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Charles Tilly

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**Social movements and (all sorts of) other political interactions – local, national, and international – including identities**

*Several divagations from a common path, beginning with British struggles over Catholic Emancipation, 1780–1829, and ending with contemporary nationalism*

CHARLES TILLY

*Columbia University*

In May 1828 the United Kingdom's House of Commons voted by a narrow margin to consider dissolution of 140-year-old legal barriers against Catholics' participation in national politics. On 10 June, however, the House of Lords blocked any such move by a majority of 48. Four days later, the British Catholic Association therefore met in London's Freemasons Tavern to discuss strategy. Debate turned to whether Catholics, like the Protestant Dissenters who had in April seen their own interdiction from national politics removed, should offer collective securities for good behavior. Mr. Therry rose to oppose any such proposal:

It has been asked what securities should we offer to Government? My answer is – our attachment to that Constitution – our love of country – a contribution of a portion of the fruits of our industry to the State – the employment of whatever wisdom and talents we may possess, and even the shedding of our blood, as before it has been shed, for the service of the State [applause].<sup>1</sup>

In the view vigorously applauded by Therry's auditors, British Catholics were already fulfilling the obligations of good citizens, including military service under the British flag, yet were being denied the privileges good citizens deserved. The long war with France, now thirteen years past, had proven Catholics to be reliable supporters of the nation's causes. Yet arbitrary religious distinctions continued to deny them their rights. Their call for Catholic Emancipation (as they called it) insisted not on their special characters as Roman Catholics but on their general character as citizens.

Members of the Catholic Association and their allies were demanding rights of citizenship by means of strategies that later generations came to recognize as social-movement politics. In 1828, however, the forms of action we know as social movements were still contested political novelties. This essay draws on current ideas concerning social movements first to examine what happened in the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, then to think out loud about analogies between social movements and other political processes at an international scale, especially assertions of nationalism. Hence the article's self-flagellating title.

The study of social movements has passed through three main phases since the 1960s.<sup>2</sup> As social-movement activity rose in Western Europe and North America during that decade, analysts drew at first on two venerable theoretical traditions: 1) treatments of collective behavior as uninstitutionalized action driven by mass psychology, which had acquired a psychoanalytic edge in analyses of fascism, 2) natural-history conceptions of social movements modeled especially on the history of organized labor, but extended to other emancipatory movements such as suffrage and feminism.

Neither one proved adequate, logically or ideologically, for dealing with civil rights activism, student protests, and other new forms of contention – the more so because so many specialists came to the subject as sympathizers, advocates, or direct participants in the struggles they were interpreting, with a consequent investment in defending the new challengers against widespread accusations of impulsiveness, self-indulgence, and incoherence. Out of that ferment emerged overlapping perspectives known variously as political-process, rational-action, and resource-mobilization models of collective action or social movements. Differing considerably from one another, they nevertheless converged on the imputation of coherent understandings and intentions to social-movement actors as well as on the grounding of their action in durable social organizations and interests.

In addition to their mutual criticism, these new orthodoxies eventually generated dissent from several quarters, notably from interpreters of so-called New Social Movements: recent mobilizations oriented to environment, peace, sexual preference, communitarianism, and related issues. Critics complained variously that the stress on social organization, interests, resources, and strategic action:

- exaggerated the instrumental character of these social movements (or perhaps of all social movements) while underestimating the importance of self-expression and collective experience;
- underestimated the contingency, plasticity, and willful self-transformation of the identities deployed in social movements (or at least in new social movements);
- assumed that all movements sought power within existing polities rather than alterations in social and political life as a whole; and
- missed the significance of shared beliefs in social-movement activity.

Collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern Europe heightened the controversy, as many critics of state socialism and advocates of democracy came to argue that social movements in the newer style could help constitute civil society and thereby forward democratic transformation.

The burgeoning of nationalisms, ethnicities, and religiously-defined political differences in the ruins of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union reinforced analysts' concern about identity and belief in social movements and related phenomena. The spread of postmodern skepticism likewise led many students of collective struggle to treat it as a social construction, a set of expressive acts with dubious grounding in interests and social structure. Even short of postmodern epistemological despair, followers of the linguistic turn stepped up their interest in the discursive side of collective action: frames, narratives, and story-telling reconstructions of events.

Responding to these challenges, realists among students of social movements took the beliefs, identities, and symbolic work involved much more seriously than they or their predecessors had in the heyday of rational-choice, resource-mobilization, and political-process models. At the same time, realists invested a great deal of energy in examining how the characteristics and trajectories of social movements vary as a function of the political opportunity structures in which they operate – establishing, for example, differences between the forms taken by movement organizations in relatively centralized polities such as the Netherlands or France and relatively segmented polities such as Switzerland.<sup>3</sup> Although no single view has emerged unquestioned from all this exploration, on the whole social-movement analysts have ended up thinking that movements depend intimately on the social networks in which their participants are already embedded, that the identities deployed in collective contention are contingent but crucial, that movements operate within frames set by a historical accumulation of shared

understandings, that political opportunity structure significantly constrains the histories of individual social movements, but that movement struggles and outcomes also transform political opportunity structures.<sup>4</sup>

Imperceptibly but powerfully, the same reorientations have moved many social-movement analysts from an individualistic toward an interactional view of their subject. Three brands of individualism long prevailed in social-movement studies: **methodological individualism**, with its imputations of interests and resources to one unitary actor (collective or individual) at a time; **phenomenological individualism**, with its effort to penetrate the consciousness of each actor (again collective or individual, but presumed unitary); **system realism**, the presumption that social movements as such are unitary actors possessing standard orientations, behaviors, and life histories. In place of any individualism, social-movement analysts have made a net shift toward an interactional way of thinking we might summarize in the following concepts:

**Actor:** any set of living bodies (including a single individual) to which human observers attribute coherent consciousness and intention.

**Category:** a set of actors distinguished by a single criterion, simple or complex.

**Transaction:** a bounded communication between one actor and another.

**Tie:** a continuing series of transactions to which participants attach shared understandings, memories, forecasts, rights, and obligations.

**Role:** a bundle of ties attached to a single actor.

**Network:** a more or less homogeneous set of ties among three or more actors.

**Group:** coincidence of a category and a network.

**Organization:** group in which at least one actor has the right to speak authoritatively for the whole.

**Identity:** an actor's experience of a category, tie, role, network, group, or organization, coupled with a public representation of that experience; the public representation often takes the form of a shared story, a narrative.

The shift in orientation leads to an understanding of social movements as strongly-patterned transactions within interlocking networks. The networks always include actors, ties, and identities, often include roles, groups, and organizations, but never sum up to a single solidary group.

Analysts adopting this view, to the consternation of all three varieties of individualist, identify social movements by looking for claim-making, interactions between challengers and powerholders. Such a view is yielding important returns for the study of all sorts of social movements.

Only timidly, however, have the same analysts sought analogies and connections between social movements *stricto sensu* and other political processes likewise involving contingent identities, historically-constructed frames of shared understanding, and variable political opportunity structure – phenomena such as nationalism, revolution, ethnic conflict, and creation of transnational institutions.<sup>5</sup> Because it straddles national and international contexts, study of struggles over religious inclusion and exclusion with respect to citizenship opens a bridge to preliminary analysis of important analogies and connections.

In Great Britain (England, Wales, Scotland), in Ireland, and elsewhere, the histories of religious exclusions from political rights and in general their dissolution during the nineteenth century illustrate four points of great importance for political analysis in general:

*First*, those histories reveal powerful analogies between the processes driving social movements within national polities and a range of other processes, both “national” and “international,” to which analysts of social movements have paid little attention; they therefore rectify common conceptions of social movements as *sui generis*.

*Second*, the identities people deploy in political claim-making (including identities of religious affiliation, nationality, and citizenship) consist of contingent relationships with other people rather than inbuilt personal traits; they therefore alter as political networks, opportunities, and strategies shift.

*Third*, the histories show us incessant interaction between political processes observers commonly distinguish as “domestic” and “international,” processes analysts frequently conceive of as quite independent one from the other.

*Fourth*, once we shift from conventional individualistic conceptions to transactional analyses of political processes these three points become almost self-evident.

The history of Catholic exclusion and inclusion in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British polity provides dramatic evidence for all four points. The final success of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 resulted largely from the dynamics of a social movement, indeed from one of the first social movements ever to form anywhere at a national scale. The political processes observable in that movement for Catholic Emancipation we can also see operating today in the play of identities, mobilizations, political opportunities, and collective contention at local, national, and international levels; although social movements occupy distinctive niches within national polities, they also share properties with revolutions, nationalisms, ethnoreligious struggles, and a variety of other processes involving collective claim-making. Like many other divisions within national polities, the ostensibly domestic issue of Catholic Emancipation intersected over and over with Britain's international relations, including questions of war and peace. Recognition of the identities, claims, and settlements involved in the struggle over Emancipation as transactions rather than expressions of individual proclivities greatly clarifies how they worked.

Catholic Emancipation alone cannot, of course, establish four enormous principles. But a clearly-focused case in point will clarify what is at issue, as well as how the issues connect. Let us interweave relevant British experience, reflections on social movements as distinctive political phenomena, and general discussions of interactions and analogies between national-level social movements and political processes at other scales.

### **Religion and citizenship in Great Britain**

Ties between religious identity and political privilege have fluctuated enormously over the long run of European history. During the last millennium, Europe has seen everything from the Ottoman empire's ready (if unequal) absorption of Christians and Jews to the Nazis' programmed annihilation of those Jews they could track down. Broadly speaking, political exclusion on the basis of religious identity increased with widespread persecution of Muslims, Jews, and Christian heretics during the fifteenth century, reached the state of war through much of Central and Western Europe during the sixteenth century, stabilized in the same regions from 1648 to 1789 with the Westphalian doctrine of *cujus regio ejus religio*, then receded irregularly from the French Revolution onward through much of the continent. Although

religious prejudice and unofficial discrimination have persisted, sometimes even flourished as in nineteenth-century pogroms and the Dreyfus Case, categorical exclusions from political rights such as those practiced by fascists became rare by the twentieth century. Until recently, at least, whether the sharpening of state-identified religious divisions in the former Soviet Union, in disintegrated Yugoslavia, in the Middle East, and potentially in France constitutes a reversal or a momentary aberration remains to be seen.

In Great Britain, the political program that eventually won the name Catholic Emancipation originated in wars, both civil and international. The struggles of 1688–89 toppled Roman Catholic James II from the British throne, established Protestant William of Orange as king, and restored a Protestant ruling class in colonized Ireland. The Glorious Revolution of 1689 barred Catholics from public office, capping their exclusion with an officeholder's oath that denied tenets of the Catholic religion and (in the case of MPs) explicitly rejected the pope's authority:

Members of Parliament were required to subscribe to: (1) an oath of allegiance; (2) an oath abjuring any Stuart title to the throne; (3) an oath of supremacy ("I, A. B., do swear that I do ... abjure as impious and heretical that damnable doctrine and position that princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope ... may be deposed or murdered by their subjects.... And I do declare that no foreign Prince, Person, Prelate, State or Potentate hath, or ought to have, any jurisdiction ... or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual within this realm"); (4) a declaration against the doctrine of transubstantiation, the invocation of the saints and the sacrifice of the Mass.<sup>6</sup>

As the political undertones of these requirements suggest, Britain's and Ireland's Catholics fell under the double suspicion of subservience to a foreign authority, the pope, and collaboration with Britain's historic enemy, France. (By the eighteenth century the pope had not, in fact, intervened effectively in British affairs for centuries. But the French, from Mary Queen of Scots' time defenders of Stuart claims to the British crown, gave direct military support to a serious Irish rebellion as late as 1798, well within the memories of many participants in 1828's debate.) Although non-Anglican Protestants also suffered political disabilities under the settlement of 1689, in practice subsequent regimes shut Catholics out of parliament and public life much more effectively.

Oaths of abjuration individualized membership in the category "Catholic" and made it seem centrally a matter of belief. Certainly Catholi-



cism had implications for individual characteristics and behavior in the United Kingdom as it did elsewhere. But being Catholic in the sense that was relevant for citizenship between 1689 and 1829 consisted of involvement in crucial social relations: relations to priests and the church hierarchy, relations to a publicly-identified community of Catholic believers, relations to an Anglican establishment. Just as the category "worker" conveniently signals a bundle of personal characteristics but finally depends on distinction from and relation to the category "employer," the category "Catholic" finally designates a distinctive set of social relations. The distinction between Catholic and non-Catholic obviously existed before 1689 and after 1829; between the two dates, however, it coincided with a relation between fuller and lesser citizens. That coincidence came under increasing challenge as time went on.

Catholic exclusion had serious political consequences. When the British won Québec from France in the Seven Years War (1756–1763), the British empire not only gained jurisdiction over an almost unanimously Catholic population but also pacified resistance to British control by large concessions to Québécois, hence to Catholic, self-rule. That settlement inserted a twin to Ireland into the British realm, but granted its Catholics more favorable conditions than their Irish coreligionists enjoyed. To the extent that the British incorporated Catholic Ireland into their economy and polity, furthermore, the Irish Protestant establishment became a less effective instrument of indirect rule, and the demands of Catholic Irish on both sides of the Irish Sea for either autonomy or representation swelled. The enlargement of armed forces during the American war, finally, rendered military recruiters increasingly eager to enroll Irish warriors, already reputed as mercenaries elsewhere in Europe, but barred from British military service by the required anti-Catholic oath.

Militarily-inspired exemptions of Catholic soldiers from oath-taking during the later 1770s raised strident objections among defenders of Anglican supremacy. The exemptions directly incited formation of a nationwide Protestant Association to petition, agitate, and resist. Scottish Member of Parliament Lord George Gordon, whose vociferous opposition to Catholic claims made him head of the Association in 1780, led an anti-Catholic campaign that concentrated on meetings and parliamentary petitions, but during June 1780 ramified into attacks on Catholic persons and (especially) property in London. A full 275 people died during those bloody struggles, chiefly at the hands of troops who were retaking control over London's streets. Among Britain's

ruling classes, those so-called Gordon Riots gave popular anti-Catholicism an aura of violent unreason. By negation, advocacy of Catholics' political rights acquired the cachet of enlightenment.

From that time onward an important fusion occurred. Catholic Emancipation became a standard (although by no means universal) demand of reformers and radicals who campaigned for parliamentary reform. By "reform" its advocates generally meant something like elimination of parliamentary seats controlled by patrons, more uniform qualifications for voting across the country, enlargement of the electorate, and frequent parliamentary elections. (Demands for universal suffrage, for manhood suffrage, or even for equal individual-by-individual representation among the propertied rarely gained much of a following before well into the nineteenth century.) Catholic Emancipation dovetailed neatly with such proposals, since it likewise called for granting a more equal and effective voice in public affairs to currently-excluded people.

Both parliamentary reform and Catholic Emancipation surged, then collapsed as national political issues in Great Britain several times between the 1780s and the 1820s. But Emancipation became more urgent during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, when William Pitt the Younger sought to still the Irish revolutionary movement that was undermining the British state's titanic war effort against France. Pitt helped create a (dubiously) United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801, which meant dissolving the separate Irish parliament and incorporating 100 Irish Protestant members into what had been Britain's parliament. In the process, Pitt half-promised major political concessions to Catholics. King George III's hostility to compromising the Anglican establishment (and thereby a crown that was already suffering from the war-driven rise of parliamentary power) made that commitment impossible to keep. Pitt's consequent resignation by no means stifled Catholic demands. On the contrary, from 1801 to 1829 Catholic Emancipation remained one of the United Kingdom's thorniest political issues. The 1807 wartime resignation of the coalition "Ministry of All the Talents," for example, pivoted on the king's refusal to endorse admission of Catholics to high military ranks.

Much more than a king's attachment to Anglican privilege, however, made the issue contentious. Anti-Catholicism continued to enjoy wide popular appeal in Great Britain, the more so as Irish immigration (responding to industrial expansion in Britain and consequent industrial contraction in Ireland) accelerated. On the other side, Irish Catholic

elites resisted the even greater separation from great decisions affecting their island's fate that had resulted from the transfer of the old Dublin parliament's powers – however Protestant it had been – to an English-dominated parliament in distant Westminster. Repeatedly during the 1820s two movements coincided: an increasingly popular campaign for Catholic political rights led by lawyers, priests, and other elites in Ireland, a coalition of radicals, reformers, and organized Catholics in support of Emancipation within Great Britain. Eventually a counter-movement of Protestant resistance to Catholic claims mobilized as well.

### **Catholic Emancipation as a social movement**

The interweaving movements reached their dénouement in 1829. During the previous six years Irish Catholic barrister Daniel O'Connell and his allies had organized successive versions of a mass-membership Catholic Association in Ireland, with some following in Great Britain. They perfected a form of organization (drawn initially and ironically from Methodist models) with which radicals and reformers had experimented during the great mobilizations of 1816 to 1819. The Association collected a monthly penny – the “Catholic rent” – from thousands of peasants and workers. With the proceeds it conducted an incessant, effective campaign of propaganda, coalition-formation, lobbying, and public claim-making. Each time the British government outlawed their Association, O'Connell and friends fashioned a slightly reorganized (and renamed) successor to replace it.

Efforts by Protestant supporters of Emancipation to get a bill through parliament failed in 1812, repeatedly from 1816 to 1822, and again in 1825. But in 1828 a related campaign to expand political rights of Protestant Dissenters (e.g., Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians) by repealing the seventeenth century Test and Corporation Acts gained parliamentary and royal assent. Although it had the effect of removing important allies from the same side of the barrier, on balance such an opening made the moment auspicious for Catholic Emancipation. The regime that had defended Anglican supremacy by excluding non-Anglicans from office in principle (despite frequent exceptions in practice for Dissenters) lost some of its rationale for excluding Catholics.

The House of Lords and the king presented larger obstacles than the Commons, which by the 1820s had on the whole reconciled itself to

some expansion of Catholic rights. The Lords included, of course, not only peers of the realm but also bishops of the Anglican church, most of whom would not lightly sacrifice their organization's privileged political position. At their coronations, furthermore, British monarchs swore to defend Anglican primacy; in 1828, King George IV still feared that to approve Catholic Emancipation would violate his coronation oath. When the House of Lords again forestalled Emancipation in 1828, both Irish organizers and their British allies redoubled the Emancipation campaign, not only expanding the Catholic Association but also staging massive meetings, marches, and petition drives. The technically illegal election of Catholic O'Connell to parliament from a seat in County Clare during the fall of 1828 directly challenged national authorities, especially when O'Connell proposed to take his place in Westminster at the new parliament's opening early in 1829.

This formidable mobilization, in turn, stimulated a large counter-mobilization by defenders of the Protestant Constitution, as they called it. In Great Britain and to a lesser extent in Ireland itself they organized Brunswick Clubs to produce meetings, marches, petitions, propaganda, and solidarity on behalf of the royal house of Brunswick. That the Commons, the Lords, and the king finally conceded major political rights – although far from perfect equality – to Catholics during the spring of 1829 resulted from an otherwise unresolvable crisis in both Ireland and Great Britain. It by no means represented a general conversion of Britons to religious toleration. Jews, for example, did not receive similar concessions until 1858. Nor did unofficial discrimination against Jews or Irish Catholics ever disappear from British life. We are speaking here of legal exclusion from political rights on the basis of religious identity.

British authorities played a double game, dealing with a predominantly anti-Catholic political mobilization in Great Britain and a massive, near-insurrectionary pro-Catholic mobilization in Ireland. A catalog of "contentious gatherings" (CGs: occasions on which ten or more people assembled publicly and somehow made collective claims) reported in one or more of seven British periodicals during March 1829 provides evidence on the British side although, alas, it does not tell us the comparable story for Ireland.<sup>7</sup> During that turbulent month, the Commons finally passed its Emancipation bills and sent them on to the Lords. Altogether the month's catalog yields 153 CGs explicitly centering on support for or opposition to Catholic rights, plus another half-dozen in which public responses to officials clearly resulted from the

positions they had taken on Catholic Emancipation. (Because many reports come from parliamentary debates in which MPs reporting petition meetings took pains to mention places but neglected dates, some events in the March catalog surely happened in February, but they just as certainly belonged to the same wave of mobilization.) A selection of about a tenth of all events from the month's catalog imparts its contentious flavor:

*London*

The minister and congregation of Crown Street Chapel assembled to sign a petition declaring, among other things, that "the engine of Romanism, with all its machinery, is still preserved entire, and ready to be brought into action as soon as opportunity and policy shall concur to set it in motion, and should the barriers of our happy Constitution, which now restrain its operation, be once removed, its influence would gradually increase, and from the nature of the very principle it imbibes and inculcates, its overbearing progress must terminate in the complete subjugation of Protestant liberties..." (Votes and Proceedings of Parliament 2 March 1829, pp. 336-337).

*Arbroath, Dundee*

The burgh's dean, guild, councillors, and brethren resolved that "all political disabilities, on account of religious opinions, are impolitic, unjust, and contrary to the spirit of Christianity" (Mirror of Parliament 3 March 1829, p. 349).

*Coventry*

A public meeting issued an anti-Catholic petition signed by 3915 persons, which generated a pro-Catholic counter-petition signed by 905 others (Hansards 3 March 1829, p. 699).

*Glasgow*

After one group sent a large anti-Catholic petition to parliament, another set out a pro-Catholic petition for signing. A man stood at the premises' door "calling out to the people not to sign in favour of the Roman Catholics," a crowd gathered to hoot at all signers and knocked down one of them, police dispersed the crowd but arrested the victim rather than the perpetrator. For two more days crowds assembled and attacked people who came to sign the petition (Mirror of Parliament 6 March 1829, p. 445).

*Rothsay*

After speeches emphasizing the Catholic threat, a meeting in Mr. M'Bryde's chapel dispersed, "some of the most unruly of them, thinking they would best show their admiration of the opinions of their pastor by a persecution of Catholics, proceeded to the house of the only Irishman in the place (a poor itinerant dealer in earthenware) and demolished every article on his premises" (Times 10 March 1829, p. 4).

*London*

"A gang of pickpockets assembled yesterday evening in front of the entrance to the House of Lords, and shouted 'No Popery' as the Peers were retiring. Several gentlemen felt the effects of accidental contact with these light-fingered gentry as they passed through the avenues, which were occupied for nearly an hour by these miscreants" (Times 10 March 1829, p. 3).

*Cranbrook*

In reaction to an anti-Catholic petition signed by "the lowest descriptions of persons, and of boys," "the Dissenters and other friends of civil and religious liberty" held a public meeting to support Catholic rights (Mirror of Parliament 12 March 1829, p. 535).

*Rye*

Through his brother (the mayor) the borough's patron (an Anglican clergyman) called a meeting to launch an anti-Catholic petition, but "although the whole body of the select (members of the corporation) ranged themselves under the orders of their chief, and, although several paupers were also pressed into the service, the motion for a petition was lost by a majority against it of four to one" (Times 12 March 1829, p. 3).

*Inverness*

A number of "boys and disorderly lads" burned an effigy representing Popery, paraded through town hoisting another effigy, then broke doors and windows at both the Catholic chapel and the police office (Times 17 March 1829, p. 3).

*Edinburgh*

At a public meeting called in reaction to a pro-Catholic assembly, the provost and inhabitants started an anti-Catholic petition that eventually acquired 13,000 signatures (Times, 19 March 1829, p. 1).

*Bothwell*

The local minister ran a meeting in which he threatened hellfire for those who refused to sign a petition against concessions to Catholics (Times 19 March 1829, p. 1314).

*London*

After the Commons' second-reading debate on Emancipation, supporters unhitched the horses from the hackney-coach into which Daniel O'Connell had retreated and attempted to draw him in triumph, but he forced his way out, and walked to his lodgings in the midst of thousands "shouting all the way 'Huzza for O'Connell, the man of the people, the champion of religious liberty'; 'George the Fourth for ever'; 'The Duke of Wellington, and long life to him'; 'Mr. Peel and the Parliament'" (Times 19 March 1829, p. 4).

*London*

Two days later, several hundred people surrounded the duke of Wellington as he left the House of Lords, "and assailed him with the most opprobrious epithets, and every sort of discordant yelling" (Times 21 March 1829, p. 2).

*East Looe*

Free burgesses and inhabitants held a meeting to oppose any further concessions to Roman Catholics, initiating a petition eventually signed "by every person in the place" (Mirror of Parliament 24 March 1829, p. 790).

*Chesterfield*

An anti-Catholic public meeting resulted in a petition signed by 4000 people, which stimulated a counter-petition signed by 500 supporters of Catholic claims, "amongst whom were the whole of the magistrates resident in the district" (Hansards 25 March 1829, pp. 1444-1445).

*Pembroke*

A county meeting concerning Emancipation divided sharply, with the Earl of Cawdor defending the measure and an Anglican clergyman exhorting the crowd against Catholics; after the county sheriff broke up the meeting, participants "broke the windows of those who were known to be favourable to the Catholics, and threw fire into the house of one person" (Morning Chronicle 31 March 1829, p. 1).

Although such actions as effigy-burning and unhitching a hero's carriage to draw it through the streets conformed to well-established eighteenth-century antecedents, on the whole these events followed the newly-emerging logic of social movements. Meanwhile, priests and patriots connected by the Catholic Association were organizing similar social-movement actions – but overwhelmingly on behalf of Emancipation – through much of Ireland.

### **What is a social movement?**

A social movement is a kind of campaign, parallel in many respects to an electoral campaign. This sort of campaign, however, demands righting of a wrong, most often a wrong suffered by a well-specified population. The population in question can range from a single individual to all humans, or even all living creatures. Whereas an electoral campaign pays off chiefly in the votes that finally result from it, a social movement pays off in the effective transmission of the message that its program's supporters are WUNC: 1) worthy, 2) unified, 3) numerous, and 4) committed. The elements compensate one another to some degree, for example with a high value on worthiness ("respectability" in the language of 1829) making up for small numbers. Yet a visibly low value on any one of them (a public demonstration of unworthiness, division, small numbers, or defection) discredits the whole movement.

Seen as means-end action, such a campaign has a peculiar diffuseness; as compared with striking, voting, smashing the loom of a non-striking weaver, or running a miscreant out of town, its actions remain essentially symbolic, cumulative, and indirect, with almost no hope that any single event will achieve its stated objective of ending an injustice or persuading authorities to enact a needed law. Social-movement mobilization gains its strength from an implicit threat to act in adjacent arenas: to withdraw support from public authorities, to provide sustenance to a regime's enemies, to move toward direct action or even rebellion. Skilled social movement organizers draw tacitly on such threats to bargain with the objects of their demands.

Social movements take place as conversations: not as solo performances but as interactions among parties. The most elementary set of parties consists of a claim-making actor, an object of the actor's claims, and an audience having a stake in the fate of at least one of them. But allies, competitors, enemies, authorities, and multiple audiences also



frequently play parts in movement interactions. Therein lies the complexity of social movement organizing, not to mention of responses by authorities and objects of claims; third parties always complicate the interaction.

Examined from the viewpoint of challengers, social movement success depends in part on two varieties of mystification. First, beyond some minimum, worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment almost necessarily contradict each other; to gain numbers, for example, generally requires compromise on worthiness, unity, or commitment. The actual work of organizers consists recurrently of patching together provisional coalitions, negotiating which of the multiple agendas participants bring with them will find public voice in their collective action, suppressing risky tactics, and above all hiding backstage struggle from public view.

Second, movement activists seek to present themselves and (if different) the objects of their solicitude as a solidary group, preferably as a group with a long history and with coherent existence outside the world of public claim-making. Thus feminists identify themselves with women's age-old struggles for rights in the streets and in everyday existence, while environmentalists present most of humankind as their eternal community. Organizers of the Catholic Emancipation campaign, including Daniel O'Connell, spent much of their energy striving to create a united public front and portraying their constituents as a long-suffering solidary population who had waited far too long for justice.

The two varieties of mystification address several different audiences. They encourage activists and supporters to make high estimates of the probability that fellow adherents will take risks and incur costs for the cause, hence that their own contributions will bear fruit. They warn authorities, objects of claims, opponents, rivals, and bystanders to take the movement seriously as a force that can affect their fates. Movements differ significantly in the relative attention they give to these various audiences, from the self-absorbed tests of daring organized by small clusters of terrorists to the signature of petitions by transient participants who wish some authority to know their opinion. These orientations frequently vary in the course of a given social movement, for example in transitions from x) internal building to y) ostentatious action to z) fighting off competitors and enemies.

Neither in the case of Catholic Emancipation nor in general does mystification mean utter falsehood. Activists and constituents of social movements vary considerably in the extent to which they actually embody worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, in the degree to which they spring from a single solidary group with collective life outside the world of public politics. To the extent that the two varieties of mystification contain elements of truth, furthermore, social movements generally mobilize more effectively; a segregated ethnic community threatened by outside attack, on the average, mobilizes more readily than do all those persons who suffer from attacks on civil liberties. But the process whereby social movement activists achieve recognition as valid interlocutors for unjustly deprived populations does not resemble the fact-finding inquiries of novelists, social scientists, or investigative reporters. It resembles a court proceeding, in which those who make such claims, however self-evident to them, must establish themselves in the eyes of others – authorities, competitors, enemies, and relevant audiences – as voices that require attention, and must commonly establish themselves in the face of vigorous opposition. They must prove that they qualify. Almost all such proofs entail suppression of some evidence and exaggeration of other evidence concerning the claimants' worthiness, unity, numbers, commitment, and grounding in a durable, coherent, solidary, deprived population.

Analysts of collective action, especially those who entertain sympathy for the actions they are studying, often insist on these mystified elements as intrinsic to social movements: the presence of solidarity, the construction of shared identities, the sense of grievance, the creation of sustaining organizations, and more; without such features, analysts say, we have nothing but ordinary politics. Sometimes the myths fulfill themselves, building up the lineaments of durable connection among core participants. But most social movements remain far more contingent and volatile than their mystifications allow; these other elements do not define the social movement as a distinctive political phenomenon.

What does? Social movements involve collective claims on authorities. A social movement consists of a sustained challenge to powerholders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those powerholders by means of repeated public displays of that population's numbers, commitment, unity, and worthiness. As they developed in Great Britain and other West European countries during the early nineteenth century, the characteristic displays included creation of special-purpose associations, lobbying of officials, public meetings,

demonstrations, marches, petitions, pamphlets, statements in mass media, posting or wearing of identifying signs, and deliberate adoption of distinctive slogans; while their relative weight varied considerably from movement to movement, these elements have coexisted since the early nineteenth century. Although the advocates and opponents of Catholic Emancipation had by no means mastered this full array of techniques in 1828 and 1829, they tried them all. They were, indeed, inventing the social movement as they went along.

Let me stress the fact of invention. For all its contentiousness, most of human history has proceeded without social movements, without sustained challenges to powerholders in the names of populations living under the jurisdiction of those powerholders by means of repeated public displays of those populations' numbers, commitment, unity, and worthiness. Rebellions, revolutions, avenging actions, rough justice, and many other forms of popular collective action have abounded, but not the associating, meeting, marching, petitioning, propagandizing, sloganeering, and brandishing of symbols that mark social movements. With some eighteenth-century precedents, this complex of interactions emerge as a way of doing political business in Western Europe during the nineteenth century; however we finally sort out the priorities, Britain shares credit for the invention. In Great Britain, the actual inventors were political entrepreneurs such as John Wilkes, Lord George Gordon, William Cobbett, and Francis Place. They, their collaborators, and their followers bargained out space for new forms of political action, bargained it out with local and national authorities, with rivals, with enemies, with the objects of their claims. The tales of contention over Catholic Emancipation in March 1829 provide glimpses of that bargaining.

### **Movement and counter-movement**

From the beginning, movements often bred counter-movements on the part of others whose advantages success for the movement's claims would threaten. British aristocrats had formed Brunswick Clubs, for example, explicitly to counter the Catholic Association's enormous success. They had then sought to build a popular anti-Catholic base. Notice the report from Edinburgh. Sir R. H. Inglis, who presented Edinburgh's anti-Catholic petition to parliament, reported that the local authorities' original plan had been to hold a sort of referendum, a public meeting at which people could vote for or against Catholic

relief and "if no public meeting of those favourable to concession was held, none would be convened of those opposed to it."<sup>8</sup> But since pro-Catholic forces (no doubt aware that by sheer numbers Edinburgh's anti-Catholic legions would carry any general public assembly) had broken the agreement, held a meeting, and sent parliament a petition, the anti-Catholic organizers insisted on having their own say.

Supporters of Emancipation put it differently: at a meeting of the Friends of Religious Liberty, "Brunswickers" had attempted to break up the proceedings. If the anti-Catholics had collected 13,000 signatures on their Edinburgh petition, Sir J. Macintosh reported on presenting the pro-Catholic petition to parliament that its 8,000 signatures began with an unprecedentedly large meeting involving four-fifths or even nine-tenths

of what, until such a levelling spirit seized the Honourable Gentlemen on the Bench below me, used without objection or exception to be called the respectable classes of the community in the ancient capital of the most Protestant part of this Protestant Empire, which, in my opinion, will perform one of the noblest duties of its high office of guardian to the Protestant interest of Europe by passing this Bill into a law.<sup>9</sup>

Macintosh echoed the ingenious arguments of several speakers at the Edinburgh meeting. They claimed that political disabilities segregated Catholics, drove them to defend their identities, and therefore made them less susceptible to cool reason. Full membership in the polity and full engagement in public discussion would, if permitted, eventually make them more skeptical of Catholic doctrine and papal authority. Macintosh went on to impugn Edinburgh Brunswickers for having padded their petition with non-residents, for having circulated libelous tracts, and by implication for having appealed to the city's plebeians. Thus he challenged their numbers, unity, and worthiness, if not their commitment to the anti-Catholic cause.

Both advocates and opponents of the Catholic cause in 1829 used a wide variety of techniques to forward their programs, but the central mechanism connected local political action directly to parliament. By the thousands, organizers drafted petitions, held local public meetings to publicize them, collected signatures, validated those signatures as best they could, and arranged for MPs to present them during parliamentary sessions. As the intensity of parliamentary debate increased, meetings and petitions multiplied. Each side tried to discredit the other's tactics and support, not only decrying false signatures (e.g., of

*Table 1.* CGs and petitions concerning Catholic Emancipation, 1828–1829.

	CGs 1828	Petitions 1828	CGs 1829	Petitions 1829
For emancipation	16	732	99	1001
Against emancipation	21	333	141	2169
Divided	4	0	2	0

women, boys, non-residents, and other persons outside the political arena) but also complaining about “inflammatory placards” and incendiary speeches. If Britons had enjoyed a limited right to petition for centuries, if Britain’s seventeenth-century revolutions set a precedent of widespread popular mobilization, and if such eighteenth-century political entrepreneurs as John Wilkes and George Gordon had used public meetings, marches, and petitions quite effectively, never before had the full panoply of social-movement organization, complete with mass-membership associations, come into play at a national scale. While recognizing eighteenth-century revolutions as possible challenges for the title and understanding that in Great Britain itself the distinctive elements of social-movement practice came together in fits and starts from the time of Lord George Gordon’s Protestant Association onward, we might even be able to call the Catholic Emancipation campaign the world’s first national social movement. By my counts of CGs and of parliamentary petitions, the scorecards over 1828 and 1829 as a whole ran as in Table 1. The figures in Table 1 refer to Great Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) alone. If these had been binding votes and Great Britain the only relevant arena of political action, Catholic Emancipation would clearly have failed as a political program. Comparable information from Ireland, on the other hand, would show overwhelming support for the Catholic cause.<sup>11</sup> Only the virtual ungovernability of Ireland itself under the impact of Catholic Association mobilization moved the duke of Wellington and Robert Peel, reluctant parliamentary midwives of Emancipation, to persuade an even more reluctant king that he had to keep the peace by making concessions.

Concessions, not capitulations. The very settlement reveals the sort of mixed bargain Emancipation entailed. While removing most barriers to Catholic officeholding in the United Kingdom, it included the following restrictions:

1. No Catholic could serve as Regent, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Chancellor of England or Ireland, or hold any position in

Anglican church establishments, ecclesiastical courts, universities, or public schools.

2. Officeholding Catholics had to swear a new oath of loyalty to the king and the Hanoverian succession, denying the right of foreign princes including the Pope to exercise civil jurisdiction within the United Kingdom, and denying any intention to subvert the Anglican establishment or the Protestant religion.
3. Forty-shilling freeholders (owners of property whose annual rent would be worth at least two pounds per year, who had previously voted in Ireland, and who had provided strong support for O'Connell) lost their franchise in favor of a ten-pound minimum with stronger guarantees against inflation of estimated property values.
4. The government dissolved the Catholic Association and barred successors from forming.

Cautious concession describes the bargain better than Catholic conquest or liberal largesse.

## Consequences

In conjunction with the earlier and less turbulent campaign over repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the partially-successful social movement for Catholic Emancipation left a large dent in national politics. Those two rounds of legislation broke the hold of Anglicans over public office and parliament. The Catholic Association made ordinary Irish People a formidable presence in British politics. Despite all the restrictions on Irish mobilization laid down by Wellington and Peel, their settlement ratified the legitimacy of mass-membership political associations and social-movement tactics. Almost immediately advocates of parliamentary reform self-consciously took up the model and precedent to organize political unions and to initiate a campaign of meetings and petitions. This time, after more than half a century of striving, reformers gained a substantial victory; if the Reform Act of 1832 still excluded the majority of adult males (to say nothing of females) from suffrage, it enfranchised the commercial bourgeoisie, gave MPs to fast-growing industrial towns, eliminated parliamentary seats that had lain within the gift of a single patron, and forwarded the principle of representation according to (propertied) numbers rather than chartered privilege. Catholic Emancipation did not cause the Reform Act, but it facilitated and channeled the political mobilization that led to Reform.

Emancipation thus forwarded citizenship and democracy in Great Britain, directly through its dissolution of barriers to political participation, indirectly through its impact on parliamentary reform. Citizenship refers to a certain kind of tie: a continuing series of transactions between persons and agents of a given state in which each has enforceable rights and obligations uniquely by virtue of the persons' membership in an exclusive category, the native-born plus the naturalized. To the extent that the British state dissolved particular ties to its subject population based on local history or membership in locally-implemented social categories while installing generalized classifications on the basis of political performance, it gave increasing weight to citizenship. Reducing barriers to the political participation of Dissenters and Catholics clearly moved in that direction.

Not all advances of citizenship promote democracy; in our own time, authoritarian regimes have often stressed a variety of citizenship in which most people qualify as citizens, but citizens' obligations are very extensive, greatly outweighing their rights. Democracy combines broad, relatively equal citizenship with a) binding consultation of citizens with respect to governmental personnel and policies, b) protection of citizens, including members of minorities, from arbitrary state action. This definition stands in a middle ground between formal criteria such as elections, legislatures, and constitutions, on the one hand, and substantive criteria such as solidarity, justice, and welfare, on the other. By such a definition, Emancipation democratized primarily by broadening and equalizing political rights, without significantly increasing the consultation of those who qualified as citizens or the protection of citizens against arbitrary action; simultaneous restrictions on voting and associational life in Ireland, indeed, attenuated the net movement toward democracy. Through direct and indirect effects, nevertheless, Britain's reduction of religious restrictions on citizenship in 1828 and 1829 marked an important moment for democratization.

In addition to its significance for British history, the Emancipation campaign takes us back to the more general points that motivate this essay: analogies between social-movement dynamics and politics at other scales, negotiated contingency of political identities in movements and elsewhere, interactions between ostensibly "domestic" and "international" political processes, value of transactional rather than individualistic conceptions of political processes. In order to avoid endless elaboration, let us confine discussion to analogies between social movements and the politics of nationalism.

### The analogy of nationalism

As a doctrine, nationalism asserts a series of propositions that had little currency two centuries ago, but came to seem like political common sense during the nineteenth century:

1. The whole world's population divides into nations, each of which shares a common origin, culture, and sense of destiny.
2. Each nation deserves its own state.
3. Each state has the right to create its own nation.
4. Given a nation's existence, its members have strong obligations to serve it and the state that embodies it. Those obligations override the claims of religion, family, and self-interest.

As propositions about how the world works, of course, each of these encounters enormous empirical and normative objections. But as justifications for social action, they all gained considerable currency in the Western world after 1789, then acquired worldwide scope with the dismantling of empires.

To be more precise and to focus on Europe, nationalist doctrines and practices took a zigzag course from 1492 to our own time. From 1492 to 1648, schematically, we witness a period in which Western and Central European powers struggled over the alignment between religion and state power, with outcomes varying among the establishment of state-dominated Protestant churches in Scandinavia, England, and parts of Germany, uneasy and unequal coexistence of multiple religions in Switzerland and the Dutch republic, expulsion and forced conversion of Jews and Muslims in Iberia, and decreasing toleration of a chartered Protestant minority in a France that kept its distance from the pope. From 1648 to the 1790s, the European state system maintained a rough alignment of official religion with state identity but the papacy continued to lose secular power, even within nominally Catholic states. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars started the severing of religion from national identity, with non-religious or even anti-religious definitions of citizenship coming to predominate. It is as if rulers discovered that religion usually encouraged international ties, which in turn subverted their programs of national hegemony. Religion bedded uncomfortably with nationalism.

As political process, nationalism consists of claim-making in the name of these doctrines. It takes two forms: **state-led** and **state-seeking**.



State-led nationalism involves claims by agents of an existing state and their political allies, claims on presumed members of the nation identified with that state. State-led nationalism includes the creation and imposition of a dominant language, origin myth, symbols, rituals, memberships, educational routines, and obligations by means of histories, literatures, curricula, museums, monuments, public assemblies, electoral procedures, state ceremonies, festivals, military service, and intervention in mass media. It entails the subordination or elimination of competing institutions and practices, at the extreme the exercise of control over wide ranges of resources and social life by state agents in the name of the nation's interest. State-led nationalism has been rare in human history; over the roughly 10,000 years that states have existed somewhere in the world, most rulers have settled for assigning priority within their domains to their own cultural definitions and readings of their own interests, but coexisting more or less comfortably with composite subject populations having distinctive charters, cultures, and social routines. Although China stands as an important partial exception, state-led nationalism only became widely available, or even technically feasible, in most of the world's states during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

*A fortiori* for state-seeking nationalism, the mounting of demands for political autonomy and recognition by self-identified representatives of a coherent nation that lacks its own state. Historically, state-seeking nationalism has arisen chiefly in three circumstances: 1) when agents of an empire have sought to impose military, fiscal, or (especially) religious obligations on a previously-protected minority, 2) when adjacent powers have attempted to undermine an empire by supporting the rebellion of peripheral populations within the empire, 3) when rulers of expanding states have undertaken thoroughgoing state-led nationalism in the presence of well-connected populations possessing distinctive cultural, political, and economic institutions. The first two have rarely stimulated strong assertions of national identity, especially with claims to separate statehood. The third – the encounter of state-led nationalism with well-connected minorities – has frequently done so. As a result, state-seeking nationalism surged during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

International relations played a significant part in both varieties of nationalism. Whether initiated by a state's agents or by an antistate minority, the claim to represent a nation could only succeed in relation to other powerholders, especially the rulers of major outside states. At

least from the treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559), settlements of large-scale European wars featured representation of multiple powers, a muster of those who had valid claims to rule, hence an implicit enumeration of those who **lacked** such claims. By the treaty of Westphalia (1648) the ruler's validated claim to represent a nation, at least as connected by a common religious tradition, came to figure among the criteria for recognition by the community of nations; one reason France and Sweden were able to keep Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III from representing all his domains as a single power at Westphalia was precisely the religious diversity of those scattered territories. Nevertheless, by the settlement of the Napoleonic Wars, shared religion had lost much of its force as a national political credential, while the concert of nations presumed more than ever before to decide collectively which states enjoyed sovereignty and who was qualified to rule them.

After World War I the League of Nations (boycotted by the United States) inherited some of the victorious powers' authority to certify nations. In the aftermath of World War II, the great powers delegated even more certifying power to the United Nations, practically ceding the work of credentialing to that body once massive decolonization began during the 1960s. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia both provoked and then fed upon disruption of the credentialing apparatus, as quick but disputed recognitions of some fragments (e.g. Slovenia, Croatia, and Ukraine) but not others incited military action on the parts of those who stood to lose potential power, livelihood, or even lives as a function of outsiders' confirmation of others as their rightful rulers. Increasingly, then, the recognition of who constituted a valid nation a) entered the process of state formation, b) became the collective business of some concert of already-recognized nation-states, however heterogeneous their actual social composition, c) generated international agencies specializing in recognition and its denial, d) had enormous consequences for the relative power of different factions within constituted states.

As this account suggests, both state-led and state-seeking nationalisms share interesting properties with social movements. Like the claims social movement activists make on behalf of themselves and their ostensible constituencies, claims to nationhood always include a measure of mystification with respect to the relevant population's tenure, coherence, and solidarity with its self-identified spokespersons. They almost always incite counterclaims by rivals, enemies, and threatened

powerholders. The identities they assert consist crucially of differences from and relations to others rather than actual internal solidarity. Their success rests as least as much on outside recognition as on internal consensus. And disciplined, stereotyped public demonstrations of "nationness," which typically require great internal coordination and repression, play a large part in that recognition. In this case, to be sure, the sheer ability to wield armed force effectively looms much larger than it does in most social movements.

### **Where now?**

Nationalist performances are not simply social movements writ large, but they involve parallel political processes. To repeat:

*First*, the histories in question reveal powerful analogies between the processes driving social movements within national polities and a range of other processes, both "national" and "international," to which analysts of social movements have paid little attention; they therefore rectify common conceptions of social movements as *sui generis*.

*Second*, the identities people deploy in political claim-making (including identities of religious affiliation, nationality, and citizenship) consist of contingent relationships with other people rather than inbuilt personal traits; they therefore alter as political networks, opportunities, and strategies shift.

*Third*, the histories show us incessant interaction between political processes observers commonly distinguish as "domestic" and "international," processes analysts frequently conceive of as quite independent one from the other.

*Fourth*, once we shift from conventional individualistic conceptions to transactional analyses of political processes these three points become almost self-evident.

We could undertake similar reviews of other ostensibly local or international political processes, such as ethnic conflict, the creation of citizenship, militarization, democratization, dependent state formation, revolution, and war. Perhaps by now, however, the main point is obvious, tedious, even otiose: the endemic individualism of history and social science have long kept analysts from recognizing parallels and

connections among political processes, parallels and connections that transcend geographic boundaries and scales. Perhaps Catholic Emancipation can direct us along the path of intellectual emancipation.

### Acknowledgments

Thanks to Ted Margadant for the commentary he offered, on an oral presentation of this article at the *Theory and Society* Conference, University of California, Davis, 24–26 February 1995, which also appears in this issue. I agree entirely with his comments, and indeed took a similar line to his in my *European Revolutions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), chapter 4. I have not modified the present article, however, in order to let his comments stand in proper relation to the original text. I have adapted some material from this article in *Durable Inequality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

### Notes

1. *Morning Chronicle*, 16 June 1828, 2.
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5. See Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, "Toward An Integrated Perspective on Social Movements and Revolution," in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, editors, *Ideals, Interests, and Institutions: Advancing Theory in Comparative Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
6. Wendy Hinde, *Catholic Emancipation. A Shake to Men's Minds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 161n.
7. For sources and methods, see Charles Tilly, *Popular Contention in Great Britain, 1758-1834* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), appendix 1.
8. *Times* 19 March 1829, p. 1.
9. *Morning Chronicle* 27 March 1829, p. 2.
10. Compiled from all issues of *Votes and Proceedings of Parliament*, 1828 and 1829.
11. Fergus O'Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation. Daniel O'Connell and the Birth of Irish Democracy 1820-30* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1985), pp. 188-257.

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### Notes

<sup>2</sup> **Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements**

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