No Other Way Out

STATES AND
REVOLUTIONARY
MOVEMENTS, 1945–1991

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Contents

Figures, Tables, and Maps page ix
Abbreviations and Acronyms xi
Preface and Acknowledgments xv

Part 1 Introduction

1 COMPARING REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS 3

2 THE STATE-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE ON REVOLUTIONS: STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS 35

Part 2 Southeast Asia

CHRONOLOGY FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA 67

3 THE FORMATION OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA 72

4 THE ONLY DOMINO: THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE 106

Part 3 Central America

CHRONOLOGY FOR CENTRAL AMERICA 137

5 THE FORMATION OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA 142

6 NOT-SO-INEVITABLE REVOLUTIONS: THE POLITICAL TRAJECTORY OF REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA 180

Part 4 Further Comparisons and Theoretical Elaborations

7 BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE: PERSISTENT INSURGENCIES 215

CHRONOLOGY FOR EASTERN EUROPE 254

8 "REFOLUTION" AND REBELLION IN EASTERN EUROPE, 1989 256

9 CONCLUSION: GENERALIZATIONS AND PROGNOSTICATION 289

Annotated Bibliography 307

Index 391

Figures, Tables, and Maps

Figures

1.1 Types of states as a function of political regime and state organization. *page* 28
1.2 Types of states as a function of political regime, state organization, and infrastructural power. 28
1.3 States most likely to "incubate" revolutionary movements (shaded area). 29
1.4 States most likely to be overthrown by revolutionary movements (shaded area). 29
4.1 Analytic trajectory of revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia, 1930–60. 131
6.1 Analytic trajectory of revolutionary movements in Central America, 1960–90. 211
8.1 Analytic trajectory of revolutionary change in Eastern Europe, 1970–89. 287

Tables

1.1 Major social revolutions, 1789–1989. 4
3.1 European presence in Asian colonies. 83
5.1 Gross national product per capita in Central America, 1972–82 (constant 1981 dollars). 151
5.2 Percentage of population living in poverty in Central America, 1980. 151
5.3 Distribution of income in Central America, 1970 and 1980 (percentage of total by stratum). 151
5.4 Gini coefficient for income distribution in Central America, 1980. 152
5.5 Average annual population growth in Central America (percentage). 152

5.6 Distribution of rural families in Central America by size of landholding, 1970 (percentage). 153
5.7 Export earnings in Central America as a percentage of gross domestic product (constant prices). 154
5.8 Net direct foreign investment in Central America, 1960–78 (millions of dollars). 154
5.9 Net direct foreign investment in Central America minus net profit transfers, 1960–78 (millions of dollars). 155
5.10 U.S. and multilateral assistance to Central America, 1953–79 (millions of dollars). 155
6.1 Occupation of combatants killed in the Sandinista revolution (percentage). 194
7.1 Size of guerrilla armed forces. 224
7.2 Boolean truth table: Persistent versus defeated revolutionary movements. 244
7.3 Measures of state infrastructural power. 251
9.1 Armed movements in Latin America, 1959–2000. 294
9.2 Major unarmed antigovernment protests, 1978–2000. 295

Maps

3.1 Colonial Southeast Asia. 73
4.1 General Navarre's map, May 1953. 113
5.1 Central America. 147
6.1 The guerrilla fronts of the FSLN, 1977–9. 193
6.2 Zones of guerrilla control in El Salvador, Autumn 1984. 206
6.3 Zones of insurgency in Guatemala, 1981. 208

1

Comparing Revolutionary Movements

> *Scholars have offered some interesting theories on how revolution develops and why it develops, but they have generally failed to explain how similar elements have produced revolutions in some cases and not in others. Research in the field should begin to examine "failed revolutions" and "revolutions that never took place" as well as successful ones to determine the revolutionary element or elements.*
>
> – William E. Lipsky (1976: 508)

Revolutionary movements are not simply or exclusively a response to economic exploitation or inequality, but also and more directly a response to political oppression and violence, typically brutal and indiscriminate. This is the principal thesis of this book, one that I reach through an examination of revolutionary movements that emerged during the second half of what has been called the "short" twentieth century (1914–91), a period characterized by the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union.

The Cold War era (1945–91) was truly an "age of revolution," even more so, arguably, than the great revolutionary age of 1789–1848 (see Hobsbawm 1962). Dozens of powerful revolutionary movements emerged across the globe during this period, mainly in the Third World, and a number of them successfully overthrew existing political authorities. In the process, some movements also radically restructured, destroyed, or replaced key institutions, social relationships, and shared beliefs. In fact, many more radical, or "social," revolutions occurred during the Cold War era than had occurred in all previous history prior to the Second World War (see Table 1.1).

This book is but the latest installment in a long line of studies that have compared revolutions and revolutionary movements in order to

Table 1.1. *Major social revolutions, 1789–1989.*

Country (or region)	Year
France	1789
Mexico	1910
Russia	1917
Yugoslavia	1945
Vietnam	1945
China	1949
Bolivia	1952
Cuba	1959
Algeria	1962
Ethiopia	1974
Angola	1975
Mozambique	1975
Cambodia	1975
South Vietnam	1975
Iran	1979
Nicaragua	1979
Grenada	1979
Eastern Europe	1989

Note: The listed dates are conventional markers, usually referring to the year in which revolutionaries overthrew extant political regimes. Revolutions, however, are best conceptualized not as events, but as processes that typically span many years or even decades.

understand better both the similarities and differences in their causes, processes, and achievements. Like other authors who have compared revolutionary movements, I begin from the assumption that understanding them better is eminently worthwhile not only because of the enormous importance of these movements for the national societies in which they occurred, but also for their effects on the configuration of power and beliefs in other societies (including, not least, the United States) and thus on the international balance of power as well. One simply cannot understand the twentieth century histories of, for example, Mexico, Russia, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, or many other countries without understanding the revolutionary conflicts that occurred there; and understanding these conflicts is also crucial for comprehending a variety of important and contemporaneous transnational processes, including, for example, the

demise of colonial empires and the history of the Cold War itself. In fact, with the possible exception of international wars, revolutions have been the most consequential form of political conflict in the twentieth century and, indeed, in human history.

Social scientists in the United States, myself included, have been particularly fascinated with revolutions and revolutionary movements and in particular with the comparative analysis of these phenomena – not least, one suspects, because of the sometimes strenuous efforts by our own government to prevent or reverse revolutions abroad. Crane Brinton, Barrington Moore, Chalmers Johnson, Ted Robert Gurr, Samuel Huntington, Eric Wolf, James Scott, Jeffery Paige, and Ellen Kay Trimberger are just a few of the scholars who have made important contributions to this tradition. Following the ground-breaking work of Charles Tilly (1978) and Theda Skocpol (1979), moreover, a veritable explosion of comparative studies of revolutions has occurred. Recent works by John Walton, Terence Ranger, Jack Goldstone, John Mason Hart, Charles Brockett, Tim McDaniel, Timothy Wickham-Crowley, John Foran, Farideh Farhi, Fred Halliday, Carlos Vilas, and Eric Selbin, among others, have further enriched our understanding of revolutions. And these works are just the tip of an intellectual iceberg that includes innumerable case studies of particular revolutions and revolutionary movements.

The idea for this particular study germinated at a time when the U.S. government was attempting to destroy – brutally and largely ineffectually – revolutionary movements in Central America. Why were (some) Central Americans rebelling, and would they succeed? I began to read about and travel through the region. To get a better handle on these issues, I also plunged into the literature on previous rebellions in Southeast Asia, another region of generalized conflict and U.S. intervention (in this case, following World War II). And before I was through, popular protests in Eastern Europe necessarily forced themselves upon my thinking.

But why, the reader may be asking, do we need yet *another* comparative study of revolutions? For two reasons. First, the particular set of revolutionary movements and revolutions that I analyze here is somewhat different from that which most other scholars have examined – and different, I believe, in an interesting and instructive way. In one sense, my sample of revolutions is drawn from a quite delimited universe of cases. I am interested in revolutions and revolutionary movements that occurred exclusively during the Cold War era – the period between the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. All

the cases that I examine, moreover, occurred in so-called peripheral or dependent societies of one type or another. Presumably, if revolutions share any common causes or dynamics (which can by no means be assumed), these are likely to be found among a relatively homogeneous pool of cases such as this one.

Unfortunately, there have simply been *too many* revolutionary movements, even in peripheral societies during the Cold War era alone, for one scholar or even a whole team of scholars to examine them all in more than a cursory fashion. Accordingly, a comparative study of such movements that has any historical complexity or nuance must necessarily limit itself to an examination of a sample of these movements. At the same time, such a sample should itself be as *heterogeneous* as possible to ensure a more or less adequate representation of the larger universe of cases, because, again, the opportunity to generalize about what might be called "peripheral revolutions" is certainly one which the analyst should seize if possible. (However, I reject the a priori assumption that there must be "general laws" that cover all cases of revolutions or even of peripheral revolutions of the Cold War era.)

Accordingly, this book examines instances of revolutionary movements and revolutions in three vastly different peripheral *world regions* during specific periods within the larger Cold War era: Southeast Asia from World War II to the mid-1950s (specifically, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaya), Central America from 1970 through the 1980s (focusing on Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), and Eastern Europe in 1989. In each of these regions, transnational "cycles of protest" (Tarrow 1994: ch. 9) or "revolutionary waves" (Katz 1997) occurred during the periods that I examine, although national revolutionary movements followed quite distinctive trajectories, which I hope to explain. So if this book, unlike some comparative studies of revolutions, does not traverse centuries, it at least traverses continents and the domains of various "area experts."

A second way in which this book differs from most comparative studies of revolutionary movements or of revolutions is its refusal to compare only "successful" revolutions with one another (in statistical terms, this is known as "selecting" or "sampling on the dependent variable"). Such a strategy, in fact, can be dangerously misleading, confusing causal processes that are in fact found in a very wide range of societies with the actual (and much rarer) causes of revolutions. Accordingly, this book also examines several types of nonrevolutions or "negative" cases, as comparativists

refer to them. I consider, for example, some important revolutionary movements that, however successful in mobilizing substantial numbers of people (in some cases, for many years or even decades), ultimately failed to topple extant political regimes, let alone to transform radically the societies from which they sprang. These "failed" revolutionary movements are not only important and interesting in their own right, but their failure also sheds considerable light on why successful revolutionary movements do in fact succeed. I also examine a case of a successful revolutionary movement (the Indonesian nationalist movement) that was not especially "radical" in terms of the broader socioeconomic changes that its dominant leaders sought to bring about. (I explain the distinction between "revolutionary" and "radical" in the next section.) Finally, I look at one national society (Honduras) in which a strong revolutionary movement, radical or otherwise, did not emerge at all, despite socioeconomic conditions that were every bit as unpleasant as (and in some ways worse than) those of neighboring countries in which strong revolutionary movements *did* emerge.

This comparative strategy is driven by a belief that "counterfactual" cases in which powerful radical movements fail to take power, or fail to emerge at all – despite what various theories might lead us to expect – have not received sufficient attention in the social-scientific literature on revolutions and social movements. This neglect is somewhat surprising, moreover, since counterfactual cases are actually a major preoccupation of many social and labor historians who study the advanced capitalist "core" societies. For these scholars, the weakness or failure of radical working-class movements – despite the expectations of Karl Marx – has been an important and longstanding concern. In addition, there certainly has been no shortage of failed or "missing" revolutions in peripheral societies; scholars do not lack for data then, on this matter.

My comparative strategy is also driven by a concern with discovering those causal processes that *differentiate* cases from one another. This concern springs from the explicitly *comparative* questions that I hope to answer in this book: Why have radical groups mobilized large followings in *some* peripheral societies, but not in others? Why have *some* revolutions involved prolonged popular mobilization and extensive violence and bloodshed, but not others? And why have *some* revolutionary movements successfully toppled extant states, but not others? I have chosen to focus in this book on *world regions*, in fact, because doing so makes it relatively easier to discern (at least in principle) those causal factors that account

for these distinctive types of outcomes. Logically, that is, any historical, social-structural, political or cultural traits that are *shared* by the national societies that comprise such regions cannot explain these societies' divergent historical trajectories. At any rate, the attempt to discover these differentiating causal factors (and to understand how they work) is a primary goal of this book. I certainly do not presume to develop exhaustive or "total" explanations for the many revolutions and revolutionary movements that I examine in the following pages, and I have concluded, moreover, that there can be no such thing as a general theory of peripheral revolutions, let alone a general theory of revolutions as such.[1] My goal in this book, however, is still ambitious: to discover the general causal mechanisms that do the most to explain the origins and trajectory of several important revolutionary movements.

This is a book, in sum, that is centrally concerned with why radical revolutionary movements became important forces in some peripheral societies but not in others during the Cold War era, and why some but not all of these movements successfully toppled the states that they confronted. My wager is that the diverse political fortunes of revolutionary movements in peripheral societies during this era were not fortuitous nor randomly distributed, but were the result of general (if not universal) causal mechanisms.

Defining Terms

These introductory remarks beg for clarification. Accordingly, before proceeding to a discussion of the major theoretical approaches to revolutions and to the analytic framework that animates this particular book, I want to define formally some of the basic concepts that I employ – most of which I have already used in the preceding discussion. Defining these concepts clearly is not simply a formal, "academic" exercise in hair splitting, but a necessary effort to spell out as clearly as possible just what this book is, and is not, attempting to explain. Getting that right, in fact, is half the battle.

An initial ambiguity that all studies of revolution must invariably confront is that the word *revolution* has at least two general meanings, neither of which is inherently more correct or accurate than the other. (Concepts

[1] On the logics of comparative analysis, see Paige 1999, Mahoney 1999, Lieberson 1991, Ragin 1987, Skocpol 1984, Tilly 1984, Skocpol and Somers 1980, and Eckstein 1975.

as such are not more or less true, but more or less *useful* for generating falsifiable explanations of interesting phenomena.) According to one (broader) definition, *revolution* (or *political revolution*) refers to any and all instances in which a state or political regime is overthrown and thereby transformed by a popular movement in an irregular, extraconstitutional, and/or violent fashion; this definition assumes that revolutions, at least those truly worthy of the name, necessarily require the mobilization of large numbers of people against the existing state. (Some scholars, however, have analyzed so-called "revolutions from above" that involve little if any popular mobilization prior to the overthrow of the state [see, e.g., Trimberger 1978].) As Leon Trotsky (1961 [1932]: xvii) once wrote,

> The most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct interference of the masses in historic events. In ordinary times the state, be it monarchical or democratic, elevates itself above the nation, and history is made by specialists in that line of business – kings, ministers, bureaucrats, parliamentarians, journalists. But at those crucial moments when the old order becomes no longer endurable to the masses, they break over the barriers excluding them from the political arena, sweep aside their traditional representatives, and create by their own interference the initial groundwork for a new regime.

According to the other (more restrictive) definition, revolutions entail not only mass mobilization and regime change, but also more or less rapid and fundamental social, economic, and/or cultural change during or soon after the struggle for state power. (What counts as "rapid and fundamental" change, however, is a matter of degree, and the line between it and slower and less basic change can be difficult to draw in practice.) Revolutions in this latter sense – revolutions "involving . . . the refashioning of the lives of tens of millions of people" (Lenin 1997 [1917]: 80–1) – are sometimes referred to as "great" or "social" revolutions, and I shall use the term *social revolution* after this fashion (Huntington 1968; Skocpol 1979).[2]

In the chapters that follow, I generally employ the concept of revolution in the first and more general sense described above. This is primarily a study, that is, of revolutions in the sense of irregular, extraconstitutional, and sometimes violent changes of political regime and

[2] According to a third (and extremely broad) definition, revolutions include *any* instance of relatively rapid and significant change – hence, the industrial revolution, the academic revolution, the feminist revolution, the computer revolution, the revolution of rising expectations, etc.

control of state power brought about by popular movements. More specifically, this book mainly attempts to explain why and how such revolutions occur – why they "succeed" in this specific sense – and why they occur in some peripheral societies but not in others.

By this definition, the revolutions examined in this book were the result, to a greater or lesser extent, of the actions of revolutionary movements, which are a special type of social movement. A *social movement* has been defined as a "collective challenge" to "elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes" by some significant number of "people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow 1994: 3–4). A revolutionary social movement, or what I shall simply call a *revolutionary movement*, is a social movement "advancing exclusive competing claims to control of the state, or some segment of it" (Tilly 1993: 10). Few social movements attempt to gain control of the state as such, but this is a necessary (and sometimes exclusive) goal of that subset of social movements that are revolutionary. There is no hard and fast line, furthermore, that separates revolutionary movements from reform-oriented social movements. Under certain circumstances (which I hope this book will illuminate), social movements may become revolutionary, and revolutionary movements may become social movements (or political parties). I am primarily concerned in this book, then, with understanding why revolutionary movements sometimes become powerful forces and sometimes gain control of state power in peripheral societies.

Not all social movements, revolutionary or otherwise, are necessarily, or equally, "radical." Most social movements, including some revolutionary movements, seek directly or indirectly to reform the state or to utilize state power in order to reform existing economic, social, or cultural arrangements. Most social movements, that is, do not attempt to restructure national societies in truly fundamental ways. (Although, again, the distinction between reform and "fundamental" change can be difficult to draw.) A radical social movement, on the other hand, seeks the destruction or fundamental transformation of (at least) several important institutions. A *radical revolutionary movement*, as I use the term, not only seeks to control the state, but also aims (among other things) to transform more or less fundamentally the national society or some segment thereof, ruled by that state. To speak of radical revolutionaries, then, is not redundant. Of course, whether and under what conditions a radical revolutionary movement can actually bring about

such a social revolution is another question altogether, and one that lies largely beyond the scope of this book (but see Foran and Goodwin 1993). In any event, while the term "conservative social revolution" would clearly be an oxymoron, based on my definition of terms, it is certainly possible to speak of a conservative or reformist revolutionary movement, that is, a movement that seeks state power but which also wishes (or whose dominant leaders desire) to preserve or at most to modestly reform existing economic, social, and cultural arrangements, without changing them fundamentally. (For example, many leaders of the American War of Independence, sometimes called the American Revolution, and of the Mexican Revolution may be accurately described as "conservative revolutionaries.") This book focuses on the trajectory of radical revolutionary movements.

A significant change in the control and organization of state power is a sine qua non of both revolutions and social revolutions, as I am using those terms. By *state* I mean those core administrative, policing, and military organizations, more or less coordinated by an executive authority, that extract resources from and administer and rule (through violence if necessary) a territorially defined national society (the term *national society* is defined later in this section). As Lenin put it, by "state" or "apparatus of government is meant, first of all, the standing army, police and officialdom" (1997 [1917]: 38). (I make no assumption, however, that states are unitary actors that are not themselves potentially riven by conflicts of interest, identity, and vision.) Generally, states claim the right to exercise final and absolute authority (i.e., *sovereignty*) within national societies. By *state power* or *infrastructural power* I mean the capacity of these core organizations to carry out their projects, and to enforce extant laws, throughout the territories that they claim to govern, even in the face of opposition from the population that they rule or from other states (see also Chapter 7, Appendix 2, for more on this concept).

Generally, modern states are organized in either a bureaucratic or patrimonial fashion, to use Max Weber's terms, with many combinations of these ideal-types in between. A *bureaucratic* or "rationalized" state organization is characterized by the appointment of officials, based upon achievement in a course of appropriately specialized training, to positions (or "offices") with clearly defined responsibilities. A *patrimonial* state, by contrast, is staffed by officials who have been appointed on the basis of political loyalty to a leader or party, kinship, ethnicity, and/or some other characteristic, ascribed or achieved, that has no specific connection

to the responsibilities of office; the latter responsibilities, in any event, are generally not clearly defined in patrimonial organizations, being either quite general or ad hoc in nature, and tend to overlap across offices. Needless to say, a bureaucratic state tends to expend resources, and to attain its declared goals, other things being equal much more efficiently than a patrimonial state.

Following Weber, the state is often defined as that institution that monopolizes the means of coercion in a society – or monopolizes the legitimate use of coercion in a society.[3] Yet this definition is clearly problematic. A state does not cease being a state, certainly, when some other organization – such as an invading army or, indeed, a revolutionary movement – also possesses significant coercive powers within the territories that state claims to rule. A *revolutionary situation*, in fact, is characterized precisely by "dual power" or "multiple sovereignty" – the existence, that is, of two or more political blocs (including, typically, extant state officials and their allies), both or all of which *claim* to be the legitimate state, and both or all of which may possess significant means of coercion (see Tilly 1978, 1993). Nor does a state cease being a state when its use of violence is *not* viewed as legitimate by large numbers of people; indeed, the existence of a strong revolutionary movement (hence also a revolutionary situation) presumably indicates that such legitimacy is not in fact widespread. (It is an open question, furthermore, whether particular authoritarian states have been considered legitimate by most or even many of the people whom they have claimed to rule.)

Based on the foregoing, a state is perhaps best defined as an organization, or set of organizations, that attempts, and claims the right, to monopolize the legitimate use of violence in an extended territory. It follows that armed revolutionary movements are a type of state-in-formation or, put differently, a type of state-building, since armed revolutionaries are attempting to construct an organization that can monopolize the principal means of coercion in a territory. The statelike character of revolutionary movements is especially evident when they are able to control and govern "liberated territories" within a national society.

States, as I use that term, are not quite the same thing as political regimes. By *political regime*, or simply *regime*, I mean the formal and informal organizations, relationships, and rules that determine who can employ state power for what ends, as well as

[3] Weber adopted this formulation from Leon Trotsky, the Russian Marxist revolutionary.

> how those who are in power deal with those who are not. The distinction between democracy, totalitarianism, and authoritarianism thus deals with the question of *regime type*. . . . Regimes are more permanent forms of political organization than specific governments [or rulers], but they are typically less permanent than the state. (Fishman 1990: 428; see also Young 1994: 40–2; Linz 1975.)

A crucial dimension of any political regime is its relative inclusiveness or exclusivity – or, to put it another way, the extent of its "embeddedness" in or connections to the national society that it governs. Very inclusive regimes, including but not limited to *democratic* regimes, have multiple mechanisms for incorporating into decision-making processes the preferences or claims of citizens and social groups, including elections, political parties, interest groups, and even social movements. By contrast, *authoritarian* regimes have greater autonomy from society, though not necessarily from economic elites, and they sometimes forcibly exclude certain mobilized groups from any role in political decision making. An extreme form of authoritarianism – and one that will make more than one appearance in this book – is what Weber termed *sultanism* or sultanistic dictatorship. Such dictatorships, which entail the concentration of more or less unchecked power in the person of the dictator, may be extremely, and violently, exclusionary, denying political influence even to wealthy elites.

The distinction between state and regime can become quite blurred in the real world. This happens the more that states and regimes interpenetrate one another, as when the armed forces (a key component of the state) directly wield executive power, or when a one-party regime penetrates key state organizations, or when important state officials are the personal clients of a powerful monarch or dictator, sultanistic or otherwise. In these instances, the fate of both the state and regime tend to become fused; if for whatever reason the regime collapses, it may bring the state down with it or, at least, result in a fundamental transformation of the state (and vice versa). This point, needless to say, is of obvious importance for the question of why revolutions occur where they do. As we shall see, moreover, the distinction between state and economy may also become blurred, with revolutionary consequences should the state break down in such circumstances.

By *national state* I mean a state "governing multiple contiguous regions and their cities by means of centralized, differentiated, and autonomous structures" (Tilly 1992: 2). (My use of the term "state" in this book implies "national state," because all the states that I am examining are of this

type.) By *national society*, or simply *society*, I mean the people and social relations within those contiguous regions.[4] (Of course, national states not only govern their societies, but often attempt to impose themselves upon – and sometimes fight – other states in the international *state system*.) A *world region* or *region*, as I use these terms, refers to geographically concentrated and/or contiguous national societies that share important political, economic, or cultural characteristics.

By *political context*, I refer to the ways in which a national society, or some component of it, is governed and regulated by, has access to, and otherwise relates to the national state as well as to the larger state system. (As I use the term, then, *political context* encompasses *geo*political context.) This book emphasizes how the influence and effects upon populations of many social and economic institutions and relationships (including class relations) are mediated or refracted, as in a "force field," by the political context in which the latter are embedded.[5]

In other words, state structures and policies are not only important in their own right, but they also powerfully shape how other factors alternately encourage or discourage collective action of various types. More specifically, for our purposes, political context is of crucial importance for understanding the variable capacity of radical revolutionaries both to mobilize masses of people and to seize state power. For example, whether economic grievances or cultural beliefs (e.g., nationalism) find expression in specifically revolutionary movements is largely determined by political context.

I make no assumption, I should add, that national states are true *nation-states*, that is, states that rule a people with a common ethnicity, language, and/or religion – in other words, a *nation*. As Tilly (1992) reminds us, there are and have been very few nation-states in this sense;

[4] Norbert Elias (1978: chs. 5–6) refers to what I am calling national societies as *state-societies*, as distinct from such other forms of "attack-and-defense units" (as he terms them) as tribes and city-states.

[5] This notion of *political context* is similar to that of *political opportunities* or *political opportunity structures*, which is found in much recent social-movement research (see, e.g., Tarrow 1994). I prefer the term *political context*, however, because (1) not all the state structures and practices that influence societies, including social movements, are "structural" (in the sense of relatively fixed or permanent) and (2) such structures and practices typically create constraints upon, as well as opportunities for, collective action. This idea of political context is similar to the notion of *political mediation* employed by Edwin Amenta and his colleagues (e.g., Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan 1992).

most states, and most societies, are multinational. National societies, in other words, are not necessarily equivalent to nations – a fact that lies behind much ethnic violence – and the borders and territories of such societies are neither fixed nor impenetrable. National societies, in short, are not "naturally" bounded, hermetic, or independent entities shut off from external forces – and revolutions simply cannot be understood if we assume that they are.

By *peripheral state* (a term that encompasses colonial states as well as many post- or "neocolonial" states) I mean a state whose power and projects are more or less strictly determined or at least very tightly constrained by a much more powerful "core" or "metropolitan" state (or states) within the state system (see, e.g., Triska 1986). *Colonial states* are de jure administrative and military extensions or branches of specific metropolitan states, although the *colonial regimes* that attach to them are almost invariably more exclusive and autonomous from the peripheral societies that they govern compared to the metropolitan regimes that oversee and more or less direct them. While colonial states thus lack true sovereignty, which is invariably a claim of the metropolitan states of which they are extensions (Young 1994: 43–5), many colonial regimes are characterized by a certain degree of autonomy from metropolitan regimes. As a result, conflicts of interest, identity, and vision may occur *between* colonial and metropolitan states and regimes, just as such conflicts may occur *within* states and regimes.

A *peripheral society*, finally, is a national society governed by a peripheral state. By *Third World* I mean those peripheral societies whose economic institutions are predominantly capitalist, as distinguished from the former "socialist periphery" of Soviet-dominated societies in Eastern Europe. Generally, peripheral states are much weaker than and thus subordinate to core states precisely because peripheral societies are much poorer (in per capita if not always in gross terms), smaller, and/or more socially disorganized than are the national societies governed by these more powerful states.[6] ("Peripherality," therefore, is a relational concept; some states – variously designated as "semiperipheral" or "subimperialist" – are subordinate to core states even as they dominate still

[6] In other words, there is a close – but certainly not an automatic – relationship between the size, wealth, and cohesion of a national society and the power of the state that governs it.

less powerful states.) All the revolutionary movements whose formation and political fortunes I attempt to explain in this book sought to overthrow and to reorganize what were clearly peripheral states – colonial or neocolonial states in Southeast Asia, "client states" of the United States in Central America (see, e.g., Coatsworth 1994), and Soviet "satellite states" in Eastern Europe.[7]

These definitions should help to identify more clearly the object of study in this book: *the formation (or absence) and subsequent fate of radical revolutionary movements in peripheral societies during the Cold War era*. My goal, again, is not to provide a complete or invariant theory of such movements, or of their historical trajectories (which in any case is simply not possible), but rather to provide a parsimonious explanation of the emergence and fate of these movements that highlights the key causal mechanisms that operate across the cases I examine.

Theoretical Approaches to Revolutionary Movements

Before adumbrating the state-centered perspective on revolutionary movements that I employ in this book, I want to review briefly the two general theoretical approaches that have shaped most profoundly both popular and scholarly understandings of revolutions, at least in the English-speaking world. These approaches are the modernization and Marxist perspectives. The theoretical literature on revolutions and revolutionary movements has grown quite complex, and it encompasses much more than these dominant paradigms.[8] Scholars of revolutions have been sensitized by a variety of theoretical perspectives to a vast range of factors that may potentially contribute to the mobilization of revolutionary movements. Instead of reviewing this entire literature, however, which simply cannot be done adequately in a chapter, I will limit myself to a brief examination of these

[7] I do not use the concepts of core and periphery in this book in precisely the same technical sense as world-system theorists (e.g., Wallerstein 1979). What I call the periphery, for example, also encompasses what those theorists would term the semiperiphery. Peripheral societies, moreover, are not exclusively capitalist in nature; they may also be economically organized along socialist or precapitalist lines.

[8] A comprehensive survey of theories of revolutions could (and has) filled volumes. This is one theoretical literature, in fact, that has largely outrun empirical research. Guides to this literature include Eckstein 1965, Kramnick 1972, Hagopian 1974, Cohan 1975, Lipsky 1976, Goldstone 1980, Zimmermann 1983: ch. 8, Aya 1990, Kimmel 1990, Collins 1993, Foran 1993, Goodwin 1994b, and McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 1997.

two influential approaches, partly as a means of setting my own theoretical approach in bolder relief. (I do comment briefly on much of the theoretical literature on revolutions in my annotated bibliography.) I should state at the outset that I do not think that these two approaches (or certain others) are altogether wrong in emphasizing the various factors that they do. These factors – in fact, a very wide range of factors – do in fact play an important role in many (although not all) revolutions and revolutionary movements. I am mainly critical of these perspectives, rather, for their tendency to abstract these factors from, to neglect, or simply to analyze inadequately the *political context* in which they are embedded. The absolutely crucial importance of political context, in fact, shall be a major refrain – indeed, *the* major refrain – of the comparative analyses in this book.

How exactly do the modernization and Marxist perspectives explain revolutions? Modernization theory links revolutions to the *transition* from traditional to modern societies, that is, to the very process of modernization itself.[9] "Traditional" societies, in this view, are characterized by fixed, inherited statuses and roles; simple divisions of labor; social relations regulated by custom; local and particularistic attachments to the family, clan, tribe, village, ethnic, or religious community; and thus very limited and localized forms of political participation. "Modern" societies, by contrast, are distinguished by social mobility and achieved statuses and roles; complex divisions of labor; social relations regulated by legally enacted rules; broader collective identifications with the nation; and mass political participation in national states.

Most modernization theorists argue that revolutions are especially likely to occur in transitional societies undergoing very *rapid* (albeit uneven) modernization; revolutions themselves, moreover, serve to push forward the modernization process. "Revolution," suggests Samuel Huntington, "is thus an aspect of modernization. . . . It will not occur in highly traditional societies with very low levels of social and economic complexity. Nor will it occur in highly modern societies" (Huntington 1968: 265). In Walter Rostow's evocative phrase, revolutionaries are "the scavengers of the modernization process," and Communism in particular "is best understood as a disease of the transition to modernization" (Rostow 1967 [1961]: 110).

[9] Useful surveys and/or critiques of the massive literature on modernization include Gusfield 1967, Portes 1976, Bendix 1977 (1964), Valenzuela and Valenzuela 1978, Wallerstein 1979, and Taylor 1979.

Why is this so? Modernization theorists have developed a number of explanations that link rapid modernization to the development of revolutionary movements. These explanations usually hinge on some sort of "lag" or lack of fit between different components of society, which are "modernizing" at different rates. Thus, Huntington argues that revolution, like "other forms of violence and instability, . . . is most likely to occur in societies which have experienced some social and economic development [but] where the processes of political modernization and development have lagged behind the processes of social and economic change" (Huntington 1968: 265). More psychologically inclined theorists suggest that rapid modernization unleashes a "revolution of rising expectations" – expectations that a suddenly stagnant or depressed economy may prove unable to meet, thereby creating the widespread anger and sense of "relative deprivation" of which revolutions are allegedly made (see, e.g., Gurr 1970; Newton 1983). Others have argued that rapid modernization may "dis-synchronize" a society's values and social structure. Accordingly, revolutionaries who offer an alternative set of values that better "fits" the social structure will become influential (see, e.g., Johnson 1982; Smelser 1962). And for still others, rapid modernization destroys the "integrative" institutions that held traditional societies together, creating a sense of meaninglessness (or "anomie") or uncertainty about one's place in society (or "status anxiety"). Revolutionaries, in this view, may become influential in transitional societies because they are able to replace the institutions that modernization undermines. As Harry Benda (1966: 12–13), an analyst of Asian Communism, has written,

> it is not inconceivable that in Asia (as elsewhere) Communist movements as such provide a substitute for decayed or vanishing institutions – the family, the clan, the tribe, or the village community – that have suffered most heavily under the eroding onslaught of the new economic and political systems carried to Asia by the West in the course of the past century or so. . . . If iron discipline, rigid hierarchies, and unquestioning obedience are among Communism's most detestable features in the eyes of truly free men everywhere, they may yet spell security, order, and a meaningful place in the world for the social splinters of contemporary Asia.

During the 1950s, a large literature explained the "appeals of Communism" and radical nationalism in much the same terms as Benda's (see, e.g., Almond et al. 1954).

Modernization theorists, however, generally do recognize that even very rapid modernization does not produce successful revolutions *everywhere*. It is at this point that many point to the role of politics: The

success or failure of revolutionary movements, they rightly claim, depends in large part upon how incumbent governments *respond to* revolutionary movements and to the broader social problems created by rapid modernization. More specifically, if a "modernizing elite" controls the government and responds flexibly and creatively to such problems – by "resynchronizing" values and the social structure, for example, through "conservative change" – then revolution can be avoided. On the other hand, "elite intransigence," as Chalmers Johnson puts it, "always serves as an underlying cause of revolution" (Johnson 1982: 97). Huntington similarly argues that revolutions "are unlikely in political systems which have the capacity to expand their power and to broaden participation within the system. . . . Ascending or aspiring groups," he concludes, "and rigid or inflexible institutions are the stuff of which revolutions are made" (Huntington 1968: 275).

Having come this far, one might expect modernization theorists to discuss at some length the factors that explain the flexibility (or lack thereof) of different types or configurations of states or political regimes. Curiously, however, one finds little such analysis. Even Huntington, the most "state-centered" of modernization theorists, offers only a vague generalization in this regard:

> The great revolutions of history have taken place either in highly centralized traditional monarchies (France, China, Russia), or in narrowly based military dictatorships (Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba), or in colonial regimes (Vietnam, Algeria). All these political systems demonstrated little if any capacity to expand their power and to provide channels for the participation of new groups in politics. (Huntington 1968: 275)

Unfortunately, this formula is not altogether helpful. Not *all* colonial regimes, after all – in fact, relatively few – have been overthrown by revolutions (as we shall see in Part 2 of this book). Moreover, if those colonial regimes that were so overthrown did indeed collapse because they lacked the capacity to incorporate new groups, what might explain this? Similarly, not *all* military dictatorships – even "narrowly based" military dictatorships – have been toppled by revolutionaries (as we shall see in Part 3). Again, if those that were so toppled actually fell because they lacked the capacity to incorporate new groups, how can we explain this? Answering these questions requires a more thorough analysis of state structures and policies than the modernization perspective offers.

Like modernization theorists, Marxists also view revolutions as occurring in "transitional" societies – only in this case the transition,

which is seen as the result of class struggle, is from one economic mode of production to another. Class struggles may become particularly acute, in this view, when the existing mode of production has exhausted its potential for further growth and development and has entered a period of crisis. This said, it must be noted that the specific character of recent revolutions in peripheral societies has come as something of a surprise to traditional Marxists. Specifically, the socialist orientation of many revolutions in the capitalist periphery (including Southeast Asia and Central America) has virtually "stood Marx on his head." As Ernest Mandel (1979: 11) notes,

> In general, traditional Marxism looked upon relatively backward countries – those of Eastern and Southern Europe, and even more those of Asia and Latin America – in the light of Marx's well-known formula: the more advanced countries show the more backward ones the image of their future development as in a looking glass. This led to the conclusion that socialist revolutions would first occur in the most advanced countries, that the proletariat would take power there long before it would be able to do so in more backward countries.

In fact, not only have a series of avowedly socialist revolutions occurred in the capitalist periphery, but the industrialized capitalist societies of the core have proven surprisingly immune to this form of social change. One notable aspect of this historic "reversal" of Marxist expectations is that recent Third World revolutions have relied heavily on classes deemed secondary (at best) to the classic socialist project, particularly the peasantry, rather than on the industrial proletariat or working class. Instead of being built on the technological foundations of advanced capitalism, moreover, socialism has been one of the means by which certain "backward" countries have attempted to "catch up" with the advanced capitalist core. In short, rather than being a *successor* to capitalism, socialism has been something of a historical *substitute* for it in many developing societies (see, e.g., White, Murray, and White 1983: 3).

Recent events in the erstwhile socialist periphery of Eastern Europe have also taken Marxists – and most everyone else – by surprise. Marxists have ably pondered, probed, and theorized a variety of sweeping historical changes, but the transition from socialism to capitalism is not one of them. Indeed, such a transition was virtually unthinkable to Marxists only a few years ago. Even anti-Communist Marxists and socialists who were harsh critics of authoritarian state socialism in the Soviet bloc did not anticipate such a transition to capitalism. On the contrary, many expected, or at least hoped, that state socialism would be democratized by popular

movements; the Communist elite that had expropriated capitalist property following World War II would itself be expropriated, in this scenario, by the people. Instead, Communism is now widely viewed, as the Eastern European joke goes, as the longest and most painful route from capitalism to . . . capitalism.

How exactly have Marxists attempted to explain revolutions in peripheral societies? For the capitalist Third World, many (following the lead of Lenin, Trotsky, and Mao) begin by pointing to the weakness of the capitalist or bourgeois class. Peripheral bourgeoisies – or "lumpenbourgeoisies," as Andre Gunder Frank has termed them – are small, only partially differentiated from feudal landowning elites (if at all), and, partly for these reasons, heavily dependent on the existing state apparatus for economic opportunities and protection. Consequently, capitalist classes in the Third World have proven unwilling or unable to play their "historic role" of leading antifeudal, democratic revolutions in the manner of their European counterparts (see, e.g., Paige 1997). Ironically, "bourgeois" revolutions in Third World societies must thus be made by the working class – guided by vanguard parties – in a strategic alliance with the peasant majority in such societies. But because such antifeudal revolutions are made by worker-peasant alliances, they may, unlike Europe's bourgeois revolutions, more or less quickly initiate a transition to socialism. Third World revolutions, to use Trotsky's phrase, thus assume the form of "permanent" or "uninterrupted" revolutions that undertake socialist as well as antifeudal policies or "tasks" (Trotsky 1969 [1930]; see also Löwy 1981). A similar line of argument about socialist revolutions has been introduced into academic social science by Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966).

Marxists do recognize, however, that significant revolutionary movements have not developed in *all* peripheral societies. This has been variously attributed to "unusually" strong peripheral bourgeoisies, to a lack of revolutionary leadership, or to the fact that not all *types* of peasants are inclined to support revolutionary movements – although just what sort of peasants are revolutionary, and why, have been the subjects of much debate.

For many Marxists, rural producers whose mode of life most closely approximates that of urban workers are, not surprisingly, the most likely stratum to ally with workers. Consequently, landless rural workers and, to a lesser degree, poor peasants (especially tenants) have usually been considered by Marxists as the most revolutionary strata in the

countryside. These groups are seen as having irreconcilable conflicts of interest with landowners as well as an "objective" interest in socialism, understood as the collective self-management of production. These groups are revolutionary, in other words, or will eventually become so, by virtue of their economic class position. Landowning "middle" peasants, by contrast, are thought to waiver in their political allegiances, while rich peasants (not to mention landlords themselves), who hire wage labor, have usually been regarded as counterrevolutionary. Peripheral societies with large middle and rich peasantries, then, are not likely to generate radical social movements, revolutionary or otherwise.

More recently, however, this general picture has been questioned in various ways by neo-Marxist or Marxist-influenced students of peasant politics. Eric Wolf (1969), for example, has argued that landowning middle peasants, not rural workers or poor peasants, are in fact *most* likely to be revolutionary. Wolf, who examines peasant involvement in the Mexican, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Algerian, and Cuban revolutions, views peasant rebelliousness as a reaction to the disintegrative effects produced by "North Atlantic capitalism" as it penetrates traditional societies (1969: 276–82). He argues that landowning middle peasants, as well as "free" peasants (e.g., squatters) who are outside landlord and state control, are most likely to rebel, both because their way of life is more threatened by capitalism compared to other social groups *and* because they are better able to act collectively to preserve their traditional ways.[10] As Wolf puts it, "it is the very attempt of the middle and free peasant to remain traditional which makes him revolutionary" (1969: 292). Wolf does however recognize that poor and landless peasants have also become involved in revolutions when they can be mobilized by "external" political parties and military organizations – organizations, moreover, that typically seek to do much more than preserve "traditional" ways of life (Wolf 1969: 290).

Wolf's arguments have been contested by Jeffery Paige (1975, 1997), who argues that sharecropping tenants and migratory "semiproletarians," not middle peasants, are the most revolutionary rural strata. Like Wolf, however, Paige also links "agrarian revolution" to the penetration of world capitalism into preindustrial societies and, more specifically, to the creation of "export enclaves"; his first book, in fact, is subtitled *Social Move-*

[10] Craig Calhoun has argued that urban artisans have been more revolutionary than the urban proletariat for similar reasons (1982: ch. 6).