

Chapter 1

What is a revolution?

On the morning of July 14, 1789, a crowd of Parisian workers set out to attack the royal prison of the Bastille. Joined by deserting soldiers who brought cannons, and ignored by Royal Army troops camped nearby, the crowds forced their way into the fortress by late afternoon, killing the governor and parading his head on a pike. That evening King Louis XVI reportedly asked the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, "Is this a revolt?" To which the duc replied: "No Sire, it is a *revolution*!"

The duc's answer was shaped by his awareness that the crowds of Paris were not simply demanding lower prices for bread, or the dismissal of an unpopular minister, or protesting the selfish luxury of the queen, Marie Antoinette. They were acting in support of the National Assembly, led by the representatives of the Third Estate, or commoners, to the Estates General. Three weeks earlier, the assembly had defied the king and declared that they, not the Estates of the Nobles or the Clergy, were the true leaders of France. If they were supported by the people and the military defected to join them, the old social and political order of France would be over.

Two great visions shape our views of revolution. One is the heroic vision of revolution. In this view, downtrodden masses are raised up by leaders who guide them in overthrowing unjust rulers, enabling the people to gain their freedom and dignity. Though

revolutions are violent, this is necessary to destroy the old regime and vanquish its supporters—the birth pangs of a new order that will provide social justice. This ideal, rooted in Greek and Roman traditions of the founding of republics, was promoted by defenders of the American and French Revolutions such as Thomas Paine and Jules Michelet. It was later given modern form as a theory of the inevitable triumph of the poor over the rich by Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong, and their followers.

Yet there is a second, opposing vision, that revolutions are eruptions of popular anger that produce chaos. In this view, however well meaning, reformers who unleash the mob find the masses demanding blood and creating waves of violence that destroy even the revolutionary leaders. Chasing unrealistic visions and their own glory, revolutionary leaders lay waste to civilized society and bring unwarranted death and destruction. This view was promoted by English critics who feared the excesses of the French Revolution, from Edmund Burke and Thomas Carlyle to Charles Dickens. It was later taken up by critics of the Russian and Chinese revolutions who emphasized the human costs of the transformations pursued by Stalin and Mao.

Revolutions

In reality, the history of revolution reveals both faces. Actual revolutions are enormously varied. Some are nonviolent whereas others produce bloody civil wars; some have produced democracies and greater liberty whereas others have produced brutal dictatorships. Today, political leaders are less concerned with the contending myths of revolution than with understanding why revolutions occur and how they evolve. Revolutions erupting in unexpected places—in Iran and Nicaragua in 1979, in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989–91, and across the Arab world in 2011—have not only come as shocks to rulers but have unsettled the international order.

This book seeks to answer the questions of why revolutions occur and why they surprise us, how they have developed over the course

of history, and where they have shaped national and global politics. But first we need to have a clear idea of precisely what a revolution is, and how revolutions differ from other kinds of disorders and social change.

Defining “revolution”

Throughout history, people have suffered from misfortune and oppression. Most of the time, people respond with fortitude and resignation, or prayer and hope. Those who suffer usually see the forces in power as too great to change and view themselves as too isolated and weak to be agents of change. Even when people do rebel against authorities, most such acts remain isolated and are easily put down.

Revolutions are thus rare—much rarer than the instances of oppression and injustice. They arise only when rulers become weak and isolated, when elites begin to attack the government rather than defend it, and when people believe themselves to be part of a numerous, united, and righteous group that can act together to create change.

Scholars of politics and history have defined revolution in different ways. Most agree that revolutions involve a forcible change in government, mass participation, and a change in institutions. But some have argued that revolutions must be relatively sudden; others that they entail violence. Some insist that revolutions involve class-based struggles of the poor against the rich, or the common against the privileged. Yet in fact revolutions are diverse in these respects.

In the Chinese Communist Revolution, Mao Zedong spent more than twenty years in the countryside mobilizing the peasantry and fighting the Nationalist regime before taking power. Most of the recent “color” revolutions, such as the People Power Revolution in the Philippines and the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine,

were rapid, unfolding in weeks; yet they remained nonviolent. And many anticolonial revolutions—such as the American Revolution—pitted members of all classes against the colonial power, and produced little or no redistribution of wealth or social status.

For much of the twentieth century, social scientists were reluctant to deal with the subjective side of revolution. These “structuralists” preferred to focus on the more easily observed features of conflict and institutional change. Yet in recent years, students of revolution have come to realize how critical the ideologies and narratives of social justice are to revolutionary mobilization and revolutionary outcomes. The pursuit of social justice is inseparable from how people define their revolutionary identities and frame their actions.

We can therefore best define revolution in terms of *both* observed mass mobilization and institutional change, *and* a driving ideology carrying a vision of social justice. *Revolution* is the forcible overthrow of a government through mass mobilization (whether military or civilian or both) in the name of social justice, to create new political institutions.

Revolutions

What revolutions are not

A key difficulty in defining revolutions is separating them from similar, more common disruptive events, particularly since such events almost always occur as part of revolutions. These component events include peasant revolts, grain riots, strikes, social and reform movements, coup d'états, and civil wars. All of these have their own causes and outcomes, but only under certain conditions do they lead to revolutions.

Peasant revolts are uprisings of rural villages. They sometimes aim at resisting the demands of local landlords, sometimes at foiling state agents (tax collectors or other officials). Usually they seek to

call attention to exceptional local hardships. Most often, their goal is to get help from the government to resolve local problems, not to change the government itself.

Grain riots are mass mobilizations to protest food shortages or excessively high prices. They involve seizures of grain shipments or stores, attacks on bakeries or merchants, and—in the style of Robin Hood—efforts to distribute food to the poor, and demands to enforce a maximum price or secure state subsidies. They usually occur in cities, where people depend on buying grain and other necessities at market prices, but they can also occur in rural areas at key points for the transit or storage of grain. Grain riots arose in more than a dozen African countries in the wake of high global food prices in 2007–8. Like peasant revolts, they usually seek government help rather than to change the government.

Strikes are mobilizations of workers to withhold work from employers. They usually focus on workplace issues of pay, hours, safety, and work rules, and are local to a particular region or industry. However, if workers have widely shared grievances against government policies they may seek a general strike, in which workers throughout the country refuse to work, or a political strike, in which workers in key industries (mining, energy, transport) coordinate a refusal to work until the government policies in question are changed. Such strikes were crucial in bringing down the Soviet and other communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

Peasant revolts and grain riots are typical of traditional agricultural societies. In most modern societies, by contrast, protests against government policies take the form of social or reform movements. Social movements are mass mobilizations on behalf of particular groups or causes. They commonly focus on discrimination or oppression against members of the group. Social movements can be disruptive and provoke regime violence, as with the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements in the United

States. They employ such tactics as sit-ins, marches, boycotts, and occupations of state buildings or public places. Nonetheless, most social movements simply aim to resolve the grievances of a particular group.

Reform movements explicitly seek to change existing government institutions. They may seek new laws to limit corruption, or voting rights for more people, or greater autonomy for a region. Yet rather than seeking to overthrow the existing government, they try to attain their goals by working through lawful procedures for institutional change, seeking to win court rulings or electoral campaigns, pass new laws, or obtain constitutional changes. They become revolutionary only when the government resists or delays meaningful change and lashes out at reformers. Thus the Mexican Revolution was unleashed when the dictator Porfirio Díaz jailed the moderate reformer Francisco Madero and manipulated the results of elections that reformers appear to have won.

Revolutions

These sorts of disorders and movements usually aim at remedying local or group grievances. Other kinds of events, however, do aim to overthrow the government. These include coups, radical social movements, and civil wars. But these do not usually produce revolutions either.

The most common acts that result in the forcible overthrow of governments are elite coups or coups d'état (literally, blows to the state). They occur when one authoritarian leader or a small group of leaders takes over the government, without any large mass mobilization or civil struggle. Although military coups against democracies or monarchies produce new political institutions, they hardly ever do so in the name of broad principles of social justice. Rather, the coup leaders usually claim their actions were necessary to restore order, end intolerable corruption, or halt economic decay, and that they will step down once their task is done. Recent military coups in Thailand and in 2006 and in Niger in 2010 are good examples.

On the other hand, coups can lead to revolutions if the coup leaders or their followers present a vision for reshaping society on new principles of justice and social order, embark on a program of mass mobilization to build support for that vision, and then enact that vision by creating new institutions. Atatürk's secular nationalist revolution in Turkey, Nasser's Arab nationalist revolution in Egypt, and the Portuguese Officers' Revolution are all cases in point.

Radical social movements, unlike most social movements, seek to forcibly overthrow the state. Yet these do not become effective revolutionary movements unless they move beyond their usually small circle of followers to create a broad coalition of varied groups that share this goal. Otherwise—like the poor student rebels in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*—they are easily isolated and suppressed.

Civil wars often produce the forcible overthrow of governments. They can arise from dynastic contests that pit claimants from the same family tree against each other; from military officers falling out and competing for power using their armed supporters; or from religious or ethnic groups seeking to oust or expel their rivals. But in none of these cases is the effort to overthrow the government driven by the dream of realizing a new vision of social justice. Only when a leader with a revolutionary vision builds an army to overthrow the government in order to realize that vision do we speak of a revolutionary war—and if that campaign succeeds and then transforms political institutions, then it is a revolution.

Revolutionary civil wars also arise after the old regime has already been overthrown. Those who enjoyed privileges under the old regime, or even those simply resisting unwelcome changes, may mobilize counterrevolutionary forces and go to war against the new revolutionary government. Some of the most massive civil wars in history, such as the Russian Whites against the Red Army in 1918–21, and the Mexican Civil War of 1913–20, both of which

killed millions, arose when revolutionary leaders struggled against counterrevolutions.

In addition to the aforementioned events, one often hears the terms "rebellions, uprisings, insurrections, and guerrilla wars" used when talking about revolutions. These are general terms that are sometimes conflated with "revolution" but do not mean the same thing. A rebellion is any act by a group or individual that refuses to recognize, or seeks to overturn, the authority of the existing government. Thus one can have an elite rebellion, as when courts refuse to recognize a decree of the ruler; or one can have a popular rebellion, as when crowds occupy a public square and refuse to obey government demands that they disperse.

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Any attempt at revolution is by definition a rebellion, so efforts to overthrow a regime but fail are often called rebellions. Still, not every rebellion that succeeds leads to revolution. If a duke with dynastic claims to the throne takes up arms against the king, that is a rebellion. But if the duke succeeds and becomes the new king, and all the institutions of government remain much the same, then no revolution has occurred. Uprisings and insurrections are types of popular rebellions—uprisings are usually unarmed or primitively armed popular rebellions, while insurrections involve some degree of military training and organization, and the use of military weapons and tactics by the rebels.

Guerrilla warfare is simply a style of warfare often used in rebellions and revolutions. Whereas conventional warfare relies on fighters who are massed in large-scale military units in regular formations, and who are housed in barracks and supplied by military supply trains, guerrilla warfare relies on smaller numbers of mobile fighters, in irregular-sized units, living off the land or blending into and supplied by the local population. Guerrilla warfare is particularly useful for small forces trying to expel a larger, more powerful force from their territory by inflicting a steady stream of losses while avoiding pitched battles with the

more powerful foe. It is therefore often chosen by revolutionaries who are initially few in number and facing a powerful government. The Chinese Communists, the Viet Cong, Castro's forces in Cuba, and the Nicaraguan Sandinistas all used guerrilla warfare. However, as the numbers of their supporters increased and they gained access to more resources (often from abroad), they shifted to more conventional warfare in the final struggle for power.

Peasant revolts, grain riots, strikes, social movements, coups, and civil wars thus all can arise in the course of revolutions and are important constituent elements of revolutionary struggles. Nevertheless, a revolution is something distinct from any of these alone. What gives revolutions their distinctive role in history and in the popular imagination is that only revolutions combine *all* the elements of forcible overthrow of the government, mass mobilization, the pursuit of a vision of social justice, and the creation of new political institutions. It is this combination that leads us to conceive of revolutions as the process by which visionary leaders draw on the power of the masses to forcibly bring into existence a new political order.

What is a revolution?

Chapter 2

What causes revolutions?

A common misperception about revolutions is that they are acts of frustration—they happen when people say “We’re mad as hell and we won’t take it anymore.” Yet scholarly research has shown that this view is wrong.

Let us start by asking—“won’t take any more of *what*?” One possible answer is poverty: when people are so poor that their very survival is threatened, they rebel. This is not entirely wrong, for economic grievances often play a role in rebellions. Yet poverty is generally *not* associated with revolution. The worst poverty usually arises in the wake of crop failures and famines, yet the majority of famines—such as the great Irish potato famine of the 1840s—did not lead to revolutions.

In fact, revolutions occur more often in middle-income countries than in the very poorest nations. When the American Revolution occurred, the American colonists were far better off than European peasants. Even in Europe, the French Revolution of 1789 arose in a country whose peasants were generally better off than the peasants of Russia, where revolution did not occur until more than a hundred years later.

This is because poor peasants and workers cannot overthrow the government when faced with professional military forces

determined to defend the regime. Revolutions can occur only when significant portions of the elites, and especially the military, defect or stand aside. Indeed, in most revolutions it is the elites who mobilize the population to help them overthrow the regime.

Some scholars, recognizing that sheer poverty may produce popular revolts but not revolutions, have argued that it is *relative* deprivation that drives revolution—when inequality or class differences grow unbearable, or when people’s expectations for further progress are dashed, they rise up in protest. But extreme inequality can just as easily lead to resignation and despair as to revolution; deep inequality also leaves the poor without the resources to create an effective revolutionary force. Throughout most of human history, great inequality and severe poverty have been justified by religion and tradition as natural and inevitable, and have been tolerated, even accepted, as the normal order of things.

What turns poverty or inequality into a motivation for revolution? It is the belief that these conditions are not inevitable but arise from the faults of the regime. Only when elites and popular groups blame the regime for unjust conditions—whether arising from the regime’s incompetence, corruption, or favoritism for certain groups at the expense of others—will people rise against it.

Yet another force blamed for revolutions is modernization. In the 1960s and 1970s, when revolutions were breaking out across the developing world, this view had great appeal. Many observers argued that as preindustrial societies start to modernize, people encounter free markets for goods and services, inequality rises, and traditional religious and customary patterns of authority lose their power. As traditional relationships break down, people demand new, more responsive political regimes and turn to force to create them.

With more study, however, it became clear that modernization was not a single package of changes that arrived everywhere in the same

way. In some countries modernizing changes undermined regimes and gave rise to revolutions; but in other countries modernizing changes strengthened rulers and created more powerful authoritarian regimes (Saudi Arabia today or Germany under Bismarck). In still others, such as Canada, modernization brought a relatively smooth transition to democracy. In a few nations revolutions occurred just as modernization was beginning, as in Japan in 1868 and China in 1911. Yet in other nations revolutions occurred long after modernization had been largely accomplished, as in Eastern Europe in 1989–91. Clearly, modernization has no consistent relationship to the onset of revolutions.

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Finally, some observers attribute revolutions to the spread of new ideologies. This view too has some truth, as ideological shifts play an important role in revolutionary mobilization. Yet this does not explain why people would be drawn to dangerous new political ideas. Rulers and elites usually enforce beliefs that justify their rule, while harshly punishing those who question their authority. So revolutionary ideologies often languish without followers. New ideologies produce revolutionary actions only when there has already been a shift in elite positions, which creates space and opportunities to mobilize people around new beliefs. New ideologies are a part of the story of revolutions. But their appearance is not sufficient to produce revolutionary change.

The reason that all these views of revolutionary causation are inadequate is that they treat society as a passive structure—like a concrete wall—that will crumble when sufficient force is applied. Given enough poverty, inequality, modernization, or ideological change, the social order will collapse and revolution will occur. Yet society is not a passive structure. Rather, societies consist of millions of active people and groups whose actions continually re-create and reinforce the social order.

Rulers provide defense and services in return for taxes; elites provide support for rulers in return for prestige and political

and material rewards; and popular groups engage in economic activities, raise families, pray in churches, and receive protection in return for their economic activity and political obedience. The whole of society is continually being reconstituted by multiple overlapping relationships. These relationships allow societies to reproduce themselves over time while also being resilient, able to bounce back and reconstitute themselves after famines, wars, epidemics, local rebellions, religious heresies, and other crises. As long as elites remain united and loyal to the regime, and most popular groups remain reasonably content and focused on managing their own lives, regimes can be stable for centuries despite considerable strains and crises.

Revolutions as complex emergent processes

To understand what causes revolutions, it is also necessary to understand what keeps societies stable and resilient. In a stable society, popular groups engage in economic activities that generate sufficient income to support themselves and their families, and to pay the rents and taxes that support elites and the government. Elites—both those working for the government and those leading other organizations—act as the critical intermediaries between the state and the populace, organizing political, economic, religious and educational activities, reinforcing existing beliefs and behavior, and recruiting and training new elite members. The rulers provide rewards, recognition, and support to the elites, who in turn support the rulers' authority. Rulers also aim to protect the populace from banditry, invasions, famines, and other threats so that people can pay their rents and taxes. Under these conditions, a society is stable and resilient. It is resistant to the spread of rebellion and revolutionary ideologies because loyal military, bureaucratic and religious elites will suppress opposition, and because most groups are invested in the status quo and would not take major risks to change it.

Such a society can be described as being in "stable equilibrium." This concept comes from physical science. Imagine a ball sitting

at the bottom of a large depression; if a small force moves the ball in any direction, it simply falls back into the depression, returning to its former state. Thus, a stable equilibrium is one in which the response to a moderate disturbance is a return to the original condition. Similarly, in a society in stable equilibrium, the response to a peasant revolt or strike, a war or economic crisis, is for rulers and elites and even most popular groups to act to restore the existing social order.

Yet consider what happens if the ball is not sitting in a depression, but resting on top of a hill. In the absence of any force the ball remains in place, but a small force pushing the ball now leads it to roll off the hill and head in a new direction. This is an unstable equilibrium—a small disturbance leads to an ever larger departure from the prior condition. This is precisely what happens to a society in a revolution.

Revolutions

When we examine societies in the years leading up to a revolution, we find that social relationships have changed. The rulers have become weakened, erratic, or predatory so that many of the elites no longer feel rewarded or supported, and are not inclined to support the regime. Elites are no longer unified but instead have become divided into mutually suspicious and distrusting factions. Popular groups find that their efforts are not providing them with expected rewards or outcomes. There may be shortages of land or work, excessive rents or falling real wages, and growing banditry, so that ordinary people are unsettled and distressed. Many elites and popular groups view the rulers and other elites as unjust; they are drawn to heterodox beliefs or ideologies that make sense of their grievances and offer solutions through social change. Rulers may attempt reforms, aiming to win elite or popular support and to gain additional resources. But these are usually too little and too late, and merely create more uncertainty and fresh opposition.

Under such conditions, a moderate or even small disturbance—a war, an economic crisis, a local rebellion, or an act of exceptional

defiance or repression—can trigger spreading popular uprisings and heightened confrontations among elite groups. If a significant portion of the elites and diverse popular groups form a coalition against the rulers and demand major changes, a revolution has begun. If the military then suffers defections, and is reluctant or unable to overcome the spreading resistance, the revolution will succeed. This is how revolutions arise—over time, a society shifts from a condition of stable equilibrium to unstable equilibrium. Then even a small disorder can set off an accelerating movement toward greater disorder and the overturning of the existing regime. Revolutions do not arise simply from mounting discontent over poverty, inequality, or other changes. Rather, revolution is a complex process that emerges from the social order becoming frayed in many areas at once.

Unstable equilibrium and the paradox of revolution

Unfortunately, it is not always easy to determine if a country is in unstable equilibrium, as despite underlying changes it may appear outwardly stable for a long time. Strikes, demonstrations, or revolts may be dismissed as insignificant as long as they are small and the military or police are willing and able to repress them. The degree to which other groups sympathize with protests, or that there is disaffection in the military and police, may not be visible until after it is too late. Elites may hide their growing discord and opposition until they seize the opportunity to act against the regime. Rulers may embark on reforms believing they will succeed, or undertake repressive acts believing they will end all opposition; it may not be clear until after the fact that reforms have failed to win support or that repression has triggered greater resentment and opposition.

Revolutions are thus like earthquakes. Geologists can identify major fault zones, and we know that earthquakes are most likely to arise in those zones. But a series of small tremors may be a

release of tensions, or it may signify growing pressures that will soon produce a major shift; one cannot generally tell in advance. An earthquake may occur on a well-known fault, or it may erupt from a new or previously hidden fault line. Knowing the general mechanisms behind earthquakes has not allowed us to predict them. Similarly, social scientists can identify societies that seem to have major faults and growing tensions—these may be evident from signs of social conflict or heightened difficulties of institutions or groups carrying out accustomed tasks or meeting their goals. Yet that does not mean that we can predict exactly when a particular state will experience the shock of revolution.

Scholars of revolutions generally agree upon five elements that they consider necessary and sufficient to create an unstable social equilibrium from which revolutions can arise. First is national economic or fiscal strains; such conditions disrupt the flow of rents and taxes to rulers and elites and undermine the income of the general population. Such strains commonly lead rulers to increase taxes or borrow heavily, often in ways that seem unjust; they also hinder the rulers' ability to reward their supporters and pay their officials and military forces.

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Second is growing alienation and opposition among the elites. Elites are always competing for position. Rivalries among families, parties, or factions are commonplace. However, a ruler usually can take advantage of this competition to win support from elites, playing off groups against each other and rewarding loyalty. Stable elites also manage to recruit and absorb talented newcomers. Alienation occurs when elite groups feel they are being systematically and unjustly excluded from favor. Older elites may feel they are being unfairly displaced by newcomers, or new aspiring elites may feel their way forward is being unfairly blocked. Elites may feel that a narrow group—a small circle of cronies or members of the rulers' ethnic or regional group—is unfairly getting a dominant share of political power or economic rewards. Under these conditions, elites can believe that their loyalty will not be

rewarded, and that the existing regime will always work to their disadvantage. They may then seek reforms, or if those are blocked or considered ineffective, elites may seek to mobilize and even try to take advantage of popular discontent to put pressure on the regime for change. As their alienation grows, they may decide to overturn and replace the existing social order, rather than merely to improve their place within it.

Third, revolutionary mobilization builds on some form of increasingly widespread popular anger at injustice. This popular anger need not be the result of extreme poverty or inequality. Rather, what matters is that people feel they are losing their proper place in society for reasons that are not inevitable and not their fault. These may be peasants who worry that they are losing access to the land or being saddled with excessive rents or taxes or other burdens; workers who find themselves unable to find employment or who face rising prices for necessities and stagnant wages; students who cannot find the jobs they expect and desire; or mothers who feel they cannot provide for their children. When these groups feel their difficulties are the result of unjust actions by elites or rulers, they will take the risks of joining in revolts to call attention to their plight and demand change.

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Popular groups may engage in urban marches, demonstrations, and occupations of public spaces. In the nineteenth century, the call "to the barricades" was a call to erect barriers to keep state forces out of "liberated" neighborhoods; today an occupation is more likely to fill a central space with crowds, such as Tahrir Square in Cairo. Workers may also call for boycotts and general

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strikes. If the revolutionaries deem the government's forces too strong to challenge in the capital, they may instead organize guerrilla forces in remote mountainous or forested areas and seek to gradually build up their strength.

Rebellions that remain local and isolated are usually easily suppressed. But if rebellion spreads to many regions, and includes peasants, workers, and students, and these groups link up with elites, their resistance can become too extensive for government forces to deal with all at once. The revolutionary forces can then thrive in certain areas, evading government forces in some regions and striking in others. At some point, military officers or enlisted men may refuse to kill their own people to keep the government in power; at that point the defection or collapse of the military ushers in the victory of the revolutionary forces.

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Fourth, bridging various popular and elite grievances and demands, and linking and mobilizing diverse groups, requires an ideology that presents a persuasive shared narrative of resistance. This may take the form of a new religious movement: fundamentalist religious groups, from English Puritanism to Jihadist Islam, have often justified revolt against an immoral ruler. It may take the form of a secular narrative against injustice, stressing the rights and the innocent victims that have been abused. It may be a narrative of nationalist liberation. Whatever their form, effective narratives of resistance highlight the terrible injustices of the current regime and create a sense of shared identity and righteousness among the opposition.

Although the elites may stress abstractions, such as the evils of capitalism or the importance of natural rights, the most effective narratives of resistance also draw on local traditions and stories of heroes who fought for justice in times past. American and French revolutionaries harked back to revolutionary episodes in ancient Greece and Rome. The Cuban and Nicaraguan Revolutions evoked the memory of earlier Cuban and Nicaraguan independence

fighters, José Martí and Augusto César Sandino. Interestingly, research has shown that revolutionary ideologies need not provide a precise future plan to unite and motivate their followers. Rather, what works best are vague or utopian promises of better times ahead combined with a detailed and emotionally powerful depiction of the intolerable injustice and inescapable evils of the current regime.

Finally, a revolution requires favorable international relations. Revolutionary success has often depended on foreign support for the opposition coming at crucial times, or on the withdrawal of foreign support for the ruler. Conversely, many revolutions have failed or been reversed because of foreign intervention to support counterrevolution.

When these five conditions coincide—economic or fiscal strain, alienation and opposition among the elites, widespread popular anger at injustice, a persuasive shared narrative of resistance, and favorable international relations—the normal social mechanisms that restore order in crises are unlikely to work. Instead, societies where these conditions prevail are in an unstable equilibrium, where any untoward event can trigger escalating popular revolts and open elite resistance, producing a revolution.

Yet for all five of these conditions to coincide is rare. Moreover, they are difficult to assess accurately during periods of apparent stability. States may obfuscate their finances until they suddenly face bankruptcy; elites typically hide their disloyalty until they see an opportunity to act; and popular groups may seethe with inward anger but give few hints of how far they will go. Narratives of resistance may circulate discreetly underground or in hidden cells; whether other states will intervene to support or oppose a revolution is often unknown until the revolutionary struggle has begun.

The difficulty in determining whether outward stability represents a stable or unstable equilibrium produces the paradox of

revolutions: In hindsight, after a revolution has occurred, it is quite apparent how severely the finances of governments and elites were affected by economic or fiscal strain; how much elites were alienated and divided from the regime; how widely felt were pangs of anger and injustice; how persuasive were the revolutionary narratives; and that international conditions were favorable. Indeed, it becomes possible to explain the origins of a revolution in such detail that its onset seems, in retrospect, inevitable. Yet at the same time, when revolutions do occur, they usually come as a complete shock to everyone, including the rulers, the revolutionaries themselves, and foreign powers. Lenin famously remarked in January 1917, just months before tsar's regime collapsed, that "We of the older generation may not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution."

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This is because no one is usually positioned to be aware in advance of all five of these elements. Indeed rulers almost invariably underestimate how much they are seen as unjust or how much they have alienated elites; if they have a sense that things are amiss and embark on reforms they frequently make things worse. Revolutionaries often underestimate the fiscal weakness of the old regime or the magnitude of popular support for the opposition. They may believe they are in a struggle that will still last for years when elites and the military defect and the old regime suddenly collapses. That is why even though revolutions may seem inevitable in hindsight, they are usually seen as unlikely, even unimaginable, right up to the moment they actually occur.

Structural and transient causes of revolutions

These five conditions together constitute an unstable equilibrium. Yet they are not causes—they do not explain what caused the social order to fray at so many levels all at once. We still have to ask what kinds of events will produce a combination of fiscal decay, elite alienation, popular anger at injustice, the spread of narratives of resistance, and international support for revolutionary change.

Scholars typically differentiate between structural and transient causes. Structural causes are long-term and large-scale trends that undermine existing social institutions and relationships. Transient causes are contingent events, or actions by particular individuals or groups, that reveal the impact of longer term trends and often galvanize revolutionary oppositions to take further action.

One very common structural cause of revolutions is demographic change. For most of history, population has changed very slowly or has grown more slowly than economic and technical progress. Under those conditions, direct inheritance provides a very secure way of replacing rulers, reconstituting elites, and even assigning ordinary people to their jobs or professions. Yet when the population grows rapidly for several generations, the cumulating effects of population change can cause the institutions of social order to suffer. Land and jobs may grow scarce; rents rise and real wages decline, producing popular anger. Prices will rise but taxes may lag, making it more difficult for the ruler to reward supporters and pay the troops. As elites have more surviving children, inheritance no longer provides for them all, and competition for elite positions heats up. Finally, sustained population growth produces ever-larger youth cohorts—often described as a "youth bulge"—who find difficulty obtaining suitable jobs and are easily drawn to new ideologies and mobilized for social protest.

A second common structural cause is a shift in the pattern of international relations. Wars and international economic competition can weaken state authorities and empower new groups in society. Revolutions frequently arose in waves following global or continental wars, as happened in Europe after the Thirty Years War, in the decades after the Napoleonic Wars, in the wake of World Wars I and II, and at the conclusion of the Cold War.

Changing population patterns and shifts in international relations often affect many states in a region at the same time, creating a large number of states that are simultaneously moving into

unstable equilibrium. If a triggering event occurs in one such state, then the outburst of revolution in that state can itself serve as the triggering event for revolutionary outbreaks in others. This is why revolutions have frequently occurred in waves that seem to spread rapidly from one apparently stable country to the next.

A third structural cause is uneven or dependent economic development. It is normal for economic development to initially create more equality as some regions or groups benefit most from the new technologies or economic organization. But all groups should benefit to some degree, and the laggards usually catch up as the new technology and economic patterns spread. Where economic growth is so uneven that the poor and even middle classes fall farther behind while a small elite grows rapidly richer; or where economic growth is so dependent on foreign investment that growth benefits mainly the foreign investors and their associates; then economic changes will be widely seen as unjust, creating popular grievances, and alienating and dividing the elites.

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A fourth and related structural cause is new patterns of exclusion or discrimination against particular groups. Inequality is universal in human societies. However, ambitious individuals aspire to improve their own positions by military or educational or economic achievements, and most societies allow for a certain amount of mobility to absorb talented newcomers into the elite. Where entire groups face legal discrimination—such as commoners in societies with hereditary nobles, or ethnic or religious minorities that are excluded from politics and certain economic roles—the discrimination must be well established and consistent to be accepted as part of the normal order.

By contrast, new or differently enforced discrimination or exclusion can undermine the legitimacy of a regime and turn entire groups into enemies of the existing social order. If existing channels of social mobility are suddenly blocked, if new groups take power and exclude former elites; or if the numbers and

wealth of a group increase greatly without any increased political opportunities for that group, then the existing equilibrium becomes unstable, as an entire social group becomes aggrieved and seeks to change the social system that they believe is unjustly holding them down.

A fifth structural cause is the evolution of personalist regimes. In many countries a leader who has come to power through an election, or as the head of a military regime or a party-state, becomes increasingly entrenched over time. By manipulating elites and political institutions to stay in power decade after decade, the ruler comes to see himself as the indispensable leader of the nation. Such rulers typically weaken or alienate the regular professional military and business elites, relying more and more on a small circle of family and cronies who obtain high positions and great wealth through personal favor. What had been an elected, military or party-based regime now becomes a personalist dictatorship.

In such regimes, the longer the ruler remains in power the more corrupt their regime becomes, as family members and cronies take greater advantage of their positions. The ruler may lose touch and not care if the bulk of the population suffers from his economic policies. As more elite and popular groups feel excluded and estranged, they come to view the regime as illegitimate and unjust. Should an economic crisis weaken the ruler or spur revolt, such rulers may quickly find themselves isolated and deserted by their elites.

Both personalist dictators and traditional monarchies often fall victim to the combination of structural causes known as "the dictator's dilemma." The ruler of a relatively poor or backward nation often must invest heavily in upgrading its military and economic capacity to keep up with military and economic pressures from more advanced states. Doing so requires creating a more educated and professional military and civil service,

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encouraging private enterprise, increasing enrollments in schools and universities, and expanding cities and communications. It may also involve inviting extensive foreign investment.

But unless these processes are carefully managed, they can cause social relationships to fray. Better educated professionals, students, and private businessmen will resent the power and favoritism of a venal dictator, the privileges of entrenched elites, and the benefits going to foreign interests. Older elites may try to block the progress of newcomers. Growing private enterprises may displace peasants from their lands and compete with traditional craft workers. Expanded urban populations are more difficult to control and become centers for the spread of alternative ideologies. Modernizing dictatorships and monarchies thus lay the basis for a vigorous opposition to their rule; if they falter in the face of war or economic crises, or have fallen into patterns of blatant corruption and exclusionary rule, they are ripe for revolution.

Revolutions

In contrast to these structural causes, which gradually create unstable equilibrium over years or decades, transient causes are sudden events that push a society out of stability. These may include spikes in inflation, particularly of food prices; defeat in war; and riots or demonstrations that challenge state authority. In addition, state responses to protest can trigger wider protests. When most people see protestors as extremists, and they are isolated targets of state action, repression is usually effective. But when protestors are seen as ordinary members of society, then repression that is too broad or inconsistent can inflame elite and popular perceptions of the regime as dangerous, illegitimate, and unjust.

These transient events are indeed causes of revolutions, since in unstable states they lead people to turn against the state more openly and in larger numbers, or weaken the state's ability to defend itself and hasten elite defections. Yet the very same events occur in dozens of states each year without producing revolutions,

because those states have the resilience to restore social order in the face of crises. It is therefore the structural causes, which create the underlying instability, that scholars treat as the fundamental causes of revolutions.

Once a regime has been weakened, key elites have defected, and revolutionaries at the head of armies or popular revolts have seized power, a revolution has begun. Yet how events will end is still undetermined, for revolutions are long processes, not simple events. They may veer through counterrevolution, civil war, terror, and renewed revolutionary episodes before achieving stability. And their outcomes may range from democracy to renewed dictatorship.

Chapter 3

Revolutionary processes, leaders, and outcomes

Many observers of revolutions focus on their origins—what caused popular uprisings, and why did the old regime fall? Yet the fall of the old regime merely begins the drama of revolution. As revolutions unfold, revolutionary leaders gain success or are cast aside as new ones emerge. Repeated upheavals and civil wars often arise as groups struggle for power and seek to build new institutions. The outcomes of revolutions are never given just from their origins; they are forged in the process of revolution itself.

The process of revolution

A revolution begins when the government loses control of a portion of its population and territory to groups demanding a change of government to rectify injustices. The area controlled by the opposition may be as small as a public square in a capital or regional city, or as distant as a mountain redoubt on the far edge of the country.

Most such beginnings lead to swift repression, or years of futile and insignificant activity. However, if a country is already in an unstable equilibrium, with the state facing economic or fiscal problems, a restive population, and declining loyalty among officials and elites, then such small beginnings soon lead to the loss of ever more territory and population to the opposition.

This is the first phase of revolution: state breakdown, when the state loses control of society. Although no two revolutions unfold in exactly the same way, scholars have identified two main patterns of state breakdown—central collapse and peripheral advance.

In cases of central collapse, the regime has already weakened greatly, usually far more than is evident. The government may be nearly bankrupt; it has been losing legitimacy with business, administrative, and military elites for some time; and popular groups have been mounting local protests, strikes, or rural revolts in recent years. Such revolutions may start with peasant revolts or uprisings in rural areas, with urban demonstrations, or with an elite challenge to state authority. They may be precipitated by a short-term economic downturn or price spike, a military defeat, a manipulated election, or new and resented actions by the government. Whatever the initial impetus, it is swiftly followed by a major demonstration in the capital city.

The government tries to disperse the demonstration but encounters surprising difficulty in doing so; initial efforts by the government are followed by expanding demonstrations. Police forces are unable to cope with the urban disorders, and the government faces a situation where the military has to be called in. Yet the military refuses to act decisively to clear the streets; key units may stand aside while others may even defect and go over to the opposition. The inaction of the military acts as a signal to the ruler, elites, and the population that the regime is defenseless. Crowds surge and take over the capital; similar mass demonstrations spread to other cities and the countryside. All of this generally unfolds over a few weeks or at most a few months. The ruler may then flee or be captured, while elites supported by crowds or the military take over government buildings and set up a provisional government. Examples include the French and Russian Revolutions, the European Revolutions of 1848, and

the Iranian Islamic Revolution, the East German and Romanian anticommunist Revolutions, the "color revolutions" in the Philippines and Ukraine, and the Arab Revolutions of 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt.

In cases of peripheral advance, the decay of the old regime is less advanced. Yet a group of elites seeking to overturn the government is able to establish a foothold in some part of the country, usually a mountainous or forested area remote from the capital. This rural base may remain small and insignificant for years. If the regime is becoming more unstable—weakening economically, suffering military reversals, losing legitimacy with additional popular groups, losing the loyalty of additional elites—the opposition nucleus grows as it acquires new supporters, while support for the existing government declines. The rebels may adopt guerrilla warfare, melting into the countryside and striking periodically at government forces, or staging spectacular raids designed to demonstrate the weakness of the government. Workers may strike in support of the rebels.

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Eventually, the opposition develops into a conventional army capable of fighting a civil war to take the capital city. Or the rebels may pursue nonviolent tactics using ever larger popular demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts to press the government to cede power. Either way, external powers may play a key role. If other nations or groups help arm and organize the opposition, or if former external allies withdraw their support for the ruler, the balance of power can start to shift decisively in favor of the opposition. As the balance tips against the regime, government forces will suffer defections and further declines in morale and military effectiveness. This process usually takes years, sometimes more than a decade. Yet at the end, as the old regime's force crumble or retreat, the revolutionary forces take the capital and establish a new regime. Examples include the American Revolution, the Chinese Communist Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, the Indian Independence Movement, the

Nicaraguan Revolution, and the Arab Revolution of 2011 in Libya.

In recent years, a third and novel pattern—the negotiated revolution—has emerged. These may start like central collapse or peripheral advance revolutions, with mass demonstrations in the capital or the opposition gaining control of local bases. But instead of the ruler fleeing and ceding power to a provisional revolutionary government, or being driven out by a civil war, the authorities recognize that they cannot overcome the opposition and instead seek to negotiate the entry of the opposition into a new, joint regime. This may involve new elections in which both the ruling and opposition parties seek seats in the legislature, or joint councils with members of the opposition and the old regime leadership. However, the overwhelming popular support for the revolutionary party allows them to dominate the new institutions, win control of the government, and enact laws to reshape the political and economic order. Examples include the South African anti-apartheid revolution (which arose from bases in the Black townships), the Polish Solidarity revolution (whose bases were in the shipyards and the Catholic Church), and the Czechoslovak "velvet" revolution.

Whether a revolutionary government comes to power with surprising speed in the capital, or it advances to win power through a lengthy struggle to expand its base and displace the regime, seizing power is just the first phase of the revolutionary process. At first, the fall of the old regime is greeted with jubilation. A "revolutionary honeymoon" period of a few weeks ensues in which people enjoy an unfamiliar taste of freedom, go out of their way to demonstrate solidarity and friendship with fellow citizens, and exhibit enormous optimism for the future. The initial elections under the new regime are usually greeted with great excitement and an outpouring of new parties and political groups.

Yet a number of critical decisions soon need to be made by the revolutionary government. How will leaders be chosen and what

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laws will govern the exercise of power? Will power be centralized or dispersed to regional and local authorities? Who will control the military? These issues could be determined by a series of decrees or laws, but often involve drafting and adopting a new constitution.

Other issues must also be settled. What will be the new regime's relations to other states—will it seek new allies or continue to fight the old regime's opponents? Will there be a redistribution of property or a change in the state religion? How will the new government finance its operations—by old taxes or new ones, by seizure of property or sale of state assets? How will the remaining leaders and supporters of the old regime be treated? What new rules should guide the economy, education, the media, public services, or the role of minorities? And if the old regime was facing financial or military or economic crises, what measures will the new regime take to address them?

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These questions are so wide ranging and so important that the diverse groups who made the revolution can rarely agree on them. If the old regime's supporters have mostly fled and no pressing external threats are present, the revolutionary leaders may be able to work out their differences peacefully, spend time negotiating a constitution that can win wide support, and develop a sharing or alternation in power among different groups. But this is rare; more commonly disagreements over these pressing major issues create cleavages among different groups. The revolution then enters the phase of postrevolutionary power struggles.

These splits are often exacerbated by crises that threaten the new regime. Supporters of the old order, often with support from foreign powers, may try to unseat the new regime through counter-revolution. Regional groups or minorities may fight for more power or against revolutionary policies. These disruptions may cause inflation or economic collapse. Civil or international

war may follow. Revolutionary leaders often will sharply divide over how to respond to such crises.

In the course of this polarization, moderate and radical factions frequently form. Moderate factions may want to continue certain features or policies of the old regime, and shrink from drastic changes in economic or social organization. Yet if war, economic crisis, or counterrevolution threatens the new regime, moderate measures often will not suffice. Should moderate policies fail, moderate leaders will be discredited and popular support will shift to radicals promising to bring better results by more extreme measures. Ruthless actions to raise revenues and forces to defend the new regime, to redistribute property, and harsh actions to deal with internal and external enemies become the order of the day.

These conflicts usually play out in ideological terms as well, with radical leaders claiming to be the "true voices" of the people and the revolution, while tarring moderates and opponents as reactionaries and traitors. Earlier constitutions may be discarded and replaced by more radical documents; many revolutions go through numerous short-lived constitutions. New symbols and ceremonies, new forms of address (e.g., "citizen" and "comrade") new official titles, changes in administrative units and capitals, and new forms of art, dress, and language are commonly promoted by the new regime.

Radical groups often displace the moderates through a coup or insurrection, seizing power and taking over the revolutionary government. Demanding loyalty to their vision and policies, they may turn to purges or terror, executing and imprisoning many thousands. Often, revolutionaries will turn on each other, exiling or executing former comrades. Danton, Trotsky, Zapata, Lin Biao, Hanoi-Saï, and Escalante are just a few of the once-prominent revolutionary leaders who were sacrificed to the gods of revolution by their colleagues.

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Even after the radicals are securely in power, their new policies may bring economic disorder or provoke civil and international wars, which cause thousands or even millions of deaths. Other nations may fear the radical revolutionaries' attempts to spread their vision and policies abroad, or they may think the disorder of revolution makes the new regime vulnerable to military defeat. Either way, the likelihood is very high that revolutionary regimes will soon be involved in international conflicts.

At some point, the radicals defeat their enemies or are defeated themselves. The new government then needs to be institutionalized so that people can return to work and the economy be restored. Whether it is the radicals and their heirs or new moderate rulers who succeed to power, the revolutionary regime becomes the "new normal" government. People adopt ordinary careerism rather than ideologically driven passion as their approach to politics, and the government seeks a stable place in the international order as a great or regional power. After this phase of consolidation, things settle down and the revolution appears to be over.

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Yet after another decade or two, the older radicals or a new generation may feel that this new order is failing to live up to the ideals of the revolution. They may seek to mobilize elite and popular groups for a new set of revolutionary measures, attacking existing officials and their policies, and seeking more radical economic and political changes. This second radical phase usually does not overturn the revolutionary government but revives its radicalism, which can lead to major new departures in domestic and international policies, and new waves of popular mobilization and conflict. This second radical phase is usually the final burst of revolutionary energy; whether it prevails or is defeated, what follows is a reconsolidated, stable version of the revolutionary regime. Examples include Stalin's collectivization campaign in the 1930s, Mao's Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, and Lázaro Cárdenas's nationalizations and land reforms in Mexico in the 1930s.

Revolutionary leadership: visionary and organizational

Revolutionary leaders are the pivots of history, the figures through which we come to see revolutions. In their own countries, they often are lionized as "fathers of the nation" and can become the subject of personality cults. Some—Washington, Napoleon, Lenin—have gone down in history as heroes who created powerful new nations. Others—Robespierre, Stalin, Mao—have gone down in history as monsters who blindly pursued their ideologies and were responsible for the deaths of thousands or millions. To be accurate, many revolutionary leaders were a bit of both.

Because in hindsight the many factors leading nations to enter unstable equilibrium can appear overwhelming, the role of revolutionary leaders is sometimes minimized. When it seems that the old order was bound to collapse, revolutionary leaders simply emerge to pick up the pieces. Yet it requires skillful revolutionary leadership to take advantage of instability and disorder, and to construct from this chaos a successful revolutionary movement and build a new regime. In the absence of revolutionary leaders to articulate and spread a new vision of society, an economic crisis or military defeat will likely be followed by the restoration of the old order with just a few institutional tweaks and adjustments. If revolutionary leaders are not able to weave coalitions across various elite and popular groups to build a durable coalition, the old regime will likely defeat its enemies and no revolution will occur. The decisions to pursue moderate or radical policies, to enter into war or terror, how to restructure law and society, and the ultimate success and outcomes of revolutions are thus driven by revolutionary leaders.

Moderate revolutionary leaders are generally found within the ranks of the existing elite and often even within the existing regime. They may be military officers or legislators or regional officials. Frequently they are advocates of reform, and only

reluctantly pursue revolution when it appears that the old regime is intransigent, erratic, or incompetent to meet pressing challenges to the nation. Radical revolutionary leaders are also usually drawn from the ranks of the existing elites but from a more middling stratum of junior officers, professionals, university students, and local leaders. They are the same people, in terms of their background and upbringing, who in more stable times would pursue careers in politics or business or the professions. They generally have a radicalizing experience—they or a family member may have been abused by a government official, or they may have been punished for their political views. They tend to be fiercely patriotic and to have an unusually acute awareness of the problems in their society leading to unstable equilibrium, thus devoting extensive time and effort to developing solutions and campaigning for major changes in government policies—campaigns that often get them into trouble with the authorities.

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Revolutionary leadership requires two distinct kinds of skills. Visionary leaders are prolific writers, and often great speechmakers, who articulate the faults of the old society and make a powerful case for social change. They create a portrait of the injustices of the old regime and of the absolute necessity and inevitability of change that is capable of motivating and uniting diverse groups to support the revolution. During the revolution, visionary leaders continue to inspire and guide the revolutionary forces. Such visionary leaders include Thomas Jefferson, Robespierre, Francisco Madero, V. I. Lenin, Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Mahatma Gandhi, Vaclav Havel, and Ayatollah Khomeini.

Organizational leaders are great organizers and leaders of organizations; it is they who organize revolutionary armies and bureaucracies and make sure that they are paid and supplied. The organizational leaders figure out how to realize the ideas of visionary leaders, to make sure that the revolution can defeat its enemies and meet its economic and political goals. They tend

to be pragmatic and are often skilled military generals. Such organizational leaders include George Washington, Napoleon, Venustiano Carranza, Leon Trotsky, Zhou Enlai, Raoul Castro, Vo Nguyen Giap and Lech Walesa.

Successful revolutions require both kinds of leadership. Without visionary leaders to inspire and unite the opposition, the existing regime can usually isolate and defeat its fragmented opponents. Without organizational leaders, the revolutionary forces will easily be defeated by their opponents, either internal or external, as the new revolutionary regime decays and falls apart due to ineffective policies and lack of resources.

Most revolutions exhibit visionary and organizational leaders operating as partners; indeed they may have several leaders taking visionary and organizational roles. But in some cases, a single figure acts as both the visionary and organizational leader; notable examples include Simon Bolivar, Kemal Ataturk, and Deng Xiaoping. Whatever their role, how revolutionary leaders are viewed is often determined by the outcomes of the revolutions they led.

Revolutionary outcomes

It is often difficult to determine the outcome of a revolution, as it is hard to know when the outcome should be assessed. Is the major outcome of the Russian Revolution of 1917 the millions killed by Stalin's collectivization campaigns in 1930s? Or should we focus on the remarkable survival of the Soviet Union after the Nazi onslaught and its rise to become one of the world's two superpowers by the 1960s? Should the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989–1991 be viewed as the inevitable outcome of the Russian Revolution seventy-two years earlier, or instead as the result of the poor choices of Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders in the 1980s?

In the outcome of the American Revolution of 1776 the Constitution adopted in 1787, which has lasted for more than two

hundred years? Or was the outcome of the Revolution and the compromises in the Constitution the collapse of the United States into bloody civil war in the 1860s?

The outcomes of revolutions are many and varied, and appear on different timescales. The American Revolution is hailed for creating a democracy; yet in fact more than half the population (women and slaves) was denied the vote for more than a hundred years. At the time of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution, China seemed to be torn apart and impoverished by internal conflict and ideological discord; twenty years later China was well on its way to achieving a modern miracle of growth and becoming the world's second largest economy.

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Despite this variety, there are a few established principles regarding revolutionary outcomes. First, outcomes do not emerge quickly. The processes described in the previous section typically take years or even decades to unfold. Ten to twelve years is the average time from the fall of the old regime before the features of the stable new revolutionary regime are clear.

Second, revolutions fall into several types with characteristic outcomes. "Social Revolutions" involve the redistribution of large amounts of property and bring members of previously excluded social groups to power. Because of the great changes involved, they invariably invite efforts at counterrevolution and require a powerful regime to consolidate change. They therefore produce highly centralized, authoritarian states, often party-states or communist regimes. They generally introduce social programs, such as land redistribution or collectivization, literacy and educational reforms, and public health measures aimed at establishing greater economic equality. They often experience a burst of rapid industrialization and economic growth due to the strong direction of the central regime, but this growth weakens substantially and leads to economic stagnation unless market-oriented reforms are introduced. Examples include the

French, Mexican, Russian, Chinese Communist, Cuban, Ethiopian, and Iranian Islamic Revolutions.

"Anticolonial Revolutions" involve rebellion against foreign powers that control a territory in order to create a newly independent nation. Except for creating independence, they have uncertain outcomes in the domestic sphere—some have led to democracies, some to military regimes or civilian dictatorships, others to communist regimes. The common characteristic of their outcomes is that the appearance of new nations disrupts the prevailing system of international relations. The loss of territory often weakens the former colonial power, while the new states may become regional powers in their own right.

Other powers may seek to improve their positions by seeking an alliance with the new states or trying to control them. As a result, anticolonial revolutions almost always produce a major alteration of international relations. Since shifts in the international system affect many states, if the colonial regimes of other states have also entered an unstable equilibrium, then one anticolonial revolution can trigger a wave of such revolutions across a continent. Examples include the American, Haitian, Latin American, Algerian, Indian, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Angolan, and Mozambique revolutions.

"Democratizing" revolutions seek to overturn an authoritarian regime that has grown corrupt, ineffective, and illegitimate, and replace it with a more accountable and representative regime. They do not mobilize supporters on the basis of class antagonisms (peasants vs. landlords, workers vs. capitalists) but rather draw support from across the social spectrum. They may begin with an election campaign or with protests against fraudulent elections. They lack the ideological fervor of revolutions whose leaders see themselves as creating a new social order or a new nation; they are therefore usually nonviolent and do not lead to civil war, nor to a radical phase, nor revolutionary terror. Unfortunately, the lack of severe contestation means that government passes into the hands of a mixture of groups, none of which wishes to

take the ruthless measures necessary to consolidate power and strengthen the new regime. These revolutions thus often drift; leaders fall into corruption and petty infighting, and the eventual outcome is a usually a flawed democracy with either frequent shifts in leadership or recurrent authoritarian tendencies. This is especially true where countries lack previous experience with democracy. Examples include the European Revolutions of 1848; the Chinese Republican Revolution of 1911; the anti-communist revolution in the Soviet Union; the "color revolutions" in Ukraine, the Philippines, and Georgia; and the 2011 Arab Revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt.

Not all revolutions fall into one of these major types. The 2011 Revolutions in Libya and Syria, for example, began as democratizing revolutions but the tenacity of ethnic or tribal loyalties to the rulers led to civil war. The Turkish Revolution, the Meiji Restoration, and the Nasser Revolution in Egypt all sought to replace traditional monarchies or empires with modern national states with constitutions and secular governments; but all led eventually to military regimes.

Revolutions are most likely to lead to democracy in societies that have prior experience with democracy, and where the revolutions do not provoke strong counterrevolutionary threats that trigger civil wars. Conversely, the greater the degree of polarization and conflict among contending groups within the new regime, and the greater the attachment of revolutionary leaders to a particular ideology or ethnic identity, the less likely is a democratic outcome.

Attachment to a particular ideology or ethnic identity makes new revolutionary regimes particularly harsh on minorities, who often are scapegoated for social problems and singled out as traitors or enemies of the new regime. In some cases, such as the Nazi Revolution in Germany and the Khmer Revolution in Cambodia, assaults by the new regime on minorities have reached the level of genocide. Racial and religious minorities may be promised

much, but postrevolutionary societies rarely deliver true equality. For example, Blacks in communist Cuba, as well as in the United States after emancipation, continued to experience discrimination despite formal proclamations of equality.

One other area in which revolutionary outcomes have consistently disappointed their followers is women's rights. Throughout history, women have marched, demonstrated, and fought alongside men for social justice. In 1789 the women of Paris marched on Versailles to demand food and dignity for their families and children, while in 1791 Marie Gouze published the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*. In Mexico, Dolores Jiménez y Muro and Hermila Galindo were leading political organizers and writers, while thousands of women fought as *soldaderas* in the revolutionary armies. In Russia and Germany, Alexandra Kollontai, Nadezhda Krupskaya, and Rosa Luxemburg helped lead the communist and socialist parties. In Cuba Celia Sánchez and Vilma Espín played key roles in the revolution, and in Nicaragua more than 30 percent of the armed Sandinistas were women.

In return for their exemplary courage and sacrifices, revolutionary leaders frequently promise equal roles for women in the new revolutionary regime. Yet without exception to date, once the revolutionary regime takes power, men seize most of the major political, military, and economic leadership posts, while women are encouraged to return to their families and focus on domestic duties. Even where women are given opportunities to gain educations and enter work and the professions, their pay remains worse, and they still bear the greatest burden for raising children and maintaining homes. While in a few cases women have emerged from revolutions as the leaders of their nation—such as Indira Gandhi in India, Violeta Chamorro in Nicaragua, and Corazon Aquino in the Philippines—they have done so as the heirs of politically prominent fathers or husbands, and have been unable to shift the dominant patriarchal character of their societies. Alongside ethnic and religious minorities,

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women have consistently been let down by revolutionary promises for equality. They have made progress only where they have undertaken their own mass campaigns for the right to vote and women's rights.

Revolutionary processes and outcomes have evolved throughout history. The idea of citizenship, born in the revolutions of ancient Greek city-states, was revived in the Renaissance and then fueled revolutions in America and France in the eighteenth century. The dream of socialism emerged in the nineteenth century and shaped communist revolutions around the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The European notion of nationalism as the right of ethnic communities to govern themselves later produced anticolonial revolutions against European powers. In sum, revolutions have constantly revised and reconstituted politics, nations, and international relations.

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If not for revolutions, we would not have today's world of democratic and constitutional governments, campaigns for liberty and human rights, or our concepts of citizenship and nationalism. Yet the costs have been stark—in the French Revolution more than a million French men and women died in the uprisings and revolutionary civil and international wars, roughly one in twenty of the prerevolutionary population. Many tens of millions perished in the Mexican, Russian, and Chinese Communist Revolutions, roughly one in ten of these countries' peoples. Some recent revolutions have been less bloody, such as the "velvet" revolutions against Communism in Eastern Europe. But against these we must place events such as the Khmer Rouge Revolution in Cambodia, in which nearly 30 percent of the population died in war and genocide. Revolutions thus deserve their reputation for horror as well as heroism.

Chapter 4 Revolutions in the ancient world

Revolutions are nearly as old as history itself. Ever since we have had records of government and taxation—as long ago as the pharaohs of Egypt—there have been efforts to overthrow governments in the name of greater social justice and to replace one set of government institutions with different ones. But as governments changed their character, so too did revolutions. Even the understanding of what revolution entailed—by both revolutionaries and political theorists—has developed over time. In different eras, the term "revolution" has meant a circular pattern of political changes, the restoration of natural order, violent and permanent political change, and today has come to include the peaceful assertion of democratic rights.

Revolutions from the pharaohs to Greece and Rome

The reign of Pepi II, the last pharaoh of the Old Kingdom in Egypt, appears to have ended in a revolution in the twenty-second century BCE. The pharaoh was losing control to regional lords, and as central rule weakened, people attacked the homes of the wealthy and seized their possessions. Magistrates were driven from their offices and palaces plundered. An ancient papyrus scroll describing this event relates how amid famine and destruction, the social order was overturned: "The poor man is full of joy. Every town says: 'Let us suppress the powerful among us.' . . . The son