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Contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia: Knowledge accumulation and cycles of growth and exhaustion

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Abstract The study of mass contentious politics in Southeast Asia has accumulated significant knowledge over the last 40 years. This politics is instructive because it presents distinctive problems for analysis whose solutions will be useful to future analysts there and elsewhere. Two areas of knowledge where this literature has made special contributions are peasant resistance and the politics of insurgency and counterinsurgency. In addition, the peculiarities of the scholarship on this topic offer an opportunity to engage two different debates. First, because of the diverse methods employed to tackle this topic, the literature is useful for evaluating claims often made by partisans to methodological debates that only one's own method can accumulate knowledge while others cannot. Second, given the high geopolitical stake Southeast Asia once held for the United States in its fight against world communism, the scholarship on contentious mass politics in this region provides an appropriate test case for the common argument that postwar American scholarship has been dominated by American "imperial designs." This article examines the different genres of analysis in the literature and shows how these genres hold different normative and ontological assumptions, conceptualize problems differently, and accumulate knowledge in different modes. A key finding of the essay is that knowledge accumulation by different genres has experienced cycles of growth and exhaustion. The evolution of these genres indicates the often neglected fact that knowledge accumulation consumes exhaustible knowledge resources that need to be replenished. The changing fortunes of the genres with different normative orientations also suggest a loose link between scholarship on this topic and broad ideological shifts in the United States, although "imperial interests" did not always prevail as often claimed.

Introduction[1]

Why do men and women rebel? How do the weak resist the strong? Why did certain revolutionary or social movements develop the way they did? Why did a few succeed but

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most fail? These are some nagging questions that have long preoccupied political scientists and sociologists. Throughout the twentieth century, Southeast Asia was rife with conflict, from peasant rebellions to urban revolts to communist revolutions.[2] These conflicts, especially the civil war in Vietnam, have inspired the quest for explanation and understanding by both generalists and regional specialists who have produced a massive number of valuable works.[3]

This essay aims to find out how the study of mass contentious politics in Southeast Asia has accumulated knowledge over the last 40 years.[4] This politics is instructive because it presents distinctive problems for analysis whose solutions will be useful to future analysts there and elsewhere. A distinctive feature of Southeast Asian contentious politics concerns well-organized and ideologically motivated insurgencies. Studies on communist movements in Malaya, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines have generated a rich body of knowledge in the dynamics and organizations of insurgency and counter-insurgency (Berman, 1974; Kerkvliet, 1977; Osborne, 1965; Race, 1972; Stubbs, 1989). Socially, Southeast Asia is home to well-developed wet-rice peasant societies with rich economic, political, and social institutions that give rise to distinctive dynamics of political contention. It is no coincidence that studies of peasants' moral economy and everyday resistance in Southeast Asia have resonated powerfully among students of conflicts in peasant societies in China, Central America, Africa, the Soviet Union and other comparable contexts (Colburn, 1989; Kelliher, 1992; Thaxton, 1997; Viola, 1996).

While knowledge about peasant resistance and insurgency politics of Southeast Asia has been useful to the global study of conflicts, the scholarship on this topic over the last 40 years contains peculiarities that are relevant to two different debates. First, the scholarship is extremely diverse in terms of methods, ranging from ethnography to quantitative techniques, from comparative-historical analysis to modeling. Examples of works influential far beyond Southeast Asian studies include Gurr (1970), Feierabend, Feierabend and Nesvold (1972), Migdal (1974), Paige (1975), Scott (1976, 1985, 1990), Popkin (1979) and Adas (1979). Many of these works do not restrict their cases to Southeast Asia but have a global sample. The deployment of diverse methods to tackle this subject thus makes it possible to evaluate claims often made by partisans to methodological debates that only one's own method can accumulate knowledge while others cannot.[5] These claims are difficult to verify because systematic comparisons of different methods as applied in a particular area of research have seldom been done. Second, given the high geopolitical stake Southeast Asia held for the US in the postwar period, the topic offers a unique opportunity to assess the common claim about the domination of Cold War concerns over American scholarship, as observed, for example, in the literature on modernization and political development (Adas, 1989; Berger, 2003; Latham, 2000). Did "imperial interests" also define the scholarship in this case? Few topics can reflect this domination, if it existed, better than contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia.

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[2] Among 53 civil wars from 1960 to 1992, 23 took place in Asia as opposed to 19 in Africa and 11 in the Middle East (dataset compiled by Henderson and Singer 2000).

[3] According to Gurr (1970, 6), out of 2,828 articles that appeared in the *American Political Science Review* from its establishment in 1906 through 1968, only 29 had titles that concerned political disorder or violence and more than half (15) appeared after 1961.

[4] McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001, 5) defines contentious politics as "episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants." Here I define contentious mass politics as uninstitutionalized politics that involves nonelites and a contest for power or authority in a polity but that is not necessarily public or collective. Ethnic and religious conflicts are excluded from this definition to make the comparative task manageable.

[5] For example, see Lieberson (1991, 1994), Savolainen (1994), Goldthorpe (1997), Ragin (1997), Rueschemeyer and Stephens (1997), and Goldstone (1997), and King, Keohane, and Verba (1994).

This article has three parts. The first section introduces the four "genres" in the scholarship on Southeast Asian conflicts and justifies their use as heuristic tools for analyzing the literature on the topic. The second section compares these genres from research questions to data collection, from ontological to epistemological assumptions, and from the use of cases to that of comparison. What I find is that actual practices do not fit neatly into conventional labels in methodological debates such as "small N/large N," "qualitative/quantitative," and "positivist/interpretivist." On the contrary, the value of these labels is called into question because they do not describe accurately how research has been conducted.

The final section discusses how knowledge has been accumulated. This sections argues that different genres have generated different sorts of knowledge and accumulated knowledge in different modes. Whereas some works raise our knowledge about certain themes, others specialize on the variations of such themes in different national contexts. Whereas some genres accumulate knowledge by hypothesis testing, others do so by generalizing human experiences across times and societies. No genre monopolizes the truth and knowledge accumulation in all genres tends to indicate complex realities rather than producing conclusive findings. Furthermore, the four genres in the study of contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia are found to have all undergone cycles of growth and exhaustion. Periods of growth are followed by times of exhaustion when a genre becomes overburdened with too rigid or complex meta-theoretical frameworks, or when it runs out of fresh cases to test its hypotheses. The historical development of the genres offers two insights – one methodological and the other concerning the politics of scholarship. First, accumulating knowledge is thus not "free" in the sense that it consumes resources (meta-theories, cases, and empirical data) that may be depleted. Second, the evolution of the genres shows apparent links to ideological shifts in the US, although one should not assume that "imperial interests" always prevail.

Genres

Given the salience of the topic and the diverse methodological approaches that have been employed, valuable lessons can be drawn about the contributions of different methods to knowledge accumulation. Yet a tricky issue is how to categorize works according to the methods used. A quick survey of research on the topic suggests that methods cannot be used as the sole taxonomic criterion simply because researchers have not been solely or even primarily concerned with methods. Many important studies combine sources and analytical techniques that are conventionally regarded as the domains of different methodological schools. In a single piece of research it is possible to find the mixed use of comparative historical and quantitative techniques,[6] of ethnography and archival research,[7] or of formal modeling and interviewing.[8] Even more interesting, some scholars are loyal to certain methods throughout their careers while others adopt new methods to solve new problems or as a result of changes in their thinking.[9] Still many others are not explicit or self-conscious about their methods. Within one particular methodological school, I have found that different works emphasize different techniques or make different ontological assumptions. It appears that for many who study this topic, methods have often been applied to solve specific problems, not as dogmas.

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[6] An example is Paige (1975).

[7] An example is Kerkvliet (1990).

[8] An example is Race (1972).

For this reason and others to be outlined below, I have chosen to compare "genres" that group studies according to either their analytical foci or their research methods or both. As indicated in Tables 1 and 2, four main genres can be identified, including peasant studies (PS), political organization (PO), comparative-historical (CH) and quantitative modeling (QM).[10] While they appear to respond to broadly similar concerns, the genres focus on different aspects of conflict. Research in the peasant study genre (PS) is concerned mainly with peasant politics, taking note of the fact that peasants were the main forces in many Southeast Asian rebellions and revolutions. The second genre, political organization research (PO), supplies in-depth case studies of revolutionary organizations or movements and is especially interested in explaining why these radical organizations develop and possibly defeat government authorities. At a more macro level, the comparative historical genre (CH) views revolutions as important social events to be compared and explained systematically. This genre traces the historical unfolding of these events at the macro level and seeks to identify and test common causal patterns across a small number of national cases. Finally, the quantitative modeling genre (QM) develops econometric models and statistical tests to search for correlates between conflict attributes and macro-systemic variables.[11]

The organization of the literature into "genres" is based on several important considerations. First, social movement organization, comparative-historical, and quantitative analyses (corresponding roughly to PO, CH, and QM genres in this essay) have long been acknowledged as distinct research programs in political science and sociology in general and in conflict studies in particular.[12] Works such as Parsa (2000) and Gurr (1970) that will be examined here are well situated within their respective intellectual traditions (of comparative-historical for the former and quantitative-modeling for the latter). Boudreau (2001, 2004) and Goodwin (1997) – here categorized as PO – are similarly part of the social movement organization literature, although the PO genre in the study of Southeast Asian conflicts in fact began with (Parsonsian) sociology of organization and only adopted social movement theories later.

Second, distinctness can be demonstrated for all four genres in the study of contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia (with important exceptions and some overlapping). Table 2 summarizes the points to be made later that the genres differ fundamentally in their

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[9] Scott (1976, 1985, 1990).

[10] The political history genre (PH) that studies particular revolutions in Southeast Asia as unique historical events is not discussed here but is added to Tables 1 and 2 to help highlight distinct aspects in the other four "political-sciency" genres.

[11] The genres certainly had had long pedigrees in political science before the 1960s, but they only took on distinct shapes since then. Among the pioneering works were Johnson (1962) for PO, Moore (1966) for CH, Wolf (1969) for PS, and Feierabend et al. ([1966] 1972) for QM. Seven Southeast Asian countries were included in Feierabend et al.'s dataset of 84 cases. Wolf had a chapter on the Vietnamese "peasant war."

[12] Syntheses and reviews of the voluminous social movement literature can be found in McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996), Tarrow (1998), and Edelman (2001). Extensive reviews of CH research program on revolutions are available in several articles and two recently edited volumes, i.e., Goldstone (1980, 2001, 2003) and Foran (1997). Reviews of QM studies on conflict include Feierabend et al. (1972), Lichbach (1989), and Henderson and Singer (2000).

Table 1 [a] Studies of Southeast Asian contentious mass politics by genre

Political History[b]	Peasant Studies	Political Organization	Comparative Historical[c]	Quantitative-Modeling
Kahin G. (1952), McVey (1964), McAlister (1969), Anderson (1972), Huynh (1982)	Wolf (1969), Migdal (1974),[d] Scott (1976),[e] Kerkvliet (1977), Popkin (1979), Weller & Guggenheim (1982), Scott (1985), Scott & Kerkvliet (1986), Colburn (1989), Scott (1990),[f] Kerkvliet (1990), Kerkvliet (2005)	Race (1972, 1974), Zasloff (1973), Berman (1974),[g] Adas (1979),[h] Marks (1994, 1995),[i] Eldridge (1995), Thompson (1995), Boudreau (1996a,b), Rutten (1996), Hadiz (1997), West (1997), Uhlin (1997), Goodwin (1997), Clarke (1998), Schock (1999), Boudreau (2001), Hedman (2001), Elliott (2003), Boudreau (2004), Aspinall (2005), Schock (2005)	Walton (1984), Fein (1993), Parsa (2000), Goodwin (2001), Thompson (2004)	Feierabend et al. ([1969] 1972), Mitchell (1968, 1969), Gurr (1970), Paige (1970), Sansom (1970), Russo (1972), Paige (1975), Jackson (1980), Harff & Gurr (1988),[j] Boswell and Dixon (1990, 1993), Collier (2000), Collier & Hoeffler (1998, 2001), Bhavnani & Ross (2003), Collier and Sambanis (2005)

[a] To trace the popularity of certain genres in different periods, works authored by the same researcher but published many years apart are listed separately.

[b] The genre provides a useful benchmark but is not discussed in the essay.

[c] In this essay, I will focus particularly on those CH studies that involve Southeast Asian cases. Walton (1984) and Parsa (2000) both include the Philippines as a case study. Southeast Asian anticolonial struggles form a set of cases in Goodwin (2001). Fein (1993) compares genocides in Indonesia (1965–1966) and in Cambodia (1975–1979).

[d] Migdal builds a theoretical framework inductively on the basis of 51 ethnographic monographs about rural relations and politics in various countries, including (for Southeast Asia) Burma, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

[e] See also Scott (1977a, b, c, 1979).

[f] Scott (1990) does not restrict its subjects to peasants but they are among the principal groups examined.

[g] Berman also employed statistical analyses but his main concern rested with the organization of Vietnamese insurgents and its relationship with the broader society.

[h] Adas examines five cases of millenarian movements under colonial rule in the Dutch Indies, German East Africa, and British India, Burma and New Zealand.

[i] Marks (1995) examines four cases of failed Maoist armed struggles in Thailand, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Peru.

[j] The last four of these QM studies include (for Southeast Asia) Burma, Cambodia and Indonesia.

normative concerns, causal ontologies, epistemologies, and modes of comparison and knowledge accumulation. To be sure, there are ontological and epistemological inconsistencies within each genre and these will be discussed, but significant internal cohesion does exist in terms of shared methods or analytical foci and the degree to which works in the same genre build on each other.[13] The last point is especially true for the PS genre: this

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[13] A "genre" in this conception is similar to a "research tradition," which can encompass inconsistent theories at any given time (Johnson, 2003, 90).

Table 2 Genres in Contrast

Genre	Normative concerns	Causal ontologies	Epistemology	Objects of explanation	Methods of explanation	Modes of comparison	Modes of Knowledge Accumulation
PH	Sympathetic to leaders of rebellions	Unspecified	Atheoretical interpretivist	Unique historical events and the particular details of these events	Implicit	Comparison rarely done	Descriptive and perhaps analytical knowledge of specific events through cumulatively more coherent and richer narratives
PS	Sympathetic to peasants and nonelites	Micro-level	Theoretical interpretivist	Peasant behavior as a general theme (not its variations in cross-national contexts) and as a generalizable human experience	Explicit	Global, not cross-national	Descriptive, analytical and causal knowledge of certain (generalizable) human experiences
PO	Sympathetic to anti-government protests	Micro- and meso-levels	Weak positivist	Movements or revolutionary organizations as social collective units; their variations in different contexts	Explicit	Infrequent, cross-national	Analytical and causal knowledge of specific social organizations and their equivalents in other contexts
CH	Rebels and authorities assumed not matter	Macro-structural	Medium to strong positivist	Rare social phenomena and the variations of their characteristics in particular contexts	Explicit	Cross-national	Causal knowledge about a category of social phenomena
QM	Rebels viewed as angry or greedy	Macro-systemic	Strong positivist	Correlations and possibly macro-causal relationships; not concerned about explaining *per se*, but about testing rival explanations expressed in macro-variables	Explicit	Cross-national	Knowledge about the magnitude and direction of certain macro-causal relationships and the degree of certainty about these parameters

genre has been dominated by a single scholar (James Scott) who interacts intensely with a few others (e.g., Samuel Popkin and Benedict Kerkvliet).

Third, a genre-based taxonomy cannot evaluate abstract methodological theories but does a better job in capturing *actual* practices as described by researchers themselves and as modified by later researchers. By comparing genres I need not make the unrealistic assumption that all researchers are fully knowledgeable or self-conscious about methodological theories (Steinmetz, 2004, 375). Rather, it is considered as possible, if not common, that researchers are led in their research not only by methodological concerns but also by substantive ones about the problems that need to be explained.

A genre-based taxonomy is not perfect nor is it the only method to divide the literature. A few studies are hard to categorize and the final decisions, although based on careful readings of the works several times, are inevitably contestable: Paige (1975) straddles PS and QM; so do Parsa (2000) and Boudreau (2004) with respect to CH and PO. Adas (1979) is somewhere between PS and PO but is eventually decided for the latter due to its central focus on the questions of movement leadership and motivation. The important point is that these studies are not many and they are by no means the key works that define the respective genres.

Of course, the literature can be divided differently — an alternative is to group studies based on their meta-theoretical approaches such as European Marxism, behavioralism-functionalism, neo-Weberianism, and rational choice. In this scheme, Scott (1976, 1985, 1990) belong to European Marxism but Popkin (1979) must be categorized as rational choice. While this division is useful in highlighting the borrowed meta-theoretical assumptions of each work, it obscures the productive exchange among studies sharing the same analytical focus and thus overlooks the degree of knowledge accumulation that took place – such as what transpired in the Scott-Popkin debate.[14]

In brief, "genres" are heuristic tools to categorize and analyze the vast literature on contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia. They are based in part on well-established research traditions in the fields of political science and sociology, in part on the particular literature on contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia, and in part on the internal cohesion generated by the intellectual exchange among the works that form a genre. Although this essay will demonstrate their usefulness, these categories may or may not be relevant to other periods, regions, or explanatory problems.

Philosophies and methods in contrast

Several trends can be briefly deduced from Table 1, which lists published research on contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia since the 1960s by genre. First, PS and PO seemed to be the most popular genres overall. Second, early PO studies in the 1970s dealt with communist insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos and relied on sociological theories of organization.[15] In the late 1990s, studies of urban movements and uprisings that used theories of democratization[16] and social movements[17] proliferated. These works continued the PO genre with the form of political organizations now being urban mass movements instead of rural communist ones. Third, QM was probably the most popular genre in the late

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[14] For example, see the Symposium on "Peasant Strategies in Asian Societies: Moral and Rational Economic Approaches," *Journal of Asian Studies* 42/4 (August).

[15] Examples were theories by James March, Herbert Simon, Chester Barnard, and Peter Blau.

[16] Juan Linz (1978) was influential to works in this genre.

[17] Works in this genre are increasingly influenced by Tilly (1978), McAdam et al. (1996) and Tarrow (1998).

1960s but apparently saw a drop in interest in the 1980s and a recent revival. Analysts in this tradition have been aided with new econometric techniques, game theory, the massive Singer-Small dataset of war correlates,[18] and simply faster computers. New lines of inquiry tackle comparative genocides and the economics of civil wars. Finally, in contrast with all the other genres, the CH genre that Barrington Moore pioneered never took roots in Southeast Asian studies even when it developed a large following in comparative politics and historical sociology. Below we see how analysts of different genres view the goals of their enterprises and the causal structures of the world, what kinds of questions are asked, what units of analysis are focused on, what forms of data are collected, what style of analysis and reasoning is used, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of each genre in dealing with the subject matter.

The peasant study (PS) genre is primarily interested in understanding and explaining what motivates peasants and how they resist their oppressors. The focus is on the salience of certain themes concerning peasant behavior and not the possible variations in their behavior across different communities and at different times. As Scott writes, “for our purposes, what is important is that the peasant community embodies a set of communal and local class interests – a moral economy – that can and do form the basis of violent confrontations with elites. The strength of that moral economy, to be sure, varies very much with local social structure, but it is a variation around a constant theme” (Scott, 1977b, 280). Another way of expressing the same idea is found in Scott (1977a, 237), “The probability of [peasant] revolt depends...on the coercive force of those who would prevent it. The capacity to experience the anger that comes from a sense of exploitation, however, is universal...” Thus the goal is to uncover peasant anger as a universal condition, not to predict the probability of their revolt. By proposing a deductive theory and applying it in three cases (pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial Vietnam), Popkin (1979) also stresses a main logic of peasant behavior despite variations across cases and times. As Skocpol rightly observes, comparison as used in this genre is global but not cross-national (Skocpol, 1982, 367). Scholars of this genre are interested in explaining peasant behavior but not in explaining the variations in such behavior across national contexts.[19]

There are two opposing causal ontologies[20] within the PS genre. In Scott (1976, 1985) and Kerkvliet (1977), the causal ontology lies in the moral world of village communities. The alternative ontology in other PS works such as Migdal (1974) and Popkin (1979) was centered on the individual peasant as a rational actor. Cases play different roles from one author to another. Kerkvliet (1977, 1990) is primarily interested in the cases (the Huk rebellion and social relations in a Philippine village) although he discusses at length the implications of his empirical findings for the moral economy hypothesis. Popkin (1979) and Scott (1976, 1985, 1990), in contrast, use cases to illustrate their theories of behavior applicable to both peasants and other groups. For Migdal, and Scott to a lesser extent, cases are also used to derive inductively and to test theory; cases are integrated in theoretical development rather than playing only an illustrative role.

Scott (1985, 1990) and to a lesser extent Kerkvliet (1977) are among the most important studies in the genre that employ an interpretivist epistemology.[21] For them, the search for “generalizations from within” makes “case selection” in the positivist sense unnecessary

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[18] For a description of this database, see Small and Singer (1982).

[19] Ragin (1997, 32) explains the difference between “explanation” and “explaining variation.”

[20] The usage here follows Hall (2003, 374). Ontology refers to “premises about the deep causal structures of the world.”

[21] See *Qualitative Methods* 1/2 (Fall 2003) (Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section on Qualitative Methods) for a recent debate on the interpretivist tradition in political science.

(Geertz, 1973: 23). More important than "cases" are their fieldwork sites: villages that can offer them access to accounts of events in their interest (e.g., participation in the Huk rebellion or post-Green Revolution changes) or some control for certain factors (e.g., rice farming village with minimal off-farm employment opportunities).

Data collection techniques indicate both changing methods and the common concerns underlying most works in the PS genre. Data come from diverse sources: direct observations, archival documents, works of fiction, and other secondary sources. Popkin (1979) counts mostly on secondary sources, whereas Scott (1976) mines official colonial records for data. Reversing himself, Scott (1985, 1990) turns to direct observations as the only valid source for his analysis of peasants' everyday forms of resistance. Official records, Scott argues, only recount those events perceived by state agents as directly threatening the state. Everyday resistance is thus left out despite its significance *from the peasants' perspective*.

For Scott and his collaborators, the resort to ethnography involves more than a practical concern about the limits of historical records. Normatively, these scholars assume that legitimacy rests with the weak, the oppressed, and the non-elites in general. They do not treat all participants in rebellions the same way and like to point out that in many cases peasants, not the "political commissars," were the true revolutionaries (Scott, 1979). This concern for the "little guys" differentiates these authors from those of the PH genre, who often identify themselves with national revolutionary leaders (Sukarno, Tan Malaka, or Ho Chi Minh), While this normative concern leads to the romanticization of peasant lives,[22] it helps works in the PS genre avoid the mistake many students of revolution make in assuming that peasants would fare better under communist regimes because they participated in the revolutions that put those regimes in power.[23]

Privileging ethnography is also based on the ontological assumption that class consciousness should be inferred not from structural economic relationships (as in classical Marxism) but from the lived experience of those involved. Class conflicts are rarely expressed in the form of violent struggles in which a class overthrows its oppressors, but are lived everyday. Scholars should be deeply concerned about the impact of their own class backgrounds on their scholarship, as Scott (1977a, 232, 245) reviews the "dismal science of peasant revolution" below:

> As larger human emotions than trucking and bartering are involved in the enterprise of rebellion, one would expect that a theory based largely on models of bourgeois calculus [i.e. rational choice theory] would fail to do it justice... It is instructive to go directly to the human participants of such dramas, where they have been heard or recorded, and ask them what moved them to act... To read [peasants' accounts] is to realize what most social scientists (myself included), who have never experienced the humiliations or hunger or poverty, fail to capture in their theories of peasant revolution.

In criticizing a study of peasant rebellions in the Philippines, Kerkvliet (1978, 772) echoes the same point: "Beginning with the belief that these rebels are unrealistic and possibly irrational, [the author] precludes an understanding of these people in their own terms. He gains knowledge about them, but does not come to know them." Scott (1977a) claims that the first test of any theory or hypothesis is how much of the "authentic human experience" it can recapture. However, this does not mean that ethnography by itself, as the principal method to gather authentic human experience, would be the only means to acquire a good understanding of the peasant world. Kerkvliet (1977, 2005) successfully combine official records and peasant voices to study Philippine and Vietnamese peasants. The widely acclaimed Popkin (1979) shows that deductive reasoning can help explain an important part of peasant lives or at least offer a plausible alternative to explanations obtained by ethnographic methods.

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[22] This criticism is made by Skocpol (1982, 360).

[23] Skocpol (1982, 363) makes this assumption.

Ethnography and interpretivism are controversial in political science.[24] "Weapons of the weak," "everyday forms of resistance," and "hidden transcripts" are catchy and widely applicable phrases but may be criticized for lacking analytic and explanatory power.[25] The real voices of participants and the liberal use of literary tales permit rich narratives of conflicts but positivist scholars have dismissed this kind of evidence as impressionistic and unsystematic.[26] Scott is the first to admit that the reconstruction and interpretation of the lived human experience are "treacherous" because behavior may be automatic (i.e., meaningless), contradictory, deliberately misleading, and uninformed of larger events (Scott, 1985, 46–47). The proposed standards of evidence and inference are that interpretations be economical, logically consistent with observations, capable of incorporating anomalies, and found plausible by the actors themselves (ibid., 139). Implied in this list is the practice of conducting validation tests not as a formal process separated from other phases of research (as in statistics), but as numerous iterated informal steps embedded throughout the course of research: for each observation the researcher makes, he has to match it with others, identify inconsistencies in the main story, search for additional observations that can account for anomalies, revise the story, and go back to his informants to find out if the revised story is still plausible. Far from being "small-N" and lacking rigor, the process in ethnographic research involves a large amount of data and numerous tests of consistency and plausibility. As Yanow (2003, 10) argues, interpretivist-qualitative research must be characterized as large-N because it entails numerous observations over extended periods combined with extensive interviews and documentary evidence.

Turning to the PO genre, the primary research questions of earlier works are how revolutionary or radical organizations gather mass support and compete with governments for authority. In answering these questions, they also address the related question of what motivates peasants and other common people to join those organizations. In contrast, more recent studies on urban movements deal with a more diverse range of issues, such as the diffusion of foreign democratic ideas (Uhlin, 1997) and the impact of regime type on the character and process of anti-government movements (Thompson, 1995). Normatively, most authors in the PO genre (e.g., Aspinall, 2005; Boudreau, 2001, 2004; Elliott, 2003; Thompson, 1995) display unambiguous sympathy for anti-government movements although they do not distinguish between elite and nonelite activists as PS authors do.[27] A rare exception is Race (1972, ix), who opens his study of the Vietnamese insurgency by saying, "The reader will find few evil or incompetent characters in this book, but rather an account of how [the communist] revolutionary movement was able to gain victory despite the efforts of a considerable number of honest and conscientious [government] men, acting according to their best understanding."

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[24] Ethnographic methods and interpretivism have been undervalued in the discipline but support for them appears to be increasing. See Bayard de Volo and Schatz (2004, 67), the debate on interpretivism in *Qualitative Methods* 1/2 (Fall 2003), and the Symposium on Discourse and Content Analysis in *Qualitative Methods* 2/1 (Spring 2004).

[25] For this point on descriptive concepts in the interpretivist tradition, see Bevir (2003, 20).

[26] See Skocpol (1982).

[27] In fact, social movement researchers in general overwhelmingly choose to study only movements with which they sympathize (Edelman, 2001, 302).

Although most PO studies focus on only one case, concepts are widely applied and research questions are often framed broadly enough to enable the potential application to other cases. Adas (1979, xxv) in fact claims that his findings about peasant-based prophetic rebellions can be useful to the study of movements based on other groups such as the urban poor. Still, comparison plays varying roles among PO studies. For most authors who study communist insurgencies, including Race (1972), Berman (1974), Marks (1994), Rutten (1996) and Elliott (2003), comparison is unsystematic and generalizations beyond their cases are made only reluctantly. Exceptions are Race (1974), which proposes a general theory of revolution based on the Vietnamese case and tests it with the Thai case; Adas (1979, xxii), which selects the most different cases among the phenomena of prophetic rebellions; and Marks (1995), which presents parallel contrasts of five Maoist insurgencies that failed for the same reasons. Recent works on comparative social movements have designed bolder comparisons. Boudreau (1996b) compares Northern and Southern sociopolitical conditions to highlight different strategic dilemmas facing Southern movements. Boudreau (2004, 3) systematically compares protest movements in Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines to "illustrate" the variety of repressive strategies available to states, and the connection between state strategies and modes of resistance. Schock (2005, xix) selects a diverse set of cases to build a common framework useful for students of "unarmed insurrections" in non-democracies.[28] The focus on a single national case in most PO works does not make them "small-N" or unsystematic. Berman (1974) quotes extensively from more than 1,000 interviews and applies statistical analyses throughout to evaluate competing hypotheses about the motives of participants. Elliott (2003, 7) combines more than 400 interviews of nearly 12,000 pages of transcribed materials with numerous postwar memoirs and thousands of captured documents. To the extent that these studies theorize about individual behavior in an organizational environment, they must be characterized as "large-N."

Ontologically, some authors in this genre reject macro causes of revolution. For example, Rutten (1996, 111) states, "We should avoid looking for 'big' causes (for instance, a wide gap between rich and poor, or a deep socioeconomic crisis) to explain a 'big' change (massive support for a revolutionary movement) but consider, instead, the accumulation of microprocesses out of which a specific large change is built." Berman similarly calls his approach "a microstructural" one, while acknowledging the importance of macrostructural factors (Berman, 1974, 9). However, the genre generally does not seem to be too concerned with limiting itself to only one level of causality. All authors assume human agents to be rational actors "who are not slaves to their environment" and who "seek goals and make choices within the constraints of their environmental situation" (ibid. 10). Yet while Thompson (1995) and West (1997) assign great weight to macro factors such as regime type, state structure, and history of protest, Berman (1974), Rutten (1996), and Boudreau (2001) emphasize meso-level organizational processes (e.g., mobilization, integration, alliance, socialization). For individual works, this ontological ambiguity may cause confusion as to how micro, meso, and macro levels are integrated in the causal structure of things, but for the genre as a whole the ambiguity may be seen as strength rather than weakness because it offers scholars more flexibility to frame their research questions.[29] Rather than accumulating knowledge *intensively* through iterated tests of some key hypotheses, the genre may grow *extensively* as researchers working on different levels can still be linked together in a loose ontological framework.

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[28] The cases include South Africa, China, Nepal, Thailand, Burma, and the Philippines.

The primary technique of data collection in PO studies is interviewing. For early studies, direct American involvement in the second Indochinese war permitted many students of communist insurgency in South Vietnam to interview thousands of communist defectors and prisoners under the auspices of the US government. Interviewing defeated revolutionaries is controversial. Data collected from such interviews may be suspect because these subjects have passed through the hands of the government and remain under prison circumstances. Researchers in this genre have devised many strategies to reduce the problem. One is to make an effort to establish rapport with their subjects before the interviews (Berman, 1974, 24). Elliott (2003) relies not only on interviews of prisoners and defectors conducted in the 1960s but also on memoirs published by victorious revolutionaries decades after the end of the conflict in South Vietnam. Rutten (1996) conducted her interviews after the Philippine communist insurgency had been largely defeated; the problem for her was slightly different. Ethnography helped: she lived in a plantation community for a substantial period and was able to "reconstruct the mobilization histories of individual persons, families, and the community as a whole" (1996, 112).

We have seen that PS and PO styles of analysis are popular in the study of Southeast Asian contentious mass politics. In contrast, the CH genre is the least popular.[30] CH works do not focus on a particular class or the revolutionary organization as PS and PO genres do. Instead, they ask why historically "revolutions" happened (or should have happened but did not) and what determined variations in their outcomes. The goal is not to seek causal regularities or universal laws but to identify common patterns across a few disparate cases (Goldstone, 2003, 50). Due to their focus on macro-structural variables and the patterns from which the (material) interests of human agents can be deduced, the normative biases of authors in the genre, besides an implicit Marxist-inspired critique of Western capitalist society (Adams et al., 2005), do not figure in their analyses as much as for the other genres.[31]

While CH works refrain from grand theorizing, most frame their arguments in terms broad enough to facilitate comparisons and generalizations (Skocpol & Somers, 1980, 19). There is no such thing as a general theory of revolution, Goodwin (2001, 8) writes in one of the most ambitious CH works ever that compares Southeast Asian, Central American and Eastern European "peripheral revolutions." His goal is to demonstrate that their outcomes were "the results of general (if not universal) causal mechanisms." In fact, more than for any genre systematic comparison is the hallmark of CH works. In the words of CH pioneers Skocpol and Somers (1980, 182), "the logic involved in [CH works] resembles that of statistical analysis, which manipulates groups of cases to control sources of variation in order to make causal inferences when quantitative data are available about a large number of cases. [CH genre] is a kind of multivariate analysis to which scholars turn in order to validate causal statements about macro-phenomena for which, inherently, there are too many variables and not enough cases."[32] Many later scholars of this genre have since moved away from this strong positivist stand. For instance, Walton's study of "national revolts" in the Philippines, Colombia, and Kenya (1984, 25) explicitly rejects the positivist logic and quasi-experimental design as "not entirely appropriate," because his study does not focus "on three cases of similar revolutionary outcomes, but on three distinctive processes of national revolt that followed rather different courses and produced different results."

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[29] Concern about this ontological ambiguity is expressed in Gamson and Meyer's (1996, 275) criticism of the concept of political opportunity structure as "a sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment-political institutions and culture, crises of various sorts, political alliances, and policy shifts." McAdam et al. (2001, 23) and Amenta (2003, 115–6) also view this ambiguity as a problem for the social movement literature. Tilly (2001) and McAdam et al. (2001) recently propose that this "problem" be solved by focusing on recurrent "causal mechanisms" and "processes" in a wide range of political contention.

[30] Why? I can offer three possible reasons. First, no Southeast Asian revolutions meet the strict requirements for "great social revolutions." Second, most revolutionary conflicts in the region involved protracted civil wars. Many of these conflicts did not end until the late 1980s, when interest in Southeast Asia had waned. Third, the CH genre requires reliable secondary sources, which were missing for many Southeast Asian cases, especially the Indochinese case, until the 1980s or 1990s.

[31] As Julia Adams et al. (2005, 28) reflect, "It seems obvious – now – that we cannot understand people's making revolutions without looking at what they thought they were doing. Yet recall that at that time, 'culture'...was often understood as homogenous and nationally unified."

Walton signals a fundamental change in the methods used to study revolutions among many later CH researchers. Whereas John S. Mill's methods of agreement and difference are accepted as the foundation for early works (Skocpol & Somers, 1980, 183), a recent comprehensive review of this genre does not even mention Mill (Goldstone, 2003).[33] Mill's controversial methods have been replaced by "process tracing" aimed at uncovering the specific causal mechanisms that link macro structures and processes to the events as they unfolded over time (ibid., 49). The change reflects a more methodologically confident generation of CH researchers who no longer have to rely on quantitative terminologies to describe themselves. Stylistically, the change helps make CH narratives less "mechanical" and "unaesthetic."[34] More important is that process tracing performs the function of robust validity tests in which macro causal hypotheses are matched and evaluated against numerous points of data (George & Bennett, 2005, 207). For instance, in studying how centralized and exclusive state rule affected the likelihood of revolution in his cases of Iran, Nicaragua, and the Philippines, Parsa presents several causal mechanisms and demonstrates how these unfolded in different national contexts over extended periods. The number of national contexts ("dataset observations" or "N") may be limited, but the extended time frame and the various institutional sites subjected to analytical investigation mean a large number of "causal process observations."[35] The central issue is indeterminacy and "causal process observations" are just as useful as "dataset observations" for mitigating this problem (Brady & Collier, 2004, 252–255; George & Bennett, 2005, 28–9).[36] Instead of accepting the condescending label "small-N" assigned to the CH genre by quantitative researchers, CH scholars now may proudly claim that their method can produce rigorously tested causal inferences based on adequate data.

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[32] Steinmetz (2004, 378) argues that this methodological positivism reflects the common tendency of sociology until recently to mimic the natural sciences.

[33] This is in part a response to criticisms that the use of Millian methods in CH works is inappropriate. See Lieberson (1991, 1994), Savolainen (1994). and Goldstone (1997).

[34] Perry (1980a, 533); Skocpol and Somers (1980, 194).

[35] The terms "dataset observations" and "causal process observations" are proposed by Brady and Collier (2004).

[36] Laitin (2005, 128–130) also maintains that providing "[causal] mechanisms linking dependent and independent variables in statistical analyses" is one of the three roles played by "narrative," which in turn is viewed as "coequal to the statistical and formal elements" of his "tripartite method." Yet although he insists that none of the three elements are adequate for making causal claims if standing alone, the roles of narrative in his view are to support formal modeling (proving plausibility tests) and statistical analysis (linking variables and analyzing residuals), rather than the other way around. Andrew Abbott (2001, 140) captures well how narratives are used in a superficial manner by positivists like Laitin, "...there are no complex narratives; narratives are always one-step decisions. There are no real contingencies or forkings in the road. There are simply the high road of variables and the rest – which is error."

Ontologically, most CH works attribute the causes of "revolutions" to the conjunction of macro structures or factors such as state and regime type, state and social class structure, the international system, and demographic pressure. For instance, in his study of "anticolonial revolutions" in Southeast Asia, Goodwin (2001) argues that exclusionary and repressive colonial regimes (in Indonesia and Vietnam, but not Malaya and the Philippines) made available broad strata of population for revolutionary parties to mobilize. Western and Japanese support for populist nationalists (in Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines, but not Vietnam) preempted communists from leading anticolonial movements. However, structural arguments no longer dominate CH works as they once did.[37] Walton (1984, 22) calls for "a merger of developmental and revolutionary theory as necessary allies in the explanation of modern rebellions."[38] Parsa (2000) treats structural factors almost as background variables for his analysis of collective action in the style of Tilly (1978). Even Goodwin (2001, 133), who goes furthest among recent works in promoting a structural "state-centered perspective," implicitly acknowledges that the state may be little more than an intervening factor: "Scholars of revolutions need to pay attention to states not only because control of state power is, by definition, central to revolution..., but also because states powerfully determine the precise ways in which a range of other factors may (or may not) contribute to both the mobilization and impact of revolutionary movements." Thompson (2004) studies 15 "democratic revolutions" in Asia and Eastern Europe since the 1980s, using an eclectic explanatory framework that includes regime types, political opportunities, and actors' motives.

For CH genre far more than for others, case selection is of paramount importance. (In contrast, data, which mostly come from secondary sources, are relatively of less concern to researchers.) Besides practical issues, the selection of cases is made with great care for the purpose of (dis)confirming certain theories, highlighting particular patterns of interest, isolating or controlling for the effects of particular variables, and avoiding "selection bias." Several opposing ways of selection have been used, including regional vs. global samples[39] and urban-based vs. peasant revolutions.[40]

Because theory is sensitive to which cases are "constituted"[41] and selected, and case selection in turn is sensitive to how "revolution" is defined, it is remarkable that CH researchers have not agreed on a common definition of "revolution." The only attribute of revolution commonly accepted is the presence of mass or class-based mobilization. Scholars disagree on whether other aspects of revolution, such as the successful overthrow of the state, the use of violence, and the "basic, rapid transformations of state and class structure," must be viewed as necessary conditions for events to be defined as "revolutions."[42] This ambiguity on the very phenomenon or phenomena to be investigated has never been (and will probably never be) successfully resolved. It is thus left to individual scholars to pick what particular set of "revolutions" they want to study: "social revolutions" (Parsa, 2000; Skocpol, 1979), "national revolts" (Walton, 1984), "urban-based revolutions" (Farhi, 1990), "Third World social revolutions" (Foran, 1992), "anticolonial revolutions" and "persistent insurgencies" (Goodwin, 2001). On the one hand, it can be argued that this conceptual fuzziness hinders the accumulation of theoretical (as opposed to empirical) knowledge because each study tackles a different species of the beast. How can scholars falsify the results of other studies if they don't study the same phenomenon?[43] On the other hand, the genre has been able to grow largely because conceptual ambiguity has allowed researchers to study new events as they happen. Interest, ideas, and secondary sources would have dried up quickly had all scholars been required to study the same three classic "social revolutions" that Skocpol (1979) did.

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[37] For a claim to the contrary, see Wickham-Crowley (1997).

[38] Walton is referring to theoretical frameworks established by James Scott, Eric Wolf, Charles Tilly, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Barrington Moore.

[39] Wickham-Crowley (1997) uses only Central American cases whereas Parsa (2000) selects cases from the Middle East, Central America, and Southeast Asia.

[40] Farhi (1990) is of the former type whereas Skocpol (1979) belongs to the latter.

[41] Ragin (1997, 30–32) discusses how cases are "constituted" and not taken as given in CH research.

[42] For discussions of definitional issues, see Goldstone (1980, 450), Walton (1984, 6–14), Goodwin (2001, 9), and Goldstone (2001, 140–142; 2003, 52–55).

The popularity of the CH genre in comparative politics during the last two decades stands in stark contrast with the QM genre that enjoyed popularity in the 1960s but largely slipped into oblivion until recently. QM works focus primarily on specifying, modeling, and testing statistical correlations between certain macro-level political and socio-economic variables (e.g., regime type, social inequality, economic development level) and the risk that a country may experience large-scale political violence or rebellion. Some early QM works such as Feierabend et al. ([1969] 1972) and Gurr (1970, 13) deduce the correlations from a general theoretical framework that explains how relative deprivation induces discontent or frustration, which in turn spurs action. Whether action is politicized and actualized depends on intervening cultural, historical, and institutional variables. More often, QM studies involve the tests of certain correlations of theoretical or policy interest, without any attempt at developing a general theory. Based on these correlations, the researcher can predict how much and in what direction the risk of civil war or rebellion in a country may change when particular independent variables change in their values. Or she can infer motivation from patterns of observed behavior expressed in statistical relationships. For instance, Collier (2000) and Collier and Hoeffler (2001) find that, after controlling for several variables, a statistically significant correlation exists between a country's share of primary exports in GDP and the proportion of uneducated young men on the one hand, and the risk of civil war in that country on the other. They then infer that conflicts are more likely to be caused by economic opportunity than by grievances, because the looting of those exports and the availability of easy recruits can be assumed to lower the cost of organizing a rebellion.[44]

Normatively, QM works tend to view rebels unfavorably. Early works embedded in functional-system and social psychological theories naturally prejudge rebellions as signs of systemic dysfunction and rebels as angry, discontented, grievous or emotionally unstable – briefly, not rational enough – individuals. Recent studies based on rational choice and economics "model rebellion as an industry that generates profits from looting, so that 'the insurgents are indistinguishable from bandits or pirates'" (Collier & Sambanis, 2005, 3). Rebels are assumed to be greedy and opportunistic – indeed, too rational – in these accounts.[45]

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[43] Lichbach and Gurr (1981) have shown that a democratic regime is associated with an increased likelihood of protests but a decreased likelihood of rebellions (see Henderson & Singer, 2000, 276 for similar examples). If the concept of revolution is not uniformly defined, two different researchers may reach contradictory results yet both may be right because they are not examining the same phenomena (even though they believe they are doing so).

[44] What is presented here is only the gist of the argument and the method of inference. Of course, their models are more complex than they can be summarized here.

[45] Yet as Sambanis (2005, 325) concludes based on a number of case studies that test the Collier-Hoeffler model, motives of rebels are more complex than the simple dichotomy of grievance and greed suggests.

More ambitious than all other genres, QM researchers often present their findings as universal relationships: “inequality is associated with insurgency” (Mitchell, 1969), or, “economic and political dependency contributes to rebellion” (Boswell & Dixon, 1990, 541). Sometimes these researchers are content with only probabilistic statements, such as “increased development is associated with a decreased likelihood of civil war” (Henderson & Singer, 2000, 289), or “unlootable resources are more likely to produce separatist conflicts, and lootable resources are more likely to produce nonseparatist conflicts” (Ross, 2003, 67).

Early QM works attribute causality to systemic variables at the national level. “Social frustration” is assumed to be the uniform aggregation of psychological “deprivation” at the individual level. Social frustration in turn is a function of systemic changes in traditional societies caused by modernization. Although deprivation is the overarching theme, sophisticated QM works (e.g., Feierabend et al., [1966] 1972) examine numerous variables that may be related to the quality of life and the nature of the political system such as regime type, coercion, level of economic development, economic growth, and political freedom. Since modernization and functional system theories became discredited in the early 1970s, QM works have continued with many of the same variables although their samples and techniques have improved greatly. However, the absence of “an integrated theory” (Gurr, 1970, 16–17) has made QM works appear eclectic at best and even *ad hoc* and fragmented at times (Lichbach, 1989, 448). Marxists and dependency theorists have developed a separate line of analysis and made occasional contributions to this genre, including Paige (1975), and Boswell and Dixon (1990, 1993). Causality for these works operates at both the level of domestic class relations and that of core-periphery dependency. A line of analysis that has recently been resurrected by (political) economists suggests a causal ontology that rests with individual motives. Rebels are rational actors and motivated by greed as much as, if not more than, grievances.[46] As Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 1) argue, “civil wars occur if the incentive for rebellion is sufficiently large relative to the costs” (for groups that want to rebel).

QM works make explicit hypotheses, offer creative ways of measuring concepts, perform massive tasks of coding and data entry, and devise mathematically rigorous tests of their hypotheses. Some of the recurrent problems in these studies include conceptual internal validity (can educational level serve as a proxy for the cost of recruitment for rebellious activities?[47]); model specifications (should the relationship between democracy and rebellion be linear or curvilinear?); and endogeneity (does greed for resources cause rebellion or does continuing rebellion raise the need for resources?[48]).

While new statistical techniques, better databases, and cumulative research skills may gradually eliminate these practical problems, QM works face far more fundamental criticisms that involve the assumptions in statistical methods about the homogeneity and independence of cases, causes, and causal impact (Ragin, 2000, 13–27; Hall, 2003). For example, Collier and Hoeffler (16) argue that primary commodity exports are highly correlated with "civil war" and suggest that looting those exports provides rebels with "start-up funds" to launch their "civil wars." Ross (2004) examines a small number of national cases and shows that no evidence exists for such behavior. Not all primary exports, but only three kinds of commodities (oil, non-fuel minerals, and illicit drugs) matter. Causal mechanisms vary greatly among "cases," and are not similar as assumed in the statistical methods.

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[46] The rational actor model is not new in the study of conflict. One of the earliest works is Leites and Wolf (1970), which seeks to apply the market analogy to political conflict in a formal mathematical model. Note that Popkin (1979) treats peasants as rational actors, whereas Leites and Wolf (1970) and Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 2000, 2001) focus on rebellious groups and their leaders as rational actors.

[47] Collier and Hoeffler (2001) argue that it can because higher education means more employment opportunities, less need to join rebellion, and higher cost of recruitment. However, in many developing countries, which suffer from perennial high rates of unemployment due to high population growth rates and stagnant economies, higher education is not sufficient to bring employment, often brings more discontent and lowers the cost of recruitment.

[48] Ross (2003, 2005) uses the case study method to examine a number of cases in Collier and Hoeffler's (2001) dataset. He shows that natural resources did not cause (although they helped sustain) civil wars as they argue.

The assumption of case independence is particularly problematic when quantitative students of political conflicts use the basic data unit of "country/year" by which a national "case" studied over twenty years becomes (or is portrayed as) 20 "cases" (or data points) in a regression analysis. For example, Collier and Hoeffler's (2001) dataset has fewer than 50 wars but their regression analyses claim to have statistical samples (N) of more than 600 "episodes". Nigeria in 1960 is treated as a case independent of Nigeria in 1959 in both spatial and temporal terms. This technique has been criticized by Pierson (2004, 170) for ignoring the changes in background conditions over time that may alter the causal relationship between the variables under study. There are different views regarding the ability of econometric techniques that have been devised to correct this "autocorrelation" problem, but most works in the QM genre tend to downplay or ignore it (King et al., 1994, 223; Abbott, 2001, 138–139).

Some criticisms of the QM genre are unwarranted, however. A common criticism is the generation of conflicting findings, especially on the relationship between inequality and rebellion (Goldstone, 2003; Lichbach, 1989). Clearly this is due in part to the use of different measures of similar concepts and different datasets with different time frames. However, no genre can escape this problem. Mahoney (2003, 140) shows that iterated tests of Barrington Moore's hypothesis in the CH tradition about the importance of a strong bourgeoisie for the development of democracy have similarly found conflicting results.

The review of methods used by different genres of analysis suggests that most of what is often labeled "qualitative research" is not "small-N." National contexts may be limited but the number of observations is very large. Interpretivist works in the PS genre are often based on a single village, yet because they search for analytical knowledge and causal explanations of human behavior in structural social relationships, national contexts may or may not matter. The number of individuals observed and the duration of observation decide how many "N" there are. Similarly, national contexts ("cases" in cross-national quantitative studies) may or may not be important for most CH works because their focus is on revolutionary processes that are observed in numerous institutional and social sites. Generalizations across national contexts by PS and CH works, if made, do have to assume similar causal mechanisms and similar impact of national particularities on individual behavior or on revolutionary processes. But QM works that examine cross-national correlations have to make similar but much less realistic assumptions about homogenous causal impact and mechanisms within a national context. "Small-N" is a misleading term that belittles qualitative research through the lenses of quantitative theory.

A second lesson from the methodological review is that testing is not the monopolized domain of positivist approaches. Contrary to conventional perceptions, interpretivist works in the PS genre do carry out testing as an integral part of their constructing a valid and consistent narrative. These tests are informal but they are appropriate for the purpose of the research involved, which does not focus on variations but on the main theme: a generalizable human experience. Rigor in this case depends less on formal and replicable procedures than on cultural sensitivity; logical rather than numerical consistency is the goal (Yanow, 2005, 209).

Knowledge accumulation and cycles of growth and exhaustion

Now that we have examined how different methods are employed by the four genres in the study of contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia, it is possible to evaluate their contributions. How has each genre accumulated knowledge, and what kind of knowledge? Rather than following Mahoney's (2003, 133) rather restrictive definition of knowledge as consisting only descriptive and causal kinds, I define knowledge as including descriptive, analytical, and causal kinds.[49] Descriptive knowledge concerns only with facts as directly observed or interpreted by the researcher, without the use of either abstract concepts or theories. Analytical knowledge involves the interpretation of facts with concepts and theories. Causal knowledge concerns causes among phenomena. Because concepts and theories often imply causal arguments, analytical and causal analysis may overlap. So may descriptive and analytical knowledge.

For the positivist CH and QM genres, causal knowledge is central to their enterprises.[50] Knowledge is accumulated through the improvement of causal theories and repeated tests with existing and new cases. Replicated tests need not yield consistent results; disconfirming existing hypotheses is progress as much as confirming is (Mahoney, 2003, 135). In the QM genre, among the most tested relationships are those between rebellion or violence and a range of systemic variables, including inequality, modernity, democracy (or repression or coercion), dependency, primary commodity exports, military spending, national income, education, and population. Repeated tests of these relationships have been done with better data, different measures, more complex models, and new techniques. Overall, repeated tests have succeeded less in settling any debates than in showing that the issues are complicated and need further testing or theoretical refinement. Theoretical development in the genre has moved away from relative deprivation towards rational choice theory. New taxonomies of genocides and natural resources (in relation to civil wars) have been constructed recently but further progress is still needed (Collier & Hoeffler, 2001; Harff & Gurr, 1988; Sambanis, 2005). Southeast Asian case studies have offered criticisms and contributed to the development of these taxonomies (Fein, 1993; Ross, 2003, 2004, 2005).

Compared to their QM counterparts, CH works make far more complex causal arguments that are embedded in particular contexts. Later works add to early ones new cases, new explanatory factors and invariably more complex causal arguments. Old hypotheses are refuted, reformulated, or accepted with important qualifications. Complexity, rather than conclusive findings, is again the result. Key insights from this literature include how types and policies of states shape the character and outcomes of protest movements, and the various conditions under which revolutionary coalitions form or do not form (Parsa, 2000). However, the CH genre is not as well-developed in Southeast Asian studies as its competitors, although Goodwin (2001) may encourage others to include Southeast Asian cases in their CH studies in the future.

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[49] The definition of knowledge here is still within the boundaries of what many anthropologists call a "traditional" definition (Hastrup, 2004). While it may be true that certain knowledge "depends intimately on the modes of knowing and of interpreting" as Kirsten Hastrup argues, I do not submit to the view that all knowledge does so.

[50] Feierabend and Feierabend (1972, 369–372), Skocpol and Somers (1980, 194), and Mahoney (2003, 131–137).

The interpretivist works that dominate the PS genre are not interested in a social phenomenon or an event per se, but in the generalizable experience of peasants: how they think and why they act in certain ways. Geertz's (1973, 25) discussion of knowledge accumulation in the interpretivist social science is relevant here:

> Our knowledge of culture... cultures... a culture... grows: in spurts. Rather than following a rising curve of cumulative findings, cultural analysis breaks up into a disconnected yet coherent sequence of bolder and bolder sorties. Studies do build on other studies, not in the sense that they take up where the others leave off, but in the sense that, better informed and better conceptualized, they plunge more deeply into the same thing... A study is an advance if it is more incisive – whatever that may mean – than those that precede it... .

What is observed in the development of the PS genre over time seems to confirm Geertz's characterization, even though not all works in the genre are interpretivist. Scott (1976) analyzes how peasants reacted to the advance of colonialism and capitalism. This work contrasts sharply with Migdal (1974) and Popkin (1979), which focus on the same theme while starting from very different assumptions about peasants' nature. Scott (1985) and Kerkvliet (1990) dwell into far more details and observe at close range how peasants live in postcolonial capitalism. They are far more incisive than their predecessors. They are preoccupied not with the rare rebellions but with peasants' everyday life. The time frame is no longer restricted to the colonial period. Scott (1990) further generalizes the human experience of exploitation as lived by peasants under capitalism to what is lived by slaves and other oppressed groups in various social and historical contexts.

Scott's (1985) framework has also been taken to the unexpected context of peasants under socialism. Kelliher (1992), Viola (1996), and Kerkvliet (2005) document peasant resistance under Stalin, Mao, Ho and their associates. The attention to the "small arms fire in the class war" allows Daniel Kelliher and Kerkvliet to offer unconventional explanations for the economic reforms in China and Vietnam in the 1980s: it was powerless peasants, not the domineering socialist state, that led agricultural reforms in both cases. Scott's concepts of "moral economy" and "everyday forms of resistance" have also helped rational choice theorists build their own theories of rationality (Lichbach, 1995; Popkin, 1979). All in all, the PS genre showcases how contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia can enrich our knowledge of social conflicts in general. This genre brings to the study of contentious mass politics not causal analyses of events but the attention to certain aspects of contention other genres overlook, such as uncoordinated but still significant individual acts of passive resistance and hidden discursive forms of contention. The genre also helps introduce Karl Polanyi, E. P. Thompson, and the concerns of Marxist and socialist theorists to comparative politics.

PO studies are interested in radical organizations viewed as social collective units operating in particular contexts. The findings in Race (1972), Berman (1974), and Rutten (1996) accumulate the analytical and causal knowledge of communist (or similarly well-organized) insurgencies on strategy, organizational processes, and overall the reasons for their success or failure. An issue of central concern to researchers of this genre is the role of force or violence in the outcome of the struggle. While both the government and revolutionaries used violence, Race (1972, 181) argues that the latter won because violence was used not as a military tactic to ensure security in a geographic area but as an integral part of a comprehensive strategy of revolution. In this strategy, the revolutionary organization announced social policies that appealed to the class interests of most peasants; their support or at least sympathy caused a shift in the balance of social forces in favor of the movement. Once this shift had taken place, government suppression was only counterproductive. Berman (1974, 72–75) evaluates the issue at a more micro-level and shows that coercion was important to draw peasants into the movement but retention required positive attractions. Coercion was indirect: the revolutionary organization controlled the environment of village life and established authority to the extent that joining became what was expected of young people.[51] Elliott (2003, 5) agrees that terror was a main feature of the South Vietnamese revolutionary movement and was effective at critical junctures but not sufficient to produce broad popular support. Rutten (1996, 150–152) also confirms a complex picture rather than a simple causal relationship between repression and rebellion in the Philippines.[52] Repression at one point prompted Church activists and victims to rally to the movement but at another time narrowed the opportunities of mobilizers to solicit support and made people less willing to support the movement out of fear. People's responses to repression varied depending on the place, timing, targeting, and the type of repression. The complex relationship between repression strategies and modes of protest has been further explored in Boudreau's (2004) comparative study of protest movements in three Southeast Asian countries. QM and CH works have generally concluded that the relationship between repression and rebellion is either linear (more repressive regimes, greater risks of rebellion) or curvilinear ("semi-democracies" experience the greatest risk of rebellion).[53] By focusing on micro- and meso-level of political events, PO works are able to grasp more subtle causal mechanisms and the nuanced dynamics of the political process than most structural CH studies and all variable-based QM works. This corpus of research on the dynamics of insurgencies and movements is another unique contribution of Southeast Asian scholarship to the global study of conflict.

While knowledge accumulation has taken place, all the genres in the study of contentious mass politics have experienced cycles of growth and exhaustion. The genre that achieved the earliest success, the QM genre, was also the first to be exhausted. The success in formulating an "integrated theory" of relative deprivation based on the combined ontologies of modernization and functional-system theories (e.g., Gurr, 1970) probably led to the wholesale abandonment of the project once those theories were discarded. The genre has experienced a recent revival thanks to the growth of rational choice theory. Yet many statistical modelers are still working in the tradition of relative deprivation without the explicit use of this theory.[54] They have not yet accepted the deductive premises of rational choice theory.[55]

As I argue, the CH genre has been able to grow thanks to its conceptual and ontological fuzziness that allows researchers to incorporate new cases and ideas into the general (originally structural) framework. The CH genre seems to have run its course as well. The most recent and ambitious work by Goodwin (2001, 5) is forced to justify at the beginning why "there needs to be *another* comparative study of revolutions" (emphasis in original). Goodwin (ibid. 132) also admits "there are now virtually as many theories as there are cases of social revolutions." Theories have been developed at an unsustainable rate: the proliferation of CH works in the past two decades has exhausted the available cases.

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[51] To control the environment of village life, the movement first developed a coercive infrastructure with covered agents and demonstrated actions (e.g., assassinations) before making repeated face-to-face contacts with potential recruits.

[52] Hawes (1990) and Kessler (1989), which study the movement at a more macro-level, offer contrary findings.

[53] For example, see Henderson and Singer (2000) and Goodwin (2001).

[54] An example is Henderson and Singer (2000).

[55] This is because rational choice hypotheses drawn from rational choice behavioral assumptions are often irrelevant to quantitative analysis. Dryzek (2005, 510) also observes that rational choice theory and quantitative approaches are not easily reconciled.

Because most CH works rely on secondary sources and most make exhaustive use of these sources, there are few new findings expected if old cases are reopened – unless startling new empirical and theoretical insight emerges for those old cases. The constant expansion of the original structural framework to incorporate new factors also makes new studies less original and less differentiated from one another. Besides Goodwin's comments cited above, another suggestive evidence of this intellectual exhaustion is found in Goldstone's (2003, 76) ironical advice in his review of the genre that students of revolutions turn their focus to the causes of stability, the very opposite of revolution![56]

The PS genre has grown thanks to its ability to generalize the human experience from peasants under colonialism, to peasants under postcolonial capitalism and socialism, then to all exploited and oppressed classes or groups. Theories of exploitation, hegemony, and class consciousness have been exhaustively analyzed with Marx and Gramsci being chided not only once but dozens of times. The concepts developed about peasants' behavior are still useful and will, of course, be further elaborated. But unless new theoretical orientations are found, the chance that the genre produces major findings, as it did in the 1980s, may be small. Here the sign of intellectual exhaustion is also apparent: the most creative researcher in the PS genre has recently produced a study of the state, the oppressor and exploiter of peasants in his earlier studies (Scott, 1998).

The PO genre has similarly exhausted its cases of communist insurgencies, which were few in the first place and anyway have mostly been defeated by the 1990s. Until recently, the popularity of peasant and communist studies led to the neglect of urban movements in the region, with the exception of the people power movements in the Philippines. Yet recent works in the genre have been able to apply social movement theories to study new forms of radical organizations and to contribute to theorizing about conditions in poor countries that may create distinct problems for social movements in these non-Western contexts (e.g., Boudreau, 1996a, b, 2001, 2004; Schock, 2005). A wave of urban-based protest movements that toppled governments in the 1990s in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines, together with the recent rise of ethnic rebellions in these countries, hold some promise of future growth for this genre.

Overall, there have been many reasons for exhaustion. Intellectual impulse (supply side) and intellectual interest (demand side) on the topic may run out (the cases of revolutions and communist movements). Knowledge resources, including cases (again, revolutions and communist movements) and sources of theoretical inspiration (e.g., Marxism and neo-Marxism), may be depleted. Theoretical frameworks may become too rigid to incorporate new information (the case of relative deprivation), or they may become too complex and vague to be original. QM and PO genres are orienting towards new sets of theories and cases, but CH and PS genres have not yet found new intellectual resources and inspiration for growth in the near future.

The cycles experienced by the four genres are instructive in two aspects. First, this phenomenon suggests the often neglected fact that knowledge accumulation uses up knowledge resources. These resources include not only methodological tools and meta-theories but also cases as sources of fresh empirical data. One often hears warnings that too much "unconnected descriptive knowledge" has been produced (Mahoney, 2003, 134). These warnings may undervalue empirical knowledge, or they may simply be based on a partial examination of a genre that is still growing. By studying several genres at the same time *and* over time in a particular area of research, this essay suggests to the contrary that too fast and too much theorization also hurts in the sense of generating a rapid depletion of knowledge resources. To be sure, these resources can be replenished by theoretical and methodological innovations or borrowings that increase the extractive capacity of scholarship from the empirical world. Yet it must be acknowledged that such developments are unpredictable and often external to the genres.

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[56] Adams et al. (2005, 34) also writes, "As contemporary revolutionary openings seemed to close and revolutionary outcomes came to be viewed more sourly, [many scholars of revolutions turned to] consider a nonrevolutionary version of progress toward a more egalitarian future, the Progressive Era and New Deal origins of the U.S. welfare state."

Second, the evolution of the genres with divergent normative orientations raises an important question, namely whether the cycles may have been driven by Cold War politics in the US. In the postwar political climate in the US, support for anti-colonial nationalist movements was quickly overtaken by the fear of communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Studies on the origins of modernization theory have invariably pointed to the hidden link between the US government's anti-communist agenda and this ostensibly scientific theory (Berger, 2003; Latham, 2000).[57] What can the historical development of research on contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia – one of the Western fronts against world communism in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s – teach us about this relationship between politics and scholarship? To begin with, the normative assumptions of the QM genre, which viewed conflicts as social malaises and rebels as psychologically unstable, seemed congruent with the anti-communist anguish at the time and this may have contributed to its popularity in conflict studies up to the late 1960s. By then, however, massive civil rights and antiwar protests had come to dominate American campuses. Sympathy for Third World radical movements was clearly behind the romanticization of revolutions and peasant rebellions observed especially in PS, CH, and PO genres. Yet the rise of neo-conservatism in the United States since the 1980s, coupled with a sobering discovery that successful revolutions in Southeast Asia only produced (at worst) genocidal and (at best) authoritarian regimes, may have taken some wind out of PS and CH genres while giving a new life to QM studies. There is thus an apparent correlation (with some lags and exceptions) between the popularity of each genre and the broad ideological climate in the US.

However, the shifting fortunes of the genres indicate that scholarship was not dictated solely by American "imperial designs" as often claimed. Scholarship motivated by normative concerns contrary to government interests did have a place in academia – in fact a respectable place in the literature concerned during the 1970s–1980s – as evidenced in the popularity of many PS, PO and CH works. Furthermore, scholarship sympathetic to peasants and "anti-imperialist" rebellions in Southeast Asia improves our understanding of these subjects or phenomena but it also contains its own biases, as demonstrated in the tendencies to romanticize peasants' traditional societies and to underestimate the destructive nature of revolutions. By overlooking the capacity of Third World revolutionaries to wreak havoc on their own people once they are in power, this scholarship may have set itself up for its own demise. Thus, studies that emphasize the domination of powerful political interests over American scholarship fail to explore the whole range of relevant politics in the United States and the not-always-collaborative relationship between government and academia. Still, the broader point this essay hopes to convey is that scholarship on contentious mass politics in Southeast Asia has been shaped much more by diverse theoretical and methodological concerns than by normative ones.

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[57] For a discussion and sources on the politics of postwar scholarship in the US, particularly with respect to Southeast Asia, see Berger (2003).

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