Political Crime: By and Against Government

Lecture Outline
- Defining
- Crime by Government
- Crime against Government
- Explaining
  - Social Patterns – of incidence and reactions
- Reducing

Problematic Idea
- Text definition
  "any illegal or socially harmful act aimed at preserving or changing the existing political or social order" (whoa)
- Not merely violation of governmental will
  - Any crime, by def, violates a pre/post-scription
  - Ideological (Teleological)
  - Vs. for economic gain, morality, or expression
  - E.g. tax evasion vs nonpayment as protest
  - Governments commit crime, too
  - Political Prisoners
    - Inc. poor in prisons?
    - Acts of omission
  - Hunger, poverty, corp crime, inst. Sexism
  - Excluding those ‘it itself a political act’
  - But should we define politically, or scientifically?
- Social definition of political crime is a variable label, explain that

Crime(s) by Government
- Aka state crime/criminality
- Text’s list
  - Political repression & Human rights violations
    - Odd to group, and understated?
  - Unethical/illegal experimentation
    - Form of HRV?
  - Aiding and abetting of corporate criminals
    - Undemocratic, but not on the same order?
  - Political corruption
    - Occupational/Enterprise – but Watergate, Iran-Contra

Undemocratic Measures
- Political repression
  - Imprisonment (dissidents), inc. trials as stigma
    - E.g. The Palmer Raids post WWI – US AG radicals
    - Ended IWW during WWI, Black Panter Party ’70-'72
    - AIM – Leonard Peltier, 1975
    - Post 9/11 – Guantanamo Bay
    - Surveillance, infiltration, disruption
      - 100s of Ks over 40 years in US (inc me!)
      - COINTELPRO, anti-Communism, civil rights workers
  - State–Corporate crime
    - Aiding corporate criminals – NC workplaces, water; NASA
  - Corruption
    - Steffens’ The Shame of the Cities (1904)
    - Teapot Dome, Watergate, Iran-Contra, Abramoff

Human Rights Violations
- Political & Cultural repression – inc. Genocide
  - "deliberate extermination of a group" – race/eth, relig, nationality
  - "Crime against humanity"
  - Jews (often), Armenians (esp post-Turkey), Native Americans, Cambodia (Khmer Rouge) Bosnia-Herzegovina (vs. Muslims & Croats), Rwanda (Tutsi), Sudan (by the Janjaweed)
  - State terrorism – beatings, torture, execution
    - Stalinism, Tiananmen Square, US civil rights workers, Kent state, Iraq
    - Operation Pheonix – 40K Vietnamese civilians
    - Coups – Chile, Dom. Rep, Guatemala, Iran, S. Vietnam…
  - Experimentation
    - Nazis – e.g. how long for naked person to freeze to death
    - Tuskegee syphilis experiment – 400 untreated for decades!
    - Military – fallout, Xrays, LSD, water poison, biowarfare (over SF!)
Crime(s) Against Gov’t

- Political Violence – revolt or riot?
  - “myth of peaceful progress” (Rubenstein, 1970)
- Terrorism
  - Irrational, demented acts? Rational, political purposes
    - “the use of unexpected violence to intimidate or coerce people in the pursuit of political or social objectives” (Gurr, 1989)
  - State terrorism
  - Vigilante terrorism – abortion clinics
  - Insurgent terrorism – Iraq, Afghanistan
  - Transnational/Global terrorism
- Assassination
- Civil disobedience – as strategy (like all SC)
- Espionage & Treason

Explaining & Reducing

- Explanation
- Explanations
  - Soc–Psych
  - Social Patterns – white MC men
  - Variability in Reactions
- Reducing
  - Is that a goal?
  - Of which kinds? – terrorism?
  - By whom?
    - Against whom?
  - State/fed, US/UN/etc