Does Modernization Breed Revolution?

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A Sicilian Revolution

Eighteen forty-eight was one of Europe's vintage years for revolution. The first truly revolutionary situation of the year did not develop in the industrializing centers of France, Germany, or England. It formed in poor old Sicily. During the three decades since the settlement which had closed the Napoleonic Wars, Sicily had occupied a position subordinate to Naples in the newly created Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Its bourgeoisie had long been pushing for Sicilian autonomy. Some of them, in tune (and, to some extent, in concert) with liberals elsewhere in Italy, had lately been entertaining ideas of political reform. And other groups of Sicilians opposed any strong government whatsoever.

Early in January 1848, the closing of the university, after student riots centering on calls for a new constitution, freed the young and educated for political action. The government decreed the arrest of some of the city's prominent liberals. Then the call for a revolt on the occasion of King Ferdinand's birthday celebration—January 12—began to spread through Palermo. A manifesto, passed from hand to hand on the ninth of January, read as follows:

> Sicilians! The time of useless supplications is past. Protests, requests, and peaceful demonstrations are useless. Ferdinand has scorned them all. Are we, a freeborn people reduced to shackles and misery, to delay any longer in reconquering our legitimate rights? To arms, sons of Sicily. The force of the people is omnipotent: the unity of the people will bring the fall of the king. The day of 12 January 1848, at dawn, will bring the glorious epoch of universal regeneration. Palermo will receive with delight those armed Sicilians who offer themselves in support of the common cause: to establish reforms and institutions proper to the progress of this century, reforms and institutions desired by Europe, by Italy, and by Pope Pius. Union, order, subordination to our leaders. Respect for property: theft is a declaration of betrayal of the cause of the nation and will be punished as such. He who lacks means will be given them. With these principles Heaven will support the just cause. Sicilians, to arms! [1]

[1] Giorgio Candeloro, *Storia dell' Italia moderna,* 2nd ed. (Milan, 1966), III, p. 122.

The declaration was a little grander than the events which followed, but the Palermitani did, indeed, begin a revolution on the twelfth of January.

The people of Palermo had rebelled many times, and against a great variety of governments, in the centuries before 1848. On this day they began with the formation of small crowds which listened to harangues, sported the Italian tricolor, marched through the streets, and skirmished with the troops and police. By the end of the day a few demonstrators and a few troops had died in combat, and barricades had put the rebels in control of the Fieravecchia section of the city. The next day the few hundreds of insurgents expanded their control over different points in the city, and found themselves reinforced by the arrival of *squadre* of agricultural workers from the surrounding countryside. On the fourteenth, the establishment of four revolutionary committees created a kind of government for Palermo and brought the liberal bourgeois and aristocrats directly into the revolutionary movement. In the succeeding days they held off the troops and ships of the Bourbon monarchy and dislodged the old government from its remaining toeholds within the city. As the Bourbon forces retreated from Palermo, insurrections sprang up all over Sicily. By the middle of February revolutionary committees had taken power almost everywhere. In the course of the following months a revolutionary regime resuscitated the old Sicilian parliament, declared its attachment to the nascent Italian federation, and established *de facto* autonomy for the island.

The revolutionary coalition, however, was disparate and uneasy. Many of the early revolutionary actions consisted of seizures of agricultural land by rural workers, acts of vengeance by them and others, and moves by bosses of what would later be called Mafia, to secure their own positions by diligent use of their strong-arm boys. The revolutionary committees soon found themselves struggling to keep down some of their supposed supporters and to hold the rest together. They organized a bourgeois National Guard to counter the irregulars who had assumed military duties everywhere. They attempted to launch a program of modest liberal reforms in the face of strenuous demands for land reform and other great transformations, and against equally strenuous resistance to any governmental intervention. Even the return of the Bourbon troops did not reunite the revolutionaries. The National Guard dissolved as the Bourbons advanced. By May 1849, those who had made the Sicilian revolution had fled, or surrendered, or disguised their roles. Ferdinand II again ruled Sicily, at least in principle.

Put in the company of the English revolution of the seventeenth century, the Spanish of the nineteenth century, the Russian of the

twentieth, or even of some of the other revolutions of 1848 itself, the Sicilian revolt was a petty affair. Yet its very incompleteness, ineffectuality, and reversal raise important questions about the nature of revolution which a concentration on the great standard examples ordinarily tempts us to answer in superficial, conventional ways. In what sense, if any, should we regard events such as those in Sicily as revolutionary? Do they constitute a number of separate revolutions, a single revolution, part of a larger revolution, or no revolution at all? What distinguishes them from the banditry, vendetta, rioting, warfare, and murder which have sometimes permeated Sicilian life? Do they have any connections? If the revolutions of 1848 were somehow promoted by the modernization of Europe, how does that generalization apply to cases like Sicily? Under what conditions might we reasonably have expected this revolution to succeed or to produce extensive structural change? How would we know which caused what?

The historical versions of these questions are challenging. The political history of Sicily always displays exotic complexities; it draws its practitioners into a sort of ethnography which rarely seems necessary on the more familiar terrain of Paris or Berlin. It also tests the limits of the standard general interpretations of 1848. Although disagreement on the character of the mid-century revolutions still thrives (within a range running from observations of the decay or incompetence of nineteenth-century political regimes to straightforward assertions of bourgeois revolution), almost everyone asserts the importance of: (a) some sort of bad fit between the political institutions shaped in the aftermath of the French Revolution and the aspirations and forms of life growing up within the urbanizing and industrializing European countries of the nineteenth century; (b) the short-run industrial and agricultural crisis of the later 1840s; and (c) the rise of new segments of the middle classes devoted to varying versions of liberalism, nationalism, and social reform. As Frederico Curato sums up for the Sicilian revolution:

> This insurrectional movement was based on economic causes not dissimilar to those prevailing elsewhere in Europe, but it had some special features which made it an unusual movement in the history of that year's insurrections. In fact it embodied not only a reaction against Naples . . . but also a reaction of the incipient Sicilian bourgeoisie to the introduction by the Neapolitan government of a unitary economic system for the two parts of the Kingdom which, combined with the free coastal trade established in 1824, damaged the development of local industries which were incapable of meeting the competition of mainland industries. In Sicily, in the last analysis, the bourgeoisie sought power not because it had become the most im-

> portant class and sought juridical and political recognition of its strength, but on the contrary in order simply to survive.[2]

The special features matter. Yet behind the particular interpretation of the Sicilian revolution we see a standard form of historical analysis which consists of identifying the principal actors, attributing to them appropriate incentives, outlooks, or calculations, and then setting them into motion. The conception is dramatic: the stage, the players, the impulses, the action. Revolution becomes a work of art.

Large structural transformations like the incipient industrialization of Europe only figure indirectly in this kind of analysis. They are neither actors nor actions. They simply condition the stage, the players, the impulses, the action. They may also result from the action, in the way that the installation of liberal regimes in 1848 facilitated the expansion of trade, the treatment of labor as a commodity, and so on. As a consequence, they tend to enter the account via theories (implicit or explicit) in which structural changes affect mentalities, mentalities guide actions, and actions produce further structural changes.

Those psychological theories are likely to fall into one of two classes. The first class of theory stresses the psychic impact of large-scale change: disorientation, rising expectations, relative deprivation, the diffusion of new ideologies. Thus, one standard interpretation of the revolutions of 1848 emphasizes the junction of two different responses to early industrialism: the bourgeois formation of a liberal-democratic-individualistic ideology and the working-class response of anger and fear. The second class of theory deals with the "fit" between political institutions and social situation, on the general grounds that where the fit is poor, men become dissatisfied, resentful, and rebellious. Another standard interpretation of the events of 1848 brings out the nineteenth-century inappropriateness or decay of political arrangements fashioned in the epic state-building of the preceding two or three centuries. Obviously one can employ either or both of these lines of explanation in attempting to account for the Sicilian revolution of 1848: the small Sicilian bourgeoisie did share to some extent in the quasi-religious devotion of their mainland brothers to the market and to self-advancement (witness the acid portraits of these very traits of that period in Tomasi de Lampedusa's famous novel of Sicilian life, *The Leopard*), the agricultural workers of Sicily did find themselves being dispossessed (note the rapidity with which the day laborers of the island took advantage of each nineteenth-century hiatus in authority to repos-

[2] Federico Curato, "Il 1848 italiano ed europeo," *Nuove questione di storia del Risorgimento e dell' Unità* (Milan, 1969), I, p. 682.

sess the lands which had been taken from them) and, for all its liberal facade, the Bourbon monarchy of the Two Sicilies was very much a dynastic state in the old style (witness the wry reports of British General William Bentinck, who had himself played an important part in the creation of the dual state).

Some Larger Questions

Despite the fascination of this sort of dramaturgic analysis of particular events, I want this essay to deal with the questions raised by the Sicilian case within a plane which is rather less historical, less colorful, more pretentious. With one eye fixed on the modern European experience, I want to ask myself whether modernization breeds revolution. (I should also like to ask, vice versa—does revolution breed modernization?—but within the compass of this article that is not possible.) That first formulation of the question is compact, but ambiguous. We shall, unfortunately, have to put a large part of our effort into the preliminary task of reducing the ambiguities. "Modernization" is a vague, tendentious concept. "Revolution" is a controversial one as well.

Instead of trying to pace off modernization precisely, I shall ordinarily substitute for it somewhat better defined processes, such as industrialization or demographic expansion. Instead of trying to grasp the essential genius of revolution, I shall offer a rather arbitrary set of definitions which appear to me to have considerable theoretical utility. I shall compensate for my arbitrariness by discussing violence, instability, and political conflict more extensively than a strict concentration on revolution would justify.

There are, furthermore, quite a few different senses in which one can imagine large-scale structural change as breeding, shaping, causing, sparking, or resulting from major political conflicts. Instead of striving to catalog and assess them all, I shall take a critical look at one synthesis of the relationships which are most often proposed, and try to communicate my reasons for thinking that (a) available theories which treat protest, conflict, violence, and revolution as direct responses to the stresses of structural change are wrong; (b) the strong effects of large-scale change on conflict run through the structure of power, especially by shaping the organizational means and resources available to different possible contenders for power; and (c) there are nevertheless certain kinds of short-run crises which tend to promote conflict, or even revolution, by affecting the likelihood that major participants in the political system will make or reject claims of great importance for the structure of power.

Pursuit of the first two problems (the conceptual difficulties and the direct relationships between structural change and revolution) will lead to a third set of questions: if the political process is so important after all, what *are* the political conditions for conflict, violence, and revolution? The discussion of that question will fall even shorter of a comprehensive reply than in the first two cases. But at least there will be some suggestions of relationships among war, domestic violence, revolution, and routine contention for power.

Huntington's Synthesis

One of the most sophisticated recent syntheses of the standard views concerning all these matters comes from Samuel Huntington. In his *Political Order in Changing Societies,* Huntington argues that the widespread domestic violence and instability of the 1950s and 1960s in many parts of the world "was in large part the product of rapid social change and the rapid mobilization of new groups into politics, coupled with the slow development of political institutions." [3] He goes on to portray an interaction among these elements:

> If a society is to maintain a high level of community, the expansion of political participation must be accompanied by the development of stronger, more complex, and more autonomous political institutions. The effect of the expansion of political participation, however, is usually to undermine the traditional political institutions and to obstruct the development of modern political ones. Modernization and social mobilization, in particular, thus tend to produce political decay unless steps are taken to moderate or to restrict its impact on political consciousness and political involvement. Most societies, even those with fairly complex and adaptable traditional political institutions, suffer a loss of political community and decay of political institutions during the most intense phases of modernization.[4]

Huntington deliberately applies this lead-lag model to Western revolutions, treating them as extreme cases of the conflicts which emerge when political institutionalization proceeds too slowly for the paces of large-scale social change (which Huntington treats as more or less identical with "modernization") and of mobilization. Moreover, John Gillis has recently argued that the model applies specifically to the European modernizing revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth cen-

[3] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven 1968), p. 4.

[4] Ibid., pp. 85–86.

turies.[5] It is therefore legitimate to ask how strong a grip on the Western experience with revolutions and violent conflict Huntington's analysis gives us. My answer is that the grip is needlessly weak—weak, because the scheme founders in tautologies, contradictions, omissions, and failures to examine the evidence seriously. Needlessly, because several of the main arguments concerning mobilization, political participation, and conflict improve vastly on the usual social-psychological tracing of "violence" or "protest" back to "strain" or "discontent."

Although it would be worth trying, this article will not attempt to wrench Huntington's theory into shape. I shall dwell on it in other ways, for other reasons, because in one manner or another it sums up most of the conventional wisdom connecting revolution to large-scale structural change; because Huntington places an exceptional range of contemporary and historical material within its framework; because the variables within it appear to be of the right kind; and because it is sturdy enough to exempt me from the accusation of having erected, and then burned, a straw man as I build up an alternative line of argument.

Huntington offers several criteria for the institutionalization of the existing political organization: adaptability, complexity, autonomy, coherence (with the latter essentially meaning consensus among the active participants in the political system). This sort of definition-making increases the risk that Huntington's arguments will become tautological. To the extent that one judges adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence on the basis of the absence or containment of domestic violence and instability, the circle of truth by definition will close.

Nevertheless, Huntington's balanced-development theory is appealing in its combination of three factors—rapid social change, mobilization, and political institutionalization—which other authors have employed separately in one-factor explanations of stability and instability. It does, furthermore, provide a plausible explanation of the twentieth-century concentration of revolution, governmental instability, and collective violence in the poorer (but not the poorest) countries of the world; the more plausible because it appears to dispose of the anomaly that by many standards the relatively peaceful richer countries are also the faster changing. Huntington's stress on the importance of group claims on the political system by mobilizing segments of the population is a distinct improvement over the more usual model of accumulating individual grievances. Indeed, the most attractive general feature of Huntington's scheme is its deliberate flight from psychologism, from the assumption that the central things to be explained by a theory of

[5] John R. Gillis, "Political Decay and the European Revolutions, 1789–1848," *World Politics,* XXII (April 1970), 344–70.

revolution are why, when, and how large numbers of individual men become discontented.

Not that I find the theory convincing, even where it escapes tautology. Its plausibility begins to wither as we examine the portion of the argument that deals directly with the political consequences of large-scale structural change: "Not only does social and economic modernization produce political instability, but the degree of instability is related to the rate of modernization. The historical evidence with respect to the West is overwhelming on this point." [6] I beg leave not to be overwhelmed by the available evidence. Almost all the sources habitually cited by Huntington and others in this regard refer to static cross-sectional comparisons of contemporary states during short spans of recent years or the distribution of support for ostensibly radical political movements like Communists. In order to be even mildly persuaded, one would want to have reliable information on the effects of changes in the rate of "social and economic modernization" within the same countries.

Very few over-time studies of the problem have ever been done. The vast long-run analyses of Sorokin offer no particular support for the thesis that the pace of change governs the degree of instability.[7] Such longitudinal evidence as my collaborators and I have been able to assemble for European countries in the modern period displays plenty of violent conflict in the modern period. But it suggests either no direct relationship with the pace of structural change, or a negative one: rapid change, diminution of political conflict. In France since 1830, for example, we have discovered a broad tendency for times of rapid urbanization to produce *less* collective violence than the rest.

Among the big cross-sectional studies, Ted Gurr's analysis of 1,000-odd "strife events" occurring in 114 polities from 1961 through 1965—the most careful and comprehensive of its kind—offers little comfort to anyone who views the pace of change as a powerful determinant of the level of conflict.[8] Within his scheme, the variables which turn out to carry the explanatory weight have to do with the illegitimacy of the regime, the difficulty of communications within the country, the existence of foreign support for potential dissidents, the presence of an illegal but active Communist party, economic discrimination, political discrimination, religious cleavage, dependence on private foreign capital, potential separatism, and so on. These detailed findings of Gurr's are doubly interesting. Like other investigators, in the preliminary stages

[6] Huntington, p. 45.

[7] Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics III: Fluctuation of Social Relationships, War and Revolution* (New York, 1962).

[8] Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1970).

of his analysis Gurr found a considerable concentration of political conflict in the poorer countries, but not the poorest ones—the very "modernizing" countries whose high propensity to instability Huntington is seeking to account for. As the analysis of causal factors proceeded, Gurr generally ruled out the pace of industrialization, urbanization, and so on in favor of a cluster of structural, organizational, and international relations characteristics which form the special burden of those poorer countries. Gurr's own interpretation of his findings runs in terms of relative deprivation, rising expectations, and the like. But it takes quite an inferential chain to go from the structural conditions he actually indexes to the psychic orientations his theory deals with. Perhaps we can attach the greater importance to Gurr's findings because he eventually sharpened a rather different axe from the one he was grinding.

On a smaller scale, the exact connections which are usually alleged to tie instability to rapid structural change also turn out to be dubious. Rapid rural-to-urban migration has no particular tendency to excite protest; marginal urban populations are not the tinder of revolutions; the initial exposure of peasants to factories does not generate high levels of industrial conflict; and so on. Huntington himself happens onto some of the evidence with apparent surprise when he observes that the big-city lumpenproletariat in modernizing countries, contrary to theory, tends to be a passive or even conservative political force, and when he goes on to speculate that urbanization may be negatively correlated with revolution.[9] Yet somehow this important qualification does not penetrate to the general statement of the theory.

To accept the Huntingtonian theory confidently, one would also want clear distinctions among radicalism, instability, violence, extent of protest, and propensity to revolution—not to mention a specification of their relationships to each other. That they are equivalent or closely related constitutes a theory to be tested, not a postulate from which theorizing may begin. As it happens, Huntington never quite clears away this difficulty. He succeeds in detaching revolution from the other phenomena by inflating it: "A revolution is a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies." [10] By this standard one might reasonably argue that no revolution has ever occurred, but one certainly would not confuse revolution with simple violence or protest. For the rest, however, Huntington willingly couples or confounds violence with "other forms of disorder." [11]

[9] Huntington, pp. 278–83, 299.
[10] Ibid., p. 264.
[11] Ibid., p. 358.

Oddly enough, all these failings eventually become irrelevant. As Huntington's arguments march on, the direct relationships between political conflict and structural change gradually drop out. At the end the balanced-development theory is pitting rapid mobilization against institutionalization alone. Modernization now acts in a series of unspecified ways as a cause of mobilization. It does not directly produce conflict. The reformulation has the advantage of simplicity. In my view, it also has the advantage of greater proximity to the main conditions affecting the level of violent conflict: the interaction of the claims being made on the system by actual and aspiring participants, on the one hand, and the established arrangements for responding to such claims, on the other. The costs of Huntington's reformulation are twofold. First, we lose any strong sense of the political consequences of structural change because of the shapelessness of the theory linking mobilization to modernization; Marx, by contrast, told us exactly what kinds of groups we could expect to emerge as significant political actors out of the development of industrial capitalism. Second, the danger of truth by definition in such a two-factor theory is even greater than before. It becomes more crucial than ever to specify "mobilization" and "institutionalization" independently of each other.

Huntington on Revolution

Huntington restricts the term *revolution* to the deep and rapid transformations of whole societies, which others have called Great Revolutions; the French, Chinese, Mexican, Russian, and Cuban revolutions epitomize what he has in mind. Sicily's adventure of 1848 would not qualify. Nevertheless, Huntington's formulation asserts a fundamental continuity between revolution and lesser forms of conflict:

> Revolution is thus an aspect of modernization. It is not something which can occur in any type of society at any period in its history. It is not a universal category but rather an historically limited phenomenon. 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. Like other forms of violence and instability, it is most likely to occur in societies which have experienced some social and economic development and where the processes of political modernization and political development have lagged behind the processes of social and economic change.[12]

Thus the imbalances which account for other forms of "disorder" also account for revolution: "The political essence of revolution is the rapid expansion of political consciousness and the rapid mobilization of new

[12] Ibid., p. 265.

groups into politics at a speed which makes it impossible for existing political institutions to assimilate them. Revolution is the extreme case of the explosion of political participation." [13]

Huntington then distinguishes between an Eastern and a Western pattern of revolution. In the *Eastern,* new groups mobilize into politics, they fashion new political institutions, and they overthrow the old order; anticolonial revolutions are the type case. In the *Western,* the old political institutions disintegrate and only then new groups mobilize into politics, create new political institutions, and come to power. The Russian Revolution is typical. The "decay" of established institutions plays a large part in the Western pattern, according to Huntington, and a small part in the Eastern. As a result, the sequences are rather different. Nevertheless, in both cases the immediate cause of revolution is supposed to be the discrepancy between the performance of the regime and the demands being made upon it. In both cases that discrepancy is supposed to increase as a consequence of the mobilization of new groups into politics, which in turn occurs as a more or less direct effect of rapid social and economic change.

The danger of circular argument is just as apparent here as before. In his detailed argumentation, Huntington does not really escape the fateful circularity of judging the extent of the discrepancy from the character of the revolution which presumably resulted from the discrepancy. He tells us, for example, that:

> 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.[14]

Suppose we suppress the urge to blurt out questions about England in the 1640s or the United States in the 1860s and stifle suspicions that the implicit standard for great revolutions at work in this passage simply restricts them logically to centralized, authoritarian regimes. We still must wonder how we could have known before the fact of revolution that the expansive capacity of these governments was inferior to that of the many other monarchies, military dictatorships, and colonial regimes which did not experience revolutions.

Huntington does not answer. In its present form his scheme does not, it appears, give us any solid guidance in the anticipation or production

[13] Ibid., p. 266.
[14] Ibid., p. 275.

of revolutions. Not even in the weak sense of projecting ourselves back into the France of 1788 or the Sicily of 1847, and saying how we would have gone about estimating the probabilities of revolution within the next few years. That is true of the whole argument, and not just of the treatment of revolution. Even in principle, the scheme is not really a predictive one. It is an orientation, a proposal to weight several clusters of variables differently from the way they have been estimated in the past, and a presentation of an exceptionally wide range of observations in the light of the orientation and the weighting.

Alternatives

How else could we proceed? We should hold onto several of Huntington's perceptions: (a) that revolutions and collective violence tend to flow directly out of a population's central political processes, instead of expressing diffuse strains and discontents within the population; (b) that the specific claims and counterclaims being made on the existing government by various mobilized groups are more important than the general satisfaction or discontent of those groups, and that claims for established places within the structure of power are crucial; (c) that large-scale structural change transforms the identities and structures of the potential aspirants for power within the population, affects their opportunities for mobilization, governs the resources available to the government, and through it to the principal holders of power. Accepting those insights would incline us to set our faces against such aggregate psychological hypotheses as those of James Davies [15] or Ted Gurr,[16] as well as against gross system-function hypotheses like those of Chalmers Johnson [17] or Neil Smelser.[18] It will encourage us to concentrate our analysis on processes of mobilization, on structures of power, and on the changing demands linking one to the other, in the manner of Barrington Moore,[19] Eric Wolf,[20] or William Gamson.[21]

We have to go further. By contrast with Huntington's global strategy, we must clearly distinguish among different forms of conflict before seeking to identify their connections; we must disaggregate revolution

[15] James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review,* XXVII (1962), 5–19.

[16] Gurr, *Why Men Rebel.*

[17] Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston, 1966).

[18] Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York, 1963).

[19] Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, 1966).

[20] Eric Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1969).

[21] William A. Gamson, *Power and Discontent* (Homewood [Ill.], 1968).

into its components instead of treating it as a unitary phenomenon; we must investigate the precise ways in which urbanization or political centralization affect the mobilization and demobilization of different segments of the population; and we must specify and trace the relations of each major segment to the changing structure of power.

Here I simply want to sketch a line of argument embodying an attempt to move in the direction I call desirable. The argument grows from an effort to document and explain changes in the character of political conflict (especially in its violent forms) in European countries over recent centuries. On its home ground, the argument is ambiguous at some points and eminently debatable at others. Far too little systematic evidence is now available to put it to any comprehensive test. The formulations reflect modern European experience too directly to warrant any confidence that they apply to the rest of the world. I inflict them on my readers only because that European experience has, in fact, provided the bulk of the models for the analysis of revolution in the contemporary world, because the scheme does help make sense of the European experience, because at some points the line of argument yields testable inferences, and because such small evidence as I have been able to accumulate from a few countries over a few centuries appears to support those inferences.

A Model of Political Conflict

First, a simple model of political action. Let us distinguish three kinds of social unit within any specified population. A *government* is an organization which controls the principal concentrated means of coercion within the population; a *contender for power* is a group within the population which at least once during some standard period applies resources to influence that government; and a *polity* is the set of contenders which routinely and successfully lays claims on that government. (We may call these individual contenders *members* of the polity, while *challenger* is a good name for a contender laying claims in an irregular or unsuccessful fashion.) Almost any population beyond a very small scale will include more than one contender. Almost any large population will include more than one government, hence more than one polity. But many theoretically possible contenders will not contend during any particular period; some will never contend. A group gains the capacity to contend by mobilizing: by acquiring collective control over resources—land, labor, information, arms, money, and so on—which can be applied to influence the government; it loses that capacity by demobilizing—losing collective control over resources.

Every polity, then, collectively develops tests of membership. The tests always include the capacity to bring considerable numbers of men into action; they may also include the possession of wealth, certified birth, religious stigmata, and many other characteristics. Challengers acquire membership in the polity by meeting the tests, despite the fact that existing members characteristically resist new admissions and employ the government's resources to make admissions more difficult. The members also test each other more or less continuously; a member failing the tests tends to lose membership in the polity. Each change in membership moves the tests in a direction harmonious with the characteristics and capacities of the set of members emerging from the change. The members of the polity come to treat the prevailing criteria of membership as having a special moral virtue. Challengers denied admission tend to define themselves as being deprived of rights due them on general grounds. Members losing position tend, in contrast, to accent tradition, usage, and particular agreements in support of their claims to threatened privileges and resources. Thus contenders both entering and leaving the polity have a special propensity to articulate strongly moral definitions of their situations.

The model is simple and broad. I have compressed its presentation unmercifully, because its only function here is as a vehicle for the analysis of large-scale political conflicts. Even in précis, however, a large practical disadvantage becomes clear: the model's requirement for data concerning the mobilization, contention, and testing of a considerable number of different groups within a population of any size—not the sort of data drawn readily from a *World Handbook*. There are compensating advantages: the avoidance of that ill-defined entity called a "society" as the basic analytic unit, the well-defined connections among mobilization, contention, and conflict, the easy accommodation to the existence of multiple governments within the same population.

The scheme also permits us to specify the close relationship between collective violence and the central political process: (a) political life consists largely of making collective claims for resources and privileges controlled by governments; (b) collective violence is largely a by-product of situations in which one contender openly lays such claims and other contenders (or, especially, the government) resist these claims; (c) such situations occur with particular frequency when groups are acquiring or losing membership—that is, partly because testing tends to take that form, partly because the moral orientations of the groups whose memberships are disputed encourage the individuals within them to take exceptional risks of damage or injury, partly because the activation of the coercive forces of the government increases the likelihood of damage

or injury to other participants; (d) hence collective violence tends to cluster around major or multiple entries and exits; (e) governments themselves act to maintain priority over substantial concentrations of coercive resources, so that a contender accumulating such resources outside the control of the government is quite likely to find itself in acute conflict with the agents of the government.

As a consequence, the common theories of violence which treat it as a product of the willingness of certain kinds of individuals or groups to "resort to violence" to express themselves or accomplish their ends fall wide of the mark. Those equally common theories which distinguish sharply between violent and orderly political actions fail just as badly. The one misses the extent to which collective violence is a contingent outcome of interactions among contenders and governments, in which the agents of government commonly have the greater discretion and do most of the injury and damage. The other misses the great continuity between nonviolent and violent political actions. In Europe of the last few hundred years, at least, the great bulk of collective violence has (a) involved agents of the government, (b) grown from collective actions (such as assemblies, demonstrations, or strikes) which were not intrinsically violent, indeed which usually went on without violence. Lovers of order and defenders of the state have obscured these facts by expanding the word "violence" to include not only physical damage but also a wide range of illegal, unseemly, and symbolically repugnant behavior. In our own day as well it is customary to puff up the idea of violence until it has little value as an analytic tool but carries great moral weight; thus, Jacques Ellul's provocative essay (called, simply, *Violence*) treats without distinction almost every form of coercion men employ.[22]

Revolutions

We now have the means of moving on to revolution. The multiplication of polities is the key. A revolution begins when a government previously under the control of a single, sovereign polity becomes the object of effective, competing, mutually exclusive claims from two or more separate polities. A revolution ends when a single polity—by no means necessarily the same one—regains control over the government. This multiple sovereignty can result from the attempt of one polity to subordinate another heretofore independent polity; from the assertion of sovereignty by a previously subordinate polity; from the formation of a bloc of challengers which seizes control of some portion of the government

[22] Jacques Ellul, *Violence* (London, 1970).

apparatus; from the fragmentation of an existing polity into blocs, each of which controls some part of the government. Many observers would prefer to restrict the label "revolution" to the action by challengers; many others would prefer to call each of these a different major type of revolution: civil war, national revolution, and so on. I begin with an exceptionally broad definition to call attention to the common properties of the various paths through multiple sovereignty.

This labeling is a delicate matter. As with "violence," many groups want to define their own political objectives by reference to revolution, whether they fear or welcome an overturn of things as they are. Most debates over the scope of the term contain the germ of a debate over goals. Some readers will surely conclude that by calling any development of multiple sovereignty revolutionary I cheapen a valuable word and erase crucial distinctions between true revolutions and mere coups, bootless rebellions, and simple brigandage. If there were, in fact, wide agreement in the scholarly and hortatory literature on the criteria for revolution, I would not hesitate to accept a narrower definition. But there is precious little agreement. The varieties of political discontinuity have a disconcerting tendency to overlap and run into each other, as illustrated by the far-reaching effects of the "mere coups" involved in the Meiji Restoration and the accession of Mustafa Kemal to power. As a consequence, there are strong advantages to beginning with the common denominator of a wide variety of phenomena—multiple sovereignty—and then creating types of revolution by subdivision. It is not hard to recreate all the major customary types by introducing the following variables: (1) extent of change in the structure of the polity; (2) composition of the rival polities in the period of multiple sovereignty; and (3) extent of structural change resulting from the revolution. These three variables fairly well exhaust the further distinctions which are most commonly made: success versus failure, proletarian versus bourgeois, colonial versus noncolonial, center-to-periphery versus periphery-to-center, and so on.

Conditions for Revolution

At one time or another the building of European states led down all four paths to multiple sovereignty: (1) attempts of one polity to subordinate another independent polity—a standard situation in the dynastic and colonial warmaking of the sixteenth century and later; (2) the assertion of sovereignty by a previously subordinate polity—the diverse Habsburg empire was peculiarly subject to this outcome, and the revolutions of the Netherlands and Catalonia are prime examples; (3) the

formation of a bloc of challengers which seizes control of some portion of the government apparatus—the purest cases are peasant revolts, but every major revolution included some such action; (4) the fragmentation of an existing polity into blocs, each controlling some part of the government—with the important qualification that coalitions between members and challengers (in this case, especially working-class groups) were frequent and influential. This was the pattern in the Sicilian revolution with which we began, the standard pattern in 1848 as a whole, and no doubt the most common pattern among all modern western revolutions.

What observable political conditions, then, ought to prevail before a revolution begins? Three conditions appear to be necessary, and a fourth strongly facilitating. The three apparently necessary conditions are:

1. The appearance of contenders or coalitions of contenders, advancing exclusively alternative claims to the control over the government currently exerted by the members of the polity;
2. commitment to those claims by a significant segment of the subject population;
3. unwillingness or incapacity of the agents of the government to suppress the alternative coalition or the commitment to its claims.

The strongly facilitating condition:

4. formation of coalitions between members of the polity and the contenders making the alternative claims.

Let me confess at once that the list contains little news not already borne by the definition of revolution as a state of multiple sovereignty. The purpose of the list is simply to focus the explanation of revolution on the structure of power, and away from the general level of strain, discontent, disequilibrium, or mobilization. At first approach, the argument therefore resembles Huntington's; both of them attach great importance to encounters between existing political arrangements and specific mobilized groups making new and powerful demands on the government. This analysis veers away from Huntington's, especially in denying the significance of a discrepancy between the overall rates of mobilization and institutionalization, in attaching great importance to conflicts over claims, duties, privileges, and conceptions of justice embedded in particular contenders for power, and in drawing attention to the important possibility that the crucial contenders will be disaffected members of a polity rather than newcomers to power.

The explanation of revolution, within this formulation, becomes the identification of the probable causes for the three necessary conditions

and the fourth facilitating condition: the appearance of a bloc advancing exclusive alternative claims, commitment to those claims, failure of repression and formation of coalitions between the alternative bloc and members of the polity. An alternative bloc can come into being via three different routes: (a) the mobilization of a new contender outside the polity; (b) the turning away of an existing challenger from acceptance of the polity's current operating rules; (c) the turning away of an existing member from its established place in the polity. In order to gauge the probabilities of employment of any of the routes, we would have to know a good deal about the operating rules of the polities involved. But several general conditions very likely increase those probabilities: contraction of the resources available to the government for the meeting of its commitments, a shift in the direction of structural change within the base population such that not just new groups but new *kinds* of groups are coming into being, disappearance of the resources which make possible the membership in the polity, and the continuing collective life of some contender.

The expansion of commitment to the claims of the alternative bloc occurs both through their acceptance by groups and individuals not belonging to the bloc and through the further mobilization of the bloc itself. The two undoubtedly reinforce each other. Acceptance of the alternative claims is likely to generalize when: the government fails to meet its established obligations; it greatly increases its demands on the subject population; the alternative claims are cast within the moral framework already employed by many members of the population; there is a strong alliance between the existing government and a well-defined enemy of an important segment of the population; and the coercive resources of the alternative bloc increase.

The literature of "counter-insurgency" (perhaps most notably the work of Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf[23]) is full of attempts to analyze the tactics for producing or checking these outcomes. The Marxist account of the conditions for radicalization of the proletariat and the peasantry remains the most powerful general analysis of the process, expanding commitment to a revolutionary bloc.[24] Where it falls down is in not providing for contenders (communities, ethnic minorities, religious groups, and so on) which are not class-based, and in obscuring the revolutionary importance of defensive reactions by segments of the population whose established positions are threatened. (Eric Wolf's

[23] Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Chicago, 1970).

[24] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow, 1958), I: 243–344.

superb study of twentieth-century peasant wars makes apparent the revolutionary potential of such defensive responses to land enclosure, expansion of the market, and the encroachment of capitalism; John Womack's biography of Zapata provides a heroic portrayal of one important leader of that reaction.[25])

The agents of the government are likely to become unwilling or unable to suppress the alternative bloc and the commitment to its claims when their coercive resources contract, their inefficiency increases, and inhibitions to their use arise. Defeat in war is a quintessential case, for casualties, defections, and military demobilization all tend to decrease the government's coercive capacity; the destruction of property, disruption of routines, and displacement of population in defeat are likely to decrease the efficiency of the established coercive means; and the presence of a conqueror places constraints on the government's use of coercion. (The routine of modern military occupation, however, tends to substitute the coercive capacity of the victors for that of the vanquished.) The end of any war, won or lost, tends to restore men with newly acquired military skill to most of the contenders in the political system. Where military demobilization proceeds rapidly, it is likely to shift the balance of coercive resources away from the government, and may shift it toward an alternative bloc. Even without war, the increase in the coercive resources of the alternative bloc (which can occur through theft, purchase, training, the imposition of military discipline, and the lending of support by outsiders) is equivalent to the contraction of the government's own coercive resources. The efficiency of governmental coercion is likely to decline, at least in the short run, when the character, organization, and daily routines of the population to be controlled change rapidly; this appears to be one of the most direct effects of large-scale structural change on the likelihood of revolution. Inhibitions to the use of coercion are likely to increase when the coercive forces themselves are drawn from (or otherwise attached to) the populations to be controlled, when new members of the polity act against the coercive means that were employed to block their acquisition of membership, and effective coalitions between members of the polity and revolutionary challengers exist.

The final condition for revolution—this one strongly facilitating rather than necessary—is the formation of just such coalitions between polity members and revolutionary challengers. Modern European history, for example, provides many examples of temporary coalitions between pro-

[25] John Womack, Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge [Mass.], 1969).

fessionals, intellectuals, or other fragments of the bourgeoisie well established within the polity and segments of the working class excluded from power. The revolutions of 1830 and 1848 display this pattern with particular clarity. The payoff to the challengers consists of a hedge against repression, some protection against the devaluation of their resources, and perhaps the transfer of information and expertise from the member. The payoff to the member consists of an expansion of the resources available for application to the government and to other members of the polity—not least the ability to mount a credible threat of mass action. This sort of coalition-formation is likely to occur, on the one hand, when a challenger rapidly increases the store of resources under its control and, on the other, when a member loses its coalition partners within the polity, or the polity is more or less evenly divided among two or more coalitions, or an established member is risking loss of membership in the polity through failure to meet the tests of other members.

Revolution and Some Other Forms of Conflict

The conceptualization of revolution as the appearance of multiple sovereignty leaves some interesting cases at the margin: banditry, durable separatism, foreign intervention in domestic conflict, some varieties of war. At least those cases *belong* at the margin; they share some, but not all, features of revolutionary situations. They are nevertheless important, because they display the similarities and connections among superficially separate organized uses of force.

The similarities are easier to grasp. Eric Hobsbawn, in his beautifully executed brace of books, *Bandits* and *Primitive Rebels*,[26] has called attention to the common properties of social banditry and popular rebellion; each tends to involve a turning of the back to the state, a wide, tacit conspiracy among members of the population who are not directly engaged in the action, a theme of redressing wrongs committed by the powerful, a romantic ideology framed in terms of traditional obligations and customs, an acting out of "natural justice." Even the less romantic forms of piracy and banditry which flourished around the Mediterranean for centuries bore some striking resemblances to civil war, for they frequently amounted to *de facto* claims to sovereignty within particular geographic areas. In regions like southern Italy, the bandits sometimes exercised their claims in collusion with the duly constituted authorities of adjacent territories.

[26] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels* (Manchester, 1959) and *Bandits* (New York, 1969).

In the case of Italy, it also becomes clear that war and revolution have a good deal in common. We conventionally distinguish the two on the basis of (a) the status of each participant at the beginning and the end of the conflict, and (b) the means employed. But in nineteenth-century Italy the "national revolution" which brought about unification consisted mainly of military conquests by Piedmont, coupled with risings led by such heroic invaders as Mazzini and Garibaldi, insurrections subsidized or even engineered by Piedmont, and further popular rebellions that broke out very widely after invasion had weakened the grips of the old state and the old elite. War or revolution? Both. The same conjunction appears in the multiple rebellions of conquered territories against Napoleon, the movements of resistance against the Nazis, the anti-Japanese phase of the Chinese Revolution, and a great many other important conflicts.

Not only similarities, but interconnections. I have already pointed out that the extent of damage and injury that results from collective violence depends largely on the organization and tactics of the government's own coercive forces. Within strong states, that relationship goes farther. Repression often works. In the European experience of the last two centuries, the substantial periods of respite from collective violence within any particular country have generally been the tenures of repressive regimes: the Spanish dictatorships of Primo de Rivera and Franco, the Bolsheviks in power, the heydey of Nazism, Italian Facism after 1925, France under Louis Napoleon and—the Resistance notwithstanding—under German occupation. Obviously, I am speaking strictly of collective violence that pits groups of men against each other, and not of terror, torture, individual repression, psychic punishment, or external war. The Nazis (among others) engaged in all of these terrible acts while internal collective violence was at its low point. Just as obviously, all these regimes began with widespread collective violence, and most of them ended with it. So the point is not that repressive regimes are kinder to life. It is rather that by deliberately demobilizing their most likely opponents and closely controlling the opportunities for collective action by any other contender, repressive regimes greatly reduce the chances that collective violence will grow out of contention for power.

Another connection comes to mind. In the West of the past five centuries, perhaps the largest single factor in the promotion of revolutions and collective violence has been the great concentration of power in national states. (I concede that the rise of the national state depended to such a large degree on the growth of production, the expansion of large-scale marketing, the strengthening of the bourgeoisie, and the proliferation of bureaucracy that such a statement commits a dramatic over-

simplification.) This factor shows up most clearly in frequency of tax rebellions in Western countries over those centuries, and in the prominence of grievances concerning taxation in revolutions, such as those of the 1640s or the 1840s. The frequency of violent resistance to military conscription points in the same direction. Violent resistance by separatist movements has commonly begun with attempts of national governments to increase their control over the periphery.

The connections are subtler and more debatable when it comes to food riots, land seizures, machine-breaking, violent strikes, or religious conflicts, but in those cases as well I think the influence of the concentration of power in national states is far from negligible. In any case, over that span of European history, one can see a long slope of resistance to central control followed by a fairly rapid transition (mainly in the nineteenth century) to struggles for control *over* the central state. In the records of collective violence, this shows up as a decisive shift away from localized tax rebellions and the like to conflicts involving contenders articulating national objectives, organized on a national scale, and confronting representatives of the national state.

But I have neglected one major connection. States are warmakers, and wars are state-makers. At least in modern Europe, the major increases in the scope and strength of national states (as indicated by national budgets, national debts, powers of intervention, and sizes of staffs) have, on the whole, occurred as a direct result of war-making or preparation for war. What is more, the armed forces have historically played a large part in subordinating other authorities and the general population to the national state. They backed up the collection of taxes, put down tax rebellions, seized and disposed of the enemies of the crown, literally enforced national policy. The relationship was neatly reciprocal: war provided the incentive, the occasion, and the rationalization for strengthening the state, while war-makers assured the docility of the general population and the yielding of the resources necessary to carry out the task. The fairly recent division of labor between specialized police forces for domestic control and military forces for the remaining tasks has not fundamentally changed the relationship.

The connection matters here because a series of important relationships between war and revolution also exists. It is not just that they overlap to some extent. In some circumstances, war promotes revolution. That assertion is true in several different ways: the extraction of resources for the prosecution of a war has repeatedly aroused revolutionary resistance; the defeat of states in war has often made them vulnerable to attacks from their domestic enemies; the complicity of some portion of the armed forces with the revolutionary bloc has been absolutely

essential to the success of the modern revolution, and the most frequent variety of revolution—the coup—has depended mainly on the alignments of armed forces; the waning phases of major movements of conquest (the weakening of the Napoleonic regimes outside of France, the Nazi regimes outside of Germany, and the Japanese regimes outside of Japan being prime examples) are strikingly propitious for revolution; and the periods of readjustment immediately following large international conflicts also seem favorable to revolution, often with the collusion of major parties to the conflict. All of this suggests a strong connection between realignments in the international system and conflicts within individual countries, a connection mediated by the repressive policies and capacities of the governments involved.

Those who find at least some of the preceding analysis useful and plausible will do well to reflect on the sorts of variables that have been in play. Despite the many recent attempts to psychologize the study of revolution by introducing ideas of anxiety, alienation, rising expectations, and the like, and to sociologize it by employing notions of disequilibrium, role conflict, structural strain, and so on, the factors which hold up under close scrutiny are, on the whole, political ones. The structure of power, alternative conceptions of justice, the organization of coercion, the conduct of war, the formation of coalitions, the legitimacy of the state—these traditional concerns of political thought provide the main guides to the explanation of revolution. Population growth, industrialization, urbanization, and other large-scale structural changes do, to be sure, affect the probabilities of revolution. But they do so indirectly, by shaping the potential contenders for power, transforming the techniques of governmental control, and shifting the resources available to contenders and governments. There is no reliable and regular sense in which modernization breeds revolution.