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Revolutions and the International

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Abstract

Although contemporary theorists of revolution usually claim to be incorporating international dynamics in their analysis, 'the international' remains a residual feature of revolutionary theory. For the most part, international processes are seen either as the facilitating context *for* revolutions or as the dependent outcome *of* revolutions. The result is an analytical bifurcation between international and domestic in which the former serves as the backdrop to the latter's causal agency. This paper demonstrates the benefits of a fuller engagement between revolutionary theory and 'the international'. It does so in three steps: first, the paper examines the ways in which contemporary revolutionary theory apprehends 'the international'; second, it lays out the descriptive and analytical advantages of an 'intersocietal' approach; and third, it traces the ways in which international dynamics help to constitute revolutionary situations, trajectories, and outcomes. In this way, revolutions are understood as 'intersocietal' all the way down.

Keywords

Revolutionary theory; international relations; intersocietal; revolutionary situations; revolutionary trajectories; revolutionary outcomes

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A long time ago in a country far, far away

In 1791, a rebellion broke out in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, the smaller, western part of the island of Hispaniola, situated not far from Cuba. Although Saint-Domingue was small, it enjoyed a lucrative role in the world economy, producing half of the world's coffee and 40% of its sugar (Klooster 2009: 84). Saint-Domingue was a colony of France, which was heavily dependent on the island: Saint-Domingue supplied two-thirds of the metropole's overseas trade (James 2001/1938: xviii). So substantial was this trade that the value of crops produced in Saint-Domingue during the 1780s was worth more to the French treasury than the combined merchandise returned to Spain from all of its colonies (Klooster 2009: 84; Stephanson 2010: 199). Beyond its leading role in the production of coffee and sugar, Saint-Domingue was a central node in one of the most important tradable commodities of the time – slaves. During the 1780s, 30,000 slaves per year were imported from Africa to Saint-Domingue (Stephanson 2010: 204). As a result, the island was home to the largest population of slaves in the region: slaves represented 89% of the island's population (Hunt 2010: 26). These slaves were highly valuable – they were worth three times as much as the value of the land and buildings in the colony combined (Klooster 2009: 91). But despite their value, slaves were subject to abject conditions both on the passage to Saint-Domingue and during their time in the colony itself (Blackburn 1986; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000). Whipping was an everyday part of life on the estates and plantations, while strict punishments were meted out to those who tried to escape: branding and severed ears for a first offence; further branding and severed hamstrings for a second offence; execution for a third offence (Klooster 2009: 92). Large numbers of slaves died from mistreatment, malnourishment, and disease. For those who survived, their lives were ones of immiseration and indignity.

Although Saint-Domingue was home to a number of slave revolts in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the 1791 rebellion had a more pronounced edge than those that had gone before. Partly this was due to the broader context of upheaval that followed the French Revolution of 1789, an event of consequence not just for France, but also for its overseas possessions. Indeed, the victory of the revolutionaries in France allowed Domingue's *gens de couleur* – an elite minority of freed slaves and mixed race European-Africans (mulattos) – to lobby the new government in Paris for the recognition of full

political and civil rights. These rights were denied under the Saint-Dominguan 'Code Noir', an act that reserved a number of professions for whites and forbade blacks from adopting a range of cultural practices, including dressing like whites (Klooster 2009: 89). At the same time, the colonial elite (*grands blancs*) saw the 1789 revolution as an opportunity to lobby for commercial autonomy from the metropole, something made pressing by heightened inter-imperial competition which, amongst other things, fostered metropolitan demands for exclusionary trade regimes (Adelman 2008: 327-8). In this, they were aided by ideas of self-rule and nativism, which acted to reconfigure notions of sovereignty within imperial territories. They were also aided by an uprising amongst black slaves in the northern part of the country, where 'protest was part of everyday life' (Klooster 2009: 91). Initially, the demands of the slaves were limited to the abolition of reviled practices, most notably the use of the whip. Over time, however, slave demands became more radical, cultivating a movement that sought the overthrow of slavery, mulatto domination, and French colonialism. This uprising was to have major repercussions not just for Saint-Domingue, but also for the wider world.

The revolutionary struggle in Saint-Domingue was long and bloody.¹ In 1800, insurgents under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe forced an initial French surrender. After a further period of re-invasion and bloodletting in which tens of thousands were killed on both sides, the revolutionaries forced a second, final French surrender in November 1803. On 1st January 1804, Dessalines became Governor-General of the independent republic of Haiti, the name given to the territory by the indigenous Taino people. The successful revolution in Haiti had cascading effects. In France, it became increasingly difficult to square the principles of the 1789 revolution – liberty, equality, fraternity – with the slave trade, particularly after the Haitian uprising demonstrated the capacity of slaves to resist, fight, and govern for themselves, and all against the largest French Army ever to have been sent overseas. Even before the revolution in Saint-Domingue had been concluded, the universality of discourse around rights was challenged by racial

¹ For the purposes of this article, revolutionary struggles are considered in a broad sense, i.e. as contestations over state power sustained by mass mobilization, an ideology of social justice, and an attempt to enact forceful institutional change (Goldstone 2014: 4). Successful revolutions are the rapid, mass, forceful, systemic transformation of a society's political, economic, and symbolic relations (Lawson Forthcoming).

discrimination, leading to debates over whether the revolutionary constitution should be extended to the colonies. The Society of the Friends of the Blacks (*Société des Amis des Noirs*), led by major revolutionary figures including Brissot, Condorcet, and Mirabeau, argued that slavery could not stand alongside revolutionary claims of universal rights and equality. In April 1792, male *gens de couleur* in Saint-Domingue were granted full civil rights. The following year, the French colonial commissioners abolished slavery in the territory. In 1793, Jean-Baptiste Belley, a *gens de couleur* representing northern Saint-Domingue, became the first non-white to take up a seat in the National Assembly. And in February 1794, the revolutionary regime in Paris extended emancipation throughout the French colonies. In Britain too, the experience of Haiti and other slave rebellions acted as a spur to the abolitionist movement. Although both colonialism and slavery proved to be resilient features of nineteenth century international order, the Haitian revolution served as a catalyst for debates that, over time, deinstitutionalized slavery and formal racial discrimination around the world (Geggus 2002, 2010; Shilliam 2008).

Further afield, the revolution ended Saint-Domingue's role as a major exporter of sugar and coffee, presaging the relative decline of the Caribbean within global economic circuits (Geggus 2010: 85). It also presaged a shift in relative power within the Americas – after the defeat in Haiti, Napoleon effectively abandoned the French imperial project in the region, selling 'Louisiana' to the United States and, as a result, greatly adding to the territory and capabilities of the United States. The effects of this reorientation in French policy also had a number of unintended consequences. Napoleon's occupation of Spain and Portugal in 1807-8 provided a window of opportunity for independence movements throughout Hispanic America. These movements were, in turn, encouraged by the revolutionary government in Haiti, particularly the administration in the southern part of the country led by Alexandre Pétion, which first sheltered Simon Bolívar and then supported his struggle for independence in return for a commitment to abolish slavery. Pétion argued that the Americas should be made free of Spanish 'monsters', and called for both Africans and Amerindians to settle in Haiti (Geggus 2010: 99). The example of Haiti acted as a spur to further uprisings in the region, including those in Jamaica, Grenada, St Vincent, St Lucia, Martinique, and Guadalupe. Indeed, it could be argued that the Haitian revolution formed part of a transnational field of

contention that was constituted not just in the Americas and the Caribbean, but which incorporated South Asia, East Asia, and the Arabian Gulf (Armitage and Subraymanyam, 2010: xx-xxi).

In sum, therefore, multiple strands of late-eighteenth century international order were brought into question by the Haitian revolution: the superiority of European coercive power; the legitimacy of colonial rule; an economic system premised on the trafficking of African slaves; and the doctrine of racial superiority that underlay the system itself. In the Haitian revolution can be found many of the dynamics that underpinned world politics over the ensuing two centuries: the extension of capitalism around the world and the development of movements intended to counter its inequities; the expansion of European colonialism and the many forms of resistance that rose up against it; and the circulation of contentious repertoires, particularly around ideas of rights, independence, and equality, which served as the 'world cultural scripts' for later uprisings in Europe, South Asia, the Americas, Indochina, and parts of Africa (Beck 2011). It may be stretching the point to follow C.L.R. James (2001: 305) in asserting that 'what took place in French Saint-Domingue in 1792-1804 reappeared in Cuba in 1958' – Haitian slaves neither started history afresh nor engendered world revolution. But by fundamentally altering the conditions of their servitude, Haiti's revolutionaries served as an inspiration for others, affecting both the region around them and broader currents of world historical development. Although the French Revolution has become known as the quintessential modern revolution, it may be that Haiti is a better exemplar of the dynamics that animate both the study and practice of revolution.²

If this is the case, it seems curious that Haiti is not a better-known instance of revolutionary change. Haiti plays little-to-no role in landmark studies of the Atlantic 'age of revolution' (e.g. Palmer 1959, 1964; Hobsbawm 1962). The impact of Haiti on the French Revolution goes largely unobserved (e.g. Rudé 1964; Furet 1999; Stone 2002). And Haiti serves only as a footnote within general studies of the subject (e.g.

² Or perhaps it is better to take both cases together. The Haitian revolutionaries were labeled by C.L.R. James (2001) as the 'black Jacobins' in order to stress the many connections between the revolutionary forces and their counterparts in France.

Foran 2005).³ In fact, it has been left primarily to historians to demonstrate the centrality of the Haitian Revolution to the international relations of the period (e.g. Klooster 2009; Hunt 2010; Popkin 2010). These studies demonstrate both the transnational features of the Haitian revolution and the ways in which a 'peripheral' territory was generative of discourse and policy in the 'metropole'. Although Eric Hobsbawm (1962: 4) argued that 'the world revolution spread outward from the double crater of England and France', the experience of the Haitian revolution reveals a more polycentric character to the modern experience of revolution.

Revolutions and the international

The relative neglect of the Haitian revolution illustrates two important points about scholarship on revolutions. First, it indicates that revolutionary theory contains a blindspot, one shared with many other areas of the social sciences, which prevents it from addressing the *constitutive* role played by 'backward' places in more 'advanced' polities (Go 2013; Shilliam 2008). Much of the modern academy is oriented towards histories and theories based on the experiences of the 'core', whether such accounts are laudatory or critical. The multiple ways in which the Haitian Revolution impacted broader transnational currents are a warning that such a focus is somewhere between limited and misleading. This point, however, is not the main focus of this article. Rather, the article is concerned with a second issue raised by the neglect of the Haitian revolution – that there is something amiss with how revolutionary theory approaches 'the international'. In other words, if there are a number of *particular* reasons why Haiti has been downplayed in the study of revolutions, Haiti also reveals a more *general* shortcoming in terms of how scholarship on revolutions treats 'the international'.

This may seem like an odd claim to make. After all, revolutionaries from Toussaint to Khomeini have long held that the international system – whether understood as colonial, capitalist, racist, or a combination of all three – operates as a structure of oppression. Given this, it is no surprise to find that, for most revolutionaries, internationalism was considered to be a *necessary* response to the inequities of global

³ One notable exception within revolutionary scholarship is Eric Selbin (2010: 143), who argues that Haiti is 'the world's most important revolutionary process', albeit one that 'virtually everyone ignores'.

structures. Marx and Engels (1967: 46-7) thought that communism could not exist 'as a local event. The proletariat can only exist on the world-historical plane, just as communism, its activity, can only have a world historical existence'. Trotsky (1997) famously spoke of the need for 'permanent revolution' in order to stoke the fires of global insurrection; Lenin's analysis ran along similar lines: 'global class, global party, global revolution' (*Weltklasse, Weltpartei, Weltrevolution*) (in Halliday 2008: 70). Ayatollah Khomeini also invoked the ways in which revolutions must challenge international order: 'state boundaries are the product of a deficient human mind ... The revolution does not recognize borders and frontiers, it will go through them' (in Abrahamian 1993: 49). And Che Guevara (1968: 62) turned internationalism into a 'battle cry' of anti-imperialism in his 'Message to the People of the World':

How close and bright would the future appear if two, three, many Vietnams flowered on the face of the globe ... what difference do the dangers to a human being or people matter when what is at stake is the destiny of humanity. Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism and a call for the unity of the peoples.

If revolutionaries have long pointed to the necessarily international components of their struggles, many revolutionary theorists also claim to have incorporated the international aspects of revolutions into their analyses. In response to the relative neglect of international factors by 'first' and 'second' generation scholarship, beginning in the 1970s, 'third generation' revolutionary theorists (e.g. Goldfrank 1975, 1979; Skocpol 1979; Tilly 1990; Goldstone 1991; Katz 1997) included a range of international factors in their accounts.⁴ Goldfrank (1979: 143, 148-51) argued that the roots of revolutions lay in the 'world capitalist system' and its 'intensive international flows of commodities, investments, and laborers', 'great power configurations' (such as a shift in the balance of power), a 'favorable world situation' (such as changing client-patron relations), and a 'general world context' (such as a world war, which served to preoccupy great powers). Skocpol (1979: 14) famously argued that 'social revolutions

⁴ The idea of there being several 'generations' of scholarship on revolutions stems from the work of Lawrence Stone (1966) and Jack Goldstone (2001). Although such an approach can foster an overly tidy picture of the development of revolutionary theory, and uproot 20th and 21st century approaches from their classical heritages, there are two benefits to thinking in generational terms: first, it works as a heuristic device by which to parse theories of revolution; and second, it helps to illuminate the development of a self-conscious canon in the study of revolutions.

cannot be explained without systematic reference to *international structures and world historical development*' (emphasis in original). Skocpol (1973: 30-1; 1979: 19-24) highlighted the formative role played by two international factors in the onset of revolutions: the uneven spread of capitalism and inter-state (particularly military) competition. Both of these factors were embedded within 'world historical time', by which Skocpol (1979: 23) meant the overarching context within which inter-state competition and capitalist development took place. Tilly (1990: 186) also highlighted the importance of inter-state competition, arguing that: 'All of Europe's great revolutions, and many of its lesser ones, began with the strains imposed by war'.⁵ Goldstone (1991: 24-5, 459-60) widened this focus by noting the ways in which rising populations across a range of territories served to foster state fiscal crises (by increasing prices and decreasing tax revenues), heighten elite fracture (as competition between patronage networks was sharpened), and prompt popular uprisings (as wages declined in real terms). Finally, Katz (1997: 13, 29) noted the ways in which 'central revolutions' (such as France in 1789 and Egypt in 1952) fostered 'waves' of 'affiliated revolutions' (also see: Markoff 1996; Sohrabi 2002; Beck 2011).

The 'retrieval' of the international by third generation revolutionary theorists has been extended by a number of 'fourth generation' theorists (e.g. Goldstone 2001, 2009, 2014; Foran 2005; Kurzman, 2008; Beck 2011, 2014). As discussed below, of John Foran's (2005) five 'indispensable conditions' that have enabled revolutions in the Third World to take place, two – dependent development and world-systemic opening – are overtly international. Charles Kurzman (2008) has noted the ways in which a global wave of democratic revolutions in the early part of the 20th century spread over widely dispersed territories, from Mexico to China. Kurzman (2008: 8) argues that this wave acted as a 'dress rehearsal' for later events, most notably the 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Colin Beck (2011: 193) sees such waves as likely to increase 'as the level of world culture more rapidly expands', an argument that finds support in Mark Beissinger's (2014: 16-17) database of revolutionary episodes, which

⁵ Despite this statement, Tilly's concern with the generative power of warfare was integrated more into his analysis of state-formation than it was into his account of revolutions. Indeed, the role of war (or any international factor) in fostering revolutionary situations is absent from Tilly's (1978) major work on the subject – *From Mobilization to Revolution*.

shows a marked increase in both the depth and breadth of revolutionary waves over the past century. Jack Goldstone (2014: 19, 21-2) lists a variety of ways through which 'favorable international relations' serve as the conditions for societal instability, plus lists a range of factors, from demographic changes (such as rising populations) to shifting inter-state relations (such as the withdrawal of external support for a client regime), by which international processes help to cause revolutions.⁶

Given this proliferation of interest in the international components of revolutions, it could be argued that contemporary revolutionary scholarship has solved the 'problem' of the international. Many contemporary works are replete with references to transnational empirical connections (such as revolutionary repertoires that cross borders), while international factors are often seen as the precipitant cause of revolutions (through relations of dependent development), and as the direct outcomes of revolutions (through inducing inter-state conflict). It is certainly the case that these accounts have gone a considerable way to opening up a productive exchange between revolutionary theory and 'the international' – this article aims to build on the insights of Goldfrank, Skocpol, Goldstone, Foran, Kurzman, Selbin, Beck, and other pioneers. However, the article also seeks to extend the insights of this scholarship by demonstrating how 'the international' has not yet been theorized 'all the way down'. There are three motivations that lie behind this claim. First, despite increasing attention to the multiple connections between revolutions and the international, this relationship remains unevenly examined, being highly visible in some work (e.g. Foran 2005; Kurzman 2008; Selbin 2010; Goldstone 2014; Beck 2014), yet all but invisible in others (e.g. Parsa 2000; Goodwin 2001; Thompson 2004; Slater 2010).⁷ Clearly there is much still to do in terms

⁶ Such fourth generation scholarship sits in parallel to recent work on the transnational dimensions of contentious politics, which stresses the co-constitutive relationship between domestic and international mechanisms (Tarrow 2005, 2011, 2013; Bob 2005, 2012; Carpenter 2014; Weyland 2014). The word 'parallel' is used advisedly. With relatively few exceptions (e.g. Tarrow 2012: ch. 4; Tarrow 2013: ch. 2), debates on contentious politics and non-violent protests are not well integrated into the study of revolutions. And, as is the case with revolutionary scholarship, the international is unevenly integrated into this analysis, playing a major role in Tarrow (2013), a minor role in Nepstad (2011), and virtually no role in Chenoweth and Stephan (2011).

⁷ Parsa's (2000) deployment of the international is restricted to the *ad hoc* activities of international organizations (such as the IMF) and non-governmental organizations (such as the International Red Cross). Goodwin's (2001) use of the international is

of 'mainstreaming' international factors into the analysis of revolutions. Second, usage of the international is often reduced to a handful of factors. In Skocpol's analysis, for example, inter-state competition is a surrogate for military interactions, particularly defeat in war. Hence: 'wars ... are the midwives of revolutionary crises' (Skocpol 1979: 286). As the next section shows, such a view neglects the ways in which a cornucopia of international processes, from transnational cultural repertoires to inter-state alliance structures, affect the onset of revolutions. Third, much revolutionary scholarship has incorporated international factors via a strategy of 'add international and stir', grafting international factors *onto* existing theoretical scaffolding rather than integrating such factors *within* a single framework. This point is worth examining in more depth.

In John Foran's (2005: 18-23) influential work, revolutions in the Third World are seen as emerging from the interaction of five 'indispensable conditions': dependent development (which exacerbates social tensions); exclusionary, personalistic regimes (which polarize opposition); political cultures of opposition (which legitimize revolutionary movements); economic downturns (which radicalize these movements); and a world-systemic opening (which denotes a 'let-up' of external constraints). Two of Foran's five causal conditions are overtly international: dependent development and world-systemic opening. Yet these factors contain little by way of causal force. The first, dependent development, is a virtually universal condition of core-periphery relations – to paraphrase Skocpol's (1979: 34) comment on the ubiquity of 'relative deprivation': what 'peripheral' society lacks widespread dependence of one sort or another on a metropole? Even given Foran's (2005: 19) specific rendering of dependent development as, following Cardoso and Faletto (1979), Evans (1979), and Roxborough (1989), a particular process of accumulation ('growth within limits'), it is clear that the concept is wide enough to be applicable to almost every 'Third World' state. This is something borne out by Foran's (2005: 255) own analysis, in which dependent development

limited to the observation that states inhabit an international system of states. Thompson (2004) barely mentions international factors at all. Slater's (2010) account of south-east Asian revolutionary movements explicitly excludes the international dimensions of these movements from the book's theoretical apparatus, even while the empirical sections of his book are saturated with such factors. Such a bifurcation parallels Barrington Moore's (1967: 214) account of revolutions, which reduced the theoretical impact of international forces to 'fortuitous circumstances' even as his empirical account relied heavily on them (on this point, see Skocpol 1973).

appears as a near constant of both successful and unsuccessful revolutions.⁸ In other words, the causal weight attributed to dependent development is nil: it serves as the background condition within which revolutions may or may not take place. In this sense, to posit relations between polities as dependent is less to assert a causal relationship than it is to describe the condition of most 'peripheral' states around the world. Without further specificity as to the quality and quantity of dependent development, the term becomes little more than an inert backdrop. At first glance, Foran's (2005: 23) second 'international' category – world-systemic opening – (by which he means a 'let-up' of existing international conditions through inter-state wars, depressions, and other such crises) appears to be more promising. Yet, here too, the causal agency of the international is significantly curtailed as world-systemic opening is seen merely as the final moment through which the 'revolutionary window opens and closes' (Foran 2005: 252). In other words, the structural preconditions that lie behind revolutions lie elsewhere – in *domestic* regime type, cultures of opposition, and socio-economic conditions. World-systemic opening is the final curtain call on a play that has largely taken place elsewhere.

In this way, both of the international components of Foran's analysis are limited to walk-on roles: dependent development is the background from which revolutions may or may not occur; world-systemic opening is the final spark of a crisis that has been kindled elsewhere. In this respect, the sequence through which Foran's multi-causal story works is highly significant: international (dependent development), domestic (exclusionary, repressive regimes), domestic (cultures of opposition), domestic (economic downturns), international (world-systemic opening). The fact that Foran's sequence *differentiates* international and domestic in this way reproduces the analytic bifurcation that his analysis – and fourth generation theorists more generally – hoped to overcome. Such a bifurcation occludes the myriad ways in which Foran's ostensibly domestic factors are deeply permeated by the international: exclusionary regimes are

⁸ Foran lists three exceptions (out of 39 cases) to the condition of dependent development – China (1911) (seen as a partial exception), Haiti (1986), and Zaire (1996). Yet it is difficult to see how these cases are free of dependent development in any meaningful sense. More convincing would be to see the three cases as ultra-reliant on wider metropolitan circuits, something Foran (2005: 254) seems to recognize in his depiction of Haiti and Zaire as cases of 'sheer underdevelopment'.

part of broader clusters of ideologically affiliated states, alliance structures, and client-patron relations; cultures of opposition are local-transnational hybrids of repertoires and meaning systems; socio-economic conditions are heavily dependent on market forces that transcend state borders. Rather than integrate the international throughout his causal sequence, Foran's maintains an empirical and theoretical bifurcation between domestic and international. And he loads the causal dice in favour of the former.

Foran's deployment of the international is emblematic of fourth generation revolutionary scholarship. For instance, Jack Goldstone (2001: 146), although clear that international factors contribute in multifaceted ways to both the causes and outcomes of revolutions, is equally clear about the division of labor that exists between these two registers:

Although the international environment can affect the risks of revolution in manifold ways, the precise impact of these effects, as well as the overall likelihood of revolution, is determined *primarily* by the internal relationships among state authorities, various elites, and various popular groups (emphasis added).

In similar vein, Goldstone's (2014) recent work makes much of the ways in which international factors serve as important conditions for, and causes of, revolutions. Yet international factors largely drop out of Goldstone's account of revolutionary processes and outcomes (with the exception of noting the propensity of revolutions to stoke inter-state war). In this way, even revolutionary scholarship that claims to fully incorporate international factors into its analysis can be seen as containing two shortcomings: first, the maintenance of an analytical bifurcation between international and domestic registers; and second, retaining a residual role for the international. As a result, attempts to integrate international factors into the study of revolutions tend to fall into a condition of: 'add international and stir'. Grafting the international onto existing theoretical scaffolding retains – and sometimes strengthens, albeit unintentionally – the bifurcation between international and domestic. And this bifurcation contains an (often implicit) assumption that the former serves as the *secondary* dimensions of the latter's *primary* causal agency. How might an approach that sought to more thoroughly integrate the international into the study of revolutions proceed?

An intersocietal approach

In generating a deeper integration between the international and revolutionary theory, the first thing to note is that the relatively sparse accounts of the international offered by scholarship on revolutions is matched by the discipline ostensibly intended to study the international components of the social world: International Relations (IR). If relatively few sociologists study transnational or global dynamics as a matter of course (exceptions include world systems, world society, and globalisation theorists), this is not the case with International Relations. Yet IR theorists have usually treated revolutions as problems to be solved (e.g. Walt 1996) or as noisy interlopers (e.g. Armstrong 1993) rather than as constitutive of international order (Halliday 1999 and Bukovansky 2002 are exceptions in this regard).⁹

Rather than look for help from existing work in IR, therefore, it is more profitable to begin with the work of transnational historians. A number of transnational histories have pointed to the ways in which revolutionary events contain an international dimension that supersedes the national-state frame (e.g. Stone 2002; Armitage, 2007; Adelman 2008; Hunt 2010). To take one example, the onset of the French Revolution cannot be understood without attention to the expansionist policies of the French state during the 17th and 18th centuries – between 1650 and 1780, France was at war in two out of every three years. This bellicosity, a product of pressures caused by developments in rival states as well as domestic factors, brought increased demands for taxation that, over time, engendered factionalism in the *ancien regime* (Stone 2002: 259-60). The interactive dimensions of international relations also affected events during the revolutionary period. For example, in 1792, as the Jacobins were losing influence to the Girondins, leading Girondins pressed the state into international conflict.¹⁰ As France's foreign campaigns went increasingly badly, the Committee of

⁹ If the rather conservative agenda of mainstream IR provides some rationale for this omission, it is more surprising to see the way in which revolutions dropped off the radar of Political Science and Comparative Politics during the 1990s and 2000s. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue. It may be that, in recent years, revolutions are making a comeback in these fields – see: Beissinger (2007, 2014); Slater (2010); Bunce and Wolchik (2007, 2011).

¹⁰ At the heart of the generalized Girondin-Jacobin conflict was a personal clash between Brissot and Robespierre. As Brissot called (successfully) for war with Austria, arguing that French troops would be greeted as liberators, Robespierre responded with

Public Safety, a leading site of Jacobin authority, blamed the Girondins for betraying the revolution and committed France to a process of domestic radicalization: the Terror. In this way, domestic political friction induced international conflict that, in turn, opened up space for heightened domestic polarization. The Jacobins identified the Girondins as ‘unrevolutionary’ traitors, speculators, and hoarders, while identifying themselves as the guardians of the revolution, a process of ‘certification’ that prompted a wave of militancy, most notably the *levée en masse* (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001: 323–7; Stone 2002: 194-208; Crépin 2013).

In addition to the roles played by international factors in both fostering the revolutionary situation and revolutionary trajectories in France, international relations also played a fundamental role in the outcomes of the revolution. First, the revolutionary regime annexed Rhineland and Belgium, and helped to ferment republican revolution in several neighboring countries, including Holland, Switzerland, and Italy. Second, the revolution prompted unrest throughout Europe, including Ireland, where a rebellion against English rule led to a violent conflict and, in 1800, the Acts of Union between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Third, the threat from France was met by extensive counter-revolution in neighboring states. In England, for example, *habeas corpus* was suspended in 1794, while legislation ranging from the Seditious Meetings Act to the Combination Acts was introduced in order to contain the spread of republicanism. Although the French did not generate an international revolutionary party, many states acted as if they had done just this, instituting domestic crackdowns in order to guard against the claim made by Jacques-Pierre Brissot that: ‘we [the French revolutionary regime] cannot be at peace until all Europe is in flames’ (cited in Palmer 1954: 11).

An approach that takes seriously the relationship between revolutions and the international builds from this understanding of the *generative* role of flows between and across borders. Such an approach charts the ways in which relations between people, networks, institutions, and polities drive revolutionary dynamics. Recall, for instance, the multifaceted dimensions of the Haitian Revolution: its embedding within

an apposite prognosis: ‘personne n'aime les missionnaires armés’ (‘no-one likes armed missionaries’). This is a lesson that subsequent revolutionaries have been slow to learn.

circuits of capitalist accumulation, slavery, and colonialism; its embroilment in interstate wars; and its impact on the development of uprisings in other parts of the world. Highlighting these connections is the principal contribution of an ‘intersocietal’ approach to the study of revolutions. The term ‘intersocietal’ is not intended to mean that the object of analysis must be ‘societies’ – rather, it is concerned with examining the relationship between ‘external’ and ‘internal’ dynamics wherever these are found: in ideas that cross borders, amongst networks of revolutionary actors, in asymmetrical market interactions, and more. *In fine*: an intersocietal approach is concerned with the ways in which differentially located, but interactively engaged, social sites affect the development of revolutions without containing a prior presumption of what these social sites are.

An intersocietal approach melds insights from both IR and Sociology. From IR comes an understanding of the international sphere as constituted around a specific problem – how order can be maintained in a realm featuring multiple sites of political authority. The ‘logic of anarchy’, it is argued, produces a sparse realm of self-help in which geopolitical necessities prohibit the emergence of enduring social ties (e.g. Waltz 1979). This neglect of the sociological features of international relations fails to take into account the multiple interactions that take place between entities in the international realm. Throughout human history, people, networks, institutions, and polities have emulated, coerced, and borrowed and stolen from each other – there is a sociological content to how these multiple entities have engaged with each other. These promiscuous interactions, allied to the uneven histories within which social orders are forged, are constitutive of how revolutions arise. To take one example: as Leon Trotsky (1997) argued in his account of the Bolshevik Revolution, British and German industrialization acted as ‘external whips’ on Russian development. The success of Britain and Germany forced Russian elites to import ‘advanced’ technologies and organizational systems en masse. However, Russia’s social order was quite different in both form and content to that found in Britain and Germany – it was home to an unstable mixture of ‘advanced’ and ‘archaic’ (Trotsky 1997). For Trotsky, the desire to ‘catch-up’ with more ‘advanced’ states succeeded only in fermenting domestic unrest. And this dynamic was not specific to Russia alone; rather, it was replicated by many of

Russia's contemporaries, including Bismarckian Prussia and Meiji Japan, as well as in many subsequent 'modernizing missions' around the world (Chibber 2013).

This insight produces two types of enquiry, both of which are concerned with how the plurality of entities is conjoined with interactivity between entities in order to foster revolutions. The first is a *descriptive* intersocietal approach. A descriptive intersocietal approach tracks the empirical connections between differentially located, but interactively engaged, social sites – previous sections highlighted examples from the French and Haitian revolutionary experiences. For all their richness, however, accounts that draw out these descriptive intersocietal connections do little to foster a second goal: the elucidating of the *analytical* advantages contained in an intersocietal approach. An analytical intersocietal approach is centered on the social logics through which differentially located, but interactively engaged, social sites affect causal pathways (Rosenberg 2006). When it comes to the study of revolutions, these analytical interactions take many forms: the pressures that emerge from the fusion of 'advanced' technologies in 'backward' sectors of the economy, the withdrawal of support by a patron, the transmission of revolutionary ideas and techniques across borders, the transnational diffusion of contentious performances, the desire to emulate both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary strategies, and so on. The next section of the paper illustrates the ways in which descriptive and analytical intersocietal dynamics affect revolutionary situations, trajectories, and outcomes.

Revolutionary situations

A revolutionary situation is defined by a regime and an opposition advancing competing, but exclusive, claims to the same polity (Tilly 1993: 10). The connections between revolutionary situations and intersocietal dynamics are clear. Revolutionary situations are more prone to emerge in eras of international upheaval, in which state effectiveness is threatened by inter-state conflicts, economic crisis, and shifts in prevailing patterns of hierarchy, authority, and rule.¹¹ In short, revolutions thrive in

¹¹ There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. For example, revolutions in Iran and Cuba took place without a major opening in international relations. Yet this does not mean that these revolutions were without intersocietal causes: Iranian revolutionaries benefited from post-Vietnam fatigue amongst US policy makers and publics, while Cuban revolutionaries benefitted from relatively favorable international press coverage,

‘abnormal times’, a point recognized vividly by Mao: ‘there is great chaos under Heaven; the situation is excellent’. In this sense, both the breakdown of semi-colonial monarchies at the beginning of the twentieth century and the winding-down of the Cold War at its end acted as a spur for revolutionary change. In the case of the former, the collapse of the Persian, Ottoman, and Chinese monarchies both constituted and induced a ‘crisis period’ that fostered the conditions for revolutionary situations to emerge (Hobsbawm 1986: 18). In the case of the latter, as long as revolutionaries framed their story as one of a ‘return to normalcy’, emancipation from the Soviet yoke, or as liberation from a system whose time had past, so the great powers welcomed what had previously been outcast states into international society (Lawson 2005: 228).

Changes in the international system therefore act as the fuel for revolutionary change – hence the rapid increase in revolutions at the end of world wars and after the collapse of empires (Beissinger, 2014: 21). Crises of international order, featuring breakdowns in extant international hierarchies, often prefigure ‘revolutionary waves’ – ‘groups of revolutions with similar objectives’ (Katz 1997: 11; also see Markoff 1996; Sohrabi 2002; Beck 2011). For example, the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev, the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, and the removal of the military guarantee for client states at the end of the 1980s had a decisive impact on the collapse of communism in Eastern and Central Europe (Lawson 2005). Soviet military failure (in Afghanistan) and economic weakness (made apparent by stagflation in the 1970s), along with a loss of faith in Marxism-Leninism as a political ideology (for example, through the challenge presented by ‘new thinking’ in the early-to-mid 1980s), prompted revolutions in a group of states subordinated or affiliated to the Soviet Union (Katz 1997: 84; Halliday 1999). In the post-Cold War era, revolutionary waves are intensifying as liberal markets, democratization, and ideas of individual autonomy (as vested in the human rights regime) foster a set of transgressive repertoires that threaten the hold of authoritarian regimes (Beck 2011; Beissinger 2014).

States most susceptible to these openings are those on the semi-periphery of the international system, dependent geo-politically and economically on other states, and

particularly in the New York Times. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing me to these examples.

facing challenges to 'modernize' from more 'advanced' states (Goldfrank 1975, 1979; Skocpol 1979). As noted in the previous section, the drive to carry out 'modernizing missions' can foster unstable amalgams of 'modern' and 'archaic' (Trotsky 1997; Chibber 2013). Pertinent examples include Mexico, Turkey, Russia, Iran, and contemporary Egypt. Revolutionary situations emerge when the dual (geopolitical and economic) dependency of states becomes unsustainable, and when the amalgam of 'modern' and 'archaic' fosters state crisis. In other words, revolutionary conditions surface in states when the ruling regime does not cope effectively with these challenges and when an opposition group emerges that espouses an alternative political ideology, holds sufficient resources to provide a credible challenge, and carries the support of significant social groups (Lawson 2005: 71). This opposition is given space for maneuver by the 'expanded access' fostered by shifts in intersocietal ties and the 'unstable alignments' that arise from the failure of some regimes to cope effectively with these shifts (Tarrow 2012: 78-80). Intersocietal relations serve as the causal crucibles that allow revolutionary movements the opportunity to redefine their positions.

In this way, intersocietal relations play a central role in the onset of revolutionary situations. For example, in the years leading up to the 2011 Arab uprisings, Egypt was the second largest recipient of US aid (worth around \$1 billion dollars per year in military aid alone), one of the main sites for the torture and rendition of suspected al-Qaida suspects, and a supporter of Israeli policies in the region, including the blockade of Gaza. These policies generated a sense of alienation between the regime and the people. According to the 2010 Pew Global Attitudes Survey, 82% of Egyptians strongly disapproved of the United States (up from 69% five years earlier). The lack of legitimacy associated with these policies, added to the neo-patrimonial nature of the Egyptian state and its incapacity to deliver basic public goods, were fundamental to the emergence of a revolutionary situation in Egypt. So too was the revolution in Tunisia, which acted as a stimulus for protest in Egypt and other states in the region, whether this was through demonstration effect, cascades, or deliberate emulation (Patel, Bunce, and Wolchik 2011; Weyland 2012; Hale 2013).¹² Indeed, the protests in Tunisia and

¹² The closeness of the ties between ruling families and their coteries also fuelled diffusion effects – their similar modes of rule meant that they shared similar vulnerabilities (Owen 2012).

Egypt spread around the region and beyond, spurring movements in Mauritania, Djibouti, and Sudan as well as those in Bahrain, Syria, Yemen, Oman, Libya, and Jordan.

Revolutions, therefore, have causes that are necessarily rooted in intersocietal dynamics. Descriptively, intersocietal dynamics are evidenced by the ways in which protests spread beyond their immediate points of departure – as with Haiti in 1791, so with Poland in 1989 and Tunisia in 2011. Analytically, an intersocietal account points to a range of important mechanisms: the role of ‘abnormal times’ in heightening demands for revolution; the ‘unstable alignments’ prompted by shifting client-patron relations; the rise and fall of revolutionary waves, and more. Taken together, these issues point towards a fertile research agenda that is, as yet, sketched-out rather than filled-in.

Revolutionary trajectories

Intersocietal relations are also central to revolutionary trajectories, not least in terms of the formation of a close-knit identity within the revolutionary movement. The identity of revolutionary movements is drawn from cultural tropes that encompass a promiscuous blend of the local and the transnational: protestors in Tehran in 1979 wore Che Guevara t-shirts, just as revolutionaries around the world sang local variants of the Internationale or, more recently, donned Guy Fawkes masks (Selbin 2010; also see Sohrabi 1995; Beck 2011). These ‘repertoires’ are the building blocks of identities that legitimate and sustain the revolutionary struggle (Tilly 2008). Revolutionary repertoires tend to be drawn from existing cultural resources – they are ‘learned clusters of historically situated actions’ (Tilly 2008: 4-5). For example, strikes, demonstrations, and rallies are well-established ‘rhythms’ of revolutionary protest. However, revolutionary repertoires are also innovative, more associated with ‘jazz’ than the ‘ritual reading of scripture’ (Tilly 2008: 14). The emergence and institutionalization of repertoires ranging from factory sit-ins to occupations illustrate the ways in which protests both draw upon, but also go beyond, existing symbolic schemas. The most successful of these repertoires have transnational appeal, becoming deployed in a range of settings (Beissinger 2007: 74-7; Bunce and Wolchik 2007: 96), combining ‘symbolic resonance’ (their cultural meaning translates to multiple contexts) and ‘strategic modularity’ (their associated practices work in different settings) (Tarrow 2013: 18). Repertoires diffuse transnationally through impersonal networks (such as forms of

media), and through the personal connections fostered by revolutionary brokers, who have the capacity both to 'externalize' local frames in diverse settings and to 'internalize' frames drawn from outside a polity (Bunce and Wolchik 2007: 93-7; Tarrow 2012: 174). Revolutionary repertoires are symbolic vehicles of mobilization drawn from an intimate connection between local and transnational.

Beyond the intersocietal dimensions of revolutionary repertoires lies a broader set of connections between local and transnational revolutionary actors. For instance, revolutionary 'entrepreneurs' play a central role in linking local and transnational struggles, as witnessed by the spread of non-violent strategies (Schock 2005; Nepstad 2011; Tarrow 2012: 78-80). At the beginning of the twentieth century, revolutionaries in Russia, Iran, Turkey, and elsewhere sought radical change not through violent overthrow, but through struggles that sought to shift sovereignty away from imperial courts towards representative assemblies, written constitutions, and legal-rational bureaucracies (Sohrabi 1995; Kurzman 2008). This form of struggle remained somewhat latent until the 1970s, when non-violent protests became regular forms of protest. Of the 67 authoritarian regimes dismantled between 1972 and 2002, over 70% were the result of non-violent uprisings (Nepstad 2011: 4-5). Advocates stress the advantages of non-violent repertoires in: widening participation and broadening coalitions (Chenoweth and Stephan 2011: 10); ratcheting-up international pressure on incumbents (Schock 2005: 54); and in inducing defections within the ruling elite, thereby weakening the 'sanctioning power' of the state (Nepstad 2011: 126). As a result, it is claimed, non-violent campaigns have been twice as successful as violent struggles (Chenoweth and Stephan 2008: 8). These strategies have been adopted – and adapted – by a range of contemporary revolutionary movements, from those that ousted state bureaucratic regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 (Lawson 2005), to the 2011 uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East (Ritter 2015).

An intersocietal approach also aids understanding of the relationship between the timing of protest and the likelihood of their success. In 1989, the electoral victory of Solidarity in Poland, negotiations in Hungary, and the opening of the Berlin Wall in November appeared as 'a chain of spectacular transformations' that made revolutions

in neighbouring states appear to be inevitable (Lévesque 2010).¹³ The relative success of these movements stands in contrast to the tendency of revolutionary waves to become less successful the further they travel from their original point of instigation (Beissinger 2007; Della Porta and Tarrow 2012: 122). A major reason why this is the case lies in the capacity of authoritarian regimes to learn how to demobilize their challengers. During the 2011 Arab uprisings, for example, protests in Bahrain were crushed by a combination of monarchical obduracy and Saudi force. Through the vehicle of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Saudis sent troops and police into Bahrain in order to secure the regime against protest, following this with large supplies of petrodollars in an attempt to appease protestors. The Saudis also gave Jordan a \$1 billion 'gift' and offered a \$4 billion 'grant' to Egypt, while mollifying domestic unrest through a reform package worth over \$150 billion (Lynch 2012: 131). This strategy, on a lesser scale, was also initiated in Kuwait, Morocco, and Jordan, with similar results: the decompression of protest. Together, GCC states promised (even if they did not always deliver) billions of dollars of aid around the region in a counterrevolutionary strategy that, to some extent, acted as a brake on the uprisings.

Once again, therefore, an intersocietal approach delivers both descriptive and analytical insights. Descriptively, it is possible to trace the ways in which revolutionaries seek to emulate and extend the revolutionary experience within transnational fields of contention, as discussed earlier in the context of the Haitian revolution and above in respect to the Arab uprisings. Analytically, an intersocietal approach draws attention to the brokerage role of revolutionary entrepreneurs, the 'externalization' and 'internalization' of revolutionary repertoires, the closeness of the dynamic between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces, and more. As with revolutionary situations, study of the intersocietal features of revolutionary trajectories serves as a potentially profitable field of enquiry.

¹³ There is increasing evidence that Chinese leaders saw these 'spectacular transformations' as a transnational wave that had the potential to spread well beyond Central and Eastern Europe. In this regard, the deployment of the military against protestors in Tiananmen Square was closely bound up with fear of revolutionary contagion, not least because China was already witnessing protests linked to rising prices and the death of the reform-minded Party General Secretary, Hu Yaobang. On the reaction of Chinese leaders to the events of 1989, see Sarotte (2012).

Revolutionary outcomes

The final illustration of the promise of an intersocietal approach lies in the insights it provides into analysis of revolutionary outcomes. Here, it is clear that the intersocietal effects of revolution endure long after the initial promise of revolution has faded. For example, the Bolsheviks' 'Decree on Peace' in November 1917 called for revolution throughout Europe and Asia, and was sustained by a two million ruble fund to support international revolution. Although the short-term success of the Bolsheviks in fostering revolution was slight, by 1950 a third of humanity lived under regimes that took their inspiration from the Russian Revolution – a Tsarist empire covering one-sixth of the size of globe had been disbanded and put back together. In comparable vein, Cuba provided troops for the liberation movement in Angola, as well as advisers and technical support to a number of allied regimes around the world. Other revolutions can claim almost as great an impact, not least the Chinese Revolution and its demonstration of the radical potential of the peasantry. Revolutions, by virtue of the example they set in overcoming apparently insurmountable forces generate substantial changes both to the texture of their home societies and to wider strands of international order.

Beyond the material aid offered by revolutionary states to other polities is a broader notion of revolutionary states as examples-to-be-emulated (Kurzman 2008). For instance, after the 1688 Glorious Revolution in England, the Treasury stood at the heart of a system of public finance that provided predictable, secure, reliable revenue and credit. In 1689, a Bill of Rights was passed, forbidding taxation through royal prerogative and royal interference in elections. The National Debt was instituted in 1693, to be managed the following year by the newly created Bank of England. These policies, along with the 'hidden sinews' of public administration, constructed a means of revenue raising and credit provision that gave England a decisive advantage over its competitors: between 1688 and 1697, annual tax revenues in England doubled; they doubled again between 1697 and 1714 (Brewer 1990: 89; Ertman 1987: 214; Hui 2005: 126). An interlocking system of parliamentary oversight, public finances, and credit markets operated as a 'structural check' on monarchical power, turning parliament 'from an event into an institution' (Ertman 1997: 200-1; Pincus 2012). In this way, a 'non-proprietary fiscal-military bureaucracy' presided over an efficient state administration with considerable infrastructural reach (Ertman 1997: 187). Whereas

French absolutism and the Dutch Republic served as models for sixteenth and seventeenth century European states, it was the English 'fiscal-military juggernaut' that served as a model to eighteenth century states and revolutionaries, not least those in North America (Bailyn 1967; Brewer 1990: 251).

Revolutions therefore challenge international order in a number of ways, ranging from disrupting existing patterns of trade and inter-state alliances to questioning underlying rules, norms, and principles. Haiti, discussed above, serves as one such example. The Bolshevik revolution in Russia provides a second. The challenges of the 1917 revolution were short-term (prompting the withdrawal of Russian forces from World War One), medium-term (in the provision of support for like-minded movements – the Soviet Union invaded Poland in 1920, provided aid for German revolutionaries in 1923, supported the republicans during the Spanish Civil War from 1936-39, and helped to install socialist regimes in Europe and Asia during the late 1940s), and long-term (in the establishment of a systemic alternative to market-democracy). As with other revolutions, the outcomes of the Bolshevik revolution included new military and economic alliances that, in turn, induced a conflict between the revolutionary state and a counter-revolutionary coalition that sought to contain it. The Bolshevik revolution, like those in Haiti, France, China, Cuba, Iran, and elsewhere challenged the credibility of the existing international system and, with it, the credibility of the system's great powers. This, naturally, prompted a response: in order to justify their position at the apex of the international system, great powers must act decisively in the face of a revolutionary challenge (Bisley 2004: 56). Occasionally, this action takes place in support of the revolutionary movement, as with the 1989 revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. More frequently, great powers act to suppress such revolutions, seeing them as threats to international order, as was the case in Haiti, France, Russia, Algeria, Vietnam, and elsewhere.¹⁴ In this way, counter-revolution should not be seen as an instrumental reaction to moments of revolutionary upheaval, but as a process hard-wired into the fundamentals of international relations itself (Mayer 1977).

¹⁴ Oftentimes, counter-revolution has taken the form of carrot rather than stick. For example, one of the principal rationales for the US Alliance for Progress programme, which pumped billions of dollars into Latin America during the 1960s, was to halt the 'virus' of the Cuban Revolution from contaminating other states in the region.

If the relationship between revolution and counter-revolution is tightly meshed, so too is the relationship between revolution and war. On the one hand, revolutionary states are far more likely than other states to enter into violent civil war: over one million people died in the Mexican revolution and the country's subsequent civil unrest between 1910-17, around three million people died in the Russian revolution and civil war between 1917-20, and close to five million Chinese were killed in the first five years of Mao's post-1949 revolutionary regime (Beissinger 2014: 6; Westad 2012: 322). On the other hand, revolutionary states are twice as likely as non-revolutionary states to induce inter-state war (Maoz 1989: 204). As Stephen Walt (1996) notes, revolutions intensify the prospects of war in three ways. First, revolutions provide a 'window of opportunity' for states to improve their position vis-à-vis other states – because revolutionary regimes are beset by civil strife and elite fracture, other states may seize the chance to attack the revolutionary regime. Second, this 'window of opportunity' generates 'spirals of suspicion' as the uncertainty produced by the revolution heightens levels of insecurity that, in turn, raise perceptions of threat (Walt 1996: 33). Finally, revolutionary states seek to export their revolution both as a way of shoring up their fragile position at home and because of their ideological commitment to an alternative international order. Concomitantly, counter-revolutionary states assume that the revolution will spread unless it is 'strangled in its crib' and that revolution will be relatively easy to reverse (Walt 1996: 43). This 'perverse combination' of insecurity and overconfidence heightens the prospects of inter-state conflict (Walt 1996: 40). By increasing uncertainty and fear, by altering capabilities, and by raising threat perceptions, revolutionary states begin a process that, quite often, engenders inter-state conflict. War between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces emerges from an 'over-reaction to over-perceived revolutionary dangers' (Mayer 1977: 202).

Many of the descriptive advantages of an intersocietal approach to understanding revolutionary outcomes have been outlined earlier in the paper in the discussion of Haiti and France. Attention to the analytical components of an intersocietal approach includes examining the relationship between revolutions, counter-revolution, and war, as well as the material aid and more intangible aspects of 'demonstration effect' that revolutions afford to other states. Even if goals of world revolution are rarely attempted, let alone achieved, revolutions play influential roles in inspiring the growth

of protest movements and reform programmes overseas (Halliday 1999). From England and Haiti to Iran and Tunisia, revolutions generate knock-on effects that spread well beyond their point of instigation.

The promise of an intersocietal approach

The promise of an intersocietal approach rests on its capacity to theorize what otherwise appears as empirical surplus: the social logics contained within the intersocietal dynamics that constitute revolutionary processes. The concatenations of events through which revolutions emerge are dynamically related to the ways in which social relations within territories interact with those beyond their borders. Intersocietal relations form an interactive crucible for each and every case of revolution, from the desire to ‘catch-up’ with more ‘advanced’ states to the role of ideas in fermenting unrest across state borders. The ‘external whip’ of international pressures, added to the uneven histories within which social orders develop, produce an intersocietal logic that has not, as yet, been effectively theorized in the study of revolutions.¹⁵ It is the task of an intersocietal approach to identify these dynamics and demonstrate their generative role in the formation of revolutionary processes. Although it can be difficult both analytically and descriptively to avoid using nation-state frames, there is no sociological rationale for maintaining the bifurcation between international and domestic. Revolutions are complex amalgams of transnational and local fields of action.

Although, as noted above, aspects of an intersocietal approach can be found in existing work on revolutions (e.g. Goldfrank 1975, 1979; Skocpol 1979, Foran 2005; Kurzman 2008; Goldstone 2001, 2009, 2014; Selbin 2010; Beck 2014), this scholarship tends to graft the international features of revolutions onto existing theoretical scaffolding, thereby reproducing the analytical bifurcation between international and domestic, and giving primary causal weight to endogenous processes. At the same time, although some of the descriptive components of an intersocietal approach can be found in transnational histories of revolution (e.g. Stone 2002; Armitage, 2007; Adelman 2008; Hunt 2010), the analytical dimensions of an intersocietal approach have not, as yet, been systematically interrogated. This paper has provided a first-cut at such an

¹⁵ A partial exception is the Marxist debate on uneven and combined development. On this, see: Deutscher (1984); Horowitz (1969); Matin (2006); and Rosenberg (2006).

approach, outlining the ways in which international dynamics, ranging from the symbolic transmissions that accelerate or redirect revolutions, to broader dynamics of revolutionary/counter-revolutionary contestation, play constitutive roles in how revolutions begin, endure, and end. Intersocietal interactions are less the product of revolutions than their drivers. In short: revolutions are intersocietal all the way down. And, as such, the promise of an intersocietal approach to revolutions is rich indeed.

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