The Revolution. Social-Change Nexus: Some Old Theories and New Hypotheses
Author(s): Ted Robert Gurr
Source: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Special Issue on Revolution and Social Change (Apr., 1973), pp. 359-392
Published by: Ph.D. Program in Political Science of the City University of New York
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/421270
Accessed: 13/04/2011 16:15

The Revolution–Social-Change Nexus

Some Old Theories and New Hypotheses

Ted Robert Gurr

The analysis of the nexus between revolution and social change may be approached in three ways. One is the question-begging definition of revolution as a type of social change—abrupt change in fundamental patterns of belief and action. This "definitional" approach is question begging insofar as it fails to deal with such aspects as the conditions under which social change becomes "revolutionary" rather than "non-revolutionary," and how it does so. The second and third approaches assume some causal connection between revolution and change. One of these specifies kinds or sequences of change that lead to violence and revolution; we may call it the "etiology" approach. The other, "instrumental" approach considers the consequences of revolution, and lesser forms of violence, for social change.

These approaches, as described here, are polar types and not necessarily accurate characterizations of particular theories. Several general characteristics of the types bear mentioning, however. The definitional approach is a manifestation of traditional scholarship, in which procedures of definition, specification of types, and the contingent categorization of historical cases of "revolution" are ends in themselves. Among their more absurd consequences are scholastic debates about whether a given set of events was "really" a revolution or not. This approach is nonempirical, for its generalizations are not intended for verification; and it will not be further considered in this article.

The "etiological" approach has its roots in such studies as Crane Brinton's classic *The Anatomy of Revolution* [1] that attempt to sort out the causes or processes, or both, of historic revolutions. Contemporary etiological theories are principally concerned with identifying types of change or sets of preconditions that are variously said to be necessary, sufficient, or probabilistically predisposing conditions of political violence

[1] New York, 1938.

generally, or revolution specifically. These theories are ordinarily subject to empirical validation; some of them have been specifically formulated with this object in mind. A latent purpose of many etiological theories seems to be the control of violence and revolution. Their authors often —though not necessarily—proceed from the assumption that revolution is undesirable, and may be forestalled if scientifically undersood. These assumptions do not make such theories inherently conservative or repressive; some have strong "reformist" assumptions and implications. We might also note that Karl Marx's theory of revolution is etiological, and self-evidently prorevolutionary.[2]

The "instrumental" approach to revolution is all but an empty category. The instrumentality of various forms of violence is often alleged by revolutionaries and revolutionary theorists. Marx forecasts a progression of revolutionary struggles culminating in classless utopias. There are also some ideographic studies of the effects of violence and revolution on particular societies. But it is still largely true, as Harry Eckstein wrote nearly a decade ago, that "almost nothing careful and systematic has been written about the long-run social effects of internal wars," not even on such basic questions as "how political legitimacy and social harmony may be restored after violent disruption, what makes internal wars acute or chronic, and what the comparative costs (and probabilities) are of revolutionary and evolutionary transformations." [3]

The first object of this article is to examine what some contemporary etiological theories say about social change as a cause of violence generally, and revolution specifically. Its second object is to consider the limited implications of these etiological theories for answering the instrumental question. Finally, I propose some general determinants of the "success" of various kinds of violent conflict, as a further step toward dealing with the kinds of questions Eckstein has raised.

I. Some Concepts

A few preliminary, definitional points must be made. By violence I mean deliberate uses of force to injure or destroy physically, not some more general category of coercive actions or policies, and not institutional arrangements that demean or frustrate their members. This definition is independent of agents, objects, or contexts of violence. The causes of the extent of violence *per se* may be of intrinsic interest, and indeed they are

[2] On the unexamined ideological premises and implications of conflict theories, see Terry Nardin, *Violence and the State: A Critique of Empirical Political Theory* (Beverly Hills, 1971).

[3] Harry Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," *History and Theory,* IV (2/1965), 136.

for some of the etiological theorists considered below. A more common concern of etiological theories is why particular violent events occur: "violence" is used theoretically as a short-hand term for, or defining property of, events variously labeled riots, rebellions, internal wars, turmoil, revolutions, and so on. A related etiological approach is to focus on some set of frequently-but-not-necessarily-violent interactions between groups, e.g., "conflict behavior" or "class conflict"; definitions and explanations of "violence" are subsidiary to the explanation of conflict generally. In evaluating these theories, and advancing my own hypotheses, I will use "violence" in the abstract sense specified above. When discussing events or interactions involving the use of violence, I will use the phrase "violent conflict."

As to "revolution," it is defined in different ways from different theoretical perspectives. I have mentioned its definition as a species of abrupt change. Etiological theories variously use the term to refer to (a) a motive or objective of a group of people; (b) a style or form of action; (c) an outcome of action; and (d) changes contingent upon action. Let us consider these briefly.

a. Individuals, groups, and organizations are said to be "revolutionary" if they are (thought to be) committed to accomplishing sweeping, fundamental changes. Societies in which such groups are widespread may be said to be in a "revolutionary situation," whether or not overt conflict or violence has occurred.

b. Concerted action aimed at transforming a social system or overthrowing a regime is sometimes called "revolution," without reference to its impact or outcome. Thus, revolutionary activists may proclaim at the onset of violence that "the revolution has begun." Similarly, scholars may categorize a continuing violent conflict as a "revolution"; in this way, we speak of the "Vietnamese revolution" while hostilities are still in progress. Once outcomes are known, such conflicts may be denoted "successful" or "unsuccessful" (or "attempted") revolutions. All these usages presume the existence of revolutionary motives (above), adding to them the occurrence of overt action aimed at their attainment.

c. The immediate outcome of violent conflict is sometimes the criterion for "revolution." If the "outs" succeed in displacing the "ins," a revolution has occurred; otherwise, the actions of the would-be revolutionaries are described as a "rebellion," "uprising," "putsch," or some such term. One anomaly of this usage is that "revolution" may happen without revolutionary intent or action. There are a number of instances—for example, El Salvador in

1944 and the Sudan in 1964—where general strikes and riots over immediate grievances induced rulers to resign, thus giving dissidents unexpected victories that were later hailed as "revolutions."

d. Seizure of power may be distinguished from the subsequent attempt to achieve revolutionary goals; "revolution" is regarded as the struggle toward or the attainment of those goals. Brinton, among others, describes the events subsequent to the seizure of power as the "process of revolution." Contemporary revolutionaries generally recognize the seizure of power as only the first step in "revolution," and refer to their socioeconomic and political changes in terms analogous to the Cuban's *la revolución en marcha.* Finally—and here we come full circle in the definitional cycle—some advocates of "revolution" mean by that term the attainment of substantial social change without the use of substantial violence or a conventional seizure of power.

All of these usages seem to me to have some validity, or at least sufficient currency that it is foolish to say that one of these things is "revolution" and another is not. In subsequent discussion I avoid the unqualified term "revolution," and use instead one of the following phrases, which correspond roughly to the above usages: (a) revolutionary movements; (b) revolutionary conflicts; (c) political revolution; and (d) revolutionary change. In the final section of this article I shall distinguish revolutionary movements from movements characterized by other kinds of motives.

A few words need to be said also about "social change" as a concept. Abstractly, I regard it as any collective change in the means or ends of human action. More specifically, following Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils, and Neil Smelser,[4] we can think of human action as being determined by (a) people's values, i.e., their valued goods and conditions of life; (b) people's norms about how those values are appropriately pursued; (c) the patterned forms of action—institutions—by which people organize or are organized for action; and (d) people's situations, the circumstances—environment, resources, technology—that facilitate or hinder their pursuit of particular values. Any change in any of these determinants of action is "social change." So defined, it is a portmanteau concept, and I so intend it. For any meaningful analysis one must distinguish a number of aspects and dimensions of change. Among the more obvious ones are:

[4] Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils, *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge [Mass.], 1951); Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York, 1963).

a. *Type of change.* Which variables among which of the above determinants of action change?

b. *Extent of change.* How many changes in the above variables occur and are they changes in degree or step (threshold) changes?

c. *Scope of change.* Which groups in a society are affected by which changes, and to what extent?

d. *Pattern of change.* Is change nonrandom, and, if so, what kind of trend or cycle does it represent?

e. *Rate of change.* How slow or rapid is each specifiable change?

Attempts to formulate comprehensive theory about the cause-and-effect relationships between violence and social change would seem to require an enormous amount of prior conceptual and theoretical materials. These would include etiological theories of violence, conceptualization and theories of conflict processes, analytic schemes for describing change, and theories specifying interrelations among dimensions of change. Partial and competing theories of these types exist separately, but thus far they afford a no more integrated perspective on the violence-change nexus than did the reports of the apocryphal blind men about the true nature of the elephant—and for an identical reason: all had different points of departure.

II. Social Change as a Cause of Violence and Revolution

All the etiological theories with which I am familiar attribute violent conflicts and revolutionary movements to some specified kinds of social change. The general relationship is so close to tautological that it never seems questioned: violent conflicts and revolutionary movements occur in times of change, not stasis. *Something* changes, even if it is only an old elite loosing its grip on the instrumentalities of force. An example is provided by the paradigm of revolutionary causation held by most American scholars in the first half of this century. Value changes of substantial extent and scope occur, at a pace too rapid for commensurate change in institutions. People can no longer achieve many of their goals; the result is widespread stress, variously called "balked dispositions," "repression," or "cramp." A period of "milling" and "agitation" sets in, leading toward consensus on grievances and the development of anti-elite norms; and "solidified public opinion" develops. Governments prove too incompetent or recalcitrant to remedy the situation. Whenever further institutional or situational change weakens the ability of the ruling

elite to resist, some precipitant will spark revolutionary conflict.[5] In brief, a succession of social changes is said to "cause" violence.

Prevalent theories tend to be more specific about the kinds of change that dispose to violent conflict. In fact, it is possible to classify them according to their metatheoretical approach to the change-violence nexus. Some are concerned with the social sources of psychological changes that dispose to violence; these are the *social-psychological* theories. A second category consists of explanations that emphasize *social-structural* change, somewhat in the tradition of the earlier theories mentioned above. The third type considered here is *group conflict* theory: violence is said to flow from the efforts of social or functional classes to maintain or improve their positions relative to others. One comment before examining some of these theories: each deals with the violence-inducing effects of some particular kinds of social change, which are argued on various inductive and *a priori* grounds to cause violent conflict. With the exception of Smelser,[6] none of them begins with a general analysis of social change, from which might be derived a comprehensive set of statements about the causal sequence from change to violence.

Social-psychological theories Some theorists begin with the seemingly self-evident premise that discontent is the root cause of violent conflict. Principal exponents of this view, in addition to myself, are James C. Davies and Ivo and Rosalind Feierabend.[7] My version of the premise is that the potential for collective violence in a nation or smaller community varies with the intensity and scope of socially induced discontent among its members. The premise is essentially a generalization of

[5] The phrases in quotations are those used respectively by Lyford P. Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolutions* (Chicago, 1927); Pitirim A. Sorokin, *The Sociology of Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1925); George Pettee, *The Process of Revolution* (New York, 1938); Rex D. Hopper, "The Revolutionary Process: A Frame of Reference for the Study of Revolutionary Movements," *Social Forces,* XXVIII (March 1950), 270–79; and Louis Gottschalk, "Causes of Revolution," *American Journal of Sociology,* I (July 1944), 1–8.

[6] Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior.*

[7] The principal theoretical statements by these authors are Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1970); James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review,* XXVII (February 1962), 5–19; James C. 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. *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York, 1969), chap. 19; Ivo K. Feierabend and Rosalind L. Feierabend, "Aggressive Behaviors within Polities, 1948–1962: A Cross National Study," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* X (September 1966), 249–71; and Ivo K. Feierabend, Rosalind L. Feierabend, and Betty A. Nesvold, "Social Change and Political Violence: Cross-National Comparisons," in Graham and Gurr, eds., chap. 18.

the frustration-anger-aggression principle from the individual to the social level. All these empirical theories elaborate on essentially the same basic premise by specifying what kinds of social conditions and processes of change increase social discontent to the threshold of violent conflict.

Davies attributes revolutionary conflict to one specific pattern of change that he calls the "J-curve": "revolution is most likely to take place when a prolonged period of rising expectations and rising gratifications is followed by a short period of sharp reversal, during which the gap between expectations and gratifications quickly widens and becomes intolerable. The frustration that develops . . . seeks outlets in violent action. When the frustration becomes focused on the government, the violence becomes coherent and directional. If the frustration is sufficiently widespread, intense, and focused on government, the violence will become a revolution. . . ." [8] I posit two additional patterns of change that create a potential for violent conflict, though not necessarily revolutionary conflict. One is the so-called "revolution of rising expectations," whereby men become angered because they acquire new or intensified expectations which cannot be satisfied by means at their disposal; the perceived gap between expectations and capability is "relative deprivation," which generates discontent. The second might be called a "capability decay" pattern; the source of people's discontent is their declining capacity to satisfy stable expectations.[9] The Feierabends and Betty Nesvold add to these basic models, distinguishing, for example, several J-curve type patterns of change, rapid and minimal change patterns, and a fluctuation change pattern.[10]

These kinds of theories quickly engage us in two additional questions: What changes according to these patterns, and why? There is approximate consensus among these theorists about *what* changes. On the one hand, what people expect out of life changes (Davies: "expected need satisfaction"; Gurr: "value expectations"; Feierabends and Nesvold: "social expectations," "present expectations of future gratifications"). On the other hand, what people do get or think they can get out of life changes (Davies: "actual need satisfaction"; Gurr: "value capabilities"; Feierabends and Nesvold: "social achievement"). All theorists recognize that men seek many different types of values. I use a classification of values whose three generic types are welfare, power, and interpersonal (belongingness, respect, status) values. Davies proposed a fourfold classification comprising physical needs, social-affectional needs, equal esteem or dignity needs, and, finally, self-actualization. Moreover, he

[8] Davies, "The J-Curve," 547.
[9] Gurr, chap. 2.
[10] Feierabend, Feierabend, and Nesvold.

asserts that these have a universal hierarchy of importance: once physical needs are satisfied, social-affectional needs become dominant; when they are satisfied the need for dignity predominates; and so forth. This hypothesis has a psychological basis. If it is manifest in collective affairs, it is of great importance for any analysis of the connections between change and violence. Consider the frequent observation that increasing material well-being seems so often associated with the generation of revolutionary demands. Those demands may well reflect emerging needs. At present, the hypothesis is supported only by a few plausible, but far from definitive, case studies.

Why expectations and achievement change over time is a thorny question, one whose answers involve a regression up an everwidening "funnel of causality." One of Davies' answers was just outlined: new needs emerge. The Feierabends' and Nesvold's answer is specific to the contemporary world: they take the socioeconomic modernization process as a given, and suggest that it is simultaneously the source of increasing expectations among "modernizing" groups and a threat to the achievements of "traditional" groups. Moreover, the attainment of modern goals is likely to be thwarted by the traditionals, and vice versa. "The farther the process of transition progresses, the more likely and the more intense the conflicts between modern and established patterns. The situation [is] a massive conflict, reflected in myriad individual psyches of different strata . . . and infecting different domains of the social process." [11] In an operational test of this theory, time-lagged comparison of many contemporary nations shows generally that the higher the levels of social and material modernity, the less the political instability and violent conflict, *but* that the greater the rate of change toward those conditions, the greater the disruption. In other words, the transitional nations—relatively unmodernized but rapidly changing—are the most subject to violent conflict. The evidence is suggestive, not definitive. An equally important kind of study remains to be done: the correlation of indices of specific kinds of change with the incidence of violent conflict *over time in particular countries.* This type of longitudinal study is woefully lacking in studies of conflict and violence. The one exception that bears mentioning is Pitirim Sorokin's extraordinary analysis of change, social disturbances, and war across twenty-five centuries of European history. He finds evidence therein for a long-term, cyclical shift from materialistic to ideological cultures and back again, each period of transition being accompanied by intensified violence. From this point of view, the contemporary "drive to modernity" is only a phase of a larger wave of change. The theory has powerful implications for our topic. It does not

[11] Ibid., 507.

seem to have been the subject of any further conceptual or empirical work.[12]

I have taken a more inductive and microanalytic approach to the question of specifying sources of change in collective expectations and capabilities. A number of relatively specific conditions that are identifiable either increase expectations or decrease capabilities in ways that generate increased potential for violent conflict. For example, each group's past rate of change in absolute position, up or down, and its decline relative to other groups are strong positive determinants of its potential for violence. So is lack of a value, like power, that proves necessary to protect values already attained, such as well-being and status. Conversely, the greater the range of alternatives open to a group's members and the greater the availability of resources in the society, the less is the potential for violent conflict.[13] All of these variables are subject to change over time; they could be analyzed as specific instances of some of the dimensions of social change cited earlier. The fact that they are not highlights their ad hoc character, and points up again the desirability of working toward better integrated theories of social change and violent conflict.

There are other psychological approaches to the analysis of violent conflict. A recent symposium by psychiatrists analyzes individual and collective violence as forms of adaptive or coping behavior, and argues that this interpretation is consistent with a variety of narrower psychological and psychiatric theories about the causes of violence.[14] Victor Wolfenstein has attempted a psychodynamic interpretation of the origins of revolutionary leadership.[15] Political alienation is the subject of extensive theoretical and empirical work by David Schwartz, who is concerned with both its psychosocial determinants and with the psychological variables that determine whether it is directed into passive or rebellious behavior.[16] In none of these instances, however, has much attention been given to the patterns of social change that have widespread psychological effects of the kinds considered. These are specifically

[12] Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics, Vol. III: Fluctuations of Social Relationships, War and Revolutions* (New York, 1937). A reanalysis of Sorokin's data, thus far unpublished, has been made by Professor Paul Smoker of the University of British Columbia and University of Lancaster (England).

[13] Gurr, chaps. 4 and 5.

[14] David N. Daniels et al., *Violence and the Struggle for Existence* (Boston, 1970).

[15] E. Victor Wolfenstein, *The Revolutionary Personality: Lenin, Trotsky, Gandhi* (Princeton, 1967).

[16] David C. Schwartz, *Political Alienation and Political Behavior* (Chicago, forthcoming).

psychological theories, in contrast with the three social-psychological theories discussed above.

Social-structural theories The social-structural theories of violent conflict differ in emphasis rather than kind from the social-psychological theories. Their common premise is that some fundamental social dislocation, variously called "strain" or "dysfunction," is the necessary precondition for revolutionary conflict. Whereas the social-psychological theorists of violence begin with aggregate psychological states, then work both "backward" to their social determinants and "forward" to their consequences, the social-structural theorists link specified kinds of social change directly to their collectively violent outcomes without substantial reference to any intervening psychological variables. A similarity between the two types of theory is their analogous conceptualization of conditions that intervene between the psychological or social preconditions and the actual occurrence of violent conflict. All of them specify some aspects of government or institutional arrangements generally that facilitate or deflect the underlying impetus to violence. I will summarize two of these social-structural theories and mention several others.

Smelser's *Theory of Collective Behavior* incorporates a general conceptual analysis of social change. It is principally concerned with showing how various kinds of structural strain produce "collective behavior," which is defined as "mobilization on the basis of a belief which redefines social action." [17] More concretely, "collective behavior" includes panics, crazes, hostile outbursts (including riots), and norm- and value-oriented movements. Hostile outbursts and value-oriented movements comprise most violent conflicts—though note that Smelser is concerned with accounting for their non- or antisystem component, not with explaining conflict more generally. Smelser identifies six sets of social determinants whose various degrees, types, and concurrence produce different kinds of collective behaviors:

1. *structural conduciveness* — structural characteristics that permit or encourage collective behavior, which are effective only in combination with
2. *structural strain* — "ambiguities, deprivations, conflicts, and discrepancies," such as "real or anticipated economic deprivation";
3. *growth and spread of generalized belief* — which provides potential actors with an interpretation of the situation and specifies appropriate responses;

[17] Smelser, 8.

4. *precipitating factor* — a specific event that triggers group action;
5. *mobilization of participants for action* — usually by a leader; and
6. *operation of social control* — "those counter-determinants which prevent, interrupt, deflect, or inhibit the accumulation of the [above] determinants," including those which minimize conduciveness and strain, and those mobilized after a collective episode begins.[18]

Structural strain is the most important of these, as is evident in this hypothesis: "Some form of strain must be present if an episode of collective behavior is to occur. The more severe the strain, moreover, the more likely is such an episode to appear." [19] All the six determining conditions are subject to change; (3) and (5) denote particular kinds of change. The most significant social changes, however, are presumably those that cause severe structural strain. Smelser offers sets of categories for typologizing strain. One set of these categories is his components of social action, which I mentioned above: they refer to people's values, norms, organization, and "situational facilities." A cross-cutting set of categories refers to the levels of specificity of each component of action. To use norms as an example, a particular business's code of operations is more specific than the business community's norms about business honesty and decency, and it is more specific than legal codes about contracts and property. Seven levels of specificity are identified for each component of social action, generating twenty-eight categories according to which various kinds of social changes may be pigeonholed.

Smelser does not provide any dynamic analysis of change *per se*. His discussion of determinants of value-oriented movements, for example, merely lists kinds of strain like "inadequacy of knowledge of techniques to grapple with new situations," "severe physical deprivation," and "the normative disorganization that war occasions." [20] The dynamic component to the theoretical framework concerns the linkages between types of strain and the nature of subsequent collective behavior. Briefly, strain of a given level and type stimulates the creation of generalized beliefs at a higher level, which redefine social action in such a way that the strain is modified. Smelser specifies processes by which this occurs and suggests which types of strain lead to, say, "hysterical beliefs," "hostile beliefs," and so forth. Smelser's theory thus offers a general approach to analyzing connections between social change and violent conflict; its categories of change, at least, are systematic rather than *ad hoc*. But it does not advance clearly formulated, dynamic hypotheses, much less

[18] Ibid., 15–18.
[19] Ibid., 48.
[20] Ibid., 338–40.

suggest how they might be operationally tested. Such hypotheses could be derived from the theory; as written, though, it is principally a typology which is more suitable for describing and interpreting specific events than for stimulating further theoretical development and assessment.

Whereas Smelser is concerned with collective behavior generally, Chalmers Johnson has proposed a theory to account specifically for revolutionary conflict.[21] The theory can be summarized rather briefly. It takes account of four determining variables. The first necessary cause of revolutionary conflict is a disequilibrated social system, one in which either systems of values and "symbolic interpretations of social action," or the society's pattern of adaptation to the environment, change sufficiently that society's functional requirements can no longer be fulfilled. Elites faced with this situation may or may not attempt to redress the disequilibrium. If they prove intransigent or unable to do so, they lose legitimacy—the second necessary cause of revolution. They may still continue in power for some time by relying on coercion. The final, sufficient cause of revolution—Johnson calls it an "accelerator"—is the elite's loss of control over the instruments of coercion. The military may be defeated in war, or become increasingly ambitious or disaffected from the rulers, or be challenged to revolutionary combat, but, however it happens, the accelerator precipitates revolutionary conflict. (The true degree of military loyalty and effectiveness is the major determinant of the outcome of that conflict.)

All four variables are evidently subject to change. Values and adaptation patterns may change; substantial shifts in either or both cause dysfunctions. Johnson identifies four kinds of dysfunctions, derived from Parsons' specification of social systems' functional needs. The dysfunctions are incoherent socialization, inappropriate ensemble of roles, dissensus on goals, and—tautologically—failure to resolve conflicts peacefully. This typology is analogous to Smelser's much more detailed typology of kinds of change. Johnson goes one step further back, to suggest a simple typology of *sources* of change, with examples. These are: (1) exogenous conditions causing value changes, e.g., international "demonstration effects"; (2) endogenous value-changing conditions, e.g., the rise of new religious movements; (3) exogenous sources of environmental change, e.g., foreign trade, technology, and conquest; and (4) endogenous sources of environmental change, e.g., technological innovations.[22] Johnson, like Smelser, does not formulate hypotheses about possible systematic connections among types or characteristics of change

[21] Chalmers Johnson, *Revolution and the Social System* (Stanford, 1964); Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston, 1966).

[22] Johnson, *Revolutionary Change,* pp. 64–70.

and types or extent of dysfunction; this part of Johnson's theory is essentially an exercise in typology. The theory's dynamic elements concern the consequences of dysfunction for revolutionary conflict. The elite's response can vary from "conservative change" to "intransigence"; its legitimacy depends on which response it takes. Johnson fails to specify or even to suggest the determinants of these responses or how they might change over time. The intransigent elite's subsequent reliance on force sets the stage for the operation of the "accelerators," a class of particular types of changes. Johnson distinguishes three kinds: conditions which reduce the effectiveness of the armed forces directly; concerted beliefs of oppositional groups that they can win; and strategically calculated violent conspiracies. He goes on to suggest how the forms and processes of revolution and its outcomes depend on various combinations of the specified conditions, plus additional variables introduced on an ad hoc basis.[23] There is no systematic attempt to relate this discussion to foregoing categories of social change or dysfunction, though, as with Smelser, a number of hypotheses of this sort could be derived from the discussion.

I mentioned above that both the social structural theories and those reviewed in the previous section identify aspects of society which facilitate or inhibit the impetus to violent conflict. The kinds of conditions cited are remarkably similar. Ideological factors are generally recognized, not only by Smelser: Davies specifies that hostility must be focused on government before revolutionary movements occur;[24] and I identify cultural and political sources of beliefs that perform this focussing function.[25] Smelser's concern with "structural conduciveness" and "mobilization of participants for action" is paralleled by my hypothesis in *Why Men Rebel* that "the magnitude of political violence varies . . . with the ratio of dissident institutional support to regime institutional support to the point of equality, and inversely beyond it."[26] I go on to specify some general determinants of institutional support and orientation. Johnson's interest in elite intransigence and revolutionary organization are aspects of what Smelser and I discuss in more general terms. Finally, these theories, without exception, identify coercion as an intervening variable. Smelser and the Feierabends deal respectively with a system's extent of "social control" and "coerciveness" as inhibitors of violence. Johnson and I are both concerned with the relative balance between revolutionary and elite capacities for employing force.

The principal differences between the two groups of theories reviewed

[23] Ibid., chap. 7 and 8.
[24] Davies, "The J-Curve."
[25] Gurr, chap. 6 and 7.
[26] Ibid., p. 276.

thus far are: (1) disagreement about whether and how the psychological level of analysis ought to be taken into account; and (2) whether a typological or propositional approach to explaining violent conflict ought to be taken. The next section considers some conflict theories of causation that have a substantially different approach.

Some other social-structural theories might be mentioned. Some early twentieth-century theories are essentially of this sort, for example, those of Lyford Edwards and George Pettee.[27] More recently David Willer and George Zollschan attribute revolutionary movements to the existence of *exigency,* a consequence of discrepancy between the structural position of individuals in society and their interest position. Widespread exigencies are transformed in revolutionary movements to the extent that exigencies are articulated, affected groups are organized to facilitate action, and their members perceive the regime as the source of persisting exigency.[28]

Group conflict theories All the theories considered so far are concerned principally with the motives of one party to violent conflicts: the "rebels," the "disruptors," those who challenge an existing status quo or equilibrium. There is a competing paradigm for theory, whose origins can be traced at least back to Aristotle, that asks how and why groups in societies come into conflict. From this point of view the interests and conflict behavior of "elites" and "regimes" are as important a subject for inquiry as those of any other social group. The basic premise of group conflict theories is that violent conflict and revolution arise out of group competition over valued conditions and positions. As Charles Tilly puts it in a widely quoted statement, "Men seeking to seize, hold, or realign the levers of power have continually engaged in collective violence as part of their struggles. The oppressed have struck in the name of justice, the privileged in the name of order, those in between in the name of fear." [29] Power is not the only issue of conflict, of course; so are well-being, status, communal and ideological purity, and so forth. A corollary of this premise is that violent conflict is a recurrent feature of societies. As the composition, interests, and relative positions of groups change, conflict occurs and so does violence. There are many such theories. Two somewhat different types are reviewed below: those which emphasize conflictful elements in group differentiation generally, and

[27] See footnote 5.

[28] David Willer and George K. Zollschan, "Prolegomenon to a Theory of Revolutions," in George K. Zollschan and Walter Hirsch, eds. *Explorations in Social Change* (Boston, 1964), pp. 125–51.

[29] Charles Tilly, "Collective Violence in European Perspective," in Graham and Gurr, chap. 1.

those which emphasize horizontal or class cleavages. The former are more general than, but do not necessarily subsume, the latter.

Group differentiation and conflict Nicholas Timasheff and Ralf Dahrendorf are among the theorists who attribute conflict to the existence of general group differentiation. Timasheff takes the more "traditional" approach, writing of "necessary and sufficient" conditions for violent conflict, but his object is more general: to account for the occurrence of both revolution and war. He postulates four sufficient conditions: two parties or groups have highly valued, incompatible goals; normative inhibitions against violence are weakened among one or both parties to the conflict; one or both loses hope of winning by nonviolent means of conflict resolution; and each thinks it has some chance of winning by violent means. Timasheff catalogs rather than generalizes about the nature and sources of goal conflicts in prerevolutionary situations. He lists disputes over the nature or functioning of government, changing class distributions of social or economic values, and rising expectations. Such conflicts must be "serious, or many, or both" to cause revolution. He suggests that the failure of the coordinating function of the state causes the groups in conflict to despair of peaceful solutions; he does not speculate systematically why that coordinating function might fail. As tensions grow, inhibitions against violence tend to decrease. The final stages resemble Johnson's theory of revolutionary causation. The government, which is by definition one of the parties to revolutionary conflict, sees its chances of winning as resting with its control of the armed forces. The revolutionaries may think that they can win because they subscribe to an ideology that convinces them the time is ripe, or because of tactical calculations, or out of despair they may take action against all odds.[30]

Dahrendorf's theory of group conflict is more precise and sophisticated than Timasheff's. It suffers considerably from any attempt at brief summarization. One major thesis of Dahrendorf's work is that group conflict is pervasive in all societies at all times; it cannot be resolved, only—sometimes—regulated. He is more concerned with what he calls class conflict than Timasheff, and he considers class conflict a species of group conflict. Class conflict is defined as any conflict between the superordinate and subordinate strata of authority structures. This is considerably different from and broader than Marx's definition of classes by reference to groups' relationship to the means of production (see below). For

[30] From Nicholas S. Timasheff, *War and Revolution* (New York, 1965), chaps. 4 and 7.

Dahrendorf the determinant of "class" is differential allocation of authority, which characterizes a much wider variety of institutions than just the state.

Two principal aspects of conflict about which Dahrendorf generalizes are its intensity (the energy expenditure and degree of involvement of conflicting parties) and its violence. The *intensity* of class conflict is said to decrease with the extent of class organization; with the extent to which various class and group conflicts are dissociated rather than coincident; and with "the extent that the distribution of authority and the distribution of rewards and facilities in an association are disassociated. . . ." To clarify the last statement, Dahrendorf is saying that conflict is less intense if the holders of power in an association do not also hold highest status, material well-being, and the like. The *violence* of class conflict is said to decrease with the extent of class organization, with the decline of absolute deprivation, and (tautologically?) with the extent of effective conflict regulation. All these determining conditions are subject to change, but the sources of those changes are not much dealt with in the theory. Considerable nonformalized consideration is given to the emergence and historical development of classes. Dahrendorf's central purpose, however, is *to show how structural changes in society are determined by group conflict.* He is thus the only one of the violence and conflict theorists we have examined who is significantly concerned with general societal consequences of conflict: conflict is the independent variable, not the dependent one, in the theory.[31] We will consider these causal connections briefly in section III of this article.

There are numerous other theories concerned with the origins, processes, and melioration of group conflict, but few are substantially concerned with violent, revolutionary conflict. Insofar as these theories account for conflict generally, they may be said to account for its violent manifestations as well; the crucial question for us is why conflict does or does not take violent forms, and in response to what if any kinds of changing social conditions. Some of the conflict theories I have in mind are Kenneth E. Boulding's *Conflict and Defense: A General Theory,*[32] Anatol Rapoport's *Fights, Games, and Debates,*[33] and Thomas C. Schelling's *The Strategy of Conflict.*[34] Others are reviewed and synthesized by Raymond Mack and Richard Snyder.[35] These theories variously attribute

[31] From Ralf Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society* (Stanford, 1959), chaps. 5 and 6; quotation from p. 239.

[32] New York, 1962.

[33] Ann Arbor, 1960.

[34] Cambridge [Mass.], 1963.

[35] Raymond W. Mack and Richard C. Snyder, "The Analysis of Social Conflict:

the transition from nonviolent to violent conflict to the weakness of integrating or regulatory procedures, and to calculations of participants that violence is an effective means to their ends. They are not, however, particularly fruitful as sources of systematic generalizations about connections between social change and violent conflict, except perhaps at a very abstract level. See Mack and Snyder's remark that "social change —its rate and direction—is an ultimate source of conflict because, as the factual social order undergoes transition, new incompatibilities and antagonistic interests arise." [36]

Theories of class conflict The several theories of violent conflict considered here attribute violent conflict, at least in its revolutionary form, to disparities in the shares of valued goods held by different, horizontally stratified classes. Aristotle helped establish this tradition of theorizing in his efforts to explain the circumstances of political revolutions in the Greek city-states. The principal cause of revolution, he proposed, is the common people's aspiration for economic or political equality when they lack it, and the aspiration of oligarchs for greater inequality than they have. Men's desires for one valued condition are correlated with their attainment in respect to others. Thus, if the common people are equal in power and status to their rulers, they will likely seek equality in material well-being. Members of an oligarchy, if they have superior material well-being, will, conversely, tend to seek superior power and status as well. The immediate causes of revolution are these aspirations after equality (or inequality); the principal or more remote causes of revolution are the social conditions which produce such dispositions. Like many later theorists, Aristotle catalogs numerous conditions that have these effects but does not generalize about them to the degree that he generalizes about revolutionary causation. Some are relatively static conditions, such as the contempt of a subordinate class for its masters, and ethnic diversity. Other conditions are types of change, such as a disproportionate increase in the relative size of one class, or the improving condition of one class or group; the latter is said to inspire revolution in two ways: by fostering envy in other classes, and by creating aspirations for further inequality in the advancing class.[37] There is a resemblance here to the contemporary "J-curve" and relative deprivation approaches to explaining violent conflict.

Toward an Overview and Synthesis," *Journal of Conflict Resolutions,* I (June 1957), 212–48.

[36] Ibid., 227.

[37] From Aristotle, *The Politics,* Book V.

We may next sketch Marx's theory of the origins of revolutionary conflict, although it is so well known that it is perhaps gratuitous to do so. Marx finds revolution essentially a function of economic change, specifically the development of contradictions between productive forces of society and the relations of classes to production. There are a succession of historically inevitable stages of economic organization, the penultimate of which, bourgeois capitalism, gives way to the classless society of the workers. Revolution marks the transitions among stages. This is Marx's own summary:

> In the social production of their means of existence men enter into . . . productive relationships which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The aggregate of these productive relationships constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which a juridical and political superstructure arises. . . . The mode of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social, political and intellectual life. . . . At a certain stage of their development the material productive forces of society come into contradiction with the existing productive relationships, or, what is but a legal expression of these, with the property relationships within which they had moved before. From forms of development of the productive forces these relationships are transformed into their fetters. Then an epoch of social revolution opens. With the change in the economic foundation the whole vast superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. . . . A social system never perishes before all the productive forces have developed for which it is wide enough; and new, higher productive relationships never come into being before the material conditions for their existence have been brought to maturity within the womb of the old society itself. . . . In broad outline, the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal and the modern bourgeois modes of production can be indicated as progressive epochs in the economic system of society. Bourgeois productive relationships are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production.[38]

The specific contradiction that brings about the revolutionary replacement of the capitalist system of production is the progressive immiserization of the working class. Capitalism must necessarily and increasingly exploit workers, Marx argued, because profit rates tend to decline (for asserted economic reasons not reviewed here). As they decline, employers press workers toward and then below the subsistence level. This economic exploitation is accompanied by increasing political oppression, a consequence of capitalism's need for stable control over the means of

[38] Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,* as quoted in William Ebenstein, *Modern Political Thought: The Great Issues* (New York, 1954), 367–68.

production and over the workers themselves. Revolutionary movements begin when workers become conscious that their collective misery can be relieved only by a total transformation of the economic and its dependent political system. Marx at least cannot be accused of "cataloging" social changes that dispose to revolutionary conflict: he precisely identifies the types and sequences of change that cause revolution. But whether this explanation fits all manifestations of revolutionary conflict equally well is another matter. Marx, at least, would argue that *all* conflict is economic-based class conflict. In this connection, we can mention that one of Mao Tse-tung's major contributions to Marxist theory is his emphasis on the conflictful and revolutionary potential of *power differences* among classes; the sources and dynamics of political oppression are thus an additional area for revolutionary theorizing.[39]

Both Aristotle and the Marxist theorists were concerned primarily with identifying the class bases of revolutionary conflict. Johan Galtung has proposed a "structural theory of aggression" that generalizes beyond the narrow conception of "class" as a party to conflict, and that also proposes to account for a range of aggressive behaviors from violent crime through riots and revolution to war. According to Galtung, it is the hierarchical position of the individual or group relative to others that determines aggressive behavior. His central hypothesis is that "Aggression is most likely to arise in social positions in rank-disequilibrium." [40] "Rank disequilibrium" is a condition in which an individual/group/nation has a relatively higher level of attainment of some valued conditions than others. A group which has high wealth, medium power, and low status, for example, is "disequilibrated" and will seek to attain high power and status as well. Whether it does so violently or not will depend on whether other means of equilibration have been tried and found wanting, and whether "the culture has some practice in violent aggression." [41] A basic similarity between this argument and Aristotle's should be evident. But Galtung says that equilibrium is *necessarily* sought, whereas Aristotle says that the desire for consistent equality, or inequality, is a function of men's conception of justice. And Galtung applies the principle to all disequilibria among all highly valued conditions, whereas Aristotle posits revolutionary consequences only of disequilibria between the economic and political positions of a class. We may also note a fundamental contradiction between Galtung's argument and Dahr-

[39] See Franz Schurmann, "On Revolutionary Conflict," *Journal of International Affairs,* XXIII (1/1969), 36–53.

[40] Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Aggression," *Journal of Peace Research,* (2/1964), 95–119; quotation from 98.

[41] Ibid., 99.

endorf's theory of class conflict. Galtung says disequilibrium intensifies aggression, while Dahrendorf hypothesizes that "the lower the correlation is between authority positions and other aspects of socioeconomic status, the less intense are class conflicts likely to be," [42] or, in other words, disequilibrium between a group's power position and its position on other dimensions should *minimize* conflict intensity. The competing hypotheses should be amenable to empirical test.

Given our concern with the social change-violence nexus, Galtung's theory suggests that we look for systematic sources of disequilibria. He makes a few general remarks on the subject, suggesting, for example, that social change is "structural" in the sense that it tends to introduce new, usually disequilibrated, rankings. "Or it may distribute new resources more evenly, which is another way of saying that some complete or nearly-complete underdogs will rise on one or more dimension due to mass education, prosperity, universal suffrage. . . . The result is disequilibrium with consequent aggression until more equilibrated combinations of rank-sets are achieved. . . ." [43] He also speculates on the conditions for revolution. One formula, not an exclusive one, is to expand higher education, make few new elite positions available, institute mass education, but make no other social changes—all of which in combination create sharp and widespread disequilibria. To these conditions he adds, ad hoc, several others including a J-curve, boom-and-bust economic pattern, plus ideology and charismatic leadership.[44] For our purposes Galtung's theory has one distinct advantage over many others considered here: it points directly to rather systematic, operational procedures for examining the change-violence relationship. In any given society, one might examine all social changes that altered the relative ranking of each identifiable group on some specified set of dimensions, then attempt to link these to the extent and form of subsequent manifestations of violence.

Some observations I hope it is clear that these summaries are only a sample of the etiological theories of violence and conflict, although most of the theories I regard as "important" are mentioned. The dominant impression they give may be one of confusion, for a great many different kinds and aspects of social change are cited as "causes." Some propose categories in which to classify causes, some afford rosters of examples, some focus on patterns or dimensions of social change such as its rate

[42] Dahrendorf, p. 218.
[43] Galtung, 112.
[44] Ibid., 108–9.

and scope. The objects of explanation, the dependent variables, are also diverse. Some theories deal with extent of aggression or violence, some with conflict, some with "revolution."

Several approaches to dealing with this profusion of theories can be suggested. I assume this objective: to make general, testable statements about the effects of social change on violence and conflict. One basic premise is that this can best be attempted by beginning with a general conceptual scheme for describing social change, then working out its various patterns and consequences, rather than taking a particular type or aspect of violent conflict and working back out a causal funnel to its assorted causes. The latter kind of theory is a highly useful input for the larger enterprise suggested here, but, as the review just completed suggests, it is not a fruitful way to deal generally with social change.

One approach might be called "conceptual reduction." The theories reviewed here stipulate many causal aspects of change that resemble one another. These variables and relationships could be classified according to an analytic scheme, comprising, for example, the dimensions of social change listed in section I, and then combined and generalized into a "synthetic" theory of change-conflict-violence. Another, more deductive approach would require us to state assumptions about the nature and general effects of each dimension of social change, then to derive a set of more specific hypotheses, which in turn should be suited (a) for comparison with the hypotheses of the more ad hoc theories, and (b) for empirical validation. It would be especially fruitful to establish definitive tests between hypotheses so derived and those stipulated in the etiological theories. This suggests a third, more inductive, approach to systematizing the change-violence relation. Various pairs of contradictory hypotheses can be found in, or derived from, extant theories; the opposition of Galtung's basic hypothesis to one of Dahrendorf's propositions was noted above. Definitive empirical tests might be set up for such opposing hypotheses, and as empirically supported relationships were winnowed out, they could be subsumed to a systematic inventory of verified change-conflict relationships—one which would eventually lead to, or take on the proportions of, a composite theory.

Each of these approaches to theory construction has its advocates, and much more could be said about the problem of how to tidy up an intellectual landscape littered with partial theories. Rather than doing so here, I propose to consider now the other side of the change-violence nexus: theories about the effects of violent conflict on social change. There the landscape is much different, the subject of considerable conjecture and wishful assumption, but not much systematic theory.

III. Violence and Revolution as Sources of Social Change

I suggested that social change can be analyzed according to the extent, scope, pattern, and rate of change in the four types of determinants of social action: values, norms, institutions, and facilities (section I). A general approach to the "instrumental" linkage between violence and change is to hypothesize and describe how different kinds and intensities of violent conflict affect the determinants of action, and how widely, swiftly, and so forth they do so.

Marx and Dahrendorf are the only theorists discussed thus far who do anything systematic of this sort. Marx quite concretely states that class revolution is a function of value changes—class consciousness—which leads to specified institutional rearrangements. Those rearrangements include a new set of productive relationships, a contingent set of new political and social relationships, and, at the final, postcapitalist stage, a withering away of the state. Marx thus attributes specific effects to a very specific kind of conflict. Dahrendorf, by contrast, argues most abstractly that class conflict produces structural changes in the associations in which it occurs. He attributes characteristics of these structural changes to several conflict variables. The *radicalness* of structural change (i.e., its consequences) is said to be a function of conflict intensity; the *suddenness* of structural change is a function of the extent of violence in class conflict.[45]

Some of the other theorists surveyed here consider some more limited consequences of violent conflict, in particular its feedback effects on the variables said to cause violence. One basic feedback relationship on which a number of theorists agree is that violent conflict tends to become endemic, to feed on itself.[46] I have suggested in some detail why this should be the case, and under what circumstances. An immediate effect is that the use of violence by one party to a conflict strongly disposes the other party to retaliate in kind; violence and counterviolence tend to escalate until one or both parties' capacity for violence is exhausted. I base this proposition on the premise that people have an inherent disposition, irrespective of cultural differences, to respond violently to violent attacks.[47] A more indirect way in which violent conflict affects future violence is by creating or reinforcing group justifications for future violence. I distinguish between normative justifications, i.e., the belief that violence is an *approved* mode of action; and utilitarian justifications, the belief that violence is a *useful* means for the attainment of group values. Normative support for violent conflict is proposed to vary with

[45] Dahrendorf, pp. 231–35.
[46] See Eckstein, 150–51.
[47] Gurr, chap. 8.

the magnitude of past violence; utilitarian support varies with the past success of violence. Some conflict theorists concur that "violence breeds violence," but account for the relation somewhat differently, arguing that the occurrence of violence in conflict situations tends to undermine the effectiveness of conflict-regulating procedures such as negotiation and mediation. A related proposition is that intergroup violence increases intragroup cohesiveness and hence sharpens lines of division between conflicting groups.[48]

Various theorists attribute some more positive kinds of social change to conflict. Conflict among groups is proposed to strengthen group cohesiveness and separateness, as noted before; to reduce tension and deviation within the group; to clarify group objectives; and to help establish group norms.[49] These more or less beneficial changes are attributed to conflict generally, though not specifically, nor necessarily to violent conflict. Elsewhere, I have proposed that political violence (violent conflict involving political groups) tends to resolve itself if the dissident group thereby obtains resources and opportunities by which it can resolve its discontents.[50] The proposition is not that "winning ends violence," when "winning" means that one group displaces another downward; this merely makes it likely that the displaced group rather than the winning one will initiate the next round of conflict. The proposition rests rather on the premise that most societies have unused or underutilized stocks of resources and techniques, which in the hands of discontented groups can be used to improve their absolute if not relative position in the distribution of valued goods and conditions.

Finally, I must mention the utopian and millennial expectations that some revolutionary theorists and philosophers have had about the effects of revolutionary conflict. I have in mind such men as the more radical French *philosophes,* Thomas Paine, Karl Marx, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Georges Sorel, Louis Auguste Blanqui, Leon Trotsky, Mao Tse-tung, Frantz Fanon, Ernesto Guevara, Regis Debray—the list could easily be extended. These men variously considered and advocated revolutionary conflict as a necessary condition for social change. Almost without exception they hoped for a more egalitarian, just, and unoppressive social order, and most saw in revolutionary conflict a necessary condition to that end. There is considerable plausibility in the contention that violent, revolutionary conflict is a *necessary* condition to the

[48] This is most fully developed by Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York, 1956).

[49] See Mack and Snyder, 228; Coser, passim; and Bernard J. Siegel, "Defensive Cultural Adaptation," in Graham and Gurr, chap. 22.

[50] Gurr, pp. 348–57.

utopian social objectives these men have sought; few "top dogs" willingly relinquish power or accept levelling. But these theorists are hopelessly unrealistic to the extent that they regard revolutionary conflict as a *sufficient* condition for social transformation. Marx's doctrine of historical inevitability was in his applications a most sophisticated millennial argument. For Blanqui and some of the anarchists, the utopian outcome of revolutionary conflict was a little-examined premise, almost an act of faith. The least utopian, and most realistic of revolutionary advocates are those like Trotsky, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung, who personally faced the harsh realities of attempting to carry out revolutionary change.

By virtue of their assumptions about revolutionary beneficence, the philosophers of the preceding paragraph are no more fruitful sources of generalizations about how revolutionary conflict changes society than are the more "objective" contemporary theorists who confine themselves principally to revolutionary causation. With the exception of some promising beginnings in the work of Dahrendorf and Lewis Coser, we are pretty much without theoretical guidelines. One partial theoretical contribution of this sort is offered in the next section.

IV. Some Determinants of the Success of Violent Conflict

I am concerned here with one particular question about the violence-change nexus: Under what conditions is violent conflict likely to be successful? The question makes sense, of course, only if asked from the viewpoint of those engaged in violence. It is a "political" kind of question to ask and attempt to answer, at least more obviously political than a comprehensive attempt to show the effects of all kinds of violence on all aspects of social change. My rationale for attempting it is that it does offer a purchase on the larger question; that it is important to some serious contemporary issues; and, frankly, that it is easier than the larger effort.

Motives for violence in social movements To evaluate the "success" or "failure" of particular violent acts requires some categorization of types of motives for those acts, and, empirically, evidence on the motives manifest in occurrences of violent conflicts. The categories should subsume all uses of violence, at least all collective ones, and not be restricted to the motives of one or another group; specifically, they should be applicable to violence used by private groups in conflict with others, and by public groups in conflict with one another and with private groups. Four general categories of motives are discussed below: self-

assertion, defensive, reformist, and revolutionary. It is my extension of a typology used by Tilly.[51] Subordinate categories could be devised for each, but this will not be done here.

Self-assertion There is an element of self-assertion in almost all acts of violence: a desire to satisfy anger, obtain revenge, assert pride, create fear in others. The motive is apparent in actions both of rulers and of ruled. Frustration-aggression theorists argue that aggression (of which violence is one form) is an inherently satisfying response to anger.[52] Fanon says that oppressed peoples redress their inferiority through violence. "At the level of the individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect." The effects of violence are said to have equally positive collective effects: "for the colonised people this violence, because it constitutes their only work, invests their characters with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole. . . ." [53] Fanon's own psychiatric case studies cast doubt on the accuracy of these generalizations, by portraying the grievous psychic costs of violence on its practitioners,[54] but the precise accuracy of his claims is not at issue here. The point is that many angry and oppressed men, in Fanon's Algeria and elsewhere, have acted violently to satisfy strong psychic needs (not merely because Fanon said they should).

Similar elements of self-assertion may be seen on the part of rulers. Slave owners sometimes used extraordinary violence on slaves for trifling offenses, a primary motive seemingly being to demonstrate their absolute mastery. Absolutist rulers in many societies have used summary executions for slight offenses and even without offense as an assertion of mastery. The historical chronicles of European absolutism offer individual instances. Some incredible examples of chronic butchery of this sort in medieval African kingdoms are presented and analyzed by E. V. Walter.[55]

Defensive violence People who use violence almost always have more than immediate motives of self-assertion. When violence is used as part

[51] Tilly.
[52] Reviewed in Gurr, chap. 2.
[53] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1966), p. 73.
[54] Ibid., pp. 201–51.
[55] E. V. Walter, *Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence* (London and New York, 1969).

of an effort to maintain a group's position, to preserve the status quo, I call it defensive. Most violence used by governments is defensive in this sense. Almost all policies of all governments are unpopular with some citizens, and physical force—violence—is usually regarded as the last resort of rulers faced with noncompliance. *Counterinsurgency* is a familiar type of defensive violence by governments, used to suppress revolutionary and secessionist movements.

Throughout human history the most common kind of violent movement by private groups has probably been defensive resistance to externally imposed change. Examples include resistance to foreign conquest, to the expansion of central government powers at the expense of local autonomy and privileges, to the competition and pressures of rising classes, and to economic immiserization imposed by employers. In this country many private groups such as vigilantes had defensive motives for violence. The vigilante groups, which were established to create and maintain public order, flourished throughout the nineteenth century in almost all parts of the United States except New England. Many frontier and farmers' rebellions—the Whiskey Rebellion, Shay's Rebellion, the Green Corn Rebellion, among others—were defensive in nature. The most notable example in American history is the secession of the South in 1861 and the ensuing Civil War. The South in fact fought to defend its traditions and privileges against the encroachments of federal authority.[56]

Reformist and revolutionary violence The reformist motive for violence is a desire for limited change, the revolutionary motive a desire for widespread, thoroughgoing change. More precisely, the *revolutionary* motive is to change fundamentally the patterns of authority, that is, to change the basic institutions and procedures of society. Its satisfaction usually requires a substantial change in the values of society, a change in the operating norms of institutional life, and replacement of the elites who manage institutions. The *reformist* motive is to change what existing institutions do, that is, to change their operating norms and more specifically some of their practices and policies. Both reformist and revolutionary motives for violence are progressive or "forward looking," as distinct from "backward-looking" defensive movements. Those who hold such motives and use violence as a means for achieving them want to create something new, not to restore something old. An American com-

[56] For a general interpretation of American political violence as defensive, see Richard E. Rubenstein, *Rebels in Eden: Mass Political Violence in the United States* (Boston, 1970).

parison should make this clear. The Whiskey Rebellion in Pennsylvania in the 1790s was defensive, a farmers' movement of resistance to an influx of federal officials and the imposition of new taxes. Dorr's Rebellion in Rhode Island in 1842 was reformist; the demand was for extension of the suffrage for workers, in the face of economic depression.

Reformist and revolutionary motives are not absolutely distinct: they differ in the degree of change sought, and thus constitute two poles of a continuum. To achieve reforms it is often necessary to make some fundamental institutional changes. And those who want revolutionary changes usually do so because they seek massive changes in the practices of existing institutions, not because they value institutional change as an end in itself.

Social movements and motives for violence I am specifically concerned with the use of violence on the part of *social movements.* I am referring to the coalescence of a large number of people to take concerted efforts to solve a set of common problems.[57] A social class is not a social movement in this sense, though it can give rise to one. Neither is a government, though it may originally have arisen from a social movement (e.g., the New England Puritans), and may foster social movements (e.g., "private" resistance to integration in the American South during the 1950s and early 1960s, abetted by local governments). Most social movements draw their membership from particular functional or hierarchic groups. The trade union, feminist, and black power movements are familiar examples. Others, like the ecology and "law and order" movements in the contemporary United States—if the last is indeed a movement—bring together members of disparate groups and classes.

Social movements can be organized around an infinity of objectives, and can pursue those objectives using a great variety of tactics. Few movements will be homogeneous in objectives; hence through their members they may represent motives of several or even all four of the types mentioned above. At the most general level of analysis, however, it should be both possible and useful to indicate whether a particular movement is predominantly defensive, reformist, or revolutionary, and, failing this, to indicate what the approximate "mix" is. The current women's movement in the United States, for example, has both reformist and revolutionary objectives, and, as is frequently the case, those objectives are represented in separate organizations: the National Organization of

[57] For a similar definition, see Hans Toch, *The Social Psychology of Social Movements* (New York, 1965), p. 5.

Women is predominantly reformist, while the congeries of groups called Women's Liberation are predominantly revolutionary.

A movement may specify violence as a primary or secondary tactic, or may explicitly rule it out. A movement may also be the object of violent opposition from other groups even though its members never advocate nor take violent action themselves. I propose, however, that the hypotheses advanced below concerning the determinants of the success of movements are applicable to movements involving violence *irrespective of the circumstances in which violence occurs.* Whether a movement initiates violence, is victimized by it, or becomes involved in violent conflict with another group, the general hypotheses about its success should tend to hold.

One last qualification is needed before proceeding to the hypotheses. I have no generalizations to offer about the "success" of the violence of self-assertion. It is an immediate motive, whose satisfaction is found in, or immediately following, the act. If an individual or group using self-assertive violence "gets away with it" without dire immediate consequences, they succeed. The more interesting kinds of questions are the determinants of the success or failure of violence when used in the pursuit of *long-run* objectives—in other words, violence used in the attempt to achieve substantial social change.

A general proposition *The greater the violence used against people who believe they are in the right, the greater the likelihood of their resistance, to the extent of their capacities.* This proposition applies to all situations in which violence is used for social purposes, and it underlies the hypotheses to follow. The rationale is straightforward; the use or threat of violence against people is an attack, a frustration and, unless it is of an absolutely overwhelming, life-endangering nature, it stimulates anger and a desire to retaliate. Even when fear predominates, which it may do at first attack, the longer run effect is that anger increases as fear subsides. The proposition might be called the "backlash" principle. It applies to any kind of targeted violence, whatever group or institution initiates it, and has one important ramification that bears mentioning here. People are symbol users, and respond as much to symbols as to direct action. Thus, the news that violence has been used against "your kind," against any group or institution with which people identify, tends to anger all those who so identify, whether or not they are directly affected.

The success of defensive violence *Violence used in efforts to maintain order or otherwise to defend a status quo in the allocation of values is*

likely to have the intended effects to the extent that three conditions hold: (1) *the purposes for which violence is used are generally accepted;* (2) *violence is generally accepted as a legitimate means;* and (3) *those against whom violence is used are too few and powerless to increase their resistance.*

This tripartite hypothesis should apply to any collective use of violence by or against a social movement. It attributes the success of a violent defensive movement less to its tactics than to the social circumstances in which it operates. An example of a successful, nongovernmental defensive movement in America is provided by the Reconstruction South. Between 1865 and 1878 Southern whites succeeded in reversing almost all the effects of the 14th and 15th Amendments; black Southerners were not reenslaved, but the terror and intimidation inflicted on them and their handful of white Republican supporters in the South was in many ways worse than slavery itself. The chronicle of mob action, vigilante-style beatings, shootings, burnings, and open rebellion against Northern authorities and black militia is too long, dismal, and well documented to repeat here.[58] The success of counterreconstruction was assured by the fact that all three of the hypothetical conditions were met.

1. Almost all white Southerners believed that blacks had to be resubjugated, otherwise Southern civilization was doomed.
2. Violence was generally accepted by Southerners as a legitimate means to this end. They had just fought a much more violent war for similar purpose, while newspaper editorials and public statements by officials and politicians of the era repeatedly condoned such violence.
3. Southern blacks and their Northern sympathizers were too weak to resist or reverse the effects of violence for any length of time. Republican political supporters, black and white, were a minority almost everywhere in the South, and, even where they were not, they often lacked means to resist. The maintenance of Federal law and order depended substantially on black militia units commanded by white officers, at least until conservative white state governments were reestablished. These units were neither well trained nor well equipped; their officers were sometimes openly murdered, their men attacked by armed bands of whites. Federal policy was generally not to send troop reinforcements. The most telling factor, perhaps, was the lack of white cooperation in efforts to apprehend the whites who carried out campaigns of concerted terror;

[58] Of many studies see, for example, John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction* (Chicago, 1961).

white Southerners could use violence with almost complete impunity against weakly defended blacks.

The case is illustrative, not definitive. A number of additional cases of both successful and unsuccessful defensive movements would be required to determine its general applicability.

The success of reformist violence I assume here that most reformist movements have no more than moderate power to attain their own ends; they are ordinarily in the position of trying to persuade, or force, powerful "others" to make changes on their behalf. In these circumstances, the following hypothesis suggests the conditions of their success. *Violence used in efforts to persuade or coerce "powerful others" to change is likely to have the intended effects to the extent that:*

(1) *the "others" accept or at least do not reject outright the desirability of the change sought;* (2) *the "others" have the capacity to make the change;* and (3) *the reaction of the "others" against violence does not override their willingness to change.*

The feminist movement in England from the 1890s to 1918 provides an example of successful reform, in which all three conditions appear to have been met. It had as its sole objective the right of women to vote and otherwise to participate in politics. The principle division in the movement was between the tactically moderate Women's Freedom League and the militant suffragettes of the Women's Social and Political Union. The tactics of the latter included an eight-year sequence of increasingly disruptive mass demonstrations, confrontations with officials, and face-slapping brawls with police, developing into a concerted terrorist campaign. At its height, between 1911 and 1914, the suffragettes carried out great numbers of stonings, fire bombings of public buildings, railway stations, and officials' homes, window breaking of the type now called "trashing," and some whipping and hatchet attacks on officials. By 1918 all women over thirty were enfranchised and allowed to stand for Parliament. The conditions of success developed seriatum:

1. The pursuit of woman's suffrage began in the 1860s, first against the disinterest, then the derision, of politicians. Some fifty years of agitation on the issue gradually increased male support, as evidenced in increasingly favorable House of Commons votes on the issue. Though no Government would declare itself in favor of woman's suffrage until 1917, by that year public and political opinion clearly accepted the principle.
2. The English government unquestionably had the authority to grant

woman's suffrage; Commons had in fact taken away the right to vote held by a miniscule number of women in 1832.

3. The public reaction against suffragette violence seems significantly to have delayed the granting of the reform. Although Commons had voted favorably on suffrage in 1909, the Government allowed the House of Lords to kill it. The subsequent four years of violent protest were accompanied by increased reluctance of successive governments to deal with the issue. The outbreak of World War I provided a respite; within a month of its onset all militant actions were suspended, and many of the suffragettes took up auxiliary military service. Given the lull in violent protest, and the war itself, in 1917 the prime minister declared himself for suffrage and an electoral reform was promptly passed by the overwhelming margin of 364 to 23.[59]

These three conditions of reformist success can be used to evaluate both contemporary and historical movements, as a comparison of two contemporary American movements demonstrates: The civil rights for black Americans, and the antiwar, antimilitarism movements. Neither of these movements has been predominantly violent, but each has provided the occasion for considerable violence of protest and resistance. The question is how this violence affects their success.

1. *Desirability of change.* Considering only the federal level of government, a substantial difference seems apparent in the desirability of the two types of change. Federal officials and the majority of congressmen have substantially accepted the desirability of effective civil rights for blacks; few federal officials and only a minority of congressmen have adopted a substantially antimilitaristic view. As one consequence, there has been a great deal of rule making and administrative activity on behalf of civil rights, but only a gradual and limited shift in military policy.
2. *Capacity to change.* On this variable, the balance is reversed. The federal government has only limited capacity to deal with the fundamental problem of civil rights, which is comprised of the ingrained racist attitudes and practices of a wide spectrum of American institutions. The slowness of effective civil rights progress is a function of widespread public resistance more than of governmental disinterest. On the antimilitarism issue, however, the federal government clearly has the power to change the United States' military policies overseas as well as to retrench overall military

[59] This summary is drawn largely from Roger Fulford, *Votes for Women* (London, 1957).

expenditures and activities; it is the *desirability* of change that has not been widely accepted, except to some degree on Vietnam.

3. *Reaction against violence.* There is every evidence that ghetto riots in the mid-1960s and the dramatized terrorism and revolutionary posturing of some black militants had substantially undermined the partial public support gained by the civil rights movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This backlash effect was reflected in opinion poll data, in the Nixon Administration's policies of "benign neglect," in widespread political opposition to programs thought to benefit blacks primarily, and in a variety of more specific and localized ways. Similarly, the use of violence by the suicidal left of the antiwar movement resulted in a widely-felt backlash at college students and youth generally.

In summary, the civil rights and antiwar movements have both been no more than partly successful, because in each instance they have confronted a "mix" of favorable and unfavorable conditions for their success.

The success of revolutionary violence Revolutionary objectives can be pursued without the use of revolutionary violence. In the United States today, many groups have been consciously working for revolutionary changes by peaceful means, to a degree that I think is without historical parallel. India during Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaigns seems to offer the only approximate analogy. The question here, however, is what the requirements are for successful revolutionary change when prosecuted by traditional, violent methods of revolutionary conflict.[60] I suggest the following conditions: *Violence used to achieve revolutionary change is likely to lead to the desired effects to the extent that three conditions hold:* (1) *the revolutionaries overcome the resistance of their opponents;* (2) *the revolutionaries remain committed to their plans for change after gaining power;* and (3) *the revolutionaries have the resources and social engineering capacities to bring about social change.*

The first of these conditions stipulates, in effect, that the revolutionaries have to "win"—i.e., a political revolution must occur before they can even attempt to bring about change. Conditions for winning can also be stipulated, derived from the numerous etiological theories reviewed above. The revolutionaries require substantial popular, though not necessarily majoritarian, support. In addition, they must have a degree of

[60] The essential conditions of nonviolent revolutionary success are probably similar to those specified earlier for reformist movements associated with violence.

organizational support from their followers at least equivalent to that of their opponents. Finally, and most immediately, they require military means sufficient to stand off the incumbents.

Revolutionary commitment, strategic skill, favorable terrain, external support, and guerrilla or terroristic tactics can compensate to a considerable degree for what the revolutionaries may lack in numbers and equipment. Almost always, however, revolutionary victory results not from a regime's defeat on the battlefield per se, but from the erosion of the military's willingness to continue to support the regime. The Communist Chinese defeat of the Nationalist regime in 1949 is one of the rare exceptions to this principle. Fidel Castro's victory in Cuba in 1959 was a good deal more typical. The Batista regime lost much of its popular support because of its increasingly terroristic and inconsistent practice of violence against urban and rural peoples. The institutional balance shifted toward the Castro forces, not because of relatively limited organizational development in the rural areas they controlled, but because of the disaffection of labor and middle-class organizations with the regime. The military balance was turned not by any great rebel victory—their number under arms in December 1958 was no more than 1,000—but by the precipitous decline in army morale. Had Batista not gone into exile on December 31, leaving Havana open to Castro, he would have been overthrown very shortly by one of the coup groups already active in the military.[61]

One other point should be made about "winning." The political triumph of the revolutionaries is not necessarily the end of revolutionary conflict. Counterrevolutions are always a possibility. In Hungary in 1919, a five-month-old Socialist revolutionary regime was overthrown in a counterrevolution that had foreign military support. Counterrevolution in Russia, 1919–21, was unsuccessful despite foreign intervention, but it devastated the country. The absence of organized, violent attempts to reverse a revolution does not necessarily mean acquiescence to the revolutionary cause, either. Massive emigration, noncooperation, and clandestine sabotage by those who supported the old elite can be a devastating burden on "successful" revolutionaries. One of the Cuban revolution's greatest liabilities after 1959 was the wholesale defection of people with the professional, technical, and administrative skills needed for economic and political transformation.

Revolutionary leaders may change their objectives, too. They may prove more interested in exploiting the "revolution" for their personal benefit than in prosecuting change. Or they may engage their resources

[61] See, for example, Boris Goldenberg, *The Cuban Revolution and Latin America* (New York, 1965).

and energies in foreign conflict, either out of necessity or an excess of revolutionary zeal. Some, like the Cuban leaders in 1959, and perhaps to a lesser degree the Chinese leaders in 1949, may choose revolutionary policies that alienate many of those who initially supported them. Revolutionary leaders cannot entirely avoid breaking faith with their followers, simply because of the diversity and mutual inconsistency of their revolutionary aspirations. In Cuba, however, the revolutionary "betrayal" was both substantial and unusual, substantial because it hurt most of the revolution's middle and skilled working-class supporters, unusual because the leaders sought much greater change than originally proposed, rather than the revolutionary norm of circumscribed change.

Probably the most common source of failure among those who win political revolutions is their limited capacity to manage change. At the point of victory almost every revolutionary regime confronts either an inert social mass of beliefs, practices, and institutions that obdurately resist change, or at best an inchoate social system riven by dissensus and paralyzed by institutional collapse. (The latter is better because, to extend a familiar revolutionary analogy, it is easier to make an omelette if the eggs are already broken.) In neither circumstance are revolutionary leaders likely to have tested methods for bringing about the kinds of social change they seek. The history of every attempt at managed revolutionary transformation with which I am familiar is comprised of a mixture of immediate gains, bootless experimentation, and policy disasters. Only occasionally is there a gradual, long-run redirection of social, productive, and political trends somewhat in the original revolutionary direction.[62]

The accuracy of these few hypotheses about the utility of violence as a lever for social change can be empirically assessed. I suggest them only as a first cut at the problem. They should be substantially elaborated and made more precise. Even at best, they can make only a small contribution to the larger problem of tracing the whole network of connections between violent conflict and subsequent social change.

[62] Much the same can be said of most large-scale nonrevolutionary efforts at social engineering; vide the results of most of the Johnson Administration's "Great Society" programs. The problem is not so much that the reformers or revolutionaries lack zeal, or even resources; lack of operational knowledge and resistance by those who are to be engineered are usually more vitiating.