

REVOLUTION: REFINING ITS DEFINING

J. MILTON YINGER

Oberlin College

MARK N. KATZ

George Mason University

ABSTRACT: Definitions of revolution have strongly influenced theorization about it. We argue here that revolution is a highly variable phenomenon. Rigid definitions of revolution do not allow for theorizing which explains this variability. Revolution can occur to various degrees along various dimensions. These include the political, international, economic, cultural, ethnic, and gender dimensions. Revolutions do not necessarily affect all these dimensions equally. Revolutions that have led to great change along some of these dimensions have also led to little or no change along others. We further argue that an understanding of revolution requires an understanding of what maintains social order.

KEY WORDS: revolution; theories of revolution; social order.

Definitions affect theories and theories influence definitions. Each tends to promote certain observations and to block others. There is a time dimension to this interaction. As Vaclav Havel has said, words have histories. “The selfsame word can be true at one moment and false the next, at one moment illuminating, at another, deceptive” (Havel, 1990, p. 6). Jacques Derrida and others have taken this point even further, into the “deconstruction” of definitions and interpretations—calling for close examination of premises and competing messages (Derrida, 1978).

We do not share the radical relativism that can be seen in such statements; yet we need to heed the warning. In particular, it is essential to remember that there are no, or few, dichotomies in social

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to J. Milton Yinger, jmy@pocketmail.com or to Mark N. Katz, mkatz@gmu.edu.

science. For the most part we deal with variables, with matters of more or less. And while social scientists often prefer explanations of social phenomena containing only one or two variables, there are some phenomena that can contain a wide variety of variables. As a result, it is often difficult to get clear definitions of what these phenomena are, or at least to get strong agreement on their definitions.

Revolution is just such a phenomenon. Or perhaps more accurately, the term "revolution" has been applied to a wide variety of phenomena. There was reference to circularity in early meanings of revolution, reflecting its use in the physical world (such as: the wheel spins at sixty revolutions per minute). According to Chinese-speaking friends, the Chinese in earlier usage defined revolution as renewal, a return to a neglected past. In current Chinese usage, it means "a changing mandate." The earlier idea of circularity has not entirely disappeared from English, but the idea of progress has led more frequently to a unidirectional view of revolution (Davies, 1962).

In 1938, Crane Brinton observed that "at one end of its spectrum of meanings revolution has come in common usage to be hardly more than an emphatic synonym for 'change,' perhaps with a suggestion of sudden or striking change" (1965, p. 3). Common examples of this broad usage of the term, Brinton observed, included, "a revolution in our thinking, or in the ladies' garment trade, or in the automotive industry—the list could be almost endless" (1965, p. 3). This broad usage of the term continued, as can be seen in such disparate phrases as the sexual revolution, the Reagan revolution, and the Internet revolution.

We see no reason why the word revolution should not be used to refer to such changes in social life and individual behavior. In particular, such usage seems appropriate when it refers to changes that have major and often unanticipated consequences. Changes that may seem, at first, to be relatively small—seen against the background of a complex social order—can reverberate through the system with dramatic effects. For example, in 1938 the Rust brothers invented the cotton-picking machine. They were, however, socially responsible: they wanted to minimize the impact of this machine on field workers. Thus, they required planters who wanted to buy their machine to develop a careful plan to assist the workers and their families whom it would displace. This proved, however, to be an impossible requirement to enforce.

By 1957, there were 41,000 mechanical cotton-pickers in use. There had also been a rapid drop in the number of black farm owners, man-

agers, tenants, sharecroppers, and hand pickers in the South. Some had fallen into deeper poverty, some entered the southern urban economy, and a very large number migrated to the North. The demand for labor during World War II picked up some of the slack, but the greater effect was that the lives of black farmers changed for the worse.¹

This, however, was not the most dramatic effect. The migration of some two million black farm workers, mainly to northern and eastern cities, was a major influence on urban life, creating new possibilities and new problems. With calculated exaggeration one might say that the cotton-picking machine led, during the next quarter of a century, to the election of black mayors in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Gary, Newark, Philadelphia, Washington, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. If today we speak of the Internet revolution, perhaps it is justifiable to also speak of the "cotton-picker" revolution.

It is our intention here, however, to focus more narrowly on revolution in the socio-political realm. There are many different definitions of this type of revolution. Brinton, for example, focused solely on the political aspect, describing it as the "drastic, sudden substitution of one group in charge of the running of a territorial political entity by another group hitherto not running that government" (1965, p. 4). For others, though, such a change in government does not make a revolution; a more fundamental change in the socioeconomic structure of society must also occur (Skocpol, 1979, pp. 4–5). For some, revolution is defined by how it occurs; what results are of less importance. For others, revolution is defined by what it achieves (or, at least, attempts); how it occurs is not relevant.²

In general, there are two types of definition of revolution: broad and narrow. There is, of course, value in broad, expansive definitions that call attention to similarities easily hidden by more obvious differences. Biologists put bats that fly, elephants that run, and whales that swim (not to mention humans who do all three) in the same class—mammalia. But they also study species and subspecies.

Broad definitions of revolution direct attention to underlying factors in many forms of social change and social conflict. Paying attention to similarities that are easily overlooked ought not, however, deflect attention from the differences. After phylum and class we need also to study the social equivalents of species and subspecies.

On the other hand, an exclusive focus on one subspecies can lead to the neglect of others. Perhaps worse, it can lead to the inappropriate assumption that the characteristics of the most studied subspecies

also appertain to the less studied ones. Although this seems like an obvious point, it is what has been done repeatedly by theorists of revolution who focus exclusively on the “great revolutions” in France, Russia, China and a handful of others—the elephants of the revolution phylum. For just as there are far fewer elephants than smaller mammals in the natural world, there have been far fewer “great revolutions” than other types.

These definitional issues are important, for it is around different definitions of revolution that different theories of revolution are built. A neat, compact definition of revolution allows for a parsimonious, elegant theory of revolution. Indeed, perhaps it is necessary to start with the former in order to construct the latter.

There is another way, though, to approach the definition of revolution: start with the premise that revolution is a complex phenomenon, and that there are several different dimensions upon which revolution can occur. Furthermore, revolution can occur to different degrees upon different dimensions. In other words, a revolution that radically transforms a country on some dimensions may only barely transform it—if at all—upon others.

Such a premise may not allow us to build a simple, elegant definition of or theory about revolution. But there is nothing, we submit, that is simple or elegant about a phenomenon as complex as revolution.

DEGREES AND DIMENSIONS

Let us begin with the question of degree. As was mentioned earlier, there are no, or few, dichotomies in social science. Revolution is not necessarily something that either occurs wholly and completely or not at all. It can also occur partially. Furthermore, claims that radical revolution has occurred along different dimensions have sometimes been made in order to mask the reality of little or no progress—or even its reversal. Revolution, then, can have a variable impact along different dimensions (or be impacted by them) ranging along a spectrum from no change to modest change to illusory change (i.e., the claim of radical change which masks the reality of little or no change), to truly radical change.

What, then, are these different dimensions which either affect or are affected by revolution? They can be divided into two broad categories: (1) the means by which revolution occurs; and (2) the outcomes of revolution.

Beginning with the means by which revolution occurs, many definitions of revolution insist that revolution occurs only as the result of a violent overthrow of the old regime. Other definitions do not insist that this occur by violent means, but certainly see this as the typical means by which revolutions occur. What is important to note here, though, is that the degree of violence (where it has occurred) in different revolutions has varied widely in terms of intensity, duration, and extent of popular participation. Differences in this last variable have been especially striking. In some cases that have been widely acknowledged as revolutions afterward (such as Egypt in 1952 or Iraq in 1958), the overthrow of the old regime was accomplished through a coup d'état; there was almost no popular participation in the overthrow of the old regime (though its overthrow was indeed wildly popular in both cases). In other cases, a guerrilla army has played an instrumental role in bringing down the old regime. While this has involved a much greater degree of popular participation in violence, the percentage of the population involved has usually been small. It is only rarely that a majority of the population has risen up against the old regime, no matter how unpopular it might be (the "masses" have usually come out into the streets only when it was safe to do so because the old regime had already fallen or it was clear to all that the regime's armed forces would not protect it).

Many observers have noted that a (largely) nonviolent path to revolution has emerged in recent years—especially in the democratic revolutions that have taken place in countries such as the Philippines (1986), most of Eastern Europe (1989), Indonesia (1999), and Serbia (2000). A relatively high degree of public participation occurred in these since they were accomplished through elections as well as through mass urban uprisings. These revolutions occurred only when the armed forces failed to defend the old regime. Even large-scale public support for democratic revolutions failed to accomplish them in cases where the armed forces did defend the regime, as in Burma (1988) and China (1989).

A tremendous degree of variation has also occurred in the outcomes of revolution. Revolutions have outcomes on several dimensions, including the political, international, economic, cultural, ethnic, and gender dimensions.

It is particularly in the political realm where revolution is commonly seen to have an all-or-nothing outcome: either the old regime falls, or it doesn't. But this apparent dichotomy masks a fuzzier reality. The old leadership may be imprisoned or executed and a new

leadership declaring a new type of regime installed, but the ranks of the bureaucracy may remain relatively stable—or not. There may be good reason for the revolutionary leadership to rely on the personnel of the old regime: the revolutionary movement may simply lack the personnel needed to maintain governmental authority. Fearing the consequences of dismissing all the personnel from the old regime, it is understandable why a revolutionary leadership might choose to rely upon them. To the extent that the new regime does this, however, the degree of change brought about by the revolution is either modest or illusory and not truly radical. But even if revolution does lead to a higher turnover in government personnel, many established ways of governing may remain, as do other structural and cultural aspects of the society. From czar to commissar was not so far, in terms of style of governing.

In some instances, the revolutionary leadership has cut a deal with the leadership of the old regime's armed forces whereby the latter is allowed to remain more or less intact in exchange for defecting to the former. Something like this actually occurred in what was widely regarded as Afghanistan's 1992 revolution in which a Marxist regime was replaced by an Islamic one. The revolution took place when a segment of the Tajik opposition joined forces with the Marxist regime's Tajik and Uzbek officers to topple the political leadership and proclaim an Islamic republic (International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 1993, pp. 175–178). Because this Islamic revolution left significant elements of the old Marxist regime intact, the political change it brought about was illusory, not truly radical. Indeed, it was the illusory nature of Afghanistan's 1992 revolution that contributed to a truly radical one there (in both the political and ethnic dimensions) in 1996.

On the other hand, the failure of a revolutionary opposition to overthrow a regime does not mean that it fails to effect change. Matthew Soberg Shugart (1992), Timothy Wickham-Crowley (1992, pp. 302–326), and Cynthia McClintock (1998, pp. 299–312) all show that revolutionary movements which could neither overthrow the authoritarian governments they were fighting nor be defeated by them have sometimes agreed to lay down their arms in exchange for a meaningful democratization process in which they are allowed to participate. Some might view the resulting political change as moderate, not truly radical. But where this modest political change has occurred, it has also had meaningful consequences.

The international dimension is also a realm where, at first glance,

the occurrence of revolution has given rise to truly radical change. Revolution has often succeeded in transforming colonies into independent states. The revolutions in America, Haiti, Latin America, Ireland (except the North), Vietnam, Algeria, and Lusophone Africa are all examples of this. In addition, revolutions in states that are already independent have often resulted in a dramatic change of alliances in which the revolutionary regime repudiated the old regime's principal alliance partner and sometimes even initiated an alliance with that state's main rival.³ Almost all Marxist revolutions in already independent states during the Cold War, for example, resulted in their ending the old regime's alliance with the U.S. and beginning one with the Soviet Union. In the case of Iran, by contrast, the new regime ended the old one's alliance with the U.S. but did not take up one with the USSR.

These seemingly radical changes in the international dimension caused by revolution, however, often mask a more complex reality. While revolution has transformed many colonies into independent states, their "independence" has often been of a highly qualified nature. Political independence, even when accomplished through revolution, has usually been accompanied by continued economic dependence either on the former colonial power or the West in general. The classic case of this is Angola, which went from being a colony of Portugal (a member of NATO and a U.S. ally) to an independent state governed by a Marxist party and allied to both the USSR and Cuba. Nevertheless, the Angolan Marxist regime saw its interests as being best served through allowing Gulf Oil (which later became part of Chevron) to continue lifting Angolan oil. Indeed, the Marxist MPLA government, along with Cuban troops, even protected these American facilities against various anti-Soviet forces (Garthoff, 1994, pp. 573, 1168; Rodman, 1994, pp. 385–386).

In addition, while repudiating the old regime's main external backer and initiating an alliance with its rival may put an end to the interference or even domination of the former, this does not necessarily bring about an end to foreign interference or domination in general. Very often, the revolutionary regime's new ally comes to interfere as much or more in the country's affairs as the old regime's ever did. Marxist revolution in the Third World, for example, succeeded in eliminating American dominance over the countries where it occurred, but this was usually replaced by a Soviet (and/or Cuban or Vietnamese) presence so intrusive that it could frequently play an important role in the revolutionary regime's internal leadership

struggles (Limberg 1990, pp. 82–93). Yet even in the Iranian case where the revolutionary regime ended the old regime's alliance with the U.S. but did not initiate an alliance with its Soviet rival, Iran remained dependent on the West. For no matter how anti-American and anti-Western the Islamic Republic was, it depended on petroleum exports to the West for the lion's share of its revenue.

Some revolutions have sought to bring about radical change in the economic dimension while others have had only modest, if any, economic goals. The American revolutionaries had a relatively modest economic goal—to break free of British control over American trade—a goal that was accomplished. Other revolutionaries, particularly Marxist ones—had the truly radical goal of destroying the market economies in their country (or even the world) and replacing them with centrally planned command systems. There was great variation, however, among Marxist regimes over how thoroughly they pursued this goal. Market mechanisms were allowed to play a relatively important role in Hungary (Rothschild, 1989, pp. 203–207). A far more thoroughgoing destruction of the market and construction of a centrally planned system took place in the Soviet Union. Even there, however, an important economic space was left to the market in the form of the tiny private plots peasants were allowed which consisted of only 1.4% of cultivable land but produced about one-third of the USSR's meat and milk and two-thirds of its eggs (Hewett, 1988, p. 117).

What is notable about these efforts is that while many Marxist (as well as other) revolutionary regimes succeeded in destroying the market economies in their countries, they did not succeed in replacing them with an alternative that was productive. Indeed, low productivity, corruption, and waste were the hallmarks of all the centrally planned economies (Hewett, 1988, pp. 50–92; Dawisha, 1990, pp. 169–193). It is noteworthy that almost all attempts to construct such planned economies have been ended either by the regimes that had initiated them (such as China and Vietnam) or by their successors (such as the post-communist states in Eastern Europe and most of the former USSR). What they found in all these cases was that, despite their best efforts to do so, revolutionary regimes simply could not repeal the laws of economies. The attempt to create centrally planned economies that were more productive than even the advanced capitalist economies, then, was a truly illusory accomplishment: the revolutionaries who tried it had convinced themselves that it was possible, when in fact it was not.

The cultural dimension is one in which revolutionaries have appeared to seek either no change or radical change. For example, while the American revolutionaries self-consciously designed a political system which they saw as recognizing human shortcomings and limitations, the French, Russian, Chinese, Iranian, and a host of other revolutionaries sought nothing short of the fundamental transformation of the basic nature of the human being (Brinton, 1965, pp. 176–204; Abrahamian, 1993, pp. 44–45). Needless to say, these attempts at the latter failed. Nevertheless, revolutions that have failed to achieve radical cultural change have often succeeded in bringing about some change in this realm. Marxist revolutionary regimes, for example, were generally successful at educating populaces that had often been largely illiterate.⁴ Although a more modest goal than the rapid, fundamental transformation of human nature, it was also one that could be—and was—achieved.

Karl Marx himself understood the limits which culture could place on revolution:

The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and burrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language. (1963, p. 15)

In a similar vein, Mao remarked that China might require another cultural revolution every fifteen or twenty years. Shanghai has long been a center of revolutionary pressure for cultural change. Yet an astute observer remarked to one of us in China in 1979 that Shanghai was a “closet Hong Kong” (Yinger, 1982, p. 299; see also Robinson, 1969).

The ethnic dimension is one that often experiences little or no change—even in revolutions that bring about, or attempt, radical change in other dimensions. Patterns of ethnic dominance existing before a revolution frequently continue unchanged after it. Both Lester Langley (1996) and Christopher McAuley (1997) have described how people of European origin were able to maintain their dominance over people of African and of indigenous origin in the revolution that occurred in the Americas. Despite the promises of equality for non-Russians made by the Bolshevik revolutionaries, Stalin brutally re-imposed Russian dominance over non-Russians after the brief

cultural flowering the latter had been allowed in the mid-1920s (Nahaylo & Swoboda, 1990, pp. 44–80). In Ethiopia, the central region of the country dominated the others in both the regime of the Emperor Haile Selassie and the Marxist regime that overthrew him in 1974 (Henze, 1985). In Iran, Persians have been dominant both under the Shah and under the Islamic revolutionary regime that overthrew him (Parker, 2000). Many more such examples could be cited.

Revolution, then, often leads to no change along the ethnic dimension. There have been some revolutions, however, which have resulted in the dominance of one ethnic group being replaced by that of another. The revolution that ousted the Mengistu regime in 1991 resulted in Tigrayans replacing Amharas as the dominant ethnicity in Ethiopia (IISS, 1992, pp. 175–178). Similarly, the Taliban revolution of 1996 restored the dominance of the Pushtuns in Afghanistan which had been seized by Uzbeks and Tajiks after the 1978 Marxist revolution and continued after the first Islamic revolution in 1992 (Rubin, 1999). But while some revolutions have led to a change in the existing patterns of ethnic dominance, they generally have not led to the elimination of this phenomenon. That would be truly radical!

Valentine Moghadam (1997) has argued that revolution can have either a positive or a negative impact on women. While “women’s emancipation” was a goal or outcome of the Turkish, Russian, Chinese, Cuban, and other Marxist revolutions in the Third World, she saw the renewed “family attachment of women” as a goal of the French, Mexican, Algerian, Iranian, 1989 East European, and 1991 Soviet Revolutions. A noted expert on the Middle East, Moghadam’s depiction of the negative impact of Islamic revolution on women is compelling. Here again, though, it is important to keep in mind the question of degree. Islamic revolution has had a far more negative effect, for example, on women in Afghanistan than on women in Iran. Since the victory of the Taliban, there have been severe restrictions on the ability of Afghan women to work, pursue education, or even leave the house. This is in stark contrast to Iran where women, while subject to a relatively strict code of behavior and dress, do go to school and work as well as play an active role in society (Moghadam, 1999). Similarly, while socialist revolutions may have served to emancipate women, this occurred only partially. These revolutions did result in a massive increase in education and employment outside the home for women, yet men overwhelmingly dominated positions of power and authority in socialist states (Smith, 1992, pp. 98–99). The “progress”

made by women in socialist revolutions, then, was both real and illusory. Whatever the impact of revolution on women, the prolonged struggle for women's equality in non-revolutionary times has had as much or more dramatic effect than many violent struggles in which one set of male rulers have been replaced by another (Davis, 2000).

SOCIAL ORDER AND REVOLUTION

We shift now to another approach to the study of revolution. The definition of a social process or structure can often be clarified by defining what it is not. We believe that it is valuable to use "social order" as such a contrast conception for revolution. There are times when members of the human species seem so self-centered, so quick to anger, so prone to aggression that the very existence of societies—many with tens or even hundreds of millions of members—is the more puzzling issue.

Looking back over the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant observed that "out of timber so crooked as that from which man is made nothing entirely straight can be built."⁵ We need not agree entirely with Kant—nor with Hobbes' statement a century earlier that before the establishment of strong governments, human life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes, 1651/1972, p. 186). We do need to remember, however, that income, power, and prestige are, by definition, in scarce supply or zero-sum. How then do societies prevent the frustration, the sense of injustice, the competing ambitions, the guilt from tearing apart the network of agreements and accommodations that social life requires?

Aristotle raised this question and answered it by saying "man is by nature a political animal" (1962, p. 28). True enough. But we are also aggressive and self-centered. When we think of the succession of violent events during the twentieth century, many of them spilling over into the twenty-first century, we may be more likely to agree that *Homo homini lupus* ("Man is a wolf to man"—popular Roman proverb by Plautus [died 184 B.C.], in his *Asinaria*. Thomas Hobbes later used it in his "De cive, Epistola dedicatoria"), the more pessimistic among us may call this an insult to the wolves. The very existence of societies requires examination. When we ask, "Why revolutions?" we need also to ask, "How do we account for social order?"

Four partially competing, but mainly interactive sources are explored in a vast literature:⁶

1. Social order is an expression of human inheritance. We can leap from Aristotle to Darwin: In the evolutionary process those among our ancestors most capable of altruism and social organization were better able to survive. The biological influence is not, to be sure, an independent force. It is always expressed in an environment within which one inherited tendency can be augmented, another blocked. Behavior is a product of an interacting field of forces.⁷
2. Social order is a product of reciprocity and exchange, of perceived mutual advantages. Devotees of the “market” today emphasize what they see as its beneficent effects. In so doing they would be wise to remember that Adam Smith wrote not only *The Wealth of Nations* (1776/1970) but also *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1790/1982) in which he qualified the emphasis on exchange and the virtues of the market. Smith’s views are rather close to those of recent theorists: Acceptable exchange rests more on trust and shared values than on negotiated agreements (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1972; Molm, Takahashi, & Peterson, 2000).
3. Social order is maintained by the power of some to command the compliance, and sometimes the allegiance, of others. The reciprocal of power is the fear of sanctions, of loss, or pain, or death. In developing the concept of “hegemony,” Gramsci (1971) described the “spontaneous” consent given to rulers by the general public. Religious leaders, intellectuals, and others are often the “deputies” of the dominant groups, giving them a softer face.
4. Social order is an expression of culture, a shared normative system. In anthropological terms, culture is a blueprint for action regarding the true, the good, and the beautiful, as they are defined and internalized by socialization. Culture may also refer to the group of people among whom there is wide agreement on those norms and values.

These four factors create a strong foundation for human societies; but what if the aggressive rather than the altruistic side of our nature is drawn out by events? When violent revolutions erupt, the genetic factors have not changed. Different tendencies are triggered by different circumstances. Some members of a society may come to believe that there is little reciprocity in the exchanges—perhaps because the exchanges have become more one-sided, or the inequalities

have become more visible, or trust has been lost, or a visionary's dream suggests new possibilities. De Tocqueville noted that *gains* in income and opportunities can provoke revolutionary opposition to the current exchanges (1966, pp. 189–199).

What if those in power begin to take their advantages for granted, forget the need for reciprocity based on trust, or become cruel in the enforcement of their “ordained” positions? What if the shared culture comes to be seen, partly due to the loss of reciprocity and the excesses of power, to be quite neglected by the powerful; or a dominant culture in a multicultural society becomes more intolerant; or a religious or political movement proclaiming dramatically new values leads the deprived, but not the hopeless, into a new cultural order in sharp contrast with the dominant one? Such developments are the seeds of *disorder*, with potential harvests ranging from demoralization, resignation, isolated riots, emigration, cultist or sectarian religious movements and, in some cases, to revolution.

When is a full-scale revolution the likely outcome? When all of the “disorderly” influences we have discussed are operating strongly: (1) When there are arbitrary and harsh leaders; (2) when there is inequality, increased by the breakdown of expected reciprocities; and (3) when there is a decline in the sense of a shared culture or mutual tolerance in a multicultural society. Revolutions do not usually develop among the most deprived, but among those for whom the trends of history have opened up new visions of possible worlds.

TOWARD A REVOLUTIONARY SCALE

A careful reading of the recent history and the current situation of a society will reveal the extent to which patterns related to power, exchange, and culture are sustaining social order or are weakening it. In some societies, there are peaceful methods to select leaders and set limits to their power, to live tolerantly in a multicultural setting, to protest and seek to reform the patterns of exchange. These include democratic elections and governance (unsullied by corruption, awkward voting arrangements, or the influence of money); labor unions; good information available to all; universalistic religious values. This is not an either-or question. *Disorderly* tendencies may be expressed primarily in one of the three sources of social order or in all three. They may be fairly weak tendencies or powerful and violent. Thus we need to think of a revolutionary scale:

- The largest minority is regionally concentrated, but there is some dispersion throughout the country.
- Until a few decades ago the country was under the control of a colonial power.
- Nearby is a large ancestral country from which this largest minority migrated. It also had been a colony.
- It is a period in human history when ethnic nationalisms seem almost to ricochet from continent to continent.
- The majority seems unwilling to grant full legal and cultural rights to the minority, partly due to their belief that for decades the colonial power had favored the minority, partly out of blind ethnocentrism, partly to protect what it regards as recently won “rightful” privileges, partly out of fear of cultural extinction or deterioration at the hands of the millions of compatriots of the minority living close by, and partly out of anger and resentment over the mounting violent conflict—with reciprocal anger and resentment among those in the minority most deeply involved in the revolt.⁸

In this context, all of the social sources of order have broken down. Although this description might fit fairly well with several contemporary revolutionary situations, it was written with Sri Lanka in mind. In the early 1980s, a faction of the Tamil minority, mainly residing in the north, began a campaign of violent resistance to what they saw as sharp restrictions on their opportunities and denial by the mainly Sinhalese majority of their cultural rights. The Tamil Tigers, sometimes attacking more moderate Tamil neighbors, seized control of the northern segments of the island country, including the northern city of Jaffna in 1990. The city was recaptured by government troops in 1995, but it remains quite isolated at the northern tip of the island, much of which is still controlled by the Tigers.

A sample of headlines suggests the flow of events during these years:⁹

- Fighting in Sri Lanka dims hope for ethnic peace (April 22, 1984)
- Tamil leaders reject offer from Sri Lanka in peace negotiations (November 19, 1986)
- Sinhalese militants threaten to paralyze government and divide the nation (August 27, 1989)
- Muslims in Sri Lanka flee violence of civil war (September 2, 1990)

- Brutal Rebellion pushing northern Sri Lanka back to preindustrial era (August 29, 1991)
- 100 Muslims die in ethnic attack in Sri Lanka (October 16, 1992)
- Suicide bomber kills President of Sri Lanka (May 2, 1993)
- Government crisis as 80 soldiers die in the downing of two planes (April 30, 1995)
- Sri Lankan forces advance on rebels (October 30, 1995)
- Emotions hardening in Sri Lanka (May 10, 1998)
- 30 Tamil rebels killed, report says (January 17, 1999)
- Tamils slay villagers in Sri Lanka (September 19, 1999)
- Bombs at two Sri Lanka election rallies injure President and kill 21 (December 19, 1999)
- Wounded President asks for help in fighting terrorism (December 20, 1999)
- Rebels claim gains in Sri Lanka (April 23, 2000)
- Tamil Tiger rebel kills 13 with bomb (June 1, 2000)
- Endless war again laps at Sri Lankan city (September 16, 2000)
- Hitting the Tigers in their pockets (March 10, 2001)
- The Tigers pounce (July 28, 2001)

Will there be revolution in Sri Lanka? This, we believe, cannot be predicted—in large part because Sri Lanka cannot be said to be at either end of the “barely revolutionary—wholly revolutionary” scale. The three social factors creating revolt are definitely present among the Tamils: the Sinhalese leadership has lost legitimacy in their eyes; they consider the Sinhalese-controlled exchange and reciprocity factors as grossly unfair; and there is a sharp, growing cultural divide. The three social factors creating a credible alternative to the existing regime, though, do not appear to be sufficiently present among the Tamil population. The leadership of the Tamil Tigers may appear highly legitimate to the rank-and-file, but many Tamils appear ambivalent, at best, about the prospect of being ruled by them. Similarly, many Tamils fear that exchange and reciprocity under the Tigers would not necessarily be beneficial to them. Finally, the Tigers have created an extreme, intolerant culture that is very different from moderate, mainstream Tamil culture. Once in power, many Tamils fear that the Tigers may launch a reign of terror in order to purge Tamil society of all those moderate aspects they disapprove of. For the Tamils, then, the existing social order has experienced continuous de-

struction for close to two decades. The social order that might replace it, though, is one that most Tamils have reason to fear.

NOTES

1. On this topic, see Hawley (1956); Pedersen (1954); Street (1957); and U.S. Census of Agriculture (1954, pp. 954–955).
2. For discussions of how revolutions occur and what they accomplish, see Goldstone (1991); Foran (1993); and Katz (1997, pp. 4–11).
3. On the international relations of revolutionary regimes, see Walt (1996); Snyder (1999); and Halliday (1999).
4. On how revolutionary regimes improved literacy rates in Russia and Nicaragua, see Smith (1992, pp. 298–300) and Foran (1997, p. 217).
5. “Aus so krummen Holze als voraus der Mensch gemacht ist, kann nichts ganz Gerades gezimmert werden.” Reflecting the resonance of this view in the late twentieth century, Sir Isaiah Berlin entitled one of his later books, *The Crooked Timber of Mankind* (1991)—from which this citation and translation are taken.
6. This section adapted from Yinger (1994, pp. 26–28).
7. On the interaction of biological, social, and psychological forces, widely discussed over several decades, but now sometimes obscured by reductionist tendencies, see Child (1924); Jennings (1930); Yinger (1965); Gould (1981); and Lewontin (1994).
8. Adapted from Yinger (1994, pp. 284–286).
9. These are taken from the Associated Press, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and *The Economist*. See also de Silva, Duke, Goldberg, and Katz (1988); Gamage and Watson (1999); McGowan (1991); Sabaratnam (1987); and Tambiah (1986).

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