Radicals, Revolutionaries, and Terrorists

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What is Radicalism?

In the course of a couple of decades, the world was riven with conflict that occurred not between states but between states and organized movements, where individual citizens became both participants in and targets of contention. A loosely organized international movement placed bombs in crowded, public places, staged assassinations and made the overthrow of the global order their goal. At the same time, organized oppositions overthrew autocratic rulers and instituted new, democratic governments in their societies, and radical mass movements struggled against economic inequality and corporate systems of production.

The reader contemporary to the publication of this book might suppose that I am describing the wave of international Islamic terrorism of the last two decades, the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011, and global justice groups like the Black Bloc or animal rights activists. But in fact, I am describing the turn of the twentieth century, when anarchists used terrorism to create "propaganda of the deed," republican movements in Turkey, Persia, Russia, Portugal, and elsewhere sought constitutional monarchies, and labor activists formed new international unions that were sometimes suppressed violently by governments. As this book will demonstrate, radicalism, revolution, and terrorism are a recurrent feature of world history.

The basic premise for this book is the interchangeability of mass movements. This idea, drawn from Eric Hoffer's (1951) philosophical reflections on Nazism and Stalinism in *The True Believer*,

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is that all movements share many features. Rather than consider the goals of social movement radicalism, the occurrence of revolution, and the use of terrorism and political violence separately, I consider them here conjointly. Each is a form of collective action, which can be defined as coordinated action by two or more people to change the conditions for a group. Imagine a Venn diagram with three circles. While each circle – radicalism, revolution, and terrorism – has some aspects that are uniquely its own, there is a space where the three overlap. Thus, to understand radicalism or revolutions or political violence, we must understand all three.

This is not an entirely new view. Besides Hoffer, scholars of social movements and revolution have long spoken to each other and found many commonalities. However, the study of social movements, which we can define as "collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities" (Tarrow 1998: 4), tends to focus on a particular western and democratic form of politics in the model of well-known 1960s cases like the civil rights movement, women's movement, and anti-Vietnam war protest.[1] Revolution scholars, in contrast, have tended to focus on the environments in which governments fail to quash their challengers, particularly in famous cases like France in 1789, Russia in 1917, Cuba in 1959, and Nicaragua in 1979. And the study of terrorism tends to operate in isolation from theories of movements and revolution, focusing on contemporary examples like nationalist-separatist groups of the twentieth century or recent terrorism by Islamist extremists. The reason for these tendencies has much to do with how each field has developed over time. Before I more precisely define radicalism, revolution, and terrorism, it is helpful to briefly introduce the history of scholarly work on the subjects.

The study of movements, revolution, and terrorism

Revolution has been a central concern of social scientists ever since the disciplines' origins in the nineteenth century. Famously, Karl Marx (1848) placed revolution as the ultimate endpoint

of his theories of economy and society, and other early social scientists and historians also wrote on the subject. Notably, Alexis de Tocqueville published what can be considered the first social scientific study of revolution in 1856, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, in which he used comparative-historical analysis to examine the fall of the French Monarchy in 1789 (Tocqueville 1856). This legacy was drawn upon by early twentieth-century social scientists of revolution. "Natural historians" of revolution, such as Crane Brinton (1938) and George Pettee (1938), primarily thought of revolution as a process that had distinct stages in which different groups, like elites, intellectuals, or the military, played crucial roles (see Goldstone 1982).

In contrast, in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, movements and terrorism received much less attention. The form of political action that we now recognize as a social movement had its origins in the mid-eighteenth century in Europe but had yet to be thought of as a rational form of political participation. Thus, collective action was thought to be the product of crowd behavior and mob psychology rather than a distinct feature of social life (see Le Bon 1896). And terrorism generally meant the repressive actions of states, like the Great Terror that occurred during the French Revolution, rather than the actions of groups and movements. This remained the case until the mid-twentieth century when the "collective behavior" tradition of the study of social movements emerged. Drawing on their scholarly predecessors, collective behavior theorists still saw collective action and social movements as inherently irrational and risky rather than a calculated political strategy. So scholars looked for the psychological strains that would lead to spontaneous contention and thought that participants must be isolated from larger society (Kornhauser 1959; Smelser 1962). Revolution studies at this time also drew on strain theory arguing that contention occurred when social systems were disrupted by rapid change and came from groups that were relatively deprived of economic resources (Davies 1962; Gurr 1970; Johnson 1966). In short, protest and revolution were thought to emanate from the grievances of marginalized social groups.

This view of contention was challenged by the social movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. It quickly became clear that participants in the civil rights movement and anti-war movement were not just isolated or psychologically strained individuals. Further, grievances no longer seemed to be a sufficient cause of contention and revolution – many activists and revolutionaries came from relatively privileged and educated social classes. Since everyone has some sort of complaint most of the time grievance theory was unable to explain where and when movements would emerge (see McAdam 1982: ch. 2). Scholars thus emphasized the structural conditions in which movements and revolutions occur. Structure refers to larger social patterns and factors that persist over time and are outside of the thoughts and actions of individuals. For example, religion, forms of government, and economic systems are types of social structures. The first structural theory was resource mobilization, where the key idea was that some groups had access to the money, skills, and other resources that enable them to mobilize a group of participants in an organized fashion (see McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978). Resource mobilization theorists thus focused on professional organizations that form the core leadership of movements. While resource mobilization did a good job of explaining the capability of movements, it was less able to identify the times in which protest or revolution would break out. So a second key idea was introduced – political opportunities. Political opportunities are moments in time when a social and political system relatively opens up to a movement's demands. For example, the civil rights movement was able to find success when it did because the Cold War made the American government want to lessen racial inequality as its enemy, the Soviet Union, claimed communist societies were more equal (McAdam 1982). Structural theories of revolution, in particular, also became popular in the 1970s. Most famously, Theda Skocpol (1979) introduced the state breakdown theory of revolution. Skocpol argues that revolutions occur not as the product of a revolutionary movement but because a government becomes relatively weak and begins to fall apart under competing demands. State-centered theory of revolution was very influential and remains so today.

What is Radicalism?

In the 1980s and 1990s, social science in general began to undergo the "cultural turn" where scholars moved away from solely structural theories to examine how culture, ideas, and individuals affect social processes. In the study of movements and revolution, these ideas penetrated deeply. David Snow and his colleagues (1986) introduced the idea of framing, which is how movements use rhetoric strategically to recruit participants and make successful claims by linking their goals to larger ideas about justice and politics. European scholars also emphasized what they called "new social movements" based on identity and solidarity rather than social and economic classes (Kriesi et al. 1992; Melucci 1980). In revolution studies, social scientists began to reconsider the role of leaders, ideology, and identity (Moghadam 1995; Parsa 2000; Selbin 1993), and how histories of resistance against government could be a resource for contention (Reed and Foran 2002). In contrast to objective structural conditions, scholars in both fields began to emphasize subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals and how these affect the mobilization process (Foran 2005; Kurzman 1996; Sewell 1996). Most recently, "relational" views of mobilization have become popular (see McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). Here scholars emphasize that movements exist in relationship to other actors, like governments and counter-movements, and explanation rejects general theories that apply to all instances in favor of specific mechanisms that combine and operate differently in different social contexts.

The astute reader will have noticed that this brief history has left the study of terrorism mostly aside and said nothing at all about radicalism. This is because the study of terrorism developed on its own parallel track to the study of movements and revolution. Like social movement theory, terrorism studies also emerged as a reaction to the experience of the mid-twentieth century. The earliest social scientific studies explored campaigns of terrorism by national liberation groups, inspired by anti-colonial revolutions and groups like the Irish Republic Army, Basque Liberation Front, and Palestinian Liberation Organization (e.g., Bell 1971; Crenshaw 1978). In the 1970s, highly visible instances

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of international terrorism occurred – for instance, the hostage taking of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games and multiple hijackings of airplanes for ransom and publicity – which focused attention on it as a distinct phenomenon. Yet terrorism had trouble establishing itself as a credible field of academic study, partially because of its practical nature – many terrorism experts were located inside of governments instead of universities (see Stampnitzky 2010). This changed substantially in the wake of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon by Al-Qaeda hijackers. Since that time, the number of studies of terrorism has grown tremendously and it has become a common focus, primarily in political science. Scholars now investigate the tactics, targets, claims, success, and environments of terrorist groups voluminously (e.g., Abrahms 2006; Brandt and Sandler 2010; Crenshaw 2011; Krueger and Maleckova 2003; Pape 2005; Piazza 2006). Methodologically, terrorism studies still uses case studies of terrorist groups but the availability of large datasets of terrorist events like the Global Terrorism Database has allowed for quantitative and statistical studies, as well. This trend is evident in Figure 1.1, which shows the number of books and articles published by social scientists on terrorism, revolution, and radicalism every year since 1970.
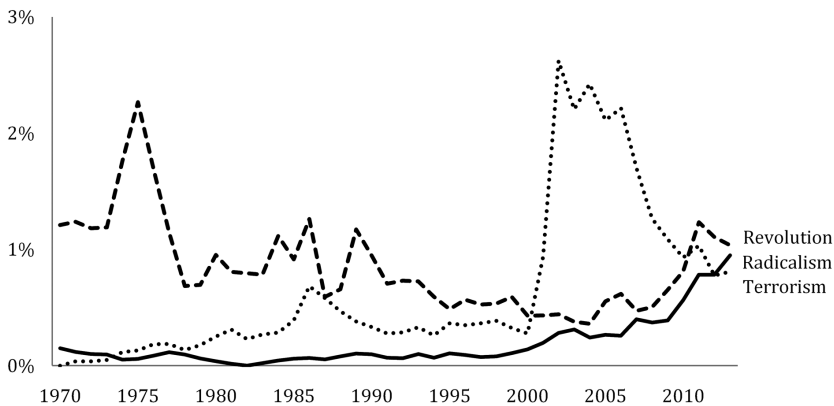

Figure 1.1   Percentage of articles and books indexed in sociological abstracts and worldwide political science abstracts by subject heading, 1970–2013

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Terrorism studies did have a small increase in the 1980s as scholars investigated the "new" wave of religious terrorism and international terrorism (Rapoport 2004), but it did not surpass the popularity of revolution studies until after September 11th. Revolution has seen a revival in the past few years as attention has focused on the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011, but it has yet to reach the level of popularity it enjoyed in the 1970s, when it was perhaps inspired by the examples of Cuba and Vietnam. Radicalism, however, has usually been much less popular. Most investigations of radicalism come through case studies of single groups, hence its increase in the 2000s as religious fundamentalism and extremists' use of political violence got more attention. Interestingly, it appears that studies of radicals may even be surpassing those of terrorists in the last two years. Even so, studies of radicalism as a unique phenomenon are very rare, confined to just a few considerations of how radical flanks influence larger social movements (e.g., Haines 1984; Isaac, McDonald, and Lukasik 2006; Jenkins and Eckert 1986).[2] Filling this gap in social scientific knowledge is one of the goals of this book. But to do so successfully, we need to know what, exactly, it is that we are considering. For that we must provide conceptual definitions of terrorism, revolution, and radicalism.

Conceptualizing terrorism

Common wisdom is that terrorism is a label that individuals, movements, and governments use to stigmatize those they do not agree with or do not like. Yet governments struggle to define terrorism in a consistent fashion. The American government has at least 22 different legal definitions of terrorism (Perry 2003), and there is wide disagreement among governments about which groups and individuals should legally be considered terrorists (Beck and Miner 2013). "One person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist," the old adage goes. While this common view might be wise – in that it recognizes the power of language – it is not enough for social science. Social scientists need to carefully

define the phenomenon that they are interested in so that when faced with an example, they can know whether a given theory would be expected to apply to it.

As with many contested concepts, the use of the word "terrorism" has seen lots of conceptual "stretching," where some have adopted it to refer to the use of any organized violence outside of formally declared wars. In the 1980s, Alex Schmid and his co-author Albert Jongman (1988) surveyed 109 different academic definitions of terrorism and found 22 commonly used elements. However, only three of these appeared in a majority of the definitions: (1) violence or force (83.5% of definitions); (2) political (65% of definitions); and (3) fear or terror emphasized (51% of definitions). (The use of "threat" was a close runner-up appearing in 47% of the definitions considered.) More recently, Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2004) repeated the examination, looking at 73 definitions that appeared in social scientific journal articles through 2001. They found even less consensus – only "violence/force" and "political" appeared in a majority. It is no wonder that Brannan, Esler, and Strindberg (2001: 11) claimed the field is in the "perverse situation where a great number of scholars are studying a phenomenon, the essence of which they have (by now) simply agreed to disagree upon."

But we can make progress if we try to boil a definition of terrorism down to what it must address. Jack Gibbs (1989) suggests that any conception of terrorism needs to answer five questions:

1. Is terrorism necessarily illegal (a crime)?
2. Is terrorism necessarily undertaken to realize some particular type of goal and, if so, what is it?
3. How does terrorism necessarily differ from conventional military operation in a war, a civil war, or so-called guerilla warfare?
4. Is it necessarily the case that only opponents of the government engage in terrorism?
5. Is terrorism necessarily a distinctive strategy in the use of violence and, if so, what is that strategy?

Answering all of these questions in one short, nicely worded definition is quite the challenge. To illustrate, let us consider two popular definitions. The first is a legal definition from the US State Department: terrorism is "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience." In answer to Gibbs questions, this definition does not explicitly tell us if terrorism is a crime (though, since it is a legal definition, we might suppose its illegality) or if it can be used during conventional warfare, but it does suggest that terrorism's goals are political, undertaken by opponents to or agents of a government, and is distinctive in that it targets noncombatants and seeks to influence a larger audience. A second definition comes from the terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman, who defines terrorism as "violence – or equally important, the threat of violence – used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of a political aim" (Hoffman 1998: 2–3). Hoffman's definition explicitly tells us terrorism has a political goal and that it includes threats as well as violence, but it does not tell us explicitly whether it is illegal, how it differs from war, who uses it, or if it is a distinctive strategy.

We thus might need to simplify the matter even further. Terrorism, as well as any contention, has three basic things that must occur: a perpetrator, an action, and a target of that action. Let us consider these in turn. First, how can we conceptualize the perpetrator? Omar Lizardo (2008) proposes that the legitimacy of the actor is key to defining terrorism. Lizardo argues, in part, that terrorism is violence initiated by any non-state actor who is not recognized as a legitimate wielder of violence. This draws on the classic Weberian conception of the state as having the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. In the modern world, the international system sanctifies states and thus legitimates their actions, whether we approve of them or not. Crucially, however, the international system does not sanction violence by non-state actors which means that it will be inherently illegitimate and thus terrorism. This helpfully captures one dimension of the common adage about terrorists and freedom fighters – the illegitimacy of the perpetrator as seen from outside is a key element of what most would consider terrorism.

Terrorism also requires an action to come into being. We already have seen that many definitions include the use of violence or the threat of violence as a key characteristic (in fact, it is difficult to imagine nonviolent terrorism). Charles Tilly emphasizes that terrorism is a strategy of political contention that can be used by various actors. Tilly (2004: 5) defines the strategy as "asymmetrical deployment of threats and violence against enemies using means that fall outside the forms of political struggle routinely operating within some current regime." The key idea here is routine versus non-routine forms of political struggle. There are lots of violent actions that take place during war, but because we understand a war as a set of organized violent actions, we expect this and no terror results. On the other hand, detonating a bomb at the finish of a marathon can be considered terrorism because it is non-routine and outside the common forms of politics. Tilly's definition thus builds on the root of terrorism as being terror – unexpected violence and threats are more terrorizing. There is also another genius in this conceptualization. Tilly is intentionally agnostic about who the terrorist actor is as long as they act outside of common routines and act asymmetrically (in other words, not just responding in kind). This allows for terrorism to be an action that both state actors and non-state actors can use. While this book does not focus on state terrorism, we may not want our conceptualization to unnecessarily preclude it either.

Finally, all violent or threatening actions have a target – the person, persons, or actor that the action is directed towards. In most interpersonal violence, the victim of violence is the target of action. For example, a victim of premeditated murder is killed because the murderer wanted them dead. Terrorism may be distinctive in that it often separates the victim and the target. For instance, the terrorist kills civilians in order to influence the policies and actions of the civilians' government. Albert Bergesen (2007) calls this the "three-step model" of violence, as it chains together three different actors through the use of violence – step one is the terrorist perpetrator, step two is the victim of terrorism, and step three is the actor the terrorist wants to influence. Such victim-target differentiation is somewhat common in terrorism

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conceptions (Schmid and Jongman (1988) found it in 37.5% of definitions), but thinking of it as a logical chain brings two other key issues into play. First, there is the goal of terrorism, which must be larger than merely the death of the victim. While the actual content of the goal might vary substantially from case to case, we know it as terrorism because of the chain of logic present in the action – if Americans are killed, then the American people is terrorized and the American government is influenced. (Note that this presupposes a relationship between the victim and the target that is legible to the observer; a terrorist could not easily kill Americans to influence, say, Madagascar.) Second, the three-step model also suggests the role of claim-making, which is common in terrorist attacks – a bomb goes off and a group takes responsibility, issuing a communiqué explaining their action and demands. Here, the terrorist actor is making the logic behind the chain of violence explicit.

In short, I propose that we can usefully think of terrorism by considering the legitimacy of the perpetrator, whether their action is routine, and who the intended target of the action is. While this does not add up to a precise definition, conceptualizing terrorism along these dimensions is helpful for distinguishing it from other violent or threatening actions. For example, the attacks on September 11th were initiated by an illegitimate actor (Al-Qaeda), using a non-routine form of political struggle (skyjacking and crashing planes into buildings) with a target beyond the immediate victims present in the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and airplanes (the American public or government). Thus, we can easily call September 11th terrorism. In contrast, consider two violent interactions that occurred as a consequence of this event. The American government caught, imprisoned, and tortured a number of Al-Qaeda members and affiliates, and the Taliban use of suicide bombers to attack American military forces in Afghanistan. In the first case, the perpetrator is a legitimate state using a non-routine but legally sanctioned action for the purpose of extracting information rather than just deterring future Al-Qaeda members. It thus fails at least two of the criteria and can be ruled out as an instance of terrorism, whether or not we condone it. In the latter

case, the Taliban are a less legitimate actor but use a common and symmetrical strategy of violence against their opponents in the ongoing war. While we might argue that the ultimate target of the violence is the American government, the death of American soldiers is a practical and proximate goal. Thus, we can rule out many of the Taliban's actions as terrorism, whether we like them or not. Even though social scientists struggle to come up with a consensus around a single definition, we do not need to conclude that terrorism is in the eye of the beholder. In the rest of this book when I refer to terrorism, this is the conceptualization I am using.

Conceptualizing revolution

Fortunately, there is much more agreement among scholars about what a revolution is. This is partially because of the nature of the field. In contrast to terrorism where, as we saw above, experts struggled to establish it as a distinct field of study, revolution has always been central to social science. In the past few decades, the study of revolution also benefited from the influence of one central author – Theda Skocpol. In 1979, Skocpol's book *States and Social Revolutions* reinvigorated the field through a comparative analysis of the French Revolution of 1789, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the Chinese Revolution of 1911. Prior to her book, scholars of revolution constantly debated what the types of revolution were – national revolutions, western revolutions, great revolutions, peripheral revolutions, revolutions from above, and so on. But Skocpol unified these definitions with a new concept – the social revolution.

Social revolutions, according to Skocpol (1979: 4), are "rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures . . . in part carried through by class-based revolts from below." The key idea here is transformation. Revolutions are social revolutions only when they change the basic features of a society, as well as change who is in power. The transformation can occur along multiple dimensions – economic, social, or cultural. For example, the French and Russian Revolutions substantially altered social rela-

tions when they abolished the monarchy and the feudal privileges that aristocrats enjoyed. The Russian and Chinese Revolutions also substantially altered the economic systems of their societies, instituting a state-directed communist system. And the French and Chinese revolutionaries also tried to substantially change cultural practices, creating a new civic religion in France or suppressing traditional practices like foot-binding in China. The other key idea is that change is not a revolution unless there is substantial popular contention outside of the state that helps accomplish it. Later scholars have mostly dropped the view that this need be "class-based," as Skocpol was writing in response to Marxist views of revolution which are less popular now, but the idea of mass uprising remains a key feature of those events we consider revolutionary. This serves to distinguish revolution from other governmental and social changes that occur by the actions of elites, such as in coup d'états or reformative democratic transitions.

But this concept of social revolution does not include changes in regime accompanied by mass revolt from below that do not substantially alter a society's make up. So it is helpful to specify another type of outcome, the political revolution. The political revolution, notes Jack Goldstone (Goldstone 1998: vii), has two characteristics: "irregular procedures aimed at forcing political change within a society . . . and lasting effects on the political system of the society in which they occurred." This is a broader definition that brings other types of conflict, such as civil wars and mass protest, into our conception of revolution.[3] But both of these definitions assume that we know when a revolutionary struggle is over so that we can assess its outcome. Unfortunately, here there is much less consensus. For example, if revolutions are over when challengers are no longer active then "the French Revolution ended in Thermidor in 1799 when Napoleon took power," or if it is when government takes on a stable form, then "the French revolution ended only with the start of the French Third Republic in 1871" (Goldstone 2001: 167). Or we might even extend the consistent turmoil of French politics through to the founding of the Fifth Republic in 1958 or de Gaulle's resignation in 1969. So when did the French Revolution end – 1799, 1871, 1958, or

1969? I do not pretend to have an exact answer, but a helpful place to start when thinking about this is Stinchcombe's (1999) view that revolutions involve substantial uncertainty about who will be in power in the future. When we become more certain that a particular regime will last for the foreseeable future, we might be able to safely say the revolution is over. Revolutionary regimes have two key problems to solve to reduce uncertainty according to Eric Selbin (1993). First, revolutionaries must institutionalize their victory, that is, create new political institutions that will outlast the revolutionary leaders. Therefore, truly complete revolutions solve the succession issue and do not just rely on the personal power of the revolutionaries. This can happen in various timeframes. Becker and Goldstone (2005) found that major social revolutions ended as quickly as less than a year (Iran in 1979) or as long as 38 years (China in 1911). Among the 47 revolutions they surveyed, half were over in less than eight years and the average time was just under 13 years. Second, Selbin argues that completed revolutions involve consolidation, that is, winning the hearts and minds of the population and ensuring their support for the new regime. As we shall see later, the ideology and actions of revolutionary leaders are key factors here. But determining consolidation in these terms is also very difficult.

Given these issues, we might want to separate the end of a revolution from its beginning. Thinking this way also gets around the problem that the two definitions considered so far have – there is no such thing as a failed revolution. To address this, Charles Tilly (1993b: 10) offers the term "revolutionary situation" which occurs when "two or more blocs make effective, incompatible claims to control the state, or to be the state." According to Tilly, we can know that a bloc's claims are effective when they command the support of a significant segment of the population. This definition draws on Leon Trotsky's idea of dual power, developed in his firsthand account of the Russian Revolution (see Trotsky 1932). Crucially, it does not suppose that power changes hands or that society changes – a revolutionary situation can fail to do either or continue to occur for many years, but we can still consider it as part of what we talk about when we discuss revolution.

These three concepts – social revolution, political revolution, and revolutionary situation – thus cover much of the needed terrain. We know that an event is revolutionary when there is mass contention against an existing state, when it overthrows a regime, or creates lasting social change and establishes new political structures. Recent work on revolution has continued to define subtypes, for instance Third World revolutions (Foran 2005), constitutional revolutions (Kurzman 2008; Sohrabi 2011), and nonviolent revolutions (Stephan and Chenoweth 2008; Zunes 1994), but these are less competing definitions than "scope conditions." Scope conditions are the limits a scholar sets as to what their theory is intended to apply. Notably, Skocpol's own theory of social revolution was intended to apply to only agrarian-bureaucratic states and not all governments, but scholars have adopted her concept more generally. In short, when I refer to revolution in this book, I am referring to both accomplished political and social revolutions as well as failed or ongoing revolutionary situations.

Conceptualizing radicalism

Scholars often refer to radical movements to indicate ideas and actions that are outside of what a social movement commonly does or believes. But very rarely is a precise definition of radicalism given. "One person's radical is another's moderate," we might say. This is problematic for the same reasons that an ill-defined notion of terrorism is. What is radical at one time or in one place may not be radical later or elsewhere. Just as the researcher should know what constitutes terrorism, or a revolution, so that they can understand what explanations may apply to a particular example, we also must know what might constitute radicalism.

We see the common strategy in Kathleen Fitzgerald's and Diane Rodgers's (2000) attempt to distinguish radicalism from moderation in social movements by looking at organizational features. According to them, radical social movement organizations tend towards non-hierarchical forms, have a "radical agenda," are ignored or misrepresented by the media, and have

limited resources. This certainly does seem like a decent description of contemporary radical movements in western democracies, but may have limited utility in other settings. Further, many activists complain about their representation in the media and many organizations struggle to find resources. Are all of these radical?

Of the few precise definitions of radicalism that have been offered, the idea of violence tends to be an integral part. Sophia Moskalenko and Clark McCauley (2009) try to distinguish radicalism from other forms of activism by measuring willingness to participate in legal and nonviolent political action versus illegal and violent action. Similarly, David Snow and Remy Cross (2011: 118) define a radical as "a social movement activist who embraces direct action and high-risk options, often including violence against others, to achieve a stated goal." These definitions both assume that violence is illegal or uncommon and thus high-risk for the activist. But imagine a society in which violence is commonplace, perhaps Syria during its ongoing civil war. Are there no Syrian radicals? Or are all participants in the war engaged in radicalism?

In short, we need a definition that deals with the issue of relativity. Since radical as an adjective can describe people, ideas, and actions, a conceptualization of radicalism should address three questions:

1. Which actors can potentially be defined as radical?
2. What are the features of radical strategies and actions?
3. How can ideas, claims, or goals be identified as radical?

In answer, I propose to define radicalism as *contention that is outside the common routines of politics present within a society, oriented towards substantial change in social, cultural, economic, and/or political structures, and undertaken by any actor using extra-institutional means*. This is quite the mouthful, so let us break it into its constituent parts.

First, the definition formalizes the relativity of radicalism with the idea of common routines. Note how this draws on Tilly's

(2004) conceptualization of terrorism. Radicalism is contention that does not look like politics, or even social movement activity, as usual. In this sense, it is often transgressive and innovative. Here, we can distinguish radical contention from "regular" contention, which can vary widely across time and place, without implying that radicalism necessarily entails violence, risk, or illegality. Second, the definition specifies that radical goals and ideas must involve changing society or social trends. This change can be progressive or reactionary; we can be agnostic about its specific political content. Thus, radicalism can be a feature of the political right as well as the political left. Similar to the definitions of revolution considered above, this change must be fundamental – change to structures and systems, not just the hearts, minds, or actions of individuals. Third, the definition specifies that radical action can be undertaken by anyone – individuals, organizations, movements, governments – as long as it does not use institutional means. This is an idea common to definitions of social movements generally as a form of "extra-institutional" politics. Institutional means of politics are things like voting, lobbying, legislating that take place within the institutions of politics. Extra-institutional means are those things that are not part of institutionalized governance, such as protest, boycotts, sit-ins, arson, violence, and so on. When institutional actors, like politicians, begin to use extra-institutional means, they approach radicalism.

Each of these three criteria must be met for us to view something as radical. For example, consider the Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011. Many Occupy activists expressed a desire for fundamental change to the capitalist economic system and American politics, and did so using a strategy that was not within political institutions. However, the contention was relatively routine in that it used tactics common to modern social movements – marches, sit-ins, speeches, and petitions. Per our definition, we would not consider this a radical movement, no matter its unexpected occurrence and surprising endurance. On the other side of the American political spectrum, the Tea Party of 2009 engaged in routine contention using the institutional means of running for office and voting with political goals that

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did not seek fundamental change. Again, not a radical movement. In contrast to both of these is the actions of environmental and animal rights groups like the Earth Liberation Front and Animal Liberation Front. These groups seek fundamental change to social, cultural, and economic practices concerning nonhuman life and do so with uncommon and extra-institutional strategies – arson, vandalism, tree-spiking, and bombings. These are certainly radicals.

While it is difficult to think of non-routine contention that is not also extra-institutional, this criterion helps us determine whether or not the actions of governments can be considered radical. For example, mid-twentieth-century fascist parties, even though they won elections and held institutional office, used violence that was not sanctioned by law and was carried out by paramilitary party organizations to accomplish their agenda of change. This would count as radical. On the other hand, when a government uses the institutional means of the police or military to suppress opposition, as even many post-revolutionary states do, this by itself would not be considered radicalism.

In short, the proposed conceptualization helps distinguish radicalism from both social movements and governments, even in cases where we may not approve of their actions. In the rest of this book, I use the term radicalism in this manner. If we consider all three definitions of radicalism, revolution, and terrorism together, we might simply say that radicalism is an orientation, revolution is an event, and terrorism is a tactic. As such, they overlap (by design) substantially – many terrorists are radical, many revolutionaries use terrorism, and many radicals seek revolution. While we can imagine nonviolent radicalism, revolution without terror, and terrorism without radical goals, the rest of this book focuses on the places where they occur together, as illustrated in Figure 1.2.
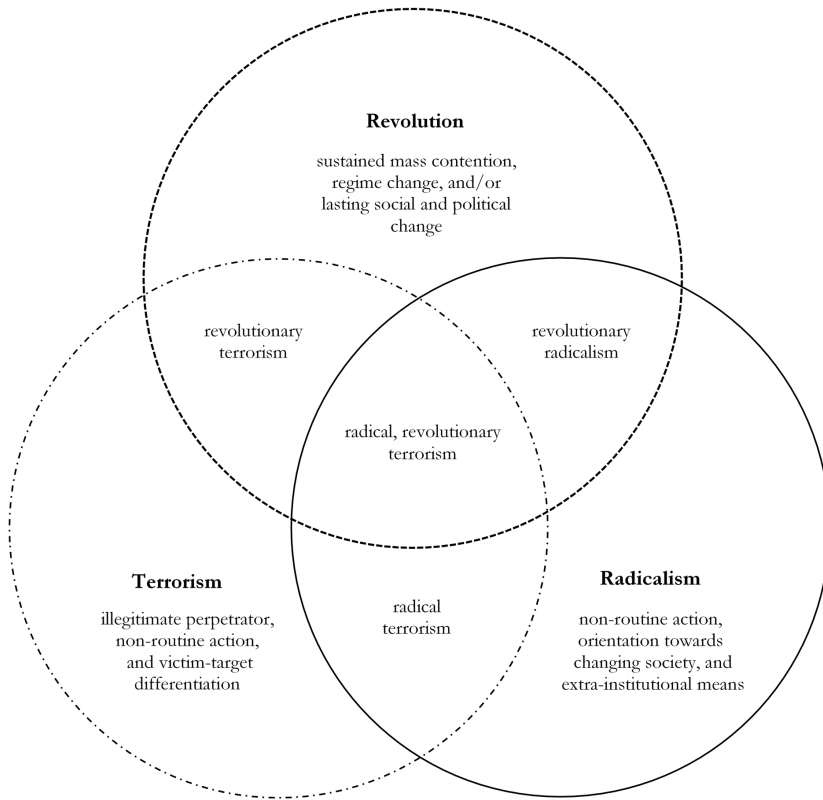
Figure 1.2   Conceptualizing radicalism, revolution, and terrorism

The chapters to come

This chapter has given some historical and conceptual context for thinking about radicalism, revolution, and terrorism. In the next part of the book, I focus on how these elements can be investigated on three different levels of analysis. Chapter 2 asks the question of who is radical, and examines the micro-level of individuals and small groups, including who participates in these movements, how they do so, and where sources of social support for them lie. Chapter 3 examines the meso-level of movements, asking how

movements become radical by examining resources, frames, and organizational strategies. Chapter 4 considers when and where radicalism is likely to occur, investigating the macro-level context in which contention takes place. From Part I, the reader will gain a general understanding of research in these fields. Part II of the book examines three key problems in more detail. Chapter 5 takes up the issue of ideology, and explores how radical ideas emerge and inform action or not. Chapter 6 asks if there is a life cycle to radicalism, and details the common trajectories and dynamics of movements' beginnings and endings. Chapter 7 then considers the related issue of the diffusion of radicalism, exploring how and why waves of movements occur. Finally, chapter 8 contemplates the future of radicalism, as well as the issue of prediction of movements more generally, and draws broader conclusions.[4]

The book uses many social science terms and concepts. When I first use them, I provide a definition for the non-specialist reader. Consulting the index will be helpful if the reader wants to remind herself of this explanation. Throughout, I also use a number of examples to illustrate the research covered and key ideas introduced. These are intended to cover both contemporary and historical periods and domestic and international contexts. Some of the examples will reoccur frequently, and, where appropriate, I point the reader to key additional readings. Some examples may only be used once. I hope that those who particularly like these cases will not feel slighted, as there are many radicals, revolutionaries, and terrorists, and no one book can do them all complete justice.