

ZA0963

Politische Indikatoren (Panel 1974-1976)

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Aggressive Political Participation

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

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Published by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey

In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press,
Guildford, Surrey

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data will be
found on the last printed page of this book

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Printed in the United States of America by Princeton
University Press, Princeton, New Jersey

To
MADELON

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am particularly grateful to Rudolf Wildenmann for his sage advice and continual encouragement since our initial discussions about this research while we were colleagues at the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1972. The project, entitled "Gesellschaftliche und Politische Indikatoren für Unterstützung/Opposition, Zufriedenheit/Unzufriedenheit und Beherrschung/Machtlosigkeit," was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft; I am naturally grateful to the DFG, for awarding the sizable grant that made the work possible, and to the project sponsors who administered the grant from the University of Mannheim, Professors Wildenmann and Wolfgang Hirsch-Weber. In addition to the DFG, two other institutions that provided financial support are deserving of thanks: the University of Mannheim, which invited me to take up a visiting appointment in the summer of 1972, at which time the research proposal was written; and the Ford Foundation, from which I received a Faculty Research Fellowship for the academic year 1972-1973 that enabled me to remain at the University of Mannheim and begin work on the pilot study phase of the project.

Quite a number of individuals contributed to this study in important ways. Jonathan Pool of the University of Washington (formerly at the State University of New York at Stony Brook) participated as a co-investigator in the pilot study, carried out in 1973-1974, when many versions of the interview schedule were proposed, tested, and revised. Without his unusual linguistic talents, the final version of the interview schedule would have been much the poorer. Sampling, interviewing, and preparation of the data tapes was carried out under the very able direction of Yola Laupheimer and Dorothea Reppart of Infratest, München. The quality control exercised by them over the "guts" of the study was first-rate. Helpful research assistance during the pilot study was provided by Walter Wehrli of the

Zentrum für Umfragen, Methoden and Analysen (ZUMA). Hans-Jürgen Hippler, Inge Kostka, and Silke Wollweber assisted in the research at ZUMA during the main phase of the project. The director of ZUMA, Max Kaase, is deserving of special thanks for making the excellent resources of that institution available to me during the many summers that I spent in Mannheim working on the analysis of the data.

Last but not least, I am indebted to Tom Jukam of the State University of New York at Stony Brook for the give and take of many lengthy discussions that benefited this book; and to those who read all or parts of it in one version or another, including Ray DuVall of the University of Minnesota, Vladimir Konečni of the University of California, San Diego, Bill Linehan and Joe Tanenhaus of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Erich Weede and Uli Widmaier of the University of Mannheim, and John Wahlke of the University of Iowa.

Aggressive
Political
Participation

and of itself, "strong" political behavior is just a warning signal. But in the longer run the probability that a regime will stand, change, or fall certainly is linked to the incidence of unconventional action. Hence to get at the question of *why* political systems stand, change, or fall, one will want to have an understanding of what causes variation in the incidence of "strong" political behavior.

It should be emphasized that the labels "strong" and "weak" are not to be taken in any pejorative sense. "Strong" political behavior is neither better nor worse than "weak" behavior—indeed, from the perspective of those committed to a given regime, "weak" political behavior is always the preferred mode of interest representation and conflict resolution. Furthermore, what constitutes "strong" or "weak" behavior will vary with regime type. In inclusive hegemonies, to follow Robert Dahl's terminology,⁵ where the right to vote is widespread but electoral competition to contest the government is not allowed, many campaign activities that are ordinary in polyarchies become "strong" political behavior; by contrast, such campaign activities are "weak" behavior in polyarchies.

Let us turn now to a more precise definition of the kind of "strong" political behavior under scrutiny in this study. Drawing on Douglas Hibbs' definition of mass political violence,⁶ aggressive political participation will be defined as behavior that possesses these properties: (1) it must be anti-regime in the sense of deviating from legal or formal regime norms regarding political participation, that is, it must be political action that is illegal; (2) it must have political significance, that is, it must be an attempt to influence the government that inconveniences it or disrupts its normal functioning; (3) it must involve group activity on the part of non-elites. Aggressive political participation, by this definition, may or may not involve violence. If it does not involve violence, it will be called *civil disobedience*, as distinguished from *political violence*. Excluded

⁵ Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pp. 7–8.

⁶ Douglas A. Hibbs, Jr., *Mass Political Violence* (New York: Wiley, 1973), p. 7.

by this definition are—in addition to conventional electoral politics—legal protest actions such as boycotts; ordinary labor strikes without political objectives; and individualistic actions such as refusal of military service and assassinations. Coups d'état by dissident factions of the military are excluded because they involve intra-elite conflict. Also excluded is violence initiated by agents of the government to repress dissident groups, since, although collective in nature, this normally (though not always) is legally sanctioned aggressive action, and by definition is behavior engaged in by elites.⁷

1.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

What kinds of objective measurement procedures are feasible for the study of aggressive political participation at the micro level? Experimentation under controlled laboratory conditions raises ethical problems.⁸ This leaves non-experimental field research in natural settings. There are two ways objectively to

⁷ In Eckstein's terminology, my focus here is on insurgents instead of incumbents—see Harry Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," in *Anger, Violence, and Politics*, ed. Ivo K. Feierabend, Rosalind L. Feierabend, and Ted Robert Gurr (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 17–18; originally published in *History and Theory*, 4 (no. 2, 1965), 133–162. Certainly, as he argues, to predict the likelihood of internal war it is necessary to consider characteristics of incumbents as well as insurgents. Characteristics of incumbents will be taken up in the last chapter.

⁸ Psychologists have sidestepped the ethical constraints on aggression research by developing a "shock" paradigm for the experimental study of interpersonal aggression in the laboratory. This involves use of an "aggression machine" that, so the subject of the experiment is told, will deliver electric shocks of varying intensity to a "victim" (really a confederate of the experimenter) seated in an adjacent room. The experiments usually are conducted under the guise of studying the effect of punishment on learning, wherein the subject, or "teacher," is instructed to shock the confederate, or "learner," every time a wrong response is made in a learning task. Those who administer especially painful shocks or press the shock button for especially long periods of time are considered to be acting aggressively. Of course, unknown to the subject, the shock electrodes attached to the victim are inoperative. For a discussion of this paradigm, see Albert Bandura, *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), pp. 120–139. The shock paradigm would appear to have limited applicability to the study of collective political aggression.

measure participation in aggressive political action by means of field research, but only one would appear generally practical. One method maximizes objectivity by having a trained corps of research personnel closely monitor the behavior of individuals over a period of time. This method has been used, for example, to study aggressive behavior among adolescents attending a summer camp.⁹ However, to study aggressive political behavior among adults, this direct observation method would not only usually be impractical but, more importantly, would constitute an unconscionable invasion of privacy. The alternative is to rely on indirect evidence gathered from individuals' self-reports of their behavior, given through self-completion questionnaires or personal interviews.

The data used here come from personal interviews carried out with 2,662 adults in the Federal Republic of Germany during the fall of 1974 by *Infratest*, 49 percent of whom were re-interviewed in the fall of 1976.¹⁰ The interview protocol, averaging slightly over 60 minutes to complete, represents the culmination of a research program begun in the United States in 1968. The attitude and behavior measures are instruments that have emerged from a process of trial-and-error testing. In the course of three separate studies, two done in the United States, one in the Federal Republic, various ways of operationalizing the attitudes and behavior of concern here were explored.¹¹ On the basis of this research, and attention to the results from

⁹ See Muzafer Sherif and Carolyn W. Sherif, *Groups in Harmony and Tension* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953).

¹⁰ The interview schedule was prepared by the author and Jonathan Pool. Helpful advice was received from many colleagues at the University of Mannheim, especially Rudolf Wildenmann and Uwe Schleth, and from Yola Laupheimer, director of the fieldwork, and Dorothea Reppart, assistant director, both of the Economics Research Bureau, Infratest GmbH & Co., Munich.

¹¹ Reports of findings from these studies include Edward N. Muller, "Correlates and Consequences of Beliefs in the Legitimacy of Regime Structures," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 14 (August 1970), 392-412; Muller, "The Representation of Citizens by Political Authorities: Consequences for Regime Support," *American Political Science Review*, 64 (December 1970), 1149-1166; Muller, "A Test of a Partial Theory of Potential for Political Violence," *American Political Science Review*, 66 (September 1972), 928-959; Bernard N.

parallel studies conducted by others,¹² those instruments which appeared to be the most promising were selected for inclusion in the interview protocol.

There were twelve sampling sites in all, four rural, two urban, and six university communities.¹³ Each was selected because, in the aggregate, opposition to the regime had been manifested there during the preceding five years at higher than average levels. In the rural and urban sites, opposition had taken the form of voting support for extreme left and extreme right political parties; in the universities it had taken the form of civil disobedience and political violence.

Two major considerations of the research design were (1) to elicit variation in individual attitudes and behavior sufficient for reliable multivariate analysis and (2) to investigate the

Grofman and Edward N. Muller, "The Strange Case of Relative Gratification and Potential for Political Violence: The V-Curve Hypothesis," *American Political Science Review*, 67 (June 1973), 514-539; Muller, "Behavioral Correlates of Political Support," *American Political Science Review*, 71 (June 1977), 454-467.

¹² I have benefited especially from interaction with colleagues at several conferences and meetings of the Research Group on Political Alienation and Support, coordinated by Jack Dennis of the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

¹³ The rural sites were four small villages: Friederichskoog and Neuenkirchen in northern Germany, Erpolzheim and Mauchenheim in southern Germany. From these sites a total of 569 persons was interviewed, of which 479 were drawn randomly from lists of eligible voters, and 90 were drawn from lists of community influentials obtained from discussions with the mayor and other community leaders by the chief of the team of interviewers for each site. The urban sites were working-class sections of Bremen in northern Germany and Nürnberg in southern Germany. From these sites a total of 990 persons were interviewed, of which 928 were drawn randomly from lists of eligible voters, and 62 were drawn from lists of community influentials compiled from nominations submitted by persons in the eligible voters sample who were active in local organizations. The university sites were six of the major West German universities: Berlin, Bochum, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, Köln, and München. A total of 1,104 students and faculty from the arts and sciences at these universities was interviewed, of which 956 were drawn by quota sampling, and 148 were drawn from lists of influential persons in various university organizations compiled from nominations submitted by persons in the quota sample. Quota sampling was used in the universities because, in previous studies of students, it had been difficult to acquire a proper sampling frame. A detailed report of the sampling procedure (in German) is available from Dorothea Reppart, Infratest, Wirtschaftsforschung, 8 München 21, Landsberger Strasse 338, Federal Republic of Germany.

effect of community context on relationships between attitudinal variables and behavior. An additional consideration was to avoid completely sacrificing representativeness at the altar of enhanced variation. While the communities chosen are by no means representative of West Germany as a whole, they do capture basic regional and community-size differences.

TWO

Explanations of Aggressive Political Participation

The study of aggressive domestic political conflict has a venerable tradition in political science and sociology, and has yielded an abundance of explanatory propositions. But these propositions have as yet borne little fruit in the form of reliable knowledge about what it is that motivates men to take part in aggressive political action. Fundamentally, this is a problem of research methodology. As Eckstein pointed out some years ago in a seminal article surveying problems and prospects of research in the area of political violence and rebellion, the methodological problem is that "most propositions about the causes of internal war have been developed in historical studies of particular cases (or very limited numbers of cases) rather than in broadly comparative, let alone genuinely social-scientific studies."¹ And since the single case or handful of cases can prove nothing about behavior in general, these propositions have the status of untested hypotheses.

In the ensuing decade, a number of scholars sought to remedy the methodological weakness inherent in the historical, case-study approach. They collected data on various societal conditions and on rates of collective protest and violence for as many nations as possible, then carried out scientifically rigorous, quantitative analyses of the etiology of domestic civil

¹ Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," pp. 11-12 (full citation in footnote 7 of Chapter One).