

**Revolutions Against the State\***

Colin J. Beck  
Pomona College

**Forthcoming. *The New Handbook of Political Sociology*, edited by Thomas Janoski, Cedric de Leon, Joya Misra, and Isaac Martin. New York: Cambridge University Press.**

Address correspondence to:

Colin J. Beck  
Department of Sociology  
Pomona College  
420 N Harvard Ave  
Claremont, CA 91711  
[cbeck@pomona.edu](mailto:cbeck@pomona.edu)

\* Acknowledgments: This chapter was informed by conversations with the participants of the Rethinking Revolutions Workshop at the London School of Economics and Political Science in May 2017. In particular, I thank Mlada Bukovansky, Erica Chenoweth, George Lawson, Sharon Nepstad, and Daniel Ritter. I also thank John Foran for his comments on a prior version.

## Introduction

The way social scientists think that others think about revolutions has been shaped primarily by Jack Goldstone. In his influential review essays, Goldstone (1982, 2001) presents the 20<sup>th</sup> century study of revolution as occurring in generations—from natural historians of the 1930s to general theorists of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, from state-centered scholars in the 1980s to a contemporary fourth generation basket of approaches. Because it is so familiar, his reading animates nearly all contemporary literature reviews in revolution studies. Goldstone’s categorizations have even impelled new work, as in Sohrabi’s (1995) research on models of revolution or Lawson’s (2016) recent theoretical synthesis.

There is a problem with this way of thinking about the field of revolution studies, however. Social science of any sort, let alone in the study of revolution, does not cohere in neat generations. I offer a few examples. During the so-called natural history phase, other scholars like Merriman (1938) argued for general structural theories of revolution that look much more like the state-centered accounts of four decades later. At the highpoint of theorization about social strain,<sup>1</sup> Tilly in *The Vendée* (1964) and Wolf in *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (1969) dug deep into specific revolutionary episodes to provide grounded and case-specific analyses. 1979 saw the publication of the state-centered *States and Social Revolutions* (Skocpol 1979), but also Goldfrank’s (1979) account of how world systemic dynamics beyond states and regimes creates revolutionary situations. And it requires little cognizance to see that “fourth generation” theory does not cohere as a theory or a generation at all.

I could go on. But the point is that thinking of prior theory in generational terms has overstated the extent of consensus present at any time. And that allows us to discard theories that are not fashionable (as Sohrabi [1995] discovered) and reify others beyond usefulness (see Goodwin 2001).

This chapter is an attempt to provide a more accurate and holistic account of revolution studies than the shackles of generational imagery has allowed. Instead of theoretical generations, I sketch eight theoretical schemas that guide ways of thinking about rebellions and revolutions.<sup>2</sup> Three schemas are classical—Marxism, natural

---

<sup>1</sup> Goldstone’s (1982) original formulation of generations of theory did not separate out strain theory as a generation by itself but only as one aspect of general theories of revolution. Later reviewers of the field have lost this distinction.

<sup>2</sup> I use the word schema here intentionally—revolution studies has mostly lacked the institutionalized networks of scholars that typify “schools” and the theoretical coherence of “paradigms” or “epistemologies”. Nor does the word “tradition” quite capture what I am after, which is a way to

history, and strain theory—and two remain in force today—state-centered and mass mobilization approaches. And three are emergent and not yet institutionalized—cultural, international, and contingency schemas. In the following sections, I first consider definitions of revolution and present the consensual ways of thinking about revolution studies in prior reviews. I then provide an overview of the schemas of revolution studies, with especial attention to recent research. Next, I show the continued dissensus about the future of revolution studies and discuss the polysemy of related research in adjacent fields, to which I propose antidotes by way of conclusion.

### **(Re-) Defining Revolution**

There seems to be almost as many definitions of revolution as there are scholars in the field. This is due, in no small part, to the tendency to place scope conditions on a theory by seeking to explain only great revolutions (Huntington 1968), or peasant revolutions (Wolf 1969), or agrarian revolutions (Paige 1975), or revolutions from above (Trimberger 1978), or social revolutions (Skocpol 1979), or urban-based revolutions (Farhi 1990), or “refolutionary” revolutions (Ash 1990), or nonviolent revolutions (Zunes 1994), or political revolutions (Goldstone 1998), or third world revolutions (Foran 2005), or negotiated revolutions (Lawson 2005), and so on.

Among all these definitions, none has had more influence than Skocpol’s (1979:4) definition of the social revolution: “rapid, basic transformation of a society’s state and class structures... in part carried through by class-based revolts from below.” Skocpol here had a particular sort of revolution in mind; the ones that created lasting change to society as well as government. The definition encompasses many of the classic cases that spring to mind when we consider revolution—France in 1789, Russia in 1917, and such. Skocpol’s concise articulation of an object of study helped clear the weeds of revolution studies at the time and likely helped the field advance through its conceptualization of the object of study alone (Beck 2017a). Yet there was always a problem with researching only social revolutions. What about those cases where there was no lasting societal transformations? What about those cases in which revolutionary attempts failed? And so, conceptions of revolution proliferated once again.

---

characterize our mental representations of what can and should be the purpose of studying revolution, hence the word schema. Alternatively, phalanxes might also be appropriate as the Greek form of military organization was based on self-kitted individuals in contrast to the hierarchical cohorts (generations) of the Roman legion.

The solution lies in a broader, yet still clear, definition of revolution. Drawing on Trotsky's (1932) conception of dual power, Tilly (1993:10) proposes the term revolutionary situations, which occur when "two or more blocs make effective, incompatible claims to control the state, or to be the state." An effective claim is one in which a faction controls the loyalty of a significant segment of the population. Here, revolutions are processes, not just outcomes. All social revolutions involve a revolutionary situation, but not all revolutionary situations lead to social revolutions. I add one thing to Tilly's definition, however. Revolutions are more than just dual claims to power. They are also about dual visions of power and the social order to which it should be set to achieve. Revolutions without ideology are hardly revolutions at all (Beck 2011). This criterion allows us to separate revolutions from coup d'états, civil wars, and other related types of contention. I thus suggest that the most appropriate way to conceptualize revolution is as revolutionary situations in which different visions of social and/or political order are in play.

### **Rethinking the History of Revolution Studies**

I opened the chapter by arguing that a conceptualization of generations of revolution theory has missed the scholarly dissensus present at any particular time. Even so, there remains a fair amount of agreement about the central areas of revolution studies. In Figure 1, I present an overview of selected reviews and syntheses of revolution research over the last three decades.<sup>3</sup> The x-axis is the reviews arranged in chronological order. The y-axis is the major themes in roughly ascending chronological order. The intersection of a review and a theme are then shaded. This allows us to see the change over time in ways of thinking about how the field is organized.

[Figure 1 here]

What seems apparent is that there is some consensus on how to think about revolution studies. Reviews tend to organize research by the familiar generations of Goldstone (1982), showing its influence. Only one theme is present across all reviews—state-centered theory, suggesting its paradigmatic status within the field. And only two major themes are shared by fewer than three reviews—a Marxist strand

---

<sup>3</sup> I examine those reviews that still have currency today, are cited in recent research, or are recent themselves. While this is not a full sample, it is a representative one. I categorize the major organizational themes of each (in essence, headings and sub-headings). A lack of intersection does not mean the review did not discuss research in a given vein; rather it means that it did not organize its review in that vein.

of thought (present in Kimmel (1990) and Goodwin (2005)), and a focus on agency and leadership (present in Foran (1993) and Goldstone (2001)). Notably, some topics that are of recent interest, such as international dimensions of revolution, were present in reviews decades before. In short, most reviews and syntheses seem to agree about what the study of revolution looks like.

Yet the shape of the data also suggests that the field of revolution studies has not evolved substantially. Imagine the counterfactual. A field identifies a problem at time 1, solves it at time 2, and so by time 3 it is completely doxa. The intersections of themes and reviews would thus cluster above the trend line in the upper left of the graph as one topic or theory replaced another. Alternatively, if the field were completely additive then intersections would cluster below the trend line in the bottom right of the graph as no theme is ever resolved and still worthy of mention. What we see instead is that some new themes emerge, some old ones are discarded, but with most movement occurring around Goldstone's historiography of generations. There is an endogeneity problem here—a prior review influences a later one; see for example the column for Lawson (2016) and its simple generational organization. In other words, the consensus we perceive here may be false. And our false consciousness has left some important ways of thinking about revolution aside.

I thus argue that we should think about revolution scholarship as proceeding in schemas, or different ideal-typical models of revolution theory (see Guggenheim and Krause 2012). While generations may die, schemas never do; they merely rise and fall in fashion (Abbott 2001).

I argue that there are eight primary schemas in the study of revolution. In rough order of emergence, they are: Marxism, natural history, strain theory, state-centered theory, mass mobilization, cultural approaches, international dimensions, and contingency. Figure 2 presents a stylized sketch of the chronological development of the different models with notable exemplar citations. While there is some generational coherence to the schemas, the picture is more complex than a sequential account alone captures. For instance, Marxist accounts of revolution persist into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Boswell 1989), while state-centered ones arguably date as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> (see Tocqueville 1856). And the connections between schemas are more complicated than mere generational succession. For example, an emergent schema of contingency has roots in the old natural history accounts, and the international theories of revolution owe a debt to Marxist world-systems arguments about revolution.

[Figure 2 here]

In the sections that follow, I chart these schemas and the connections between them. I begin by reviewing the three that are classics and remain unfashionable in recent research on revolutions.

### **Classic Schemas of Revolution: Marxism, Natural History, and Strain Theory<sup>4</sup>**

An early account of revolution is present in Marxist theory, dating back to Karl Marx's own writings on the subject, notably in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Marx and Engels 1848). In Marx's formulation, the way for society to move past a constant struggle between classes would be a social revolution and the establishment of a new social and political order. The Marxist theory of revolution was later developed further by Lenin (1918) and Trotsky (1932), among others. These early accounts were as much activist as they were scholarly, and many common Marxist phrases were coined to describe strategies for revolutionaries, e.g., vanguard of the proletariat and permanent revolution.

Marxist approaches were adopted fruitfully by scholars of revolution in the mid-twentieth century. Notably, Eric Wolf (1969) turned attention to the peasantry as a revolutionary class. In Wolf's account, landholding peasants are the most likely to be revolutionary. As capitalism penetrates their agricultural societies, middle status producers have more to lose as well as have access to the mobilizing resources that poor peasants and rural workers lack. Paige (1975) also focuses on rural rebellions, but locates revolutionary potential in sharecroppers rather than landowning peasants. In Paige's formulation, the type of revolution that results is largely a product of the agricultural system itself and its class structure of owners and workers. At this point, Marxist approaches to revolution shared much in common with "peasant studies" and had moved beyond a simple notion of class struggle between industrial workers and capitalist owners (see also Scott 1976).

The 1970s brought another Marxist way of thinking about revolution. Drawing some inspiration from Lenin's (1917) writings on imperialism, Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) proposes that the world economy operates as a capitalist society itself, with concentrations of power and resources and a resulting stratification of national states into classes. Extending this logic, Goldfrank (1979) argues that a permissive world

---

<sup>4</sup> As previous reviews have well plumbed the depths of the classic schemas of revolution—Marxism, natural histories, and social strain theory—my overview in this section will be brief. For coverage of Marxist theories of revolution, I recommend Goodwin (2005). Goldstone (1982) provides the best overview of natural history approaches, and both Goldstone (1982) and Goodwin (2005) ably cover strain and modernization theory; see also McAdam (1982:Ch. 2).

context is essential for understanding modern revolutions—as society and economy become more international, the causes and processes of revolution themselves do, as well. The world-systemic account of revolution was then more fully developed by Terry Boswell and his collaborators (see Boswell 1989, 2004, Boswell and Dixon 1990, 1993).

The key point here is that a Marxist account of revolution did not stop with the classical Marxists or even mid-20<sup>th</sup> century neo-Marxists. World systems theory became a bridge between a Marxist schema for understanding revolution and the emergent international schema discussed in more detail later in the chapter (see Foran 2005). Even so, the key elements of Marxist theories of revolution remain fairly stable. Namely, causal disruptions of traditional systems by the penetration of a capitalist economic system, a focus on an actor's position within a stratification system and consequent potential for a revolutionary movement, and the likelihood of particular revolutionary outcomes determined by a combination of class structure and economic system. In short, the contributions of Marxist approaches to revolution are to locate primary causation in the political economy of a society and emphasize the role of revolutionary representatives of an aggrieved social group or class.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Marxist theories of revolution had only one real rival; what Goldstone has termed the “natural history” approach. Taken from the title of Edwards's (1927) book, natural history theories emphasized a stage model of the revolutionary process. Particular attention focused on the different social groups that enter into the revolutionary process at different time points. From this perspective, the distal causes of revolution lie in the contradictions and failings of the *ancien regime* (Brinton 1938; Pettee 1938), increases in grievances among the populace (Sorokin 1925), and a resulting legitimation crisis (Pettee 1938). Revolutions are thus expressions of social change as much as drivers of them, in contrast to Marxist theories (Edwards 1927). During a revolutionary situation, a central dynamic is the interplay between moderate and radical factions (Brinton 1938; Edwards 1927), which is only settled in later stages of the revolution as state power is reconsolidated, often along dictatorial lines (Brinton 1938; Sorokin 1925). A natural history approach thus emphasizes the revolutionary process and how different actors identify, articulate, and negotiate their interests in relation to other actors and the current revolutionary stage.

As Goldstone (1982) notes, many of the central elements that have animated revolution studies for decades are there—a concern with states and regimes, structural strains, the process of mobilization, and prospects for lasting social and political

change. Even so, the natural history approach to revolution has mostly been supplanted. There is one exception, however. Nadir Sohrabi (1995) argues that different types of revolution have different stages, which are mostly determined by the “world time” context in which a revolution occurs. For example, the French Revolution of 1789 created a model of republican revolution that lasted until it was supplanted by the communist template of the Russian Revolution in 1917. It is thus possible to compare and contrast revolutions dependent on the paradigm of revolution under which they occurred. While Sohrabi’s account is deeply historical, it also provides a bridge to the emergent schema of contingency in revolution studies. For both, context matters as much, if not more, than structure.

The third classic schema of revolution studies is that of social strain and modernization theory. While the view of collective action as inherently irrational and connected to the dynamics of crowds and riots has roots in late nineteenth century sociology (Le Bon 1896, 1913), theorization of social strain as a cause of revolution had its heyday in the 1960s. Strain models of revolution emphasize two mechanisms: rapid social change that disequilibrates existing social and political arrangements, and consequent aggregate psychological strains that motivate revolutionary acts. For the first mechanism, strain accounts are an aspect of modernization theory, typified by Huntington (1968) and Johnson (1966). As societies move from traditional forms of organization to more modern ones, revolutions are made more likely by the disconnect between increasing economic development and lagging political modernization. Revolutions are thus an expression of modernization as well as a catalyst for it.

Aggregate social-psychological strain, on the other hand, tends to emphasize the grievances of individuals and marginalized social groups. As in the collective behavior tradition within social movement studies, mobilization is seen as inherently irrational and an anomaly to be explained (see Kornhauser 1959; Olson 1965; Smelser 1962). Davies (1962) proposes a J-curve theory of revolution where rising expectations of social and material well-being outstrip the capacity of social and political structures to deliver such benefits. As the gap grows, so does the likelihood of rebellion against the perceived underperformance of the system. Relatedly, Gurr (1970) emphasizes relative deprivation. Rather than absolute social and economic conditions as being a source of grievances, it is the relative conditions for one group in society as compared to another that motivates revolutionaries. In short, strain theories of revolution identify social change as the cause of revolution and individuals and groups as enactors of larger processes.

Of all the classic schemas in the sociology of revolution, strain theory is the closest to full extinction. While Marxist traditions and traces of natural history thinking live on, almost nothing of the strain and modernization schema persists. Suddenly imposed grievances and relative deprivation do still have some currency in political science, but it is almost impossible to find contemporary theories of revolution that take the irrationality of collective action as an explanatory framework. To the extent that strain theory has had an impact, it is in that it led to the oppositional development of mobilization-focused accounts of social movements and revolution (see McAdam 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1977). Discussion of the contemporary schemas of revolution studies—state-centered theories and mass mobilization approaches—is thus the focus of the next section.

### **The Contemporary Schemas of Revolution: State-Centered and Mobilization Approaches**

If the classic schemas of revolution have mostly been surpassed, or morphed into other models, two latter 20<sup>th</sup> century schemas live on. The first, state-centered theory, is so well established and considered so central to the field (see Figure 1) that it is as close to a paradigm as revolution studies has yet seen. The second schema, focusing on mass mobilization, has not coalesced to the same degree but nonetheless constitutes a continued competitor to structural accounts of revolution. I examine each of these in turn.

A focus on the state as a cause and consequence of revolution is perhaps the very oldest tradition in revolution studies. Tocqueville's (1856) analysis of the French Revolution takes the state as a primary arena of action, and can be considered the first modern social scientific study of revolution. State-centered theory as we know it today emerged in the 1970s in response to the economic determinism of Marxism and the psychological emphases of strain theory. Barrington Moore (1966) had offered a structural account of revolution that differed from both Marxist and strain theory by emphasizing the path dependent development of particular socio-political forms. This approach was extended by his students Trimberger (1978) and Skocpol (1979) and became a full-fledged theory of the state in revolution. For Skocpol, revolutions are not just competitions for state power; they are the product of states as autonomous entities themselves. Skocpol's (1979) analysis is quite nuanced, but in broad strokes emphasizes that early modern bureaucracies found themselves bankrupted from geopolitical competition. The resulting fiscal crisis left them unable to maintain the

loyalty of both elites and marginalized groups, and thus vulnerable to revolutionary challenges from below.

Later work has maintained the analytical focus on state structures and extended the basic model to other cases, for instance, emphasizing the role of urban insurrections (Farhi 1990), demographic pressures (Goldstone 1991), and international war (Mann 2013).<sup>5</sup> A consistent theme throughout these studies is that not only are the causes of revolution structural, they tend to take place within regimes that are unable to adapt to political crises (Goodwin 2001). A primary mechanism of fragility here is often political exclusion. Regimes with narrow bases of power are more susceptible to revolutionary challenges from below (Beck 2015; Foran 2005; Goldstone 1991; Goodwin 2001). The most brittle regimes tend to be patrimonial or personalist dictatorships, or modern *rentier* states dependent on revenue from a single industry (Skocpol 1982). State-centered theory thus approaches revolution as a problem of political structures brought on by social and economic pressures on a regime.

State-centered theory, however, is explicitly nonvoluntarist in that the actions and motivations of individuals and movements matter little. It is in this lacuna that the second contemporary schema for revolution research lays. Charles Tilly's (1964, 1978) early work is an originator of this approach (see also Dunn 1972). By the 1980s, a reaction to structuralist accounts of revolution began to focus on the process of mass mobilization itself. A key issue at the time was the formation of revolutionary coalitions. As Dix (1984) suggests, revolutions only succeed when a broad "negative" coalition of various actors from different segments of society band together to resist a regime. Along with states under external strain, the importance of coalitions is a consistent finding of revolution research (e.g., Beck 2015; Chang 2015; Foran 2005; Foran and Goodwin 1993; Kadivar 2013; Markoff 1988, 1996a; Slater 2010).

Research in the 1990s began to emphasize the microfoundations of mobilization, examining who is likely to join a revolution (e.g., Wickham-Crowley 1992) and the networks that enable mobilization (e.g., Gould 1991, 1995). Micromobilization processes, as well as the decision-making processes of participants, remain a focus for recent scholars (Kadivar 2013; Viterna 2013; Weyland 2014). Recent scholars of nonviolent resistance also focus on mobilization processes and the strategies of

---

<sup>5</sup> The consistent findings of state-centered theory are covered well by Goldstone (2001) and Goodwin (2005).

revolutionaries (see Schock 2005; Zunes 1994). In the contemporary era, it appears that nonviolent mobilizations are increasingly more likely to succeed than violent ones (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Nepstad 2011), dependent on the growth of the international human rights regime (Ritter 2015). The choice not to use violence, or limited violence, limits state repression or increases the likelihood of a popular and international backlash against a repressive regime. Cases abound—the wave of “people power” revolutions in the 1980s and the collapse of communism in 1989, the early 2000s Color Revolutions of the former Soviet Bloc, and most recently the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. The overall thrust of these mobilization-centered accounts is that revolutions are accomplished by movement actors in interaction with social and political structures and responses of regimes. In this sense, it contrasts to the predominantly structural imageries of Marxism, strain, and state-centered theory and has some parallels to early 20<sup>th</sup> century natural histories.

In short, what I term the mass mobilization schema may not be as paradigmatic as state-centered theory, but it is where much of the recent attention in revolution studies lies. Its consistent findings suggest the importance of coalition formation, resistance to state repression, and the social networks and identities that enable participation to grow and be sustained. Combined with state-centered structural causes, it appears that much of the terrain of revolution sketched by the natural historians has been met—distal causation, revolutionary processes, and the likelihood of particular outcomes. Yet there remain notable gaps and unanswered questions. To what extent do cultural practices enable or constrain revolution, does ideology affect the strategy of revolutionaries and the outcomes of state consolidation, are there international causal factors, what are the processes behind waves of revolution, and are there truly universal causal patterns or only historical contingencies? These questions are the stuff of the emergent schemas of revolution that I examine in the next section.

### **The Emergent Schemas: Cultural, International, and Contingent Dynamics**

I use the term emergent to characterize those current schemas that have not yet become as institutionalized as prior accounts, but provide coherent models of revolution nonetheless. Two of these—international dynamics and the role of contingency—are truly emergent, gaining attention mostly in the past few years. For the third, culture, a better fitting term might be uninstitutionalized. While cultural aspects of revolution have been a longstanding concern, social scientists have yet to develop a sustained program of research.

In the wake of the success of state-centered theory, early critics noted that the model emphasized structural conditions to the detriment of cultural contexts. This was most forcefully articulated by Sewell (1985). Sewell argues that crises preceding the French Revolution were heightened by ideological contradictions from “the disintegration of the absolutist synthesis and the development of a radical Enlightenment program” (Sewell 1985:67), echoing a position long held by historians of the period’s revolutions (see Bailyn 1992; Chartier 1991; Godechot 1965; Hazard 1953; Palmer 1959). In response, Skocpol (1985) allows that cultural idioms may have affected the development of the political programmes of revolutionaries but reiterates that structural factors are the most important causes.

Later work took up the challenge of culture in two ways. First, there was an attempt to provide a marriage between ideological dynamics and state-centered accounts, best represented by Goldstone (1991) and Parsa (2000). Here, ideology is not a cause of revolution per se, but a factor that shapes the course of a revolutionary situation and affects its settlement (see also Foran and Goodwin 1993; Selbin 1993). Ideology, in contrast to Marxist accounts, is often seen as a social process and emergent during the revolutionary situation (see Arjomand 1988; Moaddel 1992; Parsa 2000; Xu 2013). This echoes Tilly’s (1978) original view of repertoires of contention as cultural beliefs that inform revolutionary action.

A second challenge is locating processes of state strain and mobilization potential in cultural traditions and contexts rather than just an articulated ideology (see Sewell 1992; Wuthnow 1989). Rude (1980) and Calhoun (1983) argue that cultural traditions and popular belief are an important aspect of mobilization, both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary. Similarly, Foran (2005; Reed and Foran 2002) and Wickham-Crowley (1992) contend that traditions interact with political ideologies and subjective experiences to create cultures of rebellion against the state. More recently, social scientists have examined what Stinchcombe (1986) terms the “cultural milieu”. Here, the role of culture and global cultural change in guiding states and elites is as important as it is for mobilizers (Beck 2011, 2014; Bukovansky 2010; Markoff 1996b; Sharman 2003). We thus see era effects in the orientations and forms of protest, as Hung (2011) demonstrates for early modern China.

What is of note here is that culture or ideology has been variously theorized, but there is little agreement as to what exactly the question is. Is culture and tradition causal or is it a mechanism? Is it global or historical or is it local and contingent? Is it inherited or created by a revolutionary situation? Lots of revolutionary ink has been spilled, but in contrast to the more institutionalized schemas like Marxism and state-

centered theory or even dynamic programs like the mass mobilization tradition, the problem of culture has yet to be tackled systematically. As such, a cultural approach to revolution remains emergent, even after nearly four decades of effort.

In contrast, the two other emergent schemas of revolution have promise for escaping the fate of culture in revolution studies. Another point of departure from state-centered theory comes from those scholars who examine the international dimensions of revolutions. Skocpol (1979) recognized international causes of the revolutions she studied, as have other scholars who focus on state structures (Goldstone 1991; Mann 2013; Walt 1996; Walton 1984). But what Lawson (2005, 2015b) terms “intersocietal” dynamics never became integrated into the more abstract formulations of structural theories, and instead the modern national state has become reified in revolution studies. Drawing from international relations in political science (Halliday 1999; Lawson 2005) and the world systems tradition in sociology (Boswell 2004; Foran 2005), scholars at the cusp of the 21<sup>st</sup> century began to challenge the state as the primary unit of analysis.

In the past decade, two approaches to international dimensions have taken shape. The first is to examine how the state as an actor is interdependent on other states and international regimes. For example, Foran (2005) argues that a key cause of revolution lies in a permissive world context for revolution—that is to say, a period in which great power rivalry or systemic changes makes a local revolution more likely to succeed—and a situation of dependent development, where a society’s economy is more open to economic pressures beyond its border. Obviously, it is easy to imagine the contemporary world as having both these features as *Pax Americana* recedes and economic globalization has proven to be unsettling to class and social structures around the world. Probably the finest recent example of work in this vein comes from Daniel Ritter (2015). Ritter examines the Arab Spring revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia as compared to Iran in 1979. He argues that a regime’s relationship with western powers constrains its ability to respond to revolutionary challenges. Western countries, in particular the United States, provide much needed material support for dictatorial regimes in return for at least lip-service to the broadly legitimate values of human rights. When faced with a nonviolent uprising, these regimes are unable to use the full force of the state to maintain control as their great power patrons would withdraw support and the regime would face declining international legitimacy (see also Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Lawson 2015a; Nepstad 2011). Human rights and patron-client relationships also undermine regime legitimacy at home, contributing to

protest. In these lines of argument, the state or regime remains important but is embedded within its international relationships with other states.

The second approach emphasizes the uniquely transnational character of many revolutions, particularly those that occur in a wave of uprisings. Some scholars here emphasize the diffusion of contention across national boundaries as activists learn from and teach each other (Beissinger 2007; Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Hale 2013; Moss 2016; Weyland 2014). Others take the wave itself as the unit of analysis, examining how transnational conditions are conducive to regime fragility, mobilizing potential, and diffusive processes (Beck 2011; Kurzman 2008; Sohrabi 2002). Beck (2014) thus proposes that a truly complete model of revolution would foreground transnational dimensions, as does Lawson (2015b). Here, we might consider revolutions as global events as much as local ones. In this way, revolution studies could escape the methodologically nationalist trap of comparative sociology inherited from state-centered theory.

In both cases, states and movements are recognized as global actors subject to transnational conditions and international relationships, whether economic, cultural, or geo-political. The key point is that contemporary forces of globalization call attention to a different schema for understanding revolution. While the findings are emergent, the path is clear. An international approach allows for a better understanding of cases that have avoided sustained examination by revolution scholars, such as 1989, and calls for a reappraisal of classic cases where international factors were always at play, such as Haiti in 1794.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, the last emergent schema has spun off from studies of mass mobilization and the more general epistemological move within political sociology towards a study of dynamic mechanisms and relational dyads of actors (see McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). This schema emphasizes the particular historical context and contingency present in confusing events like revolution. Here, it is not structure that matters, but agency. It is not path determinism, but near random chance. Revolutions do not unfold in stages from distant causes, but occur in dynamic episodes as challengers and regimes act and react, perceive and misperceive. This view is most clearly present in the work of Charles Kurzman. In his studies of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Kurzman (1996, 2004a, 2004b) emphasizes the perceptual basis of mobilization; that it to say how participants on the ground make sense of the unfolding revolution. In essence, dynamics of mobilization becomes the cause of

---

<sup>6</sup> Though, for example, see Kumar (2001) and James (1938).

revolution as much as the vehicle. The emphasis on examining the revolutionary episode itself is also a feature of much recent work that uses a mass mobilization schema (e.g., Austin Holmes 2012; Beissinger 2011; Harris 2012; Moss 2014; Weyland 2014).

An intriguing line of research on contingency itself as a social process is also emerging. Ermakoff (2008, 2015) tries to demonstrate that decisions to revolt or abdicate come at junctures where outcomes remain indeterminate and uncertainty among actors prevails. At these moments, small moments and improvised decisions can have lasting consequences. The key advantage of this approach is to treat contingency as an empirical problem rather than only an epistemological one. Collins (2017) notes that much of what Ermakoff is after is actually the collective efflorescence of group processes. In that way, the emotional aspects of participants in revolution are at play. This suggests that there could be fruitful overlap with the study of emotions in social movements and other revolutionary situations (see Goodwin 1997; Jasper 2011; Reed 2004).

For the moment, the contingency schema is the least developed of the emergent ones but it may have a bright future. What is intriguing here is that research on contingency, confusion, and context could go beyond the truisms of social movements studies to uncover the micro-processes of mobilization and counter-mobilization that occur during revolutionary situations. This contrasts to the dominant ways of thinking about revolution present in Marxist, natural history, strain, state-centered, and international theories as expressions of large-scale forces of social change. A schema of contingency thus has the potential to be truly revolutionary.

### **Consensual Past and Dissensual Future in Revolution Studies**

Figure 1 shows the different ways scholars have talked about revolution studies and Figure 2 suggests the chronological development of different ways to do revolution studies. But what similar conclusions have different strands of research and schemas of revolution brought us? Figure 3 presents the key findings that reoccur across schemas, even as the details may differ. The shaded areas represent the primary emphases of each schema.

[Figure 3 here]

First, various schemas agree that rapid social change is a causal condition for revolutions. The change may be economic restructuring or shocks as in Marxist and strain theory. Or it might be geo-political reordering or transnational cultural evolutions as in the international schema. Second, the structure of regimes, states, and

the international system matters. Some types of regimes and states are vulnerable to revolutionary challenges, as natural historians note and state-centered theorists find. And transnational political and social structures matter, as well, as the internationalists remind us. Third, different groups have different potential for mobilization. Whether the classes of Marxist theory, the groups of natural history, the networks and coalitions of mass mobilization, or communities with particular cultures, favorable conditions for revolution are not enough. Revolutions involve actors. Thus, fourth, the revolutionary episode itself matters as challengers, elites, and states act, react, and interact. This is key to any analysis of mobilizing and contingent processes in a revolutionary situation.

There is a question that is crucially important missing here, however. What of the outcome of revolution? How do revolutions end, how are new regimes consolidated, how is social transformation enacted? These questions are implicitly answered by most research on revolution. For example, work in the schemas of Marxism, natural history, strain theory, and state-centered approaches tend to consider accomplished great or social revolutions. Research from the perspective of mass mobilization, culture, international factors and contingency extends outcomes to less durable changes and even failures. Yet explicit and conscious appraisal of revolutionary outcomes is rare. The most prominent example of work in this vein is Selbin's (1993) analysis of how revolutionaries must consolidate and institutionalize their gains by winning hearts and minds to their program and constructing durable institutions of governance that last beyond the lives of revolutionary leaders. Similarly, others like Foran and Goodwin (1993), O'Kane (2000, 2004), and Becker and Goldstone (2005) explicitly examine the consolidation of new states in the aftermath of a revolution. And Eckstein (1975, 1982, 1985) has considered the longer term socio-economic outcomes of revolution. In some ways, we might consider revolutionary aftermaths to be an obvious area for a schema that failed to develop in revolution studies.

This is where revolution studies has been. But what of its futures? The frontiers of research are much less consensual than prior findings. Figure 4 charts the future directions mentioned by previous reviews of revolution research. On the x-axis are the reviews again, ordered chronologically. The y-axis presents the areas of open inquiry mentioned by each review, roughly ordered chronologically. In contrast to the degree of consensus present in Figure 1, what the future holds is much less agreed upon. Of thirteen frontiers, only four are mentioned in more than two reviews: the role of ideology and culture; the need for processual or temporal thinking;

methodological issues; and a greater understand of mobilizing processes. Another four frontiers are only mentioned by one review piece: the role of capitalism; spatial dynamics; prediction; and Islamist movements. While the overall trend is to add new frontiers, there does not seem to be the conclusion of past areas of inquiry. For instance, culture is a frontier of research as early as the 1980s, and remains so in the mid-2000s. Temporal sequencing is introduced by the 1990s, but still seen as a future direction in 2016. In fact, of the seven areas identified in reviews published in the 2010s, the average year of first mention is 1998. Future directions are twenty years old? It appears that revolution studies has not made much progress.

[Figure 4 here]

I argue that a large part of the problem with contemporary revolution studies is that its cases and concerns have been absorbed by other subfields, leaving only a small cadre of scholars who identify first and foremost as social scientists of revolution. To some extent, there is a generational succession problem here. Skocpol, Tilly, and other scholars of the 1970s and 1980s trained a cohort of comparative-historical social scientists, some of whom went on to study revolution. But since those progeny, there has not been a sustained lineage of scholarship. In fact, most current scholars of revolution come from different traditions like social movement studies and international relations theory. Revolution studies thus has a problem of polysemy. Adjacent fields study revolutions, but do not consider them revolutionary in terms of theory or implication. I highlight below four subfields that could contribute to a rebirth of revolution studies.

The first area where revolution studies is occurring in practice, if not in name, is studies of democratization and regime change (for a recent review, see Haggard and Kaufman 2016). This is little surprise. Both subfields share a classic text in Huntington (1968), which is read by political scientists as about democratization and sociologists as about revolution. The lexical divide persists in recent years. Many political scientists would consider cases like post-Apartheid South Africa or post-Pinochet Chile as successful cases of democratization. Sociologists would point to these as negotiated revolutions or revolutions through the ballot box (see Foran 2005; Lawson 2005). At times the language can be convoluted. Consider how Hale (2013) scrupulously avoids the term revolutionary wave in favor “regime change cascade” and Weyland (2014) refers to “democratic contention” but not revolution in the title of his book. But the division is more than semantic. Studies of regime change and democratization do not see the object of inquiry as being revolutionary causes or processes or outcomes, but rather the consolidation or failure of a particular type of

regime. And social scientists of revolution seem to have ceded much of this terrain. For example, the events of 1989 are more commonly considered a collapse of communism rather than a revolutionary wave. And sociologists interested in the 1989 mobilizations tend to examine them for the long term socio-economic impacts rather than as a case of revolution (e.g., Bandelj and Mahutga 2010). Yet, clearly, these questions are related. Democratization may have bled revolution for a simple reason that I alluded to above: the failure of an explicit literature on revolutionary outcomes to crystalize within the field. This suggests an opportunity for the revolution scholar. What makes a revolution more or less likely to result in a democratic government?

The second area that has taken attention from revolution is the study of civil war (for recent reviews, see Walter 2017; Wimmer 2014; see also Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hironaka 2005; Sambanis 2004). Many civil wars are, in fact, revolutions. Many revolutionary episodes, in fact, end up in civil war. From the conceptualization of revolution offered in this chapter—dual, effective, and incompatible claims to power accompanied by alternate visions of social and political order—many civil wars would qualify as revolutionary. The overlap between the phenomenon has not gone unnoticed (Calvert 2010; Casanova 2000; Goldstone 2014; Goldstone et al. 2010; Tilly 1993; Wickham-Crowley 1992). But civil war is a field of study itself and one that increasingly takes over conflict studies more broadly. As with democratization studies, the lack of grounding in revolution research is striking. The solution, I believe, is not for revolution scholars to try and recapture the study of civil war. This is already attempted implicitly. Rather, the solution is to delineate which civil wars are not revolutionary. In broad strokes, we might conceive of three broad types of civil war. First, there are civil wars where insurgents try to capture the center, that is, the state itself. These are most likely to be revolutionary. Second, there are separatist civil wars, often between ethno-national groups. These may or may not be revolutionary. Finally, there are irredentist civil wars where conquest of territory of a state is the goal. These are least likely to be revolutionary. What I propose here is that civil war scholars should learn from revolution studies when they consider the first and second types. It is time for civil war scholars to bring revolution back in. Perhaps we can help by explicitly articulating the connection for them. How is post-revolution regime consolidation blocked and civil war result?

Another type of conflict that is often revolutionary, but not often seen as such is political terrorism (see Beck 2015; Crenshaw 1978). While the connection between terrorism and civil wars is well known (Findley and Young 2015; Kalyvas 2004; Stanton 2013; Thomas 2014), terror has made few inroads into the study of

revolution. This is ironic. The word terrorism itself derives from a revolution—the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution. And some scholars of revolution are also scholars of terrorism (e.g., Beck and Miner 2013; Chenoweth 2013; Goodwin 2006). Revolution studies thus needs to see terrorism as one form of revolutionary action. Such an endeavor is sketched by Beck (2015). He proposes that many cases of terrorism, including 20<sup>th</sup> century national-separatist movements and contemporary Islamist groups, are revolutions (see also Goodwin 2005). Consider, for instance, the case of the erstwhile Islamic State. The Islamic State emerges from the ashes of invasion and civil war in Iraq and revolution and civil war Syria to press revolutionary claims to state power with an alternate socio-political vision. This is truly a revolutionary situation, involving many of the dynamics that various schemas of revolution have drawn attention to. The use of the word terrorist here, both domestic and international, identifies merely one strategy that the Islamic State revolutionaries use. Of course, other forms of terrorism may not fall under the umbrella of revolution, but a third opportunity is presented for scholars of revolution to analyze a phenomenon of pressing concern with the tools of their field. Under what conditions is terrorism a preferred strategy of revolutionaries and states?

The last area of polysemy is that of research on nonviolent resistance (see Chenoweth and Stephan 2011; Schock 2005; Zunes 1994). At first, this might seem an odd claim, given that this chapter has consciously reviewed this field as part of the mass mobilization schema of revolution studies. Yet nonviolent resistance research has proceeded along its own lines, mostly separate from revolution studies and more connected to social movement studies. Some of this division is conceptual—revolutions are often considered violent. And some is methodological—the classic and state-centered theories of revolution emphasize analyzing the structures of nation-states more than the actions of protestors. As such, research on nonviolence tends to come from the tradition of peace and social movement studies rather than that of revolution, even though it is possible that the nature of revolution itself has changed (Foran 2014). Though there are exceptions (Lawson 2015a; Nepstad 2011; Ritter 2015), revolution scholars should not let nonviolence run away from them any longer. Otherwise, the danger is that another disconnected and self-referential literature will develop. Why have revolutions shifted away from tactics of armed rebellion and towards strategies of civil resistance?

The polysemy of various fields has retarded knowledge accumulation in revolution to a large degree since the 1990s. This is clearly illustrated by consideration of how the Arab Spring is studied within social science. These events

could still revitalize the study of revolution in social science. Yet, so far, this has not happened. Even the moniker for these uprisings, which could easily be called the Revolutions of 2011, shows the ambivalence about revolution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Civil resistance scholars point to the cases of Tunisia and Egypt as demonstrating the power of nonviolence as a strategy, while civil war scholars focus on conflict in Syria, Yemen, and Libya as demonstrations of their theories. Democratization scholars show interest in the success of Tunisia, particularly when compared to the failures of Egypt. And terrorism scholars have found Syria and Iraq to be fertile ground for study. But each of these cases is, first and foremost, a revolution. Tunisia is a successful revolution, Egypt a revolution turned to counter-revolution, Bahrain a suppressed revolution, Libya an unconsolidated revolution, and Syria and Yemen failed revolutions. To analyze the Arab Spring without an understanding of it as a case of revolution and revolutionary movements is nonsensical.

Some of the divisions I chart above are due to disciplinary differences. Sociologists tend to see these conflicts through the lens of revolution or social movements, due to their discipline's longstanding concern with social change. Political scientists tend to see these conflicts as part of political structures and processes, which is their disciplinary core. This suggests that the true solution to polysemy is cross-disciplinary collaboration. Or, at the very least, conversation. Revolution scholars thus need to consciously and explicitly place themselves at the center of conflict studies within sociology and political science. Without such territorial claims, fragmentation will persist.

### **Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have charted the eight different schemas that have animated revolution research since its beginnings—Marxism, natural history, strain and modernization theory, state-centered theory, mass mobilization dynamics, cultural and ideological factors, international and transnational approaches, and the role of contingency. This framework contrasts, by design and intention, to previous reviews of the field. And I have outlined the sets of findings that occur across schemas: the role of rapid social change in causing revolutions; the structure of regimes, states, and international systems as conducive factors; the potential for oppositional mobilization to develop and sustain; and the dynamics of action and reaction in revolutionary situations. And I have suggested that a path forward for revolution studies is to place itself back at the center of conflict studies. Cases of democratization and civil wars

are often revolutionary; and revolution can involve cases of terrorism and nonviolent, civil resistance.

I have also implied that a future for the field lies in the further development of the emergent schemas. First, the cultural approach to revolution needs sustained attention. There is a rich vein here—well known to historians—that social scientists of revolution have yet to fully mine. The field still awaits a grand statement about culture and ideology in revolution. Second, the conditions of our contemporary world cry out for an internationalist version of revolution studies. Revolutionary situations are only more likely to be and become international and transnational in the future. Finally, the seed of a contingency theory of revolution has been planted. With further care, it may completely change our understanding of revolution as a fundamental feature of social and political systems in ways we cannot yet anticipate.

The danger for these schemas lies in an implicit argument of this chapter. Jack Goldstone once observed to me that besides Theda Skocpol no major scholar of revolution ended up in one of the few central Ph.D. granting sociology department. This has meant that there is no succession of intellectual protégés to develop an approach further and create the type of “schools” that animate other subfields. Data I have collected on who produces studies of revolution bears this out—in acknowledgements in books there are no master-pupil chains that extend beyond one intellectual generation, and only a handful of scholars thank each other. Our epistemic community is quite small. As Collins (2000) has it, our size and fragmentation would mean that knowledge accumulation is unlikely.

To this I add three further observations. Another problem has bedeviled revolution studies. And that is the role of unquestioned and honorific citation. As I note about generations, a blind reliance on the framework has misrepresented the actual consensus and dissensus within the field. Specifically, it is time to be done with state-centered theory. I assert this for two reasons. The first I described previously, we should do so on theoretical grounds as we recognize the globality of many revolutions. More importantly, relying on a simplistic image of *States and Social Revolutions* has muddied our thinking. For example, there is Ritter’s (2015) account of revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa. This, in my view, is the finest book on the Arab Spring that has yet been written as Ritter traces how cultural constructions and geo-political maneuvering constrained the actions of regimes. Yet the clumsiest part of the book came from grafting culture-geopolitics-regime mechanisms onto prior state-centered work. Honorific citation here was unnecessary and, in fact, possibly contradictory. If Ritter were set free, we might all be talking

about the iron cage of revolution. And we probably should be.

Second, theories of dynamic mechanisms will not save us from theoretical and empirical impasse. Causal complexity is understandably appealing. But complexity for complexity's sake is a canard. Roger Gould (2003:13) once pointed out that the problem with a theory that does not fit all instances is not that it generalizes, but perhaps that it is not general enough. Theory, by definition, provides a model. And a model should simplify and stylize our understanding rather than obfuscate it. As Healy (2017) has it, fuck nuance. This is what separates social scientists from historians. A far better approach is to acknowledge the scope conditions of a particular theory. What are a theory's logical boundaries, what historical instances can it be applied to, what cannot it explain? Honesty here requires explicitness in our articulation of study design, not hand waving in the direction of ontology. This allows us to move past the issue of complexity and get on with the empirical work. Unfortunately, it also requires understanding a theory much better than cursory citation provides.

Third, I have bad news. What we think we already know about revolution may very well be probably wrong. My current book project examines all comparative case studies of revolution published between 1970 and 2010. I look at methodological choices, how cases are compared, and which theories are employed. And there is a consistent story that emerges—methodologically, revolution studies is quite poorly done. To give one example—the Nicaraguan Revolution of 1979 is the most studied case. This is both puzzling and laughable, given the event's limited geo-political and historical import. To give another example—case studies show decreasing methodological awareness and rigor over time (Beck 2017b). In the 2000s, fewer than 40% of studies had explicit justifications for their case selection, and there is no convergence on the study design techniques that comparative methodologists recommend. For the moment, let us leave aside the fact that a robust finding in our field is one that maybe just three or four studies have documented (Gould 2003). Even so, the lack of rigor in case comparisons is troubling. It suggests that much of what we think the field has established lies on a faulty foundation. We would need to see much better comparisons—drawn for particular goals related to knowledge advancement—for us to know if conclusions about the nature of revolution are spurious or not (Beck forthcoming).

I argue, quite simply, that we do not actually know much about revolution. Even given the modest consistency I identify above. This is due, first, to honorific citations that misuse and misrepresent prior theory and, second, to questionable epistemologies

that may or may not represent the phenomenon well. The lack of truth here may set us free. We can approach the subject of revolution anew and with fresh eyes.

How might we do so and avoid the mistakes of the past? I suggest the following. First, we should recapture the true intellectual history of our field. This requires reading more than citing. Next, we should stop relying on musty paradigms to frame our work. Unrooted innovation should be embraced and celebrated. Third, we need to become deliberate in our theorization. Messiness is as dangerous as abstraction. Finally, we must become better methodological practitioners. Explicit study design for explicit reasons is preferable to significant results or ad hoc comparisons. This may sound like a harsh intervention, but it is one that is sorely needed. Revolution studies is dead; long live revolution studies.

**References**

- Abbott, Andrew. 2001. *Chaos of Disciplines*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Arjomand, Said Amir. 1988. *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ash, Timothy Garton. 1990. *The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin, and Prague*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Austin Holmes, Amy. 2012. "There Are Weeks When Decades Happen: Structure and Strategy in the Egyptian Revolution." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 17(4):391–410.
- Bailyn, Bernard. 1992. *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, Enlarged Edition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bandelj, Nina and Matthew C. Mahutga. 2010. "How Socio-Economic Change Shapes Income Inequality in Post-Socialist Europe." *Social Forces* 88(5):2133–61.
- Beck, Colin J. 2015. *Radicals, Revolutionaries, and Terrorists*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Beck, Colin J. 2014. "Reflections on the Revolutionary Wave in 2011." *Theory and Society* 43(2):197–223.
- Beck, Colin J. 2017a. "Revolutions: Robust Findings, Persistence Problems, and Promising Frontiers." Pp. 168–83 in *States and Peoples in Conflict: Transformations of Conflict Studies*, edited by M. Stohl, M. Lichbach, and P. Grabosky. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Beck, Colin J. 2017b. "The Comparative Method in Practice: Case Selection and the Social Science of Revolution." *Social Science History* 41(3):533–54.
- Beck, Colin J. forthcoming. "The Structure of Comparison in the Study of Revolution." *Sociological Theory*.
- Beck, Colin J. 2011. "The World-Cultural Origins of Revolutionary Waves Five Centuries of European Contention." *Social Science History* 35(2):167–207.
- Beck, Colin J. and Emily Miner. 2013. "Who Gets Designated a Terrorist and Why?" *Social Forces* 91(3):837–72.

- Becker, Jaime and J. Goldstone. 2005. "How Fast Can You Build a State? State Building in Revolutions." Pp. 183–210 in *States and Development: Historical Antecedents of Stagnation and Advance*, edited by M. Lange and D. Rueschemeyer. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Beissinger, Mark R. 2011. "Mechanisms of Maidan: The Structure of Contingency in the Making of the Orange Revolution." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 16(1):25–43.
- Beissinger, Mark R. 2007. "Structure and Example in Modular Political Phenomena: The Diffusion of Bulldozer/Rose/Orange/Tulip Revolutions." *Perspectives on Politics* 5(2):259–76.
- Boswell, Terry. 2004. "Hegemonic Decline and Revolution: When the World Is Up for Grabs." Pp. 149–62 in *Globalization, Hegemony, & Power: Anti-Systemic Movements and the Global System*, edited by T. Reifer. New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Boswell, Terry. 1989. *Revolution in the World-System*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Boswell, Terry and William J. Dixon. 1990. "Dependency and Rebellion: A Cross-National Analysis." *American Sociological Review* 55(4):540–59.
- Boswell, Terry and William J. Dixon. 1993. "Marx's Theory of Rebellion: A Cross-National Analysis of Class Exploitation, Economic Development, and Violent Revolt." *American Sociological Review* 58(5):681–702.
- Brinton, Crane. 1938. *The Anatomy of Revolution*. New York, NY: Prentice-Hall.
- Bukovansky, Mlada. 2010. *Legitimacy and Power Politics: The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bunce, Valerie J. and Sharon L. Wolchik. 2011. *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Postcommunist Countries*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Calhoun, Craig Jackson. 1983. "The Radicalism of Tradition: Community Strength or Venerable Disguise and Borrowed Language?" *The American Journal of Sociology* 88(5):886–914.
- Calvert, Peter. 2010. *Terrorism, Civil War, and Revolution: Revolution and International Politics*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, Limited.

- Casanova, Julián. 2000. "Civil Wars, Revolutions and Counterrevolutions in Finland, Spain, and Greece (1918-1949): A Comparative Analysis." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 13(3):515–537.
- Chang, Paul Y. 2015. *Protest Dialectics: State Repression and South Korea's Democracy Movement, 1970-1979*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Chartier, Roger. 1991. *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Chenoweth, Erica. 2013. "Terrorism and Democracy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16(1):355–78.
- Chenoweth, Erica and Maria J. Stephan. 2011. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Collins, Randall. 2017. "Emotional Dynamics and Emotional Domination Drive The Microtrajectory of Moments of Collective Contingency: Comment On Ermakoff." *American Journal of Sociology* 123(1):276–83.
- Collins, Randall. 2000. *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Crenshaw, Martha. 1978. *Revolutionary Terrorism: The FLN in Algeria, 1954-1962*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.
- Davies, James C. 1962. "Toward a Theory of Revolution." *American Sociological Review* 27(1):5–19.
- Dix, Robert H. 1984. "Why Revolutions Succeed & Fail." *Polity* 16(3):423–46.
- Dunn, John. 1972. *Modern Revolutions: An Introduction to the Analysis of a Political Phenomenon*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Eckstein, Susan. 1975. "How Economically Consequential Are Revolutions? A Comparison of Mexico and Bolivia." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 10(3):48–62.
- Eckstein, Susan. 1985. "Revolutions and the Restructuring of National Economies: The Latin American Experience." *Comparative Politics* 17(4):473–494.
- Eckstein, Susan. 1982. "The Impact of Revolution on Social Welfare in Latin America." *Theory and Society* 11(1):43–94.

- Edwards, Lyford Paterson. 1927. *The Natural History of Revolution*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Ermakoff, Ivan. 2008. *Ruling Oneself Out: A Theory of Collective Abdications*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ermakoff, Ivan. 2015. "The Structure of Contingency." *American Journal of Sociology* 121(1):64–125.
- Farhi, Farideh. 1990. *States and Urban-Based Revolutions: Iran and Nicaragua*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *The American Political Science Review* 97(1):75–90.
- Findley, Michael G. and Joseph K. Young. 2015. "Terrorism, Spoiling, and the Resolution of Civil Wars." *The Journal of Politics* 77(4):1115–28.
- Foran, John. 2014. "Beyond Insurgency to Radical Social Change: The New Situation." *Studies in Social Justice* 8(1):5–25.
- Foran, John. 2005. *Taking Power: On the Origins of Third World Revolutions*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Foran, John. 1993. "Theories of Revolution Revisited: Toward a Fourth Generation?" *Sociological Theory* 11(1):1–20.
- Foran, John and Jeff Goodwin. 1993. "Revolutionary Outcomes in Iran and Nicaragua: Coalition Fragmentation, War, and the Limits of Social Transformation." *Theory and Society* 22(2):209–247.
- Godechot, Jacques L. 1965. *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century, 1770-1799*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Goldfrank, Walter L. 1979. "Theories of Revolution and Revolution Without Theory: The Case of Mexico." *Theory & Society* 7(1/2):135.
- Goldstone, Jack A. et al. 2010. "A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability." *American Journal of Political Science* 54(1):190–208.
- Goldstone, Jack A. 1991. *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Goldstone, Jack A. 2014. *Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

- Goldstone, Jack A. 1982. "The Comparative and Historical Study of Revolutions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 8(1):187–207.
- Goldstone, Jack A. 1998. *The Encyclopedia of Political Revolutions*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.
- Goldstone, Jack A. 2001. "Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4(1):139–87.
- Goodwin, Jeff. 2006. "A Theory of Categorical Terrorism." *Social Forces* 84(4):2027–46.
- Goodwin, Jeff. 2001. *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Goodwin, Jeff. 2005. "Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements." Pp. 404–22 in *The Handbook of Political Sociology*, edited by T. Janoski, R. R. Alford, A. M. Hicks, and M. A. Schwartz. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Goodwin, Jeff. 1997. "The Libidinal Constitution of a High-Risk Social Movement: Affectual Ties and Solidarity in the Huk Rebellion, 1946 to 1954." *American Sociological Review* 62(1):53–69.
- Gould, Roger V. 2003. *Collision of Wills: How Ambiguity about Social Rank Breeds Conflict*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Gould, Roger V. 1995. *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune*. Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press.
- Gould, Roger V. 1991. "Multiple Networks and Mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1871." *American Sociological Review* 56(6):716–29.
- Guggenheim, Michael and Monika Krause. 2012. "How Facts Travel: The Model Systems of Sociology." *Poetics* 40(2):101–17.
- Gurr, Ted Robert. 1970. *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Haggard, Stephan and Robert R. Kaufman. 2016. "Democratization During the Third Wave." *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1):125–44.
- Hale, Henry E. 2013. "Regime Change Cascades: What We Have Learned from the 1848 Revolutions to the 2011 Arab Uprisings." *Annual Review of Political Science* 16(1):331–53.

- Halliday, Fred. 1999. *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Harris, Kevan. 2012. "The Brokered Exuberance of the Middle Class: An Ethnographic Analysis of Iran's 2009 Green Movement." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 17(4):435–455.
- Hazard, Paul. 1953. *The European Mind*. Penguin University Books.
- Healy, Kieran. 2017. "Fuck Nuance." *Sociological Theory* 35(2):118–27.
- Hironaka, Ann. 2005. *Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States, and the Perpetuation of Civil War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hung, Ho-fung. 2011. *Protest with Chinese Characteristics: Demonstrations, Riots, and Petitions in the Mid-Qing Dynasty*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- James, Cyril Lionel Robert. 1938. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. New York, NY: The Dial Press.
- Jasper, James M. 2011. "Emotions and Social Movements: Twenty Years of Theory and Research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 37(1):285–303.
- Johnson, Chalmers. 1966. *Revolutionary Change*. New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.
- Kadivar, Mohammad Ali. 2013. "Alliances and Perception Profiles in the Iranian Reform Movement, 1997 to 2005." *American Sociological Review* 78(6):1063–86.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2004. "The Paradox of Terrorism in Civil War." *The Journal of Ethics* 8(1):97–138.
- Kimmel, Michael S. 1990. *Revolution: A Sociological Interpretation*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Kornhauser, William. 1959. *The Politics of Mass Society*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Kumar, Krishan. 2001. *1989: Revolutionary Ideas and Ideals*. University of Minnesota Press.

- Kurzman, Charles. 2004a. "Can Understanding Undermine Explanation? The Confused Experience of Revolution." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34(3):328–51.
- Kurzman, Charles. 2008. *Democracy Denied, 1905-1915: Intellectuals and the Fate of Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kurzman, Charles. 1996. "Structural Opportunity and Perceived Opportunity in Social-Movement Theory: The Iranian Revolution of 1979." *American Sociological Review* 61(1):153–70.
- Kurzman, Charles. 2004b. *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lawson, George. 2005. *Negotiated Revolutions: The Czech Republic, South Africa and Chile*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Lawson, George. 2015a. "Revolution, Nonviolence, and the Arab Uprisings." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 20(4):453–70.
- Lawson, George. 2015b. "Revolutions and the International." *Theory and Society* 44(4):299–319.
- Lawson, George. 2016. "Within and Beyond the 'Fourth Generation' of Revolutionary Theory." *Sociological Theory* 34(2):106–27.
- Le Bon, Gustave. 1896. *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Le Bon, Gustave. 1913. *The Psychology of Revolution*. London: T. Fisher Unwin.
- Lenin, V. I. 1918. *State and Revolution*.
- Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich. 1917. *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.
- Mann, Michael. 2013. *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 4, Globalizations, 1945-2011*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Markoff, John. 1988. "Allies and Opponents: Nobility and Third Estate in the Spring of 1789." *American Sociological Review* 53(4):477–96.
- Markoff, John. 1996a. *The Abolition of Feudalism: Peasants, Lords, and Legislators in the French Revolution*. Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Markoff, John. 1996b. *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1848. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.
- McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency: 1930 - 1970*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2001. *Dynamics of Contention*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- McCarthy, John D. and Mayer N. Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *The American Journal of Sociology* 82(6):1212–41.
- Merriman, Roger Bigelow. 1938. *Six Contemporaneous Revolutions*. New York, NY: Jackson, Son and Company.
- Moaddel, Mansoor. 1992. "Ideology as Episodic Discourse: The Case of the Iranian Revolution." *American Sociological Review* 57(3):353–79.
- Moore, Barrington. 1966. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Moss, Dana M. 2014. "Repression, Response, and Contained Escalation Under 'Liberalized' Authoritarianism in Jordan." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 19(3):261–286.
- Moss, Dana M. 2016. "Transnational Repression, Diaspora Mobilization, and the Case of The Arab Spring." *Social Problems* 63(4):480–98.
- Nepstad, Sharon Erickson. 2011. *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century*. Oxford University Press.
- O’Kane, Rosemary H. T. 2004. *Paths to Democracy: Revolution and Totalitarianism*. London: Routledge.
- O’Kane, Rosemary H. T. 2000. "Post-Revolutionary State Building in Ethiopia, Iran and Nicaragua: Lessons from Terror." *Political Studies* 48(5):970–988.
- Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Paige, Jeffery M. 1975. *Agrarian Revolution*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Palmer, R. R. 1959. *The Age of Democratic Revolution: The Challenge*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Parsa, Misagh. 2000. *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of Iran, Nicaragua, and the Philippines*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Pettee, George Sawyer. 1938. *The Process of Revolution*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.
- Reed, Jean-Pierre. 2004. "Emotions in Context: Revolutionary Accelerators, Hope, Moral Outrage, and Other Emotions in the Making of Nicaragua's Revolution." *Theory and Society* 33(6):653–703.
- Reed, Jean-Pierre and John Foran. 2002. "Political Cultures of Opposition: Exploring Idioms, Ideologies, and Revolutionary Agency in the Case of Nicaragua." *Critical Sociology* 28(3):335–70.
- Ritter, Daniel. 2015. *The Iron Cage of Liberalism: International Politics and Unarmed Revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rudé, George. 1980. *Ideology & Popular Protest*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Sambanis, Nicholas. 2004. "What Is Civil War?: Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6):814–58.
- Schock, Kurt. 2005. *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements In Nondemocracies*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Scott, J. C. 1976. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press.
- Selbin, Eric. 1993. *Modern Latin American Revolutions*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Sewell, William H. 1992. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation." *The American Journal of Sociology* 98(1):1–29.
- Sewell, William H. 1985. "Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case." *The Journal of Modern History* 57(1):57–85.
- Sharman, J. C. 2003. "Culture, Strategy, and State-Centered Explanations of Revolution, 1789 and 1989." *Social Science History* 27(1):1–24.

- Skocpol, Theda. 1985. "Cultural Idioms and Political Ideologies in the Revolutionary Reconstruction of State Power: A Rejoinder to Sewell." *The Journal of Modern History* 57(1):86–96.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1982. "Rentier State and Shi'a Islam in the Iranian Revolution." *Theory and Society* 11(3):265–83.
- Skocpol, Theda. 1979. *States and Social Revolutions*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Slater, Dan. 2010. *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Smelser, Neil J. 1962. *Theory of Collective Behavior*. New York, NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Sohrabi, Nader. 2002. "Global Waves, Local Actors: What the Young Turks Knew About Other Revolutions and Why It Mattered." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44(1):45–79.
- Sohrabi, Nader. 1995. "Historicizing Revolutions: Constitutional Revolutions in the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Russia, 1905-1908." *The American Journal of Sociology* 100(6):1383–1447.
- Sorokin, Pitirim A. 1925. *The Sociology of Revolution*. Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Company.
- Stanton, Jessica A. 2013. "Terrorism in the Context of Civil War." *The Journal of Politics* 75(4):1009–22.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur L. 1986. "Milieu and Structure Updated." *Theory and Society* 15(6):901–14.
- Thomas, Jakana. 2014. "Rewarding Bad Behavior: How Governments Respond to Terrorism in Civil War." *American Journal of Political Science* n/a-n/a.
- Tilly, Charles. 1993. *European Revolutions, 1492-1992*. London: Blackwell Publishers.
- Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.
- Tilly, Charles. 1964. *The Vendée*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

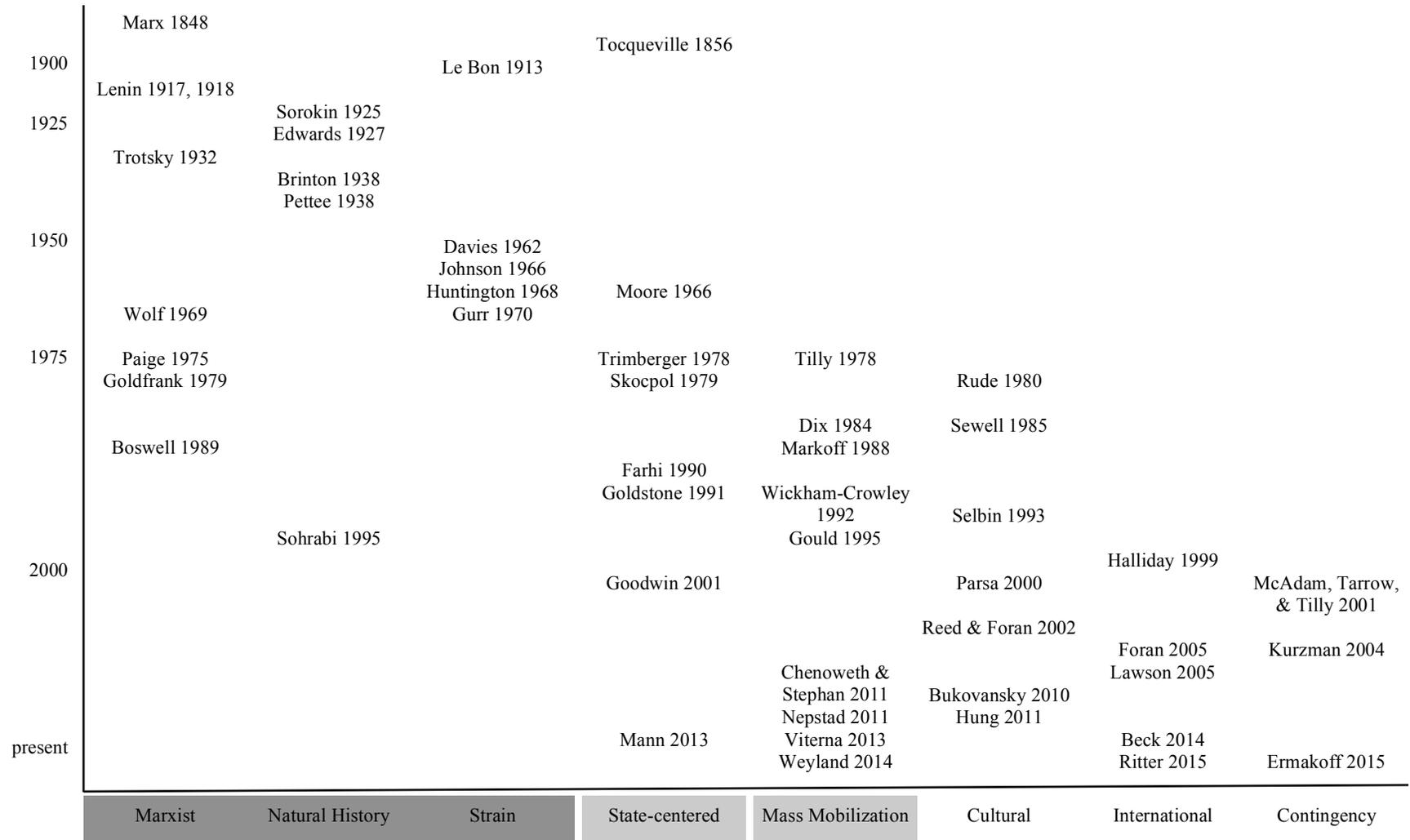
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. 1856. *The Old Regime and the Revolution*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.
- Trimberger, Ellen Kay. 1978. *Revolution from Above: Military Bureaucrats and Development in Japan, Turkey, Egypt, and Peru*. New York, NY: Transaction Books.
- Trotsky, Leon. 1932. *History of the Russian Revolution*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Viterna, Jocelyn. 2013. *Women in War: The Micro-Processes of Mobilization in El Salvador*. Oxford University Press.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 1974. *The Modern World-System*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Walt, Stephen M. 1996. *Revolution and War*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Walter, Barbara F. 2017. "The New New Civil Wars." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20(1):469–86.
- Walton, John. 1984. *Reluctant Rebels: Comparative Studies of Revolution and Underdevelopment*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Weyland, Kurt. 2014. *Making Waves: Democratic Contention in Europe and Latin America since the Revolutions of 1848*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Wickham-Crowley, Timothy P. 1992. *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes Since 1956*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wimmer, Andreas. 2014. "War." *Annual Review of Sociology* 40(1):173–97.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1969. *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 1989. *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European Socialism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Xu, Xiaohong. 2013. "Belonging Before Believing Group Ethos and Bloc Recruitment in the Making of Chinese Communism." *American Sociological Review* 78(5):773–96.

Zunes, Stephen. 1994. "Unarmed Insurrections against Authoritarian Governments in the Third World: A New Kind of Revolution." *Third World Quarterly* 15(3):403–26.

**Figure 1.** The Organizational Themes of Revolution Reviews

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Review</i>	Goldstone 1982	Kimmel 1990	Foran 1993	Goldstone 2001	Goodwin 2005	Lawson 2016	Beck 2017
international								
fourth generation								
micro-mobilization								
marginalization								
agency/leadership								
culture/ideology								
state-centered								
strain/modernization								
natural history								
Marxism								

**Figure 2.** The Schemas of Revolution Studies



**Figure 3.** Schemas of Revolution and Consensual Findings

<i>Finding</i>	<i>Schema</i>	Marxism	Natural History	Strain	State-centered	Mass Mobilization	Cultural	International	Contingency
Action and reaction						■			■
Mobilization potential		■	■			■	■		
Regime, state, system structure			■		■			■	
Rapid social change		■		■				■	

**Figure 4.** The Dissensual Frontiers of Revolution Studies

<i>Frontier</i>	<i>Review</i>	Goldstone 1982	Kimmel 1990	Foran 1993	Goldstone 2001	Goodwin 2005	Lawson 2016	Beck 2017
international							■	■
mobilizing processes						■	■	■
Islamism						■		
prediction					■			
methodology		■			■	■		■
repression paradox					■			■
state stability					■			■
processual/temporal			■		■		■	
spatial			■					
conjunctural causation		■		■				
ideology/culture		■			■	■		
capitalism		■						
outcomes		■						■