Breaking Laws

Violence and Civil Disobedience in Protest

Isabelle Sommier, Graeme Hayes, and Sylvie Ollitrault
Breaking Laws
Protest and Social Movements

Recent years have seen an explosion of protest movements around the world, and academic theories are racing to catch up with them. This series aims to further our understanding of the origins, dealings, decisions, and outcomes of social movements by fostering dialogue among many traditions of thought, across European nations and across continents. All theoretical perspectives are welcome. Books in the series typically combine theory with empirical research, dealing with various types of mobilization, from neighborhood groups to revolutions. We especially welcome work that synthesizes or compares different approaches to social movements, such as cultural and structural traditions, micro- and macro-social, economic and ideal, or qualitative and quantitative. Books in the series will be published in English. One goal is to encourage non-native speakers to introduce their work to Anglophone audiences. Another is to maximize accessibility: all books will be available in open access within a year after printed publication.

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List of Abbreviations, Organizations, and Parties

40 Days for Life (United Kingdom, 2011-)
Aarrg!! Apprentis Agitateurs pour un réseau de résistance globale (France, 2001-)
ACNV Association pour la communication non violente (France, 1991-)
AD Action directe (France, 1979-2004)
ANC African National Congress (South Africa, 1912-)
Anpo Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (1954)
APO Außerparlamentarische Opposition, or Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (Germany, 1966-1973)
Army of God (United States, 1982-)
AutOp Autonomia operaia, or Workers’ Autonomy (Italy, 1973-1979)
B2J Bewegung 2. Juni, or the June 2nd Movement (Germany, 1971-1980)
BAC Brigade activiste des clowns (France, 2005-)
BAe British Aerospace (United Kingdom, 1977-1999)
BI Brigades internationales (France, 1974-1976)
BLA Black Liberation Army (United States, 1971-1981)
BR Brigade rosse, or Red Brigades (Italy, 1970-1987)
BR-PCC Brigade rosse per la costruzione del partito comunista combattente, or Red Brigades for the Construction of the Combatant Communist Party (Italy, 1981-1988)
BR-UdCC Brigade rosse-Unione dei comunisti combatenti, or Red Brigades-Union of Combatant Communists (Italy, 1985-1987)
BWSF British Workers Sports Federation (United Kingdom, 1923-1935)
CADAC  Coordination des associations pour le droit à l'avortement et à la contraception, or Coordination of Associations for the Right to Abortion and Contraception (France, 1990-)

CCC  Cellules communistes combattantes, or Communist Combatant Cells (Belgium, 1983-1985)

CDU  Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, or Christian Democratic Union of Germany (Germany, 1945-)

CFDT  Confédération française démocratique du travail (France, 1964-)

CGT  Confédération générale du travail (France, 1895-)

CIMADE  Comité inter mouvements auprès des évacués (France, 1939-)

CIRCA  Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (United Kingdom, 2003-)

CND  Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (United Kingdom, 1957-)

CNPF  Conseil national du patronat français, or the National Council of French Employers (France, 1945-1998)

COINTELPRO  An acronym for the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (United States, 1956-1971)

Colonna 2 agosto, or 2nd of August Column, splintered off the BR (Italy, 1981-1982)

Colonna Walter Alasia, or Walter Alasia Column, splintered off the BR (Italy, 1980-1983)

COLP  Comunisti organizzati per la liberazione proletaria, or Communists Organized for Proletarian Liberation (Italy, 1981-1984)

Committee of 100 (United Kingdom, 1960-1968)

Communauté de l'Arche (France, 1964-)

CORE  Congress of Racial Equality (United States, 1942-)

CP  Confédération paysanne, or Farmers' Union (France, 1987-)

CSO  Community Service Organization (United States, 1947-)

DC  Democrazia cristiana, or Christian Democracy (Italy, 1942-1994)

Déboulonneurs (France, 2005-)
Den plirono, or I Do Not Pay (Δεν πληρώνω) (Greece, 2012-)
DKP Deutsche Kommunistische Partei, or German Communist Party (Germany, 1968-)
EU European Union
Faucheurs volontaires (France, 2003-)
FEN Fédération de l'éducation nationale, or Federation for National Education (France, 1945-)
FLN Front de libération nationale, or National Liberation Front (Algeria, 1954-)
FN Front national, or National Front (France, 1972-)
FNSEA Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles, or National Federation of Agricultural Holders' Unions (France, 1946-)
FSM Free Speech Movement (United States, 1964)
FSU Fédération syndicale unitaire (France, 1993-)
GANVA Groupe d'actions non violentes anti-nucléaires (France, 2007-)
GAP Gruppi di azione partigiana, or Partisan Action Groups (Italy, 1969-1972)
GARI Groupes d'action révolutionnaires internationalistes, or Groups of Internationalist Revolutionary Action (France, 1977-1979)
genetiX snowball (United Kingdom)
GISTI Groupe d'information et de soutien des immigrés (France, 1972-)
GP Gauche prolétarienne, or Proletarian Left (France, 1969-1973)
INRA Institut national de la recherche agronomique, or National Institute of Agricultural Research (France, 1946-)
JAC Jeunesse agricole catholique, or Young Catholic Farmers (France, 1929-1965)
JCR Jeunesse communiste révolutionnaire, or Revolutionary Communist Youth (France, 1966-1969)
JEC Jeunesse étudiante chrétienne, or Young Christian Students (France, 1929-)
JOC Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne, or Young Christian Workers (France, 1925-)
JRA Nihon Sekigun, or Japanese Red Army (Japan, 1970-2001)
Kakumeito Revolutionary People's Party (Japan, 1991-2001)
LARF Lebanese Armed Revolutionary Factions (Lebanon, 1979-1988)
LC Lotta continua, or Continuous Struggle (Italy, 1969-1976)
MAN Mouvement pour une alternative non-violente (France, 1974-
May 19th Committee (United States, 1977-1980)
MIA Montgomery Improvement Association (United States, 1955-)
MIL Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación, or Iberian Liberation Movement (Spain, 1971-1973)
MLAC Mouvement pour la liberté de l'avortement et de la contraception (France, 1973-1975)
Movimiento 15-M (Spain, 2011-)
MSI Movimento sociale italiano, or Italian Social Movement (Italy, 1946-1995)
NAACP National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (United States, 1909-
NAP Nuclei armati proletari, or Proletarian Armed Nuclei (Italy, 1974-1977)
NAPAP Noyaux armés pour l'autonomie populaire, or Armed Nuclei for Popular Autonomy (France, 1977-1979)
NCLC Nashville Christian Leadership Council (United States, 1958-)
NPD Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or National Democratic Party of Germany (neo-Nazi) (Germany, 1964-
NRP Nouvelle résistance populaire, or New People's Resistance, underground branch of the GP (France, 1970-1973)
ONF Office national des forêts, or National Forests Office (France, 1964-)
Operation Rescue (United States, 1986-)
Ordre nouveau (France, 1969-1972)
OWS Occupy Wall Street (United States, 2011-)
PAH  Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca, or Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (Spain, 2009-)

PAS  Pennsylvania Abolition Society (United States, 1775-)

PCI  Partito comunista italiano, or Italian Communist Party (Italy, 1921-1991)

PFLP  Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (Palestine, 1967-)

PG  Partito guerriglia del proletariato metropolitano, or Guerrilla Party of the Metropolitan Proletariat, splintered off the BR (Italy, 1981-1982)

PL  Prima linea, or Front Line (Italy, 1976-1981)

PLO  Palestine Liberation Organization (Palestine, 1964-)

Ploughshares (United Kingdom, 1996-)

Plowshares (United States, 1980-)

PLP  Progressive Labor Party (United States, 1962-)

PotOp  Potere operaio, or Workers' Power (Italy, 1969-1973)

PSU  Parti socialiste unifié, or Unified Socialist Party (France, 1960-1989)

RAF  Rote Armee Fraktion, or Red Army Faction (Germany, 1970-1988)

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)


RESF  Réseau éducation sans frontières, or Education without Borders Network (France)

Revolutionary Armed Task Force (United States, 1980-1981)

Rote Zora, or Zora the Redhead, feminist branch of RZ (Germany, 1977-1995)

Roya citoyenne (France, 2016-)

RTE  Réseau de transport d'électricité, or Electricity Transmission Network (France)

RYM  Revolutionary Youth Movement (United States, 1969)

RZ  Revolutionäre Zellen, or Revolutionary Cells (Germany, 1973-1995)

SCLC  Southern Christian Leadership Conference (United States, 1957-)

SDS  Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund, or Socialist German Student League (Germany, 1946-1970)
SDS  Students for a Democratic Society (United States, 1960-1969)

Sekigun  Red Army (Japan, 1969-1970)

SFIO  Section française de l’Internationale ouvrière, or French Section of the Workers’ International (France, 1905-1969)

SLA  Symbionese Liberation Army (United States, 1973-2002)

SNCC  Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (United States, 1960-1970s)

SNCF  Société nationale des chemins de fer français, or the French National Railway Company (France, 1938-)

SOS Tout-Petits, or Save the Little Ones (France, 1986-)

SPD  Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or Social Democratic Party of Germany (1863-)

SPK  Sozialistisches Patientenkollektiv, or Socialist Patients’ Collective (Germany, 1970-1972)

Transcendental Club (United States, 1836-1844)

La Trêve de Dieu, or Truce of God (France, 1988-)

Tute bianche, or White Overalls (Italy, 1994-2001)

UdCC  Unione dei comunisti combattenti, or Union of Combatant Communists, splintered off the BR-PCC (Italy, 1985-1987)

UEC  Union des étudiants communistes, or Communist Students Union (France, 1956-)

UFW  United Farm Workers of America (United States, 1962-)

UGS  Union de la gauche socialiste, or Union of the Socialist Left (France, 1957-)

UJCml  Union des jeunesse communistes marxistes léninistes, or Union of Marxist-Leninist Communist Youth (France, 1966-1968)

UN  United Nations

UNEF  Union nationale des étudiants de France (France, 1907-)

URA  Rengo Sekigun or United Red Army (Japan, 1971-1972)

Vaincre et vivre, or Conquer and Live (France, 1974-1976)

VLR  Vive la révolution!, or Long Live the Revolution! (France, 1969-1971)
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>White Citizens' Councils</td>
<td>White Citizens' Councils (United States, 1954-)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WPC</td>
<td>Women's Political Council</td>
<td>Women's Political Council (United States, 1946-)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>YCL</td>
<td>Young Communist League</td>
<td>Young Communist League (United Kingdom, 1921-1988)</td>
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Introduction to *Breaking Laws*

This book brings together two volumes initially published in French in the Presses de Sciences Po’s *Contester* series: Isabelle Sommier’s *La Violence révolutionnaire*, here translated from the original by Marina Urquidi, and Graeme Hayes and Sylvie Ollitrault’s *La Désobéissance civile*, here revised and translated by the first author. Both focus on the emergence and evolution of new and radical modes of activism in what we might call the ‘long 1960s’, from the emergence of the civil rights movement as a mass movement in the USA in the mid-1950s through to the protest cycle of 1968 and its aftermath, in which movements adopting forms of armed struggle, and movements adopting forms of non-violent direct action, challenged state power.

In the first part of this book, Sommier discusses the ‘Years of Lead’ that followed the revolutionary moment of 1968. Sommier’s account provides a fascinating overview of the key groups in Europe, North America, and Japan, with particular focus on the Red Brigades in Italy, the Red Army Faction in West Germany, Action directe in France, the Japanese Red Army, and, in the USA, the Weather Underground Organization. She argues that there is an ‘unsolved crisis of memory’ concerning these groups, and more generally concerning the relationship between 1968 and the subsequent development of movements espousing armed struggle in these countries, noting that these groups cannot simply be delegitimized as terrorist, insofar as they refused to carry out indiscriminate attacks (privileging instead a form of action centring on political assassination) and recognized in their ideology and group culture the importance of public accountability. Sommier’s analysis thus has wide conceptual importance for the study of social movements in general: where social movement theory developed from (and arguably continues to privilege) instrumentally and rationally based accounts of movement organizations operating within highly structured political contexts in order to explain their patterns of emergence, mobilization, and demobilization, Sommier argues that the contrasting trajectories of armed movements can best be understood through the cultural lens of clandestinity, and thus of group identity.

In the second part, Hayes and Ollitrault focus on the multiple and various legacies of the civil rights movements of the 1960s, charting the emergence of civil disobedience as a historicized form of ‘heroic’ social movement action in Western (post)industrialized democracies. Adopted by citizenship, anti-nuclear, and environmental movements in particular as they sought to differentiate themselves from class struggle in the post-1968
period, civil disobedience has more recently developed into a familiar form of action in counter-globalization, migrant rights, climate justice, and professionally based campaigns espousing a civic politics opposed to the entrenchment of neo-liberal, post-democratic political and economic arrangements. The authors argue here that the predominant normative focus on civil disobedience in liberal political theory obscures the performative significance of movement work, particularly concerning its discursive justification and legitimation, the contrasting movement understandings of accountability, and, crucially, the importance of boundary-marking between what constitutes violence and non-violence. Combining historical overview, theoretical discussion, and detailed discussion of movements (such as the French Faucheurs volontaires campaign against GM crops), they argue that the adoption of civil disobedience is emblematic of the frustration of activists with the failure of the ‘classic’ repertoire of social movement action to produce change faced with a widening democratic deficit.

Though the focus of their studies is very different, together these two analyses therefore ask us to re-address normative accounts of the relationship between radicalism, the use of violence, and collective action. Both privilege contextual understanding, placing their accounts of movement development and strategic choice within the situated histories of the emergence of these movements; both focus on the importance of discursive legitimation, and on the interpretive work that social movement actors do, in order to produce political and social challenge.