

# In the Shadow of Sidney Tarrow's Legacy

## Concepts in the Study of Protest Movements

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this essay is to provide the reader with basic terms and concepts in the literature of protest mobilization, since protests are the more tangible expression of a social movement. The essay opens with a discussion about cycles and waves of protests. After identifying the differences between these two, I explore more specific concepts like framing and diffusion of protests, their timing, scale shift, and repertoires of contention to finally end by proposing what can be considered as successes and failures of the protest movement. For each concept I provide a concise definition and an applied example. Most of the concepts' illustrations come from the Zapatista cycle of protests. However, I also incorporate examples from more recent protest movements in order to show the reader that while the study of social movements tends to adapt itself constantly to the events that shape the subfield, some concepts survive as useful tools in the discipline.

*Keywords:* protests, cycles, waves, framing, diffusion, timing, scale shift, repertoires, success and failures.

*A la sombra de Sidney Tarrow: Conceptos básicos para el estudio de los movimientos de protesta*

**Resumen:** El propósito de este ensayo es proveer al lector de conceptos básicos en la literatura sobre protestas, pues éstas son la forma de expresión más tangible de un movimiento social. El ensayo comienza con una la discusión sobre ciclos y olas de protesta; después de identificar las diferencias entre estos dos conceptos, describo conceptos más específicos como los marcos interpretativos y la difusión de protestas, su sincronización, los cambios de escala y los repertorios de contención, para así, finalizar discutiendo lo que

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puede considerarse como éxito o fracaso relativos en un movimiento de protesta. Para cada concepto proporciono una definición concisa y un ejemplo aplicado. La mayoría de las ilustraciones de los conceptos emanan del caso del movimiento zapatista. Sin embargo, también incluyo ejemplos de movimientos de protesta más recientes para mostrarle al lector que mientras los conceptos y la teoría sobre movimientos sociales tienden a adaptarse constantemente a los eventos que forjan el campo de estudio, algunos conceptos sobreviven como herramientas útiles de análisis en la disciplina.

*Palabras clave:* ciclo de protesta, ola de protesta, marcos interpretativos culturales, difusión, sincronización, cambios de escala, repertorios de contención, éxito y fracaso de los movimientos de protesta.

## Introduction

Since 2011, we have seen an upsurge in protest movements around the world. So much so, that by the end of that year, *Time* magazine had named ‘the protestor’ as person of the year. Ever since, social movements have regained consideration within the study of comparative social movements. Coinciding with the Arab Spring uprising, Latin American anti-austerity and anti-corruption campaigns in Southern Europe and Latin America, and other guerrilla movements in Africa, came out the third edition of Sidney Tarrow’s now classic book, *Power in Movement*, to account for the major transnational social movements that emerged with the beginning of the 2000s and to explain the growing role that the Internet began to play as another mobilizing tool. Although Tarrow was not able to include the anti-authoritarian campaigns of the Arab Spring, the anti-austerity movements in Spain and Greece, the anti-corruption protests in Brazil, or the protests against the violence and impunity generated by the drug war in Mexico, he did foresee their emergence in his description of new actors and mobilization repertoires taking part in a new “social movement society” (Meyer and Tarrow, eds., 1998) beyond the industrial West. This alternative social movement society has some of the elements that Tarrow highlights for the industrialized one. However, the social movement society outside the industrial West seems to be characterized by more confrontational and violent events, and these more confrontational and violent tactics and strategies are also being “conventionalized.”

Because of its evolving nature, the field of social movements must constantly adapt and refine its theories and methods to the phenomenon to analyze. An excellent—and beneficial for the discipline—example of this is precisely Tarrow’s book, *Power in Movement* now in its third edition. How-

ever, this adaptation has often involved the 'creation' of new explanatory concepts, as more often than not existing ones do not fully apply to explain new forms, tactics, demands, and causes of a social movement. Unfortunately, this practice has led to unnecessary jargon that may not only intimidate incoming social movement students, but also clog our understanding of protest movements. This should not occur if we take into account Tarrow's argument that "social movements do not invent forms of contention out of a whole cloth but instead innovate within and around culturally embedded repertoires" (p. 120).

In this essay, I aim to provide the reader with basic terms and conceptual ideas in the literature of protest mobilization, as protests are the more tangible expression of a social movement. The essay opens with a discussion about cycles and waves of protests. After identifying the differences between these two, I explore more specific concepts like framing and diffusion of protests, their timing, scale shift, and repertoires of contention to finally end by proposing what can be considered as successes and failures of the protest movement. Other more prominent scholars in the field have already defined these terms. What I propose to do here is to synthesize them and offer easy-to-comprehend concepts, while not jeopardizing their complexity.

Based on the treatment that each of the concepts has received in the literature, I provide a concise definition and an applied example. Most of the concepts' illustrations come from the Zapatista cycle of protests, as the Zapatista movement not only offers us great examples of protest waves, framing, and repertoires; protests' diffusion and timing, as well as mobilization scale shifts, but it is also the most salient social movement in Mexico in the last thirty years. I, however, incorporate more current examples of relevant mobilizing campaigns, such as the recent movements for peace and justice and against state corruption, impunity, and organized crime violence in Mexico.

The Zapatista movement emerged right after the uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN) in Chiapas, Mexico in January 1994. Zapatistas rapidly gained national and international salience given the ability of their spokesman, Subcomandante Marcos, to use the Internet to spread the word of a 'peaceful' guerrilla movement demanding basic human rights for the impoverished indigenous peoples of Mexico. As such, the Zapatista movement not only championed the cause of indigenous peoples in Mexico, but it also inspired other indigenous movements in Latin America, autonomy move-

ments in Spain and Italy, and became emblematic for the anti-globalization movement around the world. Most importantly for this book's theme, the Zapatista movement is also an example of a social movement that developed within a democratization process. Although Zapatistas were not among the political actors negotiating Mexico's electoral democratizing reforms, their cycle of protests soon attracted sympathy and support from other social sectors. Hence, the Zapatista movement effectively exerted enough pressure on those negotiating electoral reforms in the 1990s in Mexico although indirectly.

The disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa School of Rural Teachers (Escuela Normal Rural Raúl Isidro Burgos) and the assassination of another six people on September 26, 2014 in Iguala, Guerrero coincided with the media coverage of salient cases conflicts of interests and corruption scandals among Mexico's ruling elite (Aristegui, 2014). The response of the state to both of these events has been incompetent and full of decisions intended to cover up the impunity that prevails the Mexican political and justice systems. As a consequence, a broad social movement seems to be emerging, first, to demand thorough and transparent investigations, and second, to demand significant accountability to the three branches of government.<sup>1</sup>

It is still early to characterize the mobilization around these events as a social movement, as Tarrow (2011, p. 118) points out "a large number of protest events does not, in itself, constitute a social movement." However, as Tarrow also suggests, other actors beyond the traditional social movement ones have gotten involved in order to push for the reforms that the Mexican victims, sympathizers, and activists are pushing for. With the help of the Internet and the growing role of Mexico in international politics, transnational actors are gaining a more salient job within local movements. The irresponsible phrase "Ya me cansé" of Mexico's General Attorney on his first press conference on the Ayotzinapa case on November 7, 2014 produced the massive expression of disapproval #YaMeCansé that trespassed country boundaries thanks to Twitter. Two days before the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students, Mexico had just assumed the chairmanship of the Open Government Partnership ([opengovpartnership.org](http://opengovpartnership.org)). And the Interdependent and Inter-disciplinary Group of Experts of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission was allowed to get involved in the Ayotzinapa case

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.poresopropongo.mx/> [Accessed on: November 14, 2014].

investigations. Hence, the pressure for more transparency, less corruption and the empowerment of civil society has never been stronger and comes not only from a movement organized by the victims, their sympathizers, and supporters, but also from other actors and through more institutional channels beyond the traditional tactics of social movement actors.

Before this most recent effort, the *Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad*, organized by Javier Sicilia in 2011 had already protested against the violence generated by the war against organized crime and achieved significant reforms in favor of the victims (Gordillo García, 2015). However, because the leaders of both movements and other similar ones (*Iluminemos México*)<sup>2</sup> have not made an alliance it is still difficult to envision a stronger social movement sector emerging. Hopefully, the consequences of these mobilizing efforts will materialize soon enough to know whether we are witnessing an influential anti-corruption and impunity movement emerging in Mexico.

### **Cycles and Waves of Protest**

Sidney Tarrow (2011, p. 6) defines contentious politics as the moment in which “ordinary people—often in alliance with more influential citizens and with changes in public mood—join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents.” And that

contentious politics is triggered when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives to take action for actors who lack resources on their own. People contend through known repertoires of contention and expand them by creating innovations at their margins. When backed by well-structured social networks and galvanized by cultural resonant, action-oriented symbols contentious politics leads to sustained interaction with opponents—to social movements (p. 6).

In the previous edition of the book, he had described a cycle of contention as “a phase of heightened conflict across the social system: with a rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilized to less mobilized sectors; a rapid pace of innovation in the forms of contention; the creation of new or transformed collective action frames; a combination of organized

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iluminemosmexico.org.mx/>, June 5, 2016.

and unorganized participation; and sequences of intensified information flow and interaction between challengers and authorities” (p. 142). He clarifies, that all this increased contention is not only observable in industrial relations, but that a cycle of contention also occurs in the streets, villages, and schools; and that mobilization efforts travel from urban to more rural areas as a cycle of contention develops. In neither of these definitions, however, does Tarrow deal with cycles of protests specifically, but with contention in general. It is Ruud Koopmans (1993) the one who specifies that a significant peak of protest activity signals the beginning of a cycle of contention. Hence, a cycle of protests begins with a wave of protest events. This sudden emergence of protest activity may last several months, but Koopmans points out that it is usually followed by a receding tide. Protest activity is necessarily spontaneous and temporal because protest events require that participants devote time and resources outside of their daily routines to sustain them. In addition, as a cycle of protests develops, authorities respond differently to social movements’ actors and demands. These different state reactions affect a cycle of protests differently as well. Koopmans explains that in order to diminish and control the emerging contention, a state might decide to grant concessions to more moderate demands and actors while it represses more radical events and protesting groups. As a result, protests might become more conventional or violent depending on which group becomes more powerful based on the dissenting groups’ resources, the state responses, and as the cycle develops.

The ebb and flow of contentious protest mobilization help us identify whether we have a wave or a cycle of protests. While waves of protests tend to be a one-time phenomenon, cycle of protests may involve several surging and receding waves of protest mobilization. During a cycle, protests may augment, migrate to other places, get transformed, and finally decrease as tensions between challengers and authorities escalate and/or ease. As protests augment, they may become massive events and take different forms. The most common demonstrations are marches, sittings, rallies, road and building blockages, and strikes. As massive events, they gain great public opinion salience and the attention of the state against which they usually present their unattended claims. However, as mentioned before, massive contentious protest events are difficult to sustain over a long period. They require a lot of organization and mobilization resources. They also demand time from those protesting. Protest events’ salience also depends on the innovative capacity of those organizing them. The surprise

factor plays an important role in attracting protesters, sympathizers, and supporters, but also in generating enough pressure on the authorities to respond to their demands. Hence, since the nature of protests is spontaneous, they cannot last for a prolonged period.

A decay of protest mobilization is, however, not the final stage of a cycle of contention—although most of the times it is understood as such. While the flow of protest activity might indicate the end of a wave of protests, the transformation of contentious protests into other forms of more conventional mobilization indicates that the movement has entered another stage in its mobilization cycle. In addition, protests may vary across time and space, and as the protests' cycle spreads to other areas.

Changes in a cycle of protests also imply that contention is being framed differently. Different protest events and demands need to be framed differently in order to fit the interests of the contentious movement from which they emerged. Finally, contention tactics and strategies may also vary. Organized interest groups, sympathetic with a social movement, might decide to use their lobbying power. Other advocacy groups might decide to file lawsuits to advance the legal protection of their rights and interests. In general terms, we observe that as a cycle of protests winds down, other more conventional mobilization efforts arise and open opportunities for the representation of a movement's demands. However, depending on the social movement's agenda we might observe a moderation or radicalization of their events and claims as its protest cycle develops.

The role that cycles of protests play in democratization processes is central to the study of social movements in comparative politics. Because a democratic transition is characterized by unstable politics and political conditions, it is no surprise that it is accompanied by great political and social contention. The theory on democratic transitions tells us that an autocratic regime facing a crisis of their rule may decide to lift some restrictions on freedom of expression, organization, and information in order to prevent further conflict and loss of legitimacy (Beissinger, 2002; Przeworski, 1991).<sup>3</sup> This opens the opportunity to aggrieved sectors in society to organize and express their demands collectively and publicly. Hence, protest events will surge as civil society resurrects (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986). However,

<sup>3</sup> This is the case when autocrats decide not to respond with stronger repression and/or reformers and liberalizers do not radicalize their transitional movement into a full-blown civil war (Przeworski, 1991).

protests within a transition should recede as free and fair elections become routinized and ballots replace protests as the main mechanism to express the citizenry's interests, more or less in an inverted U-shape form as Peter Eisinger (1973) first suggested.

There are, however, other scenarios. Contention might emerge initially in reaction to the lack of political opportunities (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999; Hipsher, 1998; Jenkins and Schock, 1992; Oberschall, 2000; Schock, 1999). As the structure of the political system changes and new opportunities open up, social movement actors respond first with more protests, encouraged by their perceived success in pressuring for openings (Tarrow, 2011). Later as democracy becomes "the only game in town" (Linz and Stepan, 1996), social movements will take advantage of institutional openings to advance their demands further without having to recur to contentious activity (Pickvance, 1995).

While these findings hold for studies at the national level, my own research suggests that these findings might vary at the local level. As a democratic regime begins to consolidate, that is, during the first ten years after more transparent and fair elections take place, political openings at the national and local levels tend to diminish contentious activity. However, contentious protests tend to get concentrated in the remaining closed political environments. In other words, where free and fair elections have not been able to take previous authoritarian incumbent elites, protest activity tends to be higher than in scenarios where elections have brought new political actors into power (Inclán, 2008; 2009; 2009a). These findings hold even for organizations sympathetic to those in power and regardless of the number of political parties competing in the elections (Inclán, 2012).

The waves of protests against organized crime violence in Mexico in recent years may also be another illustration of protest activity launched against the irresponsiveness and repression of the authorities. While Mexico's electoral democracy has become routinized, it has also failed to reach the liberal goals that characterize a consolidated democratic regime, as neither civil liberties nor political rights beyond the act of voting have been promoted or protected.

In order to better understand how waves and cycles of protests develop, in the following sections I discuss how protests diffuse to other areas; how and when they might shift in scale; why protests' timing, repertoire, and framing play relevant roles in a social movement's effectiveness; and when and why can we expect a protest movement to succeed or fail.

## Protests' Diffusion and Shifts of Scale

In 2010, Rebecca Kolins Givan, Kenneth M. Roberts, and Sarah A. Soule edited an entire volume on the study of social movement's diffusion. According to them, the diffusion of protests refers to the idea of the spreading of social movements from one site to another or from one time period to another. It comprises more than a mere contagion effect, as within a social movement's diffusion, not only protests spread, but their framing, repertoires, organizational allies, and means of communication expand as well. It should not be confused with the simultaneously planned protest activity across cities, although this is part of a movement's protest diffusion, because the concept comprises the idea of a delayed dispersion of the movement demands, framing, tactics, etc. It should also not be confused with the idea of "shifts in scale," which these same authors define as a process that entails the enlargement of the scope of a social movement's contentious activity, the articulation of a movement's agenda in larger political arenas. A scale-shift usually occurs when a local movement reaches national or even international salience. Diffusion is a crucial element in a movement's scale-shift. Because as these authors highlight, in order to understand the mechanisms behind the diffusion of a social movement, we need to look at the underlying networks of social movement organizations, their brokers, and the available communication channels that will facilitate the dispersion of tactics, frames, images, and norms.

One of the first social movements that experienced significant diffusion and shifts in scale was the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, which spread and inspired other indigenous rights movements inside and outside the country (Mattiace, 1997; Velasco, 2003). The electronic diffusion of the Zapatista movement also pioneered the use of digital social networks and mass communication media. Its scale-shift rapidly brought the EZLN, which started as a local indigenous guerrilla, to become the main representative of the Indigenous Movement in Mexico and indirectly triggered democratizing reforms (Johnston, 2000; Yashar, 1999). The Zapatista cause, frame and images also rapidly reached and influenced other audiences, as well as local, national, and transnational movements (Collier and Collier, 2005; Hellman, 1999; Moksnes, 2005; Schulz, 1998).

With the current means of electronic communication the diffusion and scale-shifts of social movements occur almost instantaneously. In recent years, we have observed a rapid transnational diffusion of Occupy

movements in the United States and Europe, and the effervescent scale-shift of what became to be known as the Arab Spring in the Middle East. In all these examples we can find not only escalation of a movement to higher political arenas, but also reorganizational efforts at lower levels than its initiation, as scale-shifts do not only occur upwards, but also downwards (Tarrow, 2010). Movements composing the Arab Spring have successfully triggered the fall of various dictatorial regimes. Democratizing outcomes of these movements are still to be defined. However, local rebellions soon became liberalization movements and/or civil wars, while at the same time, these rebel groups have been forced to reorganize their mobilization efforts locally in the wake of major repressive state reactions.

While the Internet is a mobilization technology relatively cheap and easy to access, it also has an impressive outreach capacity. Nevertheless, its effectiveness on recruiting and passing from virtual to real mobilization still depends on the social and economic power of participants, sympathizers, and supporters. Online media have been crucial to coordinate protest movements in countries where freedoms of expression and organization are threatened if not prohibited. Such have been the cases of the Green Revolution of Iran in 2009 or the Arab Spring in Egypt in 2011. However, because online mobilization depends on the available connectivity of the country, on the accessibility of the service to the population at large, as well as on the level of political involvement of Internet users, protest movements that begin online will have better chances to succeed in more resourceful societies than in more socioeconomically and politically deprived ones (Tarrow, 2011; Tilly and Wood, 2009). Nevertheless, the Internet has increasingly become the preferred mobilizing tool for social movements that lack material resources but whose human resources have the strategic vision and tactical skills to use them effectively (Tarrow, 2011).

The emergence of the Zapatistas in 1994 on the Internet made it a transnational movement from the very beginning. Subcomandante Marcos pioneered the use of the Internet as a mobilizing and fundraising tool. His savvy use of the Internet, not only enabled Zapatistas to create a strong transnational solidarity network around the Zapatista cause, but it also made the movement an icon to indigenous in the region and anti-globalization movements around the world. Nevertheless, when it comes to its influence in mobilizing indigenous peasants within the region of

conflict, one cannot argue that the internationalization of the Zapatistas played a significant role, as most rural communities in Chiapas still remained unconnected (Inclán, 2009).

### **Protests' Framing**

When social movements' scholars study frames and framing processes, they refer to the mental process through which people construct meanings about people, events, and ideas that surround them. The meaning that each person gives to what happens around her allows them to identify and make sense of these events, actors and ideas. In other words, "frames" allow people to interpret the reality they live in. "Frames" also allow individuals to foresee potential future developments or outcomes (Della Porta and Diani, 1999). Hence framing is an active and purposive action on the part of the individual (Benford and Snow, 2000). Frames and framing processes do not just appear in a given society and culture, its members create them. As such, interpretative frames are generated by individuals as well as collectivities; by the State, civic organizations, political parties, communities and families.

In 1988, David Snow and Robert Benford described the different processes of framing that occur within a social movement. They looked at the type of frames that social movement actors would create (diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational) and how, for these frames to be successful in mobilizing supporters and sympathizers, they need to align with those frames of the public at large. This means that those interpretative frames created by social movement actors need to resonate with the interpretative frames of their potential sympathizers and supporters in order to generate sufficient mobilization that would strengthen a given social movement.

Hence, framing protests is a very delicate process. Because protests are usually contentious forms of expressing a social movement's demands, they require that their organizers frame their demands in a way that would attract numerous protest participants, as the power of protests relies in their numbers. Framing protests also requires that protests organizers anticipate what would be the reaction of the authorities and potential countermovement actors and groups. For protest frames to be successful they need to strongly resonate with the general public's interpretation of the reality they are living at the moment protests are launched. Sustaining a protest movement also requires that its framing adjusts to the responses of the authori-

ties and countermovement actors. Otherwise, a movement risks losing support and strength. As a movement develops and sustains a prolonged wave of protests, it may lose legitimacy not only due to a failure in the adjustment of its frame, but also due to the normal disenchantment that every movement faces if it does not go further than massive protest events, but no achievements.

As mentioned before, a democratization process opens great opportunities for protest movements to emerge and develop. The opportunities for framing new demands are also great during a democratic transition, as every previously neglected group, or organization can frame its needs and interests within a democracy-seeking frame. The liberalization of civil liberties and political rights allows minorities and excluded groups to bring their agenda forwards and fight to become influential political actors in the new regime. Radicals and moderates will try to realign their frames with those in society and among political elites leading a transition process. Depending on the course of the transition, some frames will resonate more than others and this allows us to identify which groups will benefit from a democratic transition. Here again, a social movement's framing becomes a very sensitive process. The success of their movement's agenda will depend on it.

The emergence of the Zapatista movement after the EZLN uprising in January 1994 in Chiapas, Mexico is, again, a good example. Through the voice and communiqués of Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatista cry *¡Ya Basta!* was heard almost immediately after the initial violent events in national and international news networks giving the group great salience. The dramatic public appearance of the EZLN in 1994 marked the beginning of the Zapatista movement and made it one of Mexico's most influential social movements of the last 30 years. Its relevance goes well beyond re-awakening the indigenous movement in Mexico. It also revived civil society and pressed for the democratization of the country. The Zapatista movement even catalyzed indigenous movements in other countries and the transnational anti-globalization movement across the globe. Hence, according to framing theorists (Snow and Benford, 1988; 1992), Zapatistas' clever frame soon resonated with the larger mobilizing sentiments of indigenous peoples inside and outside of Mexico, with larger mobilizing motivations for democratization, and with transnational movements against neoliberal economic policies. In addition, as many other scholars have already pointed out before, by pioneering in the use of digital media, the Zapatista discourse soon became an international mas-

ter frame for all these other movements (Collier and Collier, 2005; Hellman, 1999; Moksnes, 2005; Schulz, 1998).

The Zapatista discourse underwent significant transformations over time. While the first Zapatista communiqué was a clear declaration of war against the Mexican federal army and it was framed under the Marxist concepts of class struggles between Chiapanecan peasants and landowning elites, the Zapatista discourse soon transformed its claims within the search for autonomy rights for the indigenous peoples of Mexico (Velasco, 2003). Because the EZLN uprising coincided with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the inclusion of Mexico to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the movement's cause soon became an emblem to the anti-globalization movement. Later, and according to their own local autonomy seeking campaign and their transnational solidarity networks, Zapatistas advocated in favor of the Palestinian cause, the movement against the war in Iraq, and finally the abolition of the State as the hegemonic political system and the implementation of local direct forms of democracy instead. Subcomandante Marcos went as far as taking issue against Spanish attorney Baltasar Garzón's case against the separatist group ETA in the Vasque region. More recently, as Zapatistas refocused their mobilization efforts on constructing their autonomous authorities, they also reshaped their discourse frame towards that of direct democracy advocacy. *La Otra Campaña* (The Other Campaign) denounced the State as a hegemonic and exploitative political system and advocated for local libertarian forms of interest representation.

Other great examples of successful master frames are first, the 2011 Movimiento por la Paz con Justicia y Dignidad, which generated a pro-victims master frame, against organized crime violence, and in favor of justice, and secondly, the 2012 student movement *#YoSoy132*, which framed their demands for freedom of expression under anti-corruption and impunity frames. Both of these movements preceded the 2014 Ayotzinapa movement and helped this most recent mobilizing effort for justice find its framing niche.

The disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students coincided with the revelation of corruption scandals within Mexico's ruling elite. Together both events have framed the new demands for transparency and justice within the country in recent years. However, we have still yet to witness the reframing of the Ayotzinapa case around the previous similar movements against the violence generated by organized crime and the state's war against it. The Ayotzinapa movement has not embraced the frame generated by Sicilia's

pro-victims movement. While the Ayotzinapa movement chant “*¡Vivos se los llevaron! ¡Vivos los queremos!*” (Alive they were taken! Alive we want them back!) is a resurrected slogan from the movements in the 1960s and 1970s, and as such it frames the Ayotzinapa claim within the larger movement against forced and unexplained disappearances, the Ayotzinapa movement has yet to include the more than the 25 000 officially recognized victims of the war on drug in Mexico or the demands already framed by the Movement for Peace with Justice and Dignity in 2011. In their chants, participants of the Ayotzinapa demonstrations count from 1 to 43 to claim for justice. They also shout: “*¡No somos todos, nos faltan 43!*” (We are not complete, we are missing 43!). In both cases, they could include the other 25 000. Similarly, if a common front against injustice, impunity, and corruption is to be formed in Mexico, the other movements of organized crime victims need to start making alliances with the relatives of the Ayotzinapa students. Socioeconomic and class differences need to be put apart if Mexicans want to have justice for all. Economic and political elites, who fear the Ayotzinapa movement because of its closeness to the more belligerent teachers union (Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación, CNTE), need to conceive the movement as one conformed by parents of disappeared children, and victims of organized crime, corruption and impunity, if successful campaigns for transparency, justice, and accountability are to succeed.

### **Protests' Repertoire and Timing**

Protest movements so far, have taught us that protests usually vary from artistic performances, marches, and rallies, to sittings and strikes, road and building blockages, land and building invasions and seizures, property damages, riots, to clear acts of aggression against other humans. However, the choice of picking one over another depends on the framing of protests and demands, the goals of the movement, and the timing of protests within the cycle or wave of protests.

In 1986, Charles Tilly considered the repertoire of contention as the whole set of means that a group has for making claims of different kinds on different individuals and groups. Hence, the repertoire of a protest movement refers to the type of contentious actions that social movement actors plan and launch as part of their protest events. However, the repertoire of contention is subject to the political and cultural systems in which they take place. It depends on the movement's framing, its previous experience

with contentious activity, the contentious actions that are 'allowed' by the system, the prevailing citizen's rights, and the standards of justice (Tilly, 1986). Of course, there will be cases in which a social movement launches non-conventional contentious activities as part of their innovative tactics. These non-conventional protest events tend to call a lot of attention and help the movement to gain salience. However, by launching not-allowed contentious protests, a movement risks not only repressive actions from the state, but also de-legitimation of their cause. If protest events are considered or framed as too radical by the authorities or countermovement actors, a protest movement might lose support and sympathizers.

What type of protest event to launch and when to launch it is what is understood as the timing of protests. Although most of the times protests are reactive events to an act or policy that protesters perceive as restricting their rights, protest events are planned actions. Hence, they require organization and mobilization efforts to launch them in the most pertinent moment to attract supporters and sympathizers, but also to attract the most attention possible from the authorities and the public at large. Protests need to be well timed so their salience and the pressure to get a favorable response from the authorities are magnified.

The same logic applies to choosing the type of event in the repertoire of protests to launch. When we look at the Zapatista cycle of protest, we not only observe that timing of protests followed important events that surrounded the conflict in Chiapas from 1994 to 2003, but also how Zapatistas adjusted their repertoire of protests at different times during the cycle following both surrounding events as well as the development of the movement and the negotiations with the Mexican federal government.

As I explained in previous studies (Inclán, 2008, 2012), because the demand for land was a major, if not the main cause for the Zapatista uprising, land seizures were staged during and right after the uprisings. Land invasions subsequently diminished following an agreement to resolve the problem signed later that year by government representatives, the affected landowners, and the invading peasants. Zapatista protesters then turned to marches, meetings, roadblocks, and seizures of official buildings. Most of the meetings took place in support of the peace talks going on between the EZLN and the Mexican government from 1994 to 1996. Roadblocks, marches, and building seizures arose from conflicts following local and national elections in 1994, 1997, 2000, and 2003, and were targeted towards local and state authorities for fraud or for not fulfilling their campaign promises once in office.

In September 1996, dialogue between the EZLN and the federal delegation broke down after President Ernesto Zedillo failed to recognize the San Andrés Accords that had been signed in February granting autonomous rights to the indigenous peoples of Mexico. The EZLN then turned to a vow of silence as a resistance campaign. The Zapatista silence reduced the cycle of protest to its lowest point in 1997. By this time, military presence in the region had also increased significantly in response to the massacre of forty-five Zapatista sympathizers by anti-Zapatista groups in Acteal, Chenalhó on December 22, 1997. Although the military presence helped to contain the violence, protests flared again, now demanding recognition of the San Andrés Accords and withdrawal of the army from the region.

Another wave of protests was triggered after the victory in 2000 of Vicente Fox, the first non-PRI president in over 70 years. Fox's victory brought new hope to the Zapatista movement because of his promises to honor the San Andrés Accords and the Indigenous Rights Bill (*Ley Cocopa*) drafted after the Accords in 1996 by the *Comisión de Concordia y Pacificación*. Protests recurred in support of the Indigenous Rights Bill, but the Zapatista cycle of protest lost momentum in 2001 after the Mexican Congress passed a diluted version of the bill. Feeling betrayed again by the Mexican government, Zapatistas turned their efforts to setting up their own autonomous ruling juntas, the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno*.

While the *#YoSoy132* and the *Ayotzinapa* movements began as reactions of specific events, as time has passed, their demonstrations have either faded away—as in the case of *#YoSoy132*—or they are becoming monthly rituals. The first demonstrations in solidarity with the *Ayotzinapa* victims were reactions to the state unfortunate and incompetent responses on the case. The first anniversary of the *Ayotzinapa* movement just passed. The media estimated 80000 participants in the first commemorative march. However, the movement seems to have lost its reactive mobilizing momentum when it comes to react to the authorities actions around the case.

## Success and Failure of Protests

Most of the studies analyzing the relative success or failure of social movements focus on their impact on public policies (Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan, 1992; Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, and Su, 2010; Amenta, Dunleavy, and Bernstein, 1994). However, identifying the relative success or failure of a social movement requires more than simply looking at the impact of the

movement on policy (Burnstein, Einwohner, and Hollander, 1995) or on whether or not social movement organizations were able to gain partial or substantive concessions from the authorities. Understanding the success or failure of a movement requires knowledge on the political contexts, the values and beliefs of the movement in general, and of the organizations and individuals in particular (Banaszak, 1996).

Goals of social movements can be obtaining immediate concessions from the local, state and national executives, influencing the legislative process or judicial decisions, or calling attention to a socio-cultural grievance or humanitarian cause. Goals of social movement organizations also include gaining salience as an influential political actor inside and outside the movement, forming a social movement organization, recruiting and training activists and leaders, mobilizing support and sympathizers, fund raising, or influencing public opinion. Individuals participating in a social movement might be interested in getting politically involved, working for their community and their organization, becoming activists and/or leaders.

The same logic applies to the identification of the success or failure of protest events. Protests success range from being able to hold a protest event, avoiding harsh repressive actions, to accomplishing their most immediate and direct objective. For a workers' strike, a clear sign of success might be to reach an agreement with their employer. However, for a post-electoral protest, its goal might be to influence the electoral court decision. There are also the symbolic protests whose main goal is the commemoration of a past event.

The goals of protest events' organizers might or might not coincide with those of protestors. As the later might take part in a protest to get the experience, to accompany their relatives, partners, friends or colleagues, to get a compensation for their participation, because they are required to do so or because they believe in the protest cause, to name a few. Similarly, a social movement organization might consider the success of a protest event depending on the role they play in it and what they are able to get from it: concessions, sympathizers, supporters.

The success or failure of a protest event also depends on its framing, its timing, its place within a cycle or wave of protest, and the type of event within a social movement's repertoire of contention. In most cases, influential social movements have cultural and institutional effects and consequences beyond those planned by its organizers, supporters, and adherents. They may be able to influence public opinion (Banaszak and Ondercin, 2016), framing and

reframing mobilizing issues (Benford and Snow, 2000), gaining and losing allies, and shaping and reshaping political institutions (Giugni, 1998).

The movements that conform the Arab Spring offer great variety of successes and failures. While we have seen some of these mobilizations toppling down old authoritarian regimes like in Egypt and Libya, others have failed or have yet to succeed, like in Syria. Still even the success stories have followed very different paths and in all cases we have yet to observe whether democratic governments will replace former authoritarian power structures.

Similarly, *#YoSoy132* has so far succeeded in reviving the student movement in Mexico with new demands and agendas. During the last presidential campaign, the movement succeeded in forcing the presidential candidates, except for Peña Nieto, to hold a virtual town-hall debate. Using the Internet, students presented questions to the candidates who were sitting across each other in a lounge-style TV set. Another student served as moderator. While this debate is the first independently organized debate in electoral campaigns history in Mexico, we still have to see whether it will set a precedent for future electoral campaigns in the country. There are also high expectations for the movement to become a new influential social actor in the consolidation of the Mexican young democracy.

The Ayotzinapa movement has already reached a few gains. First, had not been for the almost immediate presence of the media covering the tragic and violent events on the night of the students' disappearance, it would have been easy for the authorities and the more conservative media to present the victims as 43 more casualties of the war on drugs. Second, massive demonstrations in Mexico City that followed the inept state responses to the case have forced the government to open the investigation to independent observers and experts. They have also forced state authorities to hold meetings with the victims' relatives, every time they demand one, despite the President's call to "get over it." However, the investigation is still going on. We have still to witness whether there will be any progress in terms of justice, transparency, and accountability in the case and the fight against corruption and impunity in the country.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was to provide the reader with clear definitions of the main concepts used in the study of protest movements. Namely, the essay covered descriptions and applications of cycles and waves of protests,

their shifts in scale and diffusion over time, the protest repertoire available to protestors, the importance of protests' timing and framing, and finally, the factors that affect the success or failure of protest movements. After reviewing all these concepts separately, the reader, however, should be able to identify that they are interrelated. A cycle of protests necessarily begins with a wave of protest events, which increases as different forms of protest events take place and contagiously migrate from highly mobilized to less mobilized environments. As a protest movement shifts to a larger scale, it gains public opinion salience as well as the attention of the state. The radicalization of protest events and demands may also prevent a protest movement from gaining attention and support. Protest demands need to resonate with those of the larger public in order to attract members, sympathizers, and supporters. A protest movement's demands also need to resonate with the larger public interest in order to gain the response of the state against which most of the times these demands and protests are aimed. Hence, protestors need to also take into account external factors to frame and time their mobilizing efforts. Surrounding domestic and international events can also frame, trigger or inhibit protest events. Finally, the success or failure of a cycle of protest is also partly explained by all these concepts. However, in order to evaluate the relative success of a social movement, one needs to first know what the movement's goals are. In any case the salience of a given movement can be measured by the size of its protests events, its geographical diffusion, its local, national or even transnational scale, the resonance of the framing of their demands with those of the public at large, and its effectiveness to attain its goals vis-à-vis a given state. 

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