Review Article

A Revolution in Revolutionary Theory?

Benjamin Abrams

Colin J. Beck, Mlada Bukovansky, Erica Chenoweth, George Lawson, Sharon Erickson Nepstad, and Daniel P. Ritter, *On Revolutions: Unruly Politics in the Contemporary World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

Mark R. Beissinger, *The Revolutionary City: Urbanization and the Global Transformation of Rebellion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Revolution and Dictatorship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

Enzo Traverso, *Revolution: An Intellectual History* (New York: Verso, 2021).

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Scholarly consensus is a rare thing. Rarer still is scholarly consensus about the general direction of an entire field of study. Yet, one such instance of consensus recently emerged among many theorists of revolution: that the field's once dominant project, that of a self-professed "Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory"—an endeavor that has spanned the entirety of the current century so far—should now be surpassed. Whether they proclaim its end,[1] its succession,[2] or its fulfilment,[3] all agree that the time has come for something new. This consensus has accompanied a flourishing of novel scholarly efforts that constitute a genuine regeneration of how we conceive of, investigate, and interpret revolutions.[4]

What could be the first elements of a prospective "revolution in revolutionary theory" have now found their way to print, and the purpose of this article is to place

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these developments in the context of the field's broader path and explore what may be in store for students of revolution in the future. In what follows, I chart the development of revolutionary theory over the course of an approximate "long twentieth century" occurring between 1883 and 2023, outline how revolutionary theory is, at present, being potentially revolutionized by new scholarly energy, and point to some prospective areas where it may be further developed.

A "Long Twentieth Century" of Revolution Studies, 1883–2023

Before examining revolutionary theory's recent rejuvenation, it is necessary to explain the conditions from which this flourishing of scholarly engagement emerged, namely the tail-end of a "long twentieth century" of academic inquiry. My ultimate focus here is on the scholarly efforts to craft a post-Cold War agenda that ultimately came to focus on revolution's relationship to political instability and state failure, a project which proclaimed itself the "Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory." First, however, I will sketch the course of contemporary revolutionary theory since Karl Marx's death in 1883, a story I provide in lieu of the established generational account that tends to characterize reviews of the field.[5] While this is just as much a potted history as categorizing scholarship by "generation," my aim is to offer a fresh perspective on some familiar terrain.

Our long twentieth century of revolutionary theorizing begins with a squarely normative endeavor. After Marx's death in 1883, communities of radical thinkers sought to chart a coherent left-wing theory of revolution that might provide some kind of guide to how collective emancipation may be achieved. Though these thinkers were not all communists, Marx's historical materialist account of Western European revolutionary upheavals offered the most authoritative touchstone of the period, and it was to this account that theorists sought to contribute or detract. Here, revolutions were seen as a means of an insurgent class responding to deepening economic contradictions in order to establish a new social order with social and economic relations more favorable to its interest. Yet, thinkers in the Marxist tradition (including Marx himself) yearned for revolutionary possibility outside of the pattern found in this Western European course and so began a trajectory of deep thinking about revolutionary possibility beyond its bounds.[6] This entailed considering both the historical patterns of revolution and the prospective efficacy of practical interventions to bring it about.

This tradition of theory and inquiry came to embody an actively empirically engaged literature on revolution, concerned as much with large scale structural and micro-agentic conditions as it was with matters of strategy, tactics, contingency, and geopolitics. It was a nuanced and contentious field that brought together radical activists, insurgent fighters, bold theorists, and careful empiricists.[7] Though comprised predominantly of socialists and anarchists, this field engaged with thinkers from across a wider spectrum of opinion. While such early work seldom presented its findings in the form of formal academic analyses, it is to this field of research that we owe theoretical tools that remain vitally important to academic work on revolution today. To name but a few, these include early "political process"

approaches to revolution that sought to trace how they unfold and the very concept of a "revolutionary situation" (a favored term of Lenin and Trotsky) used to comprehend their structural dynamics,[8] as well as the baseline distinction between "political revolutions" that seize state power and "social revolutions" that reconfigure a society's structure (a distinction popularized by Karl Kautsky as far back as 1902).[9]

By the time Bolshevik revolutionaries had successfully seized power in Russia, an alternative direction in revolutionary theory was also on the rise, most strongly expressed among academics working in the United States. These scholars sought to craft an objective social and political science of revolution, detached from or even opposed to Marxist normative commitments. The principal problem with this venture was that there existed little in the way of a cannon out of which to build such a field of inquiry. Crane Brinton, the most famous revolution scholar of this period, pithily summarized the state of the literature available to his contemporaries in the early 1950s as follows:

> Some of the books…. are careful studies by trained sociologists; some are the work of cranks with a variety of cutting tools to grind; [and] some, directly in the Marxist tradition, seem to belong.[10]

These approaches have been described generally as engaging in "the natural history of revolution," adhering to a style first inaugurated in the U.S. by Lyford P. Edwards in his landmark 1927 book by the same name.[11] However, closer inspection reveals relatively little theoretical coherence, except for a general concern with psychological subjectivity.[12] Edwards, arguably the founding father of U.S. Revolutionary Theory, weaved together the social theories of his day with a variety of empirical examples to lay out a comprehensive historical sociology of revolution that theorized pre-revolutionary build-up, the outbreak of revolution, and several varieties of revolutionary outcome. At the core of Edwards' theory of revolution was the notion that revolutions emerged owing to the long-standing denial of people's most elemental needs—usually for several generations, culminating in a scenario where society is so extensively arrayed against the extant institutional order that any outbreak of dissent shatters its grip on power.

Meanwhile, a competing trajectory of thought argued that revolutions resulted not from the denial of natural human impulses, but from perversion of a social and even sexual nature left unrestrained by a weak regime. This line of analysis was most famously championed by Pitirim Sorokin in his 1925 book, *The Sociology of Revolution.*[13] Sorokin was a Russian revolutionary exile who had served as personal secretary to Alexander Kerensky during the transitional government that preceded the Bolsheviks' seizure of power. Having fled his homeland, Sorokin ultimately took up a professorship at Harvard where he would become influential in shaping the thought of a whole generation of future scholars, sporting the glamour of an experienced revolutionary and the avowed politics of a self-professed reactionary.[14] Many others conceived of revolution on different terms entirely, positing it as a subset of collective behavior, or a cipher for general attitudinal change.[15]

In the context of this relatively diffuse literature, Brinton's own work, *The Anatomy of Revolution*,[16] came to play the role of touchstone text in the development of further

revolutionary theory, while most other scholarship would soon, as the scholar Ted Robert Gurr quipped, "seldom find its way even into the footnotes of current writings."[17] While work by Sorokin and his contemporaries was predominantly focused on finding out what social maladies had caused revolutions to occur, Brinton's work picked up the torch from Edwards in seeking to also explain how they unfolded. In doing so, he offered a sustained analysis of the systemic political dimensions of the revolutionary process.

Scholarship during this period seriously suffered from a paucity of high quality cases from which to draw conclusions. Practically every study of the period drew from among four major cases: The Glorious Revolution in England (1688), the American Revolution (1776), The French Revolution (1789), and the more recent Russian Revolution (1917), the inclusion of which was often problematic because analyses of the Russian Revolution often led to conclusions contrary to those found when analyzing England, the U.S., and France. Ultimately, these divergences were ascribed to Russia's character as a "modern revolution," similar to, yet distinct from, its seventeenth- and eighteenth-century comparators.[18]

As the twentieth century progressed, it soon became apparent that scholars would not be left wanting for cases. A spate of revolutions around the world—often led by political radicals with a very clear goal in mind—prompted a resurgence of academic interest in the topic. Once it became increasingly evident that the revolutions of the twentieth century would look a great deal more like those seen in Russia than those seen in England, America, or France, the scene was set for the study and analysis of these modern revolutions.

A variety of approaches ensued. Perhaps the most contiguous with work by scholars such as Sorokin was the body of theory that sought to comprehend the mass psychological basis for revolt, carried forward by ventures such as James C. Davies' J-Curve hypothesis,[19] Ted Robert Gurr's relative deprivation approach,[20] and Neil Smelser's work within the broader domain of collective behavior research.[21] Still, none of these new approaches really carried over their forerunners' deep emphasis on long-repressed needs. To the contrary, scholars such as Davies and Gurr cast their eyes back further for inspiration, all the way to Alexis de Tocqueville's reflections on the American and French revolutions and his famous adage that revolution arose when that "which was suffered patiently as inevitable seems unendurable as the idea of escaping it is conceived."[22] Presenting de Tocqueville's ideas as a useful rejoinder to Marxist theories, these scholars argued that it was not outright repression of needs and desires that led to revolt, but a rise in expectations and an "intolerable gap between what people want and what they get" that lay the groundwork for revolution.[23] Contemporaneously, a separate flavor of scholarship preferred to follow the pattern set out by Edwards and Brinton, taking care to outline the anatomy of revolutions, but with a decidedly structural, rather than teleological bent. Writers like Samuel Huntington and Chalmers Johnson sought to conceive of revolution as a kind of rupture in the social system,[24] drawing liberally on the popular trend in structuralist sociology (especially Talcott Parsons) to plug the analytical gaps left by a departure from Marxist theorizing.[25]

The task of understanding modern revolutions was no mere curio, it was also an important political imperative for scholars in the United States, whose cold war with

the Soviet Union had come to encompass policies geared toward the containment and attempted rollback of communist regimes around the world. Hence, in this period, the Central Intelligence Agency had begun to develop great interest in academic work on revolutions and close relationships with those researching them. Prominent scholars of revolution such as Huntington,[26] Johnson,[27] and Gurr[28] played important roles as "intermittent consultant[s]" to the agency during this time, being treated to stimulating conferences, access to key officials, and receiving important insight into government affairs.[29] Some even enjoyed the privilege of "twice-yearly meetings at Allen Dulles's hunting lodge at a CIA training base near Norfolk, Virginia."[30]

While work by Johnson, Huntington, and Gurr sought to look beyond the Marxist roots of revolutionary theory, a separate group of scholars was moving in the opposite direction, seeking to reconsider the utility of Marxist ideas for the analysis of revolution. Some of this impetus came from European scholars working in the aftermath of World War II, such as the historians Eric Hobsbawm[31] and George Rudé,[32] as well as the political theorist John Dunn.[33] Yet, by far the most influential accelerant of this trend in the United States would be Barrington Moore Jr.'s work on peasant revolt, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.[34] Inspired by the work of Frankfurt School intellectuals such as Herbert Marcuse, with whom he had shared an office at the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) during the Second World War, Moore sought to dissolve the analytical tools of Marxist class analysis into the historical sociology of revolution, using a comparative historical approach to achieve these ends. Moore laid the foundations for class-based analyses of revolutionary participation, arguing that revolutionary outcomes depended upon the class foundations of revolutionary action, with Western-model democratic revolutions being underpinned by a bourgeois class base, fascist revolutions from above by the landed upper classes, and communist revolutions by the peasantry.

This loose community of authors sought to use careful comparative and historical research as a crucible in which to meld "the ideological tradition of revolutionary action and the academic tradition of sociological analysis," and thereby provide a more comprehensive account of the phenomenon of revolution.[35] Through this work, revolutionary theory saw the renovation of classic conceptual tools from the Marxist tradition, such as the notion of revolutionary situations,[36] and meticulous class analysis.[37]

It would ultimately be two of Moore's students,[38] Charles Tilly and Theda Skocpol, who would most distinctly set the agenda for future scholars by charting two important research trajectories. Both scholars embraced Moore's comparative historical approach wholeheartedly. In his landmark 1978 text, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Tilly advanced a process-oriented approach to understanding revolutions, incorporating a thorough re-invigoration and expansion of Marxian analyses, such as those offered by Gramsci, Lenin, and Trotsky, and fusing them with the state of the art in the American academy.[39] Tilly's work would ultimately not only carry decisive influence on the development of future theories of revolution, but also lay the foundations for a more expansive scholarly agenda that moved from the separate analysis of revolutions and social movements to the entirety of contentious politics, a category encompassing

"revolutions, social movements, industrial conflict, war, interest group politics, nationalism, [and] democratization."[40]

Skocpol's agenda returned to a sorely unattended lacuna: the old problem of the state and revolution over which de Tocqueville and Lenin once poured. Like Tilly, Skocpol was uninterested in simply reproducing old theoretical standpoints, but rather sought to "rely extensively on certain ideas adapted from the Marxist and [Tilly's favored] political-conflict perspectives" to investigate promising problematics and concepts classically neglected by social scientists working in the wake of Marxist revolutionary theory, such as Brinton, Gurr, and Johnson.[41] Drawing together these competing theoretical traditions, Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions*, published in 1979, crafted what she termed a "more state-centered approach"[42] that paid careful attention to the internal organizational factors that sustained the state and its relationships to dominant class interests and external supporters. This perspective gave rise to a further tranche of scholarship employing comparative historical approaches to study the relationship between states and revolutionary movements, including work by Farideh Farhi, Jeff Goodwin, and Timothy Wickham-Crowley.[43]

Ultimately, it would be Jeff Goodwin that would go furthest to extend the comparative historical tradition to which Moore and Skocpol belonged in his *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements 1945–1991*.[44] Comparing more cases than Skocpol and Moore combined across the full scope of the Cold War and three separate continents, Goodwin used a conceptualization of "revolutionary movements" to identify the site of complex interactions between state structure, class-bases, and contingent contextual factors. Crucially, Goodwin was able to illustrate how revolutionary movements were shaped by the contextual factors analyzed by past scholars, and yet also pursued self-conscious goal-oriented campaigns that responded to evolving political conditions, effectively marrying the work of Moore, Skocpol, and Tilly and laying the foundations for research by countless subsequent scholars interested in revolutionary processes.

Amid a tide of research on states, social structures, and revolution, a number of scholars began to pay greater attention to matters of culture and agency that, so far, had been neglected by studies in the social and political sciences. Some scholars in this tradition, such as John Foran[45] and Jack Goldstone[46] saw culture as a natural domain for the extension of extant theory, seeking to explore societies' cultural dynamics primarily in order to enrich state-focused or structuralist research. Others, such as Richard Lachmann, saw the study of culture and agency as a means to unravel the impact of structural forces.[47] A third camp, including figures such as Eric Selbin, William Sewell, and Jeff Goodwin (joined in this endeavor by the social theorist Mustafa Emirbayer), placed culture and agency closer to the core of their work, arguing that properly incorporating these factors into the study of revolution required moving beyond existing theoretical frameworks to craft a novel, more versatile analytical apparatus.[48]

These differing trajectories of scholarship pursued highly productive discourse, with revolutionary theory's "old hands" having been joined by a rising cohort of scholars whose intellectual formation had encompassed a great breadth and diversity of opinion on the topic. The 1990s hence played host to a flourishing of academic research,

eliciting vibrant disagreement and lively engagement.[49] The study of revolution was in rude health, with new advances and ideas coming thick and fast. Following a new wave of East European revolutions in 1989, there was a great deal of excitement brewing as to what big contributions might come next and how they would respond to what had been termed "a revolution in revolutions": a series of novel, challenging cases that invited scholars to reconsider debates once considered settled. As Nikkie Keddie wrote at the time:

> Several revolutions since 1978… did not fit easily into the patterns found by earlier theorists of revolution. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was unlike any previous major revolution…. the East European and Soviet revolutions of 1989–91 were new in involving overwhelmingly the internal breakdown of an existing system, with popular oppositional movements being usually secondary in importance. A lesser novelty of these and other recent revolutions… in Latin America and the Philippines, was the movement away from rural centred revolt back to urban mass movements.[50]

These novel revolutionary cases posed problems for theorists of revolution because they were forced to reconsider how state failure could actively propel revolutionary change, rather than merely set the scene for the breakthrough of society's challenging elements. Moreover, they also had to consider how this might occur in the relative absence of a class coalition seeking to reorder social relations, or an efficacious revolutionary movement capable of challenging the regime in revolutionary war. If scholars were to capture and understand these new revolutions, what were they to study next?

The question of "what next" proved especially tantalizing for two well-established scholars in the field of revolutionary theory, John Foran[51] and Jack Goldstone,[52] both of whom offered their propositions for what they termed a "Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory."[53] The basic consensus was that scholars needed to reconsider state failure's role in laying the foundation for revolution and then look to the interplay of a much larger number of diverse factors to explain how state failure might actually lead to revolution (rather than the old triad of state structure, class-conflict, and popular grievances). John Foran, a sociologist whose work focused on the common factors between revolutions in Iran and Latin America, argued that further progress entailed careful attendance to still neglected areas, such as "the whole domain of culture… an enormous field for future students of revolution."[54] Foran predicted that the field was converging on "a new paradigm based on conjunctural modeling of economic, political, and cultural processes;" in his own case this amounted to the conjunction of internal economic downswings, domestic cultures of opposition, and world-systemic openings that combined to lay the foundations for a revolutionary outbreak.[55] However, Foran also warned that such efforts to produce an "additive model of 'factors' will not amount to an integrated *theory* of revolutions,"[56] and that in order to infuse theory into the field, a continuation of deep historical research remained necessary.

Goldstone's vision for a fourth generation of revolutionary theory, though differing from Foran's in some particulars, also encompassed two quite similar elements at its core.[57] Like Foran, Goldstone hoped that that work on culture and agency would

come to play a prominent role in the field, leading to work that would embrace "issues of identity and ideology, gender, networks and leadership... [and] treat revolutionary processes and outcomes as emergent from the interplay as multiple actors."[58] Goldstone also further developed upon the prospective pursuit of analytical modelling, highlighting the potential of an array of novel quantitative approaches presently under development. The most tantalizing of these approaches was one in which Goldstone himself had been readily involved, "a collaborative effort by academics and US government agencies," that had built a model which "would have accurately predicted over 85% of major state crises events occurring in 1990–1997."[59] This feat was premised on an inversion of the classic pursuit of causal explanations for revolution. Instead of seeking causal triggers of revolution, Goldstone and his colleagues focused on the factors that maintained regime stability. It was hence that Goldstone issued his personal recommendation for the future of the field, that it was "more fruitful for the fourth generation of revolutionary theory to treat revolutions as emergent phenomena, and to start by focusing on factors that cement regime stability."[60] Yet Foran and Goldstone were not the only players capable of influencing the direction of the projected "Fourth Generation" of revolutionary theory. As I and others have detailed elsewhere, a tradition of research in relational sociology and political processes also had an important impact on how scholars thought about revolution during this period.[61]

But, beyond these influences, another agenda was still influencing the direction of specialist research on revolutions: that of the Central Intelligence Agency and its Political Instability Task Force.[62] This was an agency-funded project founded in 1994 and variably led (academically) by scholars such as Gurr, Goldstone, and Monty G. Marshall, under the direction and oversight of the Agency's Directorate of Intelligence.[63] Its principal goal was to develop a global model for forecasting political instability by combining the subject expertise of scholars of revolution and political conflict with the latest techniques in managing and analyzing large scale datasets.[64] Yet, the CIA's desire to direct the task force was ultimately mitigated by a degree of scholarly resistance. Scholars such as Marshall and Goldstone flatly refused to engage in classified work, and it was much to their chagrin that the Agency deployed task force resources on a secondary track that was "secret and known only to those holding the proper security clearances."[65] Goldstone left the project in the early 2010s, after which, as Marshall notes, it came to pass that "the secretive culture of the US intelligence community… narrowly limited the dissemination of [further] Task Force research efforts and findings,"[66] leaving a great iceberg of scholarly knowledge and activity invisible to most of us, but for its very tip: a sophisticated forecasting model that came to focus primarily on civil wars, rather than revolution.[67]

Bolstered by concerted and considerable federal resources,[68] a sustained trajectory of scholarship on state failure and political instability came to offer the self-professed "Fourth Generation" project its most singularly dominant attribute, recognizable above and beyond its other proposed components for a great deal of time. While scholars had expanded their lens beyond states, class conflict, and grievances, attention to latent patterns of revolution missed by past research was still notably lacking. This shifted research

away from a focus on revolution and toward more diffuse questions, an agenda that was further strengthened by emerging trends in the domains of contentious politics and transitology.[69] As George Lawson assayed in an influential overview of the field, "Fourth generation revolutionary theory shift[ed] the object of analysis from 'why revolutions take place' to 'under what conditions do states become unstable'."[70] Other questions such as "who influences revolutionary change" and "what happens next?" received even less attention. Though its adherents had racked up some impressive accomplishments in this area, Lawson noted, the further promise of that generation, and the wider agenda it represented, remained unfulfilled.[71]

A Revolution in Revolutionary Theory?

While high quality research on revolution had by no means ceased, progress in the collective advancement of revolutionary theory had generally stalled during the first decade of the new millennium. Scholars had been unable to make sustained theoretical progress in discerning the role of culture, leadership, agency, and social networks in sustaining or carrying out revolutionary challenges,[72] and once-popular state-centered analyses mindful of the conditioning effects of political context on the formation and development of revolutionary challenges[73] had been succeeded by analyses gauging regime type and regime strength.[74] With the arrival of a spate of so-called "color revolutions" occurring in East and Central Europe following the turn of the twenty-first century, a healthy volume of empirical research nonetheless yielded relatively little scholarly exchange and less theoretical synthesis than one might expect. Even where excellent theoretical contributions arose, they were often couched in other domains[75] or received far less attention than their impressive quality would have normally entailed.[76] Meanwhile, many other scholars of revolution turned their attention to other questions: Theda Skocpol went on to become famous for her work on American politics. Jeff Goodwin became an influential scholar of social movements, before again branching out to also theorize terrorism. John Foran, though returning to questions of revolution from time to time during this period, reoriented much of his work around issues of climate justice, where he became a celebrated scholar activist. Nikki Keddie developed a line of highly praised work on women in the Middle East. Charles Tilly, not to be pigeonholed, not only worked to build the wider domain of contentious politics but also became an authority on a wide range of topics, including democracy and social processes.[77]

Yet, in the wake of the 2011 Arab Spring, research on revolutions experienced something of a regeneration. In a situation reminiscent of the 1990s "revolution in revolutions," these new disruptive cases encouraged scholars to revisit questions once considered settled and invited questions about the efficacy of the modelling-centric approach of the past. Meanwhile, a resurgent role played by factors such as violence, social class, international contagion, and counterrevolutionary activity invited interest from scholars across a wide variety of disciplines, analytical foci, or self-defined fields, not to mention scholars of a younger academic cohort. A litany of introspective articles by old hands,

doctoral theses by new scholars, and bold interventions by academic heavyweights soon followed.[78] They would not be the last.

Amid this surge of research and investigation came a debate about the prospects of a new, fifth generation of theory, which might overcome the issues that struck the Fourth Generation project.[79] The debate concluded with the sentiment that the Fourth Generation project in revolutionary theory was now at its end, capstoned by efforts such as Daniel Ritter's *The Iron Cage of Liberalism*, Asef Bayat's *Revolution without Revolutionaries*, and George Lawson's *Anatomies of Revolution*,[80] but with the sentiment that what would come after it would remain an open question.

Almost as soon as the question had been asked, the first answers began to come in: novel synthetic analyses advancing bold theories underpinned by deep thinking (such as Bessinger's *The Revolutionary City* and Levitsky and Way's *Revolution and Dictatorship*), thoughtful theoretical ventures involving scholars with diverse expertise (such as Beck and colleagues' *On Revolution*), and cohesive investigations that approach revolution from a different angle than most (such as Traverso's *Revolution: An Intellectual History*). It is my contention in this article that these books—and the wider raft of scholarship to which they are connected—constitute the first steps toward what we could call a revolution in revolutionary theory.

Among these texts, Colin J. Beck, Mlada Bukovansky, Erica Chenoweth, George Lawson, Sharon Erickson Nepstad, and Daniel P. Ritter's co-authored volume, *On Revolutions*, represents an opportunity for constructive continuity, seeking to preserve what its authors see as the very best of prior work, while rejecting its more problematic dichotomies, missions, and modes of conceptualization. Many of its authors have practically demonstrated how this might be achieved in their own prior writing on the subject.[81] One particular feature of these works is that they not only contributed to scholarly knowledge, but also rendered revolution legible to practitioners in the state and third sectors, an accomplishment that—as the history of state and humanitarian interventions in revolutionary processes assuredly evidences—is no mean feat. Yet, in *On Revolutions*, Beck and colleagues further challenge the premises underpinning much contemporary discussion of revolutions and use these critical reflections to call for a more nuanced theoretical framework that takes little for granted, embracing contingency, subjectivity, and uncertainty.

What Beck and colleagues propose is a change of intellectual regime, supported by a self-conscious critique of the structures of scholarly knowledge generation that have maintained the field until present. Though their book also includes important critiques of existing scholarship with regard to tendencies in methodology, research ethics, and the scope of our object of study, their chief target is a tendency toward dichotomous thinking that delineates unblinkingly between binary categories of revolutions (such as social/political, agentic/structured, violent/nonviolent, successful/failed, or domestic/international). We could call this a kind of "Fourth Generation Plus" approach, one that seeks to bring forward the best of self-professed "Fourth Generation" approaches, attending to culture, agency, and relational dynamics, and to continue conversations and debates still ongoing, such as those relating to (non)violence, revolutionary success

conditions, and the interplay of structure and agency, while letting go of any excess conceptual baggage accumulated over the course of revolutionary theory's long twentieth century, such as confining certain concepts to particular traditions of scholarship and assuming a generational teleology of the discipline.[82] This latter aspect is something I have sought to embrace in this article.

Yet, if there's one thing we know about revolutionary processes, it is that their direction is seldom determined from the outset. While the authors of *On Revolutions* have called for the overthrow of important elements from revolutionary theory's *ancien* conceptual *régime*, other facets of the current order are already under assault from elsewhere. The careful empirical work of Mark Beissinger in *The Revolutionary City* has shown us the promise of a return to bold theorizing and its compatibility with attentive discussion of context and contingency. Likewise, the nuanced longitudinal endeavors of Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's *Revolution and Dictatorship* have rightly called our attention to the greatly neglected formation and development of revolutionary regimes, rekindling a trajectory of research that links revolutionary challenges with non-immediate revolutionary outcomes. Finally, Enzo Traverso's *Revolution: An Intellectual History* has reignited the study of revolutionary ideas. All of these texts represent the rise of substantial areas for future inquiry that are seriously underexplored by present theorists of revolution, and to which I now turn.

The Latent Patterns of Revolution The first element of novel theoretical regeneration constitutes the renewed interest in various latent patterns occurring across a wide range of revolutionary processes. Reflecting on recent trends in revolutionary cases, such as those in Ukraine, Egypt, and Tunisia, scholars have begun to investigate whether factors easily distinguishable in these novel cases might have in fact played an important but unnoticed role in other processes of revolt or revolution.[83] It is within this area of scholarly expansion that we may situate Mark Beissinger's recent work, *The Revolutionary City,* which constitutes an impressive scholarly accomplishment.

Like *On Revolutions*, Beissinger's work is explicit in seeking to move beyond the Fourth Generation agenda. For Beissinger, this constitutes attempting "to put structural explanation back squarely into the study of revolutions by embedding revolutionary processes and interactions within the structural factors that condition, facilitate or constrain them… rejecting the tendency to downplay structural explanation exhibited in many fourth-generation studies" (p.37). A secondary shift is the desire to integrate spatiality and spatial location as structuring factor in revolutionary politics. Hence, we may see *The Revolutionary City* as restoring, to some degree, some of the intellectual framing that characterized work on revolution in the 1990s, but in the context of the further lessons learned from the past two decades of work. Yet, this sense of continuity should not undercut the novel contributions at the core of the text: an impressive excavation of latent patterns in the revolutionary episodes seen around the world since 1900.

From a rich trove of data, *The Revolutionary City* develops clear lines of structural distinction between urban and rural revolt in the long twentieth century, with particular

attention to an emergent "urban civic repertoire," that has characterized revolutionary contention in its latter years. Readers should be aware that the book avoids making the straightforward argument that urbanization breeds revolt, instead contending that revolutions have become increasingly urbanized over time and thus taken on new characteristics that change the causal influences underpinning attempted revolt.[84] Such urban-civic revolts consist of mass metropolitan protests that predominantly eschew armed tactics and major casualties, and instead leverage large public displays by negative coalitions to visibly encourage elite and praetorian defection. This is, in many respects, the book's headline contribution to the literature, one which Beissinger meticulously dissects into its constituent parts. He aims to offer a spatial theory of modern revolutions that asks the strictly pragmatic question of how they may be made both structurally and physically possible and offers an engaging theoretical discussion on how spatiality impacts these revolutionary struggles. In the context of modern cities, this entails that revolutionaries:

> take advantage of the spaces between buildings— the empty space of the public square and the boulevard—to mobilize large numbers as a strategy for disrupting political, commercial, and everyday life… in full view of the nation and the world (and of the police), in centrally located public spaces in close proximity to centers of power. Visibility is one of the key features of the urban environment that such revolts seek to exploit as a tool for increasing pressure on regimes and staying the hand of regime repression (p.44).

Yet, to focus only on the urban/spatial explanations offered in the text is to ignore its other elements, such as its rich investigation of revolutionary participation in Ukraine (2004/2013), Tunisia (2010), and Egypt (2011), which are also worthy of praise. Likewise, there is one further element of the text which touches upon another key area of development in contemporary revolutionary theory, to which I will now turn.

Long Revolutionary Outcomes A second area of recent rejuvenation has been a decided interest in what we might term "long revolutionary outcomes." These include counter-revolutionary projects that obtain power at some point during or after a revolutionary situation but also those long-running revolutionary regimes that successfully rebuff these (and other) threats and go on to shape fortunes for decades to come[85]. This latter subject is the concern of Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (*Revolution and Dictatorship*), whose work will shortly receive further treatment. *The Revolutionary City* also devotes a chapter to this topic, considering, in great depth, the "evolving impact of revolution," and the stability of its economic, social, and political outcomes in the longer run. Beyond the contributions of these texts, long revolutionary outcomes also include other kinds of extended consequences that exceed the scope of revolutionary processes or programs, such as extended geopolitical effects (isolation, territorial conflicts, expansionism, punitive expeditions, etc.), political divisions and new economic interests,[86] social stratification,[87] and new national myths or transnational revolutionary imaginaries.[88] The relationship between revolutions and these longer-run outcomes has (until recently) seldom been investigated with the same vigor and attention as short-run outcomes[89].

Within this incipient literature, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's volume, *Revolution & Dictatorship*, written partly with Adam Casey and Jean Lachapelle,[90] represents a very promising step forward, considering the quite exceptional *longue durée*. The book makes a convincing argument that counter-revolutionary reactions not only threaten revolutionary regimes, but, if vanquished, inoculate them against future threats by encouraging the development of a cohesive elite and a strong, loyal army and police, while simultaneously providing revolutionaries with the opportunity to quash alternative centers of power disadvantaged by social revolutionary change (that might otherwise come to threaten the regime in the longer term). These three aspects increase a regime's ability to withstand or prevent mass mobilization, coups, and schisms within their own ruling elite.

Levitsky and Way situate their work alongside theoretical touchstones further in the past than Beissinger, picking up where Theda Skocpol left off in her study of *States and Social Revolutions*[91] and infusing their approach with insights from a more recent literature on regime endurance.[92] In doing so, the authors are able to craft a theoretical apparatus for the analysis of the long outcomes of revolutionary processes, with attention paid to how early-stage demands placed upon incipient regimes in the heat of revolutionary conflicts may potentially set them on the pathway to enduring authoritarian success. It must be stressed that this entire argument pertains only to a quite particular subset of revolutions and regimes, what *Revolution and Dictatorship*'s authors term a "more demanding" approach to definition. Namely, the book is only concerned with major social revolutions from below that involve violent regime change and inaugurate a novel autocratic elite from outside the bounds of the existing state.[93] The authors, drawing on an inventory of autocratic regimes, find there to have been twenty such revolutions and subsequent revolutionary regimes since the year 1900.

Levitsky and Way's work constitutes a well-constructed argument for the way in which revolutionary conflicts and their immediate aftermath come to shape long-run outcomes such as regime survival. It is an argument well supported by their statistical analyses and eloquently evidenced by case illustrations. Hence, the book is assuredly a success in terms of its core mission and stands as a promising example of how fruitful the investigation of long revolutionary outcomes may be. Yet, unlike *The Revolutionary City* and *On Revolution*, *Revolution and Dictatorship* provides a less stable foundation for the advancement of collective theorizing. The restrictive conceptualization of social revolution exhibited by the authors makes it difficult to comprehend how their findings might inform our understanding of cases beyond the twenty considered in the book. These include social revolutions traditionally considered, as well as political revolutions.[94] Likewise, a lack of engagement with broader work in the field makes it hard to contextualize Levitsky and Way's contribution, and one is left wishing that they could have more concretely established where their thesis sits in relation to contemporary research on revolutions. Instead, recent work in the field of revolutionary theory—at least, scholarship appearing after Huntingdon and Skocpol—is often regarded with detachment and sometimes even a little disparagement. The latter can be found with regard to institutional and sociocultural explanations for the development of revolutionary regimes. Institutionalist

explanations of revolutionary endurance are represented in the book by arguments about communist regimes made in two writings on totalitarianism that are more than half a century old (Namely, Friedrich and Brzezinski's *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* and Selznick's *The Organizational Weapon*).[95] These are readily discarded, without consideration given to arguments made in the more recent literature focusing on revolution.[96] Sociocultural explanations—for which quotations from two books by Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions,* and *Revolution, Rebellion, Resistance: The Power of Story*, are used as an almost universal stand-in—are also critiqued without serious treatment.[97] The effect is that it becomes harder for revolution scholars to figure out how we might situate or build upon Levitsky and Way's otherwise strong contribution to our field. A notable exception, however, is *Revolution and Dictatorship*'s approach to the role of revolutionary ideology, which is readily engaged and appreciated throughout the text, even though it sits outside the principal domains of the book's analysis. This dovetails well with another major area in which the study of revolution has recently seen advancement.

The Development of Revolutionary Ideas We have also seen recent progress with regards to the study of revolutionary ideas. Despite some exceedingly high-quality work in the study of ideology, storytelling, and language,[98] revolutionary ideas have usually been treated as fleeting emergent phenomena, as facets of organizational fealty, or as derived from past experiences. The more systematic study of the development of complex, contextually-variable, and contested ideas about revolution—and their intersection with revolutionary praxis—has been left to the domain of intellectual historians and remains unintegrated into our broader work on the topic.[99] It is here that Enzo Traverso's *Revolution: An Intellectual History* constitutes a tremendous gift to our field of study. Traverso's *Revolution* unlocks its subject matter in a way that intellectual histories seldom accomplish, laying out the development of revolutionary ideas over the past two centuries, with recourse to the full scope of writings, art, personages, symbolic objects, and the interactions between them. Revolution, for Traverso, lives not only at the barricades, but at the heart of modern life, dwelling in deep intellectual, emotional, and cultural reservoirs on which its protagonists may draw, actively maintained by communities of radicals with varying aims. This is an immensely detailed and meticulously researched text, laden with important interventions parsimoniously expressed. Indeed, it must also be added that this is perhaps the most well written book on revolution in decades.

Revolution: An Intellectual History does not purport to advance a novel theory of revolutions *sui generis*. Rather, Traverso prefers to paint a vivid picture of how revolutionary ideas arise, compound, take hold, become hegemonic, or fade. He does this with recourse to the formation and development of intellectuals, academic conceptualizations of freedom or liberation, and the realities of revolutionary regimes, as well as popular mythologies, bodies, symbols, concepts, and "realms of memory." Traverso's analysis shows us not only that revolutions may thrive on ideas, but that these ideas come from somewhere, that there exist agents shaped by social and political conditions

who develop, transmit, and adapt them. He traces how and why this process unfolds, with recourse to personal networks, patterns of travel, and the historical contextual factors at play.

In the place of specific generalizable claims about revolutions writ large, Traverso instead seeks to examine the revolutionary intellectual, the subject of the book's central chapter. Here, Traverso identifies a class of actor, characterized, ideal-typically, by "an intense ideological and political commitment; an anti-capitalist ethos; a free-floating condition of bohemian déclassement; and a cosmopolitan behavior often combined with a telluric character" (p.324). These roaming intellectuals make trouble wherever they go. Traverso evidences this argument with recourse to the life-histories of well over one hundred revolutionary intellectuals around the world (with a dominant emphasis on European Marxists), providing legible tabulations that summarize his historical investigations through a simple coding regimen.[100]

In the context of the other texts under consideration, there is something different about *Revolution*. Beck and colleagues' *On Revolutions* lays the foundations for a more critical continuation of present work on revolution, while Beissinger, Levitsky, and Way all opt to pick up the torch from older periods of revolutionary theory. All of these writers have produced texts of real value that may be understood as marrying novel advances with scholarly continuity. Yet, Traverso's work is interesting to theorists of revolution precisely because it strikes the reader with new energy from beyond these bounds, casting off a great many sparks with the potential to ignite new intellectual endeavors. It accomplishes this task while simultaneously attending to precisely those areas that have been bemoaned as neglected for many decades: culture, agency, and ideas.

Revolutionary Theory's Untapped Veins

Deep thinking about the latent patterns of revolution, the careful study of long revolutionary outcomes, and the reincorporation of revolutionary ideas into our theoretical cannon are all extremely welcome developments in our field. Yet, even a cursory survey of current conferences, informal exchanges, doctoral theses, and writing in progress reveals that they are but an opening salvo in what promises to be an exceptionally exciting time for revolutionary theory. There is assuredly a lot to look forward to, but I shall refrain from jumping the gun on these important areas of forthcoming contribution. Instead, I will end by briefly discussing three areas where investigation remains promising, but collective scholarly attention is still yet to truly manifest. My hope is to encourage their consideration in the years to come.

Revolutionary Programs The social scientific study of revolution has almost exclusively focused on the manifestation of revolution as a particular political process. According to this processual understanding, revolutions develop within the bounds of a

single case (usually, but not always defined by national boundaries) that is subjected to the process of revolution and so is transformed in some way. Questions are then asked about why this process started, how it unfolded, and how it affected the political future of the community. But revolutions do not only arise within the confines of a case, but as sets of intentions pursued by groups of diversely positioned and associated actors who learn, connect, debate, organize, agitate, act collectively, and perhaps one day rule, go to war, or enforce their will with abject brutality. Such actors need not be unified by a single national context or cohesive movement in the way we traditionally consider the term, but rather a wider revolutionary program they wish to implement.[101]

Though some scholars go so far as to argue that revolutions necessitate a program to be differentiated from cases of regime collapse,[102] their concerted social scientific study is very rare indeed. Studying revolutionary programs entails beginning with the emergence of ideas and notions[103] before tracing longer trajectories of multi-sited struggles connected to them, their potential involvement in the overthrow of regimes, and the way in which they endure amid evolving political contexts with an array of international players.

Revolutions as Political Systems A second area deserving of attention is the study of revolutions as political systems. Conventional discussions of revolution tend to conceptualize it as a period of time in which political systems are overthrown or replaced, but little attention has been paid to the systematic political features of revolutionary processes themselves prior to the consolidation of a "[post]revolutionary regime" of the type Levitsky and Way consider in *Revolution and Dictatorship.* Such an area of study may begin to be explored by examining questions such as: from where may revolutionary legitimacy arise? How can it be articulated, and what does it enable? How do citizens understand a revolution to have begun or ended? These questions are still relatively untouched, having received almost no major inquiry since Chalmers Johnson and Samuel Huntington fleetingly dipped their toes in faintly similar waters more than a half century ago.[104] Hence, we do not really know if revolutions exhibit any stable political-systemic features, if there exist different systemic tendencies according to context, or how much any of these differ from the systems existing before or arising after the revolutionary period. Beyond the narrow audience of political scientists, historians, and political sociologists classically interested in revolution, the further exploration of this area of study may particularly appeal to philosophers, political theorists, classical sociologists, and economists, who are often underrepresented in our field.

Within the "Fog of Revolution" A third area still sorely untapped concerns those elements of revolution that still reside under a so-called "fog of war." These are often ascribed as purely contingent phenomena, but so seldom investigated that this has never been effectively ascertained. Looking within the fog of revolution calls forth the involvement of anthropologists, historians, scholar-activists, and revolutionary practitioners,

whose unique perspective (and, indeed, positionality) will help unveil the complex internal dynamics through which revolutionary processes arise, advance, and conclude. It also invites a renewed interest in questions of space, place, agency, and culture. Past works by scholars such as Ivan Ermakoff, Atef Said, Eric Selbin, Maha Abdelrahman, and Marci Shore provide promising touchstones in this regard,[105] and a wave of new scholarship is beginning to investigate their intersection in revolution and contentious politics,[106] but all of these ultimately only scratch the surface of an incredibly rich empirical domain, entirely ripe for theoretical development and inviting substantial qualitative investigation.

Conclusion

The areas discussed herein are just a few rich sections of a truly mountainous topic, and the extent to which they are investigated during the present period of invigoration will depend entirely on the inclinations of present and future scholars. Regardless, what is important is that we are once again exploring this difficult but breath-taking terrain. A revolution in revolutionary theory is beginning to take shape, and I hope that it continues for a long while yet.

NOTES

The author is grateful to Jack Goldstone and other members of the Political Instability Task Force for their comments and suggestions on this article's historical components that refer to the work of the Task Force.

1. Colin. J. Beck and Daniel P. Ritter, "Thinking beyond Generations: On the Future of Revolution Theory," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 34 (March 2021), 134–41.

2. Jamie Allinson, "A Fifth Generation of Revolutionary Theory?," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 32 (March 2019), 142–51; Leonid Grinin and Andrey Korotayev, "Is the Fifth Generation of Revolutionary Theory Still Coming?," *Critical Sociology*, 50 (September 2024), 1039–67.

3. Jack A. Goldstone, "The Generations of Revolutionary Theory Revisited: New Works and the Evolution of Theory," *Critical Sociology*, 50 (September 2024), 1069–86.

4. See: Benjamin Abrams, "Toward a Regeneration of Revolutionary Theory," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 34 (May 2021), 142–49, https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12317.

5. The generational narrative surrounding revolutionary theory has proven popular owing to its ability to simplify the field into four "generations" of theory that focused on different areas of study. Though this is indeed a convenient heuristic, it has been regularly critiqued by those who employ it for obscuring through-lines and continuities, and side-lining scholarship that did not conform to the dominant paradigm said to characterize a given "generation" (further discussed in: John Foran, "Theories of Revolution Revisited? Towards a Fourth Generation," *Sociological Theory*, 11 (March 1993), 1–20; Colin Beck and Daniel P. Ritter "Thinking Beyond Generations: On the Future of Revolution Theory," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 34 (April 2021), 134–41, and, finally, Beck et al.).

6. This is exemplified in Marx's letters: Karl Marx, "Letter From Marx to Editor of the Otecestvenniye Zapisky," Donna Torr, trans., *Marxists.org* ([1877] 2025), https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/11/russia.htm.

7. Traverso.

8. See: Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, "The Collapse of the Second International," *Kommunist*, No.1–2 (1915), https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/csi/index.htm; Leon Trotsky, *The History of the Russian Revolution*, Max Eastman, trans. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [1932] 1930); Leon Trotsky, "What is a Revolutionary Situation?: The Decisive Importance of the Communist Party," *The Militant*, 4(36) (1931), https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1931/11/revsit.htm.

9. Karl Kautsky, *The Social Revolution*, A.M. and May Wood Simmons, trans. (Chicago: Charles Kerr & Co, 1902).

10. Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*: Revised Edition (New York: Prentice Hall, 1952).

11. Lyford P. Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolution* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1927).

12. Discussed further in Jack A. Goldstone, "Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation," *World Politics*, 32 (April 1980), 427. See also, Beck and Ritter, 2021.

13. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1925).

14. Ibid, 12–13.

15. This was surveyed in a contemporary article: Dale Yoder, "Current Definitions of Revolutions," *American Journal of Sociology*, 32 (November 1926), 433–41.

16. See: Brinton, 1952, and Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York: Prentice Hall, 1938); Crane Brinton. *The Anatomy of Revolution*, Revised and Expanded Edition (New York: Vintage Books, 1965).

17. Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 18–28.

18. Brinton, 1952, vi–vii.

19. James Chowning Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review*, 27 (February 1962), 5–19; James Chowning Davies, "The J-Curve of Rising and Declining Satisfactions as a Cause of Some Great Revolutions and a Contained Rebellion," in Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *The History of Violence in America, A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), 690–730.

20. Gurr, 1970, and Ted Robert Gurr, "A Causal Model of Civil Strive: A Comparative Analysis Using New Indices," *American Political Science Review*, 62 (December 1968), 1104–24.

21. Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (The Free Press of Glencoe 1963).

22. Alexis de Tocqueville, *De Tocqueville's L'Ancien Regime*, M.W. Patterson, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, [1856] 1947).

23. Davies, 1962, 6.

24. Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Chalmers Johnson, "Revolution and the Social System," *Hoover Institution Studies,* No. 3 (Stanford: The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, 1964); Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966).

25. This substitution can be observed by comparing—as Johnson invites his reader to do—his 1966 book, *Revolutionary Change*, with his 1964 volume, *Revolution and the Social System*. In this precursor text, Parsons is almost entirely absent, but Lenin looms exceedingly large.

26. Huntington enjoyed a long relationship with the Agency, including its (at one time undisclosed) funding of his research on revolution. This is discussed in: Jonathan M. Moses, "Bok to Review Problems of CIA Funding: Investigation Will Address Questions of Scholarly Conduct," *The Harvard Crimson*, Mar. 6, 1986, https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1986/3/6/bok-to-review-problems-of-cia/.

27. Two years after publishing *Revolutionary Change*, Johson was recruited to advise the agency's "Office of National Estimates" (See: Chalmers Johnson, "The CIA and Me," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 29 (1997) 34–37).

28. Following the publication of Ted Robert Gurr's (1970) influential frustration-aggression theory of popular revolt, the CIA developed their own analytical "Gurr model," designed "as a technique for assessing the nature and potential for political violence," with Gurr himself ultimately becoming one of the Agency's pivotal academic collaborators. This is best evidenced by: CIA, *The Potential for Political Violence in Argentina,*

Ethiopia, and Thailand April 1975 [Sanitized]—1975/04/01, April 1, 1975, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/06628560. It is also discussed in: Monty G. Marshall, "Hybrid Authority Systems and Political Instability," in David Carment and Yiagadeesen Samy, eds., *Handbook of Fragile States* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), 121–36.

29. Johnson, 1997, 35

30. Further details can be found in Johnson, 1997. By the mid-1980s, other rising stars were also entering the agency's orbit, with Jack Goldstone delivering a keynote address at its 1986 "Conference on Revolutionary Change," a comprehensive two-day affair which sought to "develop a framework that intelligence community analysts and collectors can use in assessing the potential for revolutionary change in their [assigned] countries," building upon the mission initiated during its experiments with Gurr's work. During this period, developments in revolutionary theory helped inform intelligence community practices, with the agency even commissioning an exhaustive 281-page report on how theories of revolution and associated research methods might be leveraged for intelligence purposes. Details of the conference can be found in: CIA, *Conference on Revolutionary Change*, October 23, 1986, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88G01116R000500530006-3.pdf (See p.2 for the quote above). The 281 page report can be found in: CIA, *An Assessment of Political Instability Research Methodologies*, June 1, 1982, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp83b00851r000300130012-7.

31. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: 1789–1848* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962); Eric Hobsbawm, "The Revolutionary Situation in Colombia," *The World Today*, 19 (June 1963), 248–58.

32. George Rudé, *The Crowd in History. A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England 1730–1848* (New York: Wiley, 1964).

33. John M. Dunn, *Modern Revolutions: An Introduction to the Analysis of a Political Phenomenon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

34. Barrington Moore Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Beacon Press, 1966). With his doctoral graduation coinciding with America's entry into the Second World War, Moore found himself working not on the tenure track, but instead as a strategic analyst in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), where he shared a cramped office with a coterie of exiled Frankfurt School intellectuals, including Herbert Marcuse, Otto Kirchheimer, and Franz Neumann. See: Barrington Moore Jr., "The Critical Spirit and Comparative Historical Analysis," in Gerardo L. Munck and Richard Snyder, eds., *Passion, Craft and Method in Comparative Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 86–112.

35. Dunn, 1972, ii.

36. Hobsbawm, 1963.

37. Barrington Moore Jr., "A Comparative Analysis of the Class Struggle," *American Sociological Review*, 10 (February 1945), 31–37.

38. During his time as a TA at Harvard, Tilly had also worked closely with Pitirim Sorokin. Skocpol was a student of Moore, but notably, Moore was not on her doctoral committee.

39. Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978).

40. Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6.

41. Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 29.

42. The term "more" is often excised from descriptions of this approach, but it is a vitally important qualifier.

43. Issuing works such as: Farideh Farhi, *States and Urban-Based Revolutions. Iran and Nicaragua* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Jeff Goodwin, "Old Regimes and Revolutions in the Second and Third Worlds: A Comparative Perspective," *Social Science History*, 18 (Winter 1994), 575–604; Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements 1945–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas and Revolution in Latin America: A Comparative Study of Insurgents and Regimes since 1956* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

44. Goodwin, 2001.

45. See: John Foran, "A Theory of Third World Revolutions: Iran, Nicaragua, and El Salvador Compared," *Critical Sociology*, 19 (July 1992), 3–27; John Foran, *Taking Power: On the Origins of Third World Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

46. Two key examples are: Jack A. Goldstone, "Ideology, Cultural Frameworks and the Process of Revolution," *Theory and Society*, 20 (August 1991), 405–35 and Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (London: University of California Press, 1991).

47. Richard Lachmann, "Agents of Revolution: Elite Conflicts and Mass Mobilization from the Medici to Yeltsin," in John Foran, ed., *Theorizing Revolutions* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 71–91.

48. See: Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin, "Symbols, Positions, Objects: Towards a New Theory of Revolutionary and Collective Action," *History and Theory*, 35 (October 1996), 358–74; Eric Selbin, "Revolution in the Real World: Bringing Agency Back In," in Foran, ed., 118–32; Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1999); William H. Sewell, Jr., "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology*, 98 (July 1992), 1–29.

49. A sample of which may be found in: Nikki Keddie, ed., *Debating Revolutions* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

50. Nikki Keddie, "Revolution in the Revolutions? Theory, Prediction, and Understanding," *Contention: Debates in Society, Culture and Science* (Winter 1993), 63–64.

51. See: Foran, 1993.

52. Jack. A. Goldstone, "Towards a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4 (2001), 139–87.

53. I cover this only briefly here; it is further discussed in: Benjamin Abrams, "A Fifth Generation of Revolutionary Theory Is Yet to Come," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 32 (September 2019), 378–86.

54. Foran, 1993, 17.

55. Ibid., 1.

56. Ibid., 1,17.

57. Goldstone, 2001.

58. Ibid., 176–77.

59. Ibid., 174.

60. Ibid., 175.

61. Abrams, 2019; Allinson, 2019; Lawson, 2016.

62. Neé "State Failure Task Force" (1994–2001).

63. It was this same Task Force that had accomplished the impressive predictive feats to which Goldstone had referred in his agenda for a fourth generation of revolutionary theory.

64. The Task Force paired up revolutions scholars with expert data managers and modelers, skilled in data mining and analysis, recruiting an impressive stable of talented scholars over the years, such as: Robert Bates, Colin Beck, Patrick Brandt, Erica Chenoweth, James Fearon, Page Fortna, Barbara Harff, Colin Kahl, David Laitin, Benjamin Valentino, Jay Ulfelder, Barbara Walter, and Aristide Zolberg. Though the Task Force's focus was principally on political instability, it also was asked to veer into other areas of priority for the intelligence community, such as tracking and forecasting international terrorist activity in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

65. Marshall, 2023, 122. Both Marshall and Goldstone refused to obtain a security clearance in an effort to retain the Task Force's academic focus (Marshall, 2023, 134n3). Likewise, participants in the Task Force fought hard for its findings to be published—initially in the form of a series of Task Force Reports and later in a major article in the *American Journal of Political Science* (Goldstone et al., 2010). After Goldstone left the project he was replaced by a new generation of experts, such as Erica Chenoweth and Barbara Walter. During this period, Task Force reports and publications fell silent, but its activity continued to give shape to its constituent scholars' academic research and publications. One prominent example is: Barbara F. Walter, *How Civil Wars Start: And How to Stop Them* (London: Penguin. 2022).

66. Marshall, 2023, 121.

67. Namely, Jack A. Goldstone, Robert H. Bates, David L. Epstein, Ted Robert Gurr, Michael B. Lustik, Monty G. Marshall, Jay Ulfelder, and Mark Woodward, "A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability," *American Journal of Political Science,* 54 (January 2010), 190–208.

68. A substantial amount of money was spent on the construction, analysis, and management of Task Force data (Marshall, for example, estimates that his own firm's fees alone totaled 4.5 million USD during his 1998–2020 tenure on the task force). In contrast to the substantial amount of funding allotted for research and data management, financial renumeration for individual scholars was reportedly relatively modest (Marshall, 2023).

69. See: Abrams, 2019.

70. George Lawson, "Within and Beyond a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory," *Sociological Theory*, 34 (June 2016), 110.

71. For a full analysis of issues affecting the Fourth Generation project, see Lawson, 2019 and Abrams, 2019.

72. Goldstone, 2024.

73. E.g., Goodwin, 2001.

74. E.g., Goldstone et.al., 2010.

75. Notable examples include: Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Charles Kurzman, *Democracy Denied, 1905–1915: Intellectuals and the Fate of Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Sharon Nepstad, *Nonviolent Revolutions: Civil Resistance in the Late 20th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

76. Exemplified in: George Lawson, *Negotiated Revolutions: The Czech Republic, South Africa and Chile* (London: Routledge, 2004); Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); Eric Selbin, *Revolution: Rebellion, Resistance: The Power of Story* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010). An exception to this trend was a debate in the pages of the *Journal of Democracy* (Volume 19, Issue 3 and Volume 20, Issue 1), which, though inconclusive, brought a discussion of revolutionary waves to the forefront of political science.

77. A very good summary can be found in: Sidney Tarrow, "The Contributions of Charles Tilly to the Social Sciences," *Contemporary Sociology,* 47 (August 2018), 513–24.

78. Some indicative examples include: Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012); Jack A. Goldstone, "Understanding the Revolutions of 2011: Weakness and Resilience in Middle Eastern Autocracies," *Foreign Affairs*, 90 (May/June 2011), 8–16; and Neil Ketchley, *Contentious Politics and the 25th January Egyptian Revolution,* Ph.D. thesis (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014), http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/1057. This laid the foundations for Ketchley's later book: Neil Ketchley, *Egypt in a Time of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). Also of note is a debate in Volume 17, Issue 4 of the *Swiss Political Science Review* (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/16626370/2011/17/4), which brought scholars such as Goodwin and Goldstone into dialogue with prominent social movement theorists such as William Gamson, Mario Diani, and David S. Meyer).

79. See: Allinson, 2021; Abrams, 2019; 2021; and Beck and Ritter, 2021, as well as: Jamie Allinson, "On Generations of Revolutionary Theory: A Response," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 34 (April 2021), 150–60; Asef Bayat, "The Arab Spring and Revolutionary Theory: An Intervention in a Debate," *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 34 (June 2021), 393–400.

80. Asef Bayat, *Revolution without Revolutionaries: Making Sense of the Arab Spring* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017); Daniel P. Ritter, *The Iron Cage of Liberalism: International Politics and Unarmed Revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); George Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

81. See, for example: Ritter, 2015; Lawson, 2019; and Colin Beck, *Radicals, Revolutionaries and Terrorists* (Cambridge: Polity, 2015).

82. See also, Beck and Ritter, 2021.

83. Examples include: Benjamin Abrams, *The Rise of the Masses: Spontaneous Mobilization and Contentious Politics* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2023); Zoltan Barany, *How Armies Respond to Revolutions and Why* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Neil Ketchley, Eibl Ferdinand, and Jeroen Gunning, "Anti-Austerity Riots in Late Developing States: Evidence from the 1977 Egyptian Bread Intifada," *Journal of Peace Research*, 61 (November 2024), 952 –66.

84. Goodwin, in his review of *The Revolutionary City*, calls our attention to the easily overlooked fact that Beissinger finds no consistent relationship between levels of urbanization and the urban civic revolts he studies. See: Jeff Goodwin, "The New Urban Rebellions: A Review Article," *Political Science Quarterly* (June 2024), OnlineFirst.

85. See, on counter-revolution: Jamie Allinson. *The Age of Counter-Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

86. See: John Miller, "The Long-Term Consequences of the English Revolution: Economic and Social Development," in Michael J. Braddick, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 501–17.

87. See: Yu Xie and Chunni Zhang, "The Long-Term Impact of the Communist Revolution on Social Stratification in Contemporary China," *PNAS*, 116 (39) (2019), 19392–97.

88. See: Eric Selbin, "Spaces and Places of (Im)Possibility and Desire: Transversal Revolutionary Imaginaries in the Twentieth Century Americas," *Forum for Interamerican Research*, 9 (May 2016), 19–41.

89. See, for example: Benjamin Abrams, "Movement Split: How the Structure of Revolutionary Coalitions Shapes Revolutionary Outcomes," *Public Choice*, 200 (June 2024), 473–95.

90. See also: Jean Lachapelle, Steven Levitsky, Lucan A. Way, and Adam E. Casey, "Social Revolution and Authoritarian Durability," *World Politics*, 72 (September 2020), 557–600.

91. See, for example, pages 11 and 39 of Levitsky and Way. Another touchstone is Samuel Huntington.

92. Examples include Slater, 2010, and: James Mahoney, "Path-Dependent Explanations of Regime Change: Central America in Comparative Perspective," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 36 (March 2001), 111–41; Benjamin Smith, "Life of the Party: The Origins of Regime Breakdown and Persistence under Single-Party Rule," *World Politics*, 57 (April 2005), 421–51.

93. This final element begs the question of whether the French Revolution would have qualified for such a definition, given the extent to which the victors in each revolutionary development were often implicated in some part of the state or other.

94. Conversely, one might wonder if the book's findings are not truly about revolution at all, but rather about authoritarianism in general. For example, research on counter-revolutionary regimes seems to suggest that a similar pattern exists in those cases. These include: Killian Clarke, "Revolutionary Violence and Counterrevolution," *American Political Science Review*, 117 (November 2023), 1344–60; Daniel Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

95. Carl Joachim Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, [1956] 1965); Philip Selznick, *The Organizational Weapon: A Study of Bolshevik Strategy and Tactics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952).

96. For example: Christopher Clapham, *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Dariush Zahedi, *The Iranian Revolution Then and Now: Indicators of Regime Instability* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018).

97. Selbin, 1999; 2010.

98. Among them, Selbin, 2010, and: John A. Britton, *Revolution and Ideology: Images of the Mexican Revolution in the United States* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); Misagh Parsa, *States, Ideologies and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of Iran, Nicaragua and the Philippines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Sidney Tarrow, *The Language of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Michael Walzer, "Puritanism as a Revolutionary Ideology," *History and Theory*, 3 (1963), 59–90.

99. See, for example, Moira Donald, *Marxism and Revolution: Karl Kautsky and the Russian Marxists, 1900–1924* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1999); Raymond Geuss, "Dialectics and the Revolutionary Impulse," in Fred L. Rush, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 103–38.

100. Political and social science scholars should take care to note that these tables are illustrative, rather than analytical.

101. Here, work on revolutionary ideas and ideologies constitutes useful material for reflection but cannot substitute for the larger task at hand.

102. An argument made first by Dunn, 1979. For a discussion of this view, see also: Benjamin Abrams and John Dunn, "Modern Revolutions and Beyond," *Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest*, 5 (December 2017), 114–31.

103. With regard to the first part of this endeavor, Traverso's *Revolution: An Intellectual History* gives us some useful material for reflection.

104. Johnson, 1964, 1966; Huntington, 1968.

105. Ivan Ermakoff, "The Structure of Contingency," *American Journal of Sociology*, 121 (January 2015), 64–125; Atef Shahat Said, *Revolution Squared: Tahrir, Political Possibilities, and Counterrevolution in Egypt* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2023); Selbin, 2010; Maha Abdelrahman, *Egypt's Long Revolution: Protest Movements and Uprisings* (London: Routledge, 2014); Marci Shore, *The Ukrainian Night: An Intimate History of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

106. See, for a discussion: Benjamin Abrams and Peter R. Gardner, "Advancing the Study of Objects in Contention," in Benjamin Abrams and Peter R. Gardner, eds., *Symbolic Objects in Contentious Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023), 293–308, https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.11722857, as well as: Benjamin Abrams, Giovanni Travaglino, Peter R. Gardner, and Brian Callan, "The Meaning of Contention," *Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest*, 10 (December 2022), 83–101.