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The Role of Threat in Collective Action

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Introduction

This chapter highlights the role of threats or negative conditions that stimulate collective action. A wide variety of social movements and popular struggles are driven by threats – from local resistance over state and police repression to the global movement combating climate change. Indeed, the Women's March against the newly inaugurated Trump Administration in early 2017 represented the largest simultaneous mass mobilizations in US history, with the organizers explicitly stating a threat to the protection of rights, health, and safety as the primary motive for the unprecedented demonstrations in the opening of their mission statement.[1] In the early history of political process theory, threats were examined in general terms by scholars such as Charles Tilly (1977: 14–24, 1978: 133–135) and Harold Kerbo (1982). The part played by threats in generating social movement activity offers a second strand of inquiry in addition to political opportunities within the political process tradition. In the 1980s and 1990s, political process scholars emphasized political opportunities more than threats in studies of movement emergence (McAdam 2011: 91; Pinard 2011; Van Dyke 2013; see also Chapter 1 by McAdam and Tarrow, in this volume). Since the late 1990s and early 2000s, beginning with influential works by Jasper (1997), Snow et al. (1998) and Goldstone and Tilly (2001), a growing body of empirical research has accumulated, featuring threats and worsening conditions as primary forces generating attempts at collective mobilization (Almeida 2003; Andrews and Seguin 2015; Dodson 2016; Einwohner and Maher 2011; Inclán 2009; Johnson and Frickel 2011; Maher 2010; Martin 2013; Martin and Dixon 2010; Mora et al. 2017; Shriver, Adams, and Longo 2015; Simmons 2014; Van Dyke and Soule 2002; Zepeda-Millán 2017). In order to specify the conditions under which threats are more likely to activate social movement type activity this chapter discusses their relationship to grievances, the core components of political process theory, and resource

infrastructures. This review also develops a sensitizing scheme for the principal forms of structural threat in extant studies. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future lines of inquiry on threats with a focus on gaps in current scholarship.

Grievances and Threats

One of the first tasks for social movement scholars centers on defining concepts in a concise manner. Often the terms "grievances" and "threats" are treated as synonymous. More recent scholarship treats them as analytically distinct. Early social movement research prioritized the role of grievances, often viewing them in terms of system strain and breakdown (Buechler 2004; Smelser 1962; Snow et al. 1998). Grievances involve the everyday problems subjectively experienced by communities and social groups. Snow and Soule (2010: 23) define grievances as "troublesome matters or conditions, and the feelings associated with them – such as dissatisfaction, fear, indignation, resentment, and moral shock." These grievances may be long-standing over decades or of recent occurrence. One important pre-existing condition for the emergence of social movement-type activity is that these grievances are felt collectively by a community or a social group and not just experienced at the individual level (Snow 2013). Communities and social groups are more likely to collectively attempt to resolve such problems when opportunities or threats enter the political environment of the aggrieved population. Opportunities provide occasions to address long-standing grievances via social movement-type actions. Political opportunities signal to communities experiencing adversity that if they mobilize in the present, they are more likely to alleviate existing wrongs and "collective bads." Threats tend to have a different impact than opportunities by increasing the intensity of existing grievances or creating new ones (Bergstrand 2014). Indeed, Pinard (2011: 17) states in his extensive theoretical work on grievances that "threats can greatly increase the sense of grievances, as when the anticipation of increased hardships accompanies current ones."

Political Opportunity and Threats

Scholars define opportunities and threats at both the micro and macro levels of social life. At the micro level, empirical and theoretical work emphasizes the motivations of why individuals would engage in collective action with increases in political opportunities or threats (Goldstone and Tilly 2001). Opportunities offer the possibility of gaining new advantages and benefits by engaging in social movement activity (ibid.). Life will be better if the collective effort succeeds (Tarrow 2011: 160–161). Threats drive individuals into collective mobilization by making current conditions worse if defensive action is not undertaken.[2] At this micro level of motivations and incentives, opportunities and threats need to be perceived by the relevant actors (see Chapter 1 by McAdam and Tarrow, in this volume). Social constructionist perspectives assist in linking specific opportunities and threats to encouraging individual level participation in collective action. For example, scholars suggest that activists would need to diagnose particular threats in terms of defining the harms they create and attributing

culpability in a convincing fashion before mobilization can take place (Jasper 1997; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow and Corrigall-Brown 2005). In addition, moral economy theories (Auyero 2006; Scott 1976) connect cultural processes to the likelihood of opportunities and threats converting grievances into sustained campaigns of protest by contextualizing the particular hardship within the moral belief systems of the community or society in question (Simmons 2016).

At the structural level, scholars have elaborated more objective measures of opportunities and threats. The basic features of political opportunity structure are well codified in the works of McAdam (1996: 26), Tarrow (2011: 163–167), and Meyer (2004) (see also Chapter 1 by McAdam and Tarrow in this volume). The core dimensions of *elite conflict*, *institutional access*, *changing electoral alignments*, *external allies*, and *declining repression* are highlighted in this literature as the facilitating macro conditions encouraging attempts at collective mobilization. In more recent elaborations of the perspective, a new dimension of "the multiplicity of independent centers of power within the regime" has been introduced as an additional opportunity (see Chapter 1 by McAdam and Tarrow, in this volume). In order to give proper analytical weight to the role of various forms of threat, I move the dimension of "external allies" into the category of resource infrastructure (McCarthy 1996), since achieving links to sympathetic allies is partially related to the agency of would-be collective actors to reach out to others under settings of threat or opportunity.[3] The other primary dimensions of political opportunity are more representative of the positive conditions in the political environment favorable to the emergence of a social movement.

Tilly (1978: 134–135) contended that "a given amount of threat tends to generate more collective action than the 'same' amount of opportunity." More recently, Snow et al. (1998), in developing a related "quotidian disruption" model of movement emergence, also postulate from Prospect Theory that groups experiencing potential losses are more motivated to engage in collective action than groups facing the possibility of new gains. Such propositions encourage analysts to be especially interested in more precisely defining types of structural threats that generate large-scale mobilization to guide empirical investigations.

Structural threats are less well established in the social movement literature. Structural threats act as negative conditions intensifying existing grievances and creating new ones in stimulating collective action. Emerging scholarship identifies at least four structural threats driving social movement activity: (1) economic-related problems; (2) public health/environmental decline; (3) erosion of rights; and (4) state repression. In the following sections the basic resource infrastructure permitting mobilization is discussed and these four structural threats are defined more precisely with empirical examples. Such an exercise seeks to balance the causal universe between political opportunities and threats by illustrating the prominent role of structural forms of threat in promoting collective action.

Resource Infrastructure and Threats

In order to fend off threats, communities require some level of resource infrastructure. This infrastructure includes the human, organizational, material, technical, and experiential stockpiles of capital available to populations under various form of

threat, including those stockpiles possessed by sympathetic allies (Edwards and Kane 2014; Ganz 2009; see also Chapter 4 by Edwards, McCarthy, and Mataic, in this volume). Resource infrastructures are unevenly distributed across time and geographic space (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). This in part explains why so many grievances and threats fail to materialize into campaigns of collective action. A minimal resource infrastructure is necessary to launch a collective attempt at reducing ongoing and anticipated threats (Almeida 2003). More specifically, resource infrastructure perspectives predict stronger and longer-lasting threat-based mobilizations in communities with denser populations and communication networks, pre-established civic organizations and institutions (labor associations, neighborhood groups, schools, non-profit organizations, etc.), and past collective action experience than in communities lacking in solidarity and organizational vitality (Almeida 2007b, 2014; Andrews 2004; Cress and Snow 2000; Ganz 2009; Gould 1995; Reese, Giedritis, and Vega 2005).

To illustrate, consider one of the largest mass mobilizations in decades in the United States which occurred between February and May of 2006 over an impending Congressional Bill that heightened the criminalization of undocumented immigrants. The threat of legal repression (Menjívar and Abrego 2012) against millions of working-class immigrants with precarious residency status created a three-month-long campaign with demonstrations in hundreds of cities and towns across the nation, with some rallies reportedly reaching up to one million participants (Zepeda-Millán 2017). Bloemraad, Voss, and Lee (2011) report in their national study of the threat-based immigrant rights mobilizations in 2006 a strong correspondence between the locations of the marches and the locations of the strategic resource of immigrant freedom rides in 2003. In a local-level study of the same movement across four low-income cities in the Central Valley of California, Mora (2016) found that the cities with denser activist organizational infrastructures prior to 2006 were able to sustain mobilization over a much longer period of time in response to anti-immigrant legislation than localities lacking such prior activist networks.

In another study of threat-induced collective action of thousands of local protests against free market reforms in Central America, Almeida (2012, 2014) showed that municipalities with higher levels of state and community infrastructures (administrative offices, highways, universities, labor associations, leftist oppositional parties, and NGOs) were more likely to participate in campaigns of defensive mobilization. Between the 1980s and the early 2000s, Martin and Dixon (2010) also find resistance to the threats of post-Fordist economic restructuring in the United States in the form of labor strikes was much more forceful in states with the organizational resource of labor unions and labor union membership. In their exhaustive event history study predicting the diffusion of Occupy Wall Street encampments protesting increasing wealth inequality across over 900 US cities, Vasi and Suh (2016: 150–151) conclude that:

> Despite the movement's anarchist roots and horizontal organizing structure, it benefited from the presence of universities and a progressive community, which provided organizational resources such as meeting spaces and informal networks between activists. These findings demonstrate that organizational resources matter, even for movements that claim to be decentralized and that rely heavily on cyberbrokerage to connect activists.

The above empirical studies all indicate that excluded social groups enjoy a higher probability of collectively resisting threats when a resource infrastructure is available. These works represent a variety of methodologies, settings, forms of threat, and all incorporate variations in resource infrastructure levels within their cases. Beyond establishing the critical intervening role of resource infrastructures in converting threats into collective action, it is necessary to more precisely define common forms of threat found in existing social movement studies.

Structural Threats

In the past two decades, a series of theoretical and empirical studies have highlighted the primary role of threat in generating sustained mobilization. Four broad dimensions of threat tend to appear as the most prominent: (1) economic-related problems; (2) public health/environmental decline; (3) erosion of rights; and (4) state repression.[4] In this section each form of threat is defined, connected to stimulating joint actions, and supported with empirical examples from the social movement literature. Just as political process scholars have developed core dimensions of political opportunity, a similar set of fundamental threats can be established.

Economic-related problems

Problems related to economic conditions are perhaps one of the most common forces motivating threat-induced collective action throughout modern history. There is an abundance of ways that economic and material circumstances catalyze attempts at defensive mobilization. From general economic crises that raise levels of mass unemployment and sharpen income inequality to issues of government austerity and access to land for rural cultivators, a wide range of economic forces may encourage groups to engage in protest (Caren, Gaby, and Herrold 2017). After ethnic and religious conflict and state repression, economic-related issues are likely driving some of the largest mobilizations of the past few decades (Almeida 2010).

Since the 1980s, the Global South has experienced several waves of protests over economic austerity, privatization, and other economic liberalization measures (Roberts 2008; Silva 2009; Walton and Seddon 1994). In some countries, the massive demonstrations against neoliberal reforms in the 2000s broke national records as the largest documented street marches. These cases include health care privatization in El Salvador, a free trade treaty and utility privatization in Costa Rica, and social security reform and privatization in Panama (Almeida 2014). By the late 1990s and early 2000s, Latin America alone had experienced thousands of individual protest events over free market reforms (Almeida 2007a; Almeida and Cordero 2015; Bellinger and Arce 2011; Ortiz and Béjar 2013; Seoane, Taddei, and Algranati 2006). Similar events responding to neoliberal threats can be found in Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe (Abouharb and Cingranelli 2007; Almeida 2016; Beissinger and Sasse 2014). In the 2010s, the largest demonstrations reported in the southern European nations of Greece, Portugal, and Spain were also driven by government economic austerity programs (della Porta 2015; Kousis 2014; Rüdig and Karyotis 2014).

Mass unemployment and high concentrations of economic inequality also have led to dramatic campaigns of collective action around the globe (della Porta 2017; Dodson 2016; Kawalerowicz and Biggs 2015). In the 1930s, the economic Depression led to mass mobilization of the unemployed in the United States (Kerbo and Shaffer 1986; Piven and Cloward 1979), Britain, Australia, El Salvador, Chile, and Costa Rica. Declining economic conditions have also stimulated mobilizations by the homeless and their advocates in major US cities (Snow, Soule, and Cress 2005). One of the largest social movements in Latin America in the late 1990s and early 2000s was Argentina's unemployed workers movement that faced similar levels of job losses as the United States in the 1930s (Auyero 2002; Rossi 2017). Even rightist and nativist mobilization has been empirically linked to the explicit threats of unemployment and de-industrialization (DiGrazia 2015; Van Dyke and Soule 2002). Mass unemployment, dismissals, labor flexibility laws, and labor market precariousness have also driven social movement campaigns in Europe over the past two decades (della Porta 2015). Plant closures provide a particularly compelling catalyst to working-class mobilization in regions undergoing economic restructuring throughout the world (Auyero 2002; Moody 1997), and especially in China in recent decades (Chen 2014). Labor unions have played a major role in the movements against austerity and mass unemployment, especially in countries with a large industrial base and public infrastructure (Almeida 2007a, 2016). The Occupy Wall Street movement, with over 1000 reported protest events and encampments across the United States in the Fall of 2011, sought government intervention in wealth distribution in general, and specific local policies such as moratoriums on housing evictions and foreclosures.

Rural struggles over the loss of cultivable land and global "land grabs" are also materially based and have driven collective action campaigns throughout the twentieth and early twenty first centuries in the interior regions of the developing world (Enríquez 2010; Hall et al. 2015; Schock 2015a). The list of potential economic-based threats is profuse, including struggles over labor exploitation, regressive taxation, affordable housing, and consumer protection from price inflation. Especially important in precipitating economic-based movements and livelihood struggles is the level of disruption incurred by communities in their daily subsistence routines (Snow et al. 1998). These "quotidian disruptions" provide particularly potent incentives for groups to seek redress for potential losses in resources in the population under threat (ibid.). Given this ubiquity of economic-based threats across time and place, analysts must also incorporate measures of the resource infrastructure available to would-be movement participants to determine the likelihood of collective mobilization.

Public health/environmental decline

Public health and environmental threats provide strong negative incentives for communities to mount a collective campaign for relief and compensation. The threat is to people's actual physical well-being and long-term health (Szasz 2007). At times, this form of threat creates "a suddenly imposed grievance" (Walsh, Warland, and Smith 1997); interruptions to daily patterns (Snow et al. 1998); or a "moral shock" (Jasper 1997). Johnson and Frickel (2011: 305) define "ecological threat" as the "costs associated

with environmental degradation as it disrupts (or is perceived to disrupt) ecosystems, human health, and societal well-being." In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, public health and environmental threats appear to be on the rise as well as campaigns to slow down or reverse these deteriorating conditions (Shriver et al. 2015).

Starting in the 1980s, and continuing through the present, thousands of grass-roots movements mushroomed throughout the United States and the world demanding "environmental justice" over the new types of pollution and public health harms associated with industrial societies and their byproducts (Mohai and Saha 2015; Szasz 1994; Taylor 2014). Most of these challenges are contested at the local level, and therefore do not receive national mass media coverage. Similar trends of community mobilization in reaction to local environmental threats have been documented and analyzed in a variety of global settings, including in urban China (Dong, Kriesi, and Kübler 2015), Japan (Almeida and Stearns 1998; Broadbent 1998; Stearns and Almeida 2004), and El Salvador (Cartagena Cruz 2017). Communities within the environmental justice framework organize over a variety of environmental threats, such as lead and pesticide poisoning, along with pollution associated with incinerators, industrial waste dumps, power plants, chemical leaks, superfund sites, and air contamination from high concentrations of particulate matter. A strong current within the environmental justice movement involves campaigns confronting environmental racism or the disproportionate threats of environmental harms documented in working-class communities of color (Bullard 2000; Bullard and Wright 2012). A related set of grassroots movements have launched campaigns over the local threat of the entry of big box stores eroding environmental quality and social tranquility in smaller towns and communities across the United States and beyond (Halebsky 2009; Rao 2008).

Mining and other extractive industry operations act as another major environmental threat mobilizing localities. Across the developing world, from the Philippines and Guatemala to Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru, indigenous communities have launched fierce campaigns over the perceived threats of mining to the ecological health and sustainability of their ancestral lands (Arce 2014; Camba 2016; Díaz Pinzón 2013; Sánchez González 2016; Yagenova 2015). Not just indigenous peoples, but rural populations throughout the Global South are joining in defensive struggles against the ecological threats associated with resource extraction industries and mega-development projects (Bebbington and Bury 2013; Cordero 2015).

At the other end of production, environmental threats from continued global industrial expansion and carbon output appear to be one of the main promoters of collective action in the twenty-first century. More specifically, the transnational movement for climate justice is responding to the long-term threat of global warming. By 2009, the movement reached the capacity to mobilize events in most countries on the planet, often in simultaneous and coordinated actions. During the United Nations Climate Summit in New York City in September 2014, the mass demonstration reached up to 400 000 participants locally with over 2000 additional events held around the world. Similar to economic-based threats in terms of variety, a whole host of public health and environmental threats may act as the main triggers of collective action.

Erosion of rights

Another threat involves the erosion of rights. When rights have been extended for a substantial period where populations have become accustomed to their benefits, attempts at weakening them will often be met with collective resistance. An erosion of rights represents a relative loss of power (McVeigh 2009; Van Dyke 2013). The taking away of suffrage rights acts as one of the most fundamental offenses, creating defensive mobilization. Such governmental actions instantly place a large segment of the national population under similar circumstances. Elections that are perceived to be fraudulent or the canceling of elections frequently set off campaigns of civil society defiance (McAdam and Tarrow 2010; Norris, Frank, and Martinez I Coma 2015). For example, Kalandadze and Orenstein (2009) documented 17 major electoral fraud mobilizations between 1991 and 2005 in Eurasia, Africa, and Latin America. In a separate study between 1989 and 2011, Brancati (2016: 3–5) identified 310 major protests to "adopt or uphold democratic elections" in 92 countries. Since 2011, electoral mobilizations over perceived fraud have continued throughout the world, as in Cambodia in 2013. The 2009 general elections in Iran unleashed the largest post-Revolution mobilizations witnessed in the country as the "Green Movement" launched weeks of street marches contesting the election results as illegitimate (Kurzman 2011; Parsa 2016). Even the extremely close vote count in the 2006 Mexican presidential elections generated a month of mass street demonstrations and disruptions with claims of fraud by the defeated candidate of the left, Manuel López Obrador.[5] In late 2017 and early 2018, perceived fraud and systematic irregularities in the Honduran presidential elections resulted in multiple street marches of over 100,000 people and hundreds of roadblocks erected by citizens across the country.

Ongoing electoral fraud in multiple and sequential electoral cycles may even alter the *character* of collective action to take on more radical forms with the focus of overthrowing the prevailing regime (especially if combined with the threat of state repression). This follows the pattern of El Salvador in the 1970s. After a period of political liberalization in the 1960s, the military regime held four consecutive national fraudulent elections between 1972 and 1978. After several rounds of massive nonviolent demonstrations against the unfair elections, many sympathizers of the center left opposition parties radicalized their position and eventually threw their support behind insurgent revolutionaries, eventuating in El Salvador's long decade of civil war and violence (Almeida 2003, 2008a). Finally, military coups that interrupt the constitutional order and overthrow popularly elected governments may also generate large-scale collective action. This was the case following the 2009 military coup in Honduras that ousted the democratically elected government of Manuel Zelaya. Immediately following Zelaya's expulsion, an anti-coup mass movement erupted that sustained the largest mobilizations in Honduran history until Zelaya's return in 2011, with street demonstrations reaching up to a reported 400 000 participants (Sosa 2012). A similar, but much more concise, dynamic of an anti-coup mass movement took place following the short-lived military coup in Venezuela in 2002 that attempted to drive out President Hugo Chávez Frías.

Other forms of eroding rights also serve as a primary catalyst to collective action. Often, these perceived rights violations come in the form of policy threats by state

officials (Martin 2013; Reese 2011). The threat of weakening reproductive rights laws and welfare services, for example, pushes pro-choice and welfare rights groups into campaigns of defensive action (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Reese et al. 2005). Military invasions of other countries also operate as a policy threat leading to anti-war mobilization (Reese, Petit, and Meyer 2010; Heaney and Rojas 2015). Conservative groups in the United States often frame "government overreach" as a threat to rights in order to mobilize on a variety of issues such as over taxation, health care insurance, and gun ownership rights (Almeida and Van Dyke 2014; Lio, Melzer, and Reese 2008). The work on policy threats not only opens up critical questions about the conditions for initial movement emergence, but also leads to the potential for furthering our knowledge of movement-related outcomes (Amenta et al. 2010; Bosi, Giugni, and Uba 2016). The outcomes of threat-induced movements are vastly under-theorized and researched in comparison to mobilization outcomes generated by political opportunities. Policy threats provide one avenue for scholarly advance by constructing precise research designs that examine movement-related processes and their consequences on the final policy results (Almeida 2008b).

State repression

A final major form of threat occurs when states coerce, harass, and repress citizens under their jurisdiction (see also Chapter 12 by Ghaziani and Kretschmer, in this volume). Along with the erosion of rights, the threat of state repression operates in stark contrast to the core political opportunities of a relaxation in state repression and widening institutional access, in that movements are responding to the closing down of political space as opposed to its opening (Goodwin 2001). The state repression literature offers a vast and complex accounting of the dynamics between governmental violence and popular response (Chang 2015; Davenport 2010; Earl 2011; Earl and Soule 2010). At times, state repression quells attempts at collective action because of the heavy risks incurred in the mobilization process (Johnston 2011). This aspect of state repression is more consistent with the political opportunity strand of political process theory. At other times, state and police repression encourages heightened attempts at protest (Brockett 2005). For example, police abuse cases against African American citizens in multiple US cities reached such a threshold by 2014, that activists launched the Black Lives Matter campaign with a reported 37 chapters across the United States by late 2016 (Bell 2016).

In authoritarian states, continued repressive action against nonviolent social movements may change the nature of collective action itself and switch the trajectory of protest onto a much more radical path (Alimi, Demetriou, and Bosi 2015; Almeida 2007b; Trejo 2016).[6] This was clearly the case in the Arab Spring cases of Libya and Syria, and, to a lesser extent, Egypt. These protests began as campaigns of mass non-violence in 2011 and 2012, or what Schock (2005; 2015b) refers to as "unarmed insurrections." When the states of Libya, Syria, and later Egypt violently repressed these nonviolent challenges once they had been sustained for several months, the movements radicalized and began using violent and more military-style tactics (Alimi 2016). In contrast, in countries implementing softer forms of repression, states may "contain escalation" from converting into radicalized mobilization, as in the case of Jordan during the Arab Spring (Moss 2014). Scholars of revolutionary

movements find that radicalization appears much more likely under exclusionary types of authoritarian regimes that fail to incorporate the middle and working classes into structures of political participation or distribute the benefits of economic growth (Foran 2005; Goodwin 2001). At the micro level, outrageous acts of state repression also push individuals to take on new roles and identities as revolutionary activists and participants (Viterna 2013).

This unique property of repressive threat, with the potential to radicalize collective action, provides another major distinction from political opportunities and other types of threats (with the exception of fraudulent elections). Promising areas for advancing state repression research in terms of predicting the likelihood of protest escalation or demobilization include the severity and probability of the repressive threat being carried out (Einwohner and Maher 2011; Maher 2010), a cataloging of the coercive tactics used by the state (Moss 2014), and the precise type and level of resource infrastructure necessary to sustain mobilization under high-risk conditions (Loveman 1998; Pilati 2016).

Summary of Structural Forms of Threat

Table 2.1 summarizes the major forms of structural threat examined in the collective action literature and some of the most common types of corresponding movements. Table 2.1 does not offer an exhaustive typology, but a sensitizing scheme of frequently occurring threats. Economic-related threats produce movements struggling over material conditions – from government austerity measures to the loss of cultivable land. Movements responding to public health threats and environmental decline range from local struggles over pollution and contamination to transnational mobilizations attempting to slow down the pace of planetary warming.

The threat of eroding rights pushes two forms of movement type activities. First, when states cancel or hold fraudulent elections, this may lead to a massive round of protests against the loss of citizen voting rights and disenfranchisement. Second, newly impending or implemented governmental policies that are perceived by

Table 2.1 Major forms of threat

Form of threat	Examples of collective responses
Economic-related problems	Austerity protests, Unemployed worker movements, Occupy/Indignados, movements over loss of housing, land, affordable food
Public health/ environmental decline	Local actions related to disease and illness outbreaks attributed to government/Corporate ineptitude (e.g. Love Canal, Flint, Pesticide Poisoning, HIV/AIDS), Environmental Justice movements, Transnational Climate Justice movements, anti-mining and extractive industry movements, other environmental hazards
Erosion of rights	Fraudulent election protests, policy threat protest (reproductive rights, anti-war, welfare rights)
State repression	Protest campaigns against government harassment, arrests, killings, states of emergency, police abuse, and other human rights atrocities. Radicalized movements against authoritarian and repressive regimes.

particular constituencies as a loss of power, status, and/or protection, ranging from welfare and reproductive rights policies to gun ownership rights, are likely to facilitate mobilization (McVeigh 2009). These kinds of government measures often trigger group-wise mobilizations for the subpopulations perceived to be most threatened by the policies (Amenta and Young 1999). Repressive threats at times launch campaigns of mass resistance when governments kill popular civic leaders, commit massacres, or even lesser forms of police abuse and harassment. Under special circumstances, the threat of state repression has the unique property to potentially radicalize the form of collective action, resulting in both revolutionary and terrorist movements (see also Chapter 39 by Goldstone and Ritter on revolutions, and Chapter 40 by Beck and Schoon on terrorist movements, in this volume).[7] Many groups and advocates leading campaigns for human rights are also driven by the threat of state repression.

The Future of Threat Research

This chapter has highlighted fundamental questions in the emerging literature on the primary role of threat in driving social movement activity. Students and scholars must continue to advance in our shared understanding of how negative conditions drive attempts at defensive collective action. Some of the largest mobilizations in the twenty-first century appear to be reacting to economic, ecological/health, and political threats.[8] Beyond relating threats to grievances, political opportunities, resource infrastructures, and developing more precise indicators of structural threats, several other tasks remain.

This review has separated threat environments from opportunity environments in order to provide sustained analytical attention to the often underemphasized role of worsening circumstances in stimulating collective action. In many contexts, communities subject to mobilization may likely face a third *hybrid environment* of opportunities and threats operating simultaneously. One area of further refinement is to better understand these "mixed" or hybrid environments that are driven by opportunities and threats. For example, McAdam et al. (2010) implemented such a design of 11 oil and gas pipeline projects crossing 16 developing countries using fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (QCA). They concluded that collective conflicts most often emerged under *both* conditions of threat (e.g. no benefits for the host country, potential for environmental harms) and opportunity (e.g. public consultation with affected local communities).

Another line of inquiry would be to construct even more precise and exhaustive sub-typologies of threat, for economic-based problems, public health/environmental decline, erosion of rights, and state repression. Given that each of these structural conditions provides a diversity of threats within each form, examining the differential impacts of each sub-type of threat would enhance our understanding of the kinds of specific threats that are most likely to encourage movement actions. For example, does a government austerity program trigger similar collective responses as mass unemployment? Will lead poisoning from the municipal water supply mobilize people the same way that local air contamination from polluting industries does? Other properties of threats also need more attention such as the magnitude, severity, and extensiveness of the threat in question.

A final consideration, which this largely structural account underplays, would be to give more sustained focus to the social construction of threat that connects structural conditions to people's actual awareness and preparedness to act collectively (Klandermans 2013). Both framing and moral economy perspectives may be especially useful in addressing this lacuna (Snow et al. 2014), as well as work on the emotions triggered by threats (Collins 2001). Even in cases of sudden threats, communities must perceive the harm as a negative cost incurred and interpret it within prevailing belief systems and norms of justice and be energized with collective emotions (Jasper 1998, 2011). Longer-terms threats or slowly encroaching threats (such as increasing state authoritarianism or creeping pollution) may more likely transform into social movement-type activity when activists, community members, and leaders convincingly demonstrate that the best way to reduce current collective bads involves organizing a sustained campaign of resistance.

Notes

1   Available at: www.womensmarch.com/mission/
2   Tilly (1969) originally described these actions as "reactive." I prefer the term "defensive" (Almeida 2007a), so as to avoid misinterpreting threat-based movements as "reactionary" or ultraconservative in their ideological frameworks.
3   Even if collective actors seek out external allies under conditions of threat or opportunity, the availability of such allies may not be completely under the movement's control.
4   While these four forms of threat may be some of the most prominent found in the existing literature, they only sensitize movement scholarship into analyzing the role of "bad news" (Meyer 2002) systematically in models of the generation of collective action. These forms of threat are not exhaustive, and more work is needed in developing a more comprehensive typology of threat.
5   Protests against government corruption could also be classified as a variant of eroding citizenship rights. Between 2013 and 2017, massive protests have occurred in Brazil, Guatemala, Honduras, Russia, South Korea, and Thailand over corruption scandals in the executive branch or central administration.
6   The radicalization of collective action driven by state repression is similar to how the threat of electoral fraud may also convince activists to escalate their tactics to more violent forms.
7   It should be noted, however, revolutionary and terrorist movements can and do arise because of factors other than just state repression (e.g. ethnic conflict, religious strife, colonial/foreign occupation, etc.) (Beck 2015).
8   Mobilization over human rights represents another major movement in the twenty-first century (Smith and Wiest 2012). Such movements are often reacting to the threats of state repression in the political environment (Johnston 2011).

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