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How Much The Government?: A Comparative Analysis Of The Efficacy Of Political Opportunity Structure As A Tool To Predict The Formation And Strategy Of The Ant-Nuclear Energy Movements In France and The United States

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HOW MUCH THE GOVERNMENT?: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
EFFICACY OF POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE AS A TOOL TO
PREDICT THE FORMATION AND STRATEGY OF THE ANTI-NUCLEAR
ENERGY MOVEMENTS IN FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES

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CHAPTER I

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ANTI-NUCLEAR ENERGY MOVEMENT

Economic development is taking place across the globe as developing nations are adopting new technologies and developed nations are creating new technologies. A fundamental factor at the root of all this growth is energy. Whether growth and development are defined by a tractor in a field or a car that parallel parks itself, by a cell phone to serve a remote village or an Internet connection and computer setup that allows one to see and talk to anyone anywhere, energy is needed to fuel the vehicles, to charge the phone and to maintain a connection. Energy has become essential to the modern world and because of this importance it is an issue of national security.

Energy is a political issue. Control over energy sources can give people great wealth. Dependence on energy can create insecurity. Many energy-producing resources such as oil, natural gas, and coal have the potential to start wars and to influence international assistance to a country. However, there is one truth that can perhaps be termed “fundamental” in the world of energy: current resources to produce energy are finite. This truth is reflected in the terminology that has sprung up around the issue of energy. A phrase familiar to many is “non-renewable resources” and it is an issue many people worry about. Non-renewable resources are being depleted at an alarming rate and Science magazine reported in 1998 that oil shortages and severe hikes in prices would
begin in ten (2008) to twenty (2018) years as a result of increasing consumption rates and low levels of alternative fuel use.\textsuperscript{1} Research on the most abundant of non-renewable resources is showing even more reason for concern. Many non-renewable resources have another name, fossil fuels, and fossil fuels are not only limited in number, but are extremely polluting through the release of large amounts of chemicals when used.

In the course of all of the talk about non-renewable resources, their opposites, renewable resources, are held up as a golden light and hope for the future. Renewable resources are those resources that are not finite, the ones that can be used continuously and never run out. Their existence is what leads to the “perhaps” in whether or not it is a fundamental truth that resources to produce energy are limited. Though held up by some as the paragon of the perfect source of energy, renewable resources have problems themselves, including expense and technological challenges. As the world races into the future, developing ever newer technologies and using greater and greater amounts of energy, and as non-renewable energy sources get used up and new sources of energy – especially renewable energy sources – are slowly developed, tension is building between supply and demand, a tension that could turn into crisis: an energy crisis.

The tensions between supply and demand of energy resources have existed for many years, though they were pushed to the forefront in the 1970s with the first oil shocks – when the developed world realized just how dependent it was on oil as a primary source to create electricity, to run cars, and to fuel industry. At this time there was a new technology that really started to become productive in the 1950s and 1960s and was poised to be the perfect solution to the world’s future energy problems: nuclear

energy. Nuclear energy is a technology that is non-renewable through the use of heavy elements – such as plutonium and uranium, which are also very rare – yet, there is hope that further research could develop nuclear energy production into a renewable source of energy.

Nuclear energy also holds the distinction of being a clean source of energy, as harmful chemicals are not released into the atmosphere during its production. Nuclear energy, though, does not come without its own problems. The waste produced through nuclear-energy production is radioactive, taking anywhere from a few years to hundreds or even thousands of years to become safe for contact with humans and nature, depending on the specific type of element used. The technologies involved in the production of nuclear energy are also very expensive, costing investors upwards to $2 billion in investments to start a new facility. There are also expansive and costly regulations placed upon nuclear energy producers to ensure safety and to try to prevent any disasters, which contribute to the costs of running a nuclear energy plant.

Despite all of the possible downfalls of nuclear energy, the industry was on the rise in the 1960s and 1970s as nations looked to nuclear energy as a possible solution to future energy problems. For many reasons, including rising costs and lowering energy prices, the construction of new nuclear energy stations declined at the end of the twentieth century; however, a revival of interest is occurring in the beginning of the twenty-first century. As oil and other energy resources become more expensive and concerns about global warming escalate, alternative sources of energy are being

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promoted as essential for future security. Diversity is the new word defining the desirable state of energy production and therefore sources of energy, old and new, are being re-examined. Through this nuclear energy is coming back into the spotlight.

Looking at the issue of nuclear energy, the two nations which stand out the most are the United States and France. The United States is the nation in which much of the nuclear technology was developed. Along with its technological achievements in the field of nuclear energy, the U.S. also has the distinction of being the largest consumer of energy in the world, accounting for just under one fourth of the total energy consumption in the world in 2004. On the other hand, France is a nation which, despite having a traditionally strong green movement and a history of effective social protest, has taken American developed technology and built up its nuclear production to the point where eighty percent of the country’s electricity is produced through nuclear technologies.

There is a discrepancy between the states of nuclear energy in these two countries. Why has France, a nation relatively more concerned with the environment and with a greater tradition of social protest, developed nuclear energy to such an extent? Why has the United States, a strong technological nation that uses vast amounts of energy and is consistently using more and more, not developed nuclear energy to a greater extent? What role has social protest played in the development (or not) of nuclear energy?

Social protest is one of many ways for citizens to express opposition to their government’s plans and actions. On the issue of nuclear energy movements started to

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protest the development of nuclear technologies, the anti-nuclear energy movement. Sometimes protest is successful at achieving goals and sometimes it is not; however, in the case of nuclear energy it was not the only factor at play. There are many different factors that interact to determine the direction a nation will take in policy and especially in the case of nuclear energy. Many factors—such as the availability of alternative sources of energy, specific policy goals of the respective governments, regulations on nuclear technologies, and waste storage—have important effects on the development of nuclear energy. Still, the role of anti-nuclear movements should be examined.

Many different theories—including Marxsian, resource mobilization, and various sociological methods—have been developed in order to determine the course and cause of social movements. One of which being political opportunity structure. Political Opportunity Structure theory seeks to understand the development and success of social movements through study of the political structure of a state.

As noted above, the issue of nuclear energy is coming again to the forefront. As this source of energy is considered on a wide-scale for a second time it is helpful to look back and try to understand the process that took place with its original rise. First, we must ask the question: just what is a political opportunity structure and how did it affect the anti-nuclear movements in France and the United States? Second, why were there protests against nuclear energy? What was the driving force of widespread social movements to protest the development of nuclear technology? And last, using political opportunity structures as a basis for comparison, how effective were the anti-nuclear movements in France and the United States, and why? The anti-nuclear movement stood.

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in direct opposition to nuclear energy and as nuclear energy again becomes a public issue, a revival of these movements is also possible. An in-depth examination of the development and motivations of the anti-nuclear movement, along with the possible effects of political opportunity structure, can possibly shed light on the future of nuclear energy around the world.
CHAPTER II

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

There are many types of social movement theories, all examining the various factors affecting the rise and success of social movements. However, one aspect that has often been overlooked, despite its obvious relevance, is the role of the state in determining the development and the efficacy of social movements. The state is such an important actor in the social movement scene that it is the "target, sponsor, and antagonist for social movements as well as the organizer of the political system and the arbiter of victory." Because of the important role of the state, researchers are increasingly devoting their efforts to developing social movement theories specifically targeted to evaluate the state’s part in social movements. One theory that has been developed is the Political Opportunity Structure (POS) theory.

The POS theory specifically seeks to determine how the political structure of a state affects social movements. An early version of the POS model was developed by H. P. Kitschelt who, in his 1986 work, "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest," defined political opportunity structures as being "specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilization, which facilitates the development of protest movements in some instances and constrain

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them in others."² Through comparative analysis of same-issue social movements that occur in different states, Kitschelt believed the effects of political opportunity structure, such as the strategies and effects of and the variations between social movements, could be explained.³ Graeme Hayes, in his book *Environmental Protest and the State in France,* examines Kitschelt’s model and describes it as looking at two main factors: whether the state has a decision-making process that is open or closed and whether capacity of the state to implement policy is strong or weak.⁴

In his text, Hayes further explains Kitschelt’s methods and how the two factors are subdivided into various aspects of a political system that affect them. For the degree of openness of a political structure the important determinants are: "the number of parties and extent of factionalism; the relative strength of the legislative body; the access of interest groups to executive areas of policy-making; and the relative prevalence of procedures to build effective policy coalitions."⁵ According to Kitschelt’s model, an open decision-making process would be one defined by a large number of fractionalized parties, a system in which the legislative body is strong and access to the executive power is easily attained along with a strong tradition of coalition building. As to the strength of the political structure in a country, Hayes describes three important aspects:

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⁵ Hayes, *Environmental Protest and the State in France,* pp. 43-44.
centralization, power over decision making and resources, and strength of the judicial branch.\(^6\)

Kitschelt's basic framework, as represented in Figure 1 below, leads to two opposite reactions by states in response to social movements. A strong political structure will tend to be exclusionary toward interest groups which, when coupled with a closed decision-making process, will create confrontation between the social group and the state.\(^7\) On the other side, a weak political structure will seek to include a social movement in its structure in an effort to increase its power and, when paired with a decision-making structure that is open, this will tend toward assimilation of the social groups into its existing structure.\(^8\) Another aspect of Kitschelt's political opportunity structure model is that a social movement will seek the easiest path to enact the change it seeks. Because of this, when a social movement is faced with an "assimilation" structure it will work within the political institutions, and conversely when faced with opposition or a "confrontation" structure the movement will likely develop public protest as its main tool.\(^9\)

\(^{\text{6}}\) Hayes, *Environmental Protest and the State in France*, p. 44.

\(^{\text{7}}\) Kitschelt, "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest," pp. 66-68.

\(^{\text{8}}\) Kitschelt, "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest," pp. 66-68.

\(^{\text{9}}\) Kitschelt, "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest," p. 66.
Figure 1:

Model of Kitschelt’s Political Opportunity Structure Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>political output structures</th>
<th>political input structures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>confrontation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>assimilation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: Graeme Hayes’ *Environmental Protest and the State in France*. This model demonstrates the two extremes of responses between a state and social movement.

Kitschelt’s model of political opportunity structure was a catalyst for further discussion in the field of research on social movements with criticism coming from the sociological and political fields. Some of the common criticisms of this early model include its failing to explain differences in the development of multiple and differently structured social movements in the same state, not addressing possibilities of change in a state’s political structures, and a strong sense of structural determinism. From this discourse, there have been many scholars who have attempted to propose solutions to Kitschelt’s POS model’s failures and some have even created their own variations of the POS model. Though change has occurred, Kitschelt’s original model lies at the heart of many of the new models which, by addressing the concerns and criticisms that came from the field, expanded to include even more factors affecting the possible success of social movements in affecting policy change.

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10 Hayes, *Environmental Protest and the State in France*, pp. 45-47.

11 Hayes, *Environmental Protest and the State in France*, p. 47.
One such model that was created is outlined in an article by Hein-Anton van der Heijden. Van der Heijden gives the following abbreviated outline of the factors affecting a political opportunity structure:

(1) The nature of the existing political cleavages in society;
(2) The formal institutional structure of the state;
(3) The informal strategies of the political elites vis-à-vis their challengers [social movements];
and
(4) The power relations within the party system (alliances structures).\(^{12}\)

This outline is a compressed version of H. P. Kitschelt’s political opportunity structure model with a few adaptations. Van der Heijden’s model includes not only the structure of the state apparatus, but also explores the workings of the actual politicians and bureaucrats in explaining the development and success of social movements. This synthesis of hard structural aspects, such as the composition of the political system, and soft aspects, such as the social atmosphere and interactions among parties and individuals, lends van der Heijden’s model some flexibility and perhaps defeats some of the deterministic aspects that critics had charged of earlier models of political opportunity structures. The following is a description of the four parts of van der Heijden’s model:

*The nature of the existing political cleavages in society:* This variable concerns both whether the state has a tradition of integration of social movements and also whether “older” social movements\(^ {13}\) are still being dealt with by the state.\(^ {14}\) The presence of “old”


\(^{13}\) In social movement theory there are two different levels of social movements: old and new. Old movements generally include the labour, religious freedom and revolutionary social movements (van der Heijden 27-28). New social movements are those that had developed largely since the beginning of the 1970s, such as the anti-nuclear energy movement (Kriesi 169).
social movements was considered by van der Heijden as not only increasing the number of actors the state must deal with, but also leaving less opportunities for new social movements to have their agenda discussed – in part probably because of a lack of resolution of earlier problems in the society.\textsuperscript{15}

*The formal institutional structure of the state:* This second part is divided into an additional four aspects which van der Heijden characterizes as the following:

1. “The degree of vertical territorial decentralisation” – whether the state is centralized and to what degree power and resources are divided among authorities at national, regional and local levels.\textsuperscript{16} In this aspect, less centralization would contribute to greater access and ability to influence policy on the part of social movements.

2. “The horizontal concentration of state power” – division of power among the various branches of government (legislative, judicial and executive), which principally concerns the balance of power between the legislative and the executive branches and the availability of viable action through the judicial branch to enact social change.\textsuperscript{17} In a political system where the legislature has more power than the executive, it is generally believed that there are more possibilities for a social movement to influence policy. On the opposing side a strong executive power, often existing in the form of a single person, would be difficult to access and influence.

\textsuperscript{14} van der Heijden, “Political Opportunity Structure,” pp. 27-28.

\textsuperscript{15} van der Heijden, “Political Opportunity Structure,” p. 27.

\textsuperscript{16} van der Heijden, “Political Opportunity Structure,” pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{17} van der Heijden, “Political Opportunity Structure,” p. 29.
3. "The nature of the electoral system" – ability of social movements to enact change through winning seats in a parliament and participating inside the political structure, which is dependent on whether the voting system is a proportional representation (PR) system or a plurality/majority system.\(^{18}\) Access in this aspect would be best achieved in a PR system where even a relatively small group could gain legislative representation through voting. In a plurality/majority system, where often a significant percentage of the vote is needed to gain any representation, less opportunity for access would be available because large electoral support would be needed.

4. "Direct-democratic procedures" – the ability to initiate referendum or voting initiatives without participation in the legislative power.\(^{19}\) This concerns whether there is a way for groups to put forward petitions for changes or creation of the law. In a political system where social movements can gain referendum through petitions or in other ways, there is much greater access to possibly achieving their movement’s goals than in a system where there is not.

*The informal strategies of the political elites vis-à-vis their challengers:* This concerns the political tradition of the elites to use either an “integrative” or “exclusive” strategy when dealing with social movements.\(^{20}\) Exclusive strategies can include tactics such as repression, confrontation and polarization in order to keep challengers – such as social movements – out of the political structure, while integrative strategies use tactics

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\(^{19}\) van der Heijden, “Political Opportunity Structure,” p. 30.

such as facilitation, assimilation, and co-optation to include challengers in the political structure.\textsuperscript{21}

The power relations within the party system: Whether or not political parties are possible allies with the social movement and also whether parties in government are right or left oriented will affect both how the social movement acts against the government and how accommodating the existing political structure may be to the social movement.\textsuperscript{22} If a social movement encounters a government that shares its goals, or is, at least in part, sympathetic to the cause they are promoting, that movement has a greater likelihood of making progress toward or achieving its goals.

Van der Heijden’s model of a political opportunity structure, and political opportunity structures in general, are a new and unique way to evaluate social movements. While not particularly effective in evaluating similar issues within the same state, POS models, according to Graeme Hayes, are a “highly useful comparative indicator of the organization and outcomes of similar protest movements in different states.”\textsuperscript{23} Political opportunity structures are models that allow researchers to draw parallels between multiple political systems in a standardized fashion. While there are still remaining criticisms that POS models are too deterministic, it is important to note that political opportunity structures can be used as a framework for understanding social movements. Political opportunity structures may not be perfect, but they can make research more manageable and improve overall comprehension of an issue.

\textsuperscript{21} Hayes, \textit{Environmental Protest and the State in France}, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{22} van der Heijden, “Political Opportunity Structure,” p. 31.

\textsuperscript{23} Hayes, \textit{Environmental Protest and the State in France}, p. 4.
Concerning the applicability of a POS model to the anti-nuclear energy movement, these structures are very relevant due to the nature of the social movement itself. Kriesi writes that “instrumental movements that seek to obtain specific collective goods or to prevent specific collective ‘bads’ are likely to be heavily dependent on the opportunity structure.”24 Many aspects of the anti-nuclear energy movement are specifically concerned with the possible pollution caused by nuclear energy production, a public “bad” in Kriesi’s terms. Kriesi also writes that “highly focused problems increase a movement’s dependence on the POS, especially when the problem is itself linked to specific political decisions . . .”25 This too directly concerns the anti-nuclear movement because the implementation of widespread energy production through nuclear facilities is often promoted by the state, along with being an easily identifiable adversary for a social movement. More specifically to this study, the governments of both the United State and France were dedicated to increasing their respective nations’ nuclear energy programs.26

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CHAPTER III
THE POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES OF FRANCE
AND THE UNITED STATES

Both democracies, France and the United States, are nonetheless possessive of very different forms of government. Looking first at France and then at the U.S., this section will explore how these states are defined according to van der Heijden’s four-part structure of political opportunity. In the end, speculation on the possible effects of POS relative to each other will be explained.

France

In general, France is a nation with a strong tradition in social protest and an even stronger government. When examining van der Heijden’s first factor affecting POS, the nature of existing political cleavages, it can be seen that in France this factor is not conducive toward social movement success. This is largely because many of the so-called “old” social movements still exist and practice today and new social movements make up around one-third of social movement actions.¹ This existence of the older generation of social movements points to a state that has made very few attempts at integration of social movements into the political structure of the country. Therefore in France, rather than a tradition of cooperation, the traditional response of the state toward social movements seems to be of rigidity and cleavage.

¹ Van der Heijden, “Political Opportunity Structure,” p. 28.
The formal institutional structure of France also does not bode well for the possible success of social movements. France is a very centralized state, though it has become less so throughout the years as devolution of powers to regional and local authorities has occurred. Along with centralization of power at a vertical level, the horizontal distribution of power in France is highly concentrated in the executive branch with a weak legislative body and a judicial system that has steadily increased its influence over the last 30 years. The nature of the French political system is closed to social movement participation in the legislature. The electoral system in France is a majority-plurality system in which a candidate must win fifty percent of the vote to gain a seat, while if less than fifty percent is gained a second vote is taken with any candidate earning 12.5 percent or more of the registered electorate being eligible. While there is a plurality of parties – perhaps offering the chance of gaining representation through existing channels – such a multiplicity of parties makes it especially difficult to gain enough votes to be considered for representation. Lastly, within the formal institutional structure, the possibility for a social movement to initiate referenda is not available in France.

The third aspect of political opportunity structures as outlined by van der Heijden is the informal strategies of elites. In France the informal strategy of the state is exclusive and therefore the state often acts repressively toward social movements. France, because

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of its strong state structure, acts regarding social movements with “full exclusion,” which Hanspeter Kriesi describes as being characterized by “neither formal nor informal facilitation of access; strong repression” and it is also unlikely that concessions towards a social movement will be made by the state.\(^7\)

The last contributing factor to a political opportunity structure is the power relations within the party system. France has a multiplicity of parties and within the established parties there are those focused on environmental and social interests.\(^8\) An alliance with political parties is one factor that concerns possible access to power within the party system (as mentioned previously) and the actions of a social movement; another is the reaction to the controlling ideology in the government. For example, van der Heijden notes that when the left (and more socially sympathetic) parties were out of power, there was a high level of social movement action, while when the more socially inclined parties were in control of the government, that action decreased significantly.\(^9\)

Overall, the political opportunity structure of France is very closed to effective action by social movements. The French state is very strong and exclusive and, as was depicted in Figure 1, this leads to confrontation between social movements and the government rather than a form of cooperation. It remains to be seen, however, how the political opportunity structure of France specifically affects the anti-nuclear energy movement.

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\(^7\) Kriesi, “The Political Opportunity Structure of New Social Movements,” p. 177.


The United States

There is a strong practice of citizen initiative in the United States. In most cases the government of the U.S. offers many opportunities to be heard for citizens looking to enact change. The status of existing political cleavages in the United States is very different from that in France. Social class, one of the major factors in the creation of "old" social movements, was not as extensive in the U.S. as it was in France. Political conflict was not often a result of social cleavage in the U.S.\(^{10}\) While social differentiation is not completely ignored, in the U.S. political parties are not aligned along these lines like they were in Europe and therefore political cleavages did not develop along social class lines.\(^{11}\) Religion and revolution, the other lines upon which "old" social movement were based, were also not as apparent in the United States. While religious issues sometimes have caused problems in the U.S., religion itself has not caused major cleavage\(^{12}\) and revolution was never a major issue in political parties, mainly because the major revolution that occurred in the U.S. was the revolution from the United Kingdom, and took place before the formation of the modern parties. This lack of old social movements leaves more room for new social movements in the U.S., unlike the preoccupation with such issues that still exists in France.

Unlike France, the formal institutional structure of the United States offers opportunities for successful social protest. As opposed to the centralized system in France, the U.S. has a federal system. This makes the institutional structure very


decentralized vertically, allowing individual regions – states – to decide their own system of government and laws under an overarching national government that is given very specific and somewhat limited authorities. In this way the structure of the U.S. gives much more access than would be available in a more centralized system of government. Issues can be taken up at both a state and a federal level. On a horizontal level of power the United States has possessed very strong legislative and executive branches since its founding, as well as having a judicial branch that has grown in power throughout the decades and now has the power to rival the other two levels. Yet, while the spread of power on a vertical level is decentralized, the executive still retains a significant amount of influence, which can interfere, if the administration is closed to social groups, or aid, if the administration is fragmented with a diversity of opinions, with opportunities to enact change. The electoral system in the U.S. is winner-takes-all, which coupled with the existence of two strong political parties, leaves less access and opportunity to enact change through election into a legislative position.

Here, too, the decentralization of the government on a national level adds to access because there is more of an opportunity to access state governments and enact change on a state level. Lastly, in the area of the formal institutions of the state is the existence of direct-democratic procedures. In the United States this is a process that is available, especially on a state level, to create even

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16 Welch, Gruhl, Comer, and Rigdon, American Government, pp. 189-190.
more opportunity for a chance to enact effective change as citizens can work to place referenda – or, as they are called in the U.S., initiatives – on the voting ballot.\textsuperscript{17}

Informal strategies of elites in the U.S. are very different from those in France. Unlike the French tendency for repressive action toward challengers, in the U.S. integration is the tool most often used. Overall there is a strong tradition of integration of challengers and new issues into the existing political structures, often along political party lines.\textsuperscript{18} While this may initially give interest groups a larger voice, unless the issue becomes important on a national level, such integration is unlikely to happen. When integration occurs, Herbert P. Kitschelt describes the common result as being that the social group “evaporating” into existing structures.\textsuperscript{19} Also important to note is that often the issues will become subsumed in the other issues of the party as the groups are integrated.

Concerning political opportunity structure, the last important aspect in van der Heijden’s model is the structure of power relations within the party system. As discussed above with the elitist strategies, in the U.S. interest groups are often integrated into existing political parties. However, both main parties in the U.S. are very close to the center ideologically and may be less open to more “radical” viewpoints. The parties do differ, though, in that the Democratic Party is considered leaning more to the left and the Republican more to the right. This, in turn, influences the social and religious groups that support each party.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Welch, Gruhl, Comer, and Rigdon, American Government, pp. 74-75.

\textsuperscript{18} Kitschelt, “Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest,” p. 67.

\textsuperscript{19} Kitschelt, "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest,” p. 67.

In general, the political opportunity structure of the United States is open to effective action by social movements. The U.S. structure is weak, having a federalist government with stratification of power among the state and national levels along with a strong judiciary, and open, preferring inclusion, and because of this tends more toward the assimilation of social movements, as is represented in Figure 1.

Speculation

Before looking at the development and course of the actual anti-nuclear energy movements of France and the United State, it is helpful to look at van der Heijden’s POS model and determine its possible effects on those movements. Concerning France, there still exists social and political cleavages of the “old” type of social movement, making the issues of new social movements less likely to be discussed. The French state is also very centralized, with most policy being of a national level and the horizontal power divisions being highly unequal between executive, legislative and judicial powers. Centralization and greater concentration of power in the executive than in the judicial and legislative branches (as characterized France during the rise of the anti-nuclear energy movement) are both factors that also hinder social movement access to change within the governmental system. Two other points of possible access are the electoral system, which in France is majority-plurality and therefore relatively closed, and direct-democratic procedures, also closed in France. The informal strategies of elites in France are generally exclusive, leaving little access for social movements. Lastly, the power relations in the party system are both closed and open to action by social movements. While coalitions are used in France to gain majority power in the legislature and social-issue parties may join in such coalitions, this does not necessarily mean the issues of a specific social
movement will be addressed. However, included under the power relations umbrella are the goals of the state which - if counter to a movement’s goals - can lead to closed access. Overall, the POS of France would point to little chance for effective action on the part of social movements through the government. While there are a few places where access to the government may be achieved – legislative power and coalitions – for the most part access is denied to social movements.

In the case of the United States the POS is much different. The U.S. does not face the existence of “old” social movements and therefore the political cleavages that not having resolved such issues can create. This leaves more of a chance for access in general for a social movement’s agenda. The structure of the American state also leaves much room for access as the federal system of government and adherence to balance of power between the executive, legislative and judicial branches multiplies the avenues through which social change can be enacted. However, included in the structure of the state is the electoral system, which does not offer much of a chance for access through electing officials and representatives under the American two-party dominated system. Direct-democratic procedures are another plus for access in the American system, through ballot initiatives where issues can be taken directly to the American people. The informal strategies of elites in the United States are almost direct opposites of those in France, being assimilative rather than exclusive. This integration gives social movements a greater chance at representation, though it is necessary to keep in mind that in the two-party system of the U.S. many issues become subsumed in an overall party message. On the issue of power relations, as discussed before, there is not a lot of diversity in the American system, making it less likely to be a point of access for social movements.
Generally, the POS of the U.S. is open to social movements, as there are many points of access to get their agenda heard, though the two-party system may cause some problems with actually having a large effect.

Having looked into the political opportunity structures existing in France and the United States, and having speculated a little about the possible effects of these structures on social movements, now it is time to look specifically at the anti-nuclear energy movements in France and the United States.
CHAPTER IV

THE ANTI-NUCLEAR ENERGY MOVEMENTS

The French Anti-nuclear Energy Movement

The anti-nuclear movement in France was propelled into existence by a worry common to most of the countries that were developing nuclear technologies: the danger of radiation through possible accidents. The anti-nuclear movement started various small protest activities in France during the late 1960s; however, the movement really gained momentum through local actions in the early 1970s. This early period of anti-nuclear energy protest lasted roughly from 1970 to 1975 and was focused on the building of nuclear facilities themselves and against the possible affects of nuclear plants on local ecology and economics. This focus on particular nuclear facilities led to the creation of very isolated cells of protest in the early years, with groups emerging to protest the development of nuclear energy near their homes.

The catalyst of the rising anti-nuclear protest movement occurred in 1974 when Prime Minister Pierre Messmer announced the government’s intention to raise the

1 Alain Touraine, translated by Peter Fawcett, Anti-nuclear Protest: The Opposition to Nuclear Energy in France (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983), p. 15.


3 Touraine, Anti-nuclear Protest, p. 19.

percentage of electricity produced from nuclear sources to 70 percent by 1985 and to reach two hundred operating nuclear power stations by 2000 (the Messmer Plan).\(^5\) This announcement led to widespread reaction and the expanding of the anti-nuclear movement as the French general public, specialists, and others stepped forward to renounce the government’s intentions.\(^6\) An example of this widened protest occurred in 1975 when four hundred scientists signed a petition against nuclear energy called the “Appel des 400” (“Call of the 400”), which was an expression of rising doubts within the expert community.\(^7\) The scientists were appealing to the general population in response to the government’s stated plans and were doing so in order to express doubt about the advisability of expanding the French nuclear program.\(^8\) Though concerns about nuclear energy started slowly mounting in the early 1970s, the government’s announcement of the Messmer Plan, along with other factors such as the Appel des 400 by the mid-1970s, led to large protests across France.

Most influential to the development of the anti-nuclear protest movement was the actual location of where the building of nuclear facilities would take place. As selections of prospective locations for nuclear facilities were made, anti-nuclear committees developed in a parallel fashion.\(^9\) The isolated protest groups of the early 1970s spread and became more integrated. These localized action groups explored the general effects of

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\(^{6}\) Nelkin, The Atom Besieged, p. 59.

\(^{7}\) Nelkin, The Atom Besieged, p. 59.

\(^{8}\) Touraine, Anti-nuclear Protest, p. 20.

\(^{9}\) Nelkin, The Atom Besieged, pp. 69-71.
large factories on the local ecosystems and economies, the specific effect of nuclear power production and the possibility of contamination into the agriculture surrounding factories, the safety of nuclear facilities, and the security of long-term storage of nuclear waste. In this way the movement spread to become a series of grassroots-like organizations, and as the anti-nuclear movement became more diverse, so did the modes in which protesters expressed themselves.

As the movement grew across France, protesters began large demonstrations through occupation of nuclear facilities or proposed sites. These occupations sometimes resulted in police actions. Eventually, French anti-nuclear protesters clashed with the EDF (Electricité de France), the only energy company in France as well as being state owned. Politicians began to take greater notice as legal struggles became more common and the movement continued to enlarge. It was impossible for politicians in some of the most mobilized regions to ignore the anti-nuclear movement because protest and concerns became so extensive that the movement was a significant voting force. In regions such as Erdeven, Plogoff, Ploumogeur and Le Pellerin, where nuclear power sites were proposed, the level of local action in the anti-nuclear movement led some local politicians to agree with the movement in opposition of the state’s plans. Politicians who adopted an anti-nuclear platform saw success in many of the local and regional

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elections in the mid-1970s. Some ecology candidates received 5 to 13 percent of the vote, a significant portion in France, a nation with a multitude of political parties.\(^{14}\)

Other forms of protest that developed in France included large letter-writing campaigns, use of posters, newspaper articles and cartoons, and various literature such as petitions and reviews.\(^{15}\) Some of the more extreme protestors had physical confrontations with police and security guards. In a few instances bombs were used to destroy or hinder development of nuclear sites or the buildings of officials involved with nuclear development.\(^{16}\) In one case there was even a strike by workers at La Hague, a nuclear reprocessing facility, over working conditions and the risks of radiation. This led to greater public worry as the people actually working in the nuclear field spoke out about some of the anti-nuclear movement’s major issues.\(^{17}\)

As reviewed above, the anti-nuclear movement started with largely localized groups concerned over their own regions, yet soon the scope of people involved in the protests expanded. As Alain Touraine writes in his book, *Anti-nuclear Protest*: “The working-class organizations as a whole did not adopt an anti-nuclear stance and it was mainly the teachers, social workers, scientists and students who led a fight which also mobilized the populations directly affected by the building of nuclear plants.”\(^{18}\) Also aiding in the fight against nuclear development were ecology groups such as Les Amis de


\(^{16}\) Nelkin, *The Atom Besieged*, pp. 69, 72.

\(^{17}\) Nelkin, *The Atom Besieged*, p. 71.

la Terre ("Friends of the Earth") and La Gueule ouverte (roughly, "The Open Mouth").\textsuperscript{19} Unique to France was the involvement of the CFDT, a union confederation that included the energy production fields, which opposed the government's plans and worked to educate people of the dangers of nuclear energy production.\textsuperscript{20} As the movement gained in political popularity, many leftist parties started to take an interest, most notably the Socialist Party.\textsuperscript{21} Some of the other diverse groups active in the movement were the traditional farmers – who were already insecure in the face of industrialization and were seeking to preserve their way of life – the young, and the highly educated.\textsuperscript{22}

The diversity of interests involved in the anti-nuclear movement may have begun as a strength of the movement, but it is highly likely that this same diversity of interests contributed to its downfall. The variety of groups involved allowed the movement some initial political success. However, an inability to truly unify beyond one-time actions hindered long-term effectiveness.\textsuperscript{23} One of the death knells to a possible unified movement occurred during the July 31, 1977 march on a nuclear construction site in Melville. The march had no unified goals and no controls were imposed over the participants that resulted in the dropping out of the CFDT and the Socialist Party, who feared what might result.\textsuperscript{24} Though there was a general nonviolent theme to the march, the lack of unified control and a strong military and police presence intending to prevent

\textsuperscript{19} Touraine, \textit{Anti-nuclear Protest}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{20} Touraine, \textit{Anti-nuclear Protest}, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{21} Touraine, \textit{Anti-nuclear Protest}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{22} Nelkin, \textit{The Atom Besieged}, pp. 107-109.
\textsuperscript{23} Touraine, \textit{Anti-nuclear Protest}, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{24} Touraine, \textit{Anti-nuclear Protest}, p. 27.
the marchers from ever reaching the site soon turned events in another direction.\textsuperscript{25} When the protesters entered a zone deemed “forbidden,” the military attacked with tear gas and the situation degenerated to the point that grenades were used against the marchers.\textsuperscript{26} In historical perspective, the Melville march was the largest protest in the anti-nuclear movement, along with having the distinction of being the one in which the first death of the anti-nuclear energy movement occurred as a protestor, Vital Michalon, died from trauma inflicted by a grenade blast.\textsuperscript{27}

Many splits in the movement occurred after Melville, specifically concerning the role of violence in protest.\textsuperscript{28} Large protests seemed to disappear and more quiet forms of action – for example, literature publication and political initiatives – occurred.\textsuperscript{29} Many forms of civil disobedience, such as paying only a percentage of one’s bills to the EDF or later when faced with electricity being cut off, citizen groups “advised customers to forget to sign their checks, to pay a few centimes too little or too much, to pay their bills in several parts – all to disturb the computerized accounting system” were also popular.\textsuperscript{30} In these small ways the French continued to protest, though perhaps widespread marches had taken on a negative feel.

The goals of the anti-nuclear movement in France, much as the purpose of the protesters at Melville, were diverse. An overarching goal was to stop the construction of


\textsuperscript{26} Gyorgy, “France Kills Its First Protester,” p. 332.

\textsuperscript{27} Nelkin, \textit{The Atom Besieged}, pp. 72-74.

\textsuperscript{28} Nelkin, \textit{The Atom Besieged}, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{29} Nelkin, \textit{The Atom Besieged}, p. 79.

\textsuperscript{30} Nelkin, \textit{The Atom Besieged}, p. 80.
nuclear energy plants. Many anti-nuclear protesters were involved because of their NIMBY-like attitudes (Not In My Back Yard) and the fear of what nuclear plants would do to local communities. Stemming from this was also a fear of pollution and contamination that could be caused by nuclear plants. Other protesters taking part in the movement were aimed more at defying the government of France and its declaration of increasing nuclear energy facilities, which was decided without public input.31 Still others were concerned with more specific issues, such as proliferation of nuclear technologies of any form and the production and disposal of radioactive waste.

The United States' Anti-nuclear Energy Movement

Similar to that in France, the anti-nuclear energy movement in the United States developed parallel to the growth of the nuclear energy facilities themselves. In the 1960s, opposition to nuclear energy was “generally muted,” as Joseph A. Camilleri writes in his book, The State and Nuclear Power.32 As the decade ended a growing environmental awareness in the American public contributed to a rise in the movement.33 Initially, many people joined the movement because of their vicinity to plants and concerns over radiation and other effects on the people and environments surrounding the plants. The main tool of groups was public education.34 Worries about the environmental impact of nuclear energy production started early on in the movement, especially on the issue of

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31 Touraine, Anti-nuclear Protest, p. 22.


thermal pollution – the releasing of warm to hot water used to cool reactors into rivers and lakes.\(^{35}\)

By the early 1970s the anti-nuclear energy movement had acquired a large middle-class following. As Richard Rhodes describes in his book, *Nuclear Renewal:*

"Antinuclear activists, like the ecological activists who have succeeded them, tended to be better educated than the national average, younger rather than older, women rather than men, middle-class rather than working-class, white-collar rather than blue. They were more likely to work in the service sector than on the assembly line."\(^{36}\) Expansion of the movement not only reflected changing beliefs in the U.S. public, but the international climate as well. The energy crisis in 1973-1974 brought the issue of energy itself into the public eye and also acted to bring more controversial sources of energy to the forefront. For instance, when searching for alternatives to oil the Nixon Administration turned to further development of nuclear energy.\(^{37}\)

Large environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club, were involved in the antinuclear energy movement by the mid-1970s.\(^{38}\) Along with the Sierra Club, other well-known groups such as the Friends of the Earth – an offshoot of the French Les Amis de la Terre – and the Wilderness Society were seeking to end current construction and ban

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further construction of nuclear sites.39 A strong propellant for individuals to join such groups or smaller, more local and grassroots organizations, which numbered well more than a hundred, was the threat of construction near them.40 Eventually, many grassroots and larger organizations joined together to protest certain plants or developments concerning nuclear energy. One such instance was the Clamshell Alliance, which in 1977 planned an occupation of a nuclear site.41 Unlike its Western European counterparts, in the United States large protests were not often used. In fact, the first national anti-nuclear protest took place only after the accident involving the Three Mile Island reactor in March 1979.42 While this is not to say that large protests did not play a role in the American anti-nuclear movement, actions such as protests and civil disobedience were often imitations of pre-existing European strategies, or as Herbert P. Kitschelt describes it, such strategies were “imported,” not indigenous.43

Ralph Nadar, a well-known activist, took up the issue in 1974.44 Not only did Nadar bring nuclear energy more into the media through his campaigning for public office, he also worked to extend the cause of anti-nuclear protest by bringing like-minded people together. One way in which this was done was through an organization called “Critical Mass.” On two separate occasions – November 1974 and 1975 – Critical Mass

39 Camilleri, The State and Nuclear Power, p. 87.
40 Camilleri, The State and Nuclear Power, p. 87.
41 Camilleri, The State and Nuclear Power, p. 98.
42 Camilleri, The State and Nuclear Power, p. 98.
43 Kitschelt, "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest,” p. 73.
Conventions took place to plan protest strategy.\textsuperscript{45} More apparatuses of the anti-nuclear energy movement would evolve from these conventions, all sharing the name Critical Mass. One such was a steering committee, which was to try to direct and unify protesting, along with spreading knowledge and the issue through a publication.\textsuperscript{46}

By 1976, the issue of nuclear energy was heating up on a local level. First in California – which was quickly to be followed by Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, California, Ohio, Missouri, and Washington – ballot initiatives were tried in an attempt to have voters place a moratorium on nuclear power plants.\textsuperscript{47} The goals of these actions were as diverse as the groups supporting them; however, they served to further bring the issue of nuclear energy to the forefront of public debate.

The Clamshell Alliance is one of the most prominent opposition groups from the era of anti-nuclear energy protest. Starting unofficially in 1976, by 1977 the Clamshell Alliance was developing a structure reflective of the New Left ideology held by most of its founders.\textsuperscript{48} This ideological stance left the Clamshell Alliance with little authority over its members and a structure that was decentralized to avoid any large accumulation of power by any single individual or group. The Alliance served mainly to facilitate coordination between the many diverse groups worried about the construction of a nuclear plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire.\textsuperscript{49}


\textsuperscript{47} Camilleri, \textit{The State and Nuclear Power}, p. 91; Cohen, \textit{Ideology, Interest Group Formation, and Protest}, p. 52.


Tactics employed by anti-nuclear energy protestors in the United States were less confrontational than those of Western Europe and often included legislative and legal actions. Appealing to state level legislatures, ballot initiatives, actions through the courts, and attending hearings on plants were common tactics in the United States. Another common strategy was to delay the licensing process for nuclear facilities by showing up and protesting at the committees who issue such licenses. Attacking certain technologies or processes involved in producing nuclear energy was also often used. Scientists and experts who were expressing doubts about different nuclear technologies were often used in this approach, for example, when a plant was proposed to be built in the vicinity of Cornell University and the public turned to the campus for advice. Publications were also very popular in the United States, whether ideological – like those of the New Left – or connected to an organization or convention – as in the cases of the Critical Mass Convention and Committee and environmental groups like the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth. The large amount of local and grassroots organization also led to community involvement and public education being major tools of the movement.

Some of the goals of the anti-nuclear energy movement in the United States and in Western Europe were to “prevent further reliance on nuclear power by persuading governments and public opinion that the technology posed a unique health and social risk, and that the issue of nuclear safety was now the subject of acute scientific controversy,” along with stopping development in the protestors’ neighborhoods. In the

50 Camilleri, The State and Nuclear Power, p. 91.
51 Rhodes, Nuclear Renewal, p. 12.
52 Camilleri, The State and Nuclear Power, pp. 76-77.
53 Camilleri, The State and Nuclear Power, p. 87.
case of state ballot initiatives – where harsh action against nuclear energy development was avoided in order to not alienate voters – action was taken in hopes of slowing down the development of nuclear energy, thus giving time for other means of producing energy to develop, along with the general goal of trying to hinder nuclear energy plant development.⁵⁴

The course and development of the anti-nuclear energy movements in France and the United States were similar in some ways, but had very significant differences. By directly comparing what has been learned about both political opportunity structures and the respective anti-nuclear energy movements, greater understanding of the two can be found.

CHAPTER V

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE AND

THE ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENTS

The POS and Anti-nuclear Movement in France

The Political opportunity structure of France was an effective tool for evaluation in some aspects. France’s political opportunity structure correctly predicted that there would be little to no open discourse between the anti-nuclear energy movement and the government. Also, the POS model following van der Heijden’s specifications predicted the strict stance of the French government, which led to confrontation with the social movement, both through the political system – as it did in a limited sense in the Courts, as well as in elections – and at times physically, such as occurred at the protest in Melville. However, on initial study the political opportunity structure of France did not work out as it was supposed to concerning participation in the political process. The closed and strong make-up of the state pointed to extreme confrontation on all levels, yet the protest movements managed to gain a great deal of political success at local levels and even a little on the national level in regions that were particularly against the building of nuclear sites within their borders. While the political power that the anti-nuclear energy movement held was brief in duration, it points out a disparity in the POS model.

The French government is very strong, as van der Heijden’s model reflected, yet the model failed to address the make-up of the French political party system, which while
dominated by two strong parties, does often include coalitions that could have gained an environmental party or the Socialist Party political the access to enact the changes they wanted. Political opportunity structure theory is both successful and unsuccessful in the case of the French anti-nuclear movement.

The POS and Anti-nuclear movement in the United States

The Political Opportunity Structure of the United States was helpful in predicting some of the aspects of the anti-nuclear energy movement. The POS brought to the forefront the large amount of opportunities for protesters in the U.S. to express their views and try to achieve their goals in governmental structures. The decentralized nature of a federal system, the large and relatively powerful legislative branch, and the powerful court system were just three aspects which POS theory predicted would lead to social movement action within the government and which were taken advantage of by the anti-nuclear energy protestors. Confrontation was not a large issue in the United States as it was in France and Western Europe, another aspect that POS theory successfully predicted. However, the extent to which the relatively low level of confrontation between the government and protestors was dependent upon the political structure of the U.S. rather than societal beliefs, precedent, or other possible causes is unknown. It is also notable that as the movement progressed and legislative and legal actions were not producing the results protestors wanted, they did move to more confrontational strategies, such as site occupation and large-scale protests.

In the United States there were also some factors outside the purely political to consider when looking at the development of the anti-nuclear energy movement. The accident on Three Mile Island was a precursor to large-scale social protest on the issue of
nuclear energy, which may explain the movement's escalation outside the political arena.

POS theory does not take into account extraordinary events or even address the possible effects of such events on existing political structures and social processes.

In looking at political opportunity structures respective to the anti-nuclear energy movements in France and the United States, the Theory's utility as a tool has become very apparent. Like any tool, Political Opportunity Structure Theory did not always work perfectly (in that it could not always explain events), but overall it was useful examining, analyzing, and comparing the two nations. Political Opportunity Structure Theory, still undeveloped and not researched on a wide-scale, has some glitches. Two most noticed in this examination are an inability to account for coalitions in government formation and a lack of allowance for extraordinary events and their possible effects on political opportunity structures. Despite this, POS Theory is effective as a framework for comparing nations.

As seen in the examination of the two nations, the anti-nuclear energy movements in France and the United States both rose and fell with the tide of nuclear development. However, the end results of these tides were very different. In France the nuclear energy movement imploded, destroyed through public disenchantment with an increasingly volatile and dangerous group of protestors facing an increasingly repressive government. Whether the French people became resigned to their fate as a nuclear nation or merely tired of the fight against nuclear energy is unknown, but it is apparent that the passion behind the protestors withered away. In the United States protests also grew increasingly large and confrontational, but while police may have been called in once or twice for
arrests, there were no deaths or spectacular fights between the army or police and protesters. The growth of nuclear energy facilities in the U.S. instead seemed to peter out in the face of rising costs, public disenchantment, increasing bureaucratic red tape, and liabilities – often due to judicial reviews initiated by protestors – along with a decrease of pressure as the energy crises in the 1970s ended and oil prices stabilized.

In the U.S. the goals of the anti-nuclear protestors were achieved in part as nuclear facility development slowed to a crawl and then came to a standstill. Does this necessarily mean that the anti-nuclear energy movement in the United States was more effective than in France? Perhaps and perhaps not. The protestors in the United States took a subtler and more sustainable path in protesting nuclear energy. By working through governmental structures – which were weak in e U.S. – the movement not only gave itself an air of legitimacy, but perhaps also bolstered its cause by using established and respected means of enacting change and avoiding controversy. In France, where perhaps many were more ideologically willing to follow nuclear energy protestors than in the United States, the repeated confrontation and violence may have served to discredit the movement’s legitimacy and cause people to ignore what they might otherwise consider valid points made by the movement. France’s anti-nuclear energy movement can in part be termed radical. Though not the stance taken by the whole of the movement, some protestors did seek confrontation with police and military authorities, other protestors sabotaged construction sites – even going so far as to plant bombs – and ultimately those few protestors led to a general negative view about all protestors. It is notable that the French anti-nuclear energy movement included more well-established organizations than its U.S. counterpart – such as the Socialist Party and the trade union
CFDT – and yet still did not achieve as much success. France’s closed political opportunity structure and the French state’s focus on nuclear energy as a way to continue supplying the nation with electricity and in hopes of becoming self-sufficient also worked against protestors.

In this new age, as the world faces a future filled with fears of an energy crisis and governments and experts are looking at nuclear energy again as a new, old hope for energy, the role of anti-nuclear energy organizations remains to be seen. If the issue of nuclear energy is again taken up, it will be interesting to see what will occur, especially since the political structures of both France and the United States have changed since the first rise of the anti-nuclear energy movement. While both states’ structures have opened up, the level of this opening up has occurred at a significantly higher rate in France. However, while changes in the French political system have occurred, the state also now uses nuclear energy as its main source of electricity and presenting some viable alternative to nuclear energy would be incredibly difficult. In the United States, where nuclear energy has not been developed to such an extent as in France, a renewed battle over nuclear energy could begin.

The anti-nuclear energy movements in both France and the United States have not disappeared over the years, though they have decreased. Some major organizations have been in the forefront of publicly protesting nuclear facilities ever since the large-scale movement’s end and perhaps those organizations could be the foundation for another large anti-nuclear energy movement. In a more ecologically aware world, it is possible that an anti-nuclear movement would enjoy more success than in the past, as more people are aware and concerned about humanity’s effects on nature and the consequences that
could be faced in the future. Global warming and the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere has become a major issue and nuclear energy would hold little threat toward increasing this existing problem and has even made the strength of resistance to nuclear energy come into question.\(^1\) Yet, the issue of waste storage has not been resolved over the decades and this remains a major deterrent to further nuclear facility development.

The future of nuclear development in the world is unknown. While nations such as France have already made a major commitment to nuclear energy that would be difficult to reverse, other nations, such as the United States, have not made a commitment to such a level and so it remains unsure as to whether they will increase, decrease, or even change their use of nuclear energy.

\(^1\) The issue of nuclear energy as a more environmentally friendly option has split many environmentalists. Some still are against nuclear energy, but others feel that it might be a solution to global warming.
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