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# Comparative Approaches to the Study of Revolution: A Historiographic Essay

**William E. Lipsky**

When Crane Brinton published his *Anatomy of Revolution* in 1938, he noted in his bibliography fewer than thirty titles in English that dealt in general terms with revolution.<sup>1</sup> Today a comprehensive listing would include some ten times that number of articles and books,<sup>2</sup> and such proliferation seems likely to continue as scholars go on with their examination of revolution as a theoretical problem and in a number of theoretical and historical contexts. Like Brinton, most have taken a comparative approach, attempting to develop a conceptual framework capable of explaining the nature and the occurrence of all revolutionary movements. More recent studies, however, have moved in the direction of placing revolution in broader contexts.

There have been revolutions as long as there have been systems against which to rebel, and the subject has interested historians and political scientists from the beginnings of their disciplines. Both Plato and Aristotle examined the phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> Their concepts of revolution differ strikingly from those of modern scholars, but they remain among the first in a long line that includes Polybius, Cicero, Machiavelli, Harrington, Clarendon, Hobbes and Montesquieu, all of whom examined revolutionary change at least in passing and who occasionally threw some light on its meaning before it became a central preoccupation of historiography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

Since the French Revolution of 1789, when the term took on its

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<sup>1</sup> Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York, 1938).

<sup>2</sup> The bibliography in Clifford T. Paynton and Robert Blackey, *Why Revolution?* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 295-313, for example, lists some two hundred fifty titles.

<sup>3</sup> Plato *Republic* 8, 9; Aristotle *Politics* 5.

<sup>4</sup> Perez Zagorin, "Theories of Revolution in Contemporary Historiography," *Political Science Quarterly*, 88 (March, 1973), 24.

modern meaning,<sup>5</sup> studies of revolution generally fall into one of two broad categories. First are those works that are historical in the strictest sense and directed at the investigation of a specific, individual revolutionary movement, or a single aspect of a particular revolution. Generally narrative, occasionally synthetic, these works seek to outline the course of events of a revolution and to explain its development in terms of unique causal relationships.<sup>6</sup> While some of these histories, such as Tocqueville's *Old Regime and the French Revolution*, do propose theoretical explanations applicable to other movements, they usually make no attempt to formulate a general theory of revolution.<sup>7</sup>

The second group of works on revolution employs a theoretical rather than a historical approach. These studies tend to deal with revolution generally and through examination of selected examples seek to develop a general statement capable of explaining its what and why. Initially these investigations concentrated either on cause or effect, but more recent works have begun to examine other aspects of the problem: the classification of revolutions by types; the dynamics of the revolutionary process; and the long-range consequences of revolution.

The causes of revolution have been a central issue in revolutionary studies since Aristotle argued in *Politics* that "the passion

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<sup>5</sup> See Karl Griewang, "Emergence of the Concept of Revolution," translated from his *Der Deuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff* (Weimar, 1955), pp. 171-182, by Heinz Lubasz, in Heinz Lubasz, editor, *Revolutions in Modern European History* (New York, 1966), pp. 55-61, for a discussion of the concept of revolution before the French Revolution; Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York, 1965), pp. 21-28, and Eugene Kamenak, "The Concept of a Political Revolution," in Karl Friedrich, editor, *Revolution, Nomos VIII* (New York, 1966), 124-136, both contain discussions of the impact of the French Revolution on the concept.

<sup>6</sup> For bibliographies of the American Revolution see Jack P. Greene, "The Reappraisal of the American Revolution in Recent Historical Literature," in *The Reinterpretation of the American Revolution*, ed. J. P. Greene (New York, 1968), pp. 2-74, and J. R. Pole, editor, *The Decision for American Independence* (Philadelphia, 1975), pp. 117-124. For the French Revolution see Crane Brinton, *A Decade of Revolution* (New York, 1963), pp. 293-323, and Gerald J. Cavanaugh, "The Present State of French Revolutionary Historiography: Alfred Cobban and Beyond," *French Historical Studies*, 7, no. 4 (Fall, 1972), 587-606. A concise but useful listing of important works on the Russian Revolution is contained in Robert V. Daniels, editor, *The Russian Revolution* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 182-184.

<sup>7</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York, 1955).

for equality is at the root of revolution."<sup>8</sup> Until the French Revolution, however, most scholarship accepted the view set forth by Polybius in *The Histories*: "the cycle of political revolution, the course appointed by nature, in which constitutions change, disappear and finally return to the point from which they started."<sup>9</sup> This cyclical concept of change persisted through many permutations until the events of 1789 and after shattered it. The old image of political systems evolving under objective, natural controls gave way to one that saw revolution as a dramatic, sudden break with the past by which men establish new institutions for themselves.<sup>10</sup>

The nineteenth century produced several major theories of revolutionary causation. Marx developed a socioeconomic dialectic that saw revolution as the result of the inevitable conflict between classes for the means of production. He argued that private property produces revolution.<sup>11</sup> To Tocqueville revolution resulted from a demand for accelerated social and economic progress in a society already gradually moving in these directions. In his mind, revolution was tied to increasing prosperity.<sup>12</sup> Both theories remain influential. Others which stress conspiratorial causation or other monistic explanations have generally been abandoned by serious scholars.

Recent theories of revolutionary causation emphasize multiple rather than monocausal explanations. One of the most influential interpretations is that proposed by Davies, who, in effect combining the theoretical explanations of Marx and Tocqueville, argues that revolution is most likely to occur when

a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal. The all-important effect on the minds of people in a particular society is to produce, during the former period, an expectation of continued ability to satisfy needs—which continue to rise—and, during the latter, a mental state of anxiety and frustration. . . . The actual state of socioeconomic development is less significant than the expectation

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle *Politics* V, 2, ii.

<sup>9</sup> Polybius, *The Histories*, VI, 9, x.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Hatto, "Revolution": An Enquiry into the Usefulness of a Historical Term," *Mind*, 58 (October, 1949), 512.

<sup>11</sup> See Robert C. Tucker, "The Marxian Revolutionary Idea," in Friedrich, *Revolution*, pp. 217-239, for a discussion of this theory.

<sup>12</sup> Tocqueville, *Old Regime*, pp. 169ff; Irving M. Zeitlin, *Liberty, Equality and Revolution in Alexis de Tocqueville* (Boston, 1971), chaps. 7 and 8.

that past progress, now blocked, can and must continue in the future.<sup>13</sup>

The idea of the possibility of progress combined with the probability of regression leads to the outbreak of revolutionary violence.

But Davies is quick to point out that it is subjective attitudes, not objective conditions, that ultimately lead to revolution. "Political stability and instability," he notes, "are ultimately dependent on a state of mind, a mood, in society."<sup>14</sup> Nor are economic factors the only ones that can produce a revolutionary mentality, as application of the "J-curve" to political and social developments demonstrates.<sup>15</sup>

Although the theory describes with some accuracy a pre- or protorevolutionary society, it fails to explain why some societies and not others experiencing similar developments follow different patterns and avoid revolutions. Attitudes and how they are formed by objective conditions obviously play a major role, but the theory does not discuss who develops these attitudes, why they and not others develop, and why specific actions are taken because of them.

The questions of whether revolutions are caused by objective conditions or subjective attitudes and how they influence each other can be found throughout the literature on revolution. Kamenka, Johnson and Eckstein have discussed their interaction.<sup>16</sup> Eckstein perceives societal attitudes as independent, not dependent, variables, that may or may not be the result of objective conditions, though, obviously, they can be affected by these conditions.<sup>17</sup>

A theory of revolutionary causation depends ultimately upon its author's perception of the nature of revolution itself. Those such as Huntington and Amann, who see it as essentially a political process, find for the most part political causes.<sup>18</sup> Others, notably Sorokin and more recently Johnson, employing a sociological viewpoint,

<sup>13</sup> James S. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review*, 28 (February, 1962), 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Lawrence Stone, "Theories of Revolution," *World Politics*, 18 (1966), 172.

<sup>16</sup> Kamenak, "Concept," pp. 122-135; Chalmers John, *Revolution and the Social System* (Palo Alto, 1964), pp. 3-26; Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," *History and Theory*, 4, no. 2 (1965), 148-52.

<sup>17</sup> Eckstein, "Etiology," pp. 148-52.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968); Peter Amann, "Revolution: A Redefinition," *Political Science Quarterly*, 87 (March, 1962), 36-53.

emphasize the nature and interrelationships of group affiliations, roles, divisions of labor, class structure and values.<sup>19</sup> A final group, which includes Rude, Gurr and Wolfenstein, concerns itself primarily with the intentions of the revolutionary participants and the motivations for their actions. They employ psychological explanations and tend to see revolution primarily as a product of idealism and personality.<sup>20</sup>

Clearly a number of diverse factors operating in a number of diverse ways cause revolutions. Different scholars, working within different frames of reference, have simply selected those aspects which seem most important to them. Their critics view these as manifestations of revolutionary action and not as the primary motivating factors. Each explanation offers insights and in some combination may form a generally accepted theory of the causes of revolution. The synthesis, however, has not yet been developed.

A large number of works on revolution attempt to reach a greater understanding of the phenomenon through a comparative approach that outlines the major sequence of developments through which they claim all revolutionary movements pass and then enumerates the common characteristics of each phase. These stage theories, or natural histories of revolution, through a systematic examination of selected examples, seek to create a conceptual framework applicable to the course of all revolutions.

The basic working premise of stage theories is simple. By comparing a number of revolutions, the selection of which differs from theory to theory, their authors hope to establish the uniformities of all revolutionary movements that could offer insights into the nature of revolutionary change. The pioneering works in the field by Sorokin, Kuttner, Edwards, Pettee and Brinton tended to draw their examples from the "great revolutions"<sup>21</sup>; but more recent attempts by Amann, Tilly and Rule have used other move-

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<sup>19</sup> P. A. Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1925); Johnson, *Revolution and the Social System*.

<sup>20</sup> George Rude, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1960); Ted Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1971); E. Victor Wolfenstein, *The Revolutionary Personality: Lenin, Trotsky, Gandhi* (Princeton, 1967).

<sup>21</sup> Sorokin, *Sociology*; Alfred B. Kuttner, "The Cycle of Revolution," *New Republic*, 20 (August 20, 1919), 86-88; Lyford P. Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolution* (New York, 1938); Brinton, *Anatomy*.

ments.<sup>22</sup> All have relied exclusively on North Atlantic revolutions, ignoring those of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Two theories, by Hopper and Lubasz, make no explicit reference to any revolution, but build on the findings of others.<sup>23</sup> None has assembled evidence sufficient to determine the validity of their thesis.

The theories view revolution as the result of a series of distinct stages of development, the stages forming a standard sequence for all such movements. In some the initiation of revolutionary change terminates the movement.<sup>24</sup> In others a number of stages return the society to internal stability and peace.<sup>25</sup> Because of disagreement over just what constitutes a revolution and the revolutionary cycle, two stage theories have been proposed by Sorokin; three by Meadows; four by Hopper; five by Edwards; and six by Brinton.<sup>26</sup>

Despite divisional problems, all natural history theories depict revolution as the culmination of a series of quantitatively distinct developmental stages. The stages form a standard sequence for all revolutions and one stage cannot develop until the preceding one is complete, or nearly so. Each stage adds to the movement toward revolutionary change, but beyond this the theories fail to explain how or why one stage leads to the next.

Brinton's work has dominated the field of stage theory. He did not write the first comparative study of revolution, but his pioneering effort became the most widely read and influential one in the field. Subsequent scholarship has concentrated to a large extent on testing his theses, either expanding, modifying or refuting them. While most of Brinton's conclusions have been discounted in the more than thirty-five years since they first appeared, his work established the area of study, the methodology for investigation and the basic working premises. Only recently have scholars attempted to develop approaches not dependent on Brinton.

<sup>22</sup> Amann, "Revolution: A Redefinition"; Charles Tilly and James Rule, "Political Process in Revolutionary France, 1830-1832," in *1830 and the Origins of the Social Question in France*, ed. John Merriman (New York, in press).

<sup>23</sup> Rex D. Hopper, "The Revolutionary Process: A Frame of Reference for the Study of Revolutionary Movements," *Social Forces*, 28 (1950), 270-279; Heinz Lubasz, "Introduction," in Lubasz, *Revolutions*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>24</sup> The theories of Amann and Lubasz follow this pattern.

<sup>25</sup> The sequences developed by Edwards, Brinton and Hopper contain stages of development subsequent to the outbreak of revolutionary violence and seizure of the government by the revolutionaries.

<sup>26</sup> Sorokin, *Sociology*; Paul Meadows, "Sequence in Revolution," *American Sociological Review*, 6 (October, 1941), 702-709; Hopper, "Revolutionary Process"; Edwards, *Natural History*; Brinton, *Anatomy*.

Currently available stage theories have limited value for understanding revolution. Even granting that any one presents an accurate description of the important developments in a number of similar movements—and no such agreement exists—they still fail to explain, beyond a logical necessity implicit in the theories themselves, how and why a revolution moves from one stage to the next. They ignore both the interrelationships between characteristics and the process involved in their development. They present revolutionary action and not action and reaction. They treat revolution as inevitable.

To be useful, a stage theory must explain as well as describe revolutionary development. It must establish interrelationships between developments and not merely list them in an apparently random order. If a reasonably accurate diagram can be drawn, it must still accept the possibility that it may apply only to certain revolutions and not to all revolutions. In treating revolutions as a class, the theories ignore the possibility that there may be important causes outside the revolution that influence its course, that revolution is the tip of a historic iceberg and not the iceberg itself. In any event, insufficient work has been done to determine the validity of the basic premise behind these theories: that revolutions, being similarly named, are similar in more than name.

Stage theories have been built for the most part on a comparison of what Brinton and others have termed the “great revolutions.” These were “‘popular’ or ‘democratic’ movements carried out in the name of ‘freedom’ for a majority against a privileged minority, and were successful.”<sup>27</sup> Other kinds implicitly exist and many attempts have been made to differentiate between and categorize them on the basis of a wide variety of criteria. These classification systems are generally based on particular conceptualizations of revolution as primarily political, social or ideological conflicts, the definition of revolution determining the characteristics selected to differentiate between movements apparently similar in other respects.

Early work in the field of revolutionary typology tended to distinguish between movements on the basis of leadership, objectives and results. Thus Edwards developed a threefold classification

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<sup>27</sup> Brinton, *Anatomy*, rev. and enl., p. 21.

system consisting of moderate, radical and abortive revolutions.<sup>28</sup> Brinton expanded this system to include the "popular" revolution; "the 'Rightist' revolution; the territorial-nationalistic revolution; and the abortive revolution," although he acknowledged that "anything like a complete sociology of revolutions would have to take account of other kinds" as well.<sup>29</sup>

The criteria used by Edwards and Brinton have served as the basis of differentiation in many subsequent typologies. Recently Pettee distinguished among four types, based on the number of participants and the amount of change they initiate: the private palace revolution; the public palace revolution; the rebellion; and the great national revolution, this being the only type earlier scholars considered at all.<sup>30</sup> A different system using similar criteria has been proposed by Rosenau consisting of three categories: personnel wars fought for existing roles in the structure of political authority; authority wars for decision-making powers as well as position; and structural wars, containing elements of the other two, in which the ultimate goal is the introduction of social and economic changes in the society.<sup>31</sup> Again, no agreement exists as to whether the movements so classified are in fact revolutions.

More sophisticated systems have been based on multiple distinctions utilizing criteria from various areas beyond political considerations. Deutsch suggests using the degree of mass participation, the duration of the conflict, the number of people killed and the intentions of the insurgents to distinguish among revolutions.<sup>32</sup> Tanter and Midlarsky have employed similar criteria to develop a fourfold classification system of palace revolution, reform coup, revolutionary coup, and mass revolution.<sup>33</sup>

Several typologies concern themselves only with the "great revolutions" and have attempted to establish criteria to distinguish between them. Baechler uses ideology to differentiate, and sees liberal, communist, nationalist, fascist and democratic revolutions

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<sup>28</sup> Edwards, *Natural History*.

<sup>29</sup> Brinton, *Anatomy*, rev. and enl., p. 21.

<sup>30</sup> George S. Pettee, "Revolution: Typology and Process, in Fredrich, *Revolution*, pp. 10-33.

<sup>31</sup> James N. Rosenau, "Internal War as an International Event," in *International Aspects of Civil Strife*, ed. J. N. Rosenau (Princeton, 1964), 45-91.

<sup>32</sup> Karl W. Deutsch, "External Involvement in Internal Wars," in *Internal Wars*, ed. H. Eckstein (Glencoe, 1964), pp. 100-110.

<sup>33</sup> Raymond Tanter and Manus Midlarsky, "A Theory of Revolution," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 11 (September, 1967), 264-280.

as separate types.<sup>34</sup> Employing geographic distinctions, Huntington has established eastern and western revolutions as his two categories.<sup>35</sup>

Johnson attempts to apply criteria similar to those selected by Deutsch, Tanter and Midlarsky to the classification of great revolutions. Defining revolution as the transfer of authority within the political system, he has developed a typology of six categories based on the targets of revolutionary activity; the identity of the revolutionaries; their ideology or goals; and whether the outbreak of violence was spontaneous or calculated. The categories become jacqueries; millenarian rebellions; anarchistic rebellions; Jacobin communist revolutions; conspiratorial coups d'etat; and militarized mass insurrections.<sup>36</sup>

For Johnson's system, as for all typologies, general agreement exists as to which movements fit into which categories, but much less as to which categories contain revolutions. Many scholars believe that coups and rebellions of all types are not in fact revolutionary movements. Hagopian, for example, argues that only two of Johnson's categories contain revolutions and that coups, revolts and wars of secession are not revolutions because they change personnel only and not political, social or economic structure, and because they lack the ideology necessary to institute these basic changes.<sup>37</sup> Clearly the categories developed and their contents are based on the concept of revolution held by their authors. Until general agreement can be reached here, no typology will be accepted by everyone working in the field.

Several recent areas of study attempt to avoid problems of typology, theoretical causation and comparative development. They argue that greater understanding is possible not by examining revolutions as a distinct class of events to be studied separately, but by placing revolution in a broader historical context. Accepting the fact that revolutions occur and that some movements are universally seen as revolutions, they depict certain individual revolutions as parts of a larger revolutionary movement or an age of revolution,

<sup>34</sup> Jean Baechler, *Revolution*, trans. Joan Vickers (New York: Bannes and Noble, 1976). See Mark N. Hagopian, *The Phenomenon of Revolution* (New York, 1974) p. 101, for a summary of this classification system.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political Order*, chap. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Revolution and the Social System*, pp. 1, 26ff.

<sup>37</sup> Hagopian, *Phenomenon*, p. 101.

and stress the transnational or international character of the great revolutions.

The concept of certain events constituting a revolution of the Western world is not a new one. Tocqueville wrote that "the French Revolution had no territory of its own . . . it formed, above all particular nationalities, an intellectual common country of which men of all nations might become citizens."<sup>38</sup> Several historians, such as Andrews and Gipson, have long seen the American Revolution in a larger context as part of a struggle for empire, and Lefebvre and others place the French Revolution in the broader framework of European history.<sup>39</sup> They do not, however, view these revolutions as part of a larger revolutionary struggle, the thesis historians in the United States and Europe have begun to revive.

Although the thesis has been argued to some extent by Gottschalk and Godechot,<sup>40</sup> its chief exponent in the English-speaking world is R. R. Palmer. He views the late eighteenth-century revolutions as parts of a much larger movement, originating around 1760 and lasting until 1800 or 1801, that bound together the American and French experiences with those taking place in the Low Countries, Switzerland and parts of the Holy Roman Empire. All of these, he argues, involved a contest between aristocratic forces, values, groups and institutions and their democratic counterparts. Rejecting the contention that European conservatism arose as a reaction to the democratic forces generated by the French Revolution, he instead suggests that both aristocratic and democratic forces were on the rise after 1760 and that the revolutionary politics of the era stemmed from the clashes of these two movements.<sup>41</sup>

Palmer's thesis of a world revolution has come under close scrutiny by other scholars. Rude, for example, challenges it on the

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<sup>38</sup> Quoted in R. R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution*, vol. 1 (Princeton, 1959), ii.

<sup>39</sup> Charles M. Andrews, "The American Revolution: An Interpretation," *American Historical Review*, 31 (January, 1926), 219-232; Lawrence H. Gipson, *The Coming of the Revolution* (New York, 1954); Georges Lefebvre *The French Revolution*, 2 vols. (New York, 1962, 1964); Georges Lefebvre, "The French Revolution in the Contest of World History," in *The Eighteenth Century Revolution*, ed. Peter Amann (Boston, 1963), pp. 83-91.

<sup>40</sup> Louis Gottschalk and Donald Lach, *Toward the French Revolution: Europe and America in the Eighteenth Century World* (New York, 1973); Jacques Godechot, *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1965).

<sup>41</sup> Palmer, *Age*.

basis of important categorical differences he finds between the French Revolution and the conflicts that preceded and followed it. He argues that insurgents in other countries, following the French lead, succeeded to any extent in toppling the old regimes only because they cooperated with the invading French armies and were, in any case, too weak to survive without French military and political support. He does find indigenous revolutionary movements in Liege, Brussels and Geneva, but he questions their democratic character as well as the common nature of these and other upheavals.<sup>42</sup>

Palmer himself sees the French Revolution as the central event in the international upsurge of revolution extending over America and Europe, and he does not deny the impact of the French experience on subsequent movements. He does argue, however, that the roots of many of the others often antedated events in France and he notes that certain upheavals actually predate the outbreak of French revolutionary violence. In any event, the movements, whether or not they owed their success to the Army of the Republic, shared common origins and common goals.<sup>43</sup>

Of primary importance in evaluating Palmer's thesis is the fact that he discusses only in passing the larger problem of revolution itself and thereby fails to establish the conceptual framework necessary to test his hypotheses. He does not define what he means by either aristocracy or democracy, and provides no means of determining whether these were the same everywhere. Little is done with revolutionary psychology, the basis of political allegiance or similar contingencies. The reader is left only with a number of events that occurred during the same period of time, many of which may not even have been revolutions.

Although Palmer deals only with the period of the French Revolution, other scholars have attempted to discover an "age of revolution" in other periods of political turmoil. Of the English Revolution, Hill has written of the "crisis of the seventeenth century,"<sup>44</sup> and Trevor-Roper also views the period as one of revolution in Europe. The latter sees "a crisis in the relations between society and the State" as common throughout large parts of Europe, and common structural weaknesses in many institutions as the cause

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<sup>42</sup> Georges Rude, *Revolutionary Europe* (New York, 1966).

<sup>43</sup> Palmer, *Age*.

<sup>44</sup> Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1961).

of revolutionary violence in several different places at about the same time. He uses the term *revolution* loosely, however, and the thesis is at best tenuous.<sup>45</sup>

Less work has been done on the transnational character of the political upheavals during and following World War I. Soviet-style revolutions were attempted in Germany, Hungary and Italy, but all failed. Except for Hungary, all were superficial and futile. Lack of Soviet arms and funds probably doomed each of them, and this alone argues against "an age of revolution" here. In terms of a transnational revolutionary movement, with individual upheavals sharing common backgrounds and characteristics, the theory cannot be supported for the period of the First World War.

It is difficult, however, to deny the transnational character of the revolutions of 1848. Work on individual movements of the period and on the movements collectively denies a conspiracy was at work and suggests that similar forces were operating throughout Europe.<sup>46</sup> That all the revolutions ultimately failed does not discount the fact that in this case, at least, there was an "age of revolution," however brief, and that a comparative study of each offers greater insight into each of them.

Several recent and important works have placed the study of revolution in the larger context of the process of modernization. These seek to explain the method of transition from traditional agrarian to modern industrial society as experienced by a number of countries. And they view revolution as crucial to this process, and modernization as the most important consequence of revolutionary activity. Although the question of whether revolution leads to modernization or vice versa has not been completely answered, the relationship between the two phenomena has been successfully established. The suggestion that the type of revolutionary movement a society experiences determines the nature of its modernized political, economic and social systems seems reasonable and explains much.

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<sup>45</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century," in *Crisis in Europe*, ed. Trevor Aston (Garden City, 1967), 67; see also E. L. Hobsbawm, "The Crisis of the Seventeenth Century," in the same volume.

<sup>46</sup> See especially Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton, 1952); and Peter N. Stearns, *1848: The Revolutionary Tide in Europe* (New York, 1974). Their bibliographies contain titles dealing with individual movements of the period.

The work by Moore in this area of study is exemplary. He identified four basic patterns in the modernization process, three of which involve attempts at revolution. Nations that experienced what he calls a successful bourgeois revolution, such as England and France, develop capitalism and democracy of the Western style. Those countries in which a bourgeois revolution failed, such as Japan or Germany, still developed capitalistic systems, but with much weaker democratic features. Societies in which the revolution was proletarian or peasant rather than essentially middle class in origin developed communist regimes that forced the nation into modernization, examples being Russia and China. Where no revolution has taken place, the impulse to modernize, where present, is weak.<sup>47</sup>

Moore does not suggest a general theory of revolution, but instead presents a number of generalizations about the process of modernization in which revolution holds the central and crucial position. In the larger historical frame, revolution becomes the deciding factor in the course of subsequent developments. Although he argues that modernization is not dependent upon revolution, Moore suggests that its achievement through other means creates far different and much weaker systems.<sup>48</sup>

Huntington also examines revolution in the context of modernization and he believes that the process itself produces revolution, which in turn sweeps away obstacles to its continuation. Social and economic changes that accompany modernization, such as industrialization, urbanization, increasing education, literacy and improved communications create a rise in political consciousness, a mobilization of new groups into politics and an increase in political demands, developments with which the traditional ruling institutions are unable to come to terms. The resulting strains on the institutional structure lead to instability, disorder and revolution if left uncorrected.<sup>49</sup>

Because he views revolution as an aspect of the process of modernization, Huntington argues that its outbreak is unlikely in highly traditional societies or in highly modern ones. It is also improbable in a democratic or a communistic political system since

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<sup>47</sup> Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, 1966), esp. chaps. 7-9.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 413-414.

<sup>49</sup> Huntington, *Political Order*, pp. 8ff.

each, he suggests, has the ability to adjust to new developments and to absorb any new groups produced by them.<sup>50</sup>

The question of whether modernization produces revolution or revolution produces modernization is the crucial one to this thesis and it has not yet been resolved. Huntington argues that the process produces revolution and Von Laue agrees, at least as far as the Russian Revolution is concerned.<sup>51</sup> Others disagree.<sup>52</sup> Halpern, taking another position entirely, sees modernization as the revolution itself, rather than as a possible characteristic or outcome of a certain kind of revolutionary activity.<sup>53</sup> The connection between revolution and modernization has been fairly well established, but the nature of the relationship has yet to be resolved.

The areas of study outlined in this article in no way exhaust the various aspects of revolution that scholars have examined. Rustow, Reizler and Wolfenstein have explored the psychology of revolutionary elites, with varying results.<sup>54</sup> In a parallel area, Rude and Soboul have analyzed the nature of revolutionary populations and their relation to the outbreak and continuation of political violence.<sup>55</sup> Chorley has investigated the role of the army in the success of revolutionary activity, but seems to be alone in this category.<sup>56</sup> Other studies have presented theories regarding the impact of ideology and the effects of violence.<sup>57</sup>

Several important areas have not been much explored. Conservative or counterrevolution is probably chief among them. Most

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 264ff.

<sup>51</sup> Theodore Von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin?* 2d ed. (Philadelphia, 1971), especially pp. 204-216.

<sup>52</sup> See Zagorin, "Theories," pp. 39-41; and Isaac Kramnick, "Reflection on Revolution: Definition and Explanation in Recent Scholarship"; *History and Theory* (1972), 35-39, for critical analysis of Moore's and Huntington's theories.

<sup>53</sup> Manfred Halpern, "The Revolution of Modernization in National and International Society," in Friedrich, *Revolution*, 178-214.

<sup>54</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Study of Elites," *World Politics*, 18 (1966); Kurt Reizler, "On the Psychology of Modern Revolution," *Social Research* 10, (September, 1943), 320-336; Wolfenstein, *Revolutionary Personality*; see also note 22 above.

<sup>55</sup> Rude, *Crowd*; Albert Soboul, *The Parisian Sans Culottes and the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1964).

<sup>56</sup> Katherine Chorley, *Armies and the Art of Revolution* (London, 1943).

<sup>57</sup> E. H. Carr, *Studies in Revolution* (London, 1950); Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (Boston, 1960); P. A. R. Calvert, "Revolution: The Politics of Violence," *Political Studies*, 15 (1967), 1-11; Carl Leiden and Karl M. Schmitt, *The Politics of Violence: Revolution in the Modern World* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968).

studies of revolutionary activity, regardless of definition, have examined liberal or leftist movements. Except for Meisel, Molnar, Mayer and a few others, little has been done to study revolutions of the right as anything other than isolated historical developments.<sup>58</sup> Whether they are a singular type of revolution, or simply reactions to other revolutions, or even if they are revolutions at all remain unanswered questions.

In examining the nature of revolution, scholars have reached little agreement. They concur that revolutions have taken place and that a few movements, at least, have been revolutions; but beyond this they disagree on just what has taken place, how it did so, why it did so, what results it produced, and whether or not these results could or would have been achieved in any case and under other circumstances.

Terminology remains a basic problem. No consensus exists as to just how to define revolution. Most definitions have been tautologies, characteristics selected because they are found in specific movements and specific movements chosen to support the definition because they manifest those characteristics. The first step for the study of revolution is developing a conceptual framework that does not simply acknowledge previous acceptance of this or that movement as a revolution.

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.

Work also needs to be done in prerevolutionary societies. Though revolutions may produce sudden changes, they are themselves obviously the products of gradual and long-term developments. Divergent patterns may be discovered here to explain why some nations move toward revolution and others do not.

Revolution has been examined from political, social, economic, psychological and intellectual points of view. It has been seen as the death of an old society, as the birth of a new society and as the

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<sup>58</sup> James Meisel, *Counterrevolution: How Revolutions Die* (New York, 1966); Thomas Molnar, *The Counter-revolution* (New York, 1969); Arno Mayer, *Dynamics of Counterrevolution in Europe* (New York, 1971).

transition between the two. Its outward manifestations have been explored and its inner mechanisms dissected. It has been argued alternately that it is produced by poverty, by prosperity, by small groups of individuals and by great forces. Scholars have suggested that it develops in two, three, four, five or six or more stages; that it creates a new social order; an old social order made more efficient; great changes; or nothing very much at all. The reader may take his pick. Some authorities have chosen more than one alternative at the same time.

The problem remains that no one has assembled the vast amount of data necessary to test any of the theories of revolution in a meaningful way; that is to say, in a variety of historical settings. For some theories, this is unnecessary as theorological inconsistencies disprove them without any outside assistance. For those that remain, their proof or disproof awaits a systematic analysis of all pertinent sources. Perhaps that will never happen. Perhaps the task is too large. In the meantime, less is known about revolution than is unknown, and much of what is known remains subject to debate and doubt.

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