Considering Political Opportunity Structure: Democratic Complicity and the Antiwar Movement

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In the contemporary United States, as in democracies around the world, it is important to evaluate the condition of democracy. In the highly politically charged days since September 11, 2001, how is democracy faring? There are many indicators of the condition of democracy, including institutions like free and competitive elections, citizen participation in the political system, and competition for political power. However, this thesis is more concerned with an evaluation of democracy as represented by the actions of citizens outside of the conventional political system. Specifically, the role of dissenting activity is central to any thorough examination of democracy. The ability to participate in protests, social movements, and other expressions of dissent illustrates to what extent “the people” have access to power and the ability to rule. The effectiveness of this protest activity and the ease at which it emerges and develops is a product of the political context and broader political culture. Therefore, the degree of activity and effectiveness of dissenting activity can illuminate and explain the broader condition of democracy.

One major expression of dissent can be found in social movements. Social movements, according to Rucht, can be defined “in a restrictive sense…[as consisting of] two kinds of components: (1) networks of groups and organizations prepared to mobilize for protest actions to promote (or resist) social change … and (2) individuals who attend protest activities or contribute resources without necessarily being attached to movement groups or organizations.”¹ Although focusing on social movements as an expression of dissent in some ways limits the discussion, it allows a focused and detailed review of the most important elements of theory, which can then be applied to other forms of

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dissenting activity. Scholars have long examined social movement activity because of the historical influence of movements, and because they offer citizens an effective vehicle for democratic participation. Social movements, therefore, represent one important indicator of democratic life. Social movement activity varies according to a wide set of internal and external conditions, but it is particularly useful to discuss the emergence of these movements. Because dissent is a critical element of democracy, the ease with which social movements can overcome the obstacles to emergence explains important aspects about the conditions of American democracy.

This thesis, like many works by social movement scholars before it, will attempt to answer the following question: what are the political conditions that facilitate social movement emergence and growth? This question is significant because it explains and predicts social movement activity, but also because by evaluating these political conditions we can learn about the condition of our democracy itself. By focusing upon political factors, this study will necessarily exclude other theories of social movements. Unfortunately time and space do not allow a thorough discussion of each model. However, the focus on political process model can be justified considering not only its significance in the changing political conditions after September 11, 2001, but also the fact that the debate is relatively recent (and therefore relevant) but incomplete. In discussing political conditions, this work will expose flaws in the debate that has been important to social movement theory for the past twenty-five years.

The political process model of social movement theory was developed when Michael Lipsky asked, “Is it not sensible to assume that the [political] system will be
more or less open to specific [social movement] groups at different times?2 Although there is debate about the exact details of the model, it is based upon the central concept that social movement emergence and activity is influenced by political opportunity structure or factors in the political environment. In addressing the question of the political conditions that facilitate social movement emergence and growth, this paper will contribute to the central debate of this model over the definition of political opportunity structure. Although many scholars have addressed this question, my work will make a contribution to the debate by discussing a political factor that has been largely neglected and therefore exposing a weakness in the scholarly debate.

In order attempt to answer these research questions, this thesis will focus upon the case of the anti-Iraq War movement. This case study is a sound one for several reasons. It is a strong social movement in the United States that emerged after September 11, 2001. This is important because the change to the political culture and political context of the United States after the terrorist attacks on that date cannot be overstated. For that reason, the research from a case study of a movement occurring before September 11, 2001, could prove problematic in that it might be difficult to apply that research to a post-September 11th movement. In order to understand what the political conditions after September 11, 2001 signify for social movements and dissent, it is critical to use a case study that occurred after that date.

Additionally, the antiwar movement was large in scale, including some of the largest protests since the Vietnam War era. The movement in the United States was part of a global struggle against the war that began remarkably before the war began. Millions of people protested the war around the world. And although it failed to prevent the

beginning of the war, its other successes and its transformation over time make it a valuable case for a study of the political conditions influencing social movements.

In order to complete a study of the antiwar movement and assess the political conditions from which it emerged, this paper will take the following form: first, I will discuss the ways in which scholars have approached the same research question in the past. My literature review will therefore discuss the political-process model of social movement theory, and will focus on the political opportunities that allow social movement emergence and activity. Next I will lay out my methodology and discuss the way I conducted my research. Then I will explore the background of this case—both of the Iraq War and the movement that it created. Finally, I will discuss my study of the antiwar movement, focusing on three hypotheses to explain the political opportunity structure that the Iraq antiwar movement faced. The first relates to access to the conventional political system, the second is concerned with political efficacy, and the third focuses upon the complicity of expected elite allies. In the end I will tie these three hypotheses together to illustrate the political conditions that allowed the rise in the antiwar movement and develop a new theory of what composes those conditions more generally. The connections between these political factors and the movement’s activity will reveal weaknesses in the existing theory and demonstrate that more research is necessary to gain a true understanding of the political opportunity structure.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Because it is an important element of social movement theory, theorists have discussed and debated at length why and how social movements emerge. Some of the earliest social movement theories focused upon grievances and psychological strain on the individual as determinant factors, often regarding movement emergence as occurring in reaction to suddenly imposed grievances or other catalytic moments that provoke a response from individuals for whom the psychological strain has become unbearable. These classical theories shared the belief that movements emerged as a result of a collective reaction to system strain, which was motivated not by a rational choice to attempt to change the system, but rather in order to manage and outlet these psychological tensions. Marx and Engels developed one such theory. They argued that the alienation and exploitation of workers caused societal strain and individual discontent. This caused individual rebellions which would eventually lead to larger scale rebellions and finally revolution.3

In response to the classical model, critics pointed to the fact that grievances are a constant force in the human condition, and that systemic strain always causes psychological strain. In order for a social movement to emerge, these critics claimed, there had to be a determining factor. The field of work in social movement theory thus shifted to resource-mobilization theory, which argued that the aggregation of resources was a necessary catalyst to social movement emergence. This theory thus regarded increased resources—external and indigenous—as crucial to social movement emergence. It “examines the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon third parties for

success…” and “depends more upon political, sociological, and economic theories than upon the social psychology of collective behavior.”

McCarthy and Zald’s model of resource-mobilization theory has three requirements of social movement emergence: the aggregation of resources, some form of organization, and support by outside individuals, organizations. The role of elites is thus very important in this theory, as elites can be considered a valuable resource.

The resource-mobilization theory was thus focused upon resources, both indigenous and external. While resources have been proven to play an important role in social movement activity, some scholars have criticized the concentration on resources at the expense of other factors.

In the past twenty-five years, social movement theories have focused upon a different model in explaining social movement emergence. Because earlier models tended to ignore political factors in explaining emergence, Theorists responded, developing the political process model of social movement theory. Critical to the political process model, the political opportunity structure illustrates the way that movement emergence depends upon the broader political environment.

The central element of the political-process model is the political opportunity structure; many social movement theorists have attributed social movement emergence to the political opportunity structure. The term “political opportunity structure” was coined by Peter Eisinger in his study of urban protest in the United States. He argues that “elements of the [political] context are conceived as components of the particular structure of political opportunities…such factors…taken individually or collectively,

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serve in various ways to obstruct or facilitate citizen activity in pursuit of political
goals…[and] help to establish the chances of success of citizen political activity. In short,
elements in the environment impose certain constraints on political activity or open
avenues to it.” Generally, most theorists agree with this statement. However, its
ambiguity has caused enormous debate over what specific factors actually compose
political opportunity structure. Koopman agrees, arguing, “the core idea uniting the
approach is that opportunities are the most important determinant of variations in levels
and forms of protest behavior among social groups, spatial units, and historical
periods…‘opportunity’ is seldom defined, but generally refers to constraints, possibilities,
and threats that originate outside the mobilizing group, but affect its chances of
mobilizing and/or realizing its collective interests.” Even in Koopman’s defense of
political opportunity structure, he recognizes that there exists a wide disagreement on its
definition.

**Defining Political Opportunity Structure**

Political opportunity structure is the central concept of the political process
model. It is generally understood to be the structural definition of the political
environment, a way of understanding and quantifying how movement action is defined
by the larger political context. However, this abstract concept is meaningless without
more specific definition. For that reason, and because it is so central in the political
process model, it is important to understand the way theorists have visualized, defined,
and explained the political opportunity structure.

5 Peter K. Eisinger, “The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities,” in *The American Political
The Structural Definition of Political Opportunity Structure

The first school of thought is the structural definition of political opportunity structure. These theorists define political opportunity structure purely in terms of structural factors, and focus upon elements of political opportunity structure that occur mainly within the conventional political system.

Although there are many different factors contributing to the political opportunity structure, there are four major factors that guide the majority of structural thought:

- **The degree of openness of the political system**
- **The stability of alignments of power**
- **Division among ruling elites**
- **Availability of elite support**

**Degree of Openness of the Political System**

Tarrow is one influential social movement theorist who has defined the political opportunity structure most clearly in structural terms. In his 1994 book *Power in Movement*, he names the four dimensions of political opportunity structure in his explanation of increasing political opportunities for collective action. He explains systematically the way that “the most salient changes in opportunity structure” affect action. First, he argues, when access to the political system is opened, even partially, people have more incentive to act. In fact, according to Tarrow, “access to participation is the first important incentive for collective action” because “rational people do not often attack well fortified opponents when opportunities are closed. But gaining partial access
to power provides them with such incentives.”

It is not important that the conventional political system be fully open, just that people have partial access to it in the form of elections or other institutions that allow some level of political power.

Thus, Tarrow articulates the first factor of the four major structural aspects of political opportunity structure. However, he is not alone in his consideration of the degree of openness of the political system. Peter Eisinger considers this factor in his study on protest behavior in American cities as well. He writes of an open system, “where the structure of government is potentially more responsive to an electorate by providing opportunities of formal representation for distinct segments of the population...there exist chances for diverse groups to exercise influence...and influence appears to elicit government action.”

An open system, therefore, can be defined in structural terms of the conventional political system—formal representation, methods of ensuring accountability, ability to influence how representatives act, and as opportunities to hold political power all represent structural aspects of an open political system. According to Eisinger’s research, open political systems in American cities lead to increased opportunity for protest. While an open political system also leads to increased activity within the conventional political system, people will still act outside the political system when they believe that not all of their grievances are being addressed.

Hanspeter Kriesi agrees that the degree of openness of the political system is an important aspect of the political opportunity structure. In fact, he combines the “dominant strategy” (exclusive vs. inclusive system) with the “formal institutional structure” (strong

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9 Ibid.
vs. weak state) as the two structural elements he considers the most important. The degree of openness in the political system defines whether it is exclusive or inclusive, and therefore is important enough to compose half of Kriesi’s definition of political opportunity structure. Kriesi defines the degree of openness of the system as the structures in place that connect challengers to the system with the system itself. His measurements depend upon factors such as procedural integration of challengers (the ease at which dissenting candidates can run for office, for example), formal and informal facilitation of access to the system (i.e. close contact with representatives), and veto power. According to McAdam, the openness of the political system was crucial to the Civil Rights Movement: when African Americans began moving out of the South between 1910 and 1960, they gained access to the political system by voting, and “blacks greatly enhanced their electoral importance.” This new openness of the political system helped African Americans elect Truman, establish a Committee of Civil Rights, and assert the political power to block nominees. This new political power was gained by an opening political system, and was critical in giving African Americans a sense not only of political efficacy, but also a sense that they had substantial options for action. McAdam thus considers the effects of the opening political system as critical to the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement.

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The Stability of Alignments of Power

The second of the four major structural elements of political opportunity structure is the degree of stability of the power alignments. McAdam elaborates on this factor, calling it the “stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity.” Tarrow considers this more generally as “political instability” and argues that “political instability encourages[s] collective action.” Tarrow’s definition of political instability, in a democratic system, is indicated by electoral instability. Electoral instability can take the form of elections that are too close to call and elections that change the ruling party. Tarrow argues, “the changing fortunes of government and opposition parties…create uncertainty among supporters, encourage challengers to try to exercise marginal power and may induce elites to compete for support from outside.”

Piven and Cloward argue that opportunities for poor people are rare, and that instability—both in alignments of powers as well as in electoral politics—helps delegitimize the political system, which allows people to look outside their daily routines and begin to demand change and perceive a new political efficacy that leads them to act.

Divisions among Ruling Elites

Closely related to the degree of political stability are the divisions among ruling elites. Jenkins and Perrow point to this as an enormously important element of political opportunity structure based upon their study of the farmworkers movement. They argue,

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12 Ibid.
“elite divisions provided the opening for reform measures then being pressed…” 

In the case of the farmworkers movement, divisions caused a more “neutral stance toward farmworkers” than was previously the case and even helped allow favorable legislation by using allied groups to take advantage of the divisions by appealing to one side for political support. Within the context of politically divided elites, the movement was more successful at finding elite allies, who helped the movement act both inside and outside of the political system.16

Meyer and Staggenborg agree that divisions are important, asserting that “movement-countermovement conflicts are most likely to emerge and endure in states with divided governmental authority” because “policy advocates on both sides of an issue are likely to encounter a mixture of governmental support and opposition from different levels and branches of government.”17 While this divided governmental authority is most important to Meyer and Staggenborg in the institutional and structural divisions such as branches of government and levels of government, divisions among ruling elites can also be understood in terms of issues like party polarization and electoral competition. The division of elites affects the political opportunity structure because it allows groups to manipulate the competition between elites, as well as taking advantages of openings that result from struggles in elite area of the political and societal system.

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16 Jenkins and Perrow, 271.

The Availability of Elite Support

Related to the division of powerful elites is the availability of elite allies. The recognition of elite support has always been important in social movement theory, and it is similarly significant to the political opportunity structure. Elite allies offer political opportunities by enhancing a group’s political leverage and power.\footnote{McAdam, 43.} When Jenkins and Perrow discuss the divisions among elites, they also focus upon the elite allies who emerged for the farmworker movement in the 1960s. During the successful emergence of the farmworker movement, liberal allies such as Democratic leaders and middle- to upper-class Americans in church groups and other associations around the country assisted the movement by following boycotts and helping raise consciousness on the issue of farmworkers’ rights.\footnote{Jenkins and Perrow.} The farmworkers movement is just one example of the influence that elite allies have on many movements. In holding power to set the agenda, raise consciousness, and represent the movement’s interests in the political system, they change the options for political action. They can change the political opportunity structure by “act[ing] as…guarantors against repression or as acceptable negotiators.”\footnote{See also Tarrow, 88.}

Static vs. Dynamic: Types of Structural Factors

Although these four major elements of political opportunity structure are nearly universal among the structuralist school of thought, these four can be broken down into different perspectives. As Rudbeck and Sigurdssen aptly point out, “conceptions of opportunity structures divide into institutional ones that emphasize the rigid and static dimensions of opportunity and processual ones that stress its dynamic and shifting

\footnote{For more information on the four main elements of political opportunity structure, please see Doug McAdam, 1996.}
aspects. Thus, within the structural position of political opportunity structure, some scholars approach political opportunity structure from a perspective that focuses upon the static, and others are more concerned with the dynamic or volatile.

*Static Elements of Political Opportunity Structure*

As Gamson and Meyer assert, “some aspects of opportunity are deeply embedded political institutions and culture. If they change at all, they do so very gradually over decades or centuries...these aspects of opportunity are essentially fixed and given.” To Gamson and Meyer, these elements are most useful in a comparison of movement activity within different settings, rather than in predicting or explaining social movement emergence.

Other theorists attribute a different significance to the static aspects of political opportunity structure. Kriesi et al., for instance, make a distinction between static and dynamic elements, and argue that because dynamic aspects depend upon the actions of individuals, only the elements of political opportunity structure that occur institutionally or independently of political actors should truly be considered part of political opportunity structure. Kriesi names political institutions (such as elections) and informal procedures (like the political traditions of communication between representatives and constituents) as key elements of the static political opportunity structure because they

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exist outside the behavior of individual actors.⁹³ These two elements are important because each limits collective action and movement activity in its own way.

In considering static political opportunity as independent of political actors, different factors influence the static and institutional structures. Rudbeck argues that scholars in the static perspective “have taken political opportunity to be a function of more formal or informal aspects of a given country’s institutional make-up, comprising ‘all those aspects of a political system that determine movement development independently of the purposive action of the actors involved.’”⁹⁴ For example, as Marquette points out, the systemic change that occurred as a result of the industrialization and economic development of the United States after 1870 (rather than the activity of political actors) was largely responsible for shifting political opportunity. This took the form of things like shifts in the people who had political clout and changes in demographics that affected the political system.⁹⁵ The impact of economic growth on the political opportunity structure only demonstrates the power of factors outside of the control of individuals.

Additionally, theorists concerned with the static structural political opportunities often consider the political opportunity structure to be “open” or “extending.” They argue that certain structural conditions create an open political opportunity structure that necessarily encourages movement activity and emergence. These conditions include “levels of access to institutional participation [that] have begun to open up” and “political alignments [that] are in disarray.”⁹⁶ According to this theory, political

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⁹⁴ Rudbeck and Sigurðsson, p.6.


opportunity structure encourages movement emergence only when its factors can be considered open.

**Dynamic Elements of Political Opportunity Structure**

Several ideas distinguish the dynamic or volatile side of political opportunity structure from the static perspective. Gamson and Meyer describe the dynamic as “shifting with events, policies, and political actors...and at the heart of the explanations of mobilization and demobilization that emphasize the interaction between movement strategy and the opening and closing of those oft cited windows of opportunity.”27 Three main features characterize the dynamic perspective. First, political opportunity can be considered dynamic because it depends upon the actions of individuals to influence the political opportunity structure. Second, there is the idea that social movements—their organizations and activists—actually control the political opportunity structure. And finally, the dynamic perspective regards a shifting political opportunity structure as more important than a so-called open structure.

Aspects of political opportunity structure such as elite divisions and allies are dynamic and volatile simply because they depend upon the actions of individuals (elites) within the system. When Georgia Duerst-Lahti discusses the political opportunity structure that helped empower the Women’s Movement, she does so in terms of politicians and other elites whose support helped legitimize the movement and put its issues on the political and social agenda.28 Similarly, Johnson’s study of the political opportunity structure facing the disabled movement emphasizes the role of individual elites—in this case supportive members of the media were important—in changing the opportunities and facilitating the movement.29 Therefore, political opportunity structure can be shaped by political actors and activists. Compared to the static focus on institutions, this perspective of a political opportunity structure that varies according to individuals is unpredictable, dynamic, and volatile.

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27 Gamson and Meyer, 277.
Political opportunity structure is dynamic because it is tied to the actions of individuals; it can also be considered dynamic because of the way it can be controlled by movements, activists, and organizations. Tarrow describes the way “early risers” can set an example of activity, as well as expose the vulnerability of the status quo. He names those women who had been involved in the civil rights movement as early risers for the 1960s women’s movement, as they triggered the movement activity. He also points to innovative action, arguing that “each new form of action finds authorities unprepared...creating new opportunities and reaching new publics.”\textsuperscript{30} Tarrow points, for example, to the new uses of nonviolence during the Civil Rights Movement to prove that “movements create opportunities for themselves or others. They do this by diffusing collective action through social networks and by forming coalitions of social actors, by creating political space for kindred movements and countermovements, and by creating incentives for elites to respond. This theory can be distinguished from resource-mobilization even when it considers these activists as resources, because it is always concerned with political factors. Challengers who seize and make political opportunities are the catalysts for the cycles of protest and reform that break out periodically.”\textsuperscript{31} In Tarrow’s description of cycles of protest movement interaction is based upon shifting and dynamic political opportunity structure.

Meyer and Staggenborg agree that movements have the ability to affect the political opportunity structure. They argue that “social movements can influence policy, alter political alignments, and raise the public profile and salience of particular issues. Movements can also create collective action frames, demonstrate the efficacy of various

\textsuperscript{30} Tarrow, 97, 180.
\textsuperscript{31} Tarrow, 82.
means of political action, and draw media attention...”32 These are all examples of the ways that movements can shift the variables of political opportunity structure in order to create a more accessible context.

Aminzade and McAdam illustrate another way that movements can change the political opportunity structure, namely by “transforming events” and “small victories” that change consciousness and create the emotions necessary for mobilization. They cite the Montgomery Bus Boycott as a watershed moment that, after being effectively exploited by the Civil Rights Movement, changed the political efficacy (or cognitive liberation) and thus political opportunity structure for the movement. The success of the boycott revealed the space for action that the movement had access to, and thus encouraged more participation.33 These examples all illustrate the fact that, “relevant variations in opportunity result primarily from the interaction of social movements with political actors and institutions.”34 As a result of these interactions, political opportunity can be considered dynamic and volatile.

The final characteristic of the dynamic side of political opportunity structure is its concern with the change in structure rather than simply the openness of the political opportunity structure. One key element of this is the theory that closing political conditions (i.e. repression) may actually encourage collective action. Goldstone and Tilly’s work elucidates this point, noting that the basic model of expanding opportunity leading to expanding action is oversimplified and inaccurate. They point to numerous empirical studies in which “action, mobilization, and success were not simply

32 Meyer and Staggenborg, 1634.
34 Koopmans, 96.
proportional to opportunity.” In order to explain this trend, they distinguish opportunity from threat, which they define as “an independent factor whose dynamics greatly influence how popular groups and the state act in a variety of conflict situations.” Threats such as the threat of losing an election or being repressed sometimes act as a motivating factor, and therefore can be considered part of political opportunity structure. Goldstein and Tilly therefore argue that the model of political opportunity structure must be studied with more complexity, given the distinction between opportunity and threat.35

Finally, Meyer and Staggenborg make the strong point that “for some challengers, increased political openness enhances prospects for mobilization, while other movements seem to respond more to threat than opportunity.”36 Lichbach’s study on state repression offers similar results: “repression can thus produce mixed effects on strife: consistent government accommodative and repressive policies reduce dissent while inconsistent policies increase it.”37 According the Lichbach it is not the substance of policies regarding dissent, but the consistency of those policies that influences social movement activity. By inconsistent policies, Lichbach is referring to government activity that varies in its reaction to and effect on protest activity. Because it is true that some movements mobilize when faced with increased repression rather than increasingly open political opportunity structure, it seems clear that the dynamic, changing nature of opportunities may be more important than the substance of those changes.

36 Meyer and Staggenborg, 1634.
For these three reasons—the fact that political opportunity structure changes according to political actors, that it can be manipulated by movements, and that it is more significant in the fact that it changes than in the changes it makes—one can consider political opportunity structure from a dynamic as well as a static position. The combination of static and dynamic dimensions composes the structural side of the definition of political opportunity structure, as Rudbeck and Sigurdsson describe it: “shifting political opportunities to a considerable degree determine the emergence of popular contention and the institutional aspects of opportunity constrain its form, goal, and strategy.”38

However, when political opportunity structure is considered in a combination of static and dynamic ways, there is an ambiguous line between the political process model and other social movement theories. The dynamic perspective, which accounts for human agency and the creation of opportunity, is difficult to distinguish from resource-mobilization theory, which argues that emergence depends upon an increase in resources and organizational capacity. One such resource is elite support, which is also considered important by scholars of political opportunity structure. This raises the question of how specifically to make a distinction between political process model—specifically political opportunity structure—and other models, most notably the resource-mobilization model. That distinction lies in the emphasis of political opportunity structure on politics—political structure and the broader political context. Political opportunity structure might account for resources, and the dynamic perspective might be concerned with human agency, but these things are important to

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38 Rudbeck and Sigurdsson, p.7.
this school of thought simply because they are factors that compose a broad political context in which movements emerge.

The Sociocultural Definition of Political Opportunity Structure

Critics of the structural perspective of political opportunity structure argue that the structural bias limits the accuracy of the model. Morris points to the structural bias as causing the theory of political process model to “slight the role that human agency plays in social movements.”39 Goodwin and Jasper echo that criticism, arguing that the structural bias allows misinterpretation of cultural and social factors.40 The importance of social elements of political opportunity structure cannot be overstated. In order to clarify this, theorists draw attention to several types of opportunity outside the structural political opportunity structure. It notes the importance of opportunities outside the narrow definition of political opportunity structure, it acknowledges the fact that political change often occurs as a result of societal or cultural change, and it points to the psychological question of perception as a critically important dimension in the discussion of political opportunity structure. While these factors might point to theory outside of the political process model entirely, this is not the case. Scholars of this school of thought can be considered part of the political process model because they are concerned with the political opportunity structure, and use political and structural language. However, the way that they define political opportunity structure with regards to factors outside structure distinguishes the sociocultural scholars as a different school of thought within the same paradigm.

40 Goodwin and Jasper, 36.
Sociocultural theorists believe that social and cultural opportunity is equally important to political opportunity. Gamson and Meyer argue, “opportunity has a strong cultural component and we miss something important when we limit our attention to variance in political institutions and the relationships among political actors.” They name societal legitimacy, class consciousness, national mood, public discourse, and media frames as factors of cultural opportunity affecting movement emergence.41

Similarly, Smith makes a distinction between sociocultural opportunity and political opportunity, referring to the former as “mobilizing opportunity,” arguing that both “directly affect the possibilities for the aggregation of interests or the forming of associations, organizations, and alliances that might influence individuals’ political views and mobilize collective political action.” For Smith, the factors that define sociocultural opportunity include the strength of networks, salience of social and economic hierarchies, association, attitudes and behaviors.42

McAdam goes so far as to identify four dimensions of sociocultural opportunity structure parallel to that of political opportunity. These are: “the dramatization of a glaring contradiction between a highly salient cultural value and conventional social process; suddenly imposed grievances; dramatizations of a system’s vulnerability or illegitimacy; and the availability of an innovative ‘master frame’ within which subsequent challengers can map their own grievances and demands.”43 These four factors are important not only in the way they affect consciousness and other sociocultural elements, but also in the fact that they represent sociocultural opportunities

41 Gamson and Mayer.
for political activity. By manipulating perceptions of legitimacy, grievances, social norms, and framing, these sociocultural activities change the way that people see the broader system and therefore become politically significant.

**Sociocultural Causes of Political Opportunity**

Not only does the cultural perspective of political opportunity structure demonstrate that cultural and social opportunities are important in their own right, it also illustrates the way that they affect the more structural political opportunities. Piven and Cloward use the case study of the poor to attribute changes in the political opportunity structure to broader changes in society and the social system, asserting “since periods of profound social dislocations are infrequent, so too are opportunities for protest among the lower classes.”

Similarly, McAdam et al., in their integration of different ideas, discuss the way that political opportunity structure and cultural factors are fundamentally interrelated and should therefore be considered as parts of one theory. This is true because it is impossible for structure to exist without sociocultural factors. Structures are created based upon sociocultural factors, and they change according to sociocultural changes. The structural and sociocultural are irrevocably connected at their very base.

Rucht agrees with the importance of sociocultural factors, arguing that opportunities are “socially constructed in two ways: their perception depends on the process of framing and interpretation which eventually may lead to a ‘cognitive

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liberation,’ and opportunities may themselves become targets of social movements, and undergo processes of strategic intervention.”

As Rucht points out, in addition to the influence of cultural and social factors in political opportunity structure, the cultural school of thought addresses the important issue of perception. Tarrow, when considering the importance of political opportunity, emphasizes the idea of perception, asking “doesn’t a political opportunity have to be perceived in order to affect an actor’s behavior?” In Kurzman’s study of the Iranian Revolution, he argues that actual opportunity structure might not be as important as perceived opportunity. He describes the way that “Iranians seem to have based their assessment of the opportunities for protest on the perceived strength of the opposition.” What explained the increasing activity in the 1970s was perception of opportunity: “Iranians continued to recognize and fear the state’s coercive powers. However, they felt that these powers were insignificant compared with the strength of the revolutionary movement.” The Iranian Revolution demonstrates the ability of perceptions of political opportunity to cause activity, which in turn shifts the political opportunity structure.

Other scholars support this assertion. Johnson argues that political efficacy—or perception of favorable opportunity structure—was critical in the emergence of the Disabled Movement. Similarly, McAdam argues that the experience of the Civil Rights Movement illustrates that “favorable shifts in political opportunities [must] be defined as such by a large enough group of people to facilitate collective protest,” a process that

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46 Rucht, p. 190.
McAdam refers to as “cognitive liberation.” This cognitive liberation is the belief that protest is right, and that it has a reasonable chance of success. It represents one form of perception of opportunity, which is arguably equally important to the actual existence of such opportunity. Tarrow agrees, arguing that the changing political opportunity structure exposes the vulnerability of the status quo, which changes the expectation of success. This focus upon perception is combined with sociocultural opportunity and its effect on political opportunity to compose the sociocultural school of thought in political opportunity structure.

**Structural + Cultural: Putting the Political Process Model Together**

Some scholars believe that the sociocultural school of thought saves the political process model from its structural bias. In fact, that is the direction that much of the most recent scholarship has taken. Although the central tenet of the model is the structurally-based political opportunity structure, the cultural element of perception of opportunities and interrelation of different opportunities is also stressed. Although the political opportunity structure is the central tenet of the model, in accounting for the forces outside the conventional political system, the composition of structural and cultural combines changes in the political environment with the ability of movements to control and manipulate these shifts.

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49 McAdam (1982), 49.
50 Tarrow (1994), 86.
51 Koopman; McAdam et al. 2005.
METHODOLOGY

Case Selection

In this paper, I will use a study of the anti-Iraq War Movement as a way to illustrate the way political opportunity structure affects movement emergence, and to test my own hypothesis of what composes political opportunity structure. There are several potential problems with a focus upon this movement. First, the fact that the movement, like the war, continues even today might make it difficult to evaluate with any historical perspective. Also, the fact that it is so recent means that there is a lack of academic research and analysis of the movement. On the other hand, the role of the Anti-Iraq War movement within the context of the peace movement provides historical precedent that allows a close examination and comparative study of this movement.

Hypotheses

In my literature review, I summarized the research surrounding the political opportunity structure. I discussed both the structural and socio-cultural factors that scholars have considered, and distinguished between their static and dynamic elements. My review reveals the fact that the research on the subject is limited and should be studied more closely. To that end, in my study of the anti-Iraq War Movement, I will attempt to clarify the importance of several elements of political opportunity structure. Therefore, I will test several hypotheses:
Structural:
Changing level of access to conventional political system → social movement emergence

Socio-cultural:
Cognitive liberation (or political efficacy) → social movement emergence

New hypothesis:
Abandonment/acts of complicity by expected elite allies → social movement emergence

In testing these hypotheses, I intend to demonstrate that, although political opportunity structure is composed of several important elements, scholars have yet to account for each. Each of these hypotheses can be considered to be part of the definition of political opportunity structure. The changing level of access to the conventional political system is central to the structural school of thought and a key facet of the theories of Tarrow, Eisinger, and other structural theorists. Cognitive liberation is also central to the definition of political opportunity structure, especially as part of the socio-cultural school of thought and elaborated by McAdam, Kurzman, and Rucht. The last hypothesis has been largely neglected by scholars. Theory surrounding the role of elites has been limited to several simple relationships:

The support of elite allies →

Open POS → Social movement emergence

Divisions among elites →
Instead of focusing upon this type of supportive relationship between elites and movements, my hypothesis focuses upon the abandonment of expected elite allies. Although this has been neglected by scholars, the hypothesis seems to be a reasonable one. When movements or actors with grievances expect the support of elite allies, their abandonment or complicity in those grievances represents not only the abandonment of the individual elites, but also the abandonment of the political system as a whole. In my study of the anti-Iraq War movement I expect to find that this abandonment makes individuals lose faith in the conventional political system and encourages them to act outside of it.

**Definition of Concepts**

For the purposes of this paper, I will define the key terms in the following ways:

*By the conventional political system*, I mean the institutions, policies, and spaces for action that are sponsored and regulated by the government. This includes electoral politics, laws, and the judicial system. *Degree of openness of the political system* refers to the ability to make change through actions within the conventional political system. *Cognitive liberation* is the perception that protest against grievances is the correct course of action and that it has a reasonable chance of success. *Political elites* are the individuals who hold political power; that is, those with a high degree of access to the political system and who have a greater chance of making change. A *social movement* in this study will be understood as the coordinated activities of individuals in order to make change outside of the conventional political system.
Measurement of Variables

The hypotheses I have outlined above are difficult to measure consistently and accurately. I will depend upon newspaper accounts, polls, and interviews of members and leaders of anti-Iraq War Movement organizations.

In order to test my first hypothesis, that changing levels of access to the conventional political system causes increasing social movement activity, I will measure several factors. I will use traditional measurements of political participation such as electoral politics. More importantly, I will analyze to what extent electoral politics could provide potential antiwar activist with access to the conventional political system. I will discuss whether the congressional elections of 2002 or the presidential primaries of 2004 constituted changing access to the conventional political system.

In order to measure my second hypothesis, I will need to measure the level of political efficacy. To do so, I will rely almost entirely on interviews, statements by activists, and polls in a order to evaluate how successful they expected the movement to be. Because political efficacy is closely related to the perception of political opportunity, I will explore the effects of factors such as September 11, 2001 and national and international support (often expressed and networked through use of the internet) on the sense of political efficacy among movement organizers and members. I will also discuss the role of political elites in creating or destroying a sense of efficacy.

In measuring my third hypothesis, I will have to examine closely the actions of the most important expected elite ally against the war-- the Democratic Party. To measure any complicity in the Iraq War effort by Democrats, I will examine their reaction to the events leading up to the war, as well as the positions that key Democratic leaders took.
Specifically, I will discuss the implications of Congress’ passage of the Authorization of Use of Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002, the approval of the presidential war budget in March of 2003, and other acts that demonstrated a lack of commitment to the anti-war cause. I will measure the response to these and other acts, while being careful to consider the role of elites in a suitably complex and nuanced manner.

**Alternative Conclusions**

Although the Political-Process Model of social movement theory is an important theory, it is by no means the only one. Therefore, in this study of the anti-Iraq War Movement, it is important to consider factors outside the realm of political opportunity structure.

In the Classical Model of social movement theory, this is the general model of causation:

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\text{Societal strain} \rightarrow \text{Individual frustration, anxiety, discontent} \rightarrow \text{Mass protest}
\]

There is some difficulty in applying this model to the case of the antiwar movement for several reasons. Most importantly, classical theory considers participation in a protest movement as an outlet for individual psychological strain rather than a rational strategy for real political or societal change. While there are certainly apolitical elements of the antiwar movement, it emerged from a unique political context, and cannot be considered separately from those conditions.

Also, another aspect of classical theory is the idea that *suddenly imposed grievances* are important as a catalyst for protest activity. In this case, since the antiwar movement began before the war itself, it is not accurate to consider the war a *suddenly*
imposed grievance that catalyzed the movement. The threat of war was a catalyzing factor, but it was imposed over many months rather than suddenly. For these reasons, it is problematic to use the classical model to explain the antiwar movement.\(^{52}\)

Several elements of the resource-mobilization theory make it important to consider in a study of the antiwar movement. First, it is clear that there was in fact, an aggregation of resources before the emergence of the movement. These resources took two main forms, internet organization and international support.

The internet was critically important to the antiwar movement. Through internet organizations like MoveOn.org and TrueMajority, the movement mobilized thousands of people in the United States, collected petitions, organized letter-writing campaigns, educated people on the war, and spread the word about national protests and other events. The value of this resource to the antiwar movement can not be overstated. And, although the internet has been used before in movement organization (namely in the anti-globalization movement) it has never been used by an antiwar movement, and it has never been used to such an extent or with such success.

The second resource, international support, was also important in the movement. In considering the efforts in the United States as part of a global struggle against war, the overwhelming international support gave the movement higher morale and a greater sense of efficacy.

Both of these resources were critical in the emergence of the antiwar movement in the United States. Unfortunately, time and space prevent this thesis from considering elements of the resource mobilization theory in the study of the Iraq antiwar movement. However, more study of the movement in terms of its resources and using the resource-
mobilization model can only add to the understanding both of this movement and of the theory itself.

**Potential Problems of a One Case Study**

There are several reasons for the use of case studies in a study of social movement theory. Only case studies provide empirical evidence of trends, connections, and causal relationships. However, as this essay uses only one case, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of a one-case study. Most importantly, when using only one case, it is difficult to create generalized statements to apply to other cases. Instead, as this case study has attempted to do, one-case studies are suitable to reveal weaknesses in theory and encourage scholarship on specific issues. This study, for example, will illustrate the complexity of political opportunity structure and point to one particular area in which those theories of political opportunity structure are incomplete.
BACKGROUND

United States-Iraq Relations

The United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 was part of a troubled and turbulent history between the two countries. That history, like the recent history of Iraq itself, has been defined by conflict. At the time that Iraq invaded Iran in 1980, the United States had no official ties to Iraq and during the 1980-1984 Iran-Iraq War, the United States remained officially neutral. However, driven by its distrust of Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini and its belief that an Iranian victory would not serve US interests in the Middle East, in 1982 the United States began supporting Iraq in a variety of unofficial ways. The State Department, for example, removed Iraq from a list of countries supporting international terrorist groups as the two countries restored formal relations. More significantly, the United States supplied Iraq with intelligence and military support, as well as overlooking (for two years) its documented and frequent use of chemical warfare against Iran.53

The United States support of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War continued through the 1980s despite US worries about Iraq’s human rights violations. In fact, in October of 1989 President George H. W. Bush signed National Security Directive 26, which called for a commitment to improved relations between Iraq and the United States, as well as ”economic and political incentives” to achieve the objectives of “moderating” Iraqi behavior and increasing U.S. influence.”54

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Given this relationship, it is not surprising that it has been speculated by some that Saddam Hussein expected United States support when he invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Instead, not only did the UN Security Council declare that Iraq’s annexation of Kuwait was “null and void,” but also American President George H. W. Bush called the invasion “a naked act of aggression.”

After Iraq ignored the UN’s orders to withdraw its troops, the United States led a coalition of twenty-eight countries in Operation Desert Storm, a UN-approved attack on Iraq. After one month of air strikes followed by only a few days of land war, Saddam Hussein withdrew Iraqi forces from Kuwait. On February 28, 1991, President George H. W. Bush declared victory in the Gulf War.

After the Gulf War, the history of Iraq was shaped by economic sanctions. Days after the invasion of Kuwait, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 661, which imposed strict economic sanctions on Iraq. These sanctions created a complete trade embargo to and from Iraq, excepting humanitarian supplies. Although some of these sanctions lasted more than ten years, over time they became increasingly relaxed. The Oil-for-Food program eventually replaced most of the sanctions, allowing Iraq to sell a certain amount of oil and use the profits to purchase food and humanitarian supplies. The influence of the economic sanctions on Iraq’s history can not be overstated.

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According to the Coalition Against Sanctions in Iraq (CASI), and UN humanitarian experts:

The sanctions have had an extremely negative impact on the Iraqi population ... As a result of the sanctions regime and the general impoverishment of the Iraqi society, we decimated what used to be a dynamic and active middle class. ... contributed [to] a general degradation of the humanitarian situation ... the sanctions regime was a tool that allowed the regime to create an increased dependency level of the Iraqi population vis a vis the state apparatus.59

Middle East analyst Gerald Butt agrees, “Iraq is bankrupt, its economy and infrastructure shattered by years of economic sanctions imposed by the United Nations.”60 Since 1991, therefore, the relationship between the United States and Iraq has been shaped by violence, destructive sanctions, and US opposition to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. The opposition to Hussein was based not only upon his invasion of Kuwait, but also the brutality of his regime. According to Butt, “in attempts to suppress the Kurds, [Hussein] has systematically used chemical weapons. And in putting down a rebellion of Shi’ia in the south he has razed towns to the ground and drained marshland… Saddam is feared as a vicious dictator who threatens the security of the Gulf region as a whole.”61 This fear only grew around the turn of the century, as the United States’ interest in a stable Middle East increased along with oil prices and the threat of terrorism.

61 Ibid.
The 2003 Iraq War was justified in a variety of ways. In the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002, Congress approved the use of force based upon several different arguments. These arguments were:

- “Iraq had large stockpiles of chemical weapons and a large scale biological weapons program” and had the ability and willingness to produce nuclear weapons
- Iraqi ownership of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) threatened US interests and security and international peace and security
- Iraq brutally repressed its own population
- The Iraqi regime was capable and willing to use WMD against its own civilians
- The Iraqi regime “demonstrated its continuing hostility toward, and willingness to attack, the United States” (examples include the assassination attempt of President H. W. Bush and the firing on US planes enforcing no-fly zones)
- Al Qaida members were in Iraq
- Iraq harbors and supports terrorist organizations

The last two of these rationales reflects the broader justification for war that was accepted by many Americans. The Resolution states,

The attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001 underscored the gravity of the threat posed by the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by international terrorist organization…the United States is determined to prosecute the war on terrorism and Iraq’s ongoing support for international terrorist groups combined with its development of weapons of mass destruction…make clear that it is in the national security interests of the United States and in furtherance of the war on terrorism that all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions be enforced.

Thus, the Resolution made a connection between Iraq and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks that was intended to justify the Iraq War in terms of the larger “War on Terror” that the United States had declared. This connection appealed to the people of the United States. According to Gallup Polls, in 2003 57% of Americans polled believed that the war in Iraq to be part of the “war on terrorism that began on September 11, 2001,

63 Ibid.
and only 41% considered it a separate military action.64 Further, in August of 2002, 53% of adult Americans said that they believed that Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11th terrorist attacks, compared to 34% who disagreed.65

According to a NOP World Survey poll performed for the BBC, 28% of Americans said the main reason for the Iraq War was to prevent further acts of terrorism like September 11, and a further 33% believed it was to eliminate Iraq’s WMDs. 66

Many of the beliefs of the American people were based on the statements and rhetoric that the President used after September 11, 2001. In a March 2003 speech in which he threatened war in Iraq, Bush justified military action, arguing that intelligence proved that there was “no doubt that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised…it has a deep hatred of America and our friends. And it has aided, trained, and harbored terrorists, including operatives of al Qaeda.”67 By connecting Iraq with the war on terrorism, Bush was able to garner public and legal support for attacking Iraq. His speech continued, “the United States of America has the sovereign authority to use force in assuring its own national security… this is not a question of authority, it is a question of will.”68

Just two days later, President George W. Bush exercised his authority and demonstrated his will when he began airstrikes on Iraq. The war initially appeared to be

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64 By June, 2005, the number of Americans who considered the war in Iraq as part of the war on terrorism had dropped to 47%.
65 Again, by October, 2003 these numbers had changed. 42% believed Hussein personally involved, while 53% did not.
Ibid.
68 Ibid.
going well. On April 9, 2003, United States forces stormed Baghdad and tore down a statue of Saddam Hussein. On May 1, 2003, Bush gave a speech declaring the end to major military operations while standing under a banner reading “Mission Accomplished.” Not until December 13, 2003 was Hussein captured, hiding in a hole in the ground. Meanwhile, although major military operations were finished, insurgents waged a guerrilla war against the occupying United States troops. The war continues today. As of March 31, 2006, more than 2300 American troops have died, nearly 2200 of which occurred after Bush’s “Mission Accomplished” speech.69 Meanwhile, as of March 31, 2006, between 33,000 and 38,000 Iraqis have been killed in the war.70

In order to pay for Operation Iraqi Freedom, Congress approved the President’s wartime budget, which allotted $75 billion to military spending.71 This was approved shortly after the start of the war. By March 2006, estimates of the financial cost of the war in Iraq based upon congressional appropriations were above $250,000,000,000.72

Dissent

Large-scale protest predated the war in Iraq. The movement had emerged on a national scale by October 2002. Although there were large protests before this date, it was in October that the movement became nationally organized and consistently active, at least partially in response to the congressional vote on the resolution authorizing the war. For the five months between October 2002 and March 2003, the movement was concerned with preventing the war. Although it failed in this respect, many organizers

considered the sheer size of the initial movement a success: “the new antiwar groups take pride in the size of the crowds they have been able to mobilize. They have grown a protest movement the size of which it took Vietnam-era organizers four years to build—this time without a draft and even before the first body bags might shock people into the streets…”

The Anti-Iraq war thus emerged as a mass, global movement based upon large scale demonstrations—some as large as ten thousand strong. These demonstrations were organized by a few main peace groups, such as United for Peace and Justice, Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (ANSWER), Not In Our Name (NION), and Win Without War. Each of these groups was actually an umbrella organization, or coalition of numerous local groups. These coalitions were responsible for the mobilization of the large-scale demonstrations, candlelight vigils, petitions and other campaigns against war. Along with groups like MoveOn.org, they used the internet as a new tool and strategy to educate and mobilize an enormous number of Americans.

After the beginning of the war, the movement continued, but struggled to adjust to a new goal. Protests continued, along with more conventional political strategies. After a large protest in September 2005, there has been continuing small-scale but highly publicized efforts by activist Cindy Sheehan, as well as continued petition and email campaigns by organizations like MoveOn.org. As of March 2006, the movement continues in some forms, but lacks a coherent form in facing the violent insurgency in Iraq, Republican control over both the Presidency and Congress, and public opinion that is unsure as to what course should be followed in Iraq.

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Political Opportunity Structure: Considering Access to the Political System

*Did the degree of access to the conventional political system influence the Anti-Iraq War Movement?*

One of the most significant indicators of the level of access to the conventional political system is the electoral process. In a democratic system such as the United States, elections provide the most tangible access to the political system and are designed to do so. Many scholars have considered elections as an accurate indicator of access to the political system.\(^74\)

For those Americans who were interested in avoiding the war in Iraq, two elections were timely in opposition to the Iraq War. First, the congressional elections of November, 2002 provided an important opportunity for access to the conventional political system. Going into the elections, the Democrats held a slim majority in the Senate, holding 50 seats to 49 Republicans and one Independent. On the other hand, Republicans controlled the House with 221 seats compared to 207 Democrats and one Independent. In what was considered a significant Republican victory, the GOP gained control of the Senate and increased their majority in the House. Key elections included the defeat of Sen. Max Cleland (D-GA) by Saxby Chambliss (R) in a campaign that saw Chambliss’s supporters using images of Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden to suggest that Cleland was a liability to homeland security. Considering the Republican control of the executive branch as well, the election results took away the Democrats’ “only existing power base in Washington and much of the leverage they have had to

\(^{74}\) Tarrow, 1994; Kriesi, 1996; McAdam 1982.
block or reshape Bush initiatives...without control of committees and the Senate agenda, their powers [were] sharply curtailed.”

The second election that influenced the Anti-Iraq War Movement was the presidential election in 2004, including the primary elections. By the time the war began in March, 2003, the Democratic candidates were fully involved in their campaign for the nomination. And given its timeliness, the Iraq War played a central role in the campaign. After a strong beginning by Vermont Governor Howard Dean—a strongly anti-Iraq War candidate—Massachusetts Senator John Kerry ultimately won the nomination after riding the momentum of a strong finish in both the Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary. Kerry’s position on the war was more complex than that of Dean; he voted in favor of Joint Resolution 144 to authorize the use of force in Iraq, but argued that President Bush handled the war wrong. A Vietnam War hero who then protested against the war, Kerry instead advocated patience, careful planning, and preferably multilateralism. After winning the nomination, Kerry eventually lost in the general election as Bush won both the popular and electoral votes.

Given that both of these elections occurred in the midst of the Anti-Iraq War movement, this section will analyze their importance in the political opportunity structure from which the antiwar movement emerged. In order to do so, I will follow the methods employed by Tarrow, Kriesi, and other scholars, that uses elections as an indicator of access to the conventional political system. To do so, I will speak broadly to their ability to affect the level of access to the political system, and ask the following questions about both elections:

--Did the election provide access to the conventional political system?
-Did the platforms of candidates represent the views of antiwar activists?
-Did the election results constitute a change in degree of access to the conventional political system? Did access increase? Decrease?

In the case of the congressional elections, it is relatively simple to measure the degree to which candidates represented the views of antiwar activists. Only a month before, Congress had passed Joint Resolution 144 which authorized the president to use force in Iraq. Although even some proponents of this resolution spoke out against the choice of war, their vote of approval for the resolution illustrates an acceptance of the war that did not represent the views of antiwar activists.

Therefore, in order to represent their political interests, antiwar activists would have needed to elect candidates who were against the war. At first glance that might seem to be the case, as Senators Carnahan, Cleland, and Hutchinson—all of whom voted in support of the resolution—were all defeated. However, in the case of Carnahan and Cleland the candidates who replaced them were both Republicans who supported the war. Similarly, although Hutchinson was replaced by Democrat Mark Pryor, Pryor made it clear that he was anything but antiwar, going so far as to depict himself in army fatigues in campaign videos.76

Similarly, most of the Democratic incumbents who won their elections voted in favor of the resolution. Of ten total races in which a Democratic incumbent was victorious, only three Senators had voted against the resolution—Senators Durbin (D-IL), Levin (D-MI), and Reed (D-RI). The other seven victorious Democratic incumbents had

all voted in support of the resolution. These included Senators Johnson (D-SD), Landrieu (D-LA), and Baucus (D-MT), all of whom were considered to be facing “tough reelection campaigns.” In the Minnesota race, incumbent Paul Wellstone was considered an “endangered incumbent coming out against the resolution…” in large part because his opposition Republican Norm Coleman’s campaign was based upon Wellstone’s opposition to the war. The race was extremely tight before Wellstone’s death shortly before the election. Coleman was victorious in the election against Wellstone’s last-minute replacement Walter Mondale, and thus antiwar activists failed to maintain their representation in Minnesota. Therefore, in a total of thirty-four Senate elections in 2002, only three Senators were elected who opposed the Iraq War.

As the 2002 case shows, elections—arguably the most important tool that the people have to represent their interests—are at best a flawed way to access the political system in the United States. Shier agrees, pointing to several important problems with the system. He argues not only that “campaign spending…is out of control and increases corruption” but also that “the explosion of spending inhibits the accountability of our electoral system.” Shier’s argument exposes the limits of elections as an access to the political system or political power. In the 2002 Congressional elections, these limits are clear in the results—exactly who is elected. In the thirty-four Senate races, twenty-seven included an incumbent. In all but three of those elections (Arkansas, Georgia, Missouri)

80 Steven E. Shier, You Call This an Election? (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 132.
the incumbent won the election. Similarly, in 435 races for the House, only six times did
a non-incumbent beat the incumbent (Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, New Mexico, New
York, and Texas).\textsuperscript{81}

Thus, as these races show, Congressional elections are institutionalized in a way
that makes it unlikely that a non-incumbent will win an election. This suggests that the
elections allow only an unequal representation that limits the access to the political
system for those who support candidates or platforms outside the status-quo. In the case
of the 2002 Congressional elections, this translated to a failure of the elections to provide
those who were opposed to war with increased access to the conventional political
system.

The presidential election of 2004 is perhaps a more simple case to analyze the
level of access to the political system, and it is just as significant. Key Democrats were
identified as candidates as early as 2002, at which time their statements and platforms
became significant for activists. As the Democratic primary was a lengthy and widely-
observed process, it allowed each candidate to fully elucidate his views on the war. It is
therefore relatively simple to measure the level to which the presidential candidates
represented the views of those Americans who opposed the war.

Early in the campaign—in May 2003—a debate occurred among Democratic
candidates for the nomination. This early debate gave the candidates the opportunity to
discuss the Iraq War. Vermont Governor Howard Dean, the early frontrunner, used the
opportunity of the debate to criticize the war, saying:

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{81} \url{http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2002/} accessed 12 March 2006.
I think this was the wrong war at the wrong time because we have set a new policy of preventive war in this country, and I think that was the wrong thing to do because sooner or later we're going to see another country copy the United States, and sooner or later we're going to have to deal with the fact that there may well be a Shia fundamentalist regime set up in Iraq which will be a greater danger to the United States than Iraq is.\textsuperscript{82}

Massachusetts Senator John Kerry—the eventual winner of the nomination—expressed a more complex view of the war. Standing by his decision to support the Joint Resolution Authorizing the Use of Force Against Iraq in October of the previous year, Kerry said, “I would have preferred if we had given diplomacy a greater opportunity, but I think it was the right decision to disarm Saddam Hussein, and when the president made the decision, I supported him, and I support the fact that we did disarm him.”\textsuperscript{83} Kerry thus represented the view that while President Bush was right to go to war, he was wrong in the way that he handled the war.

Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman expressed yet another opinion of the war in Iraq. He argued that the war was right, saying:

We did the right thing, and we gave him 12 years and tried everything short of war to get him to keep the promises he made to disarm at the end of the Gulf War. We did the right thing in fighting this fight, and the American people will be safer as a result of it. And incidentally, no Democrat will be elected president in 2004 who is not strong on defense, and this war was a test of that strength.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{82}Howard Dean, Democratic Presidential Debate. Drayton Hall, Columbia, South Carolina, 3 May 2003, 19 Mar. 2006, \url{http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A16686-2003May5}.


In the continuing campaign, Lieberman was joined by John Edwards and Rep. Richard Gephardt, both of whom expressed their support for the war. Kerry represented the middle of the spectrum, while on the other end of the spectrum were Dean, as well as less “mainstream” candidates such as Sen. Bob Graham, Al Sharpton, Carol Moseley Braun, and Rep. Dennis Kucinich. Kucinich, for one, remained an outspoken critic of the war from the beginning of the campaign, calling the war “illegal” and criticizing Democratic support for it, saying “it is not logical to say you oppose the war and once the war started, you support it.”

Thus, the 2004 Democratic presidential primary included several candidates who represented a strong antiwar platform. In its candidates, it therefore offered access to the political system in the possibility of nominating an antiwar candidate to face President Bush in the election.

However, in practice it was difficult for candidates to maintain their opposition to the war and the perception of their “electibility” throughout the campaign. One of the main reasons for the general hesitation to express opposition was public opinion on the matter. According to polls conducted by the Democracy Corps in October 2003, not only did Democrats say that their perfect candidate was “someone with a more nuanced position on Iraq than simply opposition from Day One” but also that electibility was a more important quality than standing up for core “Democratic values.”

Ultimately, this public concern with “electibility” seemed to define the results of the Democratic primary. In spite of Dean’s strong numbers as late as mid-January 2004,

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by the end of February he had dropped out of the race, and Kerry’s more moderate campaign seemed all but destined for victory. In his speech accepting the nomination, Kerry set the tone for his campaign, referring several times to the war, but never in a direct way. He said, “I will be a commander in chief who will never mislead us into war” and therefore blamed President Bush for mishandling the war without taking a strong stand against it.

As the above evidence demonstrates, neither the 2002 Congressional election nor Democratic presidential primary elections of 2004 succeeded in giving antiwar activists a higher degree of access to the conventional political system. In both cases the election results brought victory to candidates who failed to represent a strong antiwar platform.

This evidence is important because it suggests that not only are elections at best an imperfect tool for accessing the full conventional political system, but also it proves that in this case two different elections failed to increase the level of access to the political system of the antiwar cause. This failure was important in a substantive way, but also in a symbolic way. Many activists looked to the 2002 congressional elections and the 2004 presidential election as an opportunity for political power, although with trepidation. Organizer MJ Muser (Not In Our Name) states “people were a little jaded after the 2000 election” and adds that failures in both the 2002 and 2004 elections encouraged people to “step out of their comfort zones” in terms of political action, choosing tactics like sit-ins, confrontations, and protests rather than relying upon access to the conventional political system.

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89 Mari Jo Muser, Telephone interview, 15 March 2006.
have failed to bring political power to antiwar activists, in their failure they were a mobilizing factor. The political system had failed people, so they felt it was necessary to act outside of it.

The results of these two elections represented a failure to provide political access to the antiwar movement. In addition to considering these elections as changing the level of access to the conventional system, it is important to recognize that substantively they failed to represent the antiwar view, while symbolically they represented a failure of the conventional political system itself. This symbolic failure encouraged antiwar activists to change their tactics to focus on a space outside the conventional political system.
Political Opportunity Structure: Considering Political Efficacy

To what extent did a sense of political efficacy motivate the emergence of the antiwar movement? What factors created this sense of political efficacy?

Political efficacy is a significant theme in much of social movement theory. The importance of political efficacy (as developed into cognitive liberation by McAdam) is based upon the idea that people are more likely to take part in social movements when they believe that protest will have a reasonable chance of success.

This section will attempt to evaluate the sense of political efficacy of the antiwar movement at several critical moments, as well as to track its changes over time. It will explore the factors that created political efficacy, and discuss the ways that this efficacy related to the emergence and strength of the antiwar movement.

Considering the movement in broad terms, the sense of political efficacy was not particularly high early in the movement’s history. One important reason for this was the general perception that public opinion was not opposed to the war. According to polls by the Pew Research Center, in late 2002 at least 62% of Americans favored removing Saddam Hussein by force. In the protests before the passage of Resolution 114 authorizing force in Iraq, there were low expectations of success—activists had come to realize that they would not affect the outcome of the vote on the resolution. In fact, it was not until after the resolution passed that the movement gained numbers and, in late October 2002, staged the biggest demonstration since protests against the Vietnam War.

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The movement then gained in momentum and in sense of efficacy. There was a sense that “this movement was going to be really big” and that it stood a fair chance of preventing the war. In fact, in the months leading up to the war, many activists shared the belief that their action could be critical in preventing the war before it even began. Leslie Cagan of United For Peace and Justice (UFPJ) said: “This may be our last chance to stop the war. If it starts it will be much harder to end. If marches do not work we will escalate.” Cagan described the sense of optimism and efficacy as being partially due to the early emergence of a strong movement. “The difference between this antiwar protest movement and the Vietnam antiwar movement is that we have a huge grass-roots campaign before the war has even begun.” Thus, because the movement was a strong force before the beginning of the war, many activists felt that their chances of success were greater than in antiwar movements of the past.

The sense of political efficacy was particularly high after the global days of protest in January and February 2003. In those cases, participants in the movement in the United States were able to join millions of people around the world in protesting the war. In its sheer numbers alone these global days of protest gave the movement in the United States a greater sense of power and efficacy. International ANSWER’s spokesperson Tony Murphy described this feeling after the January 2003 protest: “the antiwar movement is now at a whole new level. We’re talking about a force that can really stop the war. It’s not just a hopeful attitude. It’s a real sense that it’s possible.”

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94 Ibid.
Landreau of the Brandywine Peace Community agrees, describing his perspective of the political efficacy in early 2003: “there was the sense that [the movement] was going to be really big” and could be successful.96

However, there are limits to the sense of political efficacy that movement participants felt. Participants always accepted the chance that they would not be successful, often planning ahead for such occasions. In early March 2003, for example, organizer Chris Nineham said “we still believe we can stop this war before it begins. But if not, we’re putting the warmongers on notice that there will be massive protests on the day war breaks out and the following weekend.”97 Nineham’s comments were typical of the response of activists, and they reveal an incomplete sense of political efficacy that was based in the suspicion that the war might simply be inevitable.

The beginning of the Iraq War on March 19, 2003 caused a fundamental shift in the goals of the antiwar movement, and thus in its sense of political efficacy. The massive protests in the days and weeks following the beginning of the war, unlike the earlier protests, could not be based on a belief that they could prevent the war. And although there remained significant enthusiasm for the movement in its efforts to express the anger and opposition of the war, the movement was never able to fully respond to the war with coherently articulated goals that people could support. Landreau attributes the “petering out” of the movement to this, stating that the movement failed to develop articulate and

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96 Landreau.
compelling goals as the war unfolded.\textsuperscript{98} David Meyer recently agreed, arguing “what’s missing is some sort of unity and a clear set of demands.”\textsuperscript{99}

Part of the reason that the movement has failed to create new coherent goals was that the situation in Iraq became more complicated as the war continued. There was (and there remains) no simple solution to “the mess that we’ve made” in Iraq. In spite of the guerrilla war that continues even today, there is a fear of what could happen without the United States occupation as well as a sense of responsibility to fix the current situation that the war created.\textsuperscript{100}

In spite of these hurdles, the outlook is not so grim for everyone involved in the movement. Rather, some organizations—mostly those concerned with legislation and other activity within the conventional system—are encouraged by the recent shifts in public opinion. With the way that events in Iraq are unfolding, says Laura Weis of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), President Bush is “blowing his cover. People are recognizing that some sort of change in strategy is needed.”\textsuperscript{101} Mari Jo Muser (formerly of Not In Our Name) agrees, arguing that there is now a new understanding of the war and protest.\textsuperscript{102}

Recently, thus, the antiwar movement has been encouraged by a sense of political efficacy stemming from the drop in public support for the war. However, this renewed political efficacy has not translated into a revival of the large-scale demonstrations

\textsuperscript{98} John Landreau, Telephone Interview, 27 March 2006.
\textsuperscript{100} Landreau.
\textsuperscript{101} Laura Weis, Telephone Interview, 24 March 2006.
\textsuperscript{102} Mari Jo Muser, Telephone Interview, 15 March 2006.
against the war. Instead, the more conventional strategies—including work on legislation are internet-based petitions—are nearly the only part of the movement that remains on a national scale. Although polls show more and more Americans believing that the war in Iraq was a mistake and not worth its costs, fewer Americans are involved in the movement. As the war continues, fewer people believe that involvement in protest will be successful. Stetz describes this phenomenon, writing, “aside from gathering to recognize key dates, people seem to fade away. Nationally, the movement has seen some heady moments…but can’t seem to sustain momentum.”

To what extent, then, can the ebbs and flows of the antiwar movement be attributed to the changing sense of political efficacy among its participants? I argue that the evidence shows that while political efficacy certainly affected the level of protest activity, it is by no means the only factor influencing the movement. Specifically, the emergence of the movement on the large, national, and prolonged scale occurred not at a moment when there was great hope of success, but immediately following a momentous occasion in which not only did many important elite allies abandon the movement (thus decreasing the chances of success) but also the President made an enormous stride towards the beginning of the war. The passage of the resolution authorizing force in Iraq, far from signifying better chances of success and therefore creating a sense of political efficacy, rather made the war far more likely to occur. The movement, had it emerged before the resolution was passed, would have had a far higher chance of being successful. The emergence of the large, national movement that was represented on October 26, 2002 was not due to a sense of political efficacy.

104 Stetz.
There were, however, moments in the movement’s progression that seemed to be influenced by increased or decreased sense of efficacy. Specifically, the large-scale international support for the movement made the level of efficacy high during the “global days of protest” in early 2003. However, once the war began, the sense of efficacy fell as activists struggled to adjust their goals and strategies after their failure to prevent the war. After being defeated in their first goal, the level of efficacy naturally dropped as activists wondered whether future goals could be met. Therefore, while a sense of political efficacy was not a central factor in the emergence of the antiwar movement, it played a critical role in determining the ebbs and flows once the movement had begun.
Political Opportunity Structure: Considering the Role of Expected Elite Allies

Did acts of complicity or abandonment of the antiwar cause by expected elite allies influence the Anti-Iraq War Movement??

The Democratic Party as an Expected Elite Ally

In order to analyze the role of expected elite allies, I will focus mainly upon the most notable expected allies in an antiwar movement—members of the Democratic Party. It is reasonable to characterize the Democratic Party as an expected ally in the opposition to the Iraq War for several reasons. The ideology of the party has long associated it with peace movements in cases like the 1972 election in which the Democratic candidate George McGovern ran on an Anti-Vietnam War platform, and in 1991 when most Democrats opposed war in the battle in Congress over the Gulf War.105 Additionally, most antiwar activists are more likely to identify with the Democratic Party than the Republicans, and therefore rely on the Party and its leaders as a supportive and politically powerful force.

There are a few small problems with considering the Democratic Party an expected elite ally. Most notably, the Party is nothing more than an association of individuals who hold the autonomy to act according to their own individual views. Expecting the support of a political party can be considered nothing more than expecting the support of the individuals who compose the group.

However, as a political party, the Democrats do represent a particular ideology and particular policy goals. Antiwar activists cannot have expected universal support for their cause by all Democrats, but rather a general and official opposition to the war.  Rep. 105 “1991: US Congress Votes for War in Iraq,” BBC On This Day, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/12/newsid_4534000/4534588.stm, accessed 20 March 2006.
Nancy Pelosi (CA) acknowledged this pressure, but said “there is no party position on the war, much to the dismay of our grass-roots constituents.” Instead of consensus and an official opposition to the war in Iraq, the Democrats provided antiwar activists with a divided and often convoluted reaction to the threat of war.

On the one hand, there were several important leaders of the Democratic Party who were strongly opposed to the war. Sens. Edward Kennedy (MA) and Robert C. Byrd (WV) were notable leaders of the “small but vocal” antiwar faction in the Senate. Howard Dean was a strong and relatively well-supported antiwar candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. In addition, there were 156 Congressmen who committed to an antiwar position by voting against the resolution authorizing force in Iraq. Most notably, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) were for many months outspoken in opposition to the war, “their double-barreled criticism [standing] in contrast to the largely bipartisan and subdued support that Congress has given to Bush’s approach to Iraq.”

Thus, although there were a number of important allies to the antiwar cause, still other Democratic leaders supported the Iraq War. My discussion of the presidential primary elections discussed the position of Joseph Lieberman, who was “the most outspoken ally of Bush’s policy in the big Democratic field.” Lieberman was joined by Sen. Richard Gephardt (D-MO), who was a critical ally of Bush in his efforts to gain

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congressional approval for his resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq.\textsuperscript{110} And 373 Congressmen voted in favor of the resolution that gave President Bush the authority to attack Iraq. Overall, support for the war was “largely bipartisan and subdued…as [Democratic] party leaders generally have kept low profiles.”\textsuperscript{111}

Although both ends of the spectrum were thus represented, many Democratic leaders represented more complex and moderate views. Many of these leaders joined the likes of Gephardt and Lieberman and were complicit in the war efforts. As VandeHei argues, the Democratic response to the war was split not in two different sides, but “into three different camps: those who support[ed] the war, those who oppose it and those who want a U.N.-sanctioned encounter.”\textsuperscript{112} Dobbs perceives this middle camp rather as a “not-yet” camp, which “includes many people from the old foreign policy establishment… [who are not currently in government, but represent this view] because nobody in government is willing to challenge the administration in public.” Retired Gen. Anthony Zinni represented the “not-yet” camp when he said “Hussein is a long standing threat…I don’t object to military action against Saddam; in fact, we should have done it a long time ago, but right now there is the potential for us to be distracted from a lot of other things…there are many other places that need our attention.”\textsuperscript{113}

This moderate, “not-yet” Democrats also included arguments like Kerry’s support for war, but criticism for the unilateral way that the President handled it, and those who pressured Bush to “tone down his rhetoric, build greater international support and allow

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} VandeHei and Dewar, 7 March 2003.
\textsuperscript{112} Jim VandeHei, 18 March 2006.
U.N. weapons inspectors more time to work before trying to topple Saddam Hussein.”

Some of these Democratic leaders in Congress (even after their votes approved the war resolution “sent a letter to the president imploring him to ‘make every attempt to achieve Iraq’s diplomatic means and with the full support of our allies.”114

The message from the Democratic Party was thus convoluted and divided. But beyond the mixed views and opinions of the individual Democratic leaders, these expected allies were involved in a series of acts that not only abandoned the antiwar cause, but also were complicit in the President’s efforts with regards to the Iraq War. In these acts of complicity, Democratic leaders provoked a strong response from antiwar activists who were disgusted and disillusioned by their abandonment.

Acts of Complicity

In the behavior of the Democratic Party leaders with regards to the Iraq War issue, there are many examples of acts of complicity. Local activists were horrified to see their representatives supporting Bush and failing to speak out against the war. These acts of complicity were most common and most pronounced on the national level, owing to the larger spotlight on national leaders and the greater expectations of high-profile figures. For the purposes of this study, I will focus upon a few major, national-scale acts of complicity, including the passing of Joint Resolution 114, the approval of the President’s wartime budget, and the silencing of debate and dissent among all but the most staunch of the war critics.

Certainly the most glaring and powerful act of complicity was the October 2002 congressional approval of Joint Resolution 114 Authorizing the Use of Force in Iraq. As discussed earlier, this resolution referred to several factors as reasons necessitating the use of force in Iraq, and gave the President the power to enforce all U.N Security Council resolutions even without U.N. support.

Beyond the fact that Congress supported the war effort by passing this resolution, it was regarded as an act of complicity even more so as a result of the way that many Democrats approached the resolution. Nobody represented this approach more clearly than Kerry. In a New York Times Op-Ed piece in September 2002, Kerry advocated patience with the U.N. inspections process, writing “regime change by itself is not a justification for going to war…those who think that the inspection process is merely a waste of time should be reminded that legitimacy in the conduct of war, among our people and our allies, is not a waste, but an essential foundation of success.”\textsuperscript{115} In a speech on the Senate floor before the vote in October, he said “international institutions must rise to the occasion and seek new authority and a new measure of respect…tough questions must be answered before—and not after—you commit a nation to a course that may well lead to war…,” then announced his support for the resolution, saying that it limited Bush’s action to Iraq, authorized the president to defend the United States’ national security, and authorized him to enforce relevant U.N. resolutions. Kerry wrapped up his speech by saying “by standing with the President, Congress would demonstrate our Nation is united in its determination to take away that arsenal [of weapons of mass

destruction], and we are affirming the president’s right and responsibility to keep the American people safe.”

Similarly, Sen. Gephardt exemplified the abandonment of the antiwar cause. In fact, VandeHei and Eilperin state that “no Democrat personifies the party’s philosophical shift more dramatically than…Gephardt. Gephardt was among those who voted against war authority a decade ago, but [in 2002] he joined the president in crafting language endorsing a unilateral strike in Iraq…Gephardt staked out this hawkish position even before Bush started to make his impassioned case…”

Joined by twenty-seven other Democratic Senators and eighty-one Democratic Representatives, Kerry and Gephardt voted in favor of the Resolution Authorizing the Use of Force in Iraq and were therefore complicit in the legitimization and beginning of the Iraq War.

In addition to the approval of the war through support for the resolution, Democrats continued to support the war even after its beginning. In another important act of complicity, congressional Democrats approved a $78.5 billion emergency war budget in April, 2003. While the decision to fund the war was not an unreasonable one, especially considering the fact that the war had already begun by the time Bush asked for such a large sum, the passage of the budget was an act of complicity because it was an opportunity to voice opposition that passed unheeded. Before the spending bill, and indeed before the war began, some Democratic leaders questioned its costs. Most notably, Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV) said that “the cost of the war would be staggering, including the possibility of higher oil prices, unsettled financial markets, and payments to

116 John Kerry, speech on floor of US Senate, 10 October 2002.
win the support of allies.” Kennedy also questioned the cost of a war, saying “the administration ‘must clearly explain from where this funding will come.’”\textsuperscript{118}

However, once the war began, instead of questioning the “protracted conflict and military occupation” that would require such a budget, Daschle committed congressional Democrats to “fully support Bush’s proposal to fund[ing] military operations in Iraq.”\textsuperscript{119} Neglecting the Iraq War debate, the Democrats instead pushed for more funding for homeland security—arguing that Bush’s requests were inadequate—and structured control of the accounts into which the money would go.\textsuperscript{120} Although it is natural that the Democrats should want to ensure that a war that had already begun would not be hindered by lack of funding, the passage of the emergency spending bill was a complicit act in its failure to provoke debate and criticism of a war that was to prove so costly.

The lack of meaningful debate about the war budget was emblematic of the larger war issue. In fact, the Democrats deliberately stifled debate on many occasions, particularly in Congress. Baker describes this phenomenon, stating:

Debates rage nearly everywhere about the wisdom of America’s imminent resort to war…but the one place from which Americans might expect to hear a dramatic clash of opinions, the U.S. Congress, has been largely quiet. Much has happened since October 10 [2002] when Congress resoundingly approved a joint resolution authorizing President Bush to enforce the U.N. resolutions calling for the disarming of Iraq. But the whirlwind of events…hasn’t prompted regular, ongoing discussion on the floor of either the House or the Senate. The speeches [in early March]…involved mostly partisan sparring. They were no substitute for the kind of probing, extensive exchange that the issue warrants.\textsuperscript{121}

The early Democratic response can best be described as “cautious dissent…[with] room to embrace Bush’s war policy in the end.” The few Democrats who were vocal in their opposition—including Al Gore, Rep. David Bonior (D-MI), and Rep. James McDermott (D-WA)—were criticized and “ridiculed privately by party leaders and tagged as the “Baghdad Democrats.”

This stifled debate continued in the months leading up to the beginning of the war. Further, many Democratic leaders chose to limit their dissent even further as the war appeared to become more imminent, and “even the harshest of war critics in Congress expressed unequivocal support for the…troops…many vowed to tone down their opposition to military action soon in deference to those in uniform.” In an effort to show deference to the troops, VandeHei predicted that “once the bombs start dropping, many congressional critics may fall largely silent.”

Thus, Democratic leaders—even those who were opposed to the war—limited their dissent throughout the debate about the war and even as it unfolded. Many antiwar activists watched this unfold: “there was no debate…to debate the war was to be unpatriotic and the Democrats were more scared of that than anything.” The reasons for this stifling, as well as the numerous other acts of complicity, were many, from wide cultural changes to pure political self-interest.

First, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 represented a formative moment in the history of the United States. Rep. Robert Andrews (D-NJ) described the way that

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123 VandeHei and Eilperin, 6 October 2002.
124 VandeHei, 18 March 2003.
125 John Landreau, Telephone Interview, 27 March 2006. Landreau is active with the Brandywine Peace Community in the Philadelphia area.
the Democratic Party changed in response to the change in American culture after September 11th, stating that Democrats “have changed in the same way the American people have changed...[they] are acutely aware of how vulnerable the country is, right here, to an attack. It’s a new realization the world is a place where conventional military superiority does not guarantee security.”126 The horror of the terrorist attacks made the Democratic Party adjust to a new world view and a new sense of vulnerability. This shift in thinking after September 11, 2001 translated into not only support for the war, but the stifling of most of the dissent and debate among party leaders.

By supporting the war in Iraq, Democrats used their support of the war to prove their toughness in matters of national security. Because the war was seen as an effort to protect the national security of the United States against an established dictator, Democrats wanted to be considered as strong on defense and national security as the Republicans.

This toughness on national security was particularly important given the recent history of the party with war. In 1991, Congress only just passed a resolution giving President H. W. Bush the authority to attack Iraq in response to Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait. The 1991 “doves” who opposed the war received significant criticism, especially considering the quickness and the American success in the war that unfolded. By supporting the second war in Iraq, Democrats hoped to shake their reputation of being soft of defense.127

The reputation of toughness was particularly important to the Democratic Party during the period leading up to the Iraq War. First the congressional and then

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126 VandeHei and Eilperin, 6 October 2002.
127 Ibid.
presidential elections were imminent, leading important Democratic leaders to act more for political motivations than personal convictions. VandeHei and Dewar describe the motivations for the Democratic complicity:

Based upon political, practical, and patriotic reasons...democratic leaders [are] worried about exposing deep fissures inside the party that could haunt them in the next election [and] have shot down several attempts by antiwar liberals to force a new debate on Iraq. Some Democrats fear a repeat of the Persian Gulf War, when Democrats paid a political price for opposing what turned out to be a victorious military campaign.128

These pressures were based also upon the public opinion of the war. Around the time the resolution passed, some polls showed 61% of Americans in favor of using force to remove Hussein, with the numbers shifting considerably with changes in wording and questions referring to unilateralism.129 Because of the timing of the congressional and then presidential elections, Democrats were concerned with avoiding the alienation of all those Americans who were in favor of the war.

It was for those many reasons that the Democratic response to the Iraq War issue can be characterized as revolving around several important acts of complicity. The question then arises, to what extent were these acts of complicity connected to the antiwar movement? Did the complicit acts by the Democrats influence movement activity?

The complicit acts by the Democratic Party and its leaders did, in fact, influence the antiwar movement by motivating its members to abandon hope of gaining change through its expected elite allies within the political system and instead moving on to unconventional political activity.

This hypothesis can first be supported by the evidence of October 2002 protest activity. As the timeline on page 72 shows, there was heavy protest activity in the month that Resolution 114 passed Congress. First, Not In Our Name (NION) organized protests on October 6 in hopes of affecting the outcome of the resolution. About 85,000 people protested in over 40 cities.\textsuperscript{130} A few short weeks later and after the resolution passed Congress, on October 26 100,000-200,000 people gathered in Washington DC, while another 50,000-100,000 protested in San Francisco. These protests, organized by International ANSWER (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism), were organized in opposition to the “drive to war” as exemplified by Resolution 114, which according to ANSWER was an “illegal blank check…to wage a war of aggression against the Iraqi people.”\textsuperscript{131} In fact, “approval of the resolution on Iraq, though disheartening…has increased the anti-war effort…some say politicians who ignored the will of their constituents and voted to approve the resolution will face repercussions, such as more protests and sit-ins at their offices…”\textsuperscript{132} Hundreds of antiwar protests occurred all over the United States during the few weeks following the passage of Joint Resolution 114, with particular attention given to those Democratic leaders who supported the resolution.\textsuperscript{133} For example, Gephardt and Feinstein drew sit-ins in their offices. Gephardt frustrated antiwar activists by supporting the resolution from the outset, while Feinstein ignored 11,000 phone calls from constituents against the resolution as she voted instead to support it.\textsuperscript{134} Hundreds of thousands of people participated in these protests as an expression of disgust and dissent after the congressional complicity in the war effort.

\textsuperscript{130} Mari Jo Muser, Telephone Interview, 15 March 2006.  
\textsuperscript{131} International ANSWER, \url{http://www.internationalanswer.org}, 20 March 2006.  
\textsuperscript{132} Nieves, 14 October 2002.  
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
Protester Luigi Procopio voiced the fear and disgust that many activists felt, saying, "[war] feels imminent. Congress has just rolled over."\(^{135}\)

The early success that the protest experienced only bolstered the protest activity of the movement. The turnout of 100,000-200,000 at the October 26, 2002 protest in Washington DC “startled even organizers” and signified a shift in public willingness to become involved in dissent and protest. “‘There is not going to be one speech or one demonstration, after which everyone goes home’ said Barbara Lubin… ‘this is a movement against war, and it’s building momentum.’” Organizers used this momentum to create what it hoped would “serve as a countervote to the Congressional resolution in support of military action in Iraq.”\(^{136}\)

These direct responses to governmental activity prove that the movement was fueled by the Democratic complicity in the war effort. After the approval of Joint Resolution 114, activists began to give up on the Democratic Party as an ally in the antiwar effort. Protest activity skyrocketed at the time of this major act of complicity.\(^{137}\) And it continued, especially on the local level, as a response to acts of complicity.

However, this major abandonment in October 2002 made activists give up hope and come to expect future Democratic complicity. For that reason, feelings of abandonment by the Democrats were constant in the ensuing years, and small acts of complicity were seen almost as pale in comparison to the passage of the resolution. After that ultimate act of complicity, activists had come to not expect any more support from Democrats. As activist John Landreau states, “Democrats don’t try to energize their base…Democrats


\(^{137}\) Nieves; See also timeline.
have completely abandoned progressive politics. Everything is shifting to the right.\textsuperscript{138}

That disillusionment and disgust with the party was illustrated by the enormous scope of the protests outside the conventional system, as well as the general abandonment of efforts to work with most Democratic leaders.

That phenomenon of abandonment and disillusionment with the Democratic Party continues even as more national politicians are questioning the war today. Laura Weis, a legislative assistant with an organization dedicated not to protest, but to legislative change (Friends Committee on National Legislation, FCNL), spoke of her organization’s efforts to cooperate with leaders of both parties in order to push moderate legislation that would prevent permanent bases from being established in Iraq. She says, “Democrats are hesitant to talk. They support us in principle, but they won’t say anything.”\textsuperscript{139} Activist Imogene Berry says that this abandonment by the Democrats has guided her organization’s strategy, saying “our strategy right now is to focus on winning over moderate Republicans and we've really given up on the Democrats.”\textsuperscript{140}

In giving up on Democrats, organizations like the legislation-based FCNL tried instead to gain the support of moderate Republicans. For others, the abandonment of the Democratic Party represented the failure of the conventional political system. Muser described this disillusionment with the political system, saying “politics as usual isn’t good enough. [When the political system failed] people didn’t know what to do.” So people took to the streets.\textsuperscript{141}

\textsuperscript{138} John Landreau, Telephone Interview, 27 March 2006.
\textsuperscript{139} Laura Weis, Telephone Interview, 24 March 2006.
\textsuperscript{140} Imogene Berry, Email Interview, 24 March 2006.
\textsuperscript{141} Muser.
So, after the joint resolution passed, as the war became more imminent and finally began, people continued to take to the streets. Organizations including NION, Win Without War, United For Peace and Justice (UFPJ), International ANSWER, Code Pink, and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), continued to organize protests, vigils, sit-ins, teach-ins and other protest activity. At the same time, these organizations and their allies such as MoveOn.org, waged a campaign not on the streets, but on the internet. Based upon email petitions, letter-writing campaigns and other peaceful activities, this represented a different side of the movement, although it was equally based outside the conventional realm of politics.  

In all of its forms of protest, the antiwar movement acted in response to the actions of the Democratic Party. When smaller protests and calls to Democratic leaders failed to influence the Democratic vote on the resolution authorizing force in Iraq, antiwar movements responded by abandoning hope of creating change through allies in the conventional system. Instead, movement leaders reached out to new allies and moved outside the conventional political realm.

As the study of the Iraq antiwar movement illustrates, scholarship of the relationship between elites and movements has been too far limited. Instead of focusing upon the positive relationship between the two, scholars would be right to continue examining the abandonment of movements by their expected elite allies. In this case, the abandonment and acts of complicity by the Democratic Party were important in alienating the people from the conventional system and encouraging them to express their dissent through protest and participation in the antiwar movement.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has attempted to answer the question: what political conditions facilitate the emergence and growth of social movements? In the case study of the movement against the Iraq War, I have followed a long line of scholars in developing a definition of the political opportunity structure that is based upon both the structural and sociocultural factors that define and determine protest activity. In an effort to show that political opportunity structure is a complex composite of different factors, I tested several hypotheses in my study of the Iraq antiwar movement.

My first hypothesis was based upon a structural element of political opportunity structure. I evaluated the effect of the degree of openness of the political system on the level of protest activity. In order to do so, I focused upon two elections: the 2002 congressional election and the 2004 Democratic presidential primary. Through my research, I found that in neither race did antiwar activists increase their access to the conventional political system. Due to the problems of the electoral system in general, the lack of candidates who were willing to represent a strong antiwar platform, and the results of the elections that favored moderate and even pro-war candidates, these two elections did not effectively give antiwar activists access to the political system. Therefore, opening access to the conventional political system cannot be considered a key factor to the emergence of the movement in this case.

Next, I focused upon the idea of political efficacy. This dynamic factor of political opportunity structure is based upon the perceptions both of opportunity and of chance of success. Political efficacy is considered important to political opportunity structure because people are more motivated to act if they have the sense that they have a
reasonable chance of success. In the case of the antiwar movement, I found that political efficacy was important at particular moments in the movement, but not in its initial emergence. The sense of political efficacy was not high when the movement emerged as a national force in October 2002. Rather, after the resolution authorizing the war was passed, activists were not particularly optimistic about the chances to actually prevent the war. Later, as months passed without the start of war, and when the movement became more involved in the global days of protest against the war, the sense of efficacy grew along with the growth of the movement. After the war began, the sense of efficacy collapsed as activists realized that they had failed to meet their goal of preventing the war and also that there was little chance of stopping the war after its beginning. The case of the antiwar movement, then, illustrates that while political efficacy is important in the maintenance of a strong movement, it is not always necessary to the emergence of protest activity.

Finally, I studied a hypothesis that has been largely neglected by social movement theory scholars. I expanded on the topic of elite support, and decided to go in a different direction. Instead of focusing on the role of elites within a movement or in aid of a movement, I focused upon the abandonment and acts of complicity by expected elite allies. In this case, the Democratic Party was considered an elite ally, and I used their acts of complicity in order to demonstrate the relationship between acts of complicity and protest activity.

The results of this study were promising. In the antiwar movement, the research shows that the acts of complicity of the Democratic Party represented to activists a failure of the conventional political system, and encouraged the mobilization of people to act
outside of the conventional political realm. These results, although limited to one case study, demonstrate that more research is needed. Scholars have too long neglected the abandonment and complicity of expected allies as an important element of political opportunity structure.

As this study is based solely upon one case, it would be foolish to attempt to broadly apply these results to social movements in general. Rather, this study is intended to illustrate the gaps in scholarship on the subject of the political process model of social movement theory. The varying degrees of connectivity and relevance of the three hypotheses studied here illustrate the complex and varying components that make up the political opportunity structure. It is clear that more study is necessary in order to gain a more accurate understanding of the political opportunity structure and use it to explain and predict social movement activity.

In addition to its use as an explanatory factor of protest activity, it is important to understand political opportunity structure because it is an important indicator as to the condition of democracy in the United States. Free expression of dissent is critical to a healthy democracy. A clear understanding of the political conditions that allow and facilitate the free emergence of protest, social movements, and other expressions of dissent provides an indicator of the condition of our democracy. With this understanding it is possible to develop goals in the struggle to consolidate and strengthen the condition of democracy in the United States.
Key Dates in the Antiwar Movement:

2002

January 16—D.C. Antiwar Network organizes protests in Washington DC in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

October 6—Not In Our Name (NION) organizes rallies in 40 cities, 85,000 people are involved. Protesters hope to influence outcome of the congressional vote on the resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq.

October 26—100,000 gather in Washington DC, 50,000 in San Francisco in response to the congressional vote in favor of the resolution. Protests are organized by International ANSWER.

December 10—United For Peace and Justice (UFPJ) organizes scattered protests across the country to coincide with United Nations Human Rights Day.

2003

January 18—Estimates of up to 500,000 people protest in Washington DC and other American cities and across the world. In the United States, NION and ANSWER organize the protests again to coincide with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

February 15—Largest protests in American history in nearly every major city. Organized at the World Social Forum in Brazil as part as a “global day of protest” against the war.

March 15—50,000 protest in Washington DC anticipating a quickly approaching start of the war. Peace vigils occur across the country.

March 20-23—250,000 gather in New York City to protest the beginning of the war.

March 27—“Die-in” in New York City.

March 29—Largest protests in Boston history, 50,000 gather.

April 7—Day of civil disobedience, hundreds are arrested in New York.

April 12—International ANSWER organizes protests in Washington DC, San Francisco, Los Angeles.

October 25—Protests in Washington DC.

2004

August 26-30—UFPJ and ANSWER organize protests of thousands at the Republican National Convention in New York.

2005

January 20—DC Antiwar Network and ANSWER organized protests of President Bush’s inauguration.

March 19—nearly a million protesters worldwide protest the second anniversary of the beginning of the Iraq War.

August 6-31—Cindy Sheehan sets up a protest camp outside of President Bush’s ranch. Her efforts are highly publicized.

September 25—ANSWER and UFPJ organize protests in Washington DC and other cities. About 150,000 gather.
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