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# Political Process Approach: A Brief Review of A New Perspective on Social Movement Research

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## 1. Introduction

This article reviews the so-called political process approach (PPA) to the study of social movements, which has become increasingly influential among social movement researchers in both the United States and Western Europe. Originally, this perspective was forged in the late 1970s and early 1980s by American scholars, who started from the resource mobilization approach (RMA) but became critical of it. From the second half of the 1980s on, however, the growth of the political process approach has been spurred by West European scholars who were initially inspired by the so-called new social movement approach (NSMA) but were oriented toward more empirical and comparative research on new social movements in Western Europe. Since the late 1980s, the increasing communication between North American and West European scholars has given rise to the consensus that the following three broad sets of analytical units are crucial for the emergence and development of social movements: political opportunity structures, mobilizing structures, and framing processes.

Among these three factors, the concepts of political opportunity structures (POS) is arguably the most central to the political process approach to the study of social movements, and has been elaborated by a number of American and European scholars. Meanwhile, the rigidity of the initial conception leads not only to the further elaboration of the concept of POS but also to the formation of a complementary perspective within the political process approach,

i.e., the conflict management perspective.

Nevertheless, the concept of POS is scarcely found in social movement research in Japan, nor can one talk of a political process approach in Japan. Therefore, this article introduces this important analytical tool, POS, to Japanese researchers in this field. At the same time, this article attempts to clarify the merits of choosing one specific version of the POS concept for research on the Japanese anti-nuclear movement, an ongoing project I am currently engaged in.

## 2. Recent Trends in Social Movement Research in Western Europe and in the United States

### 2.1 Rise of the Political Process Approach

In a recent volume that takes stock of the profusion of literature on social movements and revolutions for the past twenty years, its editors were able to safely declare that this field of study has by now become a "growth industry" in the social sciences in both Western Europe and the United States (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996a: 2). In this plenitude of social movement research, they discern a new, emerging synthesis of comparative theoretical approaches. Constitutive of this synthesis are three broad sets of analytical units, which are seen to contribute to the emergence and development of social movements: political opportunity structures (POS) that constrain social movements; mobilizing structures, i.e., informal and formal organizations available to protesters when they mobilize collective action; and framing processes, i.e. processes of reality interpretation and blame attribution by movement participants. The framing processes mediate between opportunity, organization, and action. It is the growing recognition of the importance of these three elements that forms the new synthesis among Western scholars of social movements.

The major driving force behind this synthesis is those American and West European scholars espousing the so-called political process approach (PPA) to

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the study of social movement. "The crucial contention of the so called 'political process' approach to social movements is that social processes impinge indirectly on social protest, via a restructuring of existing power relations" (Kriesi et al. 1992: 219) . The PPA was originally developed by American researchers who started with the resource mobilization approach (RMA) but became critical of it. They criticized the resource mobilization approach in that it placed too much emphasis on the internal resources of social movement organizations (SMOs) as the most crucial factor contributing to the emergence and development of a social movement. As a matter of course, the RMA equates the most successful movements with the most resourceful and professionalized ones.

The political process approach (PPA) has diverged from the RMA in that the former highlights the importance of the external political context to the emergence and development of social movements. Although some might argue that the dividing line between the two approaches merely lies in whether one focuses on internal or external resources available to a movement (Katagiri 1990) , the PPA should no longer be seen as just an offshoot of the RMA since the former has increasingly emphasized the structural aspects of the political context that are historically formed rather than the capacity of SMOs to choose strategies and mobilize resources as they wish.

This does not imply that political process scholars deny that collective action is essentially rational. Social movements are something more than riots by mobs. In this sense, both the PPA and the RMA disagree with the classical, "breakdown" approach to collective behavior, which regards social movements as an irrational explosion of popular grievances in mass society.

Unlike the RMA, however, the PPA does not assume collective action as a matter of free choice of strategies. Rather, rationality is "bounded" by political structures which come across more or less as a given to mobilizers, and depending on the extent to which structures are open, mobilization may or may not develop, although political structures as such do not prevent social movements from emerging.

## 2.2 Political Opportunity Structures

### 2.2.1 Conceptual Development

Central to the political process approach, therefore, is the concept of political opportunity structures, which constrain movement action. This concept is traced back to Eisinger (1973) and was developed by Tilly (1978), McAdam (1982) and Tarrow (1983), as a concept to explain the ups and downs of social movements in one nation, or its subunits. However, it is only with the participation of West European scholars that the concept of POS was more fully elaborated. At the same time, the concept has since become operationalized for comparative research. Thus, the seminal article by Kitschelt (1986) is an *explicitly cross-national analysis of anti-nuclear movements, and critics of Kitschelt have since further refined and more widely used the concept of POS in order to explain cross-national variations in characteristics of so-called new social movements, such as anti-nuclear, ecology, peace, gay and women's movements.*

In a way, then, the political process approach is a critical though constructive response not only to the RMA but also to the new social movement approach (NSMA) which dominated social movement studies in Western Europe in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Although this latter approach is represented by such diverse scholars as Inglehart, Touraine, Melucci and Offe, they commonly emphasize the impact of broad socio-economic developments that can be found, though at the most fundamental level, in all the highly industrialized societies on the emergence of new social movements. Understandably, this perspective was influential when new social movements were still at their initial, formative stages. Thus, the scholarly efforts were focused on how to explain the rise of this new phenomenon. As time has gone by, however, new social movements have lost some of their supposedly new characteristics, and at the same time have shown quite different characteristics across nations, within a nation, and between movements. Nevertheless, the new social movement approach cannot explain such variations.

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As a response, the political process scholars in Western Europe have come to assume socio-economic developments as a precondition for the formation of mobilizing potential for new social movements, but they have tried to explain beyond this formative aspect of movement (e.g., van der Heijden et al. 1992). So, they would ask, why does a movement develop in some countries but not in others, in spite of the supposedly common existence of mobilizing potential?

An RMA scholar would reply, "because SMOs in some countries are capable to effectively exploit organizational resources, and others are not". In contrast, a political process scholar, like Kitschelt, would respond, "because political opportunity structures are open in some countries but closed in others".

But the latter explanation sounds too static and deterministic. This is the very criticism that has been directed against the Kitschelt's analysis of anti-nuclear movements. For many critics (see Flam ed. 1994), Kitschelt pressed his arguments too far: he tried to establish an immediate link between the features of the formal institutional structures of a polity and the strategic choices of a movement toward a polity on the one hand; between these formal structural features and external impacts a movement can exert.

### 2.2.2 Kitschelt's Conception of POS

Kitschelt's concept of POS consists of two dimensions of the state structures: open or closed political input structures that determine the accessibility from challengers to the political decision making system; and strong or weak output structures which determine the implementation capacity of the state. The first dimension is a function of four properties of a polity:

- (1) the larger or smaller number of political parties and other groups that effectively articulate demands;
  - (2) the larger or smaller degree of independence of the legislature from the executives;
  - (3) the dominance of a pluralist or corporatist pattern of interest intermediation;
- and

(4) the existence or absence of viable procedures to aggregate articulated new demands into effective policy coalitions.

The first option of each factor makes input structures open and accessible (Kitschelt 1986: 63; see also Diani and van der Heijden 1994: 380, n.5).

The second dimension, the output structures, is a function of three factors:

- (1) decentralized or centralized administrative structures;
- (2) weaker or stronger governmental control over economy; and
- (3) greater or smaller independence of judiciary from the executive.

The first option of each factor characterizes output structures as weak and ineffective (Kitschelt 1986: 63-4).

His typology of states along these two dimensions classifies Sweden as open and strong, the United States as open but weak, France as closed and strong, and West Germany as closed but weak. Using these structural variables as explanatory ones, Kitschelt hypothesized their effects on strategic choice by movements toward a polity - either confrontational or assimilative - as well as on movements' external impacts. The latter is further broken down into procedural impacts (success in gaining access to the political system) , substantive impacts (success in bringing about policy changes) and structural impacts (success in transforming political structures per se) (Kitschelt 1986: 66-7).

On the basis of strategic choice and the three types of impact, Kitschelt came up with four sets of hypotheses in each cell of the POS typology. For example, in the state with open and strong structures like Sweden, it is expected that most movements adopt assimilative strategies, while movement activities result in significant procedural as well as policy reforms so that movements do not need to redirect their course of action toward transforming political structures per se. In the closed and strong state like France, in contrast, neither procedural nor substantive gains are expected. As a result, confrontational strategies become dominant among movements, and they question the legitimacy



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of the state itself while demanding radical changes in input structures by forming green parties, for example. The overall schema made by Kitschelt is recapitulated in Table 1. Each cell is filled with a set of four hypotheses concerning, respectively, (1) dominant type of movement strategy, (2) the possibility of procedural and (3) substantive gains, and (4) the existence of pressure which forces a movement to orient toward transformation of opportunity structures.

**Table 1. Kitschelt's Hypotheses About the Relationship Between POS and Social Movements (for the full description, see Kitschelt 1986: 68, Table 2):**

	Open Input Structures	Closed Input Structures
Strong Output Structures	1. Assimilative 2. Much 3. Much 4. Little (Sweden)	1. Confrontational 2. Little 3. Little 4. Much (France)
Weak Output Structures	1. Assimilative 2. Much 3. Little 4. Little (United States)	1. Confrontational 2. Little 3. Little 4. Much (West Germany)

Obviously, Kitschelt's discussion of the structural impacts is confusing because he calls them "structural impacts" at one point and "structural pressures" at another. Aside from this more technical point, his schema is overly simplistic and cannot stand up against empirical inspection (e.g., Flam 1994a: 307-8). Fundamentally, it cannot adequately account for fluctuations in mobilization or changes in features of a movement, including its strategic choices. A movement would change its character over time as it interacts with established political actors. Interaction with a movement may, in turn, change the attitudes of established actors.

What is more, the POS seems less sufficient for explaining policy outcomes than for explaining movement features (Midttun and Rucht 1994). If the role of established political forces tends to be significant irrespective of the degree of

openness of a polity, the exclusion or inclusion of a movement in policy making cannot sufficiently explain cross-national divergencies of nuclear energy policy.

Even if we avoid the problematic issue of empirically confirming how much a movement can actually contribute to political change, and thus focus on the impact of POS on movements, rather than a movement's impact on its outside, Kitschelt's concept of POS has the difficulties just mentioned. In short, some informal and dynamic elements are needed for the political process analysis of social movements.

### 2.2.3 Informal and Dynamic Dimensions in the Political Process Approach

This task can be done in two ways. First, the concept of POS can be enlarged to encompass more unstable or more informal aspects of polity. Thus, Tarrow (1994) has emphasized the importance of the availability of established political allies with a movement in his version of the POS concept. Kriesi and his colleagues (1992; 1995; Duyvendak 1992) agree with Tarrow, and emphasize the impact of changing attitudes of Social Democrats toward new social movements. However, they differentiate yet another aspect of opportunity structures from what they call "alliance structures": "prevailing strategies", which refer to informal, but recurrent practices which have traditionally been applied by established political actors to challenging movements. For example, they argue that there are repressive traditions in both Germany and France which reemerge when the state actors see the established political and social order endangered by movements.

Though one might question whether it is necessary to call these aspects "structural", they could be because they are relatively stable in comparison with contingent factors of the political process. In other words, Kriesi and his colleagues tried to capture relatively stable aspects of political culture which constrain movement action while carefully avoiding incorporation of all the cultural factors that Gamson and Meyer included in the category of "political opportunities" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 33; Gamson and Meyer 1996).

Gamson and Meyer, while being aware of the danger that the term political

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opportunities becomes “an all-encompassing fudge factor for all the conditions and circumstances that form the context for collective action” (275), tried nonetheless to capture cultural components of opportunity (279). In reality, however, they “could well be accused of contributing to the very problem they seek to remedy” and “blur an important analytic distinction” between political opportunity structures and framing processes (McAdam 1996: 25). “The kinds of structural changes and power shifts that are most defensibly conceived of as *political* opportunities should not be confused with the collective processes by which these changes are interpreted and framed” (McAdam 1996: 25-6; emphasis in the original). Nevertheless, Gamson and Meyer convey an important point that political opportunities and framing processes are related with each other.

The second way to introduce dynamic elements into the political process approach is to examine policy-related responses by established political actors, such as governments, industries, political parties and politicians, which aim to “manage” the conflict. In short, this view emphasizes power exercise by the establishment in order to manipulate the conflict process. Classical expressions of this view are found in Bachrach and Baratz (1962). In recent years, this perspective has been applied to research on policy outcomes of nuclear energy conflicts (Rüdiger 1990; Flam 1994a and 1994b) and of environmental politics in general (Sainteny 1995).

Like the conceptualization of political opportunities, the conflict management can also come closer to the framing approach when it deals with the manipulation of agenda setting and policy debates by the established political actors. In order to make a concept like “state response” more operational, it might be better, for example, to distinguish between institutional or material responses and framing efforts by the state.

In conclusion, it seems important to sufficiently limit both the concept of political opportunities and that of state responses to more structural, though not entirely formal, aspects in order to delineate the analytical units from the framing processes.

### 2.3 Mobilizing Structures and Framing Processes

While the POS concept was only elaborated in the latter half of the 1980s, the mobilizing structure had already been addressed by the resource mobilization approach ten years earlier. But the narrow initial focus of this school on formal, professional movement organizations has been criticized by political process theorists. The latter scholars, instead, have recognized the significance of informal mobilizational networks, such as workplace, neighborhood, churches, friendship, which are conducive to the emergence and development of social movements.

Compared with the POS and the mobilizing structures, the theorization of the framing process was the slowest. This delay is partly attributable to "the ephemeral, amorphous nature of the subject matter" (McAdam et al. 1996a:6). Nevertheless, the importance of cognitive or cultural dimensions of collective action have long been recognized in social movement studies since the "classical" approach of collective behavior which stressed the irrational grievances of those who are mobilized.

In more recent years, the new social movement approach (NSMA), represented by Inglehart, Touraine, Melucci, and Karl-Werner Brand, focused primarily on the sources and functions of meaning and identity within social movements. For this approach, it is the centrality of their cultural elements that marked the new social movements as discontinuous with the "old" social movements such as the labor movement (McAdam et al. 1996a:5).

Another source of the framing perspective has come from the political process approach. Gamson (1988), for example, analyzes the changing salience of media discourses on nuclear energy in the United States.

But the milestone in the theorizing of the framing processes was laid down by Snow and his colleagues (Snow et al. 1986), who modified and applied Goffman's term, framing processes, to the study of social movements. Snow's original concept is formulated by McAdam et al. (1996a: 6) as "the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action"

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(emphasis removed) . Lacking such cognitive elements, people would not mobilize even when “objective” opportunities are opened up and organizational networks that could be used for collective action exist.

In a way, Snow returned to the classical issue of grievances as an inducer of movement. In this way, he addressed the issue that had been neglected by both the resource mobilization and part of the political process perspective that assume that grievances as mobilizing potential are ubiquitous and given.

But the framing processes are no longer ignored by both perspectives. Hence the increasing efforts of integrating the three perspectives in recent years.

### 3. Proposal for a Political Process Approach to the Study of Japanese Social Movements

#### 3.1 Research on Social Movements in Japan: Absence of Political Scientists

In contrast to this emerging consensus among Western scholars, research on social movements in Japan remains at an older consensus that recognizes the need to integrate both resource mobilization and new social movement perspectives into the field (Shakai Undo Ron Kenkyukai 1990) . While the analysis of mobilizing structures of Japanese social movements has become conventional within the RMA framework in a broader sense (Katagiri 1995; Krauss and Simcock 1980), only a small number of researchers have considered the possibility of applying the framing, i.e., social constructionist approach to research on Japanese social movements (e.g., Oishi 1994).

But the infrequent use of the framing approach is understandable given its theoretical underdevelopment among Western scholars as well. However, it is surprising to find that political analyses of recent Japanese social movements from the political process approach hardly exist.

This absence of political scientists is all the more embarrassing in the field of research on the environmental movement in Japan, given its more obviously political nature than that of other, seemingly more identity-oriented new social movements such as the women’s movement. What is more, the lack of political

research on the Japanese environmental movement seems to be just a more eloquent expression of the general absence of Japanese political scientists in environmental studies. As Kaku (1996) argues in his review article on environmental political studies in Japan, only a very small minority of political scientists have addressed environmental issues; and among the minority of political analyses, those dealing with environmental politics in Japan rather than abroad were produced between 1970 and 1985. Even so, Japanese political scientists did not analyze the environmental movement as such, but rather the issue of institutional arrangements for citizen participation in general.

In contrast, Western specialists of Japanese politics have constantly analyzed Japanese environmental politics, and in the past, not a few of them dealt with the environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, the excellent accounts of the anti-pollution movement by Huddle, Reich and Stiskin (1975), McKean (1981), Simcock and Krauss (1980) and that of the anti-Narita airport struggle by Apter and Sawa (1984) have become standard texts for Western students of the Japanese environmental movement.

However, while these analyses of characteristics of citizen's or resident's movements are still relevant to the study of Japanese environmental movement, they are rather outdated in terms of their relevance to the analysis of political contexts that have significantly changed since the era of the anti-pollution movement. Nevertheless, Western interest in the Japanese environmental movement had faded away by the first half of the 1980s, corresponding to the pacification of the earlier movement. Since then, Western scholars of Japanese environmental politics have become more policy-oriented.

### 3.2 Research on the Japanese Anti-nuclear Movement

Against this background, it is therefore not surprising to find little research, by both Japanese and Western scholars, that has dealt with the political aspects of the anti-nuclear movement that exploded in Japan after Chernobyl. Most of the academic literature dealing with this movement has been written by either sociologists or science historians, and even those few political analyses

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(Edmunds 1983; Dauvergne 1993; Tabusa 1992) are focused more on explaining Japan's ambitious nuclear energy policy than on describing and explaining the movement against it.

Although neither sociologists (e.g., Kajita 1988; Takata 1991; Hasegawa 1991a, 1991b, 1995a, 1995b) nor science historians (e.g., Yoshioka 1995) completely ignore the political aspects of the anti-nuclear movement, explicit use of the concept of political opportunity is rare. While Hasegawa mentions "limited political opportunities" in his articles, he simply refers to McAdam (1982) and neither defines it nor applies it systematically. Presumably, Tabusa (1992) is the first Japanese researcher to systematically apply the concept of POS to research on social movements in Japan. In addition, she tried to combine the POS, conflict management, and framing perspectives. Thus, her Ph.D. thesis is characterized as a political process approach.

Nevertheless, her preoccupation with the goal of establishing "the link between the development of the antinuclear movement and the career of nuclear energy policy" (Tabusa 1992: 35) led her to rely heavily on Kitschelt's concept of POS beyond its conceptual capacity. Being aware of the limits of this concept, she complemented it with some conflict management and framing theories. Thus, her thesis aims to show that both the "closed" political opportunity structures and "exclusionary" responses of the political responses to the challenge of the movement excluded the movement from participation in policy process as well as limited the choice of movement strategies (pp.415-6). Moreover, she also argues that "exclusionary" responses of the political institutions "minimized the significance of nuclear energy issue in the national political arena", thus keeping it a "non-issue" (p.416).

Though this conclusion sounds plausible, one important deficit remains: Tabusa has little to say about how a movement emerges and develops in spite of the generally unfavorable political structures. In other words, she lacks a theory of movement development. This resulted from her immediate dismissal of the new social movement and resource mobilization approaches (p.35) as well as from her reliance on Kitschelt's concept of POS, which is useful for cross-national comparison of polities, but not for a single nation case study on the

development of a movement.

In contrast, the focus of my ongoing research on the Japanese anti-nuclear movement is on how to explain the trajectory of this movement over time. The aim of the research is to look at it from the political process perspective. Therefore, in the following sections, I propose an alternative strategy to forging a theoretical framework suitable for this research purpose.

### 3.3 The POS concept of Kriesi et al.

Given a variety of conceptions of POS, the question is which conception of POS is to be used for a specific research purpose. Aside from Kitschelt's concept focused exclusively on stable, formal institutional state structures, the growing consensus among designers of the POS concept has centered around the following four dimensions (McAdam 1996: 27):

- (1) The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system
- (2) The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity
- (3) The presence or absence of elite allies
- (4) The state's capacity and propensity for repression

I have chosen the POS concept which has been developed by Kriesi and his former colleagues in Amsterdam (Kriesi et al. 1992; Duyvendak 1992). In their conception of POS, the first dimension identified by McAdam is divided into two features of a political system: the formal institutional structures and the informal, prevailing strategies (i.e., traditional patterns of state response) with regards to challenging movements. The latter, in its part, contains McAdam's fourth dimension, namely, the existence or absence of state propensity to repress challengers to political order.

Unlike Kitschelt, Kriesi and others do not see it relevant nor possible to distinguish between input and output structures of a polity. Instead, they collapse openness into strength and closure into weakness (Kriesi et al.



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1995:27). In order to determine whether a polity is strong or weak, they discern four formal aspects:

- (1) territorial centralization, i.e., unitary or federal state;
- (2) functional concentration of state power between legislative, executive, and judiciary;
- (3) coherence of public administration; and
- (4) existence of direct democratic procedures (Duyvendak 1992: 66-72).

However, as Duyvendak notes, "although it is evident that a strong state is potentially repressive, whether repression will be the authorities' standard response cannot be concluded automatically" (Duyvendak 1992:76). Thus, it is relevant to introduce the second dimension, the informal, prevailing strategies in dealing with challengers (traditional patterns of state response). This is characterized as either exclusive or inclusive. For example, "While the formal institutional structures of the Federal Republic has been completely rebuilt after World War II, the dominant strategy of its ruling elite with regard to challengers from below has continued to be marked by the experience of the past" (Kriesi et al. 1992:222-3). By combining the state strength and the dominant strategy of the state, Kriesi and his colleagues have arrived at a typology of four distinct general structural settings for movement mobilization (Table 2).

**Table 2: The General Structural Settings for Movements based on Kriesi et al. 1992. For the full description, see Kriesi et al. 1992, Figure 2, p.225.**

Traditional Pattern of State Response	Formal Institutional Structure	
	Weak State	Strong State
Exclusive	Formalistic Inclusion (Germany)	Full Exclusion (France)
Inclusive	Full Procedural Integration (Switzerland)	Informal Co-optation (Netherlands)

In addition, even if we reach a conclusion that a state is strong on the basis of these formal aspects, a strong state has two options: it may work to suppress a movement's demands, but it may also implement them much more effectively than a weak state when the government is reform-oriented (Duyvendak 1992: 74). Hence the rationale for introducing the third dimension of POS, the configuration of power, which is to some extent constrained by the first and second, long-term dimensions.

The concept of the configuration of power incorporates McAdam's second and third dimensions of POS. By configuration of power Kriesi and others mean partisan relations primarily in the party system (and additionally in the labor union system; Duyvendak 1992) and secondarily in the social movement sector at large (Kriesi et al. 1992:231). The former, relatively unstable configuration determines whether a social movement can find allies in the party system and/or in the labor union system, while the latter, more stable configuration represents relative salience of new cleavages against old cleavage structures in politics. Although these two types of partisan relations are seen interrelated with each other, one important difference remains: while the former deals with Old Left parties and labor unions as potential sources of support to a new social movement, the latter treats salient old cleavages, especially class cleavage, as an impediment to the articulation of demands of a new social movement. Thus, in the most recent elaboration of their POS model, Kriesi et al. (1995) divide these two configurations into "alliance structures" and "cleavage structures", respectively.

Regarding the alliance structures, Kriesi and others focus on two aspects of the power configuration on the left as particularly important to the mobilization of NSMs: whether or not the left is divided between Communists and Social Democrats, and whether or not the left participates in government (Kriesi et al. 1992: 232). This focus on the left is justified by the observation that the supporters of NSMs typically belong to the electoral potential of the left.

Overall, the formal institutional structures, the prevailing strategies to challengers, and the configuration of power (or the alliance structures) together reduce the number of strategic options that can be used by established political

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actors who possess institutionalized access to decision making in the political system. In short, strategic calculations of the authorities are “bounded” by the political opportunity structures.

Likewise, collective action by a movement is constrained. Different from Kitschelt, however, Kriesi and his co-authors do not assume a direct impact of POS on strategic choice of a movement. Rather, they recognize intervening, perceptive factors that mediate between POS and actual strategies of the “members” of the system (i.e., state response) on the one hand, and movement action on the other.

These perceptive factors concern interpretation of a given situation by potential movement participants, and either motivate or discourage participation to collective action (Duyvendak 1992: 43):

- (1) the assessed chances of success when people act (“success chance”);
- (2) the assessed chances of goal realization or negative results in case people do not act (“reform” or “threat”);
- (3) the experienced degree of support for movement actions and SMOs by established political actors, including the state (“facilitation”);
- (4) the assessed chances of repression (“repression”).

The first two concern the costs and benefits regarding goal realization, while the latter two are related to the costs and benefits accompanied by the collective action itself. Note the addition of words “assessed” and “experienced”. By this inclusion of motivational factors, Kriesi’s team has tried to avoid an objectivist fallacy to directly infer movement outcomes (e.g., low mobilization, radicalization, etc.) from features of a political system. In this fuzzy area, there is considerable room for action by both the established elites and social movements.

If, then, one stresses social movements’ efforts to provide an interpretation of reality so that people are motivated into action, the motivational theory is open to research on framing processes based on the perspective of Snow et al. (1986). Equally, the theory is open to the conflict management perspective

which is centered on elite responses to a movement. Kriesi and his colleagues have chosen the latter strategy by incorporating the conflict management perspective into the third dimension of their POS model, the configuration of power.

The decision not to include these fuzzy elements in the conception of POS itself seems to be right given the danger of conceptual inflation. As a result, however, research on a movement would not be able to bypass the analysis of the concrete interactions between movement campaigns and members of the political system. This might be seen as a limit of the POS concept designed by Kriesi's team, if one expects too much from this tool.

Nevertheless, merits of the POS model of the Amsterdam team lie in the inclusion of more informal and unstable structural factors while keeping a distinction between POS and more contingent, perceptive factors.

The latter factors, in turn, are useful for the analysis of interactions between institutionalized politics and movements. For these reasons, the theoretical framework devised by Kriesi and his colleagues is more appropriate to the analysis of the Japanese anti-nuclear movement than that which Tabusa (1992) was based on. Though she was aware that Kitschelt's concept of POS has limitations, she did not seem to have more reliable conceptual tools. As a result, it seems that the distinction between different perspectives - POS, conflict management, framing, and policy research - has been blurred.

In this context, then, it is important to clarify presumed relations between variables. In the model of Kriesi et al., relations between variables are schematized as shown in Figure 1 (see in the last page).

#### 4 Prospects

As some might have already noticed, the recent trend toward the political process approach in social movement studies in the United States and Western Europe can be seen as an expression of revitalized interests in the relationship between state and civil society as well as in political institutions in a broader field of comparative politics since the 1970s. In abstract terms, the central focus

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in comparative politics in recent years can be summarized as what Keman identifies as the “core subject” of comparative politics:

“a theoretical approach in comparative politics should be focusing on the interaction between political actors and institutions, in which way this interaction influences a system’s capacity to perform in accordance with the needs and demands of a society”.

Put differently,

“actor-related behavior (i.e., ‘politics’) must be understood within the context of political institutions (i.e., ‘polity’). In addition, ... the variation of the policy performance of a political system can to a large extent be accounted for by examining the patterned interaction between the working of institutions and the related room for maneuver of political actors” (Keman 1993: 47).

Nevertheless, there had been a significant time lag before the political process approach was established as an independent perspective. As Koopmans (1992:9) wrote, “scientific studies of social movements have long denied the relevance of politics for the emergence and development of social movements, and it is only recently that political factors have been fully appreciated in the literature”.

Such a time lag seems even more prolonged in Japan. In environmental movement studies, the lack of political scientists would be attributed by critical observers like Kaku (1996) to the alleged general propensity of Japanese political scientists to avoid involvement in partisanship, to fear established authority, and to defend self-interests. In other words, those who study power relations in society are susceptible to real power. Is that true? It might be. However, I would tend to emphasize the possible impact of the power configuration in the Japanese political system which might have worked as a disincentive for Japanese political scientists to doing any political analysis of the environmental movement.

In any case, by this article and the ongoing research project on the Japanese

anti-nuclear movement, I hope to contribute to filling up the lacuna which has resulted from the lack of political scientists in the field of environmental movement research in Japan.

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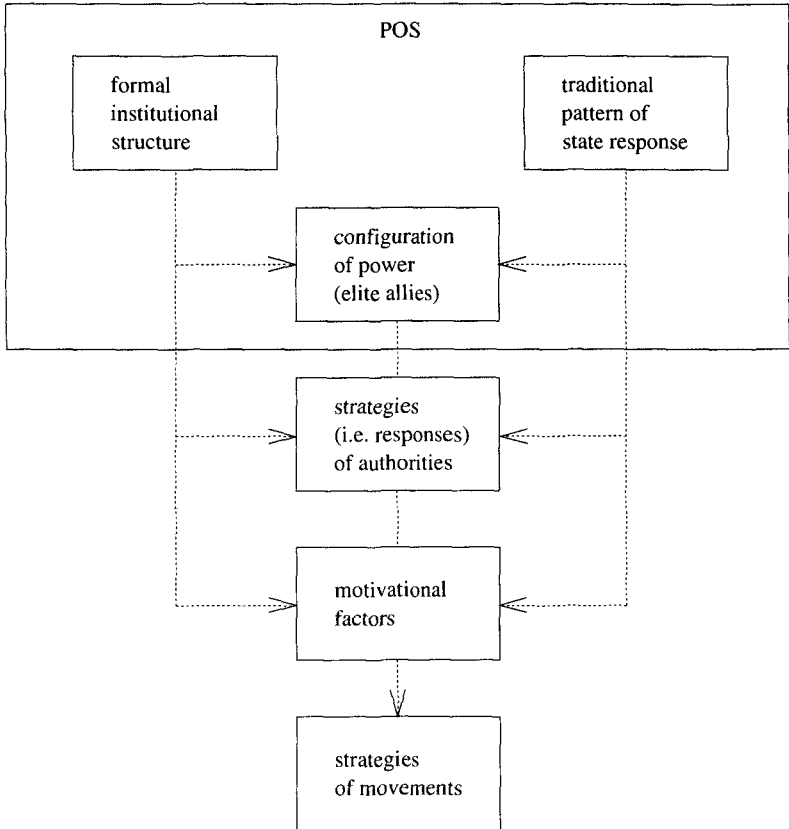


Figure 1. The relationship between Variables of the POS Model of Kriesi et. al. (1992: 221); Terms are changed from the original.