more money on their campaigns than is allowable under the law (Plasser 2002: 149).

The ethics of a system in which political interest groups can make huge contributions is increasingly questioned. It is obvious that money is given in the expectation of influencing public policies. Although cause-and-effect relationships are hard to establish, there are striking linkages between groups’ campaign contributions and beneficial legislation. In the 1996 election in the United States, for example, tobacco companies contributed $11.3 million; soon after, legislation was passed directing a 15-cent-per-pack cigarette tax to a fund offsetting lawsuits, a benefit estimated at $50 billion. Oil, energy, and natural resource firms contributed $18.3 million and then gained $18 billion in benefits from exemptions from the passage of an alternative minimum tax law (O’Connor and Sabato 2004: figure 16.3).

No one knows the amount of illegal resources that are distributed, although in most countries, scandals regarding bribes and kickbacks seem to be reported with increasing frequency (Johnson 2006). In 2007, for example, former Philippine president Joseph Estrada was found guilty of taking more than $85 million in bribes during his presidency. Evidence surfaced that Samsung executives distributed $205 million in payoffs to South Korean government officials and journalists in 2008 (Bloomberg.com 2009). And China reported 17,000 bribery cases involving more than $575 million between August 2005 and December 2006 (Chinese Consulate-General 2007). This is not a new phenomenon. In a wry comment on American politics, humorist Will Rogers once observed that “our Congress is the best that money can buy.”

**Exchange of information.** Providing data and information to those within the government is another activity performed by some interest groups. The interest group may have specialized information that policymakers would find difficult or impossible to obtain from other sources. These private groups are stakeholders with a vested interest in the public policies that emerge, and so most actively provide data that support their own interests. For example, in the early 1980s, the U.S. Congress began considering a law requiring mandatory air bags as a safety restraint in automobiles. In determining whether to pass such a law, legislators were particularly influenced by information provided by automobile manufacturers (whose data indicated that air bags were costly, would reduce fuel economy, and would not substantially reduce overall injury levels in automobile collisions). This critical information, from a highly interested party to the decision, was an important reason behind the refusal of Congress to require air bags (Reppy 1984). Later in the decade, a barrage of counterinformation from another powerful interest group, the insurance industry, persuaded Congress and the public that air bags could save lives and lower insurance premiums. This resulted in laws requiring air bags.

In many countries, as the scale of government and the reach of public policy have expanded, many organizations in society need detailed, inside information about what the government is doing or intends to do that might affect their organization. Thus, Salisbury (1990; Salisbury et al. 1991) has concluded that American interest groups in Washington, D.C. now spend more time gathering information from the government
that is relevant to their organizations’ interests (e.g., changes in rules or laws) than they do providing information to the government that might influence its policies.

Cooperation. Major interest groups can also exert influence through their compliance or noncompliance with the government policy process. In many countries, government actors understand that policy is implemented more successfully when it is acceptable to the affected interest groups. There are many countries (especially industrial democracies such as France, Japan, South Korea, and Sweden) in which government cultivates a special relationship with the interest group representatives of major economic organizations, such as business, labor, and farmers. When such interest groups can help the government implement policy, they enjoy a privileged position. Governance based on close cooperation between government agencies and these major sectoral interest groups is called corporatism. For example, the British ministry responsible for agriculture and food works closely with the interest group representing the food manufacturers so that the manufacturers, rather than the government bureaucracy, take most of the responsibility for inspecting and monitoring food hygiene (Wilson 1991). Obviously, an organization benefits greatly when its interest group persuades the government to allow the organization to regulate itself.

**CONSTRAINTS ON A GROUP’S BEHAVIOR**

Each interest group must decide what mix of activities is most likely to serve its political agenda. This mix depends on many factors, including the nature of the group’s political resources, the objectives it pursues, and the political environment in which it operates.

**Political resources.** A group’s political resources are those elements, controlled by the group, that can influence the decisions and actions of political actors. The political resources that are most effective differ according to the situation and the political system. The preceding section emphasized the potential impact of financial resources and information, but certain other political resources can also be influential: control of factors of production, social status, legality, special knowledge or skills, ability to mobilize large numbers of people who pressure the government, capacity for social disruption, and access to decision makers. Various groups usually have dramatically different levels of all these political resources. An interest group’s behavior depends on the kinds of resources it has available and its decision to use a particular mix of resources.

**Objectives.** The objectives that interest groups pursue in the political world are as diverse as the different policy issues on which the government might act. One group might want one specific goal, such as a subsidy for growing wheat, while another group might have very broad objectives, such as a set of policies to eliminate poverty. An interest group’s strategies and the probability that it will be successful
are related to the group’s political objectives. In general, an interest group has an advantage to the extent that its objective (1) is similar to existing policy and (2) is a decision that the political system has the capacity and motivation to make. For example, the Greenpeace groups in France and Germany are more likely to influence government policies on safer disposal of nuclear wastes than on stopping the development of new nuclear power stations, and these groups have little chance of achieving their goal of worldwide nuclear disarmament.

**Political environment.** At the most basic level, the demands that groups can make and the actions they can take depend on the boundaries of acceptable political action within the particular political environment. Every example of interest group action given thus far in this chapter has focused on a group operating in a democratic political system. An essential feature of democratic systems is that interest groups have extensive rights to make political demands and engage in political actions. Yet there is some disagreement about the extent to which interest groups contribute to healthy democratic processes (see Debate in 3).

In democracies such as Great Britain, Italy, and Japan, professional representatives of interest groups (lobbyists) are as much a part of the accepted set of governmental actors as are elected legislators and their staffs. In Japan, it is common for a senior government official to “descend from heaven” (amakudari), leaving his position for a high-paying lobbyist’s job for a major corporate interest. In the United States, 35,000 full-time professional lobbyists are registered in Washington, D.C., and one analyst contends that the total number of people engaged primarily in lobbying activities is more than 80,000 (that is, more than 140 professional lobbyists per member of Congress) (Birnbaum 1993, 2005).

In contrast, repressive political systems tolerate only a very narrow range of interest group activities that are in opposition to the leadership. Such groups, and especially their leaders, usually face extensive harassment and punishment from the authorities. Occasion-ally, the state responds positively to these demands. Some interest groups are eventually granted a major role in the political process. This happened in South Africa to the African National Congress, which began in 1912 as an interest group to promote the human rights of black South Africans, was later a government opposition movement, and then an outlawed violent protest group (in 1961); finally it became the country’s major political party whose leaders (from Nelson Mandela to Jacob Zuma) have become presidents of the country. Other groups have successfully engaged in a combination of political violence and mass mobilization to overthrow the existing regime, as did the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in 1979, and as the National League for Democracy aspires to do in Myanmar.

In general, however, one of the key features of a repressive political system is its capacity to stifle or crush opposition interest groups. In these environments, such groups operate on the margins of the political system, and they range from small revolutionary cells such as FARC in Columbia to organized groups such as the Buddhist monks in Myanmar, to mass movements such as the democracy demonstrations in China in 1989 and Iran in 2009.
DEBATE IN 3

How Interested Are Interest Groups in Democracy?

For as long as democratic governments have existed, there has been ambivalence about political interest groups. On the one hand, democratic theory is grounded in the idea that individuals can and should form political interest groups to influence the selection of officials and to promote public policies that serve their goals. On the other hand, the press, the public, and even some governmental officials are often heard blaming a country’s problems on “special interests,” which are effective in influencing government to enact policies that serve the interests of specific groups but are not in “the public interest.” Do interest groups hinder the democratic process or facilitate it?

Interest Groups Facilitate Democracy

- Interest groups are fundamentally important sets of actors in a democratic system because they enable citizens to organize into groups of sufficient size to communicate their concerns and demands in a clearer, more amplified voice to policymakers, especially to the national government.
- Interest groups are especially valuable in representing and supporting those groups whose views are not effectively represented by any of the political parties.
- In a single country, thousands of interest groups can operate at the same time, representing the interests of different groups of people. Because there are so many groups whose voices are heard, no one interest group will go unchecked and become too powerful and influential relative to the others.
- Financial contributions from interest groups enable candidates to purchase the expensive media that allow them to communicate their ideas to many citizens and thus enhance the citizens’ capacity to participate knowledgeably in the democratic process.

Interest Groups Hinder the Democratic Process

- Interest groups play a very beneficial role in the public policy process. They provide public officials with an enormous amount of relevant, specialized information that public agencies might not be able to gather efficiently and that supports good policymaking.
- Interest groups serve as an expert watchdog over legislation or policies that public officials might try to implement but that are based on error or are self-serving. By articulating such concerns, interest groups add a valuable level of accountability and monitoring to the process of democratic governance.

- Most interest groups work to garner support for a single or narrow set of goals, often at the expense of the interests of the broader society.
- Many interest groups have large professional staffs that work 24/7 to promote their goals. Ordinary citizens rarely have this level of expertise and time commitment for political action, and thus the interests of these ordinary citizens are not as well promoted in the policy process as those of special interests.
- Interest groups have specialized information and data that they provide to government officials. Although such information can be quite influential in the policy process, it can also be heavily biased in favor of the interest group’s position on issues.
- Special interest groups are the major supplier of personal resources to many political actors. Campaign contributions and other “goodies”
Debate in 3 (Continued)

can be the source of considerable corruption because they purchase access to and influence with public officials. Meanwhile, most other citizens, who lack such financial resources, are at a serious disadvantage in gaining access and influence.

Interest groups form an unnecessary layer that insulates citizens from their government and discourages citizens from engaging in direct democracy.

MORE QUESTIONS . . .

1. Can you think of any effective interest groups whose actions are a positive force in making your government work in a more democratic manner? Can you think of any effective interest groups that actually undermine democracy? Are your choices closely linked to your own interests and values?

2. Does a system of strong and active interest groups increase or decrease the effectiveness of political parties?

3. Can you imagine an effective political system that has no organized interest groups?

Types of Interest Groups

Gabriel Almond proposed a relatively simple and widely accepted taxonomy of four types of political groups (Almond et al. 2008): (1) associational, (2) institutional, (3) nonassociational, and (4) anomic.

Associational interest groups. The first type, the *associational interest group*, is organized specifically to further the political objectives of its members. One example is the British Medical Association (BMA), a professional organization promoting public policies that support the goals of its members, 139,000 doctors. The BMA makes major contributions to political parties, provides expert information to government agencies, and guides the doctors’ willingness to cooperate with government health policies. Another example is MADD, a primarily volunteer organization whose central goals are to stop drunk driving and underage drinking and to support the victims of drunk drivers. It utilizes its Web site, its network of more than 2 million members in five countries, and a professional lobbying staff to persuade policymakers and judges to impose stringent laws and harsh penalties on drunk drivers. It has trained 1,400 victim-advocates to provide counseling and legal support to victims of drunk drivers.

Institutional interest groups. This type of group has been formed to achieve goals other than affecting the political system, but it also pursues political objectives. Most occupational and organizational groups recognize that the decisions of the political system sometimes have major impacts on their own interests. Thus, they have a formal or informal subunit whose primary purpose is to represent the group’s interests to the political system. For example, the University of California is a large institution of higher education, but its interests are strongly affected by local, state, and national policies on educational funding, research funding, regulation of research, discrimination in admissions and hiring, tax law, patent law, collective bargaining, and many
other policies. Consequently, the university has full-time professional and student lobbyists on each campus, in Sacramento (the state capital), and in Washington, D.C.

**Nonassociational interest groups.** These groups are fluid aggregates of individuals who are not explicitly associated with a permanent organizational entity but who share some common interest regarding certain issues and become politically active on an issue. A loosely structured organization might temporarily emerge to plan and coordinate political activities, but the group is temporary and relatively informal, and once the issue has lost its immediate salience, the group disappears. If an interest group emerges in your community to stop a building development, or to recall a public official, or to promote a particular law, it can be categorized as a nonassociational interest group. Such an interest group can be also termed a social movement when its activities on an issue of social change become more sustained, its supporters increase in number and loyalty, and its form becomes more of an organized campaign spread over a broader geographic area. Examples include the women’s rights movement, the civil rights movement, the indigenous peoples movements, and the pro-choice and anti-abortion movements (Meyer, Jenness, and Ingram 2005; Smith 2007; Tilly 2004).

**Anomic interest groups.** These groups are short-lived, spontaneous aggregations of people who share a political concern. These people participate in a group political action that emerges with little or no planning and then quickly stops after the action is completed. For Almond, a riot is the clearest example of an anomic interest group—the participants tend to share common political interests or grievances that they express through a generally disorganized outpouring of emotion, energy, and violence. A political demonstration is a somewhat more organized version of this type of interest group activity.

Many taxonomies, like Almond’s four types of interest groups, can be understood as presenting what Max Weber called ideal types. An ideal type is a set of distinctive forms of a phenomenon that are defined in order to reveal the different ways in which key characteristics can be combined. There are usually no actual, real-world cases that are precisely like one of the ideal types, and most actual cases blend elements of the different ideal types. Rather, the ideal types are analytic constructs that are pure forms meant to facilitate our comparative thinking and our understanding. There will be many sets of ideal types offered in this book, in addition to the four ideal types of interest groups, including types of legislative-executive relations, administrative systems, party systems, political economies, public policies, and political violence.

### POLITICAL PARTIES

An interest group is transformed into a political party when the group attempts to capture political power directly by placing its members in governmental office. The political party is the broadest linkage institution in most political systems because most parties are overarching organizations that incorporate many different interests and groups. While countries can have thousands of political interest groups, most have only a handful of political parties.
Activities of Political Parties

Political parties in most countries engage in six broad activities, functioning to:
(1) broker policy ideas, (2) engage in political socialization, (3) link individuals and the political system, (4) mobilize and recruit activists, (5) coordinate governmental activities, and (6) organize opposition to the governing group.

Brokers of ideas. The first, most central activity of political parties is to serve as major brokers of political ideas. Many individuals and political groups have interests and demands regarding the policies of government. A crucial function of political parties is to aggregate and simplify these many demands into a few packages of clear policy alternatives. To the extent that political parties are effective in this activity, they dramatically reduce the complexity and scale of the political process for the decision maker, who must perceive and respond to the individual and group demands, and for the voter, who must select political leaders whose overall policy preferences are closest to his own.

While all political parties are brokers of ideas, parties can be differentiated into two broad categories—ideological and pragmatic—on the basis of their intensity of commitment to those ideas. Ideological parties hold major programmatic goals (e.g., egalitarianism, ethnic solidarity, Islamic fundamentalism) and are deeply committed to the full implementation of these goals. Ideological parties are usually extreme within the context of their particular political culture. The German Green Party, described in Focus in 3, is an example of an ideological party. Others include the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, the North Korean Communist Party, Sínn Fein in Northern Ireland, and the American Libertarian Party.

In contrast, pragmatic parties hold more flexible goals and are oriented toward moderate or incremental policy change. To achieve electoral success, pragmatic parties might shift their position or expand the range of viewpoints they encompass. Parties of the center are characteristically pragmatic parties. Examples include the Christian Democrats in Germany, the Congress Party in India, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in Mexico, and the Democratic Party in the United States.

Agents of political socialization. A related activity of political parties is their socialization of people into the political culture (see Chapter 4). In many political systems, most people develop a clear “party identification”, which means that a person has a strong attachment to one political party which he trusts to represent his political interests. The person’s political beliefs and actions are influenced by information that a political party provides or by the person’s perceptions of what the party supports. Even if a person does not have a strong party identification, political parties can be an important source of his political knowledge because they provide easily understood reference points regarding politically relevant information.

Links between individuals and the system. In its role as a linkage institution, a political party connects individuals and the political system. Most individuals rely on political groups to represent their interests within the political system. More than
Few political interest groups transform into successful, modern political parties. The Green Party in Germany has achieved this transformation. It began as a diverse set of loosely affiliated interest groups in the 1960s and declared itself a political party in 1980. Its electoral fortunes in the national legislature have gone up and down (starting with 3.7 percent of the seats in 1983, dropping as low as 0 percent of the seats in 1990, and currently holding 10.9 percent of the seats).

Where did the Green Party come from? Like all political groups, it began with people who wanted to influence politics. In the late 1960s, some West Germans were displeased with their government’s support of U.S. actions in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. Some also believed that their government, and the entire “establishment” in their society, had been corrupted in its quest for ever-expanding power and wealth. And some had other policy concerns, including the huge inequalities in wealth and welfare within their society and among countries, the discrimination against certain groups such as women and ethnic minorities, the frightful buildup of nuclear weapons by the superpowers, and the degradation of the environment.

People with these political beliefs, energized mainly by young countercultural Germans, demonstrated, marched, and formed local protest groups. Dissatisfied with the policies of the national parties, these groups began to elect some of their members to local office, especially in larger cities. The most dynamic people in these local groups developed a national network, and in 1980 they formed a national political party, Die Grünen (the Greens).

The common concern that attracted many individuals to the Green Party was its commitment to preserving the environment. In Europe, the Greens became the first important party representing the “self-expressive, postmaterialist values” discussed in Chapter 2.

The Green Party remains an ideological party, and its party platform includes strong anti-establishment elements. The party ideology emphasizes the transformation of Germany: from capitalism to a system in which workers own and control industry; from a militaristic, NATO-based country to one that becomes neutral, eliminates nuclear weapons, and stops preparing for war; and from a leading postindustrial society to one that uses only those technologies that do not damage the environment.

The Green Party had a substantial impact on German politics in the 1980s but struggled for electoral support in the early 1990s. In 1993, it merged with three East German progressive parties and is now called Alliance 90/The Greens. This merged party was a somewhat uneasy junior partner in a governing coalition with the large Social Democratic Party (1998–2005). It opted to remain outside the conservative-led “grand coalition” of parties (2005–2009) and also the current government, both under Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The future of the Alliance 90/Green Party at the national level remains uncertain. Germany is both the largest economy and the political leader within the European Union. Although the country is still attempting to improve the economic conditions of the formerly communist East Germany, which merged with West Germany in 1990, the population is generally prosperous and enjoys a high standard of living.
Focus in 3 (Continued)

Recent economic problems associated with the global economic slowdown and hostility toward the large immigrant population are among the policy issues that have created electoral swings toward more conservative political parties. However, the German citizenry is one of the world’s most secular and self-expressive in terms of political culture (recall Figure 2.1) and thus a portion of the electorate might continue to support the progressive policies of the Alliance 90/Green Party. Will it be outflanked by the more radical Left Party or absorbed by the large Social Democratic Party in the left center? Can it avoid self-destruction caused by the strong ideological differences among its moderate and more radical factions? Some analysts suggest that this party is too wild to last much longer.

FURTHER FOCUS:
1. What condition(s) might substantially increase or decrease the support for Germany’s Green Party?
2. What policy positions are most likely to benefit and harm electoral support for “green” parties in most countries?

other groups, political parties function in a general manner to formulate, aggregate, and communicate a coherent package of demands and supports. And, if the party gains political power, it can attempt to implement those demands on behalf of the individuals whose interests it serves. Thus, political parties greatly facilitate the individual’s sense of integration into the political process.

Mobilization and recruitment of political activists. The political party offers a well-organized and obvious structure within which a person can direct his political interests. It is a source of political information, of contact with other politically relevant individuals and groups, and of effective access to the political system. In many political systems, involvement with a political party is the primary mechanism through which individuals are drawn into roles as political foot soldiers and, ultimately, as political leaders. Often, political parties select the candidates for political positions or have the power to place people directly in positions within the political system. Whether one is considering a highly democratic polity such as Great Britain or an extremely nondemocratic one such as China, most or all individuals in key executive and legislative positions have achieved these positions through recruitment and selection by a political party.

Coordination of governmental operations. The fifth major activity of political parties is to coordinate the actions of the government. The political party can encourage or require its members to work together to achieve shared policy goals. It can establish an internal hierarchy, with party leaders (e.g., in the U.S. Senate, majority and minority leaders, whips, committee chairs) controlling the actions of party members in the conduct of government. The parties can also provide mechanisms for facilitating cooperation and regulating conflict among different parties. Leaders of several parties might form a coalition to secure majority support for certain policies. Such coalitions are especially important in legislatures in which no single party commands a majority. Political parties can also establish forms of power sharing in the conduct of government business. For example, the parties can agree
to formulate executive or legislative committees in a manner that reflects the political strength of the various parties.

**Organized sources of opposition.** Finally, where the political system has more than one party, the parties not participating in the governing group can serve as an explicit and organized source of opposition. The function is fully institutionalized in Great Britain, where the major out-of-power party in Parliament is explicitly designated as “Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition.” This party should oppose, but never obstruct, the actions of the governing party because the opposition party remains loyal to crown and country. In Britain, the opposition party is guaranteed control of a specified amount of time during legislative sessions. The opposition leaders receive salaries to serve as a “shadow government,” with a member of the opposition serving as the alternative and potential future replacement for each top official in the government. Hence, there is a shadow prime minister, a shadow minister of defense, and so on, who articulate what they would do if they held ministerial positions as the governing party.
Politics comes alive when people engage in political action. The participation in a protest march, the attempt to persuade a friend to share your political perspective, even the act of voting can be a moment of heightened experience. Acting alone or with others, the individual who takes political action can seek to serve his own most crass self-interest or the altruistic goal of global prosperity.

This analysis has indicated the diverse modes of political action as well as the rather modest levels of such actions reported by most people. Some people are shocked that so many citizens do not even bother to vote in a country such as the United States. Others are surprised that anyone really thinks that one person’s involvement in politics, whatever the level of commitment, will make any difference in the grander scheme of things. Political participation is a crucial topic for analysis because people’s actions are at the heart of the political process.

In this chapter, you have been introduced to the methods and findings of micropolitical analysis. To this point, our treatment of micropolitics has focused mainly on description and taxonomy—on what people believe about politics and on what political actions people undertake. For a richer analysis, however, we must at least attempt to answer the *why* questions: Why do people engage in a particular political action? Can we explain the apparent differences in people’s political beliefs? Explaining political beliefs and actions is the central topic in Chapter 4.

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**KEY CONCEPTS**

- associational interest group
- corporatism
- extremist-activists
- foot soldiers
- group
- ideal types
- ideological party
- interest group
- political activists
- political environment
- political participation
- political party
- political resource
- pragmatic party
- social movement
- taxonomic analysis

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FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

1. Why might the absence of a political action be viewed as an act of political participation?
2. Apart from voting, what political action do you think is most important?
3. Imagine that you could engage in a conversation with the political activist, contemporary or historical, who most fascinates you. Whom would you choose? Why? What would you ask him or her?
4. Should there be any limits on people’s actions to influence political decision makers? What principles can you offer to justify any such limitations?
5. What is the most unconventional political action in which you have engaged? If the same circumstances arose now, would you behave any differently? Why?

FOR FURTHER READING

Ackerman, Peter, and Jack DuVall. (2001). *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Non-Violent Conflict*. New York: Palgrave. A series of engaging case studies set in many countries (e.g., Chile, Denmark, Poland, Serbia) reveals how political activism grounded in strategies of nonviolence (e.g., strikes, protests, boycotts) has achieved major political change in the face of repressive regimes and dictatorial leaders.


Bohlen, J. (2000). *Making Waves: The Origins and Future of Greenpeace*. Montreal: Black Rose. The fascinating history of an international group, with a special focus on its activist leaders, committed to fighting governments and huge corporations in order to protect the environment.


Greenwood, Justin. (2003). *Interest Representation in the European Union*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan. An exploration of the roles, behaviors, and impacts of various types of interest groups (e.g., business, “the public,” professional groups, labor) in the context of the European Union (EU) as a supranational policymaking body that also must link with national governments and a multitude of interest groups.


Loader, Brian D., Paul G. Nixon, Dieter Rucht, and Wim van de Donk, Eds. (2004). *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens, and Social Movements*. London: Routledge. A useful set of essays exploring how the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) are being utilized in Europe by activists (citizen groups and social movements) in an attempt to mobilize other citizens and also pressure governments to respond to their demands.


Ma Bo. (1995). *Blood Red Sunset: A Memoir of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*. New York: Viking. A harsh, gripping autobiography of a young person drawn into the fervor of Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution. A Red Guard working on a hopeless program to create farmland in Mongolia, Ma Bo is transformed from a true believer into an embittered man fighting to clear himself from charges that he is a reactionary.


Meyer, David S., Valerie Jenness, and Helen Ingram, Eds. (2005). *Routing the Opposition: Social Movements, Public Policy, and Democracy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. A diverse set of essays examining the effects on public policies of social movements in policy areas such as prison reform, immigrants’ rights, and the organic agriculture movement. The studies explore the interactions between the very different approaches and agendas of policymakers and those participating in social movements.

Volgy, Thomas J. (1999). *Politics in the Trenches: Citizens, Politicians, and the Fate of Democracy*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. A political science professor offers a brief, highly readable and revealing description of the challenges and actual experiences of political leaders in American local politics, based on his many years as a local government elected official and his interviews with more than 300 elected officials.

**ON THE WEB**

- [http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm](http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm)
  This site offers a directory and description of U.S. political parties.

- [http://www.ifex.org](http://www.ifex.org)
  The International Freedom of Expression Exchange represents more than 80 organizations in 50 countries committed to human rights and civil liberties and describes current situations of concern.

- [http://www.idea.int/](http://www.idea.int/)
  The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) provides information about current democratic practices and various relevant databases for more than 100 countries, including comparative data on voter turnout for both presidential and parliamentary elections covering the period since 1945.

- [http://www.greenpeace.org/usa](http://www.greenpeace.org/usa)
  Greenpeace’s U.S. Web site describes some of the key initiatives taken by this global, action-oriented interest group.

- [http://www.uschamber.com/default](http://www.uschamber.com/default)
  This Web site of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world’s largest business federation, representing more than 3 million large and small businesses and, according to some, the most powerful lobby group in the United States.

- [http://www.protest.net](http://www.protest.net)
  This Web site provides a comprehensive calendar of upcoming protests and political rallies taking place around the world. The site lists upcoming protests by both geographic region and political issue.

- [http://www.internationalanswer.org](http://www.internationalanswer.org)
  This Web site serves as the electronic home of International ANSWER, a coalition of anti-war and antiracism groups, providing information about movements taking place throughout the international community.

- [http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/smc/smcframe.html](http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/smc/smcframe.html)
  This site, developed by Washington State University, provides a number of links and articles related to both American and global social movements.

- [http://www.amnesty.org/](http://www.amnesty.org/)
  Amnesty International has been dedicated to human rights causes for more than 40 years, with 2.2 million members in 150 countries. The site provides information on a variety of topics ranging from refugees to arms control.
http://civicyouth.org

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) promotes research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25. The organization’s Web site offers a variety of interesting data and studies on this topic, including research papers on youth participation and strategies for mobilizing young adults into political participation.