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Man, the State, and Revolution

Abstract

Despite the progress that has been made in revolutionary theorising over the past few years, most theorists of social change continue to neglect the influence of opposition leaders upon the revolutionary process. One of the few exceptions in this regard is Max Weber. In his analysis of legitimate authority, Weber asserts that the charismatic form of authority rests on popular devotion to the normative order ordained by a specific person at a time of crisis.

Though his work offers some important insights into the revolutionary process, Weber fails to take into account the conditions that give rise to such forms of authority in the first place. This is why the state-in-society approach is so important. It analyses the interactions of multiple sets of formal and informal groups that promote different conceptions of political order. The focus here is not so much on whether a state provides opportunities for people to act, but how the practices of states generate justifiable collective grievances and ideologies in the first place.

This is significant because revolutionary theorising needs to recognise the processes by which states influence the identities and ideas of various opposition groups in society. Where state practices contend with very different forms of social behaviour, people tend to be drawn into revolutionary movements because they are inspired by the vision of those who offer an escape from the unjust practices of the state. As we will see, this was certainly true in Cuba and Iran, where Fidel Castro and Ayatollah Khomeini came to assume paramount roles in revolutionary movements committed to very different forms of socio-economic justice.

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University of Denver

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of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Nicholas Bowen

June 2011

Advisor: Dr. Jonathan Adelman

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MAN, THE STATE, AND REVOLUTION
Dr. Jonathan Adelman
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1

Introduction

For many years now, there has been disagreement among comparative theorists about the causes of social revolution. Structural and cultural approaches compete with one another in an effort to moderate the influence of contesting accounts. Even though structural and cultural analyses have undoubtedly made revolutionary theorising empirically richer than before, they have too often been regarded as opposites. Whilst structural accounts have demonstrated the importance of the state in the revolutionary process, cultural accounts have highlighted the significance of anti-system ideological beliefs in collective action.¹

Often characterised in either-or-terms, such approaches have tended to neglect the important ways in which structure and culture interact with one another. Because they are viewed as mutually exclusive dimensions of the social world, these approaches have not only closed off possible analysis into the ways in which state practices are implicated in the very constitution of group formation, but also the various ways in which certain actors manipulate popular beliefs for revolutionary ends. Only by reconciling these two accounts is it possible to appreciate the new approach to revolution developed here.²

¹ Social revolutions are defined here as the rapid and fundamental transformation of the state, including the social, economic and cultural institutions governing the population. For a review of recent trends in revolutionary theorising, see John Foran, ed., *Theorizing Revolutions*, New York: Routledge, 1997.

² Timothy Wickham-Crowley writes that: "Nation-specific 'cultural' views of revolution will almost surely never surmount their fundamental problem, that $n = 1$ ". See Timothy Wickham-Crowley, "Structural Theories of Revolution," in *Theorizing Revolutions*, ed. John Foran (New York: Routledge, 1997), 64.

Unfortunately, by focusing almost exclusively on the macro-level causes of revolution, most theories of social change tend to neglect the influence of opposition leaders upon the revolutionary process. Even though Lenin and Mao are associated with the great revolutions in Russia and China, their lasting historical impact is often thought to be of secondary importance. It is hoped that comparative analysis can better appreciate the influence of these figures by integrating structure and culture, and bringing the individual back in.³

This is important because revolutionary leaders often become totemic figures in societies that have undergone a radical transformation. While Lenin lies preserved in Red Square to commemorate the legacy of Communism, pictures of Mao hang in Tiananmen Square to serve as a potent reminder of the Chinese Revolution. That the influence of such individuals has often been ignored by theorists of revolution seems surprising when so many of the great revolutions have been associated with leaders whose success has transformed their societies forever.

The State-in-Society and Revolutionary Leadership

One of the few exceptions in this regard is Max Weber. In his analysis of legitimate authority, Weber asserts that the charismatic form of authority is absolutely critical because it rests on popular devotion to the exemplary character of an individual person and the normative order ordained by him at a time of great national crisis. By this,

³ Crane Brinton writes that: “It takes almost as many kinds of men and women to make a revolution as to make a world. It is probable that, in their crisis periods, our revolutions threw up into positions of prominence and even responsibility men of the kind who would in stable societies not attain similar positions. Notably, great revolutions would appear to put extreme idealists during the crisis periods in possession of power they do not normally have”. See Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 119.

he means that charismatic leaders articulate an alternative image of legitimate authority that successfully captures the popular imagination and mobilises resistance to the existing form of authority.⁴

Sadly, his analysis fails to take into account the structural conditions that give rise to such forms of authority in the first place. But this should not be a cause for despair. Given the relevance of the modern state to the revolutionary process, it is critical that contemporary students of revolution advance a theoretical approach that emphasises the dynamic interactive process in which state and society are bound. This is why the state-in-society approach is so important. It analyses the interactions of multiple sets of formal and informal groups that promote different conceptions of political order.⁵

From this perspective, state practices often contend with very different forms of social behaviour and this leads to unexpected outcomes for states that purport to govern. The focus here is not so much on whether a state provides opportunities for people to act, but how the practices of states generate justifiable collective grievances and ideologies in the first place. This is significant because revolutionary theorising needs to recognise the

⁴ Weber writes that: “Since it is ‘extra-ordinary’, charismatic authority is sharply opposed to rational, and particularly bureaucratic, authority, and to traditional authority, whether in its patriarchal, patrimonial, or estate variants, all of which are everyday forms of domination; while the charismatic type is the direct antithesis of this. Bureaucratic authority is specifically rational in the sense of being bound to intellectually analysable rules; while charismatic authority is specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules. Traditional authority is bound to the precedents handed down from the past and to this extent is also oriented to rules. Within the sphere of its claims, charismatic authority repudiates the past, and is in this sense a specifically revolutionary force”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 244.

⁵ Kieran Allen writes that: “In Weber there is no dialectic – the leader is the subject and the followers his object. There is no space for a discussion of the social and economic conditions or the complex interplay of political conflicts which raise dull orators or fanatical eccentrics into the role of national heroes. The process is literally mystified”. See Kieran Allen, *Max Weber: A Critical Introduction* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004), 110.

processes by which states influence the identities and ideas of various opposition groups in society.⁶

Capturing the essential dynamic between state and society moves beyond more recent accounts in which the state is afforded such ontological primacy that society only comes to the fore when the autonomy of the state is fatally undermined. By analysing this essential dynamic between the two, much greater emphasis can be placed upon the actors in the revolutionary process and the various ways in which they interact with the state. This is extremely important because it is only when popular belief in the authority of the state is fatally undermined that the potential for social revolution increases.⁷

Seeing as the state is not a fixed entity in this account, one must analyse the state as it becomes, taking into account what it has been in the past, what it is becoming in the present and what it may become in the future. The state is not just the location of crisis in the revolutionary process, it is a thoroughly active participant in the origins and outcomes

⁶ Joel Migdal writes that: “The approach here is one that focuses on process rather than conclusive outcomes. This is not a prize-fighter model in which each combatant remains unchanged throughout the bout and holds unswervingly to the goal of knocking out the other. Instead, the state-in-society approach points researchers to the *process* of interaction of groupings with one another and with those whose actual behaviour they are vying to control or influence. This is an important distinction. The dynamic process changes the groupings themselves, their goals, and, ultimately, the rules they are promoting...Like any other group or organisation, the state is constructed and reconstructed; invented and reinvented, through its interaction of its whole and of its parts with others. It is not a fixed entity”. See Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.

⁷ Theorists using the state autonomy perspective adopt a definition of the state that emphasises its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. But the claim to the legitimate use of violence simply does not fully capture the interaction between state and society. Even though the state may lay claim to such authority, there is always resistance among certain groups in society to the policies dictated by the state. That is because the state is engaged in an ongoing process in which the practices of the state either reinforce the existing political order or undermine the power of the governing authority. For a good analysis, see Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and their Critics,” *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (March 1991), 77-96.

of revolutionary transformation. This is why it is so important to identify those practices that have historically undermined its claim to legitimate authority.⁸

Without going into too much detail here, there are four state practices that can be said to account for the origin of revolutionary movements. Given that each of these practices is equally important, they can be regarded as causally cumulative. They are significant because they largely determine the extent to which society comes to think of the authority of the state as illegitimate and why different groups come to envision a radical restructuring of the political order. Just as the practical laws of physics show that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, so it can be assumed that various groups in society will respond to the unjust practices of the state.⁹

Here one of the most influential state practices in the emergence of revolutionary movements is the ongoing protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements. Those states that exclude large numbers of people from equal access to economic opportunities are often susceptible to revolutionary movements because such practices come to be seen as unfair. Sometimes these differences manifest themselves in unpopular social arrangements where certain economic classes, ethnic communities and religious

⁸ Jeff Goodwin writes that: “The point is simply that revolutionaries cannot will revolutionary movements, let alone revolutions, into existence. Rather...revolutionaries have been most successful when they have confronted states, and the populations ruled in certain ways by those states, that exhibit certain deterministic features and characteristic practices”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 40.

⁹ Migdal writes that: “To understand domination, then, demands two levels of analysis, one that recognises the corporate, unified dimension of the state – its wholeness – expressed in its image, and one that dismantles this wholeness in favour of examining the reinforcing and contradictory practices and alliances of its disparate parts. The state-in-society model focuses on this paradoxical quality of the state; it demands that students of domination and change view the state in dual terms”. See Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22.

groups are given preferential treatment. Injustices thereby become politicised and eventually give rise to collective forms of action.¹⁰

These problems can be further exacerbated when marginalised social groups are excluded from power and resources. This can be explained by the fact that aggrieved groups in society have no opportunity to advance their claims within the existing system. Since the political environment does not permit any real access to power and government resources, some people are inescapably drawn to opposition groups expressing radically different conceptions of political order.

To avoid such an outcome, the state can incorporate these groups into the political system to help deradicalise them. When there is genuine participation in government, the public is reassured that the state is not isolated from the interests of society and that their concerns are recognised as important. Such groups often view their inclusion as a means by which to achieve greater power. But when they see that this is impossible to achieve, these same groups engage in the kind of action that undermines the authority of the state.

This is significant because the extent to which the state responds with repression largely determines the radicalisation of such groups. Indiscriminate state violence against mobilised groups and opposition leaders can reinforce the revolutionary idea that the state needs to be overthrown and radically reorganised. In those cases where state repression is

¹⁰ Goodwin writes that: “In certain societies, economic and social arrangements – particularly those involving people’s work or livelihood or important cultural institutions – may be viewed as widely unjust (that is, as not simply unfortunate or inevitable). Yet unless state officials are seen to sponsor or protect those institutions – through legal codes, surveillance, taxation, conscription, and, ultimately, force – specifically *revolutionary* movements are unlikely to emerge. People may blame their particular bosses or superiors for their plight, for example, or even whole classes of bosses, yet the state itself may not be challenged (even when the aggrieved are well organised and the political context is opportune) unless there exists a widely perceived symbiotic or dependent relationship between the state and these elites”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 45.

insufficiently overpowering, such practices can even lead to increasingly popular forms of violent mobilisation as opposition among the population grows.¹¹

Of course, these problems can be made even worse when the state cultivates unpopular relationships with outside actors. Because the geo-strategic interests of the international community take priority over the repressive practices of the state, it is much easier for a regime that has come to be seen as illegitimate by the people to sustain itself. This is because the client state often demands various forms of material assistance to maintain the status-quo.¹²

Even though this preliminary analysis is quite brief, such efforts are required in order to come to a better understanding of the dynamic interactive process in which state and society are bound. What they clearly demonstrate is that the perpetuation of unpopular economic and social arrangements, the exclusion of opposition groups from the political process, and the indiscriminate use of state violence, often with the support of external actors, can lead to the emergence of popular revolutionary movements.

It should be noted that each of these practices co-exists to varying degrees in every revolutionary situation and can be regarded as the cause for the rise of anti-system ideological movements whose objectives include the overthrow of the state and a radical

¹¹ Goodwin writes that: “Indiscriminate state violence also reinforces the plausibility and diffusion of specifically revolutionary ideologies – that is, ideologies that envisage a radical reorganisation not only of the state, but of society as well. After all, a society in which aggrieved people are routinely denied an opportunity to redress perceived injustices, and even murdered on the mere suspicion of disloyalty, is unlikely to be viewed as requiring a few minor reforms”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 48.

¹² Theda Skocpol writes that: “If a structural perspective means a focus on relationships, this must include transnational relations as well as relations among differently situated groups within given countries. Transnational relations have contributed to the emergence of all social-revolutionary crises and have invariably helped shape revolutionary struggles and outcomes”. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 19.

reorganisation of society. Crucially, neo-patrimonial regimes are among the most vulnerable to overthrow by radical revolutionary movements because the narrow political constituency of the regime tends to alienate large numbers of people in society.¹³

This is the point at which revolutionary leaders come to prominence. While their influence has often been neglected in mainstream approaches to revolutionary theorising, it should be obvious that such movements do not arise out of nowhere. People tend to be drawn into these movements because they are inspired by the extraordinarily compelling vision of those who offer an immediate escape from the unjust practices of the state. The identity of these figures might not always be known by outsiders, but their influence is critical nonetheless.

This is what makes the performative aspect of revolutionary leadership so important. As well as articulating a powerful vision of state and society, a capable revolutionary leader must also adopt the right organisational tactics to succeed. Though there are other important characteristics of successful leadership, no one can doubt that a persuasive message and organisational creativity are absolutely critical to those who are fundamentally committed to restructuring the political order.¹⁴

¹³ Goodwin and Skocpol write that: “Two specific types of exclusionary and repressive authoritarian regimes are especially vulnerable to actual overthrow by revolutionary movements: neo-patrimonial or Sultanistic dictatorships identified with a foreign power and colonial regimes based on so-called direct rule by the colonising country. These regimes are not only more narrowly based than other political orders, including other forms of authoritarianism, but they are also more brittle and *unreformable*”. See Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol, “Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World” in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, ed. Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 268.

¹⁴ Eric Selbin, a strong proponent of studying revolutionary leadership, writes that: “Just as a social revolution must have both institutionalisation and consolidation to succeed, revolutionary leaders need both vision and organisation. When these elements are embodied in one person, the task of balancing the strengths of one leader with another is simplified or eliminated”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 69-70.

Here the advantages of the state-in-society approach are obvious. By focusing on the dynamic interaction of the two, the state-in-society approach moves beyond the study of static independent variables to the numerous interactions of multiple sets of formal and informal groups. Even though some elegance is lost by adopting this approach, there is no doubt that such interactions can sometimes transform the very nature of the state itself.¹⁵

Of course, putting revolutionary leadership in this much broader context is crucial because it helps avoid the charge of reductionism. Such figures do not simply emerge out of nowhere. They are affected as much by the practices of the state as the state is affected by them. If that were not the case, they would certainly not attract such widespread levels of support from the local population. This is important because only those who experience the injustices of the state will be attracted to the radically transformative messages of change that these figures offer.

This was certainly true in twentieth century Cuba and Iran, where the Batista and Pahlavi regimes oversaw an increasingly violent centralisation of authority after coming to power in the early 1950s. Shortly thereafter, two very different opposition leaders appeared who were able to articulate a radical vision of state and society. As the revolutionary process unfolded, Fidel Castro and Ayatollah Khomeini came to assume paramount roles in the founding of revolutionary governments committed to contrasting forms of socio-economic justice.

¹⁵ Migdal writes that: “Fashionable rigour may force-feed overly constraining hypotheses on readers by searching for one-way causality that starts at a key moment. Existing methods popularly found in political economy, rational choice, and structural analyses can overemphasise the explanatory power of independent variables...By fixing those variables in time, they ignore how the effects that they spawn may, in turn, transform them”. See Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 24.

Conclusion

All this would seem to confirm that the state-in-society approach is ideally suited to the study of social revolutions. Characterised by an emphasis on the dynamic interaction of state and society, it moves beyond more recent theories of revolution that focus on the autonomy of the state. By making the state an active participant in the revolutionary process, attention immediately turns to the people who engage in radical forms of collective action.

This is extremely important because it is in this encounter that revolutionary leaders emerge to play a far more influential role than traditionally recognised by existing theories of revolution. To be successful, these figures must not only articulate a vision of state and society that resonates with a large number of followers, they must also develop the kind of organisational tactics that are strong enough to withstand the attentions of the state. Otherwise such revolutionary movements will always be stillborn.

None of this is meant to suggest that successful revolutions are wholly dependent upon the activities of revolutionary leaders. As the state-in-society approach makes clear, such figures only emerge when the state engages in certain kinds of practices. Even though this would seem to indicate that structure and agency are equally critical to the revolutionary process, there seems no better place to start our analysis than with a discussion of the Weberian types of legitimate authority.¹⁶

¹⁶ Mary Fulbrook writes that: “The antimony between those emphasising the actions of individuals (with reasons, motives and behaviour constituting the main explanatory elements in the story) and those emphasising structural or collective features (political and economic organisation, institutional arrangements, collective ‘mentalities’, social circumstances) has run deep among historians. At its heart lies the question of the extent to which human beings – their beliefs, their actions, and the consequences of these – are conditioned and shaped by aspects of their environment; and the extent to which, or conditions under which, in turn, humans can alter the world into which they were born”. See Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 122-123.

2

The Weberian Ideal Types

In making the argument that conventional theorising has largely ignored the role that individual opposition figures have played in the revolutionary process, it seems obvious that we should return to the Weberian ideal-type of charismatic authority for greater insight. Here Weber explicitly developed the idea that influential figures could have a significant bearing on the political process by reorienting individual attitudes to the existing form of authority. In contrast to social theorists such as Marx, Weber argued that consciously evaluating individuals constituted the primary object of analysis and he firmly believed that a properly devised typology of social action was the principal device for increasing the precision of scientific research. He thus conceived of the ideal-type as an essential analytical construct in the service of knowledge production.¹

The Methodological Controversy

In many ways, the ideal type was a product of the methodological controversy between positivism and historicism that characterised German social science in the late

¹ Weber writes that: "Sociology seeks to formulate type concepts and generalised uniformities of the empirical process. This distinguishes it from history, which is oriented to the causal analysis and explanation of individual actions, structures, and personalities possessing cultural significance...An important consideration in the formulation of sociological concepts and generalisations is the contribution that sociology can make toward the causal explanation of some historically and culturally important phenomenon". See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 19-20.

nineteenth century. Whereas positivism viewed reality as governed by abstract laws, historicism rejected any effort to reduce the study of reality to reasoned scientific analysis. The thinkers who revolted against the central concept of a world governed by natural law were acutely aware of the differences between their world and the kind of universalism that was deeply embedded in the Enlightenment tradition. As Isaiah Berlin writes in his discussion of the German historicists:

“They were, for the most part, deeply involved with the political societies and nations to which they belonged; and they saw their intellectual activity as bound up with the rise of a new order of things in which the German peoples played a leading part”.²

For many historicists, reality could only be intuited by direct empirical analysis and their work was seen as a robust defence of the newly emerging German state under Bismarck. In their view, the abstract theorising of French and English philosophy was seen as inapplicable to a nation confronted by the exigencies of international competition between the major European states.

For many writers, the source of this new historical vision had its roots in the great social and cultural transformation of the Reformation. The rupture of the once dominant Roman Catholic Church and the end of Habsburg rule had demonstrated the individuality inherent in German political life. Writers began to conceive of social reality as elements

² Isaiah Berlin goes on to say that: “Its beginnings can be traced to many lands, but it first found systematic expression among German thinkers and was historically connected with the rise of the national state. Radical political developments are often preceded by a ferment in the realm of ideas. Individual thinkers, and, after them, wider groups – academic, political, artistic, religious – began to conceive of all human activities as elements in unified, ‘organic’ social wholes, not static institutional structures, but dynamic processes of development of nations, cultures, classes – social ‘organisms’ held together by impalpable and complex relationships which characterised living social wholes, quasi-biological entities which defied analysis by the exact quantitative methods of chemistry or physics. Such forms of life it was held, could be felt, or intuited, or understood by a species of direct acquaintance; they could not be taken to pieces and reassembled, even in thought, like a mechanism, compounded of isolable parts, obedient to universal and unalterable laws”. See Isaiah Berlin, “Meinecke and Historicism” in *The Power of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 206.

in unified wholes rather than static institutional structures. For Friedrich Meinecke and others, the developing consciousness of the nation characterised the essence of German historicism. As Calvin Rand observes:

“The methodological concepts of a historical way of thinking can be summed up as individuality, development and relatedness. Following in the Rankian tradition, Dilthey, Troeltsch and Meinecke hold these concepts and the principles resulting from them the most pervasive and indispensable in any historical consideration...Hence, the historian, in studying and organising the panorama of the past through records and other empirical evidence, is directed to look upon each person, event, nation, or era as a unique individual, which develops over a period of time through its own internal means and through causal interaction with other developing individuals”.³

For such eminent writers, the view that every nation possessed its own individual laws of growth stood in marked contrast to the belief that empirical reality could be reduced to some generalised system of understanding. For the historicists, the social, political and artistic life of the nation was affected by the beliefs and ideals of the community. Rather than accept a naturalistic conception of reality, the historicists celebrated the individuality inherent in the different paths of development led by the state.⁴

³ Rand goes on to say that: “He must select characteristics which distinguish a particular individual from all others as well as characteristics common to all; he must note the different stages of an individual’s development, what has led to these changes and whether internal or external causes are in question; and he must determine, if significant, the influence of external causes, which may be other individuals or more general environmental factors. Putting it another way, the historian notices that each individual is rooted in its own time and place in the course of history and that it grows out of the specific circumstances of the times”. See Calvin G. Rand, “Two Meanings of Historicism in the Writings of Dilthey, Troeltsch and Meinecke,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25, no. 4 (December 1964), 507-508.

⁴ Berlin writes that: “They were acutely conscious of their own German roots in the Reformation, in pietism and the mystical and visionary movements that preceded it, in the localised, provincial, tradition-bound social, political and religious life of German cities and principalities. Above all, they were acutely aware of the differences between their world and the universalism and scientific rationalism deeply embedded in the civilisations west of the Rhine. As scholars, critics, historians, they investigated, collected, described, analysed, explained”. See Isaiah Berlin, “Meinecke and Historicism” in *The Power of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 206.

Such was the antagonism between positivism and historicism that a debate erupted between the German historical school and the Austrian school of marginalist economics in the late nineteenth century. This was known as the great *Methodenstreit* and perfectly captured the resistance of the German historicists to the methods of the natural sciences. Carl Menger had initiated the debate with the historical school in 1883 when he defended the use of abstract concepts as the only way to scientific knowledge.

The marginalists believed that the starting points for economic analysis were clearly defined theoretical concepts that allowed for deductions, hypothetical statements and predictions about human acts. But for the historicists, the theoretical position of the Austrian school was only applicable to societies organised around the principles of an exchange economy, free competition and rational conduct. Such ideas were ill-suited to Germany where the protection of the Junkers from free competition was meant to achieve rapid economic development in the newly unified state.⁵

In many ways, the debate between the positivists and the German historicists was indicative of the growing ill-feeling that followed the post-Newtonian revolution in the natural sciences. Through Newton it was believed that man had penetrated the order of the universe and could now use that knowledge for his own benefit and empowerment.

⁵ Allen writes that: “The Historical School had originated in opposition to the English philosophy of free trade and demanded protectionism. However, its avoidance of a more abstract and general approach became an intellectual disadvantage once Germany became an industrial power on the global stage. The main rival to the German Historical School was the Austrian School of marginalist economics. This was the school which eventually became dominant in most modern conventional economics. Unlike the Historical School, it used abstract concepts and aimed at establishing general laws”. See Kieran Allen, *Max Weber: A Critical Introduction* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004), 70.

Following his death, his achievement was celebrated as the triumph of the modern mind and his methods became the paradigm for scientific practice everywhere.⁶

When Auguste Comte lent his weight to this debate by analysing how physics, chemistry and biology had passed through the theological, metaphysical and scientific stages of development, there was a growing conviction that the strategies of the natural sciences were also applicable to the study of society. This is why he proposed the word *sociologie* to describe the pursuit of positive knowledge about social phenomena.

As the achievements of positivism extended further into the social sciences, the historicist position became increasingly untenable. Eventually, the positivists and the historicists came to a new *modus vivendi*, with inductive-empiricism replacing its hitherto dominant intellectual forebear amongst historicist writers. But this only seemed to hasten the decline of the original historicist position that the individuality inherent in reality could only be intuited by direct empirical analysis. As Rand accurately observes:

“To say that historicism is an ‘approach to the social sciences’ aiming at ‘historical prediction’ through laws of the evolution of history goes as far as to contradict many genuine historicist principles...It is rather the rational dialectic of Hegel and Marx, along with the positivistic aims of J.S. Mill and Comte, which have attempted to introduce law and prediction into history. Ranke speaks of trends and tendencies in the historical process, but not in a long-range, predictable sense”.⁷

⁶ Richard Tarnas writes that: “After Newton, science reigned as the authoritative definer of the universe, and philosophy defined itself in relation to science – predominately supportive, occasionally critical and provocative, sometimes independent and concerned with different areas, but ultimately not in a position to gainsay the cosmological discoveries and conclusions of empirical science, which now increasingly ruled the Western world view”. See Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that have Shaped our World View* (New York: Ballantine, 1993), 280.

⁷ Rand goes on to say that: “Their view of history as a continual intermixing of individual lines of development in a system of external relations, all preclude any sense of law, prediction, or total evolution”. See Calvin G. Rand, “Two Meanings of Historicism in the Writings of Dilthey, Troeltsch and Meinecke,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 25, no. 4 (December 1964), 515-516.

Even though some writers continued to insist upon the unique character of German social and political life, historicism had witnessed its high watermark in the German tradition. No longer held in such high esteem by social scientists, the historicist position was further undermined by those who claimed to have uncovered scientific laws of development within a specific evolutionary system of understanding.

Nowhere was this more forcefully demonstrated than in the historical materialism of Karl Marx. His empiricist approach to history laid claim to certain deterministic laws of social development that continue to influence social science today. In his view, the progressive differentiation in the division of labour was synonymous with the growth of private property and alienation. Classes emerged where the relations of production allowed for the appropriation of any surplus by the dominant class.

In modern capitalist society, the ascendancy of the bourgeoisie had led to the increasing centralisation of administration in the state. Since all human consciousness was rooted in definite social conditions, Marx believed that the bourgeoisie was able to propagate its ideas of freedom and equality to help legitimate its position in society. This was significant because it meant that the political, religious and moral values of every age were nothing more than a reflection of the ongoing human struggle for material power.⁸

⁸ Marx writes that: "Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive force and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their real life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life process". See Karl Marx, "The German Ideology" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton Press, 1978), 154.

Such was the force of this argument that it now seemed as though the principles of the Newtonian revolution in science had found new and revealing applications in the social dimensions of human experience. But the radical perspectivism implicit in Marx had merely served to undermine the edifice of the Enlightenment position. There was a greater awareness that reality and knowledge were in a constant state of change, with increasing priority placed on concrete experience rather than fixed abstract principles.⁹

This new perspectivism found its greatest exponent in the figure of Nietzsche. In his view, the uniqueness of human experience contrasted with the scientific search for general laws defining a single objective reality. The rational intellect could not achieve objective truth nor could any perspective be independent of human interpretation.

The Ideal-Type

With the epistemological debate turning on the role of conceptual constructions in the social sciences, a movement that greatly influenced the work of Weber emerged in the late nineteenth century that represented a methodological codification of how to proceed in the process of causal investigation. Known as neo-Kantianism, this secular view of concept formation held that such generalisations were constructions of the human mind. There could be no confusion of concept with reality since they were artificial

⁹ Anthony Giddens writes that Marx dispensed with the problem of relativity of historical knowledge by arguing that theories developed by political economists contain important elements of truth that can be applied to all societies: "It is certainly the case that all forms of human consciousness, including the most highly complex kinds of ideologies, are rooted in definite sets of social conditions. But this does not preclude the retrospective understanding of history in terms of rational principles. Thus there are certain characteristics which are shared by all class societies: but these could not be known until the advent of the conditions for the emergence of scientific knowledge of society, generated by capitalism". See Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 43.

constructions for the purpose of knowledge production. Such concepts were simply the means for increasing knowledge through instrumental and methodological procedures.¹⁰

One of the underlying convictions of this approach was the belief that the natural sciences were very different from the social sciences. Whereas the natural sciences broke objects down into stable units of analysis, the social sciences dealt with the unpredictable behaviour of consciously acting human beings. By embracing an interpretive approach to historical research, the historicists had reaffirmed this distinction. Objecting to the notion that social reality could be reduced to abstract forms of theorising, they believed that a *sui generis* approach offered far greater insight into the social life of a nation. Unfortunately, their efforts did not provide very much in terms of cumulative theoretical knowledge.¹¹

So significant was this flaw that Weber departed from the historicists on this point and charted his own middle-of-the-road position. Whilst he agreed that human society was inaccessible to naturalist analysis, he did not believe that conceptual constructions should only be reserved for the natural sciences. He felt that whatever the object under investigation, scientific concepts were always worth employing if it made an explanation more robust. As he remarked of the economic theories dominant in the Menger School:

¹⁰ Eliaeson writes that: “Neo- Kantianism might be considered the first truly secularised modern scientific methodology – a codification of how to proceed in the cognitive process of causal investigation. It represented a new level in scientific development while reviving certain aspects of Kant’s philosophy, a renaissance for the critical philosophy of Kant to the modern achievements of science. Neo-Kantianism distinguishes between the constructs of the mind and material reality. It explains how one can achieve testable propositions about reality by utilising lucid conceptual constructs, and it removes the eternal question about the true nature of reality from the sphere of science and situates it instead in the sphere of metaphysics. Neo-Kantian nominalism does not help us in transcendental matters”. See Sven Eliaeson, *Max Weber’s Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 12.

¹¹ Allen writes that the debate over methodology played an extremely important role in German life: “Wilhelm Dilthey argued that the ‘humanistic sciences’ – history and the social sciences – did not seek regularities or laws in the same way the natural sciences did. Instead they dealt primarily with the human mind and Spirit (*Geist*) and these could only be understood ‘from the inside’ in terms of intentions and beliefs”. See Kieran Allen, *Max Weber: A Critical Introduction* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004), 69.

“The general theorems which economic theory sets up are simply constructions that state what consequences the action of the individual man in its intertwining with the action of all others would have to produce, on the assumption that anyone were to shape his environment exclusively according to the principles of commercial bookkeeping – and, in this sense, ‘rationally.’ As we all know, the assumption does not hold – and the empirical course of proceedings for the understanding of which the theory was formulated accordingly shows only an ‘approximation’ (varying considerably according to the particular case) to the theoretically constructed course of strictly rational action. Yet, the historical peculiarity of the capitalist epoch, rests on the circumstances that – while the economic history of some epochs of the past has not without reason been designated as ‘history of non-economic conditions’ – under today’s conditions of existence the approximation to reality to the theoretical positions of economics has been a constantly increasing one. It is an approximation to reality that has implicated the destiny of ever-wider layers of humanity. And it will hold more and more broadly, as far as our horizons will allow us to see”.¹²

Herein lay the neo-Kantian application of critical philosophy to modern science. Rather than obscure scientific practice with interpretive analysis, analytically derived concepts were created for the purpose of increasing knowledge production.¹³

Informed by this general epistemological position, Weber believed that a properly devised mental construct was the primary scientific device for increasing the precision of sociology. The Weberian method was to begin with intersubjectively accessible human

¹² Eliaeson goes on to say that: “Weber’s methodology is primarily about conceptualisation and the problem of producing intersubjectively meaningful selections from vast and infinite reality. The tool with which he addresses this problem and reflects on its difficulties is the ideal-type. The ideal-type is drawn from culture and shaped by evaluative implications that are present in the cultural sources from which ideal-types must be constructed”. See Sven Eliaeson, *Max Weber’s Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 45-47.

¹³ Eliaeson writes that: “This is the core of the nominalism that neo-Kantians adopted and put to methodological use: the world of phenomena is that on which we ultimately rely in our evaluation of the fertility and adequacy of conceptual constructs... To the neo-Kantians, in a certain sense, science creates its own objects of knowledge and our knowledge of these is always a product of human activities and thus is never independent of us. Analytically derived concepts do not necessarily have anything to do with reality as such; they are merely the means for increasing our knowledge through instrumental and conventional methodological procedures. The neo-Kantian element is crucial for the understanding of how Weber contributes to the controversy over method”. See Sven Eliaeson, *Max Weber’s Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 13.

behaviour and account for it through specific analytical concepts. The means by which he did this was the ideal-type. For Weber, the ideal-type was drawn from culture and formed a one-sided synthesis of concrete individual phenomena in a unified analytical construct:

“The ideal-type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasised viewpoints into a unified analytical construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *Utopia*. Historical research faces the task of determining, in each individual case, the extent to which this ideal-construct approximates to or diverges from reality”.¹⁴

Even though this pure mental construct could not be found anywhere in the outside world, Weber believed that it was heuristically indispensable for sociological and historical research. By codifying reality in such a way, the ideal-type was seen as a necessary intellectual device in the process of objective scientific research.

Crucially, the ideal-type itself was not regarded as a hypothesis according to Weber, but offered guidance in the process of causal investigation. A sort of theoretical function was thus ascribed to ideal-types, such as those used in the Menger school, where abstract economic theory offered an ideal picture of socio-economic events under certain conditions. Weber firmly believed that ideal-types did not represent forces truly existing in reality and he criticised the scientific orthodoxy of Marxism for its claims to have uncovered the supposedly natural laws of economic and political development:

¹⁴ Weber goes on to say that ideal-types are necessarily value-free: “Before going any further, we should emphasise that the idea of an ethical *imperative*, of a ‘model’ of what ‘ought’ to exist, is to be carefully distinguished from the analytical construct, which is ‘ideal’ in the strictly logical sense of the term. An ‘ideal-type’ in our sense, to repeat once more, has no connection at all with *value-judgements*, and it has nothing to do with any type of perfection other than a purely *logical* one”. See Sven Eliaeson, *Max Weber’s Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 47.

“Nothing, however, is more dangerous than the *confusion* of theory and history stemming from naturalistic prejudices. This confusion expresses itself firstly in the belief that the ‘true’ content of and the essence of historical reality are portrayed in such theoretical constructs or secondly, in these constructs as a procrustean bed into which history is to be forced or thirdly, in the hypostatisation of such ‘ideas’ as real ‘forces’ and as ‘true’ reality which operates behind the passage of events and which works itself out in history”.¹⁵

In his view, the specific relations of production were only one among many other ideal-types that captured the essence of empirical reality. Any claims to absolute truth would have to be determined by their successful application to society. Because sociology and history were empirical sciences, the success of different ideal-types depended upon the extent to which they effectively explained the object under study.¹⁶

Even though the ideal-type concept remains elusive today, there cannot be any doubt as to its ingenuity. As a product of the neo-Kantian turn in German social science, it represented significant progress in the methodological debate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Recognising its limited aspirations, Weber genuinely hoped the ideal-type would offer practitioners real guidance in the process of causal investigation:

¹⁵ Eliaeson goes on to say that the methodological position adopted by Weber is very similar to the moderate one taken up by Carl Menger in the controversy over method: “In Menger’s view, the doctrines of theoretical economics were precisely characterised by their one-sidedness and abstraction; and he believed that no ‘realistic’, i.e., historical, science of economics could dispense with the help afforded by such abstract propositions. In fact therefore, Weber, in his discussion of the *nature* and general *function* of concepts, sides *with* the abstract school and *against* the historical one”. See Sven Eliaeson, *Max Weber’s Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 47-48.

¹⁶ Eliaeson writes that: “Weber was well aware of the limitations of the ideal-type. Its pragmatic function and character is one of its instrumental assets. The ideal-type ‘serves as a harbour until one has learned to navigate in the vast sea of empirical facts. The coming of age of science in fact always implies the transcendence of the ideal-type, insofar as it was thought of as possessing empirical validity or as a *class concept*.’ This intermediary role of the ideal-type in the research process should not be overemphasised. The ideal-type is helpful in order to make us observant, aware of the peculiarities in the empirical reality we are about to explain. The rational type has the potential to *rational* behaviour, to point out instances where the action of an actor has not been rational and remains to be explained. The ideal-type exposes phenomena and derivations of an elusive character”. See Sven Eliaeson, *Max Weber’s Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 49.

“Although the ideal-type does not fit into formalised theoretical structures, it remains an instrument for theory construction, even when ‘theory’ refers to more complex systems of interrelated hypotheses...As a practitioner he developed sensible (for his time) strategies to balance the criteria of science with the requirements of the social objects of study, wisely not attempting to answer the old question of whether social science could attain the character of ‘hard’ science. In short, Weber cultivated the notion of unified scientific criteria, in line with the modern hypothetical-deductive method”.¹⁷

At the heart of the ideal-type methodology lay the notion that consciously evaluating individuals constituted the primary object of analysis. This was perhaps most clearly articulated in his analysis of the development of capitalism in the West. Though Weber argued that the Protestant work ethic was largely responsible for encouraging the development of legal-rationality in modern society, it seems plausible that Calvin served as a progenitor for the charismatic form of authority developed later. This claim is extremely important because many of the social changes wrought by Calvinism were just as transformative as those inspired by radical revolutionaries centuries later.

The Protestant Ethic

The much debated relationship between the Reformation and economic progress had long been of interest to researchers. In his study on suicide that appeared in the late nineteenth century, Emile Durkheim had observed that Protestants killed themselves far more than the members of any other confession. Even though such factors indicated an advanced industrial society with a high standard of living, the growth in social anomie

¹⁷ Eliaeson goes on to say that: “We are all working in the aftermath of Marx and Nietzsche, and our understanding of the world is definitely different from what it would have been before they were writing. I suggest that Weber’s whole methodology is imprinted with the Nietzschean response to the predicament of modernity, the response to the post-Enlightenment necessity of existentialist choice. The resulting ‘perspectivism’ is built into Weber’s instrumental analysis, the value-aspect-choice methodology of normative empirical theory”. See Sven Eliaeson, *Max Weber’s Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 51-54.

that characterised the functional differentiation of labour in modern society had raised the question of the extent to which Protestantism had contributed to this advance.

Intrigued by the way in which faith affected behaviour, Weber sought to expose the relationship between religious belief and economics. He did not intend to study just the material causes of capitalism, but to search for its origins in the ways in which faith affected human activity. He identified the principal features of capitalism as follows:

“The acquisition of more and more money, combined with a strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment is...thought of so purely as an end in itself, that vis-à-vis the happiness of, or utility to, the particular individual, it appears as quite transcendental and wholly irrational. Man is dominated by acquisition as the purpose of his life; acquisition is no longer a means to the end of satisfying his material needs. This reversal of what we might call the ‘natural’ situation, completely senseless from an unprejudiced standpoint, is evidently as definitely a leading principle of capitalism as it is foreign to all peoples not under capitalistic influence”.¹⁸

Whereas the characteristic Marxist explanation held that Protestantism was an ideological reflection of the economic changes incurred during the development of capitalism, Weber argued that there was a clear relationship between Protestantism and modern capitalism that could not be fully explained by seeing the former as a reflection of material forces.¹⁹

¹⁸ Giddens goes on to say that: “The characteristic Marxist explanation, deriving mainly from the writings of Engels, held that Protestantism is an ideological reflection of the economic changes which were incurred in the early development of capitalism. In rejecting this as an adequate viewpoint, Weber’s work begins from an apparent anomaly, the identification and explication of which constitutes the real originality of *The Protestant Ethic*. It is usually the case that those whose lives are bound up with economic activity and the pursuit of gain are either indifferent to religion, or positively hostile to it, since whereas their actions are directed towards the ‘material’ world, religion is concerned with the ‘immaterial.’ But Protestantism, rather than relaxing the control of the church over day-to-day activities, demanded of its adherents a much *more* vigorous discipline than Catholicism, and thereby injected a religious factor into all spheres of life of the believer”. See Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 126.

¹⁹ Marx writes that: “The phantoms found in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development”. See Karl Marx, “The German Ideology” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton Press, 1978), 154.

This was most clearly revealed in the work of one of his doctoral students. In his statistical study on the economic position of Catholics and Protestants in Baden, he showed that Catholics rarely gained promotion beyond the simplest jobs when they found employment in industry. The Protestants, on the other hand, were drawn to professional training, tended to predominate in the towns and occupied senior management positions. As businessmen, they showed a commercial spirit largely absent among the Catholic population and seemed to become more prosperous with the passage of time.

Convinced that religious belief had encouraged the development of capitalism, Weber suggested that the Protestant notion of the *calling* was the crucial determinant in this process, for it brought the mundane affairs of everyday life into an all-embracing religious influence. The individual was to fulfil his duty to God through the conduct of his day-to-day life. In contrast to the ascetic man of the Middle Ages, whose desire for gain met with no ideological approval, the Protestant work ethic encouraged a disciplined spirit of enterprise. At the time of the Reformation, this was extraordinarily innovative for it was the highest form of moral activity the believer could assume.²⁰

Among the many religious groups that emerged during the Reformation, Weber believed that the successful practice of the *calling* only became prominent among later Protestant sects, such as the Calvinists. In his view, the doctrine that the universe was created to further the glory of God and the belief in predestination were seen as the major contributing factors to the rise of the capitalist spirit. This last precept, in particular, was

²⁰ Parkin writes that: "Given the general drift of his strong thesis, it follows naturally enough that Weber should construe the significance of the calling and good works as motive forces for economic activity. The implication is that the Calvinist finds release from the fear of damnation by becoming successful in his workaday affairs. To prosper in the marketplace, to flourish in the business world, would seem to be the most tangible evidence of God's favour". See Frank Parkin, *Max Weber* (London: Routledge, 2002), 49.

crucial because only a small number of men were chosen to achieve eternal grace. Calvin himself restricted knowledge about divine judgement to God. Man was destined to remain in ignorance, for only God could know who was saved and who was damned:

“There was not only no magical means of attaining the grace of God for those to whom God had decided to deny it, but no means whatsoever. Combined with the harsh doctrines of the absolute transcendentality of God and the corruption of everything pertaining to the flesh, this inner isolation of the individual contains...the reason for the entirely negative attitude of Puritanism to all the sensuous and emotional elements in culture and in religion, because they are of no use toward salvation and promote sentimental illusions and idolatrous superstitions. Thus it provides a basis for a fundamental antagonism to sensuous culture of all kinds”.²¹

For the believer, this must have led to a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness as he was forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny that had been decreed for him from eternity. Without any sacraments for assistance, the believer was exposed to the impossibility of knowing whether or not he would achieve salvation.

But rather than succumb to the loneliness before God implied by predestination, the Calvinists increasingly came to believe that the successful reward of good works was a sign of divine approval. The believer considered it necessary to deem himself one of the chosen, for any doubts only served as evidence of imperfect faith. In order to help develop and sustain the necessary self-confidence, intense worldly activity came to be regarded as the most appropriate occupation for every believer:

²¹ Giddens goes on to say that: “In what was for the man of the age of the Reformation the most decisive concern of his life, his eternal salvation, he was forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny which had been decreed for him from eternity. In this crucial respect, each man was alone; no one, priest or layman, existed who could intercede with God to produce his salvation. This eradication of the possibility of salvation through the church and sacraments, according to Weber, is the most decisive difference which separated Calvinism from both Lutheranism and Catholicism. Calvinism thereby brought about a final conclusion to the great historical process which Weber discusses elsewhere in detail: the gradual process of the disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of the world”. See Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 128-129.

“This means that God helps those who help themselves. Thus the Calvinist, as it is sometimes put, himself creates his own salvation, or, as would be more correct, the conviction of it. But this creation cannot, as in Catholicism, consist in a gradual accumulation of individual good works to one’s credit, but rather in a systematic self-control which at every moment stands before the inexorable alternative, chosen or damned”.²²

The self-control and discipline of the earlier ascetic was now expected of every Christian in the world. Thus the performance of good works became regarded as a sign of election and labour became attributed with the highest possible ethical evaluation.

For Weber, the one movement that unreservedly accepted the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and captured the spirit of capitalism was English Puritanism. The moral accumulation of wealth was condemned to the degree that it formed an enticement to idle luxury. In the work of Richard Baxter, Weber found evidence that seemed to support his thesis of a direct connection between the *calling*, financial profit and personal salvation:

“If God shows you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your own soul or to any other), if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God’s steward, and to accept His gifts and use them for Him when He requireth it: you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin”.²³

²² Hamilton goes on to say that: “Rather than a disconnected series of actions which would ultimately add up to the believer’s credit, ‘the God of Calvinism demanded of his believers...a life of good works combined into a unified system.’ In this system, there was a new rationality, a method, which emerges from the spiritual autobiographies in which the Christian would chart his own progress”. See Alastair Hamilton, “Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic” in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 157.

²³ See Alastair Hamilton, “Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic” in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 158. Giddens writes that: “Calvinism demands of its believers a coherent and continuous life of discipline, thus eradicating the possibility of repentance and atonement of sin which the Catholic confessional makes possible. The latter effectively sanctions a haphazard attitude to life, since the believer can rely on the knowledge that priestly intervention can provide release from the consequences of moral lapse”. See Anthony Giddens, *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory: An Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 129.

This was perhaps the most perfect expression of the rational bourgeois life. Against the ostentation of feudal magnificence, the Puritans set the clean and solid comfort of the middle class home as an ideal.²⁴

Herein lay the difference between the modern Western capitalist and his Catholic counterparts. Not only had the outlook described produced extraordinarily enterprising businessmen, it had also provided the disciplined and rational work force without whom modern capitalism would be impossible. What to the Puritan was compliance with divine guidance became a mechanical conformity to the economic and organisational exigencies of industrial production in the world of contemporary capitalism. Materialism had begun to increase its hold and form the type of system that Weber observed in his own day.

Despite the inevitable criticism his work attracted among contemporaries, Weber remained firmly convinced that there was a relationship between economic progress and the content of religious belief. But it would be wrong to ascribe to Weber the notion that Protestantism was the sole cause of capitalism:

“We have no intention whatever of maintaining such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis as that the spirit of capitalism...could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation, or even that capitalism as an economic system is the creation of the Reformation...On the contrary, we only wish to ascertain whether and to what extent religious forces have taken part in the qualitative formation and the quantitative expansion of that spirit over the world”.²⁵

²⁴ Weber writes that: “The religious valuation of restless, continuous...work in a worldly calling, as the highest means to asceticism, and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude toward life which we here call the spirit of capitalism”. See Alastair Hamilton, ‘Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 159.

²⁵ Hamilton goes on to say that: “Because Weber replied to the main objections to his thesis made in his lifetime, and because relatively little has in fact been added to these objections since, the debate serves as an effective illumination of the some of his ideas and indicates the sort of research which he stimulated”. See Alastair Hamilton, “Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic” in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 161-169.

Other contributing factors, such as scientific progress and the development of the Western city, were equally important. What was absolutely central was the methodological conviction that every individual interprets, chooses and evaluates what they are doing, according to their own subjective interpretation of the world:

“The decisive aspect of the religious ethic is not the intensity of its attachment to magic and ritual or the distinctive character of the religion generally, but is rather its theoretical attitude to the world...Indeed, the very tension which this religious ethic introduces into the human relationships toward the world becomes a strongly dynamic factor in social evolution”.²⁶

In his view, Protestant religious belief had simply lent support to the idea of glorifying God on earth through hard work. Nowhere was this more evident than in the effect of the Calvinist doctrine of the *calling* and the transformative impact it had on the economic development of the West. Weber had simply concluded that the relationship between economic progress and religious belief had manifested itself among a community of believers without whom the emergence of capitalism would have been impossible.

The Ideal-Types of Legitimate Authority

In many ways, the methodological individualism that characterised this approach was subsequently developed in *Economy and Society*, where Weber argued that sociology is concerned with the formulation of general principles and generic type concepts in

²⁶ Weber goes on to say that: “When ethical prophecies have broken through the stereotyped magical or ritual norms, a sudden or gradual evolution may take place, even in the daily order of human living, and particularly in the realm of economics. It must be admitted, of course, that there are limits to the power of religion in both spheres. It is by no means true that religion is always the decisive element when it appears in connection with the aforementioned transformation. Furthermore, religion nowhere creates certain economic conditions unless there are also present in the existing relationships and constellations of interests certain possibilities of, or even powerful drives toward, such an economic transformation. It is not possible to enunciate any general formula that will summarise the comparative substantive powers of the various factors involved”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 577-579.

relation to human social action. And because social action occurs when consciously evaluating individuals interact, Weber indicated that it was the primary duty of the sociologist to describe the different forms of authority that such interaction had given rise to over time:

“We have taken for granted that sociology seeks to formulate type concepts and generalised uniformities of empirical process. This distinguishes it from history, which is oriented to causal analysis and explanation of individual actions, structures, and personalities possessing cultural significance. The empirical material which underlies the concepts of sociology consists to a very large extent, though by no means exclusively, of the same concrete processes of action which are dealt with by historians. An important consideration in the formulation of sociological concepts and generalisations is the contribution that sociology can make toward the causal explanation of some historically and culturally important phenomenon. As in the case of every generalising science the abstract character of the concepts of sociology is responsible for the fact that, compared with actual historical reality, they are relatively lacking in the fullness of content. To compensate for this disadvantage, sociological analysis can offer a greater precision of concepts”.²⁷

Even though Weber had argued that Western society was increasingly dominated by legal-rationality in his work on the Protestant work ethic, he was well aware that he had failed to capture the differences elsewhere. So he proposed an innovative typology of legitimate authority that better reflected the contrasts in empirical reality.²⁸

²⁷ Weber goes on to say that: “Social action, which includes both failure to act and passive acquiescence, may be orientated to the past, present, or expected future behaviour of others. Thus it may be motivated by revenge for a past attack, defence against present, or measures of defence against future aggression. The ‘others’ may be individual persons, and may be known to the actor as such, or may constitute an indefinite plurality and may be entirely unknown as individuals”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 19-22.

²⁸ Eliaeson writes that Alexander von Schelting thought that this transition marked his transformation from a historian into a sociologist: “Alexander von Schelting was for long regarded as the foremost authority on Weber’s ideal-type methodology and was evidently the main source for Parsons’s interpretation. His main distinction was between individualising and generalising types. The ‘Protestant Ethic’ or ‘early modern capitalism’ are both examples of individualising types, stylising unique historical phenomena; ‘bureaucracy’ is a typical generalising type, equally applicable to ancient Egypt as to imperial China”. See Sven Eliaeson, *Max Weber’s Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 50.

Though the classification he proposed did not attempt to confine all historical reality into a rigid scheme, Weber identified three distinct ideal-types that he believed captured the main differences in human society. They were his famous legal-rational, traditional and charismatic forms of legitimate authority. This typology was not meant to be regarded as exhaustive. It simply offered guidance in the process of social scientific investigation.²⁹

Whilst some people have observed that this classification was a modification of the six forms of constitution proposed by Aristotle, this was to a large extent the consequence of his decision not to base the typology on the ability of the ruling body to contribute to the public good. To do so would have implied a value commitment to social scientific analysis that Weber felt had no place in the study of society. And even though the order in which he presented his three types of authority was specifically designed to discourage any interpretation that might suggest an evolutionary progression, he recognised that legal-rational authority was predominant in modern society.³⁰

²⁹ There has been much debate about the most suitable translation of *Herrschaft* in the academic literature. Talcott Parsons prefers 'authority' whilst Reinhard Bendix favours 'domination.' Parsons writes that: "The preferable interpretation...is represented especially by his tremendous emphasis on the importance of legitimation. I should therefore wish to stick to my own decision to translate *legitime Herrschaft*, which for Weber was overwhelmingly the most significant case for general structural analysis, as authority". See Talcott Parsons, "Max Weber" in *American Sociological Review* 25, no.5 (October 1960), 752.

³⁰ Peter Lassman writes that: "The radicalism of Weber's approach is revealing. Although he insists that his forms of state are ideal-types and as such they cannot exist in reality he has, nevertheless, reduced the number of types to three. This is to a large extent the consequence of his decision not to base his classification on the two Aristotelian criteria of the size of the ruling body and its ability or inability to contribute to the public good, but, instead, simply on the possible formal bases of command and of claims to legitimation. The order in which Weber presented the three types of rule, in its later versions, was deliberately meant to discourage any interpretation which could see them as constituting some evolutionary progression. In *Economy and Society* he discusses rational, legal rule with a bureaucratic staff first, followed by traditional rule, and last, but certainly not least, charismatic rule". See Peter Lassman, "The Rule of Man over Man: Politics, Power and Legitimation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 91-92.

Legal-Rational Authority

For Weber, such authority exists where a system of rules is administered over every person in a particular territory. Those who exercise power are typically appointed or elected by legally sanctioned procedures and are themselves orientated towards the maintenance of the legal order. Those who are subject to such authority are legal equals who obey the law rather than the persons implementing it. This means people obey in their capacity as citizens and obedience is given to the office holder.

In most forms of authority, the rule over a considerable number of people requires a staff that can be relied upon to implement general policy. The administrative staff in the legal-rational form of authority is more highly developed than in any other and becomes a bureaucracy in its purest form. Here the staff operate continuously according to rules that govern the conduct of their official business. The whole system forms a hierarchy so that the higher offices supervise those below. Rules govern the conduct of every office and each official is given specific training to meet the demands of a particular post.³¹

In this way, the purely bureaucratic type is capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency. It is superior to any other form of administration in stability, discipline and reliability. The supremacy of impersonal ends inherent in bureaucratic administration only serves to enhance the uniform reliability and calculability of its operation:

³¹ Parkin writes that: “Under all other types of domination authority resides in persons – patriarch and lord, messiah and revolutionary leader. Under bureaucracy alone authority is vested in rules; it is a system of laws not of men. The hallmark of bureaucratic domination is its studied impartiality. Its officials act without prejudice or passion, applying the same rules to all irrespective of differences in social rank and condition. The bureaucrat, moreover, is not the ultimate fount of rule. Unlike the traditional or charismatic leader, the official in the modern state is himself the servant of a higher political authority – typically an elected government and its ministers. Willing obedience is thus a necessary attribute of the good bureaucrat. The trouble is that bureaucrats do not always behave in the way they are supposed to”. See Frank Parkin, *Max Weber* (London: Routledge, 2002), 88.

“Experience tends universally to show that the purely bureaucratic type of administrative organisation – that is, the monocratic variety of bureaucracy – is, from a purely technical point of view, capable of attaining the highest degree of efficiency and is in this sense formally the most rational known means of exercising authority over human beings. It is superior to any other form in precision, in stability, in the stringency of its discipline, and in its reliability. It thus makes possible a particularly high degree of calculability of results for the heads of the organisation and those acting in relation to it. It is finally superior both in intensive efficiency and in the scope of its operations, and is formally capable of application to all kinds of administrative tasks”.³²

Contrary to the views of many socialists who believed that state administration could be eradicated in an ideal society, Weber argued that bureaucratic administration in modern society is practically indestructible. Short of chaos, the management of public affairs under a system of legal-rational authority means that it is crucially dependent on expert training, functional specialisation and the coordination of bureaucratic responsibilities.³³

Traditional Authority

The opposite is true for those systems operating under traditional forms of authority. In contrast to the impersonal rules inherent in legal-rational forms of authority, traditional authority is based on respect for the sanctity of age-old rules and customs.

³² Weber goes on to say that: “The development of modern forms of organisation in all fields is nothing less than identical with the development and continual spread of bureaucratic administration... If bureaucratic administration is, other things being equal, always the most rational from a technical point of view, the needs of mass administration make it today completely indispensable. The choice is only that between bureaucracy and dilettantism in the field of administration”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 223.

³³ Lassman writes that: “The tension between formal and substantive rationality is built into the operation of all forms of modern bureaucracy. The extension of the bureaucratic rule under conditions of socialism is, for Weber, an important example of this unavoidable and insoluble conflict between formal and substantive rationality. In this case Weber meant that the substantive aims and ideals of socialism, such as equality, community and distributive justice, are in a state of permanent tension with the formal, hierarchical character of bureaucracy whose ability to produce the highest degree of formal rationality and economic calculability necessary for economic planning is indispensable for its survival”. See Peter Lassman, “The Rule of Man over Man: Politics, Power and Legitimation” in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 93.

Loyalty is characterised by personal allegiance to a specific ruler rather than impersonal commitments to the rules of an office. Under such authority, Weber maintains that there is no clear division of labour and that the staff have no well-defined areas of jurisdiction. The structure of the traditional system of authority revolves fully around the ruler.³⁴

Gerontocracy and patriarchalism are the most elementary forms of traditional authority where the master has no administrative staff. Gerontocracy is applied to small rural communities where authority tends to be in the hands of village elders. Oftentimes, they are the oldest members of the community and thereby qualified to hold positions of authority. Patriarchalism, on the other hand, is traditionally based on the household unit and is characterised by the authority of a particular individual whose right to govern is designated by a definite rule of inheritance.³⁵

In those cases where strong patriarchal forms of authority eventually come to dominate a wide territory, patrimonial forms of authority emerge. Weber observes that patrimonialism tends to arise whenever traditional authority develops an administration and a military force that are purely the personal instruments of the master:

³⁴ Weber writes that: “The masters are designated according to traditional rules and obeyed because of their traditional status. This type of organized rule is, in the simplest case, primarily based on personal loyalty which results from a common upbringing. The person exercising authority is not a ‘superior,’ but a personal master, his administrative staff does not consist of mainly of officials but of personal retainers, and the ruled are not ‘members’ of an association but are either his traditional ‘comrades’ or his ‘subjects.’ Personal loyalty, not the official’s impersonal duty, determines the relations of the administrative staff to the master”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 226-227.

³⁵ Parkin writes that: “Patriarchal domination always faces something of a crisis as soon as the master enlarges his domain and seeks to administer it along the same lines as the domestic unit. The patriarch generally gives responsibility for the oversee of his extended territories to his own dependents. For their part, the latter are always inclined to try to formalise and codify their duties and responsibilities towards the master and to specify their privileges and entitlements. The master will typically resist any such move since any formally prescribed rules would reduce the latitude of his purely discretionary and arbitrary powers”. See Frank Parkin, *Max Weber* (London: Routledge, 2002), 80.

“*Patrimonialism* and, in the extreme case, *sultanism* tend to arise whenever traditional domination develops an administration and military force which are purely personal instruments of the master. Only then are the group members treated as subjects. Previously the master’s authority appeared as a pre-eminent group right, now it turns into his personal right, which he appropriates in the same way as he would any ordinary object of possession. In principle, he can exploit his right like any economic asset – sell it, pledge it as security, or divide it by inheritance”.³⁶

By controlling these instruments, the master can broaden the range of his arbitrary power and put himself in a position to grant grace and favours at the expense of the traditional limitations of gerontocratic and patriarchal structures. This is important because the primary economic effect of traditionalism is to reinforce the existing structure of authority. Economic relationships tend to be strictly tradition bound and this only serves to obstruct the development of the market. Where property is solely in the hands of the master, corruption and bribery are more likely to flourish because it leads to monopolistic expressions of want satisfaction.³⁷

Charismatic Authority

At times such as these, Weber would seem to argue that charismatic forms of authority are more likely to emerge. He adopted the term *charisma* from Christian theology to argue that charismatic leaders are seen by their followers to have some

³⁶ Weber goes on to say that all traditional forms of authority permit a high degree of arbitrariness: “Where domination is primarily traditional, even though it is exercised by virtue of the ruler’s personal autonomy, it will be called *patrimonial authority*; where it indeed operates primarily on the basis of discretion, it will be called *sultanism*. The transition is definitely continuous. Both forms of domination are distinguished from elementary patriarchalism by the presence of a personal staff”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 231-232.

³⁷ Weber writes that: “The development of markets is, according to the type of monopolies involved, more or less seriously limited by irrational factors. The important openings for profit are in the hands of the ruler and his administrative staff. Capitalism is thereby either directly obstructed, if the ruler maintains his own administration, or is diverted into political capitalism, if there is tax farming, leasing or sale of offices, and capitalist provision for armies and administration”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 238.

extraordinary power that commands obedience. In its pure form, charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to the existing structures of economic and political organisation. It is one of the few truly revolutionary forces in history, tearing down the institutions and traditions of existing authority structures:

“Since it is ‘extra-ordinary,’ charismatic authority is sharply opposed to rational, and particularly bureaucratic, authority, and to traditional authority, whether in its patriarchal, patrimonial, or estate variants, all of which are everyday forms of domination; while the charismatic type is the direct antithesis of this. Bureaucratic authority is specifically rational in the sense of being bound to intellectually analysable rules; while charismatic authority is specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules. Traditional authority is bound to the precedents handed down from the past and to this extent is oriented to rules. Within the sphere of its claims, charismatic authority repudiates the past, and is in this sense a specifically revolutionary force”.³⁸

Even though followers must submit to the leader and be free from ordinary worldly attachments if they are to occupy secondary positions in the movement, the majority of followers need to support themselves over the longer term. This means that charismatic authority eventually has to be adapted to some form of fiscal organisation to provide for the needs of the group. This is the stage at which charismatic authority restructures the material and social conditions of society according to its transformative ideals.³⁹

³⁸Weber goes on to say that: “The term ‘charisma’ will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least superficially exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a ‘leader’”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 241-244.

³⁹Weber writes that: “In its pure form charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structures. The social relationships directly involved are strictly personal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities. If this is not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon, but to take on the character of a permanent relationship, a ‘community’ of disciples or followers or a party organisation or any sort of political or hierocratic organisation, it is necessary for the character of charismatic authority to become radically changed”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 246.

More often than not, the specific content of those ideals cannot be inferred from the pre-existing form of authority. But this does not mean to say that the radical claims of a charismatic movement are independent of the authority structure it opposes. By creating new demands of its followers, charismatic authority is symptomatic of a rupture with the past and indicative of efforts to lay the foundation for a new order:

“In traditionalist periods, charisma is *the* great revolutionary force. The likewise revolutionary force of ‘reason’ works from *without*: by altering the situations of life and hence its problems, finally in this way changing men’s attitudes towards them; or it intellectualises the individual. Charisma, on the other hand, *may* effect a subjective or *internal* reorientation born out of suffering, conflicts or enthusiasm. It may then result in a radical alteration of the central attitudes and directions of action with a completely new orientation of all attitudes toward the different problems of the ‘world’”⁴⁰

It is here that one finds the most significant underlying characteristic of the charismatic form of authority. With social action defined as the continuous interaction of consciously evaluating individuals, charismatic authority successfully draws on the lived experiences of every individual and reorients existing attitudes from within. This is much the same as radical social revolutionaries have always done throughout the course of human history.

But it is important to note here that Weber does not once discuss the structural characteristics of traditional authority that give rise to charismatic leaders. Instead, he claims that they emerge out of the widespread feelings of hope and despair. This has led

⁴⁰ See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 245. It is important to note that Weber thought bureaucratic forms of authority could be revolutionary too: “The difference between the two kinds of revolutionary force is that bureaucracy transforms from ‘without’ whereas charisma transforms from ‘within’. That is to say, bureaucracy alters social and economic institutions, while charisma brings about a transfiguration of the self. Those who fall under the spell of charisma are re-made into entirely new people. Societies in which legal-rational domination was the norm might be less vulnerable to the disturbances of charisma but they were by no means immune from them. In any social order there would always be enough suffering or simmering rage or cosmic anxiety to ensure a following for a leader with a simple solution to it all”. See Frank Parkin, *Max Weber* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 86.

some commentators to conclude that his analysis of the charismatic form of authority is very similar to the much maligned ‘great man’ theory of history:

“In spite of the careful nominalism of his method, Weber’s conception of the charismatic leader is a continuation of the ‘philosophy of history’ which, after Carlyle’s *Heroes and Hero Worship*, influenced a great deal of nineteenth century history writing. In such an emphasis, the monumentalised individual becomes the sovereign of history”.⁴¹

Of course, this is not the way in which the political process unfolds. Charismatic leaders become celebrated national figures only where large numbers of people are experiencing extraordinary dissatisfaction with the existing form of authority. To avoid accusations of reductionism, far greater attention must therefore be given to the structural conditions that give rise to charismatic forms of authority during the revolutionary process.⁴²

Conclusion

In suggesting that mainstream revolutionary theorising has traditionally ignored the crucial role that individual opposition figures have played in the revolutionary process, it should now be obvious why we have returned to the Weberian ideal-type of charismatic authority for greater insight. It was here that Weber explicitly developed the idea that certain figures could have a significant bearing on the political process by

⁴¹ Gerth and Mills go on to say that: “Weber sees the genuine charismatic situation quickly give way to incipient institutions, which emerge from the cooling off of extraordinary states of devotion and fervour. As the original doctrines are democratised, they are intellectually adjusted to the needs of the stratum which becomes the primary carrier of the leader’s message”. See Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1958), 53-54.

⁴² Allen writes that: “It is not necessary to deny the role of individuals in history or the particular talents or insights they bring to a movement. The Russian revolutionary Trotsky dismissed the mechanical approach of Plekanov who effectively wrote the individual out of history and instead produced an account of Lenin’s role in the Russian Revolution which deemed it quite decisive. However, he also showed there was a dialectic involved...In Weber there is no dialectic – the leader is the subject and the followers his object. There is no space for a discussion of the social and economic conditions or the complex interplay of political conflicts which raise dull orators or fanatical eccentrics into the role of national heroes”. See Kieran Allen, *Max Weber: A Critical Introduction* (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2004), 110.

reorienting individual attitudes from within. Though his work has attracted a great deal of criticism over the years, there is no doubt that his ideal-type methodology remains a valuable tool in the process of causal investigation.

State and Society

To understand revolutionary leadership better, it is critical that we now examine the conditions that give rise to such forms of authority. This can be achieved if we adopt an approach that focuses on the interactions of multiple sets of formal and informal groups that promote different conceptions of political order. It is now widely accepted among theorists of revolution that the state is the dominant actor in the political process. As the organisation that claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, the state arrogates to itself the primary law-making authority within any society. This explains why states themselves are central to the revolutionary process.¹

States and Social Revolutions Defined

Before going on to define exactly what is meant by the term revolution itself, it is crucial that we identify an approach that captures the dynamic interactive process in which state and society are bound. This is important because revolutionary leaders do not

¹ Goodwin writes that: “Successful revolutions necessarily involve the breakdown or incapacitation of states. Of course, revolutions obviously involve much more than this, and no claim is made here that all states break down in precisely the same way, or independently of pressure from revolutionaries. Still, there would be no revolutions to study...if states did not occasionally break down or were otherwise incapacitated, whether from the efforts of revolutionaries themselves or for some other reason...This ‘state-centred’ idea is now widely if not universally accepted not only among scholars of revolution but also among more large numbers of social scientists more generally”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 24.

emerge out of nowhere. To help us understand why revolutionary movements capture the popular imagination, we must first begin by redefining the state. Joel Migdal writes that:

“The state is a field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) the *image of a coherent, controlling organisation in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory*, and (2) *the actual practices of its multiple parts*. Actual states are shaped by two elements, *image* and *practices*. These can be overlapping and reinforcing, or contradictory and mutually destructive”.²

Here he moves beyond more recent definitions that dwell upon the bureaucratic functions of the administrative staff to include the idea and practices of the state. Since most people now accept the idea of the modern state as the most appropriate form of controlling organisation within a given territory, Migdal encourages us to pay attention to the way in which the policies and practices of the state are responsible for the emergence of radical revolutionary movements.³

This would seem to indicate that consciously evaluating individuals respond to the practices of the state as they vary through time and space. Indeed, Migdal writes that history has most often been written where the numerous economic, political and security practices of the state have fatally undermined its claims to legitimate authority:

² Migdal goes on to say that: “Image has tended to be homologous from state to state, especially the image of the modern state that has its origins in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries in northwest Europe and came to encompass the entire globe in the last half of the twentieth century. Conversely, practices have tended to be diverse, and, while there are certainly recognisable comparative patterns, they have defied neat categorisation”. See Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 15-18.

³ Skocpol writes that: “The state properly conceived is no mere arena in which socioeconomic struggles are fought out. It is, rather, a set of administrative, policing, and military organisations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organisations. Of course, these basic state organisations are built up and must operate within the context of class-divided socio-economic relations, as well as within the context of national and international economic dynamics”. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 29.

“The central political and social drama of recent history has been the battle between the idea of the state and the often implicit agendas of other social formations (which may very well include parts of the state itself) for how society should be organised. The dispute is over who makes the rules, who grants the property rights that define the use of assets and resources in the society, whose system of meaning people will adopt to explain to themselves their place on this earth. Scholars dealing with the maintenance of order and change in society as a whole need an approach that brings this struggle for social control into stark relief”.⁴

This is important because it gets to the heart of whether or not the state can lay claim to the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within a given territory. For Migdal, no definition of the modern state can simply be reduced to the functions of its bureaucratic staff because it overlooks the various ways in which the state interacts with society.

This now brings us to a discussion of revolution itself. Efforts to define the term have varied widely and most scholars have disagreed about the distinct characteristics of the revolutionary process. In order to avoid any such conceptual confusion, it is important that a robust definition be found at the outset of our analysis. Samuel Huntington was one of the first to offer a comprehensive definition of social revolution in his influential study on political order in changing societies. Embedding his analysis of revolution in the modernisation process, Huntington writes that:

⁴ Migdal goes on to say that: “There have been few universals in the processes of social change, yet on this issue one can generalise very broadly. By the middle of the twentieth century, in practically every society on earth, political leaders asserted the ‘idea of the state’ as right and proper – to create a state organisation that would itself either make the rules that govern the details of people’s lives or determine which other organisations might establish these rules (and monitor those organisations). But success in achieving this goal has been elusive. Political leaders have faced tremendous obstacles in their drive to assert control, obstacles that they have often failed to overcome. Leaders of other social organisations have been unwilling to relinquish their prerogatives, their ability devise rules governing some aspect of people’s lives, without a fierce struggle. These other formal and informal social organisations have joined forces with parts of the state, sometimes even with the beleaguered heads of states themselves, and developed practices contradicting the official laws and regulations of the state. The participation of fragments of the state in such coalitions that intersect the state-society divide are practices of the state, and ‘practices of the state’ may directly contradict the ‘idea of the state’”. See Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 49.

“A revolution is a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and governmental activity and policies. Revolutions are thus to be distinguished from insurrections, rebellions, revolts, coups, and wars of independence”.⁵

Even though he rightly points to the importance of fundamental change in the leadership, political institutions and social structure of society, nowhere in his definition does he mention the state. Surely it should be clear from the preceding analysis that the state is a significant actor in the political process and simply cannot be ignored in any meaningful definition of revolution.

The centrality of the state to the revolutionary process is now one of the axiomatic principles of all revolutionary theorising. Jeff Goodwin has described how perspectives emphasising the state have resolved some of the crucial problems distinctive to the study of revolution itself. Most importantly, it should be obvious that revolutions never even occurred before the seventeenth century. This is because social revolutions were impossible before the emergence of the states system in early modern Europe.⁶

Needless to say, this explains why revolutionary movements are so concerned with overturning state power. As the most influential actor in society, the state enforces

⁵ Huntington goes on to say that: “A coup d’etat in itself changes only leadership and perhaps policies; a rebellion or insurrection may change policies, leadership, and political institutions, but not social structure and values; a war of independence is a struggle of one community against rule by an alien community and does not necessarily involve changes in the social structure of either community. What is here called simply ‘revolution’ is what others have called great revolutions...or social revolutions”. See Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 264-265.

⁶ Goodwin writes that: “This proposition follows tautologically, in fact, from the very definition of revolutions as involving, at the very least, the overthrow of national states or political regimes. Thus, there could be no revolutions, in the modern sense of the word, before there were states, and it follows that there cannot be revolutions if and when the international states system is replaced by some other mode (or modes) of governance. This simple yet profound proposition, frequently reiterated by Charles Tilly, is usually overlooked by analysts of revolutions; it is taken for granted by virtually all scholars of revolution, including Marxists, cultural analysts, and many state-centred theorists themselves”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 40-41.

the fundamental rules of social and political order, and must necessarily be of concern to the revolutionaries themselves. Even though Huntington identified some of the most important features of the revolutionary process, it is clear that he fails to provide a sufficiently robust definition.⁷

A more comprehensive definition has since been provided by Theda Skocpol. Moving beyond the constraints imposed by Huntington, she not only centres the state in her analysis of modern revolutions, she also describes the extent to which popular participation is a central feature of the revolutionary process. In her view:

“Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society’s state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below. Social revolutions are set apart from other sorts of conflicts and transformative processes above all by the combination of two coincidences: the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social transformation”.⁸

There is no doubt that this definition represents an advance in our understanding of the revolutionary process because it connects social and political transformation with popular participation. This is particularly important because revolutions do not just involve the transformation of political institutions and social structures. They are inherently human

⁷ Goodwin writes that: “In other words, because the state enforces (through violence if necessary) the most fundamental ‘rules’ of a society (whether these are codified as laws or exist as traditions or conventions) by virtue of its control of the principal means of coercion, any fundamental recasting of these rules requires access to, and indeed a thorough reorganisation of, state power itself. Because of their actual and potential infrastructural power, in other words, states are necessarily the target (although not always the *only* target) of revolutionary movements”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 41-42.

⁸ Skocpol goes on to say that: “In contrast, rebellions, even when successful, may involve the revolt of subordinate classes – but they do not eventuate in structural change. Political revolutions transform state structures but not social structures, and they are not necessarily accomplished through class conflict. And processes such as industrialisation can transform social structures without necessarily bringing about, or resulting from, sudden political upheavals or basic political-structural changes. What is unique to social revolution is that basic changes in social structure and political structure occur together”. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 4-5.

processes. Skocpol thereby moves beyond the definition of revolution provided by Huntington to include mass participation in the transformation of the social and political structures of society.

But the story does not end there. In his work on state and society, Migdal writes that there is an important ideological foundation to the state. This means that any comprehensive definition of revolution must include this critical feature of the revolutionary process. It also helps explain why revolutionaries spend so much time articulating innovative visions of the way in which political life ought to be structured.⁹

Even though this reflexive characteristic of human agency often goes unrecognised, there is no doubt that ideas are absolutely central to the Weberian method of studying society. He realised that all social activity is predicated upon the notion of consciously acting individuals. Where the discrepancy between the idea and practices of the state leads to widespread popular opposition, people are guided as much by a vision of the way in which political life is to be structured as they are by the practices of the state itself.

This means that in order to come to a comprehensive definition of revolution, it is absolutely imperative that ideology be included. This would certainly seem to explain why Theda Skocpol decided to incorporate an ideational component into her later definition of revolution:

⁹ William Sewell writes that: “One example will suffice to make this clear. A glaring difference between the outcomes of the French and Russian Revolutions was that private property was consolidated in France and abolished in Russia. Can this difference be explained without taking into account the different ideological programmes of the actors in the French and Russian Revolutions?” See William Sewell, “Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case” in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, ed. Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 171.

“Social Revolutions...are rapid, basic transformations of a country’s state and class structures, and of its dominant ideology. Moreover, social revolutions are carried through, in part, by class-based upheavals from below. The Iranian Revolution seems to fit this conception”.¹⁰

There are two distinguishing characteristics of this definition that immediately demand attention. By incorporating ideology, Skocpol recognises the significant role of ideas in the transformation of state and society. Indeed, such innovative conceptions of political order have always been essential to the authority of a newly restructured state because they reflect the dreams of the people in whose name a revolution has been made.

At the same time, she also moves beyond rooting her definition of revolution in the actions of the lower classes. Her observation that revolutions are only carried through, in part, by popular participation from below broadens the revolutionary franchise. This is important because it is now widely accepted among theorists of revolution that support from the professional classes is critical to the success of revolutionary movements.¹¹

¹⁰ Skocpol goes on to say that: “Shi’a Islam was both organisationally and culturally crucial to the making of the Iranian Revolution against the Shah. Radicalised clerics, loosely following the Ayatollah Khomeini, disseminated political ideas challenging the Shah. Then the networks, the social forms, and the central myths of Shi’a Islam helped to coordinate urban mass resistance and to give it moral will to persist in the face of attempts at armed repression. All of this meant that a very ‘traditional’ part of Iranian life – albeit a traditional part fitting in new ways into a steadily changing modern socio-political scene – provided crucial political resources for the forging of a very modern looking revolutionary movement. Many social-scientific theories of revolution have argued that revolutionary ideologies organisations must convert and mobilise mass followings before a revolution is possible. Actually, this has rarely been the case in revolutions of the past, ‘which were not made,’ but came unintentionally on all concerned. In Iran, uniquely, the revolution was made”. See Theda Skocpol, “Rentier State and Shi’a Islam in the Iranian Revolution” in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, ed. Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 249.

¹¹ Goodwin and Skocpol write that: “Although peasants have undoubtedly been as central to most Third World insurgencies as they were for the classical social revolutions, the characterisation of Third World revolutions as *peasant wars* or *agrarian revolutions* – a characterisation that sometimes carries an implication of homogenous peasant communities rebelling spontaneously – has shifted our attention away from the role of other actors in revolutionary dramas. Revolutionary outbreaks and seizures of power are often carried through by coalitions, alliances, or conjunctures of struggles that cut across divides between urban and rural areas and different social classes and ethnic groupings”. See Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol, “Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World” in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, ed. Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 261-262.

Theorising Revolutions

Now that a satisfactory definition has been agreed, it is time to turn our attention to the various accounts of revolution. There is no doubt that interest in the study of revolution has been widespread since the days of Marx. This is understandable given the romantic ideals often expressed by those who claim to be resisting injustice and tyranny. Even though some writers have directed their work at would-be revolutionaries, others have clearly sought to improve our understanding of the revolutionary process itself.

This is where Jeff Goodwin distinguishes between Marxist and modernisation theories of revolution. Even though he recognises that both approaches have uncovered some important causal factors in many of the revolutions under study, he criticises both for abstracting those elements from the dynamic interactive process in which state and society are bound. Describing this as the political context within which human action occurs, Goodwin censures Marxists and modernisation theorists alike for having neglected the policies and practices of the state in the revolutionary process.¹²

This is obvious when one sees that most modernisation theorists tend to associate revolution with the disruptive effects of the transition from traditional to modern society. Whereas traditional society is characterised by a simple division of labour and localised forms of political participation, modern society is distinguished by its complexity and widespread public involvement in the decision-making process:

¹² Goodwin writes that: “The state itself does not literally or intentionally construct revolutionary movements (any more than cultures self-construct ideas or ideologies); revolutionaries do that. But they do so, and can only do so, in particular political contexts. To paraphrase Marx, people make their own revolutions, but not just where and when they please; people do not make revolutions under circumstances chosen by themselves, but within specific political contexts directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. State structures and practices invariably matter, in other words, for the very *formation* of revolutionary movements, not just for their success or failure – and they generally do so in quite unintended ways”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 25.

“Revolution is thus an aspect of modernisation...It will not occur in highly traditional societies with very low levels of social and economic complexity. Nor will it occur in highly modern societies. Like other forms of violence and instability, it is most likely to occur in societies which have experienced some social and economic development and where the processes of political modernisation and political development have lagged behind the processes of social and economic change”.¹³

This means that revolutions only affect those societies where political development fails to keep pace with the disruptive processes of social and economic change. In other words, they are a function of broad popular demands for greater political inclusion as developing societies undergo the modernisation process.

This contrasts with relative deprivation theorists who insist that modernisation unleashes a revolution of rising expectations. They claim that a long period of growing prosperity raises aspirations for a better life. Unfortunately, such hopes are often dashed thanks to an abrupt economic downturn. This leaves many states vulnerable to revolution because they are unable to satisfy the newly created demands of an expectant society.¹⁴

These claims differ from those who insist that modernisation leads to imbalances in the subsystems of society. Some have argued that this type of change desynchronises traditional society and destabilises its old social structures. When modernisation destroys

¹³ Huntington goes on to say that: “Political development involves the creation of political institutions sufficiently adaptable, complex, autonomous, and coherent to absorb and to order the participation of these new groups and to promote social and economic change in society. The political essence of revolution is the rapid expansion of political consciousness and the rapid mobilisation of new groups into politics at a speed which makes it impossible for existing political institutions to assimilate them. Revolution is the extreme case of the explosion of political participation”. See Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 265-266.

¹⁴ Goodwin writes that: “More psychologically inclined theorists suggest that rapid modernisation unleashes a ‘revolution of rising expectations’ – expectations that a suddenly stagnant or depressed economy may prove unable to meet, thereby creating a widespread sense of anger and sense of ‘relative deprivation’ of which revolutions are allegedly made”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2001, p.18.

the institutions that once held societies together, revolutionaries are much more likely to become influential if they can replace the institutions that modernisation undermines:

“If iron discipline, rigid hierarchies, and unquestioning obedience are among Communism’s most detestable features in the eyes of truly free men everywhere, they may yet spell security, order, and a meaningful place in the world for the social splinters of contemporary Asia”.¹⁵

The crucial point here is that the process of modernisation tends to disorientate people who are accustomed to the formal hierarchies of traditional life. Since modernisation is responsible for destabilising many of these old social structures, some people embrace revolutionary ideologies in the hope of finding comfort in the midst of change.¹⁶

Unfortunately, despite these crucial insights into the modernisation process, the above theories of revolution are undermined by the fact that modernisation itself clearly does not produce revolution everywhere. Many countries have pursued a course of rapid social and economic development over the past fifty years and experience teaches us that revolution is extremely rare. Indeed, as Huntington himself makes clear, the success or failure of revolutionary movements largely depends upon the way in which states respond to the very problems generated by modernisation:

¹⁵ Harry Benda goes on to say that: “It is not inconceivable that in Asia (as elsewhere) Communist movements as such provide a substitute for decayed or vanishing institutions – the family, the clan, the tribe, or the village community – that have suffered most heavily under the eroding onslaught of the new economic and political systems carried to Asia by the West in the course of the past century or so”. See Harry J. Benda, “Reflections on Asian Communism,” *The Yale Review* 56, no.1 (October 1966), 12-13.

¹⁶ Oliver Roy writes that radical Islam is also the product of the encounter between Islam and the West: “The frontier between Islam and the West is no longer geographical, and is less and less civilisational. The process of westernisation of Muslim societies over two centuries has had obvious and permanent effects, even if it has entailed a backlash in the past thirty years, taking the form of ‘Islamic revival’ at different levels (political with the Iranian revolution, societal with the re-Islamisation of daily life, the increase in the number of veiled women or of references to *sharia* in the law, and so on). This backlash does not mean a return to ‘pre-modern’ society nor to an authenticity that is supposed to have been destroyed by acculturation. It is more an attempt to ‘Islamise modernity,’ as Sheikh Yassin wrote”. See Oliver Roy, *Globalised Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 19.

“Revolutions are unlikely in political systems which have the capacity to expand their power and to broaden participation within the system. It is precisely this fact that makes revolutions in highly institutionalised modern political systems unlikely”.¹⁷

Huntington thus seems to concede that state practices are determinate in the revolutionary process. But with the explanatory weight of his argument resting upon the social tensions caused by the modernisation process – rather than the political context within which social action occurs – his analysis ultimately falls short.

In contrast to modernisation theories, Marxist inspired approaches have a rich history and continue to influence the study of revolution today. But rather than rooting their arguments in the process of modernisation, Marxist theorists argue that revolutions are the inevitable consequence of class conflict as society progresses from one mode of production to another. As Marx makes clear in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, the history of all human society is characterised by the history of class conflict:

“In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank... The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression”.¹⁸

¹⁷ Huntington goes on to say that: “It is precisely this fact that makes revolutions unlikely in highly institutionalised modern political systems – constitutional or communist – which are what they are simply because they have developed the procedures for assimilating new social groups and elites desiring to enter politics. The great revolutions of history have taken place either in highly centralised traditional monarchies (France, China, Russia), or in narrowly based military dictatorships (Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba), or in colonial regimes (Vietnam, Algeria).” See Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 275.

¹⁸ Marx goes on to say that: “Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing on another: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat... We see, therefore, how the modern bourgeoisie is itself the product of a long course of development, of a series of revolutions in the modes of production and exchange”. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack Goldstone (Belmont: Wadsworth Thomson, 2003), 24-25.

He writes that in each period of human history, where the existing mode of production has exhausted its potential for expansion and development has entered a period of crisis, class struggles become particularly acute and drive the radical reconstruction of society.

Even though Marx believed that the widespread growth of large-scale industrial enterprise would inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bourgeois state by the industrial proletariat, some of the most significant socialist revolutions of the past century occurred in the nations of the Third World. This was surprising because many of them relied upon the peasant classes rather than the industrial proletariat to realise their socialist utopia.

Some writers have rejected the strict economic formalism of Marx to emphasise the possibilities of informed political action. Where socialist revolutions have been made by the peasant classes, a number of prominent revolutionaries have argued that socialism can be brought into being regardless of economic conditions. Whilst this would appear to suggest that some individuals can influence the revolutionary process, others have tried to explain this apparent anomaly by rooting their explanation of agrarian revolution in the disruption caused to traditional society by the transition to commercial agriculture.¹⁹

Eric Wolf and Jeffery Paige have written two of the most influential accounts in this area. Recognising that powerful revolutionary movements have not developed in all

¹⁹ Sheldon Liss writes that Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara was one of the first people to insist that informed political action could bring about socialism: “To initiate action, he backed the *foco* theory. By *foco* he meant a centre or nucleus of guerrilla operations rather than a base. A *foco* consisted of a unit fighting in a specific province, not stationed in one place. The *foco* could be seen as a force rather than a centre or, to use the Cuban expression, ‘the one small motor that sparked the big motor’ of the revolution, providing the leadership, subjective conditions, and revolutionary drive that led to creation of a people’s army. French intellectual Regis Debray, who observed Guevara in Cuba and Bolivia, called the *foco* theory more than a strategy. To Debray it represented an ethical philosophy recognising that a person’s life-style gradually determines his or her activities and demanding that revolutionaries be activists who impress others by what do, not what they say. *Foco* theorists claim that orthodox Communist organisation benefits only urbanites and ignores the peasantry”. See Sheldon Liss, *Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 163.

peripheral societies, they have explored in great depth which peasants are revolutionary and why. Both writers instinctively reject conscious political action as the most critical factor in the revolutionary process. In fact, both agree that economic conditions alone account for the revolutionary sentiments affecting the peasantry of the Third World.

Wolf has conclusively argued that landowning middle peasants are the most likely revolutionary group in his worldwide study of Third World revolutions. He claims that peasant rebelliousness is a natural reaction to the disintegrative effects of international capitalism. Lying outside state and landlord control, land-owning peasants are those most threatened by the intrusion of market forces and act collectively to preserve their traditional ways.²⁰

Jeffery Paige contests this view and suggests that sharecropping tenants and migratory peasants are the most revolutionary rural class in traditional society. In his view, revolutionary movements develop because sharecroppers and migratory peasants are wage-earning cultivators who confront a large landowning class that derives most of its income from fixed holdings. He concludes that revolutionary movements develop as the competitive demands of international capitalism upset traditional ways of life.²¹

²⁰ Goodwin writes that: “Wolf, who examines peasant involvement in the Mexican, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Algerian, and Cuban revolutions, views peasant rebelliousness as a reaction to the disintegrative effects produced by ‘North Atlantic capitalism’ as it penetrates traditional societies. He argues that landowning middle peasants, as well as ‘free’ peasants (e.g. squatters) who are outside landlord and state control, are most likely to rebel, both because their way of life is more threatened by capitalism than other groups *and* because they are better able to act collectively to preserve their traditional ways”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22.

²¹ Goodwin writes that: “Wolf’s arguments have been contested by Jeffery Paige, who argues that sharecropping tenants and migratory ‘semi-proletarians’ not middle peasants, are the most revolutionary strata...Paige argues that revolutionary movements develop because sharecroppers and semi-proletarians are *wage-earning* cultivators who face a non-cultivating class that derives its income from more or less fixed landholdings (as opposed to capital investments), the control of which is non-negotiable”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22-23.

As both these accounts of the revolutionary process demonstrate, they are rooted in economic determinism. In fact, the global commercialisation of rural life becomes the master process through which different economic systems collide. And even though Wolf and Paige disagree over whether subsistence or wage-earning peasants are more likely to rebel, they unite around the fact that aggravated mass insurrections derive from the intrusion of global capital markets into otherwise protected societies. Social revolutions in the periphery can thus be explained by their incorporation into the world economy.

But as Goodwin rightly observes, Marxist approaches to revolution have tended to overemphasise the economic difficulties of the rural classes at the expense of the political conditions within which social action occurs. He argues that the majority of land-owning peasants and wage-earners participate in revolutionary movements as violently excluded subjects of the state. Even though economic grievances often play a very important role in social revolutions, he claims that their roots can be found in the political context in which class relationships and economic institutions are embedded.²²

This explains why the state must be included in any comprehensive theory of revolution. As the principal actor in modern society, the state imposes the fundamental rules of political order and defines the context within which people act. All of this would seem to confirm that the state is a critical variable in the political process and that social revolutions cannot simply be reduced to class relationships alone. As Skocpol notes:

²² Goodwin writes that: “There is thus something askew in the Marxist search for the class or economic ‘roots’ of revolutions. Class and economic grievances do usually play an important role in revolutions, but the roots of revolutionary movements are found in the political context in which class relationships and economic institutions (among other factors) are embedded”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23. Perry Anderson goes on to say that: “It is nevertheless necessary to recall one of the basic axioms of historical materialism: that secular struggle between classes is ultimately resolved at the *political* – not at the economic or cultural – level of society”. See Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: Verso Press, 1974), 11.

“In historical revolutions, differently situated and motivated groups have become participants in complex unfoldings of multiple conflicts. These conflicts have been powerfully shaped and limited by existing socio-economic and historical conditions. And they have proceeded in different ways depending upon how each revolutionary situation emerged in the first place. The logic of these conflicts has not been controlled by any one group or class, no matter how seemingly central in the revolutionary process. And the revolutionary conflicts have invariably given rise to outcomes neither fully foreseen nor intended by – nor fully serving the interests of – any one of the particular groups involved”.²³

In her analysis of the revolutions in France, Russia and China, revolutionary crises emerged when states could not meet external challenges due to internal obstructions. Military competition exacerbated pre-existing inefficiencies in agricultural production and this precipitated a state financial crisis. When elite opposition to reforms of the tax system combined with disruptions to the agrarian economy, revolutions soon followed.²⁴

A number of influential theories of revolution have since expanded upon the role of the state in the revolutionary process. Whereas Jack Goldstone has argued that population growth rather than foreign war can account for revolutions in the early modern period, Charles Tilly has claimed that revolutionary crises arise when one or more competing groups emerge to challenge the authority of the state. He defines this as

²³ Skocpol goes on to say that: “One can begin to make sense of such complexity only by focusing simultaneously upon the institutionally determined situations and relations of groups within society and upon the interrelations of societies within world-historically developing international structures. To take such an impersonal and non-subjective viewpoint – one that emphasises patterns of relationships among groups and societies – is to work from what may in some generic sense be called a structural perspective on socio-historical reality”. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 17-18.

²⁴ Skocpol writes that: “The effects of social revolutions upon the subsequent economic and socio-political development of the nations that they have transformed have been due not only to the changes in class structures, but also to the changes in state structures and functions that revolutions have accomplished. In sum, the class upheavals and socio-economic transformations that have characterised social revolutions have been closely intertwined with the collapse of the state organisations of the old regimes and with the consolidation and functioning of the state organisations of the new regimes”. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 29.

a condition of multiple sovereignty and suggests that revolutions occur when the state finds itself in a position where it is unable to repress the opposition.²⁵

Even though these arguments undoubtedly represent an advance in our understanding of the revolutionary process, they neglect the vital importance of state practices in the formation of revolutionary movements. By resting the full explanatory weight of their arguments on exogenous variables, Skocpol and Goldstone are guilty of isolating the state from its ongoing interactions with society. And whilst Tilly is absolutely correct to suggest that multiple sovereignty indicates a revolutionary crisis, he largely overlooks the kinds of state practices that might help explain why revolutionary movements appear in the first place.²⁶

This would seem to confirm that such accounts of revolution have tended to set the state apart by emphasising its autonomy from society. An important attribute of the state-in-society approach is its focus upon process. Researchers are thus pointed to the interaction of state and society as they are constructed and reconstructed through time. Though Migdal recognises that much has been achieved by nomothetic approaches to social science theorising, he argues that they are as limiting as they are revealing:

²⁵ Wickham-Crowley writes that: "Goldstone's demographic-structural theory of state breakdowns is like Tilly's in so far as he gives deep attention to long-term processes, in this case those of (cyclic) population growth, as the 'prime movers' underlying state breakdown. Such growth in turn partly (only) accounts for the intensification of (1) state fiscal crisis and (2) of elite competition, especially for state office. He then combines these issues with measures of (3) the potential within the population for mass mobilisation". See Timothy Wickham-Crowley, "Structural Theories of Revolution" in *Theorizing Revolutions*, ed. John Foran (New York Routledge, 1997), 56.

²⁶ Tilly writes that: "According to the chronologies I have assembled, revolutionary situations appeared most frequently in one or more of three circumstances: (1) when discrepancies increased sharply and visibly between what states demanded of their best-organised citizens and what they could induce those citizens to deliver; (2) when states made demands on their citizens that threatened strong collective identities or violated rights attached to those identities; and (3) when the power of rulers visibly diminished in the presence of strong competitors". See Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492-1992* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 237.

“The presentation of highly stylised pictures in which the action is frozen, in which we are presented with static independent variables (such as fixed preferences or structures or institutional arrangements) bearing the weight of causality, places far too restrictive blinders on students of comparative domination and change”.²⁷

In hoping to identify the moment of original sin, he writes that most orthodox approaches to social science appear to confine all social and political life into a narrowly constructed world of rigour. This is problematic because all such approaches seem to over determine the present and force human history into the restrictive prison cell of their hypotheses. As a result, they do not account for the various ways in which the practices of the state can lead to the transformation of state and society.

For this reason, Goodwin claims that revolutionary theorising needs to adopt an approach that emphasises the numerous ways in which the state influences the interests, ideas and identities of social actors in the revolutionary process. By examining the ways in which states help to construct or constitute various social forces, the state-in-society approach emphasises how the actions of states help to create cognitively plausible and morally justifiable grievances, ideologies and actions. Whilst none of this ignores the collective efforts of the revolutionaries themselves, there is no doubt whatsoever that certain state practices are critical to the emergence of revolutionary movements.

²⁷ Migdal goes on to say that: “Social scientists need to understand the effects, not only of revelation, but also the quest for redemption. Revelation is an act fixed in time, in which Truth is collectively discovered and assimilated. It creates the founding principles that inspire people to act within a shared framework of meaning, displacing their own material desires in favour of those hallowed principles, even to the point of martyrdom or die for one’s own country. But the quest for redemption is ongoing. It holds out the hope for deliverance from the ills and decline that are part of the human condition – pain, sickness, poverty, decadence, decline, corruption, selfishness, and the like. Redemption offers the promise of collective deliverance and restoration. It prompts ongoing reactions to the world in which people find themselves, continually motivating responses to the failed human condition, to the failed promise of revelation”. See Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 24-25.

State Practices and Revolutionary Movements

This now leaves us in a position to analyse precisely what kinds of state practices are critical to the formation of such movements. Since each of these practices is equally important, they can be regarded as causally cumulative. They are significant because they largely determine the extent to which society comes to regard the authority of the state as illegitimate and why various groups come to envision a radical restructuring of the political order. Since the actions of the state generate resistance to the authority of the political establishment, society can no longer be seen as a residual variable in the revolutionary process. Just as the laws of physics dictate that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, so it can be assumed that various groups in society will respond to those practices of the state that have come to be seen as unjust.²⁸

Protection of unpopular social and economic arrangements

One of the most crucial state practices in the emergence of revolutionary movements is the protection of unpopular socio-economic arrangements. This is because the perpetuation of certain practices comes to be seen as unjust where they concern the daily lives of people everywhere. For many, the governing authority is responsible for guaranteeing equality for all in society. Those states that protect arrangements that only serve to exclude many from equal access to economic opportunities are susceptible to revolutionary movements because these practices come to be seen as discriminatory.

²⁸ Foran writes that: “The logic of the model proposed above is one of complex conjunctural causation, for it argues that a combination of factors may be necessary and sufficient to lead to the outbreak of social revolutions. It also illustrates what Charles Ragin terms *multiple* conjunctural causation since it is based on the possibility that Third World social revolutions may differ among themselves as from the classic agrarian revolutions studied by Skocpol”. See John Foran, *Taking Power: On the Origins of Third World Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 24-25.

These differences are often manifested in unpopular social arrangements in which certain economic classes, ethnic communities and religious groups are given preferential treatment. Grievances may thus become the foundation for widespread collective action as various groups in society contend for state power. In this way, state practices help to constitute a specific strategic orientation among those who are aggrieved in society.²⁹

Exclusion from state power and resources

The perpetuation of unpopular economic and social arrangements can generate further opposition to the state when mobilised groups are excluded from power and resources. This is because aggrieved groups in society have no opportunity to advance their claims within the existing political system. In fact, that is why so many revolutionaries have been convinced that the overthrow of the state is crucial to the realisation of their objectives. When the political system does not permit access to power and resources, the opportunity to resolve the grievances of those in society is restricted and those groups laying claim to a radically different conception of socio-political order become increasingly popular. This means that the state is susceptible to competing claims of legitimacy and revolutionary action.

To avoid such an outcome, the state can incorporate these groups into the political system in order to deradicalise them. When there is active participation, the public tends to be reassured that the state is not isolated from the interests of society and that their

²⁹ Goodwin writes that: “Economic grievances and cultural resentments may only become ‘politicised’ (that is, framed as resolvable at the level of the state), and thereby a basis for specifically revolutionary movements, when the state sponsors or protects economic, social, or cultural arrangements that are widely seen as grievous. Note that this is a ‘state-constructionist’ argument: States practices, in this case, help to constitute both a distinctive *target* and *goal* for aggrieved groups in civil society – namely, the state itself and its overthrow (and reorganisation), respectively”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 46.

concerns are important. Most of these groups often view their inclusion as a means by which to achieve greater power and influence. When they believe it is impossible to attain a reasonable share of state power, such groups often engage in the kind of social action that is openly disloyal to the state.³⁰

Indiscriminate state violence

State violence is crucial because the extent to which the government responds with repression largely determines the radicalisation of such groups. Indiscriminate state coercion against mobilised groups and oppositional political leaders can reinforce the idea that the state needs to be violently overthrown and radically restructured. Where state repression is insufficiently overpowering, such indiscriminate violence can be dangerous because it can lead to even more alienation among the population.

This can be explained by the fact that the various practices of the state are already regarded as unjust and the use of repressive violence only generates more resistance. Because indiscriminate state coercion encourages people to become more and more sympathetic to revolutionary movements, one may witness a rise in support for radical ideological beliefs. People who are repressed are much more likely to become receptive to the alternatives offered by religious zealots, socialist militants and radical nationalists.

³⁰ Goodwin writes that: “Chronic repression and/or exclusion of mobilised groups from access to state power is likely to push them toward a specifically revolutionary strategy – that is, militant, extralegal, and even armed struggle aimed at overthrowing the state. Such repression, after all, serves as an object lesson in the futility of legalistic and constitutional politics... Those who specialise in revolution tend to prosper under such regimes, because they come to be viewed by politically repressed groups as more realistic and powerfully effective than political moderates. Partly for this reason, virtually every powerful revolutionary movement of the present century... developed under a repressive and exclusionary regime, including the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Communists in China and Southeast Asia, Castro’s July Twenty-Sixth Movement in Cuba, the broad coalition that opposed the Shah in Iran, and the guerrilla movements in Central America”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 47.

They view the state as totally corrupted, incapable of reform and in need of complete reconstruction.³¹

Unpopular relationships with external actors

Finally, where the state has cultivated relationships with outside actors whose support confers legitimacy upon the government, the state is better able to pursue those policies and practices that have come to be seen as unjust. In fact, such relationships ensure that the state avoids being subjected to any undue outside pressure to broaden its political constituency. This is often because some international actors have a real interest in supporting the economic and social arrangements that already exist within a country.

Here wider concerns about spheres of influence or economic arrangements that favour the international community override the unacceptable practices of the governing authority. Oftentimes in such cases, these states are also the grateful recipients of material assistance. This not only explains why some outside actors come to be associated with the actions of the state itself, but also why they ultimately become the object of popular opposition themselves.³²

³¹ Goodwin writes that: “Indiscriminate state violence against mobilised groups and oppositional figures is likely to reinforce the plausibility, justifiability, and (hence) diffusion of the idea that the state needs to be violently ‘smashed’ and radically reorganised. For reasons of simple defence, in fact, people who are literally targeted by the state may arm themselves or join or support groups that have access to arms. Unless state violence is simply overwhelming, then, indiscriminate coercion tends to backfire, producing an ever-growing popular mobilisation by armed movements and an even larger body of sympathisers”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 47-48.

³² Skocpol writes that: “If a structural perspective means a focus on relationships, this must include transnational relations as well as relations among differently situated groups within given countries. Transnational relations have contributed to the emergence of all social-revolutionary crises and have invariably helped to shape revolutionary struggles and outcomes”. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 19.

Whilst none of these practices can be found anywhere in pure form, they are heuristically indispensable for sociological research. What they demonstrate is that the perpetuation of unpopular socio-economic arrangements, the political exclusion of opposition groups, the use of indiscriminate state violence and the pursuit of unpopular relationships with outside actors, all constitute a political process in which the state is an active participant in the emergence of revolutionary movements. Each of these state practices co-exists to varying degrees in every revolutionary situation and can be regarded as the cause for the rise of radical ideological movements whose objectives include the overthrow of the state and the fundamental reorganisation of society.

All we need do now is resolve the distinction between those states that are most *vulnerable* to the formation of radical revolutionary movements and those that are most susceptible to being *overthrown*. Even though the above analysis demonstrates why such movements emerge over time, this is an important theoretical distinction and there is no reason to collapse the two analytically.³³

From our earlier discussion of the ideal-types, it should be obvious that states have been characterised by different forms of authority throughout history. Even though the legal-rational and traditional forms of authority have been dominant, Weber writes that charismatic authority tends to emerge in traditional societies. This would seem to suggest that they are among the most likely regime types to be overthrown.

³³ Goodwin and Skocpol write that: “When speaking of regime vulnerability, a distinction should be made between vulnerability to the *formation* of a mass-based revolutionary movement within the territory the regime claims to rule, and vulnerability to actual *overthrow* by that movement. We need to understand what makes the second type of vulnerability as well as the first, without analytically collapsing the two”. See Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol, “Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World” in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, ed. Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 267.

In recent years, Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol have argued that exclusionary authoritarian regimes are among the most vulnerable to the *formation* of radical revolutionary movements. Since regimes of this type provide a visible focus of opposition, they often turn to repression when faced with popular demands for reform. This is because they tend to alienate and radicalise large numbers of people in society.

Among the various authoritarian regime types, Goodwin and Skocpol write that sultanistic regimes seem to be the most susceptible to revolutionary *overthrow*. Here the dictatorial manipulation of the political and economic arrangements of the state prevents any stable ruling group from emerging. This leaves personalist dictators more vulnerable to revolutionary overthrow than other more impersonal forms of authoritarian rule.³⁴

Whereas many of the lower classes vehemently oppose the limited social and economic opportunities afforded by the regime, the professional classes come to resent the tendency to monopolise significant sectors of the economy and the granting of special privileges to foreign powers in exchange for aid. As Goodwin concludes:

“Certain types of states...foster the very formation and indeed ‘construct’ the hegemony or dominance, of radical movements by politicising popular grievances, foreclosing the possibilities of peaceful reform, compelling people to take up arms in order to defend themselves, making radical ideologies and identities plausible, providing the minimal political space that revolutionaries require to organise disgruntled people, and weakening counter-revolutionary elites, including their own officer corps”.³⁵

³⁴ Goodwin and Skocpol write that: “Sultanistic neo-patrimonial regimes are centred in the personal manipulation of individual dictatorial rulers, who allow no stable group prerogatives in the polity – not even collective prerogatives for military officers or upper social or economic classes”. See Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol, “Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World” in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, ed. Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 268.

³⁵ Goodwin goes on to say that: “By thus illuminating state breakdowns *and* processes of revolutionary mobilisation, state-centred approaches provide us with some very powerful tools for explaining revolutions”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 50.

This last point, in particular, is important because dictators are often far more concerned with preventing their overthrow than with establishing an effective fighting force. When a foreign power withdraws its support from an incumbent regime and popular opposition becomes widespread throughout society, the military can suddenly collapse and open up the way for an irregular seizure of power.³⁶

Conclusion

These, then, are the reasons why certain state practices are likely to generate the formation of radical opposition movements. Where the state adopts unpopular economic and social arrangements, excludes opposition groups from the political process and uses indiscriminate violence to repress the opposition, revolutionary movements tend to emerge with a radical vision for reordering society. In those cases where such movements successfully overthrow the state, revolutionary leaders often become celebrated national heroes and remind us of the importance of conscious political action in the revolutionary process. Now that we have analysed the practices of the state in the formation of revolutionary movements, we are finally in a position to explore the reasons why opposition leaders have such a significant bearing on the revolutionary process.

³⁶ Goodwin writes that: “Because dictators often view economic and military elites as their chief foes, they may attempt to weaken and divide them in various ways, even though such groups share with dictators a counterrevolutionary orientation. By weakening counterrevolutionary elites, however, dictators may unwittingly play into the hands of revolutionaries, since such elites may thereby become too weak either to oppose revolutionaries effectively or to oust the dictator and reform the regime, thereby pre-empting revolution”. See Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 50.

4

The Arts of Leadership

From our preceding analysis of the state-in-society approach, it should be clear by now that revolutionary leaders most often play a significant role in the revolutionary process when they are best able to articulate a competing ideological vision of state and society. Where certain state practices undermine the legitimacy of the existing regime, there is a fundamental reorientation of collectively held beliefs in society. Revolutionary leaders are crucial in this regard because they are responsible for communicating a radical new vision of political order. No longer prepared to confer legitimacy upon the existing system, the people respond by rising up against the government in the hope of establishing a more equitable system of authority.¹

Charismatic Authority

Among the many writers to have examined the importance of revolutionary actors in history, Max Weber is perhaps the most widely-known. Weber argued that charismatic forms of authority are much more likely to appear in periods dominated by tradition. As we have seen, he adopted the term *charisma* from Christian theology to argue that charismatic leaders are believed to have some special power that commands obedience.

¹ James MacGregor Burns writes that: “[Revolutionary leadership] is passionate, dedicated, single-minded, ruthless, self-assured, courageous, tireless, usually humourless, often cruel. It is always based on a chiliastic political theology, but it remains flexible in its uses of theology in practice. It is committed to conflict. It rests on a belief in angels and demons and salvation. It does not tolerate heretics”. See James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1978), 239.

In its pure form, he writes that charismatic authority has a character specifically alien to the existing structures of economic and political organisation. He even claims that it is one of the few truly revolutionary forces in history, tearing down the institutions and traditions of existing authority structures:

“Since it is ‘extra-ordinary,’ charismatic authority is sharply opposed to rational, and particularly bureaucratic, authority, and to traditional authority, whether in its patriarchal, patrimonial, or estate variants, all of which are everyday forms of domination; while the charismatic type is the direct antithesis of this. Bureaucratic authority is specifically rational in the sense of being bound to intellectually analysable rules; while charismatic authority is specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules. Traditional authority is bound to the precedents handed down from the past and to this extent is also oriented to rules. Within the sphere of its claims, charismatic authority repudiates the past, and is in this sense a specifically revolutionary force”.²

Even though a small number of followers must submit to the charismatic leader and be free from ordinary worldly attachments if they are to occupy secondary positions in the movement, the vast majority of people need to support themselves financially over the longer term. This means that every charismatic form of authority must eventually adopt some form of fiscal organisation to provide for the needs of the group.

Ultimately, this can only be achieved by fundamentally restructuring society according to the transformative ideals of the movement. Though the content of those ideals cannot be inferred from the experiences of the past, this certainly does not mean

² Weber goes on to say that: “It recognises no appropriation of positions by virtue of the possession of property, either on the part of a chief or of socially privileged groups. The only basis of legitimacy for it is personal charisma so long as it is proved; that is, as long as the followers and disciples prove their usefulness charismatically”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 244. Peter Lassman writes that: “Despite the detailed attention given to traditional and legal rule, Weber was fascinated by the phenomenon of charismatic rule. Weber, revealingly, frequently states that he is interested ‘above all’ in the character of rule by virtue of devotion to the purely personal ‘charisma’ of the ‘leader’ on the part of those who obey him”. See Peter Lassman, “The Rule of Man over Man: Politics, Power and Legitimation” in *The Cambridge Companion to Weber*, ed. Stephen Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 91.

that the claims of the charismatic movement are not influenced by recent experience.

What is most significant is that by creating new demands of its followers, charismatic authority is symptomatic of a rupture with the past and the emergence of a new order:

“In traditionalist periods, charisma is *the* great revolutionary force. The likewise revolutionary force of ‘reason’ works from *without*: by altering the situations of life and hence its problems, finally in this way changing men’s attitude towards them; or it intellectualises the individual. Charisma, on the other hand, *may* effect a subjective or *internal* reorientation born out of suffering, conflicts or enthusiasm. It may then result in a radical alteration of the central attitudes and directions of action with a completely new orientation of all attitudes toward the different problems of the ‘world’”.³

According to Weber, this is the most important characteristic of charismatic authority.

Whereas the exercise of legal-rational and traditional authority is rule and precedent based, charismatic forms of authority rest solely on the ability of a particular individual to redirect social action. Defined as the continuous interaction of consciously evaluating individuals, charismatic forms of authority draw on the lived experiences of the past and reorient existing attitudes from within.⁴

Even though this reflexive understanding of agency has led to some confusion among scholars, Ann Ruth Willner skilfully identifies four dimensions of charisma that she thinks distinguish it from both the legal-rational and traditional forms of authority.

She begins by identifying the *leader-image dimension*, which simply refers to the beliefs

³ Weber goes on to say that: “In its pure form charismatic authority has a character specifically foreign to everyday routine structures. The social relationships directly involved are strictly personal, based on the validity and practice of charismatic personal qualities”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 245-246.

⁴ Ann Ruth Willner writes that: “It rests on devotion to the specific sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative...order revealed by him. Charismatic authority, therefore, is lodged neither in office nor in status but derives from the capacity of a particular person to arouse and maintain belief in himself or herself as the source of legitimacy”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 4.

that followers have about their leader. In her view, such characteristics are believed to transcend the temporal realm especially where leaders are thought to possess superhuman qualities associated with the divine. As Joseph Goebbels wrote to Adolf Hitler in 1926:

“You gave a name to the suffering of an entire generation who were yearning for real men, for meaningful tasks... What you uttered is the catechism of a new political credo amid the desperation of a collapsing, godless world. You did not fall silent. A god gave you the strength to voice our suffering. You formulated our torment in redemptive words, formed statements of confidence in the coming miracle”.⁵

This penetrating characterisation of Aryan nationalism perfectly demonstrates the critical importance of the religious motif. Having established National Socialism as a political religion in the fertile soil of pre-war Germany, Hitler inevitably came to be seen as the mythic saviour of the German nation.

Whilst the promise of redemption is essential to any leader, Willner is adamant that popular associations with the divine represent only one feature of the *leader-image dimension*. This is because certain exceptional qualities can also be important to the success of charismatic leadership. Here she claims that the incredible strength Mahatma Gandhi showed during his famous non-violent protest against Imperial rule was such that it continues to inspire devotees of peaceful resistance around the world today.⁶

⁵ Michael Burleigh goes on to say that: “That is what one early Nazi meant when he said: ‘I did not come to Hitler by accident. I was searching for him. My ideal was a movement which would forge national unity from all working people of the great German fatherland... The realisation of my ideal could happen through only one man, Adolf Hitler. The rebirth of Germany can be done only by a man not in palaces, but in a cottage’”. See Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: Religion and Politics from the European Dictators to Al Qaeda* (London: Harper Collins, 2007), 103-104.

⁶ Willner writes that: “Enumeration of specific qualities with universal or near-universal applicability is hazardous because of cultural variation. Attributes that may be considered truly exceptional in one culture may be seen as no more than relatively rare in another. Similarly, different cultures may have different measures for how much of any quality so far surpasses the normal human range as to transcend human potential”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 21.

It should come as no great surprise that revolutionary leaders are often among those who are thought to be endowed with such qualities. Time and again, the repressive practices of the state demand a strong figure whose courage inspires others. During the Cuban Revolution, this certainly seems to have been the case with Fidel Castro:

“Those who fought beside him in the sierra have told how, going from one place to another in the middle of the forest, he would suddenly stop and say, “No – not there.” They would change direction and go by a round-about route and learn afterwards that near those very places where Fidel had stopped – “as if by lightening,” his comrades said – there had been enemy troops lying in ambush. This happened not once but several times. Be it intuition, magic...or whatever, there is a quality in the man that warns him of danger”.⁷

It is obvious from this short account that Castro was publicly endowed with qualities that distinguished him from his followers. He was admired by those with whom he fought for being able to perceive danger without any apparent forewarning. This eventually proved critical in his victory against the Batista regime. His prodigious ability to foresee military threats saved his men from ambush and led them to safety on a number of occasions.

Whether or not Castro actually foresaw government troops lying in wait is largely irrelevant because charismatic figures are often endowed with exceptional qualities by their followers. Public perception is critical in this regard because it tends to give rise to levels of trust not often experienced under the legal-rational and traditional forms of authority. This

⁷ Willner goes on to say that: “The preceding examples come largely from countries in which many people still freely admit to beliefs in magic and the supernatural. This does not mean, however, that beliefs about the supernatural gifts of some leaders are confined to such countries. Equivalent convictions or at least close approximations of them are also held in the more industrially or scientifically developed countries. However, these are more generally expressed in different terms, such as attributing luck to a leader the possession of a ‘sixth sense,’ of ‘extraordinary luck,’ or of ‘singularly good fortune’”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 23-24.

would certainly seem to corroborate the claim that Willner makes about charismatic forms of authority being distinguished by personal expressions of faith in a given leader.⁸

Of course, this is not the only characteristic of successful leadership. She goes on to say that the *idea-acceptance dimension* is equally as important as the *leader-image dimension*. Despite the fact that many people are quite sceptical about the public statements of their leaders, followers in a charismatic relationship tend to accept them as gospel truth. This is even true when there is plenty of reliable evidence to the contrary. Here a senior government official recounts a remarkable conversation he had with some bewildered German farmers during the final months of the Second World War:

“Hitler could never lose the war...The Fuhrer is still holding something in reserve that he'll play at the last moment. Then the turning point will come. It's only a trap, his letting the enemy come into the country”.⁹

What makes this so surprising is that Germany was on the verge of defeat by this time. Even though the Allies had successfully occupied the Ruhr, many people still believed that Hitler could never lose the war. In fact, they were so convinced by his promise of victory that many refused to accept defeat during the final months of the conflict.

⁸ Willner writes that: “Several attributes or clusters of attributes can be singled out as having been traditionally and widely considered to be superhuman, supernatural, or magical. Belief in a leader's possession of one or some of these qualities can serve as a valid indicator of charismatically oriented perceptions of him. One such quality is prescience, the ability to foretell or prophesy the future. Another is the closely related capacity to read the minds of others. A third is the ability to heal or harm in unorthodox ways, by will alone, by sheer presence, inadvertently, or at a distance. Ability to influence or control the elements also belongs in this category”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 21-22.

⁹ Willner goes on to say that: “A valid indicator that such acceptance exists, either on the level of belief or on the level of behaviour requires more than that the followers' beliefs accord with the statements of the leader or that their behaviour conforms with his directives. It should demonstrate that the leader's statements constitute a sufficient source for their beliefs and his commands a sufficient motive for their obedience. Adequate evidence should show that a following believes that something has been so, is so, or will be so or believes that something is right *because of* the leader's statements to this effect”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 25-26.

This was perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the willingness of the army to continue fighting in the streets of Berlin. In spite of the horror that some people felt at the prospect of being shot for refusing to fight, Willner writes that such devotion is indicative of the *compliance dimension*. Whilst there may be many reasons why followers conform to the demands of a particular leader, she insists that such motives are often irrelevant in the charismatic relationship because every single follower feels duty bound to obey.¹⁰

This is absolutely crucial because the popular influence of a charismatic leader can only be measured by the extent to which people actually comply with his demands. Nowhere was this more evident than in the historical effects of the Protestant work ethic on the development of capitalism. In one of his earliest works, Weber had argued that the *calling* and a belief in predestination were major contributing factors to the rise of the capitalist spirit. Not only had it created enterprising businessmen, it had also provided the disciplined work force without which capitalism would have been impossible.

What to the Puritan was compliance with divine guidance became a mechanical conformity to the demands of industrial production in the Western world. Without an extraordinarily resolute belief in predestination, Calvinist adherents would never have responded to the *calling* and adapted themselves to the newly created demands of a rational life. Here was the way in which worldly activity became the seventeenth century ideal by which the faithful expressed their belief in God.

¹⁰ Willner writes that: “The compliance dimension refers to follower obedience to a leader’s directives. There are many bases upon which followers comply with commands of leaders – because they seem reasonable or lawful, because it is to their advantage that to obey, because of fear of losses or penalties if they fail to comply, because of the means of coercion the leader can use, because of the leader’s persuasiveness, or because of other motives. For followers in the charismatic relationship, however, such motives are minor or irrelevant. They comply because for them it is sufficient that their leader has given the command. If *he* has ordered, it is their duty to obey”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 6-7.

Of course, none of this would have been possible had there not been a powerful emotional attachment to the doctrine of the *calling*. For Willner, this *emotional dimension* is important because it refers to the intensity of the commitment between a leader and his followers. The power of this bond is well described in the work of Herbert Matthews, an American journalist who had limited access to Fidel Castro during the Cuban Revolution:

“The personality of the man is overpowering. It was easy to see that his men adored him and also see why he has caught the imagination of the youth of Cuba all over the island. Here was an educated, dedicated fanatic, a man of ideals, of courage and of remarkable qualities of leadership”.¹¹

It is clear that the loyalty of his men was absolute and that they offered unswerving commitment to the higher ideals of the revolution. According to Willner, charismatic leaders inspire extraordinary levels of trust and this is why emotional expressions of obedience are one of the most important features of charismatic leadership.¹²

Taking this all into account, she goes on to analyse six different historical figures, all of whom are thought to demonstrate charismatic political leadership. Even though her examples cut across a range of cultures, they represent some fairly unambiguous cases.

¹¹ Matthews goes on to say that: “In this interview were all the elements out of which the insurrection grew to its ultimate triumph. So was the true figure of Fidel Castro, before power taught him realism and worked its intoxicating spiritual corruption, before the ideals of democracy and freedom presented themselves as impossibilities if he was to make a drastic social revolution. The essence of the social revolution was there on February 17, 1957, in the words of a hunted youth in the heart of the jungle fastness of Cuba’s Sierra Maestra. History was speaking, and it will be for history to say whether, by and large, he betrayed the grandiose ideal for which he was fighting”. See Herbert Matthews, *The Cuban Story* (New York: George Braziller, 1961), 36-40.

¹² Willner writes that: “In the charismatic relationship...the emotions are not only more intense in degree, but they are also of a somewhat different order. Followers respond to their leader with devotion, awe, reverence, and blind faith, in short, with emotions close to religious worship. It is worth noting that charismatic leaders have rarely provoked indifference, neutrality, or mild reactions. Treated as godlike by their followers, they have often been regarded as diabolic by many of those not susceptible to their appeal. Whatever underlay the kinds of intensity of emotion they have generated, even their opponents have recognised and feared them as far beyond the ordinary and even beyond the unusual in human experience.” See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 7.

This is why it comes as such a surprise that she chooses to ignore the revolutionary leadership of Lenin and Mao. Instead, she refers to the two men as nothing more than quasi-charismatics:

“Lastly might be mentioned those cases of political leaders who do not meet the criteria for the possession of charisma but for whom its attribution or appearance has some justification. They are marginal cases who might be termed *quasi-charismatics*”.¹³

Willner claims that visitors to China before the communist party came to power did not witness any charismatically oriented follower perceptions among the Chinese people. She writes that such expressions of adoration appear to have emerged and flowered only after the onset of the communist regime and the institution of the cult of Mao.

This has significant implications for our work on revolutionary leadership because it would seem to indicate that charismatic leaders and political revolutionaries can in fact be distinguished from one another. Though this insight is undoubtedly important, such a distinction should not be a cause for despair, as it was Weber himself who insisted that every scientific achievement will eventually become outdated and need to be surpassed:

“That is the fate to which science is subjected; it is the very *meaning* of scientific work, to which it is devoted in a quite specific sense, as compared with other spheres of culture for which in general the same holds. Every scientific ‘fulfilment’ raises new ‘questions’, it asks to be ‘surpassed’ and outdated. Whoever wishes to serve science has to resign himself to this fact”.¹⁴

¹³ Willner goes on to say that: “Some of these leaders listed above as probables might be more fittingly classified as quasi-charismatic of the problem of establishing the genuineness of their apparently charismatic acclaim. This problem arises in cases of closed systems in which the cult of leadership is officially cultivated and propagated”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 38-39.

¹⁴ Weber goes on to say that: “In contrast with these preconditions which scientific work shares with art, science has a fate that profoundly distinguishes it from artistic work. Scientific work is chained to the course of progress; whereas in art there is no progress in the same sense”. See Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Editors, *From Max Weber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 138.

What this would seem to indicate is that a more comprehensive framework for studying the major dimensions of leadership needs to be developed in order to understand better the ways in which revolutionary leaders affect the course of history. Whilst the charismatic form of authority certainly points us in the right direction, there is no doubt that it needs to be redefined if we are to improve our understanding of this extraordinary social phenomenon.¹⁵

The Arts of Leadership

At the heart of this analysis lies the idea that revolutions are made and that they are affected by the conscious choices of revolutionary leaders. Even though certain state practices are a crucial component of the revolutionary process, they alone are not responsible for driving society through this incredibly transformative process. This is what makes the following examination of the arts of revolutionary leadership such a critical feature of this much debated historical experience:

“Revolutionary leaders consider the interplay of wants and needs, the memories and the visions of the population in whose name the revolution has been made, their own vision, and the domestic and international factors that impinge on their ability to realise the social revolutionary project”.¹⁶

¹⁵ Willner writes that: “What is so admirable about Weber is that so much of his work has *not* been outdated in over half a century and that so much of it is relevant in a world that has changed in many ways since the world of his time and the prior worlds that formed the empirical basis for his theories. If Weber’s work has raised new questions, it is the task of those of us who follow in social science to try to answer them and, in doing so, to raise new questions”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 208.

¹⁶ Selbin goes on to say that: “Social revolutionary leadership has received surprisingly little attention from political scientists; the few studies done have focused almost exclusively on psychological factors. There are a number of problems with such studies, two of which merit attention here. The first is that the organisation of revolutionary behaviour, that is, the constitution of revolutionary activity, cannot be explained by analysing personality traits of revolutionaries. The second is that the examination of revolutionary personalities is not helpful in explaining the emergence – where or when – of revolutionary activity”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 67.

Eric Selbin is absolutely correct here when he claims that revolutionary leaders are primarily responsible for successfully communicating a publicly acceptable vision of the radical reordering of state and society. This is because the ability to articulate an ideology that draws on the lived experiences of the past and offers a compelling vision for the future serves as the cornerstone for every successful revolutionary movement.¹⁷

Unfortunately, many theorists of social revolution continue to ignore the central role of agency in the revolutionary process. Though there is no denying the influence of the state on the direction of revolutionary action, it should certainly be obvious by now that revolutionary leaders are the ones who communicate the promise of deliverance from the ills of society. It is only through their exceptionally innovative leadership efforts that life begins anew and society is ultimately transformed beyond all recognition:

“Revolutions do not happen but are *made*, guided by the conscious plans and significant choices of revolutionary leaders throughout the three phases of the social revolutionary process. Social revolution in particular – defined as it is by the effort to transform society – is largely the result of, composed of, and driven by human action, not simply structural phenomena”.¹⁸

¹⁷ Selbin writes that: “This is not to deny or denigrate the importance of structures or the reality that there are conditions that may confine the range of options available either to the leadership or the population. ‘Objective’ conditions undoubtedly create an atmosphere that may be conducive to insurrection, political victory, or transformation. What is not at all clear is that such conditions in and of themselves have moved any society into or through revolution”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 67.

¹⁸ Selbin goes on to say that: “Since World War II, social scientists have built upon such notions and looked at questions of and about leadership in a variety of ways. These studies are broadly of two types: speculative analyses focused on archetypes of leaders and their functions and empirical analyses of characteristics, social backgrounds, education, and occupation. Although political scientists were part of this movement, the increasing attention to analytical models in the 1960s brought on by the so-called behavioural revolution in the social sciences often ignored leaders. Only recently has the importance of leadership in society been ‘rediscovered’ by most political scientists. But they largely continue to neglect such questions as why people opt for revolution in general and noticeably avoid the challenging and enigmatic question of revolutionary leadership specifically”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 67.

This is critically important because it means that there can be no transformation of state and society without the conscious action of revolutionary leaders. As creative visionaries whose strength of purpose and will to power dominates the historical landscape, so much of their authority is revealed in the final stages of the revolutionary process. Not only do they encourage large numbers of people to rise up against the old regime, they also help shape the governing structures of the newly established revolutionary state.¹⁹

Given this kind of influence, it comes as a surprise that social scientists have not studied revolutionary leadership in more detail. Keith Grint argues that our understanding of this issue has been unnecessarily complicated by the recent scientific turn in the social sciences. Whereas the natural sciences progress through a form of experimentation, such rigorous methods of analysis are extremely difficult to replicate in the social world:

“In other words, the more scientific our methods of analysis become, the less likely we are to understand leadership because it is not accessible to scientific approaches. This would be the equivalent of trying to measure the merit of a picture by reference to a scientific system that evaluates the objective use of colour, form, and definition”.²⁰

He writes that there are so many variables that can be used to evaluate the success or failure of leadership that it is more or less impossible to construct a reliable scientific experiment with decisive results. Given that the study of leadership does not properly

¹⁹ Selbin writes that: “It is during the...complex and protracted process of societal transformation that the efforts of groups and individuals have their most obvious and dramatic impact: People act, make strategic choices, and influence one another. As a result, this phase of the social revolutionary process is best understood as a period of purposeful adaptations to a variety of political circumstances, as the revolutionaries seek to transform the political, economic and social structures of society”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 66.

²⁰ Grint goes on to say that: “The more I read, the more I realised how ignorant I was. But there was something else at work: the more I read, the more *contradictory* appeared the conclusions I came to. Despite all my best efforts to analyse the data as objectively as possible and to run the numbers past as many sophisticated statistics I could manipulate, the results refused to regurgitate any significant pattern except one banal truism: successful leaders are successful”. See Keith Grint, *The Arts of Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-4.

lend itself to the rigorous demands of scientific analysis, he suggests using an altogether different approach entirely.²¹

This particular method of studying leadership he calls the constitutive approach. Here he claims that leaders actively shape popular perceptions of the social environment by articulating an image of reality that successfully captures the public imagination. This is significant because it effectively makes leadership a creative enterprise in which the performing arts are central. Successful leaders are thus distinguished by their unique ability to identify and communicate a radical revisioning of the existing order.²²

According to Grint, there are four equally important arts of leadership. The first of these he describes as the *who dimension* of leadership because it is vital for leaders to define the identity of the community they are speaking to. When there are very large numbers of people involved, the vast majority of followers are unlikely to know one another, so this can only be achieved by appealing to the shared experiences of the group. This means forging a new identity out of the grievances that a community holds dear.

Of course, leaders cannot invent a completely new identity because they are also bound by existing cultural discourses. Willner makes much the same argument when she

²¹ Grint writes that: “While natural science is generally held to progress through experimentation, in which all variables except one are held constant to establish the significance of that variable, such experimentation is extremely rare in social science if general and leadership research in particular. There have been experimental forms of leadership research, but either they have been very limited in their numbers and replicability, or, while replicable, the results have been less than compelling. As a result, most leadership research has tended to be either a review of successful leaders or grounded in survey approaches”. See Keith Grint, *The Arts of Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

²² Grint writes that: “The *constitutive* approach, therefore, is very much a pro-active affair for leaders. It is they who actively shape our interpretation of the environment, the challenges, the goals, the competition, the strategy, and the tactics; they also try and persuade us that their interpretation is both correct – and therefore the truth – and, ironically, not an interpretation but the truth. But because this is essentially an interpretive affair, it casts doubt upon those claiming scientific legitimations for their claims and buttresses an approach to leadership that is firmly within the arts, not the sciences”. See Keith Grint, *The Arts of Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

writes that charismatic appeal cannot simply be explained by the shared grievances a leader can willingly exploit. Successful leaders must not only be able to articulate the general frustrations of the group, they must also demonstrate a common heritage:

“The deeper sources of charismatic conversion and attachment to a leader can be found in the common denominators and common symbols of a shared cultural heritage. They can be found in the myths that are transmitted from generation to generation in a particular culture. The leader who becomes charismatic is the one who can inadvertently or deliberately tap the reservoir of relevant myths in his culture and knows how to draw upon those myths that are linked to its sacred figures, to its historical and legendary heroes, and to its historical and legendary ordeals and triumphs”.²³

This would seem to indicate that influential leaders need to invoke and incorporate the values embodied in society if they are to be successful. During times of great crisis, such beliefs not only retain their meaning but gain renewed power among the population. This type of phenomenon can be so powerful that some leaders even come to be seen as contemporary personifications of revered historical figures.

Nowhere was this more forcefully demonstrated than in Iran, where Ayatollah Khomeini led the opposition movement against the shah. Even though most people in the outside world could not believe that an elderly and long-exiled cleric could possibly gain such a powerful hold over the minds and emotions of so many of his countrymen, he had early on become associated with the some of the most powerful myths in Islam:

²³ Willner goes on to say that: “At a time of transition and crisis, some aspects of a given cultural configuration may lose their significance or be in danger of dissolution. Concomitantly, and even perhaps because of the climate of uncertainty, other beliefs and symbols not only will retain their meaning but will probably gain renewed or added power to move the minds and emotions of people”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 62. Foran writes that: “Such political cultures of opposition may draw upon diverse sources: formal ideologies, folk traditions, and popular idioms, ranging from ideas and feelings about nationalism (against control by outsiders), to socialism (equality and social justice), democracy (demands for participation and an end to dictatorship), or emancipatory religious appeals (resistance to evil and suffering)”. See John Foran, *Taking Power: On the Origins of Third World Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21.

“Just as the Imam may be hidden from the world but is in communication through a few receiving his word, Khomeini was hidden from the sight of most Iranians but was in communication through a few. In some versions, before the Imam can bring justice, he must lead the people in a struggle against tyranny and oppression and in some he cannot appear until a period of great tyranny and oppression has occurred”.²⁴

For his followers, the times and the man certainly seemed to fit the mythic scenario and they fully expected his leadership to herald a nationwide return to justice. Whereas some people associated his opposition to the shah with the memory of Hussein, others believed his return from exile symbolised the much anticipated reappearance of the Twelfth Imam. In this way, Khomeini drew on the shared cultural experiences of the Iranian people and helped lead a revolution against the corrupt Pahlavi regime.

Needless to say, this is not the only feature of successful leadership. According to Grint, the ability to communicate a compelling vision of the future is known as the *what dimension* of leadership. Despite being constrained by the environment within which they operate, influential leaders must transcend the present and articulate a convincing vision of the future. Whilst some people have argued that all utopian thought is naïve, Grint is quite insistent that a persuasive vision is absolutely critical to long term success.²⁵

²⁴ Willner goes on to say that: “To the world outside Iran it seemed incredible and inexplicable that an elderly and long exiled cleric could have gained from a distance such a clearly charismatic hold over the minds and emotions of millions of his country people. Yet this incredible phenomenon can be explained in great measure by Khomeini’s identification with myths over a thousand years old, the cardinal myths of Shia Islam”. See Ann Ruth Willner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 78.

²⁵ Grint writes that: “In this sense the imagination of the leader is very much locked into notions of utopia...And, although many have criticised utopian thought on the grounds that it is impossibly naïve, there are good reasons to suggest it has a kernel of critical importance to leadership; for, if leaders cannot imagine a preferable alternative to the status quo, why should followers follow them? Thus, if we ensure that utopias must be capable of realisation – that is, concrete rather than abstract – then we can utilise the create potential of the imagination and not suffer from it or suffer from its absence”. See Keith Grint, *The Arts of Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 14-15.

Though common beliefs are certainly important here, Grint claims that a leader needs to express his ideals to the community if he is to attract any support. This should be obvious given that no one can really be expected to succeed without doing so. He writes that this is the case for both the business leader who wants to develop a new financial strategy and the revolutionary who wants to transform state and society:

“To imagine ‘what is not present’ is to concern oneself both with what may be and what was but is no longer. It is to look at the *what* – the content of the vision – but also to consider *where* this will be achieved, *when* it will be achieved, and *why* it should be achieved”.²⁶

Not only must a skilful leader articulate a compelling vision of the future, he must also describe the ways in which the community can be expected to get there. For Grint, this is equally true of a soldier leading his men into battle or a local politician explaining a new policy proposal to his constituents. He says that if a leader fails to articulate a coherent vision to the community, there will always be those who refuse to follow.

In many ways, this substantiates the claim that the most successful leaders are those whose inventiveness is rooted in the imagination and the lived experiences of their followers. This means that leaders are far more likely to be followed when their strategic vision is clear and it resonates with the immediate desires of the community. For many followers, such vision constitutes a very seductive message because it emphasises the social needs of the collective rather than the personal ambitions of the leader.

²⁶ Grint goes on to say that: “This aspect of imagination can look backwards as well as forwards; leaders may rekindle the activities of their followers by recalling some golden age of the past, quite possibly mythical – or imagined – but which nevertheless mobilises people to move from one situation to another”. See Keith Grint, *The Arts of Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13. Selbin writes that: “A social revolutionary ideology is a strong critique of the previous regime and society; it provides a framework for both the articulation of social ills and obstacles and the creation of the new society. As a result, it rationalises, legitimises, and justifies the demands that the social revolutionary leadership places on the people and supplies dignity to their actions”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 76.

This is clearly important in the revolutionary process where a leader can only be successful by articulating a vision of the radical reorganisation of state and society. Eric Selbin argues that visionary leaders are crucial because they are endowed with that rare capacity to consider existing realities and articulate a collective image of a better future. He claims that this mainly involves drawing attention to the most widespread popular grievances and offering an image for the wholesale transformation of the state:

“Prior to political victory, the visionary leadership is engaged in two intimately related projects. First, it draws attention to popular grievances and discontent with the status quo and its maintenance. Second, and more important, the leaders propose a vision of the future in which these grievances and discontent are rectified. Thus the social revolutionaries seek both to undermine the regime in power and to rally the population to the social revolutionary project and elicit from them the commitment and the devotion necessary for the struggle”.²⁷

It is quite clear from this perspective that such a comprehensive transformation requires commitment, creativity and vision from the top. In other words, revolutionary leaders need to provide inspiration and direction to the people mobilised on their behalf. They need to articulate and justify the desires of the population, evoke dramatic images of the future and exploit a popular sense of liberation from an alienated past.²⁸

²⁷ Selbin goes on to say that: “The transformation of society requires daring, commitment, creativity, adaptability, and vision. The visionary leaders must provide both inspiration and direction to the people mobilised on behalf of the social revolutionary project and attract others to the struggle”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 72. Robert Tucker writes that: “A person or persons show initiative as non-constituted leaders along some path not being taken by constituted authority. They define a set of circumstances that deeply concern people as a problem situation, or – if that has been done already by others, in or out of government – they define the situation in a novel way... And they seek the support of others for their view of what the situation is and what should be done about it”. See Robert Tucker, *Politics as Leadership* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 86.

²⁸ Selbin writes that: “Critical to the social revolutionary project are the tasks of promoting new values, mobilising people and pursuing the reconstruction of the social consensus, often rent during the insurrection and/or the political victory. Visionary leaders, then, articulate, promote, and in some sense sell the social revolutionary project. Therefore, they seek to articulate and justify the desires of the population, kindle dramatic images of the future to justify the sacrifices of the present, and evoke the fervour of the community”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 72.

It is worth noting that charismatic appeal can be critical if there is no pre-existing cultural narrative. Selbin observes that charismatic figures usually reject convention and open up new possibilities by encouraging support from those with whom they share no previous historical experience. In the absence of a cultural doctrine legitimising and institutionalising new forms of social organisation, charismatic leaders intervene in the political process to institute a radical new vision of the existing order:

“Charismatic figures raise the promise, the potential, of rejecting convention and creating possibilities for the people. The period during which authority is transferred from the existing order to the alternative vision espoused by a charismatic or visionary leader is one characterised by revolutionary potential”.²⁹

All this would seem to confirm that a radical imagination and dramatic creativity are essential to successful revolutionary leadership. Given the extraordinarily transformative impact such figures have on the political landscape, it seems reasonable to describe them as ideological entrepreneurs. One might even call them creative prophets of destruction.³⁰

Of course, creative imagination is not the final dimension of good leadership.

According to Grint, success also demands skilful organisational tactics. He writes that this was borne out by the startling English victory at the Battle of Agincourt, where King

²⁹ Selbin goes on to say that: “In the social revolutionary context, charismatic leaders call for the rejection of societal convention and the established political order and, in their place, propose new and different forms of societal organisation. With respect to societies where institutions are weak to begin with...Heine suggested that ‘charismatic leadership can be a precious, vital resource.’ Charismatic leaders promote, advance, and facilitate the social revolutionary process by their ability to give voice to people’s needs and aspirations as part of the vision of the future that the revolutionary leaders propose”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 71.

³⁰ This term is adapted from the influential work of Joseph Schumpeter. Even though he was talking about entrepreneurs under the capitalist mode of production, the same argument holds for ideological entrepreneurs. He writes that: “The function of entrepreneurs is to reform or revolutionise the pattern of production by exploiting an invention or, more generally, an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way, by opening up a new source of supply of materials or a new outlet for products, by reorganising an industry and so on”. See Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper Perennial, New York, 1962), 132.

Henry cleverly positioned his archers on both sides of the saturated battlefield to help contain the heavily armoured French knights. Unable to outflank the English position, the French got bogged down in the mud, where they were eventually crushed by the inferior English forces. For Grint, the French defeat simply reaffirms the view that superior resources do not always determine the outcome of historical events. This is because good organisational tactics are often critical.³¹

Describing this as the *how dimension* of leadership, Grint argues that competent organisation is important when leaders do not have the strength to defeat their opponents. Even though many people overlook the importance of organisational ingenuity, he writes that some leaders have been most successful when they have neutralised the resources of their opponents. To reinforce his claims, Grint argues that Hitler only managed to crush the popular Social Democratic Party by using the organisational resources of the state to suspend parliament and imprison many of his opponents.³²

In recent years, a number of writers have emphasised the central importance of organisational tactics in the success of revolutionary movements. According to Selbin, the place where such tactics have been most evident is in the vanguard party. Even

³¹ Grint writes that: “At Agincourt the strength of the French army lay in its heavily armoured cavalry and the English could not hope to match them in a traditional contest. Instead, the desire of the French cavalry to close with and eliminate the English led the former to attack in a narrow area that rapidly filled with French dead, cut down by English arrows, to the extent that the size of the French attack made manoeuvre impossible amidst the growing body of dead”. See Keith Grint, *The Arts of Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21.

³² Robert Gellately writes that: “The Reichstag-fire decree, as it became known, took immediate steps ‘in defence against Communistic violence endangering the state.’ This measure suspended constitutional guarantees of personal liberty; allowed police to detain anyone they wished; and imposed restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and association. The powers of the national government were extended over the states. The decree also provided the legal basis for creating the secret state police, or Gestapo, as well as the concentration camps. The latter emerged soon after the March elections. In the meantime, state-sponsored violence was used against the paramilitary forces of the Communists”. See Robert Gellately, *Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler: The Age of Social Catastrophe* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 298-299.

though this represents only one particular organisational tactic, he writes that it can be distinguished by its emphasis on the popular mobilisation and transformation of the people. As Marx observes in the *Communist Manifesto*:

“The communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all the others; on the other hand, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the great advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement”.³³

Lenin would later argue that social revolutions are made by a small cadre of professional revolutionaries. He insisted that the proletariat had to be made aware of their situation because sudden expressions of revolutionary consciousness were extremely unlikely. It was only by appealing to the interests of the people that success could be guaranteed.³⁴

With that in mind, a leader must not only inspire the imagination of his followers and develop the organisational tactics to get them there, he must also ensure that they are sufficiently motivated to see the job through. Grint writes that this can be achieved by adopting the theatrical arts. Known as the *why dimension* of leadership, these qualities are rooted in emotion, rather than the language of science, and can be difficult to analyse:

³³ Marx goes on to say that: “The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat. The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer.” See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton Press, 1978), 484.

³⁴ Selbin writes that: “The concept of the vanguard party was most explicitly advanced by Lenin, who, drawing on Karl Marx, argued that revolutions were made by a small cadre of professional revolutionaries and that revolutionary ‘indoctrination’ of the population was not possible; people had to be brought to consciousness, guided much as a bricklayer uses a guideline to keep the wall being built straight. In another analogy, Lenin assumed that the revolution would be propelled by popular discontent but that the population could not steer. Thus the vanguard party existed to give bearings to the revolution. To attain this position, however, the party must appeal to the values and interests of the people, albeit carefully. Popular participation that was out of control, undirected, was a risk to the revolutionary project”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 70.

“In this we can include the theatrical performances that leaders must engage in if they are to achieve the necessary mobilisation of followers and it is also derived from the skills of rhetoric and the skills of negotiation. Thus having a persuasive message, delivering it effectively, and deploying negotiating skills to achieve movement are also critical elements of leadership. But again, although science and rational argument can be used to support these practices, they are fundamentally rooted in emotional and symbolic grammars, not the language of science”.³⁵

This would seem to indicate that leaders will be most successful when their followers believe in the collective identity and strategic vision being articulated by a talented performer. Since the performing arts are distinguished by the various ways in which a message is communicated, success does not only come from the reading of a script. It also comes from interaction of the props, the players and the audience.³⁶

This is why Grint ultimately concludes that leadership can best be understood as a performing art. His four dimensions of leadership offer a unique perspective on what makes a great leader. He does this by moving away from the empiricism of the social sciences to insist that the invention of identity, the formulation of a strategic vision and the adoption of suitable organisational tactics are all crucial dimensions of successful leadership. In this respect, leadership is not so much a reflection of material reality as it is a particularly distinctive way of representing the world through language and practice.

³⁵ Grint goes on to say that: “Just as a play comes alive only if the script is regarded as good, the actors are persuasive, and the sets appropriate for the context, and the audience are engaged to *believe* in the production, so leaders can be successful only if their followers come to believe in the collective identity, the strategic vision, and the organisational tactics of the leader. For that to happen the skills of the performing arts are crucial. Leadership, therefore, is more of a performance than a routine; it is the world of theatre and it has to be continuously ‘brought off’ rather than occasionally acted out”. See Keith Grint, *The Arts of Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

³⁶ Grint writes that: “Reading the text of Shakespeare’s *Henry V* may give you some idea about leadership, but it is not the same as watching a performance of the play itself. The equivalent for leaders would be that reading this or any other book on leadership will provide you with all you need to know about leadership; it probably will not. Leadership is something to be experienced rather than simply read”. See Keith Grint, *The Arts of Leadership* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24.

Conclusion

This is very important because social revolutionary movements are also rooted in the creative abilities of those who can offer an idealised vision of state and society. The performing arts are critical here because revolutionary leaders must not only convey a compelling image of the future, they must also adopt the right organisational tactics to help them succeed. As we will discover with Fidel Castro and Ayatollah Khomeini, this is what has made successful revolutionary leaders such a potent threat to exclusionary neo-patrimonial regimes the world over.³⁷

³⁷ Selbin writes that: “Vision and organisation are the hallmarks of social revolutionary leadership. Visionary leaders, who articulate the social revolutionary ideology, are verbal and dynamic people with broad, popular, often charismatic appeal. Organisational leaders, who seek to translate the social revolutionary ideology into reality are often taciturn and methodical people who work behind the scenes. Both types of leader may be quixotic idealists, hesitant to make concessions, or pragmatic realists, willing to manoeuvre and compromise as they seek to maximise popular support; but idealists tend to be visionary leaders, whereas realists are more likely to be organisational leaders. Most of the familiar Latin American revolutionary leaders demonstrate characteristics of both visionary and organisational leadership....It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive: Some visionary leaders have been as much organisers as orators or vice-versa. In fact, visionary and organisational leadership may be found equally in the same person. V.I. Lenin...in Russia, Mao Zedong in China, Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, and Fidel Castro in Cuba all resist categorisation – they filled both roles simultaneously. It is almost certainly no coincidence that these five people would likely top any list of ‘great’ revolutionary leaders”. See Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions* (Boulder: Westview Press, Colorado, 1999), 69.

Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution

During the 1950s, Cuba was torn apart by a vicious guerrilla war. Many opponents of Batista viewed him as a brutal authoritarian whose government was dominated by foreign interests. Here was a typical neo-patrimonial regime in which the ruling elite adopted unpopular economic and social arrangements, excluded opposition groups from the political process and used indiscriminate violence to repress the population. No wonder a popular revolutionary movement emerged with a radical vision for reordering society. Craving social justice and inflamed by an assertive nationalism, many people were inspired by the dynamic leadership of Fidel Castro. Leading a small rebel movement in the Sierra Maestra, Castro captured the imagination of the Cuban people by claiming to speak for the immortal ideals of Jose Marti. Promising to restore the island to independence, he eventually overcame Batista and established the first socialist economy in the Western hemisphere. Before going on to analyse the extraordinary success of the July 26 Movement, we need to understand why Castro was able to attract such widespread popular support among the Cuban population.¹

¹ Samuel Farber writes that: “The Cuban Revolution was one of the most important events in twentieth century Latin America and had a major impact beyond the Western Hemisphere. The establishment of Cuban Communism resulted from a democratic, multi-class revolution against a rather typical Latin American dictatorship...Of course, the transformation of the Cuban multiclass democratic political revolution into a Communist social revolution and the development of a close alliance between Cuba and the Soviet Union made this revolution unique”. See Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 170.

Early History

As briefly indicated above, any analysis of the revolutionary period is impossible without understanding the tragic history of Cuban independence. Dominated by foreigners for over four hundred years, the Cuban people had long dreamt of self-rule. The Caribbean island had first been discovered by Columbus on his inaugural visit to the New World in 1492. Following colonisation, the Spanish settlers began to recruit hundreds of thousands of indigenous people to clear the land for agriculture. But after war and rebellion had disrupted the French colonies in the region, many of the wealthiest Spanish migrants decided to establish large sugar plantations. Recognising this work as labour-intensive, the Spanish preferred to import large numbers of slaves from Africa rather than employ the local population.²

When many of the colonial territories in the Caribbean were awarded their independence, the majority of Spanish plantation owners chose to remain under military rule because they were worried about the possibility of slave rebellion. As a result, the only serious demand for reform emerged in the late 1860s when Cuban planters began insisting upon greater economic and political influence. Even though the export of sugar continued to expand, Cuba faced growing competition from the new sugar producing regions in Europe and North America. Facing a mounting crisis, the Cuban opposition

² Marifeli Perez-Stable writes that: “National sovereignty and the struggle for social justice were the twin pillars of radical nationalism. The nineteenth century forged its tenor, the twentieth its intransigence. The republic frustrated its aspirations, bolstered its contentions, and enhanced its credibility. By the 1950s, the nineteenth century cry of *independencia o muerte* (independence or death) had become *libertad o muerte* (liberty or death). After 1959, *patria or muerte* (homeland or death) would express the nearly one hundred years of struggle for national sovereignty. Socialism would become the conduit to realise social justice. That radical nationalism retained relevance in the republic and emerged as a viable alternative in 1959 was in no small measure due to the complexion of Cuban society and the crisis of political authority”. See Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

concentrated its efforts on obtaining a significant number of reforms from Spain, including greater participation in the colonial government.³

As negotiations continued into 1867, a ruinous economic crisis swept across the island. With fewer sugar mills in Oriente province, the eastern end of the island was more vulnerable to a serious downturn in the economy and it soon became the centre for much pro-independence activity. This was critically important because it would prove to be the start of a revolutionary tradition that eventually led to the rise of Fidel Castro. For many opponents of the Spanish administration, this was seen as an opportunity to overturn the discriminatory tariff system that put Cuban planters at a disadvantage in the global marketplace. Moreover, the opposition felt that by ending the prejudice against Cubans in government, they would be able to abolish the system of slavery upon which so many of the Spanish plantation owners depended for their economic prosperity.

When the negotiations failed the following year, fighting between the two sides soon broke out. Convinced that the Spanish authorities were aware of their activities, Carlos Manuel de Cespedes decided to raise the banner of rebellion and proclaim the independence of Cuba. With the colonial government in no position to react decisively, Cespedes attacked and captured the town of Bayamo in mid-October. Having established himself as the undisputed leader of the rebellion, the news from Oriente province electrified the island and rapidly mobilised the Cuban population. Within only a few

³ Luis Aguilar writes that: “By the mid 1860s the majority of the Cuban economic elite concentrated their efforts on obtaining the necessary reforms from Spain to assure them free trade, the *gradual* abolition of slavery with compensation for their losses, and increasing participation in the colonial government. Opposing them, the most intransigent *peninsulares* (Spaniards), who dominated trade and colonial administration, denounced every reform as a step towards independence. One of the arguments most frequently used by the *peninsulares* was that any rebellion against Spain would reproduce in Cuba the fate of Haiti”. See Luis Aguilar, “Cuba, c. 1860–c. 1930” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 22.

months, the colonial government was confronted by a growing rebellion and called upon the Spanish authorities in Madrid for some much needed assistance.

Even though the war was largely confined to the east, the fighting lasted a full decade. Local resistance was so fierce that the Spanish government was forced to send more than a hundred thousand troops to defend the small Caribbean island. Just as the Batista regime discovered in its struggle with Castro almost a century later, the rebels were helped by the topographical knowledge and material support of the local peasantry. Often aware of Spanish troop movements, the rebels were able to select the best areas for combat and they soon became experts in guerrilla warfare. Unaccustomed to the conditions in the tropics, many of the Spanish soldiers contracted malaria and fatigue repeatedly disrupted their military operations.

Yet in spite of these advantages, the Cuban resistance movement had its own share of problems. Divided by petty regionalism, class differences and conflicting views of military strategy, the rebels lacked the discipline and unity necessary for victory. At the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly in 1869, the authoritarian tendencies of Cespedes alarmed the civilian delegates under Ignacio Agramonte. Even though the military agreed to act only with congressional approval, this ultimately led to friction between the civilian and military authorities. In the end, factional strife among the rebel leaders and strong resistance by the Spanish forced the Cubans to sue for peace.

Having lost many thousands of lives, a Cuban commission presented the Spanish authorities with armistice terms. In return for peace, they demanded eventual autonomy for the island. Wishing to avoid further bloodshed, the Spanish government agreed to the proposals and a treaty was signed shortly afterwards. Recognising that Spain was still in a

position to determine the timing of Cuban independence, rebel leaders, Maximo Gomez and Antonio Maceo, rejected the treaty and went into exile. But they need not have worried because the war had evidently given birth to a newfound sense of Cuban identity:

“The entire conflict, know...as the Ten Years’ War, contributed to the growth and maturity of a national conscience. The vague feeling of collective identity which had emerged in the early nineteenth century became a deep, ardent sentiment”.⁴

Over time, this collective sense of identity would grow as Cuban mill owners were forced to look abroad for investment. Finding it impossible to compete with increasingly modern farming techniques, more and more local landowners were forced to sell their property to wealthy investors from the United States. Thus began the ill-fated penetration of the domestic market by American capitalism.⁵

As peace returned to the island, it soon became obvious that reconciliation would be difficult. Tired of war, some prominent members of the old reformist group led by the Cuban plantation owners founded the Autonomista Party. Anxious for reconstruction and prosperity, the main objective of this powerful national organisation was the achievement of Cuban autonomy by peaceful means. Even though the Autonomistas were opposed by

⁴ Aguilar goes on to say that: “Spanish warnings that an anti-colonial struggle would trigger off a racial war similar to that of Haiti now carried little weight since blacks had joined whites in the fight against Spain. Memories of Cuban heroes and Cuban victories...stirred patriotic emotions which made full reconciliation extremely difficult”. See Luis Aguilar, “Cuba, c. 1860–c. 1930” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26-27.

⁵ Aguilar writes that: “Even in the undamaged western regions the war accelerated a similar process. Many important hacendados began building bigger, more efficient mills, while those who had suffered severe losses or could not afford larger mills were transformed into *colonos* (planters who sold their sugar to the mills), slowing down the trend to *latifundismo* on the island. Ultimately, the war signalled the decline of the Cuban landed aristocracy, who were decimated and ruined by the long struggle or forced by the Spanish authorities to sell their land and mills. In many cases American capitalists acquired both at very low prices, marking the beginning of American economic penetration into Cuba”. See Luis Aguilar, “Cuba, c. 1860–c. 1930” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 27.

many of the pro-independence groups for their rejection of violence, divisions among the war veterans gave the Autonomistas the short term support of many Cubans.

Unfortunately, their political victories were only marginal at best. Ten years after the peace treaty had been signed, inequality continued to prevail. Even though Spain had introduced some minor reforms and abolished slavery, many Cubans continued to long for full independence. In 1893, Spanish minister Antonio Maura proposed a new set of reforms to give the Cuban people more autonomy. But his proposals were met with the usual resistance from conservatives in Spain and scepticism among many Cubans. When Maura eventually resigned, he had already lost the confidence of the majority of Cubans.

To make matters worse, it was becoming increasingly obvious that American investment was a double-edged sword. As exports grew, the island became increasingly vulnerable to the slightest change in American trade policy. When the government passed the Wilson tariff on sugar imports, the repercussions in Cuba were disastrous. Engulfed by a strong sense of Cuban nationalism, the people rose up against the Spanish government in a final bid for independence. United by their hopes for a new dawn in Cuban history, they were driven on by the popular writer Jose Marti.

Marti was a man of extraordinarily deep conviction who appealed to Cubans of all races and classes. Born in the capital city of Havana in 1853, Marti excitedly adopted the cause of Cuban independence, even being arrested at the young age of seventeen for writing pro-independence literature. After serving a number of months in prison, he was immediately exiled to Spain where he earned degrees in law and philosophy. He would later return to the island after the end of the ten year war. But after resuming his pro-independence activities, the authorities once again expelled him from Cuba.

Not wishing to go far, Marti settled in New York and worked as an art critic for the *New York Sun*. During his time in the United States, he wrote prolifically about Cuban political affairs. This would later prove critical as his work came to inspire an entire generation of Cuban revolutionaries. In his writings, Marti expressed the belief that all forms of oppression should be eliminated. According to Sheldon Liss:

“Marti had a deep faith in all types of people; his highest mission was to solidify human bonds. His actions and writings were designed to serve truth, justice and progress in politics as well as the arts. He was a universal man, devoted to knowledge and culture that analysed and elevated humanity...always with an eye toward educating himself and others.”⁶

Eventually, Marti managed to return home and join the rebel groups leading the fight against Spain. Even though he was tragically killed in a minor skirmish with Spanish forces, it was clear that a war to determine Cuban independence was now under way. Such was his influence that Castro would later try to capture his spirit in the struggle against the Batista regime.⁷

Despite being an untimely blow to the Cuban independence movement, the war continued in his absence. After landing in Oriente province, Marti had frequently clashed

⁶ Liss goes on to say that: “Cubans often refer to Marti’s unsystematic thought as an *ideario* (a concept) rather than an ideology. He is looked upon as a people’s philosopher rather than an academic because he never formulated a methodology through which to build an ideal world. He never devised a political or social theory, but he posited some ideas for a more perfect state. The love of humanity overrides all other factors in his work. He viewed politics as the ‘art of bringing humanity to justice’”. See Sheldon Liss, *Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 49 and 56.

⁷ Liss writes that: “Marti believed in the masses, but he strove to maintain common cause with all classes. He noted the political and social injustices inherent in the uneven distribution of wealth to the various classes...He cited exclusive wealth as unfair and preferred a more equal distribution of private property.” Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, the Marxist historian, writes that: “One must not...attribute to Marti ideological bases that are alien to him and that distort his real significance. It is plausible, but it is artificial to probe the great man to extract from him a pretended socialist streak...in perspective we can see that no one was more the child of his times, more expressive of his class, more tied to the customs of his day, than Jose Marti...The republic of Marti, therefore, is democratic in its political aspect, and bourgeois in its social content”. See Sheldon Liss, *Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 53-55.

with Maximo Gomez about the need for a strong civilian government that was capable of balancing the power of the military. Following his unfortunate loss, Generals Gomez and Maceo were able to organise a revolutionary government more amenable to their own ideas. Whilst both recognised the critical importance of a political organisation, neither man was prepared to allow civilian interference with the military.

In an effort to expand their field of operations, the two generals traversed the country in a brilliant campaign that soon found the Cuban forces fighting in the vicinity of Havana. Determined not to lose the island, the Spanish military erected barriers to seal off different parts of the countryside and forcibly relocated the rural population to special camps. But the lack of food and inadequate organisation soon transformed this military measure into an inhuman venture that infuriated the rebels and prompted international outrage.

These problems were made even worse when it became clear that only two Cuban provinces had been safely secured after three long years of war. The Spanish army had been forced to withdraw from many rural areas and it was widely thought that Spain would soon have to abandon the island. But by this time, the situation in Cuba had become a major issue in the United States. After the victory of William McKinley in the presidential election of 1896, the press immediately demanded recognition of Cuban independence.⁸

⁸ Jules Benjamin writes that: “As the fighting intensified, popular opinion in North America sided overwhelmingly with the rebels, whose daring exploits (real and invented) against a powerful foreign master resembled the now mythic struggle against British rule. In any event, as Spain was evil, surely her enemies in the field must be serving the cause of justice. Farmers and workers, sensitive to their own oppression by powerful forces, found reasons to identify with the Cuban rebels as well. Many U.S. newspapers reflected and, by their biased and often sensational reporting, deepened this feeling”. See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 34-35.

Reluctant to become involved at first, the president agreed to place the navy on full alert only after the explosion of the USS Maine in Havana harbour. But as the public came to view the Monroe doctrine as a warrant for American influence in Latin America, the president was forced to act. Exhausted by the war, the government in Madrid offered the rebels a truce to end the fighting. When this offer was rejected, the president finally recommended to Congress in April 1898 that the United States intervene. Hoping to demonstrate American benevolence, the president stated publicly that:

“When it shall appear hereafter that there is within the island a government capable of performing the duties and discharging the functions of a separate nation, and having, as a matter of fact, the proper attributes of nationality, such a government can be promptly and readily recognised and the relations and interests of the United States with such a nation be adjusted”.⁹

However, it soon became clear that the United States would ignore the rebel movement. Despite an offer of armed support from General Calixto Garcia, the Americans made no effort whatsoever to include the Cuban rebels in their offensive against the Spanish forces. Demoralised and worn out by three years of war, the Spanish finally agreed to sign a peace treaty with the United States in early December.¹⁰

⁹ Benjamin goes on to say that: “The debate over Cuba was complicated not only by differing class orientations but also because it took place at a time when the old continentalist and Manifest Destiny justifications for expansion were being reworked to make them serviceable to the growing North American need for customers rather than land. The Monroe Doctrine was being transformed by the growing power of the United States from a way of preventing European interference in the New World to a warrant for spreading North American influence within it”. See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 27.

¹⁰ Benjamin writes that: “The mood in the United States was a self-confident one when Spain signed the treaty that transferred the island in December 1898 – a document that bore the mark of no Cuban signatory. By this time, the United States saw itself as the sole victor over Spanish colonialism and oppression, a feat it presumed the Cubans to have been incapable of achieving. The rebels’ thirty-year role in draining Spanish power and authority was ignored”. See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 61.

Shortly after the conflict came to an end, the American occupiers established a military government in the hope of restructuring the economic and political system on the island. Even though the Teller Amendment had explicitly denied the government of the United States any jurisdiction or sovereignty over Cuba, the military administration quickly disbanded the rebel army and encouraged American capital to return. Despite complaints that Cuba would inevitably become dependent on the United States if the sugar industry was revived, many Americans insisted upon expanding production. Foreign interference such as this would later play a role in the rise of Castro.

After bringing about a number of improvements in public administration, the United States finally agreed to restore a restricted form of sovereignty to the island in 1902. Before granting independence, Congress demanded that the Cubans incorporate the highly controversial Platt Amendment into their new constitution. Drafted by Senator Orville Platt and Secretary of State Elihu Root, the amendment gave the government of the United States permission to intervene in the domestic affairs of the island for the preservation of life, liberty and property. Following an extremely fiery debate, the Constitutional Convention agreed to adopt the measure by a single vote.¹¹

¹¹ Benjamin writes that: “After much threatening and cajoling behind the scenes, a majority of the convention was finally induced to approve the special rights that the United States demanded. Several months later, after the assassination of McKinley had elevated Theodore Roosevelt to the presidency, Leonard Wood acknowledged to the new chief executive that ‘there is, of course, little or no independence left Cuba under the Platt Amendment.’ Placing the defence of U.S. interests within the core statute of the Cuban republic assured that Cuban independence would not challenge – indeed, that it would express – the hegemony that North Americans had long expected to enjoy over the island”. See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 65. Ramon Eduardo Ruiz goes on to say that: “For more than a hundred years of colonial life Cubans had been the stepchildren of a declining Spain which was compelled...to reject brash American bids for the island. No sooner had Cuba achieved independence from Spain than it was forced to accept the Platt Amendment, which severely circumscribed the island’s freedom of action”. See Ramon Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (New York: Norton, 1970), 7.

Clearly unable to pursue the colonial alternative, the United States had desperately wanted to maintain some influence over the region. Although political observers had insisted upon the strategic importance of Cuba for many years, it had become increasingly obvious that only a war with Spain would permit the creation of a republican system of government on the Caribbean island. As John Quincy Adams had once observed:

“There are laws of political as well as physical gravitation; and if an apple severed by the tempest from its native tree cannot choose but fall to the ground, Cuba forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only towards the North American union, which by the same law of nature cannot cast her off from its bosom”.¹²

Even though some Cubans supported American involvement in the affairs of the island, many others deeply resented the Platt amendment and the increasingly malign influence of the United States in Cuban economic and political life. Over time, this frustrated sense of Cuban nationalism would become the binding emotional sentiment behind the revolutionary coalition that emerged in the middle of the twentieth century.

Discontent and the Emergence of Batista

With Cubans enjoying their newly won sense of freedom, the country went to the polls for the very first time. When Maximo Gomez refused to run for office, Tomas Estrada Palma was overwhelmingly elected the first president of the newly independent

¹² Benjamin goes on to say that: “While annexation was considered a natural fate for Cuba, independence was not. The dominant North American view throughout the nineteenth century was that, for reasons of geography, racial composition, and cultural heritage, the island was incapable of self-government. John Adams was among the most pessimistic. Reflecting a widely held view in Protestant North America that Roman Catholicism was hopelessly reactionary, Adams considered the establishment of democracy in Latin America as likely as its appearance in the animal kingdom. Jefferson observed that history ‘furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government’”. See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 8-9.

republic. Even though economic recovery characterised the first few years of the new regime, long term programmes and loyalty to principles were often sacrificed to more immediate political gains. Not having had any real experience of self-government before, Cuban politics rapidly became the principal means to economic improvement.

With the menacing shadow of the United States hanging over the island, the major parties found it impossible to realise a distinctive political identity. In fact, the problems were so deep that there were almost no major ideological differences between them at all. This was often reflected in the way that many independence leaders sought public office as the only way to personal solvency:

“Cuban politics did not produce powerful or popular leaders. It brought forward instead those who were successful at aggregating large numbers of votes through shrewd electoral combinations and at avoiding the wrath or gaining the blessing of Washington. This same tendency prevented the Cuban republic from producing socially based parties of consequence”.¹³

After several unstable governments, a promising candidate from the Liberal Party was elected president in 1924. Gerardo Machado had assured voters during the campaign that he would eliminate the Platt Amendment and end public distrust of the government. With the promise of a trustworthy administration generating widespread public enthusiasm, the energetic Machado sincerely believed that he could be the one to restore Cuban dignity.

This would quickly become the familiar refrain of politicians of all persuasions.

¹³ Benjamin goes on to say that: “Without strongly based and politically distinct parties and without leaders willing to direct the state towards important social goals, Cuban politics was personalist, corrupt and, at times, violent. Though Washington’s own power over the island did much to assure this outcome, it could see in the result only confirmation of its belief that self-government lay beyond the ability of Cubans”. See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 71-72. Farber writes that: “Foreign domination, in combination with the native class system, produced a political system dominated by two almost indistinguishable political parties, the Conservatives and Liberals, who alternated in office under the leadership of their usually corrupt chieftains”. See Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 72.

During the first few years of his regime, Machado was certainly able to fulfil the hopes of many Cubans. Whilst a vast programme of public works provided thousands of jobs to the unemployed, the president also enacted legislation to diversify agriculture and regulate the sugar industry. Lining up in support of the president, the traditional political parties effectively gave him free reign over the island. Without any opposition, Machado governed as no other president had done before. Only a small group of students criticised the authorities for the repressive methods being employed by the regime.¹⁴

Hoping to oversee the economic renaissance of Cuba, the president had congress change the constitution. This was followed by the imposition of a restrictive emergency law that prohibited presidential nominations from parties supporting other candidates. Using his control of state funds, Machado ran unopposed for a new six-year term of office in 1928. Despite the opposition of several distinguished political figures, the president enjoyed the support of the United States and the business community.¹⁵

Unfortunately, the Wall Street crash in 1929 meant that sugar exports fell sharply and the president quickly started losing support. As unemployment rose, some opposition groups began adopting the tactics of urban terrorism in an effort to undermine the regime. At one time, political violence had been limited to clashes among competing political

¹⁴ Ruiz writes that: "Machado did not disappoint his backers; his regime invested millions of pesos in eye-catching public works projects, while his face-lifting program won the plaudits of many who judged him 'a man who accomplished what he preached.' In a much-discussed speech, the Archbishop of Havana pontificated that paradise had 'God in Heaven and Machado in Cuba'". See Ramon Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (New York: Norton, 1970, 77.

¹⁵ Benjamin writes that: "Enoch Crowder, now serving as the first U.S. ambassador to Havana, found Machado much more cooperative than previous presidents. Machado's pseudo-constitutional extension of his mandate in the late 1920s did evoke some private reservations among some within the State Department. Officially, however, Washington continued to give him its vital support". See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1990), 81-82.

groups, but now whole sectors of society entered the struggle. Middle class reformers, including students from the University of Havana, united with the lower classes against the dictatorship:

“By this time Machado faced a multi-faceted movement against his dictatorship. Before it spent itself, this movement produced the first radical nationalist insurgency of the post-independence era. It created a new generation of nationalists who would serve as exemplars and martyrs to a later anti-dictatorial movement in the 1950s”.¹⁶

As violence reached extraordinary levels across Cuba, the newly elected president of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, decided to send Benjamin Sumner Welles to the island in the hope of bringing an end to the political crisis. Despite being wholly committed to a policy of non-intervention in Latin American and Caribbean affairs, Roosevelt hoped that his efforts would soon restore some order to the region.

With the exception of the Student Directory, many of the opposition groups were happy to accept his mediation. However, the government was critically undermined when a local radio station mistakenly announced the resignation of the president in early August 1933. Shortly thereafter, a number of military officers rebelled and Machado was forced to escape Havana. Despite the support of Sumner Welles and the American government, the new Cespedes administration appeared too hesitant in the face of the ongoing crisis. Responding to a sense of demoralisation in the officer corps, a group of

¹⁶ Benjamin goes on to say that: “Machado had bought electoral monopoly at the price of political legitimacy. By raising constitutional questions about the extension of his term of office and his re-election, he assured that there would be an important political component to the economic tensions converging on the presidency”. See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 82-83. Ruiz writes that: “[The] anti-Machado protest...had its origins in the history of Cuba. Each republican administration, in the opinion of the new critics, had contributed its quota of mistakes to the national problem. Every administration shared the blame for alienation of natural resources, theft of public funds, political chicaneries, and the practice of calling on Americans to salvage personal interest. To the new critics, that process had merely culminated in Machado”. See Ramon Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (New York: Norton, 1970), 81.

sergeants from the army rose up against the new regime. With success at hand, the leaders of the Student Directory managed to persuade Fulgencio Batista to march on the palace and depose the president.

Batista initially supported the revolutionary government headed by Ramon Grau San Martin. Having announced a policy of robust agrarian reform, the government soon established an eight-hour working day and limited the purchase of property by foreigners. Reflecting many of the ideals of Cuban independence, the majority of these reforms were strongly opposed by the American business community. As a cautious diplomat, Welles forcefully argued against recognising the revolutionary government and encouraged the military to restore stability to the Caribbean island. In January 1934, Batista demanded the resignation of the president and a few days later San Martin was forced into exile.

With the full support of the army and the American government, Carlos Mendieta was immediately proclaimed the new president of Cuba. After cancelling the land reform programme, the United States welcomed the return of political order and agreed to abolish the Platt amendment. As peace slowly returned to the island, the revolution of 1933 became one of the defining moments in the tragic history of Cuban independence:

“The turmoil of 1930-4...proved to be much more than another episode of political violence in Cuba. The nationalistic, social and political forces unleashed transformed the island and opened a new era. The leaders, parties and ideas which emerged in 1933 dominated and controlled Cuba for the next 25 years”.¹⁷

¹⁷ Aguilar goes on to say that: “The Cuban society which Fidel Castro confronted in 1959, and even Castro’s rise to power, cannot be understood without taking into account the profound impact the frustrated revolution of 1933 had on the history of Cuba”. See Luis Aguilar, “Cuba, c. 1860–c. 1930” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 55. Farber writes that: “As far as Fidel Castro and the members of the...politically conscious circles around him were concerned, the profound problems of Cuba’s economy and society and the failure of the previous reform efforts made the revolutionary road a possibility grounded in Cuban realities”. See Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 33.

This was certainly true and much of the Cuban population eventually united behind Castro precisely because he promised an end to social injustice and foreign interference in Cuban affairs. Drawing on a strong tradition of radical nationalism, Castro frequently identified himself with the widely held disappointments of Cuban nationhood. This meant being contemptuous of a political system in which incumbents used political office for personal gain and failed to address the socio-economic problems of the island.

In the meantime, the *ancien regime* enjoyed new life under Batista and Carlos Mendieta. Having been through a difficult period of social unrest, the new government undoubtedly had its challenges. Most immediately, the reform programme of the short lived provisional government acquired institutional vigour with the organisation of the Autentico Party. For the more radical opponents of Batista, a clandestine revolutionary organisation called Joven Cuba rejected traditional politics and soon adopted armed struggle in an effort to undermine the newly established regime.¹⁸

As anti-government demonstrations and labour protests became commonplace, student opposition to the regime soon resurfaced at the University of Havana. In March 1935, momentum for a revolutionary change assumed formidable proportions when an anti-government strike plunged the island into crisis. Rather than negotiate with the opposition, the government seemed absolutely determined to pursue the participants. After proclaiming martial law, Batista oversaw a reign of terror that lasted until the late spring. Whilst some strike leaders were arrested, others were tortured and assassinated.

¹⁸ Louis Perez writes that: “Eschewing electoral politics, Joven Cuba adopted armed struggle as the principal means to combat the Batista-Mendieta government. Assassination, bombings and sabotage again became the dominant mode of opposition. Student opposition resumed with the reopening of the University of Havana in 1934. Anti-government demonstrations and labour protests once again became commonplace”. See Louis Perez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930–c. 1959” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 73.

Unions were outlawed and the university was occupied. In the horrifying weeks that followed, military firing squads executed hundreds of civilian dissidents. Extremely violent repressive actions such as these certainly help to explain why the powerful revolutionary movement that later emerged under Castro became so popular.

When it was finally over, the revolutionary tide had undoubtedly turned. Even though the general strike had collapsed after only a few days, its effects lasted through the decade. In the coming months, almost every branch of government passed under the control of the armed forces. As military supervisors replaced senior government officials, Batista was able to establish complete control over every area of public administration:

“In some measure the restoration of social tranquillity was due to the programs pursued by the new army command. Certainly Batista transformed the Cuban army into an effective apparatus of repression. At the same time, however, the military leadership practised graft and corruption on a scale previously unknown in Cuba”.¹⁹

Though a number of presidents came and went in the years that followed, the army had certainly become the most important source of patronage and public employment on the island. By exerting his power from behind the scenes, Batista had established himself as the most dominant political force in Cuba.

Whilst many prominent opponents of the regime had lost their lives, others sought personal security in exile. Exhausted by the continuous violence of the past few years, the Autentico Party turned to electoral politics and devoted itself to the arduous task of constructing a new party infrastructure. In 1938, the party adopted a reformist position by

¹⁹ Perez goes on to say that: “He committed the armed forces to a wide range of social programmes, starting in 1937 with the inauguration of the civic-military school system, under which sergeants served as schoolmasters throughout the countryside. These *misiones educativas*, designed to disseminate information concerning agriculture, hygiene and nutrition to rural communities, inaugurated a rudimentary education network in the interior”. See Louis Perez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930–c. 1959” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 74-75.

exchanging legal status and political recognition for public support of the government. At the same time, Communist control of the trade union movement expanded and ultimately led to the founding of the Confederacion de Trabajadores Cubanos. Reflecting this new sense of calm, many students quietly returned to classes at the university in 1937.

As the years passed, it became increasingly obvious that Batista was interested in more than just political power and personal wealth. In the hope of revitalising the listless Cuban economy, he committed the armed forces to a number of vital social programmes. Soon the government had rebuilt the education system and launched an impressive three year plan to reform agriculture. Even though the local sugar industry slowly recovered a larger share of the American market, the economic revival was not without its critics. Under the terms of a new reciprocity treaty, the government of the United States had secured a number of important tariff concessions. Over the coming years, scores of agricultural and manufacturing industries would be badly affected by this agreement.

As the revolutionary government became increasingly more popular with the people, Batista agreed to begin new negotiations on constitutional reform. Despite being the strongest political figure on the island, Batista found himself in a precarious position. Having opposed the reform movement earlier in the decade, he now hoped to empower his regime by writing a new constitution and holding fresh elections. To ensure that everyone was represented, all the major parties were invited to the discussions.

For the very first time in Cuban history, the delegates to the constituent assembly were free to consider any political issue they felt was important. After putting aside many of their differences, the participants were able to agree upon an exceptionally progressive constitution. Facing strong opposition from the United States, the delegates recognised

the right to strike and imposed a limit on working hours. But much of their hard work was undone when they failed to agree on provisions to enforce the new document:

“For all its enlightened clauses, the Constitution of 1940 remained substantially a statement of goals, an agenda for future achievement. The absence of provisions for enforcement meant that the new Constitution would remain largely unrealised. At the same time, it soon occupied a place of central importance in national politics since it served alternately as the banner through which to mobilise political support and the standard by which to measure political performance”.²⁰

Since the vast majority of its social measures were never implemented, Cuban politics would in future turn on partisan promises to interpret most faithfully the principal clauses of the document. Whilst some politicians chose to overlook the constitution, others came to see it as a binding covenant with the Cuban nation. This would be the approach adopted by Castro in his popular campaign to free the island.²¹

For now, though, Batista upheld his promise to the country and prepared the way for presidential elections in 1940. Stepping out of military uniform, he ran against Ramon Gran San Martin, who had returned from exile to challenge his old rival. After a vigorous campaign, Batista won the election in a ballot that many local observers thought free and fair. But new problems quickly emerged. Even though the election had served to reinvest the office of the presidency with some legitimacy, the political demands on Batista the president were significantly different from those on Batista the army chief:

²⁰ Perez goes on to say that: “Many of the objectives of the 1930s found vindication in the new constitution, which also provided the foundations for legitimacy and consensus politics for the next twelve years. Cuban politics would henceforth turn on partisan promises to interpret most faithfully and implement most vigorously the principal clauses of the Constitution”. See Louis Perez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930–c. 1959” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 77.

²¹ Ruiz writes that: “Only a profound revolution would make these provisions operative, while their enforcement would limit dramatically American control of the local economy. Further, these provisions explain why Fidel Castro, and other reformers who advocated fundamental changes in the Cuban economy, would eventually demand the restoration and enforcement of the Constitution of 1940”. See Ramon Eduardo Ruiz, *Cuba: The Making of a Revolution* (New York: Norton, 1970), 105.

“[The president] had acquired a larger constituency and accumulated debts to the political coalition that had carried him into office. Batista now presided over the return of patronage and political appointment to the presidential palace”.²²

Having been accustomed to the exercise of unconstrained authority, many in the old army command were frustrated with these developments. Tension between the military and the president ultimately came to a head in a short lived revolt of senior officers in early 1941. Fortunately for Batista, the collapse of the plot raised presidential authority to a new high and by the end of his term a constitutional balance of power had returned.

But this success was only temporary. Thanks to the war in Europe, the president was becoming more and more unpopular. Even though the United States had negotiated a series of generous trade agreements, no increase in the amount of trade could compensate for the loss of the big European export market. Prices increased and shortages of all kinds became commonplace. Such was the level of public dissatisfaction by the end of his term that Grau San Martin defeated Carlos Saldrigas in the presidential elections of 1944.²³

After waiting more than ten long years, Ramon Grau San Martin had finally won a presidential election. Disheartened by traditional politics, many people hoped the new government would embrace the revolutionary programme of his previous administration.

²² Perez goes on to say that: “In early 1941, customs-houses, long a source of military graft, were transferred to the Ministry of the Treasury. Army-sponsored education projects passed under the authority of the Ministry of Education. Supervision over lighthouses, maritime police, merchant marine and the postal system returned to appropriate government ministries”. See Louis Perez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930–c. 1959” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 78.

²³ Perez writes that: “The mystique of Grau as well as the appeal of the Autenticos was primarily derived from those heady and exalted days of 1933. In 1944, Grau promised more of the same, and an expectant electorate responded. In the June poll Grau obtained more than one million votes, sweeping five out of six provinces, losing only Pinar del Rio. After more than a decade of unsuccessful bids for political power, Grau San Martin and the Autenticos had finally won a presidential election. The Autentico victory raised enormous popular expectations in the reform program that had served as both the legacy and the promise of the PRC”. See Louis Perez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930–c. 1959” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 79.

But by the end of the decade, naive idealism had simply given way to widespread public cynicism. Despite the progressive principles enshrined in the Constitution, public office no longer seemed to offer the opportunity for collective improvement:

“The Constitution of 1940 was the compromise that settled the revolutionary struggles of the 1930s. It included the recognition of many social and economic rights as well as protection of civil liberties and private property. Under its charter, representative democracy was reconstituted and three presidents were elected, but new *politicos* were elected and political parties continued the tradition of corruption”.²⁴

With the administration under siege, corruption and malfeasance permeated every branch of government nationwide. As various groups fought over the spoils of office, terror and violence became an extension of traditional party politics. This helps to explain why the majority of the Cuban population was eventually seduced by the ideals of Fidel Castro.

These problems were made even worse by the continuing economic difficulties facing the island. Even though record sugar exports had created a large balance of payments surplus, the government had failed to diversify the economy. To help overcome the problems of chronic unemployment and underemployment, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development urged the Cuban government to reform the economy.

Unfortunately, much of this advice was ignored. By the end of the decade, sugar continued to dominate the national economy and there was a widespread sense of public dissatisfaction. With the island facing a growing economic crisis, Carlos Prío won the

²⁴ Perez-Stable goes on to say that: “Their tenure reinforced the old logic of corruption without instituting parallel economic and political reforms. The *autenticos* emerged in the revolution of 1933, and their coming to power initially signalled hope. The former revolutionaries, however, succumbed to the temptation of rapid self-enrichment and sidetracked their erstwhile visions and ideals. Cuba was still a nation of limited economic opportunities, and the next electoral round could drive incumbents from power”. See Marifeli Perez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36 and 50.

1948 presidential election on the promise of change. But the start of the Korean War in 1950 forced the price of sugar upwards and postponed the need for urgent reform:

“Of course, these developments were not entirely new. They had long been associated with the boom-or-bust mentality of the Cuban sugar economy. But in the late 1940s and early 1950s such conditions had far reaching implications. The fact that sugar continued to dominate the economy persuaded potential investors to retain large portions of their assets in liquid form. It contributed to fostering the desire for quick profits and it discouraged new investments and economic diversification. Cuba continued to depend upon an export product in which competition was especially intense, the decline of rival producers as a result of war engendering a false sense of security”.²⁵

This was a very difficult period because the Cuban government was confronted by a problem that would have defied almost any administration. Dominated by American business interests, the island found itself in a vice. Almost entirely dependent on the export of sugar for profit, the political system had effectively become captive to its primary agricultural product.

All these problems explain why the Autenticos had become so disliked by this time. Despite agreeing to minor reforms, Grau San Martin and Carlos Prio had avoided measures that would challenge the United States. Characterised by massive graft and the abuse of public funds, the Autentico Party had left many people feeling disappointed in the promise of 1940. Such was the indifference with which the Autenticos viewed the legacy of the revolutionary generation that it created tensions across the country.

²⁵ Perez goes on to say that: “The economy was not growing fast enough to accommodate the estimated annual 25,000 new jobs required to meet the growing numbers of people entering the job market. These problems would have challenged even the most enlightened administration. They were historical and structural, and defied easy solution. The Autenticos, however, were far from enlightened. These were years that began with great hope and ended with disappointment and disillusionment”. See Louis Perez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930–c. 1959” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 81-82.

In protest, Senator Eduardo Chibas decided to abandon the dominant governing party. Arguably one of the most charismatic figures of his generation, Chibas founded the rival Ortodoxo Party in the late 1940s. By claiming to follow the principles of Jose Marti, he hoped to identify the new party with the ideals of the earlier independence movement. Articulating the widespread disappointments of the public, he launched an enormously popular campaign against the Autenticos. But after failing to provide any evidence to substantiate a claim of corruption, he shot himself a year before the election.²⁶

Largely discredited, the Autenticos now presided over a disgraced government and a demoralised body politic. Even though this unexpected suicide caused widespread disillusionment among the Cuban people, the Ortodoxo Party continued to campaign for reform. But all their hard work came to nothing when the army once again seized power shortly before the 1952 election. After commandeering the principal army posts across the island, military units moved into the capital. When local residents awoke the next morning to rumours of a coup, all they heard was uninterrupted music on the radio.²⁷

Whilst the coup owed much of its initial success to the abilities of its planners, the effects of more than a decade of corruption had ultimately prepared the way for the return of military rule. The much observed failure to modernise the economy, the inability of the

²⁶ Farber writes that: “Although the Ortodoxos supported the idea of a welfare state and provided political support for many strikes, they were not a class-based party and did not advocate a radical restructuring of Cuban society. They attracted the professional middle classes as well as many young students and urban and rural workers sickened not only by the corruption of national politics but also by the corruption and bureaucratisation of the majority of unions”. See Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 47.

²⁷ Perez writes that: “Telecommunication service to the interior was interrupted. Sites of potential protest demonstrations against the coup passed under military control. The university and opposition press offices were closed. Local headquarters of various unions and the Communist Party were occupied, and leading activists arrested. Constitutional guarantees were suspended”. See Louis Perez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930–c. 1959” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 83.

political system to respond to the needs of the population and the continuing interference of the United States in internal affairs had created a broad feeling of popular discontent:

“The ease with which Batista and the army executed the plot...reflected considerably more than adroit application of conspiratorial talents. The effects of nearly a decade of graft, corruption, and scandal at all levels of civilian government had more than adequately paved the way for the return of military rule in 1952. The *cuartelazo* simply delivered the coup de grace to a moribund regime. Indeed, the general indifference to the coup underscored the depth of national cynicism with politics. The discredited Autentico government possessed neither the popular confidence nor the moral credibility to justify an appeal for popular support; its overthrow simply did not warrant public outrage. On the contrary, for many the coup was a long-overdue change”.²⁸

Such was the level of frustration that many people gladly welcomed the return of military rule. Even though they were caught unawares by the coup, the main political parties were in no position to prevent the latest developments on the island. Hoping Batista would oversee a return to order and stability in the region, the United States declared its support for the new president as he went about imposing a brutal neo-patrimonial regime.

Whilst both parties condemned the blatant violation of the constitution, neither responded to the coup with a comprehensive plan of action. Having lost all moral authority, the only credible opposition to the new regime tended to come from outside the political mainstream. Among those who resisted the government was a young man named Fidel Castro. No doubt one of the most fearless critics of the regime, his daring attack on the Moncada Barracks in 1953 marked the beginning of a long struggle against Batista.

²⁸ Perez goes on to say that: “To business and commerce Batista pledged order, stability and labour tranquillity. To the United States he promised respect for foreign capital. To the political parties he promised new elections in 1954. The Autentico and Ortodoxo parties proved incapable of responding effectively to Batista’s seizure of power. The Ortodoxos were leaderless and the Autenticos could not lead”. Louis Perez, Jr., “Cuba, c. 1930–c. 1959” in *Cuba: A Short History*, ed. Leslie Bethell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 83.

The Rise of Fidel Castro and the M-26-7

Castro was born in the Cuban town of Biran in 1926. His father was a Spanish immigrant who had begun life on the island by selling lemonade to sugar workers. With his savings, he had rented and later purchased land to grow sugar. Having achieved great success, the Castro holdings eventually totalled around twenty-six thousand acres. In his early years, Fidel was tremendously competitive and physically active. Accustomed to playing with the poor children at the small country school near his home, he would later claim that such experiences had set him on the path towards becoming a revolutionary.²⁹

After attending Belen College in the capital, Castro went on to study law at the University of Havana. During his studies, he was exposed to various groups competing for student government. According to observers, the large number of radical groups on campus reflected the widespread sense of public discontent in the country. Attracted to the militant extremism of student politics, it soon became clear that Castro was a gifted political operator who quickly rose to prominence among his contemporaries. In fact, it was here that he first began to forge his distinctive political identity.³⁰

²⁹ Tad Szulc writes that: "In an autobiographical interview with Carlos Franqui in 1959, Castro notes that 'all the circumstances surrounding my life and childhood, everything I saw, would have made it logical to suppose I would develop the habits, ideas, and the sentiments natural to a social class with certain privileges and selfish motives that make it indifferent to the problems of others.' Yet, he says, 'one circumstance in the middle of all this helped us develop a certain human spirit: It was the fact that all our friends, our companions, were the sons of local peasants'". See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 117.

³⁰ James Defronzo writes that: "Major activist organizations included the student branch of the Communist Party and two reportedly revolutionary but not anti-Communist armed groups, the MSR (Socialist Revolutionary Movement) and the UIR (Insurreccional Revolutionary Movement). These organizations and others competed for control of student government. Physical intimidation, beatings, and even assassinations occurred. Because the university was autonomous and self-governing, neither the army nor the police could enter the campus". See James Defronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2007), 201.

Evidently held in high esteem, Castro was invited to the founding of the Ortodoxo Party. Whilst he was acquainted with Marxism, Castro seemed to doubt the ability of the Communist Party to bring about sweeping change. When Eduardo Chibas shot himself, Castro suggested that the Ortodoxos mobilise the population around a programme of radical reform. After passing his final year law exams, Castro began offering legal advice to lower income residents in Havana. Thanks to his work in the community, he started to attract enough support to run as an Ortodoxo Party candidate in the parliamentary elections.³¹

Fully intent on working within the democratic system, Castro was forced to adopt the tactics of armed insurrection after the coup. As the Ortodoxo Party fell into confusion, Castro began organising a group of brave young men and women for an attack against the regime. Building on the influential traditions of the past, Castro insisted upon launching a strike against the Moncada barracks in Oriente province. Known historically for its fierce resistance to the Spanish, Oriente had long been home to the independence movement.

Recognising the obvious inferiority of his forces, Castro thought a surprise attack on the barracks would secure enough weapons for a nationwide uprising. On the morning of July 26, Castro led his small group of enthusiastic young compatriots into the city for the ill-fated attack. Unfortunately for the rebels, they encountered a military patrol shortly

³¹ Szulc writes that: "What Castro achieved by joining the *Ortodoxo* party was to give himself the option of pursuing his long-term political ambitions through establishment politics, and to position himself to take best advantage of it. Being an *Ortodoxo* and dedicating much time to the *Ortodoxo* Youth Section, Fidel committed himself full time to political life and involved himself in its chaos and violence. There is no real contradiction between Castro's very practical decision to play politics from inside through the new party, and what he described as his revolutionary instincts and his evolution toward Marxism. Even at this young age, Fidel had enough sense and political radar to know that revolutions are not accomplished overnight and that the proper climate must exist for them to occur". See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 148-149.

after arriving at the barracks. In the intense fire fight that followed, many of the rebels were killed. Exhausted by the confrontation, Castro fled into the countryside.

Over the coming days, most of the survivors were caught by military patrol. In an effort to impose his authority, Batista instructed his men to execute many of the rebels in cold blood, thereby demonstrating the ferocity of the new regime. Fortunately for Castro, it was decided that his life should be saved and he was brought to trial in Havana. In an extraordinary courtroom appearance, he delivered a stinging indictment of the regime, accusing the government of looking after itself and failing to improve the lives of the Cuban people:

“When we speak of the people we are not talking about those who live in comfort, the conservative elements of the nation, who welcome any oppressive regime, any dictatorship, any despotism – prostrating themselves before the masters of the moment until they grind their foreheads into the ground. When we speak of struggle and mention the people, we mean the vast unredeemed masses, those to whom everyone makes promises and who are deceived by all; we mean the people who yearn for a better, more dignified, more just nation; those who are moved by ancestral aspirations of justice, for they have suffered injustice and mockery generation after generation; those who long for great and wise changes in all aspects of their life; people who, to attain those changes, are ready to give even the very last breath they have, when they believe in something or someone, especially when they believe in themselves”.³²

Even though Castro was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, he seemed determined to earn the trust of the nation. Having spoken about the various indignities suffered by the Cuban people, he went on to describe their long held desire for social justice. No doubt

³² Castro goes on to say that: “The first condition of sincerity and good faith in any endeavour is to do precisely what no nobody else ever does, that is, to speak with absolute clarity, without fear. The demagogues and professional politicians who manage to perform the miracle of being right about everything and of pleasing everyone are, necessarily, deceiving everyone about everything. The revolutionaries must proclaim their ideas courageously, define their principles, and express their intentions so that no one is deceived, neither friend nor foe”. See Marta Harnecker, *From Moncada to Victory: Fidel Castro's Political Strategy* (New York: Pathfinder, 1987) 104-105.

aware of the importance of propaganda, he smuggled out the words of his speech and instructed his followers to distribute them among the population on the mainland.

Known simply as *History Will Absolve Me*, Castro defended the rebels in the name of human dignity. Criticising the worst excesses of the regime, he drew on history to suggest that no one could be prevented from fighting for the basic principles of human existence. He argued that Batista should be judged for violating the constitution and saw the Moncada attack as a denunciation of the regime. In one of the most famous passages of the speech, Castro described those who had been worst affected by the recent failures of government and explained why they wanted to cast off the tyranny of dictatorship:

“In terms of struggle, when we talk about people we’re talking about the *six hundred thousand* Cubans without work, who want to earn their daily bread honestly without having to emigrate from their homeland in search of a livelihood; the *five hundred thousand* farm labourers who live in miserable shacks, who work four months of the year and starve the rest, sharing their misery with their children, who don’t have an inch of land to till and whose existence would move any here not made of stone; the *four hundred thousand* industrial workers and labourers whose retirement funds have been embezzled, whose benefits are being taken away, whose homes are wretched quarters, whose salaries pass from the hands of the boss to those of the moneylender, whose future is a pay reduction and dismissal, whose life is endless work and whose only rest is the tomb; the *one hundred thousand* small farmers who live and die working land that is not theirs, looking at it with the sadness of Moses gazing at the promised land, to die without ever owning it, who like feudal serfs have to pay for the use of a parcel of land by giving up a portion of its produce, who cannot love it, improve it, beautify it, nor plant a cedar or an orange tree on it because they never know when a sheriff will come with the rural guard to evict them from it”.³³

³³ Castro goes on to say that: “These are the people, the ones who know misfortune and, therefore, are capable of fighting with limitless courage! To these people whose desperate roads through life have been paved with bricks of betrayal and false promises, we were not going to say to you : ‘We will give you...’ but rather: ‘Here it is, now fight for it with everything you have, so that happiness and liberty may be yours’”. See Marta Harnecker, *From Moncada to Victory: Fidel Castro’s Political Strategy* (New York: Pathfinder, 1987), 105-106.

Speaking directly to the demoralised agricultural worker and the poorly paid industrial labourer, Castro was able to empathise with the suffering of the Cuban people. After so many years of economic mismanagement and corruption, he seemed to understand their misery. By promising to restore human dignity, Castro drew on the legacy of Jose Marti and appeared to offer the Cuban nation the best hope of redemption. In doing so, he was able to fulfil the demands of the *who* dimension of revolutionary leadership.³⁴

Having committed himself to such high ideals, Castro was soon forced to abandon the country he loved. A year into his sentence, he was unexpectedly granted amnesty and allowed to return to the mainland. But it quickly became clear that it would be extremely difficult to lead an uprising against the regime without a proper organisational network in place. Worried that his life was in danger, Castro left the island in the summer of 1955 and made his way to Mexico City.

Shortly after arrival, Castro met an Argentine physician named Ernesto Guevara. A specialist in allergies, he had travelled widely throughout Latin America. Even though they had extremely different backgrounds, both men read widely and soon formed a close friendship. Drawn to socialist thought as a young man, Guevara shared a real passion for social justice. But his interest was more than a simple intellectual curiosity. Having recently witnessed the coup in Guatemala, Guevara was quickly attracted to the idea of organising a revolutionary movement to challenge the dictatorial Cuban leader.

³⁴ Castro writes that: “We were taught that for the guidance of Cuba’s free citizens, the Apostle wrote in his book *The Golden Age*: ‘The man who abides by unjust laws and permits any man to trample and mistreat the country in which he was born is not an honourable man...In the world there must be a certain degree of honour just as there must be a certain degree of light. When there are many men without honour, there are always others who bear in themselves the honour of many men. These are the men who rebel with great force against those who steal the people’s freedom, that is to say, those who steal human honour itself’”. See Marta Harnecker, *From Moncada to Victory: Fidel Castro’s Political Strategy* (New York: Pathfinder, 1987), 151-152.

In many ways, Guevara was more theoretically sophisticated than Castro and he proved to be an important influence on the new movement. According to Guevara, action provided the most encouragement to revolution and he urged the rebel leader to take up the fight against the regime in the countryside. In his view, this was the only way in which an irregular guerrilla force could overcome the might of the Cuban military:

“Marx and Lenin saw the urban proletariat as the most effective revolutionary force and believed that the cities were the place to launch the battle, but Che modified their ideas on revolution to fit the countryside. He concluded that the peasantry wanted control over the means of production and could be the vehicle for liberation. He believed that the peasantry might not lead the revolution but would participate in it, cooperate with the guerrillas, and play a key role in rural areas where it dominated numerically”.³⁵

Herein lay the successful application of the *how* dimension of leadership. Knowing that his small rebel force would be undermanned and poorly armed compared to the military, Castro realised that his best chance of victory would come from avoiding urban centres and attacking the regime in the countryside. Only then could he ensure the kind of revolutionary change that he hoped to achieve.

But organisational and tactical considerations were not his only concern. Even though Castro seemed determined to liberate the island himself, he was not the only figure to insist upon violent opposition to the regime. In his absence, Jose Echeverria and the Revolutionary Directorate had won widespread public support for their acts of urban terrorism. Realising that any sign of disunity among the rebel groups would undermine

³⁵ Liss goes on to say that: “He maintained that in underdeveloped Latin America rural guerrilla action was preferable because the most repressive forces of the incumbent regimes operated in the cities. Like Giap and Mao, Guevara advocated alliances between guerrillas and the peasantry, which could be mobilised by implementing agrarian reform. He believed that the peasants would fight to obtain land, and this constituted the main mainspring of Third World revolution”. See Sheldon Liss, *Roots of Revolution: Radical Thought in Cuba* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 160-163.

their efforts to overthrow the regime, the two revolutionary leaders agreed to combine their resources. Their agreement was subsequently formalised in the Mexico Pact:

“The Mexico Pact ideologically united the fighting young people of the July 26th Movement and the Directorate in regard to the aims of the revolution. However, the unity process had still not gone far enough to be able to map out a single military strategy. Each organisation selected a different arena of struggle. Despite those differences the two leaders were wise enough to reach unity agreements in the area where it was possible at the time. They granted each other freedom to carry out plans each regarded as best tactically, although each force had an assigned task within the general plan”.³⁶

Now formally committed to a strategy of guerrilla war, Castro contacted an expert in guerrilla warfare to help train his men for the conflict ahead. Alberto Bayo had served with distinction in the Spanish Civil War and was well acquainted with insurgent tactics. Convinced that it was his duty to help prepare the newly named M-26-7 for the struggle ahead, Bayo established a training base outside Mexico City, while Castro went to the United States and met with groups of anti-Batista exiles in New York and Florida.³⁷

As all this was happening, the situation back in Cuba slowly continued to deteriorate. Faced with a brutal regime, the main political parties had refused to participate in the 1954 presidential elections. With the continued support of the United

³⁶ Harnecker goes on to say that: “Although both organisations stressed insurrection and a general strike to overthrow Batista, the Directorate held that Havana should be the nerve centre of the struggle. It was the home of over a million people, and its was unquestionably the most important centre of the country from the economic, political and military standpoint. However, Fidel rightly said for these reasons that it was also the enemy stronghold, where the underground activity of the revolutionary movement was extremely limited and risky. He therefore chose Oriente Province as the terrain for struggle. In Oriente the regime was much weaker and the population possessed greater revolutionary traditions”. See Marta Harnecker, *From Moncada to Victory: Fidel Castro’s Political Strategy* (New York: Pathfinder, 1987), 51 and 35.

³⁷ Szulc writes that: “Fidel Castro arrived in Mexico with the clear and specific purpose of organising and training a rebel force that would land in Cuba to engage in guerrilla warfare in the Sierra Maestra. The guerrilla army would then defeat the Cuban armed forces, depose General Batista, and proclaim a revolutionary government on the island. To achieve his aim, he had at his command, as he set foot in Mexico, a few friends, limitless tenacity, and tremendous powers of persuasion”. See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 325.

States, Batista had run unopposed and unsurprisingly won a new term of office. Clearly determined to hold on to the presidency, armed resistance now seemed the only plausible course of action. According to Robert Taber:

“[The political parties might] just possibly have accomplished something had they acted in time, before Batista was able to consolidate his power, but they failed to act. The parties were fragmented, and irretrievably discredited. Their failure is found in the disunity, their weakness, their intramural rivalries, in the jealousies and personal ambitions and venality of the politicians, and in the skill with which the Batista regime used the means at its disposal...to render all legal opposition impotent”.³⁸

Still the opposition desperately hoped to avoid a violent confrontation with the regime and made one last effort to negotiate a political settlement. Beginning in 1955, representatives of the Civic Dialogue organised a series of conferences with Batista. During the discussions, the participants asked that free and fair elections be held in the coming year. When the president failed to give the necessary guarantees, all hope for peaceful reform disappeared and Fidel Castro began preparing for his return to the island.

With their training complete, eighty-two men set sail on board the *Granma* bound for Oriente in late 1956. Castro had assured the Cuban people that he would return before the end of the year and he insisted on living up to his promise. When bad weather delayed their arrival, the rebels failed to rendezvous with a waiting supply party on shore. Drifting out at sea, the men were betrayed by a local guide and found themselves ambushed by the

³⁸ Taber goes on to say that: “Party members who believed in the possibility of a purely political solution, or who found it convenient so to believe, were converted, willy-nilly, into collaborators, used by Batista to create the illusion of a ‘loyal opposition’ to shore up the democratic pretensions of the dictatorship. Honest men either became active revolutionaries, or lapsed into inaction and despondency”. See Robert Taber, *M-26: The Biography of a Revolution* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961), 77. Szulc writes that: “Whether a revolution so uncompromising and of such magnitude could have occurred without the political conditions suddenly created by...the dictatorship is most unlikely. Batista’s rule was widely hated, it brought more unity to Cubans than any government since the Machado dictatorship twenty years earlier, a unity which Batista failed to understand and which would serve as the main trigger for the revolution”. See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 213.

military when they finally came ashore. Even though most of the rebel landing party were killed, sixteen men somehow managed to escape and regroup in the dense undergrowth of the Sierra Maestra. Among the survivors were Fidel Castro and Ernesto Guevara.³⁹

Thanks to the protection of the rural population, the rebel army soon began to grow in size. With large numbers of peasants living in poverty, many were attracted to the social ideals of the movement. Much as Guevara had predicted, the native population soon became a vital source of support. They did this by providing arms and ammunition to the guerrilla army. Over time, this proved significant because it allowed the rebels to establish a main base of operations from which to launch attacks against the regime:

“In the beginning peasants and their families hid and protected the little, poorly armed, and famished rebel band; they served as principal channels for obtaining food, arms and ammunition, and all other kinds of supplies from what could be found in the Sierra or brought up from urban underground groups, and, finally, they served as a source of manpower. It was not a peasant revolution that gave Fidel Castro power, but there would have been no revolution without the peasants. Moreover, it was Castro who knew how to inspire this astounding display of solidarity and sacrifice despite the danger it presented to the peasants’ lives”.⁴⁰

There is no doubt whatsoever that Castro was helped by the fact that he had commenced operations in a peripheral region of the island where the military presence amounted to a few isolated guard posts. Local commanders had long been terrorising rural communities

³⁹ Farber writes that: “The fact that Castro had fulfilled his promise to return, illegally landing in Cuba in 1956, constituted an initial but major step in the process of building his mystique among the Cuban opposition and people at large. As the other groups were suffering serious setbacks, Castro eventually defeated the army in a number of skirmishes and ambushes, some of them at small rural outposts”. See Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 117.

⁴⁰ Castro goes on to say that: “Batista was carrying on a fierce repressive campaign, and there were many burned houses, and many murdered peasants. We dealt with the peasants in a very different manner from the Batista soldiers, and we slowly gained the support of the rural population – until that support became absolute. Our soldiers came from that rural population”. See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 380 and 402.

and many peasants came to identify with the achievements of the rebel army. In this case, the Sierra Maestra proved to be ideal territory for a prolonged guerrilla campaign. This was significant because it demonstrated the importance of suitable organisational tactics in the fight against the regime.⁴¹

Castro soon achieved another victory with the publication of an interview with Herbert Matthews in the *New York Times*. This was a momentous coup for the guerrilla movement as it was believed that the rebel leader was dead. During the interview, Castro reiterated his long-standing commitment to social justice and promised to end the misery of the Cuban people. His dedication was such that Matthews was genuinely moved by the love and devotion he appeared to inspire among his followers:

“It was easy to see that his men adored him and also to see why he has caught the imagination of the youth all over the island. Here was an educated, dedicated fanatic, a man of ideals, of courage, of remarkable qualities of leadership”.⁴²

This proved to be an important turning point for the rebel movement. By giving a much publicised interview to a prominent international newspaper, Castro put the regime in an awkward position. Since news of the interview contradicted official reports of his death,

⁴¹ Taber writes that: “What was gradually emerging was the classic pattern of guerrilla warfare...virtually impossible to stamp out, because it gives the professional soldier nothing with which to come to grips and leaves him to deal with an increasingly hostile population that passively resists him and with which he can find no fault, while knowing, none the less, that it is a source of his phantom enemy’s sustenance, intelligence and manpower”. See Robert Taber, *M-26: The Biography of a Revolution* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961), 93.

⁴² Matthews goes on to say that: “As the story unfolded of how he had at first gathered the few remnants of the eighty-two around him; kept the Government troops at bay while youths came in from other parts of Oriente as General Batista’s counter-terrorism aroused them; got arms and supplies and then began the series of raids and counter-attacks of guerrilla warfare, one got the feeling that he is now invincible. Perhaps he isn’t, but that is the faith he inspires in his followers... ‘We have been fighting them for seventy-nine days now and are stronger than ever,’ Senor Castro said”. See Herbert Matthews, *The Cuban Story* (New York: George Braziller, 1961), 36-37.

the meeting damaged whatever trust remained in the brutally repressive Cuban government. This was quite an achievement for the leader of a small rebel army.

Seeing this as a perfect opportunity to build on his support, Castro decided to reinforce the urban underground. With news of insurgent victories keeping much of the population alive to the struggle in the mountains, he hoped to strengthen his following in the cities. To coordinate better the activities of the urban underground and the rebel army, Castro resolved to bring the two organisations together in the National Directorate. Even though the guerrillas would continue to take the lead in the fight against the regime, the urban movement would be given substantial autonomy to initiate the revolution in the cities. Led by a radical young activist named Frank Pais, the urban directorate rapidly grew in influence and provided much needed assistance to the rebels in the Sierra:

“[Pais] reinforced the rebel forces; trained and recruited men and amassed weapons for a second front...initiated talks with dissident members of the Cuban armed forces; and sent out feelers to leading Cuban political figures who sympathised with the 26th of July”⁴³

It soon became clear that his involvement in the underground movement was absolutely critical. His brilliant organisational skills quickly made him an indispensable part of the urban movement. By providing logistical support to the rebel forces, Pais demonstrated his importance to the organisation. As well as recruiting and training volunteers for the

⁴³ Julia Sweig goes on to say that: “He began to build the urban underground into far more than the rearguard supporting the guerrilla struggle in the mountains. The scope of his initiative and decision-making authority, conferred by Fidel Castro himself, was vast. The guerrilla, or *sierra* forces, completed depended upon the *llano* for everything from medicines, weapons, ammunition, food, equipment, clothing, money, and domestic and international publicity. With more and more comrades falling into police custody, Pais carried the burden of satisfying virtually all of these requirements. In one of several memoranda sent around the country to M267 activists, Pais also made it clear that the movement must avoid overtures from traditional opposition political parties and even from other insurgent groups”. See Julia Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 21 and 14.

fight against Batista, he would publicise news of rebel victories. All of this would be critical over the longer term as the rebels attempted to overthrow the regime.

With opposition to Batista mounting, Pais became increasingly convinced that Castro needed to broaden the popular appeal of the revolutionary movement. He insisted that it was not enough for Castro to strengthen the organisational capacity of the urban underground when some sectors of Cuban society remained distrustful of the rebel leader. Seeing as he had already sworn to implement a programme of land reform, Castro would need to reassure the moderate opposition groups that he would also protect their interests. This would involve him reaching out to a much broader coalition of interests.

Later that summer, Pais managed to convince Raul Chibas and Felipe Pazos to visit Castro in the mountains. Pazos was the former president of the National Bank and Chibas the only surviving brother of the deceased founder of the Ortodoxo Party. When they arrived in the high country, they were met warmly by the guerrillas and soon agreed to a document of national unity. Written mainly by Castro himself, the Sierra Manifesto essentially affirmed the moderate character of the unified movement. After promising a new round of general elections and an end to foreign intervention in Cuban affairs:

“The document declared that the provisional government should adjust its mission to a program of government which included the restoration of civil liberties, union democracy, civil service reform, a campaign against illiteracy, and the establishment of...an agrarian reform program”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Farber goes on to say that: “Fidel Castro had obviously made a clear choice of strategy in his efforts at building a revolutionary movement against Batista. He accommodated his middle- and even upper-class supporters by adopting a social program that would not frighten them into indifference or opposition. All coalitions necessarily depend, by their very nature, on a compromise between the most radical and the most moderate components, but coalitions also work on the principle that, as the more radical elements become stronger, they can afford to ‘raise the price’ of agreement with the moderates”. See Samuel Farber, *Revolution and Reaction in Cuba, 1933-1960* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1976), 191.

Even though the promise of land reform seemed to be the most radical proposal in the unified programme, it was well within the bounds of the 1940 constitution. In any case, the manifesto committed the opposition to free elections and constitutional government. Published in *Bohemia*, the document was read by hundreds of thousands of people and became one of the most widely known programmatic statements of the revolutionary period. By identifying what was wrong and advising a suitable course of action, the Sierra Manifesto demonstrated the successful application of the *what* dimension of leadership.⁴⁵

With the signing of the joint agreement, Castro had become the most prominent opposition figure on the island. He had not only created a secure stronghold in the Sierra Maestra, he had also strengthened the urban underground and reached a decisive political agreement with the moderate opposition. Thanks to the support of the peasantry, his rebel army had grown to several hundred fighters and he had successfully built a strong base of operations from which to attack the authorities. With the launch of Radio Rebelde in early 1958, Castro added an exceptionally valuable tool of propaganda to his armour:

“Cuba had a strong tradition of the use of radio in politics, and Fidel had been very effective with the microphone on the limited occasions when he was allowed to get near one. In the second and last year of the guerrilla war, Castro installed a radio station – Radio Rebelde – at his headquarters atop the Sierra Maestra, rapidly turning it into a superb instrument of propaganda and the dissemination of coded operational orders”.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Taber writes that: “Fidel continued to have his reservations concerning the question of cooperation with the old-line politicians, or, for that matter, with any political faction. At the same time, he saw the need to win the support of conservatives who still reposed confidence in the politicians, and to capture the control of the respectable parties and institutions nominally representing the conservative elements”. See Robert Taber, *M-26: The Biography of a Revolution* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961), 155.

⁴⁶ Szulc goes on to say that: “He often addressed Cuba over Radio Rebelde. The switch to television was thus natural, and Castro’s ideal on-camera presence and his rich dramatic gifts did the rest”. See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 40.

Very soon, the radio station gained a reputation for telling the truth about rebel victories and defeats, although there was often good news to report. According to witnesses, the rebels had been hardened by everyday life in the mountains and they seemed more than capable of outwitting the professional military. This quickly became an acute source of embarrassment to the regime and it created a serious drain on the Cuban treasury.⁴⁷

At the same time, a number of urban-based opposition groups had suffered serious defeat at the hands of the regime. One of these was the Revolutionary Directorate. Formally bound to a strategy of urban insurrection, the Directorate was primarily composed of middle class university students. In March 1957, the movement launched an unsuccessful attack on the National Palace. Thirty-five rebels died that day and scores of others were hunted down and killed over the coming weeks. When it became known that Jose Echeverria was among the dead, the rural movement enjoyed a significant bounce in public support.

The strength of the Sierra Maestra stronghold now proved important because it enabled the movement to survive possibly its greatest defeat. This was the long planned national general strike. Though the M-26-7 had emerged as the strongest insurgent force, Frank Pais was well aware that the organisation did not have enough money and arms to overthrow the regime. For this reason, he proposed that the urban-based National

⁴⁷ Taber writes that: "The government forces were hopelessly inadequate for their task, their lines far over-extended, unable to maintain contact with the enemy, hard put to defend themselves from lightning attacks in unexpected quarters. Rebel tactics were simple and seldom varied. A provocation would be created. Government troops would speed to the scene and run headlong into an ambush or, avoiding the obvious trap, would find themselves in yet another, encircled and attacked on their flanks or from behind. Army commanders found it easy to enter the hills, difficult to get out again with their units intact... Rebel casualties were low, one reason being that the rebels were able to depend on the civilian population for warning of the approach of government troops, and only did battle when it seemed expedient". See Robert Taber, *M-26: The Biography of a Revolution* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961), 198-199.

Directorate organise a nationwide strike in the towns and cities across the island. As one of the leading members of the urban underground put it at the time:

“We think we have a duty to organise the workers, to strengthen the civilian resistance, to build provincial and municipal cadres with real revolutionaries, who, together with the revolutionary army of the Sierra Maestra, will guarantee the accomplishment of our program”.⁴⁸

Seeing the strike as a viable tactical complement to the battle in the mountains, Castro cautiously agreed to let Pais move forward with his plans. But he insisted that the rebel army remained the most important element in the struggle against the regime. This was significant because it indicated his determination to remain in control of the revolution. Only a few weeks earlier, the Sierra Manifesto had committed the opposition to armed resistance and the rebel leader was unwilling to let the strike sabotage his efforts.⁴⁹

Even though Pais was killed by the police at the end of July 1957, his plans for a general strike continued apace. Fully convinced that public opinion had turned, the urban revolutionaries insisted that a nationwide strike would be enough to undermine the regime. This was confirmed when the movement published the Manifesto of Twenty-One Points in March 1958. Signed by Castro and some of the most influential members of the urban underground, this newly approved manifesto signalled to the regime and the public alike that the movement would initiate a far reaching general strike the next month:

⁴⁸ Armando Hart goes on to say that: “We must also help the militia, which, outside the Sierra Maestra, without resources or arms (all that we had were sent to you) have heroically succeeded in extending the Revolution beyond the frontiers of the Sierra Maestra and have created an organisation that you...are duty-bound to protect”. See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 436.

⁴⁹ Szulc writes that: “The twenty-two point Manifesto, from ‘the General Headquarters of the rebel forces,’ started out by proclaiming that the struggle against Batista had entered its final stage’ and that ‘the strategy of the final blow is based on the general revolutionary strike, to be seconded with military action.’ The strike, it said, ‘will be ordered at the proper time,’ and it will continue along with the armed struggle ‘if a military junta should try and take over the government’”. See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 437-438.

“Due to the visible disintegration of the dictatorship, the growth of national consciousness, and the belligerent participation of all social, political, cultural, and religious sectors of the country, the struggle against Batista has entered its final stage...The strategy of the final blow is based on a general revolutionary strike”.⁵⁰

Shortly afterwards, Batista handed the revolutionaries a major victory when he decided to suspend all constitutional guarantees and impose press censorship. Concerned by reports of torture, the American government announced that it would no longer supply weapons to the regime. With such a promising wind behind their backs, many senior figures in the movement began to think that success might now be at hand.⁵¹

Sadly, much of their optimism was unfounded. Whilst the Communist Party refused to support the strike, others chose not to walk off the job when the action started on April 9. Thanks to poor planning and an inadequate response, the strike was doomed. With the police out in force, many of the revolutionaries were killed. As the situation deteriorated, it became clear what an extraordinary disaster the strike had been. Over the coming weeks, most of those involved were arrested, tortured and killed. Such was the scale of devastation that hopes for an urban front were dashed forever.

Despite his anger at the failure of the strike, Castro insisted that a battle had been lost and not the war. Determined to reassert his authority over the movement, he

⁵⁰ Sweig goes on to say that: “Castro, confident in his ability to demoralise Batista’s military and that the Sierra was home to the heart of the revolution, signed off on Pais’s plan with aplomb. Castro encouraged Pais to move forward with his strike plans, but at the same time let the *llano* leader know that in his view guerrilla warfare in the Sierra remained, in Fidel’s words, the ‘axis’ of Cuba’s political solution”. See Julia Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 110-111 and 46-47.

⁵¹ Benjamin writes that: “Batista’s opponents had long been calling for an end to U.S. support for the dictator, but without much success. One part of their critique of U.S. policy did, however, strike home: their demand for an end to the supplying of U.S. weapons to Batista’s army. These weapons were being used to kill Castro’s forces, in the course of which many civilians were being killed”. See Jules Benjamin, *The United States and the Origins of the Cuban Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1990), 150-151.

indicated that all efforts would now be focused solely on defeating the Cuban military in the Sierra Maestra. When Batista launched a massive summer offensive later that year, the support of the urban movement proved critical since everyone was focused on helping the rebel army. From now on, a unified revolutionary movement would be absolutely essential:

“The ideal thing in politics is unity of opinion, unity of doctrine, unity of forces and unity of command, as in a war. A revolution is just like a war. It is difficult to imagine a battle, being in the midst of a battle, with ten different military strategies and ten different sets of tactics. The ideal is unity”.⁵²

With his leadership restored, the guerrillas began winning battles far more substantial than those of the year before. Trained in the various methods of guerrilla warfare, the rebels targeted vulnerable military outposts and attacked the enemy in terrain largely unsuitable for field artillery. Without peasant support, the Cuban armed forces often found themselves outmanoeuvred and unable to respond effectively.⁵³

After suffering numerous defeats, most Batista units refused to venture into the hostile mountains. The offensive had taken an enormous toll on the regime and by mid-August the military had completely vacated the Sierra Maestra. Now that he had managed to consolidate his primacy in the east, Castro found himself in an exceptionally strong

⁵² Castro goes on to say that: “That is the ideal, but reality is something else. I believe that every country must get used to waging its battles in whatever conditions it finds itself. Let’s say it is impossible to attain total unity. Well let’s get some unity on this opinion, on this idea and on that other idea. We must seek unity of objectives, unity on specific questions”. See Marta Harnecker, *From Moncada to Victory: Fidel Castro’s Political Strategy* (New York: Pathfinder, 1987), 67-68.

⁵³ Szulc writes that: “Batista lost the summer offensive, and close to one thousand dead and wounded plus the four hundred prisoners, which the rebels kept returning as they captured them. Castro took over five hundred modern weapons, including two tanks, an extraordinary contrast with the moment in June at La Plata when he had only his telescopic-sight rifle and Aguilera, a shotgun. It was calculated later that 321 men beat back the huge Batista offensive, and politicians and senior officers in Havana also calculated that the regime could not last much longer. Castro broadcast on Radio Rebelde to all of Cuba every detail of the victories”. See Tad Szulc, *Fidel: A Critical Portrait* (New York: Post Road Press, 1986), 448.

bargaining position. Even though he had eased up during negotiations over a new unity agreement on his main demand of forming a provisional government in the Sierra Maestra, it was clear to the other opposition groups involved that Castro was now very much in the driving seat politically and strategically:

“The rebel army’s military successes had strengthened Fidel and the 26th of July Movement politically; they could now ease up on their demand of forming a provisional government in the Sierra Maestra prior to reaching a broad-based unity agreement. At the same time, so anxious was the opposition to support, benefit from, co-opt, or ride the coattails of a winning ticket that they settled for vaguely stated language in the Pact of Caracas that committed the 26th of July to very little”.⁵⁴

Among the most important provisions agreed to by the signatories in the Pact of Caracas was the promise to adopt a common strategy of armed insurrection. This clearly put the powerful guerrilla army at the forefront of the struggle against the regime. For the Cuban people, there was another equally important feature of the new agreement. Its publicly stated opposition to foreign interference in domestic affairs.

For many years now, the United States had openly been supporting the Batista regime. But foreign exploitation of the local economy, high unemployment and extreme poverty in the rural areas all contributed to the growth of widespread popular discontent. Thanks to the overpowering dominance of the American business community, the island had never really developed an independent commercial class and many people had been

⁵⁴ Sweig goes on to say that: “The new unity agreement called on all civic, political, and revolutionary forces to join together in a broad-based civic-revolutionary coalition...It asked for massive material reinforcement of all the guerrilla fronts then fighting against Batista. And it mandated coordinated efforts, but not a joint command, of all civic, revolutionary, and political sectors of Cuban society. Indeed, from the vantage point of the 26th of July, the Pact of Caracas was significantly and deliberately more general than the Pact of Miami. First, the new accord adopted a ‘common strategy’ of armed insurrection to defeat Batista, ‘culminating in a great general strike on the civilian front.’ Second, after Batista’s fall, ‘a brief provisional government’ was to guide the nation ‘to a normal state of affairs’ and ‘establish full constitutional and democratic rights’”. See Julia Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 173-174.

forced to turn to the state for employment. Turned off by the endemic corruption of the regime, the Cuban people sought relief in the revolutionary ideals of Fidel Castro.⁵⁵

This public sense of discontent was further exacerbated by the awful brutality of the security forces. Since Batista was a largely uninspiring leader who had no interest in the future direction of Cuban society, he tended to use the coercive power of the state to safeguard his dominance over the island. But many of these repressive state practices provoked immense popular outrage and alienated much of the population. As the regime became increasingly brutal in its methods, more and more people joined the revolution:

“One can only wonder at the policy which sanctioned such senseless slaughter...It is clear enough that no better result of such methods could have been expected than an intensification of the bitterness already felt by a people whose sons were dying in what *they*, for their part, saw as a battle against tyranny. Each murder could only produce another martyr, and new recruits for the revolution”.⁵⁶

As a show of kindness, Castro much preferred to treat his opponents with respect. If they were detained in combat, he would most often take away their weapons and set them free. This impressive sense of compassion demonstrated the enormous differences between his revolutionary movement and the regime. Herein lay the successful application of the *why* dimension of leadership. Whilst Batista alienated the vast majority of the population during his brutal reign of terror, Castro became one of the most popular figures in Cuban history.

⁵⁵ Jorge Ibarra goes on to say that: “In these circumstances, a united political front that called for the overthrow of the dictatorship was born. The various classes accepted the minimal program of national-popular demands of the revolutionary organizations without making any separate, special claims”. See Jorge Ibarra, *Prologue to Revolution: Cuba, 1898-1958* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 127.

⁵⁶ Taber goes on to quote *The New York Times* from this period: “This form of counter-terrorism is not bringing internal peace to Cuba. On the contrary, it is exacerbating an already embittered atmosphere”. See Robert Taber, *M-26: The Biography of a Revolution* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1961), 128-129.

Riding on a wave of success, Castro ordered Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos to advance into the lowlands for a final assault on the regime. But by this time, the military had essentially become a mercenary institution and was in absolutely no position to resist the guerrilla campaign. At the end of December, Guevara captured the city of Santa Clara and Castro secured the military garrison in Santiago. Finding himself under pressure from the guerrilla army, Batista fled the island shortly before the New Year. As soon as he had gone, Colonel Ramon Barquin brought the remaining troops under his command, agreed to a ceasefire and put an immediate end to the violent struggle of the past two years.⁵⁷

When Castro finally assumed control of the island in January 1959, he enjoyed the widespread support of the Cuban people. After organising a provisional government under his leadership, the new administration quickly introduced an agrarian reform act and announced a rise in wages. Even though the measure destroyed the majority of American owned landholdings on the island, tens of thousands of impoverished rural workers benefited from the redistribution of land and many more enjoyed higher pay:

“Castro...felt that past revolutions had bitterly disappointed the economic and nationalist aspirations of most Cubans. In contrast, the new revolutionary government’s rapid redistribution of wealth rallied enthusiastic support for the revolution among the majority of Cuba’s rural and urban populations”.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Farber writes that: “The control achieved by Fidel Castro became a critical element in the development of a revolutionary process in which the revolutionary leadership always retained political initiative and control. Even though the mass of the Cuban population became politicised and radicalised...the revolutionary political leadership always stayed ahead in implementing radical policies”. See Samuel Farber, *The Origins of the Cuban Revolution Reconsidered* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 119-120.

⁵⁸ Defronzo goes on to say that: “Revolutionary leaders concluded that a nationally owned...economic infrastructure would give Cuba the ability to resist economic control from other countries more effectively. The possibility that Cuba, having alienated the United States, might become economically dependent on the USSR seemed less onerous because the Soviet Union was very distant and presumably could not exercise the same level of control as the military and economic giant only ninety miles away”. See James Defronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2007), 207.

Castro later declared that social justice could only be achieved by following the main principles of Marxism. Realising that the revolution was heading in a socialist direction, the moderates in his government started to resign. Castro condemned the departures and encouraged his critics to flee. Unfortunately, they would not be the first. Over the coming years, many others would escape in protest at the unfulfilled promises of the revolution.

Conclusion

That so many people were surprised by the new direction of the revolution indicates just how successful Castro had been in articulating an inclusive message of social justice and radical nationalism. For many years, the island had been subjected to the influence of the United States and Castro appeared to offer the best hope of redemption. The rebel leader rejected dishonesty at the heart of government and promised to restore a sense of dignity. He spoke to the entire nation by appealing to the memory of Jose Marti and drew on the memory of past grievances. Even though the majority of his support came from the rural population, Castro cleverly accommodated himself to the moderate opposition. When he eventually moved towards socialism, the revolutionary leader inevitably let down those who wanted to see a return to a constitutional form of democratic government.

Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian Revolution

Almost twenty years to the day after Fidel Castro defeated the Batista regime in Cuba, an equally unexpected revolutionary movement came to power in Iran. Despite the apparent prosperity of the Iranian economy, much of the population objected to the modernisation programme undertaken by the shah. Long regarded as an important ally of the United States, Iran was governed by a typical neo-patrimonial regime in which the ruling elite adopted unpopular economic and social arrangements, excluded opposition groups from the political process and used indiscriminate violence to repress the population. No wonder the various opposition groups united behind the radical revolutionary movement led by Ayatollah Khomeini. Drawn largely to his promise of social justice, the Iranian people deposed the Pahlavi regime and enthusiastically supported the formation of an Islamic Republic. This was significant because they can certainly be said to have changed the face of the modern Middle East forever.¹

¹ Ali Ansari writes that: “Khomeini was an unusually unorthodox mullah, in many ways thoroughly modern in outlook, whose growing popularity reflected not only his determination to confront the political and ideological challenges facing Iran, but also the changing intellectual climate which witnessed the growth of religious discourse within a political environment. As with other countries in the Middle East, secular nationalism was proving an inadequate remedy for the myriad ills of the state...Khomeini became the personification of this synthesis. For the traditional masses of religious Iranians, he represented all that was traditional and authentic about Shi’a Iranian culture. For the young idealistic students who were to become the ideological vanguard of the movement, he represented unorthodoxy and rebelliousness. They saw him as the champion of national independence and integrity. Khomeini did not simply think about the world, he wanted to change it. This was an immensely attractive mantra to the young”. See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 200-201.

Early History

To understand how an influential Muslim cleric became the immensely popular leader of a revolutionary movement, it is important to go back to the earliest history of Islam. This is necessary because the interweaving of religion and politics began with the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Among the many divine revelations he wrote down in the Quran were a number of political and legal injunctions that enabled him to rule over the Muslim community. It was only when he died that problems began to arise. Whilst some of his followers decided to follow the caliphs, others felt the succession rightly belonged to his cousin Ali. This schism would be replicated years later when Ayatollah Khomeini fled to Najaf. As the final resting place of Ali, Khomeini wanted to demonstrate the continuity between his claims to rule and those of his predecessor.²

Those who recognised the caliphs came to be known as the Sunnis, whereas those who acknowledged the leadership claims of Ali came to be known as the Shias. When Ali died in the seventh century, his son Hussein insisted that he was the legitimate heir to the Prophet Muhammad. Feeling threatened, Caliph Yazid murdered Hussein at the battle of Karbala in 680AD. For many, this marked a critical turning point in the history of Islam. Despite his death, Hussein had left behind a son and heir whose descendents came to be known as the *Imams*. Over time, these Imams attracted widespread devotion among the Shia masses for they were believed to be the only legitimate interpreters of divine will.

² Reza Aslan writes that: "From the moment Muhammad died, there arose dozens of conflicting ideas about everything from how to interpret the Prophet's words and deeds to who should do the interpreting, from whom to choose as leader of the community to how the community should be led. It was even unclear who could and could not be considered a member of the Ummah, or, for that matter, what one had to do to be saved. Again, as is the case with all great religions, it was precisely the arguments, the discord, and the sometimes bloody conflicts that resulted from trying to discern God's will in the absence of God's prophet that gave birth to the varied and wonderfully diverse institutions of the Muslim faith". See Reza Aslan, *No God but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2006), 114-115.

Before long, religious sectarianism became one of the defining features of the Muslim world. Among the majority Sunnis, it was widely believed that all fundamental legal principles had been outlined in the Quran by the Prophet Muhammad. Even though new decrees and interpretations were made, they did not have the same legal status as the early law books. This contrasted with the Shias who believed that no new interpretations were required because only the Imams were capable of giving infallible legal opinions.

This remained the case until the ninth century, when the Twelfth Imam suddenly went into hiding and the source of all authoritative legal judgement disappeared. Starved of spiritual guidance, the Shias cultivated a unique system of trained legal scholars called *mujtahids*. As students of Islam, they were believed to have the intelligence and training necessary to make crucial judgements on a range of important legal issues. Even though these judgements were considered fallible, the mujtahids often commanded enormous respect among the Shia masses because they responded to popular local needs. This would later prove true of the radical revolutionary movement led by Khomeini.³

Until the fifteenth century, the vast majority of people in Iran were Sunni. But in 1501, a powerful Shia movement emerged in the northwest province of Azerbaijan under the dynamic leadership of Ismail Safavi. Wishing to unite the entire country, Ismail successfully suppressed the warring tribes and founded the Safavid dynasty. In an effort to consolidate his power, he brought in a large number of distinguished Shia theologians

³ Aslan writes that: “There are now so many mujtahids in the Shi’ite world that only those who have attained the very highest level of scholarship and who can boast the greatest number of disciples are still allowed to practice *ijtihad*. At the top of this order are the *ayatollahs* (the title means ‘the sign of God’), whose decisions are binding on their disciples. Only a handful of authoritative *ayatollahs* exist today – primarily in Iran and Iraq – but their religious and political authority over the Shi’ah is formidable. As we shall see, it was precisely this authority that allowed Ayatollah Khomeini to impose his will upon the social, political, and economic forces that led to the Iranian Revolution in 1979”. See Reza Aslan, *No God but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam* (New York: Random House, 2006), 184-185.

from abroad to help provide support for the new regime. This would later prove critical as the clerics became more and more influential in Iranian social and political life.

Though insufficient research has been done on the Safavids, it appears that by the sixteenth century Iran was beginning to find an effective system of accommodation with the large nomadic population. A significant factor in this success was the enlistment of a Persian speaking bureaucratic class with experience in administration and tax collection. Even though military power still remained in the hands of the tribes, the imperial court managed to impose some degree of centralised authority.⁴

In the end, Safavid rule was undermined by the integration of the empire into the international system. Given that many of the luxury textiles produced in local workshops were popular in the West, profitable trading routes were soon established along newly built roads. Sensing an opportunity to enrich themselves, a number of tribes rebelled against the court in the hope of asserting local control over commercial exchange. With the Safavid crown starved of much needed revenue, the empire quickly fell into decline. This would certainly not be the first time that external relations affected internal politics.⁵

⁴ Nikkie Keddie writes that: “Ever since the eleventh century Seljuk conquest of Iran, Turkic languages were predominant among rulers, who were all of nomadic origin or, in the Safavid case brought to power by nomads. Nomadic or nomad-backed dynasties included two fifteenth-century Turkmen dynasties who preceded the Safavids; the Safavids themselves; various eighteenth-century rulers; and the nineteenth-century Qajars. However, all major dynasties made use of a Persian-speaking bureaucratic class with long experience in administration and tax collection. One secret of Safavid success was their early enlistment of this class and of Persian landlords and merchants, which involved moving away from the egalitarianism of their early tribal followers”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 12.

⁵ Keddie writes that: “The great Safavid Shah Abbas (1587-1629) encouraged international trade through building roads, caravanserais, and workshops to produce the luxury textiles and ceramics demanded in the West. Silk was the main export. Disruption by military tribes, the low level of agricultural production, and the gradual change of Western trade routes to the Far East from overland to overseas, however, contributed to economic decline, reflected in political decline, and to easy conquest by the Afghans in 1722”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 12.

At the same time, the clergy had also started to assert their autonomy from the court. For many years, it had been extremely difficult to criticise the ruling elite because religious scholars throughout Iran depended upon the crown for financial support. This position had been simple enough to maintain as long as the shahs followed Islamic law and contributed to the economic well-being of the country. But all this began to change as the financial basis of clerical independence grew. This was important because it would have profound effects on the country in later years.

More than anywhere else in the Muslim world, Iranians could make bequests of their property as inalienable endowments. Charitable endowments were usually given to religious institutions administered by the clergy, whilst private endowments often went to the descendants of the donor. When it came to large private endowments, members of the clergy were frequently rewarded for helping people avoid the strict inheritance laws in the Quran. As the number of endowment contributions steadily increased, the clerics soon found themselves in a position to assert their independence from the regime.

These changes were largely reflected in the fact that the clerics were also able to keep control of certain religious taxes known as *khoms* and *zakat*. Though their proceeds were meant to go to charity, social welfare organisations managed by the clergy benefited most. As basic living conditions improved, many clerics retreated into religious institutions to offer influential legal opinions on various questions of national importance. Their newfound influence was such that some of the more prominent religious scholars even insisted that they should be given a much greater role in the running of the country:

“They did not yet say they should rule directly, an idea that came forth only with Ayatollah Khomeini, but that the shah should carry out their rulings when given and defend the nation militarily”.⁶

This would seem to confirm that Shia Islam increasingly came to dominate the social and political landscape in Iran. Thanks to their newly won independence from the regime, the clerics became more powerful and much of the population experienced the birth of a new national identity. This would ultimately have both short and long term consequences.

Nowhere was this more evident than under the Qajars. After coming to power at the end of the eighteenth century, the new rulers of Iran transcended tribal opposition by marrying into local families and appealing to the commonly held religious identity of the people. Whilst some made pilgrimages to the holy sites of Najaf and Karbala, others gave money to support the gold plating of the Samarra mosque. This was important because it revealed the extraordinarily powerful influence of Shia belief among the Iranian people.

As public expressions of religious identity became more and more popular, Iran experienced the growth of foreign interference in domestic affairs. Shortly after the nineteenth century Russian invasion of the Transcaucuses, the British attacked the south. During the peace negotiations, the Qajar government was forced to concede a number of humiliating concessions. Most importantly, both powers were allowed to set up regional consulates and all foreign merchants were exempted from existing customs regulations.

⁶ Keddie goes on to say that: “The most important function of a Shi’i mujtahid was to exert ijthad to give new interpretations of law and doctrine in response to new questions. Although the Sunni ulama outside Iran in fact made some new interpretations, the latitude for Shi’i ulama to do this was much greater. Like other differences between Sunnis and Twelver Shi’is, the power of the mujtahid to interpret doctrine is not ‘purely’ a doctrinal one but has roots in the greater socioeconomic strength and independence of the Iranian ulama and also in the decentralisation of power in Iran, owing to great difficulties of communication, sparse and scattered population, and the independent power of nomadic tribes. In late Safavid times some mujtahids claimed that they had more right to rule than did the impious, wine-bibbing shahs”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 16-17.

Unfortunately for Iran, this kind of outside interference would continue well into the twentieth century.⁷

As traditional life suffered from the inevitable disruptions of international trade, popular feelings of resentment grew. Even though Iran had profited from selling textiles to Europe in the past, newly imposed tariff agreements contributed to the steady decline of the export trade. With the vast majority of foreign made products exempt from local trading laws, domestic textile production slumped. As more and more Iranians were forced out of work, many sought comfort in the effects of opium and tobacco.⁸

To make up for the loss of crucial tax revenues, the Iranian government started offering generous economic concessions to outsiders. Whatever the short term benefits, these measures inevitably contributed to the foreign stranglehold of the local economy. Of these concessions, one of the most famous was awarded to the well known British businessman, Julius de Reuter, in 1872. For distinguished imperialists, such as Lord Curzon, these concessions were critical to the future prosperity of Great Britain:

⁷ Ervand Abrahamian writes that: “Iranians began to refer to the two powers as their ‘northern’ and ‘southern’ neighbours. The treaties had far-reaching consequences. They established borders that have endured more or less intact into the contemporary age. They turned the country into a buffer and sometimes a contested zone in the ‘Great Game’ played by the two powers. Their representatives became key players in Iranian politics – so much so that they had a hand not only in making and unmaking ministers but also in stabilising the monarchy and influencing the line of succession throughout the century. This gave birth to the notion – which became even more prevalent in the next century – that foreign hands pulled all the strings in Iran, that foreign conspiracies determined the course of events, and that behind every national crisis lay the foreign powers. The ‘paranoid style of politics’ which many have noted shapes modern Iran had its origins in the nineteenth century”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 36-37.

⁸ Keddie writes that: “Interaction with the West on unequal terms thus reduced large areas of economic activity and opened up or increased some others. Based on existing evidence it seems unlikely that the gains compensated for the losses...While many imported consumer goods could be bought more cheaply than their local counterparts, this did not necessarily bring a better life to most Iranians. More sugar, tea, tobacco, and especially opium were consumed, which was detrimental to health, while prices of basic foodstuffs rose”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 52-53.

“In the furious commercial competition that now rages like a hurricane through the world, the loss of a market is a retrograde step that cannot be recovered...Indifference to Persia might mean the sacrifice of a trade that already feeds hundreds of thousands of our citizens in this country and in India. A friendly attention to Persia will mean so much more employment for British ships, for British labour, and for British spindles”.⁹

Though widespread criticism of the agreement forced the government to retract much of the concession, Reuter was still allowed to open the Imperial Bank of Persia. Responding to concerns about the expansion of British influence in the region, the Iranian government asked the Russians to train the newly formed Cossack Brigade. But this decision only seemed to demonstrate Iranian impotence in the face of foreign pressure.

Public outrage over the concession policy finally came to a head in 1890 when Nasser ad-Din Shah gave away a monopoly for the production and sale of Iranian tobacco. With domestic consumption on the rise, tobacco production was a lucrative business for many landholders and bazaaris alike. Concerned that the agreement would upset the local economy, public protests began in the spring of 1891. After failing to overturn the concession, an influential Iranian cleric called Hajj Mirza Hasan Shirazi issued a binding legal opinion in which he urged people to boycott the use of tobacco.

Reluctant to confront clerical authority, the government tried to renegotiate the concession, but a massive protest in Tehran led to the deaths of several unarmed civilians.

⁹ Abrahamian goes on to say that: “By 1900, government deficits were running at a rate of more than \$1 million a year, yet the Qajar state was too weak to raise the revenues it needed. In an effort to break this vicious circle, the state tried selling concessions and borrowing money. Nasser ad-Din Shah initiated this process in 1872 by selling the sole right to construct mines, railways, tramways, dams, roads and industrial plants to Baron Julius de Reuter, a British citizen after whom the famous news agency was later named. The price was \$200,000 and 60 percent of annual profits. Curzon described this sale as the ‘most complete surrender of the entire resources of a kingdom into foreign hands that has ever been dreamed of, much less accomplished in history.’ Indeed, this prospective monopoly created such a furore – especially in St. Petersburg and among Russian courtiers – that it had to be cancelled. But it sowed the seeds for the oil concession that was to bring so much turbulence in the next century”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 38.

Incensed by the terrible loss of life, more demonstrations followed and the Iranian government was eventually forced to annul the agreement. To a large extent, these events demonstrated the growing power and influence of the religious establishment. This was not only the first successful protest movement in Iranian history, it was also one of the last times that an economic concession would be awarded to an outsider.

In many ways, the widespread popularity of the protest movement revealed public dissatisfaction with the political system as a whole. When Amin as-Sultan secured a loan agreement with the Russian government, the native opposition became active once again. According to a report written at the time, the economic situation had deteriorated to such a degree that some people wanted to reform the entire system. Having shied away from direct involvement for so long, the clerics now emerged as a powerful political voice.

The first real opportunity to push for reform came in December 1905, when the governor of Tehran beat the feet of several sugar merchants for supposedly raising prices. Claiming that unjust local tax regulations were to blame, a number of clerics and bazaaris took sanctuary in the royal mosque to protest. After being forcibly dispersed by agents of the government, the clerics went to the shrine of Shahzadeh Abd al-Azim to draft a series of recommendations for the shah. Without specifically referring to Islam in the text, they insisted upon the creation of a house of justice where complaints could be heard.¹⁰

¹⁰ Keddie writes that: “The Iranian Constitutional Revolution is usually dated from December 1905, when the governor of Tehran beat the feet of several sugar merchants for not lowering their raised sugar prices as ordered...A large group of mullahs and bazaaris then took sanctuary (bast) in the royal mosque of Tehran – whence they were dispersed by agents of Ain ad-Dauleh. A large crowd of ulama then decided, at the suggestion of the prominent liberal mujtahid, Sayyed Mohammad Tabataba’i, to return to the shrine of Shazadeh Abd al-Azim and formulate demands for the shah. The crucial demand was for a representative *adalatkhaneh* (house of justice) of which the meaning and composition were left unclear – perhaps in order to maintain the unity of modernisers and traditional ulama”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 67.

Hoping to restore order, the shah immediately agreed to implement most of their demands. But when the clerics returned to Tehran, it quickly became clear that he had no intention of fulfilling his promise to the protesters and wanton acts of violence continued. In June 1906, a young protester was murdered by a royal officer. No doubt determined to reproach the shah, many of the leading clerics abandoned Tehran and made their way to the holy city of Qom. This was an extremely important act of public defiance because it vividly demonstrated the increasing political assertiveness of the religious classes.

Later that week, business in Tehran was brought to an abrupt standstill when thousands of bazaaris took sanctuary in the British legation. Dismayed by the failure to implement their earlier demands, the protesters insisted upon the immediate dismissal of Chief Minister Ain-ad Dauleh and the formation of a new representative legislative body or *majles*. Overwhelmed by the strength of the opposition movement, the shah dismissed his chief minister and authorised parliamentary elections across the country. When the first majles opened in October, work on a new constitution began immediately.¹¹

The newly agreed documents were largely modelled on the Belgian constitution. Even though the shah remained head of the executive, the agreement gave parliament a much greater say in decision-making. This was an exceptionally important achievement. For the first time in Iranian history, the ruling monarch would need legislative agreement

¹¹ Said Arjomand writes that: "This group included a number of enlightened bureaucrats whose crucial role in constitutional reforms of the state will be discussed at length. The social background of the intelligentsia at the turn of the century was undoubtedly diverse and included clerical, bureaucratic, landowning, and mercantile elements. But this diversity of social background did not prevent their unification on the basis of a single ideology comprised of the philosophy of the enlightenment, the Victorian conception of progress, and the political ideas of nationalism and of parliamentary democracy. Nor did it prevent the intelligentsia from acting as the agent of mobilisation and political enfranchisement of the growing civil society on the basis of that same ideology. Thus, the constitutional revolution of 1906 to 1911 was both a nationalist revolution and a democratic revolution". See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 35.

on ministerial appointments, foreign loans and treaties. If there were any public concerns, equality before the law was guaranteed. This meant that the Iranian people would now be free to express themselves in public without fear of arbitrary detention or arrest.¹²

Unfortunately, many of these achievements would turn out to be stillborn. Having been through extensive public discussions on the most divisive issues of the day, it soon became clear that the new constitution would be honoured more in the breach than the observance. When the shah died in January 1907, his son made a dramatic return to Tehran and swiftly revealed his autocratic tendencies. In no mood to compromise, he dismissed the newly formed legislative assembly and reasserted royal control:

“The shah struck in June 1908...Declaring martial law, the shah appointed Colonel Liakhoff, the Russian Cossack commander, to be military governor of Tehran. Liakhoff banned all newspapers and public meetings, including Muharram processions; issued arrest warrants for the leading deputies; and sent his Cossacks to occupy the telegraph office and to bombard the Majles building”.¹³

Here was a man who was clearly unwilling to negotiate with his opponents. Not only did he issue arrest warrants for some of the leading deputies, he also ordered the Cossacks to attack the parliamentary building itself. Having reaffirmed his authority, the new shah then moved to pacify the rest of the country. While much of Iran quickly surrendered, the

¹² Abrahamian writes that: “The final two documents – known as the Fundamental and the Supplementary Fundamental Laws – were modelled after the Belgian constitution. According to eye witnesses, the drafters of the two documents...intended to establish a constitutional monarchy with classic separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judiciary. These two documents, with minor amendments, survived as the fundamental laws of the land all the way to the 1979 revolution – at least on paper”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 47.

¹³ Abrahamian goes to say that: “According to British reports, the fighting took some 250 lives. Most parliamentary leaders managed to escape – into exile or took sanctuary in the Ottoman Legation. But Behbehani and Tabatabai were placed under house arrest. Six others were imprisoned in the royal gardens and accused of sowing ‘corruption on earth.’ Three of them were executed there”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 51.

city of Tabriz continued to hold out against the regime. Only when food supplies became critical did Russian soldiers enter the city and take the northern stronghold.

The fact that foreign troops ultimately defeated the opposition movement should come as no surprise. Thanks to the 1907 Anglo-Russian Entente, northern Iran fell under the Russian sphere of influence. No doubt worried about political instability, the Russian government was determined to restore order in the north. But deep feelings of resentment towards the shah remained and another powerful revolutionary movement soon emerged in the nearby province of Gilan. As the revolutionaries began their march on the capital, the Bakhtiariis liberated the southern city of Isfahan and turned towards the north.

The two movements eventually converged on Tehran in July 1909. Out of fear for his life, the monarch sought refuge with the Russians and his adolescent son was crowned king. After bringing back the parliamentary assembly, the new administration called upon the services of Morgan Shuster, a financial expert from the United States, to help oversee economic reform. In order to generate some much needed revenue for the central government, he proposed the creation of a new tax collecting gendarmerie. But this idea quickly ran into difficulty when a member of the British legation was asked to lead the new body.

In November 1911, the Russian government sent a strongly worded ultimatum to parliament demanding the immediate dismissal of Shuster. When the legislative assembly refused, Russian soldiers started moving towards the capital. In an effort to keep them off the streets, the cabinet dismissed the assembly and sent Shuster home. Later some people would come to see this as the moment when the constitutional revolution came to an end.

Despite the best efforts of the Iranian people, the continuing interference of Britain and Russia had left the fledgling Iranian state just as impotent as before.¹⁴

These problems were made even worse when a British explorer called William Knox D'Arcy discovered massive oil reserves in southern Iran. Even though the Iranian government had awarded the extraction rights in 1901, it took almost eight years to find any oil. Before long, the discovery was attracting the attention of the British government. Ever since the navy had converted its fleet from coal to oil at the start of the century, the government had been looking for a secure and reliable supply line. As the first great war of the century approached, the British cabinet agreed to invest in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Though no one knew it at the time, this fateful strategic decision would have enormous political and economic ramifications in the years ahead.¹⁵

For the time being, though, revolutionary sentiment once again resurfaced across much of Iran. While the British and Russian governments were distracted by the conflict in Europe, a popular nationalist movement emerged near the Caspian Sea, where Kuchek Khan seized upon the opportunity to demand a more decentralised system of government. Despite the efforts of the regime, the rebel leader refused to back down. It was only when

¹⁴ Armojand writes that: "The Constitutional Revolution of 1906 did not succeed in setting up a strong modern state...In sharp contrast to the French revolutionaries of 1789, the Russian revolutionaries of 1917, and the Iranian revolutionaries of 1979, the Constitutionalists of the first decade of the twentieth century did not inherit a centralised state. This fact goes a long way to explaining the fifteen years of anarchy and disintegration that followed the Constitutional Revolution". See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 59.

¹⁵ Keddie writes that: "Although the first years' explorations were discouraging, oil was finally discovered in the southwest in 1908. The Anglo-Persian oil company was formed in 1909. In 1912 the British navy converted from coal to oil, and in 1914 the British government bought a majority of shares in the company holding the concession. The British backed the virtually autonomous Shaikh Khaz'al, the most powerful tribal leader of Khuzestan province, and also entered into independent relations with the adjacent Bakhtiari tribal leaders. British troops were stationed in this neutral zone region, and the British exercised a control in the south comparable to that held by the Russians in the north". See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 72.

the Tsar had been overthrown by the Bolsheviks that the British stepped in to sign a peace agreement limiting his power to the north. Shortly thereafter, a new administration came to power in the capital under the leadership of prime minister Vosuq-ad Dauleh.

Sensing an opportunity to extend British influence, the foreign secretary opened sensitive negotiations with the Iranian government in the hope of eventually making Iran a British protectorate. Even though the negotiators tried to keep the talks secret, news of the discussions quickly came to light. In a series of damaging revelations, it became clear that Great Britain wanted a monopoly on all foreign advisors in Iran. While the United States expressed discomfort at the extent of foreign interference in Iranian affairs, others were outraged by the idea of giving away such concessions to foreign powers.¹⁶

Given the weakness of the regime in Tehran, the new Iranian government soon found itself dangerously confronted by two different regional separatist movements. While Kuchek Khan proclaimed the formation of a Soviet Socialist Republic in Gilan, Muhammad Khiabani established an autonomous government in the rebellious province of Azerbaijan. Even though both men attracted strong local support, the vast majority of Iranians remained uncomfortable with regional demands for self-rule:

¹⁶ Abrahamian writes that: “Curzon, now Britain’s foreign minister, saw the defeat of Germany and Russia as providing Britain with the perfect opportunity to take over the whole of Iran. As viceroy of India he had described Iran as vital for the security of the Raj, and had denounced in no uncertain terms the 1907 convention for conceding too much to Russia. He now drafted his Anglo-Persian Agreement to incorporate the whole country into the British Empire. Harold Nicholson, who served in the British legation in Tehran before turning to literature, wrote in his biography of Curzon that his protagonist aspired to create a chain of vassal states from the Mediterranean to India’...According to the Anglo-Persian Agreement, Britain obtained the sole right to provide Iran with loans, arms, advisors, military instructors, customs administrators, and even teachers...In return, Britain was to provide Iran with a loan of £2 million. It was also to have the monopoly right to help the country build railways, combat famine, find entry into the League of Nations, and seek indemnity for damages suffered in World War I. The 1919 Anglo-Persian Agreement was as far-reaching as the 1872 concession to Baron de Reuter which Curzon had minced no words in denouncing”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 60-61.

“The post-war social movement in Iran had a rather sporadic and regional character. The negative effects of war help account for both the genesis and the limitations of this movement. The war did not stimulate urban development or national economic cohesion, but furthered regionalism and disunity. The popular movement was disunited, and did not have a national program that could challenge the government or exercise strong influence on national affairs. Western intervention also lessened the effectiveness of popular movements”.¹⁷

What Iran needed now was a strong political figure who could unite the country around a cohesive reform programme. For more than a hundred years, Britain and Russia had been intervening in the affairs of the nation and the economy had suffered from the disruptions of international trade. If the Iranian people really wanted to win their independence, they would need to find a determined leader who could finally bring the country together.¹⁸

The Development of the Pahlavi State

Fortunately for the Iranian people, salvation came almost immediately in the form of a figure on horseback. In February 1921, Reza Khan, commander of the Cossack Brigade in Qazvin, entered Tehran and arrested sixty prominent politicians. After reassuring the shah that he had come to save the increasingly embattled monarchy from revolution, he declared Zia Tabatabaie the new prime minister of Iran. Powerless to respond, the shah appointed Khan the commander of the army. This would turn out to be

¹⁷ Keddie goes on to say that: “There was, however, a new breadth and intensity of nationalist and reform movements. These movements could take much credit for keeping Iran from becoming a virtual British colony. By early 1921 the British ceased to press for their treaty, owing to strong Iranian opposition, backed by American and Russian official opinion”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 79-80.

¹⁸ Shirin Ebadi writes that: “Unfortunately, Iranians are at heart hero worshippers. Whether it is the Rostam of our ancient epic poem the *Shahnameh* (The Book of Kings), or Imam Hossein, the martyr-saint of Shiism, they cling to the notion that one lofty, iconic figure can sweep through their lives, slay their enemies, and turn their world around. Perhaps other cultures also believe in heroes, but Iranians do so with a unique devotion. Not only do they fall in love with heroes, but they are in love with their love for them”. See Shirin Ebadi, *Iran Awakening* (New York: Random House, 2006), 147.

a significant decision. Over the coming years, the army chief would become increasingly more powerful as he pursued a vigorous programme of national reform:

“The accession of this government marked a turning point in Iranian history. The government showed a new independence of the West in many matters, and Western interference became more indirect. Reza Khan was primarily interested in building a strong centralised state, and his reform efforts were mainly measures for centralisation and efficiency, including the suppression of tribal and autonomist movements and strengthening the army and bureaucracy”.¹⁹

Whilst Tabatabaie negotiated a treaty restoring normal relations with Russia, Reza Khan focused on modernising and strengthening the army. In May, he removed Tabatabaie and became minister of war. To many observers, it was becoming increasingly obvious that real power lay in the hands of Reza Khan. This was clearly demonstrated by the fact that he spent so much of the next year consolidating his control over the coercive machinery of the Iranian state.

Among other things, he placed the all important tax collecting gendarmerie under the control of the war ministry and replaced foreign officers in the Cossack Brigade with his own appointees. He then turned his attention to the popular irredentist movements in Gilan and Azerbaijan. Seizing upon public dissatisfaction at the separatist ambitions of Kuchek Khan and Muhammad Khiabani, he marched northwards and quickly defeated

¹⁹ Keddie goes on to say that: “Control over the modernised Cossack Brigade was a power base for the new government, and particularly for Reza Khan. By 1921 the British saw a protectorate was impossible and favoured a strong government that could suppress the jangalis and other threats from leftist or Russian-backed movements”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 80-81. Ansari writes that: “The rise and consolidation of the Pahlavi dynasty cannot be understood in the absence of the civilian element which was crucial to the construction of the modern state in Iran...Reza Pahlavi provided the coercive arm and drive, but the ideological and practical administrative details were developed by others, working behind his protective shield and ultimately subsumed by him. Reza Khan was a man of his time, as much a product of the exigencies of his age as a consequence of his own ambition. He was the man on horseback, the saviour of the secular intelligentsia craved and moulded to their desires. Like all myths, he was to prove all too human”. See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 21.

the two rebel movements. This public expression of his authority showed that no one would be allowed to threaten the integrity of the state and the centralisation of power.²⁰

By 1923, Reza Khan had become such a dominant political figure that he managed to persuade the shah to appoint him prime minister. Even though the nationalist cleric, Hasan Modarres, broke with Reza Khan over his proposal for compulsory military service, the legislative assembly agreed to endorse his extensive reform programme. This was not the last time that an influential cleric would disagree with the regime. One of the most important measures was the abolition of hereditary titles. After being told that the British would not intervene, Reza Khan took the name Pahlavi and deposed the shah:

“The majles abolished the Qajar dynasty and ordered the election of a constituent assembly to change the fundamental laws. Reza Khan, who had recently assumed the name Pahlavi with a view toward reviving the imperial glory of pre-Islamic Iran in his forthcoming reign, was voted shah by the constituent assembly in December 1925. The Qajar dynasty was thus replaced with the Pahlavi dynasty, with a monarch almost as new to the name chosen for his dynasty as to the throne itself”.²¹

Though Reza Khan was an astute political actor who effectively manipulated the various social forces in Iran, there is no doubt whatsoever that his most outstanding achievement was to realise the legacy of the constitutional revolution. But his effort to modernise and strengthen the Iranian state would come at great expense. Over the next few decades, the

²⁰ Arjomand writes that: “Khan’s political astuteness in manipulating political forces and personalities is undoubtedly an important factor in explaining his ascent. But far more important was his success in realizing, at last, the second goal of the Constitutional Revolution: modernising the state. The broad early support for him was actually support for the creation of a strong centralised state”. See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 63.

²¹ Arjomand goes on to say that: “The Constitutional Revolution had not drawn the peasants into national politics and they remained on the periphery of tribal society, and Reza Shah’s regime was neither of nor for the tribes. But in urban political society, he enjoyed wide political support and used it adroitly for his rise to supremacy. The old Constitutional elite preponderantly supported him, as did the younger generation of politicians associated with the reformist and radical parties”. See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 62.

religious classes would become increasingly disillusioned by the secular nationalism of the Pahlavi regime. This would eventually reach its apogee during the reign of his son.²²

Much of this resentment stemmed from the fact that Reza Shah built his newly emerging state on powerful secular institutions such as the military and the bureaucracy. Shortly after assuming the name Pahlavi, he introduced a new conscription law requiring all adult males over the age of twenty-one to serve two full years in active service. Meant to strengthen the nation, the measure soon became the major centrepiece of the new regime. Not only did the shah appear in public wearing military uniform, he also increased the military budget. As an insightful British report observed at the time:

“The main burden of the taxpayer will continue to be the army. Tanks, artillery and other material are being acquired in increasing quantities, so much so that neighbouring states are beginning to wonder whether Iran may not be a potential aggressor in the future. The reasons which have led the shah to spend so much on armaments are...quite simple: he had to have a sufficient force to keep order and, having acquired this, his natural wish, as a soldier, was to see his army provided with up-to-date material. Further, he has vivid recollections...of a weak Persia in times of war...and is determined to avoid...such a state of affairs”.²³

²² Abrahamian writes that: “The political structure built by Reza Shah was stable in contrast to the structures of traditional Iran, especially that of the previous dynasty. For it rested not on the sands of tribal contingents and communal manipulations, but on the three stone pillars of a standing army, a modern bureaucracy, and extensive court patronage. But it was unstable in comparison to with the political structures of the modern world, particularly those of the West. For the new regime, despite impressive institutions, had no viable class bases, no sound social props, and was thus without firm civilian foundations. The Pahlavi state, in short, was strong inasmuch as it had at its disposal powerful means of coercion. But it was weak in that it failed to cement its institutions of coercion in the class structure”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 149.

²³ Abrahamian goes on to say that: “With conscription came Iran’s first birth certification as well as mandatory family names. The conscription law required all able-bodied males over the age of twenty-one to serve two full years in active service and another four years in the reserves. The conscripts were drawn first from the peasantry; then from the tribes; and eventually from the urban population. By 1941, the military had eighteen full divisions totalling 127,000 men – one division in each of the twelve provinces with extra ones on the northern border with Russia. The cavalry and mechanised divisions contained some 100 tanks and 28 armoured vehicles. The air force had 157 planes; the navy 2 frigates and 4 gunboats. The services were coordinated by a newly created joint office of the chiefs of staff”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 69.

Over the years, the shah took a particular interest in the training and living conditions of his men. He even sold senior officers valuable state lands at discount prices and turned a blind eye to their well-documented financial indiscretions. In time, the army grew to well over a hundred thousand men and provided the regime with a solid base of support. This gave Reza Shah the freedom to impose his secular vision of society on the rest of Iran.

Of course, none of these changes would have been possible without an extensive state bureaucracy. For many years, Iranian economic development had been inhibited by the interference of outsiders in the political and economic affairs of the nation. But as the country pursued rapid economic growth under the Pahlavi regime, new departments were created to help oversee the modernisation process. For a people who had never witnessed a government centralise so much power before, these changes transformed everyday life:

“Reza Shah came to power in a country where the government had little presence outside the capital. He left the country with an extensive state structure – the first in Iran’s two thousand years. It has been said of Stalin that he inherited a country with a wooden plough and left it with the atomic bomb. It can be said of Reza Shah that he took over a country with a ramshackle administration and left it with a highly centralised state”.²⁴

By the end of his reign, the shah presided over eleven permanent ministries employing more than ninety thousand paid civil servants. Under their supervision, the government oversaw remarkable economic growth and the expansion of the state into every area of Iranian society. Having reduced the influence of parliament, new restrictions were placed

²⁴ Abrahamian goes on to say that: “In 1921 the central government had no more than a haphazard collection of semi-independent mostowfis, monshis, and titled grandees. But by 1941, it had eleven full ministries employing in excess of 90,000 salaried civil servants. The largest ministries – interior, education, and justice – had scarcely existed in 1921.” See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 67. Ansari writes that: “Reza Shah and his government were intensely nationalistic. They also made it rapidly clear that they would support the social pillars of tradition, insofar as they did not challenge the authority of the new order and its nationalist ambitions”. See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 44.

on the clergy and the Pahlavi state became the driving political force in Iran. Much later Khomeini would condemn many of these changes in his bid for power.²⁵

In the meantime, opposition to the regime began to grow. While the middle classes were concerned by the centralisation of power around the shah, the traditional classes were frustrated by his failure to protect the traditions of Islam. Even though he managed to contain the opposition for much of his reign, the shah soon found himself in a precarious position. Thanks to his friendly relations with the Nazis, German agents were spread throughout the country. After the 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, this became a source of concern for the allies.

That summer, the British and Soviet governments sent a strongly worded message to the Iranians insisting upon the immediate removal of every Nazi adviser in the country. But in a bold declaration of independence, the shah chose not to respond and allied troops were sent across the border. Soon after, the shah was forced to abdicate the throne and his son was crowned king. When parliament had been fully restored, the country was once again divided into competing zones of influence. Whilst Soviet troops returned to the north, the British imposed direct military control over the oil fields in the south.²⁶

²⁵ Abrahamian writes that: "Gaining the crown in 1926, he moved to consolidate his power by building his support on three pillars – the new army, the government bureaucracy, and the court patronage. For the first time since the Safavids, the state was able to control society through extensive instruments of administration, regulation, and domination. And, having consolidated his power, Reza Shah was able to embark upon an ambitious program of social, cultural, and economic reforms". See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 135-136.

²⁶ Ansari writes that: "Reza Shah sat astride a period transition from tradition to modernity but which ultimately yielded less modernity and more tradition. He oversaw the establishment of the framework of a modern state, using the able talents of Teymourache, Firuz and Davar, but subjected its growth and development to his own dynasty. To Reza Shah must be accredited the blueprint for modern Iran, an achievement which even Ayatollah Khomeini could cautiously acknowledge. However, it would be left to his successors to build upon the very rough edifice he had erected, refining it and imbuing it with...conviction". See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 74.

Enjoying only limited freedom in Tehran, the Iranian government sent for an advisory mission from the United States to help restore order to the economic system. Since the conflict had brought untold new problems to Iran, it was hoped that a major reorganisation would make the nation much more productive. But economic activity remained weak and the new regime soon came to be seen as worse than before. In response, a large number of radical new political organisations began to appear:

“There was also an increase in urbanisation and new urban groups, at the same time as the traditional ways of tribes and religious leaders re-emerged. Acute economic and social problems led to a growth of political organisations. Competing groups and ideologies – religious, nationalist, and socialist – vied for the allegiance of Iranians as never before. And, to compound internal problems and rivalries, foreign powers showed a stronger interest in Iran, with concern to control her politics and her oil”.²⁷

The newfound influence of these radical political movements was demonstrated by many of the new social measures implemented by the post-war Iranian government. Among the most popular policies was a labour law that limited factory work to only forty-eight hours a week. Even though this was well received by some Iranians, members of the communist Tudeh Party continued to campaign for further reform. After coordinating a general strike among disgruntled oil workers in the south, the Iranian government reluctantly agreed to a new minimum wage. Despite this success, public discontent still remained strong.

This was certainly true for the clergy. Having experienced a loss of power under Reza Shah, some saw the worsening economic crisis as an opportunity to reassert clerical authority. Blaming many of the problems of modernisation on the West, they argued that

²⁷ Keddie goes on to say that: “After the war, Iran’s social and economic problems intensified, as did social conflicts and foreign interference. The immediate postwar years were characterised by a series of dramatic events that surpassed in scope the movements after World War I. Wartime and post-war crisis conditions contributed to the appeal of movements aiming at a radical change in social and economic life. As after World War I, the strongest radical movements were in the north”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 110-111.

Iran needed to return to the founding principles of Islam. Only then would the people be able to overcome their present difficulties. These were very well described in a gloomy government report on the Iranian economy that concluded with the following warning:

“It is not concealed from anybody that the economy of the country is passing these days through a critical phase which has resulted in the weakening of the productive power of the country, the decline of exports, necessitating the importation of primary living needs from abroad, lowering of the purchasing power of the rial, increase of the cost of living, poverty and unemployment”.²⁸

By the end of the decade, the economic crisis had created the perfect set of conditions for a nationalist movement to emerge. There was almost no productive economic growth and government efforts to stimulate the economy had failed. Even though there were a number of different ideas about the best way to revive the nation, everyone agreed that the country needed to put an end to foreign domination. This had been a recurring theme in Iranian history and would later become the familiar refrain of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Unsurprisingly, the match that lit the fire was opposition to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. In 1933, Reza Shah had negotiated a compromise with the British government that paid the Iranians a twenty percent share of annual profits. Though the agreement was seen as a success at the time, the payments had slowly declined in value over the years. It was even claimed that the company paid more in tax to the British government than it did to the Iranians. As problems mounted after the war, the rise of nationalist sentiment found popular expression in heated public criticism of the agreement.

²⁸ The report goes on to say that: “The extent of this crisis is such that individual means and power, private initiative and undertakings, and even sporadic measures of the Government agencies will not be able to overcome it”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 121.

In response to the criticism, the Iranian government opened negotiations with the company for a different concession in 1947. Even though a new supplemental agreement was signed a couple of years later, the Iranian public condemned the negotiations and the majles refused to pass the legislation. During elections to the new parliament in 1950, the National Front Coalition won widespread support for its opposition to the concession. At the time, the national coalition was led by former cabinet minister Muhammad Mossadeq. Well known for championing constitutionalism and Iranian independence in international affairs, Mossadeq became prime minister and immediately nationalised the oil company. This would mark the beginning of an exceptionally turbulent period in Iranian history.²⁹

Shortly afterwards, the British government referred the increasingly bitter dispute to the International Court and negotiated a boycott on the sale of Iranian oil. Even though Mossadeq was a staunch nationalist, British media reports tended to characterise him as a dangerous fanatic who would deliver Iran to the Soviets. When the court ruled that it had no jurisdiction over the dispute, the Truman administration stepped in to help mediate the crisis. But as soon as it became clear that Mossadeq was not prepared to compromise, the Americans became increasingly hostile towards the Iranian regime. None of this should have come as a surprise because a number of oil companies were concerned about the effects of the oil dispute on their own revenue sharing agreements in the Middle East.

²⁹ Abrahamian writes that: “He opposed the 1921 coup and the establishment of the Pahlavi, which led to his brief imprisonment, followed by banishment to his village of Ahmadabad some one hundred miles from Tehra. After 1941, he returned to politics and again became prominent in parliament where he argued that the shah – like his counterparts in Belgium and Britain – should reign not rule”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 114. Ansari goes on to say that: “Mossadeq was able to capture a moment in Iranian history when nationalism emerged from its intellectual and elitist cocoon and became a force for political action. Where Reza Shah...defined an increasingly exclusive ideology of ‘Persian’ nationalism, Mossadeq successfully capitalised and extended its popularity. Between 1951 and 1953, Persian nationalism became truly Iranian – inclusive, broad-based and with an increasing mass appeal”. See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 107.

As the months passed, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company continued to enforce the boycott against Iranian oil exports. To make matters worse, the British government froze Iranian investments in the United Kingdom and placed heavy restrictions on Iranian trade. As the economic crisis deepened at home, Mossadeq travelled to the United States in the hope of obtaining an emergency loan. But the American government refused to act and insisted that the Iranians resolve the dispute before requesting foreign aid. Thanks to the remarkable popularity of the prime minister, the decision provoked enormous public outrage in Iran and led to widespread criticism of the United States and Great Britain.

As relations with the West worsened, Muhammad Reza Shah decided to reassert his authority. In 1952, he dismissed Mossadeq and replaced him with Qavam as-Saltaneh. But a series of nationwide demonstrations meant that Mossadeq soon returned to political office with greater power than before. Though the restoration of the National Front leader showed the strength and determination of the Iranian people, his failure to resolve the oil dispute continued to put a strain on the economy. As the crisis degenerated, British and American officials began to think seriously about removing the Iranian government.

Their plans started to gain ground with a change of administration in London and Washington. Even though the idea came from British intelligence, the CIA assumed most of the responsibility for the coup. They were helped by the fact that conditions in Iran had started to change when supporters of the prime minister turned against his government. In early 1953, the Muslim cleric, Ayatollah Kashani, ended his association with the National Front after complaining about the influence of the Tudeh Party. Later that year, a number of senior parliamentarians resigned in protest at the failure to resolve the economic crisis. In response, Mossadeq called a referendum to demonstrate that his government still had

the support of the people. Even though the referendum was unconstitutional, the prime minister decided to suspend the legislative assembly and govern in its absence.³⁰

As criticism of the prime minister mounted, several influential opposition groups conspired to overthrow the government. Among them were senior officers in the military who felt threatened by the idea of Mossadeq taking control of the armed forces. With this in mind, the CIA and British intelligence worked with pro-monarchy officers throughout 1953 to help organise and coordinate the removal of the National Front government. On August 12, the shah dismissed Mossadeq and announced that General Zahedi would be his successor. But when the Imperial Guard tried to capture the former prime minister, they were surrounded and arrested by soldiers loyal to Mossadeq. Concerned about his safety, the shah fled Iran hoping to make a successful return in the near future.³¹

Though the coup seemed to have failed, his sudden departure caused widespread unrest. As the protests intensified, the Iranian government tried to contain the opposition, but this proved impossible. A few days later, on August 19, a large crowd of protesters began moving into the city centre from southern Tehran. Among them were paid agents

³⁰ Ansari writes that: “In many ways his premiership can be characterised as the first round in a continuing struggle between an emergent, increasingly politically conscious society, both traditional and modern, and elites. The National Front was a broad movement composed of different parties including socialists and secular and religious nationalists, and driven less by a cohesive rigorous ideological platform and more by ambiguous ideas of self-determination, nationhood and anti-imperialism. This inherent ambiguity was to draw much scorn from Mossadeq’s critics, but he recognised that the level of political consciousness required a simplification of the ideological agenda if it was to succeed in becoming truly popular”. See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 113-114.

³¹ Abrahamian writes that: “The British had a long-standing and extensive network inside Iran. They had a number of Persian-speaking experts – some of whom had worked in and on Iran for more than thirty years. They also had contacts with numerous old-time politicians, religious figures, tribal chiefs, business leaders and senior military officers...The Americans, meanwhile, brought to the table their large embassy compound; some one hundred advisors embedded in the Iranian army and gendarmerie; young officers, many of them tank commanders, recently trained in the USA; and a clandestine network in the Tehran bazaars, especially in the gymnasiums, known as *zurkhanehs*”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 121.

of the CIA. When they reached the centre of the capital, they were joined by senior military officers who announced that Zahedi would indeed be the new premier of Iran. While the shah returned to Tehran triumphant, Mossadeq was arrested and put on trial in military court. After being found guilty of treason, he was sentenced to serve three years in jail.

Even though President Eisenhower believed the Iranian people had demonstrated their overwhelming love for the monarchy, the coup left a very profound and long-lasting legacy. The events of that year not only undermined the legitimacy of the Pahlavi regime, they also marked the end of an intense period of political pluralism and social dynamism. Having put pay to the nationalist dreams of the post-war period, the coup paved the way for the emergence of a revolutionary religious movement some thirty-five years later:

“In an age of republicanism, nationalism, neutralism, and socialism, the Pahlavi monarchy had become inseparably and fatally identified with imperialism, corporate capitalism, and close alignment with the West. One can argue that the real roots of the 1979 revolution go back to 1953”.³²

Over the next few years, hundreds of opponents were executed or driven into exile, while those who had organised and supported the coup were lavishly rewarded by the shah. As for the oil companies, they were effectively given control of oil production. To the most ardent opponents of the shah, the agreement represented a humiliating conclusion to the nationalist interregnum. The independence movement had ended in nothing but failure.

³² Abrahamian goes on to say that: “The coup seriously undermined the legitimacy of the monarchy – especially in an age already rampant with republicanism. It identified the shah with the British, the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and the imperial powers. It also identified the military with the same imperial powers – especially the CIA and MI6. It tarnished the Americans with the British brush – Iranians began to see the main...enemy as no longer just Britain but Britain in cahoots with America. It destroyed the National Front and the Tudeh Party – both suffered mass arrests, destruction of their organisations, and even executions of their leaders. This destruction paved the way for the eventual emergence of a religious movement. In other words, the coup helped replace nationalism, socialism, and liberalism with Islamic ‘fundamentalism’”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 122.

Muhammad Reza Shah and the White Revolution

Unsurprisingly, the removal of Mossadeq changed the country in several ways. First and foremost, the United States now became the most dominant power in Iran. Even though the administration expressed some concern about authoritarianism, relations were soon strengthened with the new regime. During his first trip to the American capital, the shah described Iran as a frontline state in the war against Communism. Concerned about Soviet ambitions in the region, the United States responded by agreeing to a financial assistance package that amounted to about \$500 million over the next ten years.

At the same time, the newly restored shah began showing a much greater interest in modernising the economy. But the international boycott meant that development depended on settling the oil dispute. A year after the coup, the shah reached an agreement that effectively gave the foreign oil companies complete control over the production and sale of all Iranian oil. This represented an outstanding victory for the United States and Great Britain. Even though the Iranians would receive fifty percent of the profits, the government no longer retained a controlling interest in domestic oil production.³³

After ending the crisis, the shah turned his attention to home. From the moment of his restoration, he had wanted to re-establish royal control over Iran. Though the coup put him in a difficult position, he gradually began imposing his authority on the country. Having selected each candidate for a new parliamentary election, the shah dismissed his

³³ Keddie writes that: “Nonessential housing and service functions were to be handled by the National Iranian oil company. All major decisions, such as production levels and the sale price of oil, remained in the hands of the consortium and its constituents, and the agreement was in essence similar to those in operation in nearby countries. A secret consortium accord that in effect limited production and income became known to Iran only in the 1970s. Soon Iranian oil began to regain its share in world markets and new income began to accrue to the government”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 132.

prime minister and assumed dictatorial power. This move forced much of the opposition movement underground as nationalist leaders tried to shelter from the Pahlavi regime:

“In the face of arrests and persecution, most opposition groups went underground, especially the Tudeh Party, which was the most persecuted and most of whose leaders had to flee Iran. Iranian security forces uncovered a network of Tudeh or pro-Tudeh officers in the army, whose extent may have been exaggerated but whose existence was real. There were many executions and a widespread purge of the armed forces, and new legislation against oppositional organisations was passed”.³⁴

When the shah finally agreed to end the military government three years later, he shocked the country by announcing the creation of a new state security service known as SAVAK. Primarily trained by the CIA, this new intelligence organisation played a significant role in stabilising the regime.³⁵

Responding to public criticism, the shah created a new two party system to help give his regime more legitimacy. But it soon became clear that he would govern in much the same way as his father. Since the Melliyun and Mardom Parties offered no legitimate opposition to the regime, the shah went on expanding the traditional pillars of the Pahlavi state. Thanks to fast rising oil revenues, the military budget enjoyed a dramatic twelvefold increase and eight new government ministries were created. All these changes

³⁴ Keddie goes on to say that: “From the time of his restoration, the shah was determined never to allow a Mossadeq type of situation to recur. This meant emulating Reza Shah in ignoring the major thrust of the 1906-07 constitution, which had foreseen government by a cabinet responsible to a freely elected majles and had reserved few powers for the shah”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 135-136.

³⁵ Keddie writes that: “One part of SAVAK was involved in the jailings, beatings, and tortures that became notorious in the years before the revolution, but there were also suave, educated operatives in coats and ties who persuaded people of the dangers of speaking or acting out of turn. In addition, the shah maintained other intelligence services, partly to check on one another. Numerous intelligence agents infiltrated opposition groups, and many informants, as in American and other intelligence services, worked part time for SAVAK. With jail, torture, or even death as the possible stakes, it is not surprising that even underground or exile oppositional groups were decimated and suspicious or that within Iran people were increasingly hesitant to discuss politics at all”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 134.

were important because they demonstrated the increasing power of the Iranian state. For the people, this was undoubtedly one of the most transformative periods in history.³⁶

Even though public outrage would eventually lead to the overthrow of the regime, the early 1960s saw the first genuine expression of discontent with the shah. At the time of the June 1960 elections to parliament, Ali Amini had come out as a forceful critic of the regime. Amini had recently served as Iranian ambassador to the United States and was believed to have the backing of many policy makers in Washington DC. As soon as the fraudulent elections were complete, supporters of the National Front poured into the streets. They denounced the elections as unconstitutional and demanded the immediate dismissal of the legislature. When two school teachers were killed during protests in April 1961, the shah sent for Amini and asked him to form a new government.

News of his appointment was warmly welcomed in the United States and the shah was urged to support economic reform. But when he refused to lower the military budget, Amini announced his resignation. This was critical because it seemed to demonstrate that the shah would only allow independent ministers to govern as long as the political alternative appeared more threatening to his own power. Shortly afterwards, Asadollah Alam became prime minister and he agreed to meet the leaders of the National Front in Tehran. When their long held demands for a fresh round of elections were refused, they

³⁶ Ansari writes that: “The Shah...recognised that he had to maintain at least the façade of parliamentary government. He constantly stressed his constitutional credentials and repeatedly emphasised that freedom and democracy existed in Iran. In private he was more forthcoming, even admitting...that his imposition of a two-party system was a farce”. See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 139. Abrahamian goes on to say that: “Although the shah helped modernise the socioeconomic structure, he did little to develop the political system – to permit the formation of pressure groups, open the political arena for various social forces, forge links between the regime and the old classes, and broaden the social base of the monarchy that, after all, had survived mainly because of the 1953 coup d’etat. Instead of modernising the political system, the shah, like his father, based his power on the three Pahlavi pillars”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 435.

created a new central council and openly started criticising the shah. In later years, many of these same concerns would influence the popular revolutionary movement led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

The shah responded to this criticism by supplementing the government measures of 1962 with a new land reform bill. Known as the White Revolution, the new proposals were intended to sustain a particularly modern conception of monarchical authority. This was important because the shah no longer wanted to be seen as an oppressive autocrat. In an age of social inclusion and revolutionary nationalism, he wanted the Iranian people to see him as an egalitarian monarch whose primary concern was the welfare of the nation:

“The White Revolution was launched by decree (the six points were first articulated in November 1961) and ratified by referendum in January 1963. It was composed of six principles: land reform, nationalisation of the forests, profit-sharing for industrial workers, sale of state factories, votes for women and the foundation of a Literacy Corps. Subsequently it was to be extended to 12 points and by the late 1970s to a total of 17 points. What distinguished this ‘White Revolution’ from what had preceded under Amini was that it represented a definite programme rather than a vague idea, and that its focus was the shah as leader”.³⁷

Despite the modernising aims of these proposals, the vote was boycotted by the National Front on the grounds that all such reform programmes should be debated first by a freely elected assembly. This meant that when the plebiscite was held in January 1963, the vote was overwhelmingly favourable. Unfortunately, the same could not be said for its effects. Some of the most transformative measures, including the sale of state-owned factories to

³⁷ Ansari goes on to say that: “The ‘White Revolution,’ as it came to be known, was primarily an act of political rather economic necessity, intended to serve and sustain a particular conception of relations of domination centred around the Shah. It was a revolutionary strategy aimed at sustaining a traditional system of authority. Its impact on Iranian society was profound, even if its consequences proved unforeseen. The ‘White Revolution,’ both in conception and implementation, has come to be associated with the shah, and to epitomise an enlightened if flawed vision of rapid modernisation taking Iran towards a ‘Great Civilisation’”. See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 157 and 148.

private enterprise, simply laid the foundation for an inequitable form of elite-dominated capitalism. This would soon come to have profound consequences for the entire nation.³⁸

This was most clearly demonstrated by the small number of leading clerics who started to voice their opposition to the shah. Even though the National Front led the resistance movement, the economic and political crisis impacted religious leaders and their followers just as much. Among the most well-known critics of the regime were Kazem Shariatmadari and Ruhollah Khomeini. Of the two men, Khomeini was certainly the more outspoken in his criticism of the regime. In the early 1940s, he had published a work on the monarchy in which he accused Reza Shah of not abiding by the divine laws of Islam. Even though he had remained silent throughout the 1950s, he did not moderate his views and began to preach openly against the shah during the early 1960s.

In March, government security forces attacked the seminary in which he lectured. During the fighting, a number of people were killed and Khomeini was detained. Despite agreeing to moderate his political views, he soon resumed his public denunciations of the regime. He not only attacked the corrupting influence of the United States, he also claimed to be defending the constitution. On June 3, he even went so far as to say that the fundamental laws had been acquired with Iranian blood and he would not permit them to be violated in any way. When he was detained again the next day, the decision proved to be a disaster because it was also the anniversary of the martyrdom of Hussein:

³⁸ Vanessa Martin writes that: “The shah was anxious to encourage industry. The Third (1963-1967) and Fourth (1968-72) Development Plans stressed improvement of the infrastructure and state incentives to initiatives in private industry, resulting in rapid growth in the industrial sector. In combination with his agricultural policy, this led to migration urban areas, where many lived in squalid housing and shanty towns in the south of Tehran which greatly contrasted with the mansions of the elite in the north of the city. Between 1956 and 1976 the urban population of Iran rose from 6 million to 16 million”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 25.

“When the news became known in Tehran processions of mourning for Hussein turned into demonstrations. Demonstrations spread the next day to the university and to Shiraz, Kashan, and Mashad. Despite heavy deployments of troops on Friday, June 7, the uprising continued, with one pamphlet calling for Holy War against the regime”.³⁹

The demonstrations were finally suppressed by the government after several more days of fighting. Even though the shah arrested many of his main opponents, Khomeini continued to criticise the government unabated. After being released from prison in August 1963, he defied an agreement with SAVAK to stop interfering in politics and ordered his followers to boycott the national elections in October of that year.

Failing to judge the political temper of the country, the newly elected assembly rashly decided to open discussions on a bill that would offer full diplomatic immunity to all American military personnel. Even though there was popular resistance to the idea of any more concessions, the shah was clearly determined to see the bill through in order to help secure a generous loan agreement from the American government. When the majles finally acquiesced and the controversial piece of legislation was passed, the United States approved a \$200 million grant for the acquisition of military equipment. In a powerfully vivid demonstration of the *who* dimension of leadership, Khomeini accused the shah of deliberately betraying the interests of the Iranian people. This was far more than the regime was prepared to accept and Khomeini was soon forced into exile in Iraq.⁴⁰

³⁹ Keddie goes on to say that: “As was the case in 1977-78, discontent was sparked in part by a few years of painful economic crisis and inflation following several boom years that helped the rich much more than the poor or petty bourgeoisie. As in 1977-78, the shah responded to the crisis and discontent by partial reforms, which were far from meeting the demands of opposition groups”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 147-148.

⁴⁰ Mohsen Milani writes that: “As Khomeini went into exile, his boldness to confront the shah, his spiritual leadership, his ability to speak a language understood by the ordinary people, and his magnetism to unify divergent groups were qualities that combined in the national memory to become national myth”. See Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 55.

Ayatollah Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution

By this time, Khomeini had become the most vocal critic of the shah. Even though many senior mujtahids remained silent, he attracted widespread support for his opposition to the regime. During his long exile abroad, he developed a theory of clerical rule that eventually won the backing of the people. In a country where most politicians enjoyed the finer luxuries in life, Khomeini seemed to be a man blessed with incredible spiritual authority. Overwhelmed by social and economic problems, the country cried out for an inspiring leader who could fulfil the long held promise of Iranian nationhood.

According to reports, Ruhollah Khomeini was born in September 1902 in the province of Markazi. His father was a cleric who had spent a number of years studying at the seminary in Irfan. Even though he died when the children were still young, Khomeini grew up in an extraordinarily devout home. As a child, he went to the local religious school and showed great natural ability. Having decided to pursue a career as a cleric, he left home and went to study in Qom. With Reza Shah having just come to power, it was not long before Khomeini began developing a strong interest in politics:

“In political terms there were two major options confronting him, that of following Ha’iri Yazdi’s policy of...accommodation and consolidation, or that of supporting Mudarris’s activist struggle against the perceived dictatorship. His writings gave no firm clue, possibly out of respect for Ha’iri Yazdi, his teacher, but his subsequent praise of the policies of Mudarris...reveal where his sympathies lay”.⁴¹

⁴¹ Martin goes on to say that: “Supportive of reform and constitutionalism, he nevertheless fought legal change that might weaken Islam and strongly opposed the secularising inclinations of the radical democrats...Mudarris demonstrated his simplicity of lifestyle and piety in such a way that he secured a following among the poorer classes. However, he had less standing in terms of learning and was more willing throughout his career to make compromises with elite groups. His perception of the role of the clergy in politics was more one of supervision than of outright rule”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 30.

In time, Khomeini came to admire the outspoken Mudarris for the strength of his public opposition to the shah. Not only would he listen intently to his speeches in the assembly, he would also go to his classes and visit his home. But his failure to influence politics in any meaningful way meant that Khomeini soon became disillusioned with the regime.

This proved important because his sense of disenchantment coincided with his increasing interest in Islamic mysticism or *irfan*. According to religious scholars, *irfan* is a unique kind of philosophy that includes the possibility of unity with the divine. Since it is believed that anyone with enough training can access eternal truth, such claims have always been frowned upon by the proponents of orthodox Islam. This can be explained by the fact that the notion of attaining individual union with God fatally undermines all hierarchical forms of traditional authority.⁴²

Even though he would later develop an expertise in Islamic law, Khomeini would always maintain a strong interest in mysticism because it offered the practitioner an exact path towards becoming the ideal man. This was significant because anyone who was able to achieve unity with the divine would also be in a strong position to lead the community. As one can imagine, this approach to Islam had serious implications for the Iranian state because it created a competing source of authority. This is why some analysts have claimed that the concept resonates with the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king:

⁴² Martin writes that: “*Irfan* had always to some extent been frowned upon by orthodox Islam, as with its supposition of individual union with God and, in its more extreme form of pantheism, the presence of God in all things, it undermined the orthodox concept of divine transcendence. *The* tendency in ‘*irfan* and particularly its more spiritual manifestation, Sufism, to challenge established authority, whether lay or religious, to favour direct individual action, to encourage the notion of a worthy death, and of preparation to meet it, as well as to risk disorder in pursuit of its goals, made it the object of suspicion of both Orthodox Islam and the state. Its relative independence of the rigidities of established texts has also made it more open to revolutionary politics not only in Iran...but in the leadership of revolutionary movements in other countries”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 33.

“In a utopia led by the philosopher ruler there are questions of what the state is and where authority and sovereignty reside...It presupposes a relationship of command and obedience between rulers and ruled. The rulers, a public office or person, possess sovereignty, the incontestable right and power to resolve differences. In the Platonic tradition the state is epitomised by the just agent who will make the state just. Sovereignty and authority reside in the ruler or guardians, among whom, however, there may be consultation and consensus”.⁴³

Given this deep spiritual background, it should come as no surprise that the leader of the Iranian revolution was also one of the preeminent scholars of Islamic mysticism. Having demonstrated his willingness to break with Islamic orthodoxy, Khomeini revealed a dynamic independence of mind. In his uncompromising journey towards divine unity, he became increasingly outraged by the social injustice and moral deprivation of the Pahlavi regime. For this reason, he claimed that only those with a proper knowledge of the eternal truth could lead the Muslim community out of the darkness and into the light.

To encourage support for his position, Khomeini recognised that he would need to provide a coherent vision of a just society. Even though mysticism seemed to offer a path to divine unity, it said nothing about the ideal Islamic state. In fact, scholars had only recently begun to discuss the ways in which Islam could be reconciled with modernity. This debate focused on more than just Islam as a religion, it also touched on Islamic law and political ideology. Most importantly, it was felt that the problems presented by

⁴³ Martin goes on to say that: “The leader encourages self-knowledge in his followers so that they may also aspire to strength through communing with the divine. The purging of the soul creates self-discipline, which in turn generates self-empowerment the will to struggle against the debilitations of the ego. Although not individualistic in the Western sense, there is nevertheless a strong element of individual endeavour. Among the followers is a vanguard who provides guidance and an example to the ordinary people, so building up a wider base of support. At the same time individual initiative and direct action emerge liberated from the constraints of constant referral to written authority, but are still based on rightful guidance. The result is an activist movement not dissimilar in many ways to contemporary dedicated and organised secular groups. A further modern influence is indicated in the linking of Gnostic ethics to the needs of society and social responsibility”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 46.

modernity had to be integrated into Islamic jurisprudence. This involved the revolutionary reconstruction of Islam so that Muslims everywhere could resist the expansion of the West.

One of the first people to present a tentative theory of a modernised Islam able to withstand Western imperialism was Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, sometimes known as al-Afghani. A rather idiosyncratic figure, al-Afghani was a devout man with a background in mysticism and philosophy who exhorted all Muslims to unite against imperialism and to be politically assertive. He thought of Islam as an entire civilisation that needed to put its past divisions aside and unite in one popular movement against the West:

“Al-Afghani in particular saw Muslim leaders as weak...and susceptible to foreign manipulation, and sought to inspire movements to reform and strengthen the political institutions of Islam...He recognised the unity of the Muslim community and the responsibility of each individual Muslim to the community. Islam, he argued, should be liberated from the corrupt and debilitating accretions of the past centuries and return to the purity and strength of its early years”.⁴⁴

As for its political structure, al-Afghani was less informative. He simply sought to inspire and strengthen reform movements in the belief that Islam offered the community a strong sense of purpose and moral guidance. He claimed that Islam was primarily an activist religion that encouraged believers to struggle against all forms of corruption and tyranny. To create a strong and vibrant community, he insisted that the faithful needed to liberate themselves from the West and realise the divine promise inherent in the laws of Islam.

⁴⁴ Martin goes on to say that: “In his approach to religion there was also a rational element, in that he perceived it as an all-embracing ideology which would provide the community with an identity, a sense of purpose and moral guidance. He saw it as a force which stood on the side of the people, challenging the ruling factions. To al-Afghani, Islam was profoundly activist, influencing believers to struggle against colonialism and despotism; thus Islam was presented as a religion of science, action, hard work, struggle and reform, and of accepting difficult responsibilities”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 101.

This meant that it was left up to others to answer the vitally important question of who should actually lead the Muslim community. Khomeini did this by trying to reconcile the structural needs of political Islam with his personal interest in mysticism. In one of his very earliest scholarly works, known as *The Revealing of Secrets*, he argued that parliamentary systems of government undermine religious law. But he accepted that even they can be reconciled with the needs of Islam if the clerics adopt an advisory role:

“We, who say that government and guardianship must be in this time with the jurists do not mean that a *faqih* should be shah or vizier... Instead we say that... an assembly could be set up of pious *mujtahids* who both know the laws of God and are just and free of selfish motives, and who have no aim nor worldly ambition except the good of the people and the execution of the law of God, and who choose someone as a just sultan who could not infringe the laws of God and who would hold back from oppression and transgression against life and property”.⁴⁵

The timing of this piece of work should come as no surprise whatsoever. Reza Shah had only recently been deposed by the allied powers and his inexperienced son had just come to the Pahlavi throne. Having witnessed the gradual dilution of clerical power, Khomeini wanted to remind the Iranian people of the importance of clerical involvement in the state. This was extremely important because he wanted to publicise a form of government in which the clerics would play a definitive role.

As the years passed, he started coming out much more strongly for clerical rule as Muhammad Reza Shah turned away from Islam in his pursuit of modernisation. This prompted Khomeini to argue increasingly forcefully that if the government consulted

⁴⁵ Martin goes on to say that: “The key to this vision of just government was above all the law, the shari’a, the implementation of which would be the first principle of the structure of the state. To achieve the only just rule, the rule of God, the government must be skilled in jurisprudence and its administration should be carried out for the benefit of both people and country – a state which in effect is under strong supervision by the ‘ulama, though not under their actual government”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 108-109.

Islam and pursued a religious agenda the whole country would benefit. Even though he never disclosed what constituted an Islamic form of government, he opposed policies that diluted clerical influence. He did this because he felt that it would make Iran stronger in its confrontation with the West:

“Islamic government has great responsibilities. It should protect Islam, including the unity of Islam, and its precepts, and make it understood in developed countries so they do not think it is like Christianity, merely a personal matter between the individual and God. Islam is a programme for life and government. It has provided government for about 1500 years and more...It is more than a few words on morality...It regulates life from before birth, family life and life in society. It does not just involve prayer and pilgrimage...Islam has a political agenda and provides for the administration of the country”.⁴⁶

Realising that he would need the support of every Iranian, Khomeini endorsed the creation of a strong organisational network. By this time, he knew that a dedicated army of followers was critical to the distribution of his radical message. Given their daily contact with the people, he expected them to become the foot soldiers of the Islamic Revolution.

Here Khomeini was fortunate because he was held in the highest possible esteem by his students. He was not only respected for his piety, he was also admired for his

⁴⁶ Martin goes on to say that: Issues relating to social justice are regularly raised. He complained of governmental squander when parts of the country had no fresh water, doctors or medicines. Governments, he said, belonged to the people, the country's budget came from their pockets, and the government should be answerable to them for expenditure and not waste money on its own indulgences". See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 113-114. Arjomand writes that: "Pahlavi centralisation and modernisation of the state destroyed the Qajar division of authority in the polity between the hierocracy and the state and devastated the institutional foundation of clerical power and influence...The loss of judicial and educational foundations...and the loss of control of the religious endowments and of land ownership...meant that the Shi'ite hierocracy became by and large 'disembedded' from the Pahlavi regime...At the same time, they had become more homogenous and much more distinct from the secular intellectuals produced by the modern educational system. The disengagement of the Shi'ite hierocracy from the Pahlavi regime, the increased homogeneity of the *ulama* as an estate, and the sharpened distinctness of the identity go a long way to explaining how they came to lead the first traditionalist revolution in modern history". See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 81-83.

strictly ethical lifestyle. He criticised the shah in class and advanced the view that political duties should be overseen by the clerics. Over time, he became one of the most admired teachers and attracted hundreds of devotees to his lectures. This was extremely important because many of his students went on to preach throughout the country and it was through them that he was able to communicate his message every week.⁴⁷

Their efforts were complemented in Tehran by the hard work of the Association of United Societies. This much overlooked organisation was founded in the early 1960s when it became clear that a major confrontation with the Pahlavi regime was under way. It was then that Khomeini realised the vital importance of having an organisation in the capital to print and distribute leaflets. This was critical because Khomeini enjoyed great support among the lower classes. Their identity had been associated with Shia Islam for many centuries and their values had passed down from one generation to the next. This made it easier for the organisation to distribute anything they received from Khomeini.

Gradually the Association of United Societies expanded beyond Tehran to include various Muslim groups across the country. Herein lay the successful application of the *how* dimension of revolutionary leadership. To ensure unity, Khomeini used the nationwide mosque network to plan secret meetings and organise demonstrations against the regime. What united every member was their dedication to the religious ideals of the movement:

⁴⁷ Martin writes that: “Khomeini’s students held him in the highest respect, emphasising his piety, his purity of character and his strength. He was without pomp, pretensions of self-promotion and always greeted people with respect. Outside of class, unlike most senior clerics, he did not walk around accompanied by an entourage of students. He was also decisive, fastidious, efficient and meticulous; he was so well-ordered that even marriage could not disrupt his routine. He had a strictly moral lifestyle, pursuing continuously the subject of ethics and its study, which he believed formed the greatest protection against oppression. His students derived strength from him, and absence from him produced a kind of loneliness”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 57.

“Their goals included the enforcement of the Shari’a, the introduction of Islamic government, and an end to foreign interference, oppression, and corruption. Dedication to Islam included dedication to Islamic culture, which infused all actions and organisation. Islamic purism and freedom from East and West were emphasised, and membership of any non-Islamic body prohibited”.⁴⁸

Even though members were expected to make financial contributions, Khomeini made all the spending decisions himself. Funds would then be allocated by him for distribution throughout the organisation. Whilst the dispersal of funds made it incredibly difficult for the security forces to oversee the movement, centralising the association around Khomeini guaranteed ideological conformity. As one can imagine, the revolutionary potential of this group was not lost on the regime. But it had real difficulty in suppressing the organisation because it would have meant being accused of attacking Islam.

When Khomeini was exiled in 1964, some of his students assumed leadership of the movement at home. In the 1970s, a few of them decided to join together and form the Combative Clerics Organisation. Well-known for its numerous meetings, the organisation soon became the centre of opposition to the Pahlavi regime. By the time of the Islamic Revolution, the organisation had developed an extensive network of thirty thousand students and clerics. Their efforts were complemented abroad by an influential opposition movement in Iraq. Eight years after Khomeini had left Iran, a number of students in Najaf

⁴⁸ Armojand goes on to say that: “Some of the *ad hoc* organisations and groupings, which had come into existence to distribute Khomeini’s proclamations in Tehran and other cities and to organise demonstrations, continued their existence underground after June 1963. In these clandestine associations elements from the bazaar, the religious youths, and the militant *‘ulama* cooperated intimately”. See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 95. Abrahamian writes that: “The only sectors of society still independent of the state, the bazaars and the religious establishment, provided Khomeini with generous financial support but also with a nationwide organisational network. In short, by the eve of the revolution, the state had shattered all political parties and silenced their main organs...It was therefore not surprising that the bazaar became the focal point of the revolution”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 533.

created a group dedicated to opposing the shah. By making use of the cassette tape, the group was able to publicise the objectives of the Islamic resistance in Iran:

“Modern organisation and acute awareness of its significance assisted the rise to power of Khomeini and his movement. The benefits of centralisation were recognised particularly in the deliberate creation for the first time of a single leader of all the Shi’a. The effect, helped by post-war prosperity, was to revive Qom, and the clergy became much better equipped to confront both the modern state and new ideologies”.⁴⁹

Here they were helped by the policies of the regime that encouraged increasing numbers of people to migrate to the cities. With almost no state support, they often came to depend on the help of the organisations that were closely connected to Khomeini. This made his movement unique. While most Iranians were brought together by traditional values and beliefs, modern organisational tactics allowed them to resist the state.⁵⁰

By this time, Khomeini had adopted the radical view that the clerics themselves should govern. In his 1970 work on Islamic government, he seemed to find evidence for the rule of the clerics in the juristic tradition that saw them as the only rightful authority.

According to Shia belief, the legitimate ruler is the Twelfth Imam. But in his absence, the

⁴⁹ Martin goes on to say that: “Three types of popular network assisted the rise of the ‘ulama. The first was traditional, the networks surrounding religious institutions. As a group, the artisans and small shopkeepers were important supporters of Khomeini, especially as by the 1970s they and their employees constituted more than a quarter of the urban workforce....The second type of organisation was more modern, and centred on the educational and welfare societies in the model of those started by Hasan al-Banna...in Egypt. Such groups had experience of organisation in membership and financial arrangements, in rapid dissemination of ideas in small towns and villages, and in the provision of classes and religious guidance, moral development and sacrifice. The third type of organisation, the networks created in the bazaars throughout Iran, was influenced ultimately by Marxist methods. It was coherent and detailed, systematic and efficient”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 73.

⁵⁰ Roy Mottahedeh writes that: “In the later sixties and, especially, in the seventies Iranians...discovered cassettes...Given the opportunity to choose between hundreds of sermons, Iranians became discriminating connoisseurs of preaching, especially as a cassette cost about three dollars, the equivalent of a days worth of meals for an Iranian of the lower middle class. But cassettes were worth it; they not only gave you control of the music and sermons you heard, they also offered you a chance to thumb your nose at the government as you listened in private to sermons obliquely critical of it, or even to those of Khomeini (smuggled from Iraq), which were directly critical”. See Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 351.

question arises as to who has authority over the community. Khomeini now claimed that the clerics alone should govern because they were the only ones trained in religious law. He suggested that Islamic government was the government of God and that the clerics were critical because they would act as the moral vanguard in the fight for justice:

“The fundamental difference between Islamic government and constitutional monarchies and republics is this: whereas the representatives of the people or the monarch in such regimes engage in legislation, in Islam the legislative power and competence to establish laws belongs exclusively to God...In an Islamic government a simple planning body takes the place of the legislative assembly that is one of the three branches of government. This body draws up programmes for the different ministries in light of the ordinances of Islam”.⁵¹

There seems little doubt that Khomeini had increasingly come to this view because the modernisation programme undertaken by the regime had led to uneven development and vast inequalities of wealth. When he had first written about government, Khomeini hoped the young shah would abide by the divine laws of Islam. But his dreams had been put to the sword on the altar of Pahlavi nationalism. Confronted with injustice and oppression, Khomeini articulated a vision of an Islamic state in which the clerics alone would rule.

Over the next ten years, Khomeini became increasingly popular. Even though the country enjoyed rapid economic growth under the shah, the Pahlavi regime was criticised for benefiting the wealthy. Most government aid in agriculture went to a small number of

⁵¹ Khomeini goes on to say that: “It is not a tyranny. It is not constitutional in the current sense, that of being based on approval of laws in accordance with the opinion of the majority. It is constitutional in the sense that the ruler is subject to a set of conditions in the governing and administering of the country, conditions set forth in the Qur’an and the Sunna.” Martin writes that: “The ruler must therefore be the most learned in the law, and since a ruler of the ordinary kind does not have such knowledge, the *fuqaha* themselves should rule. A just ruler is one who grants Muslims their rights and is fair in the imposition of taxes, which he spends rightfully, and in the implementation of the law. However, not all officials need to be *fuqaha*, as they will need only to know such laws as pertain to their duties. Although no individual can be expected to have the virtues of the Prophet, the ruler should be untainted by major sin, as well as having the necessary knowledge. The jurist does not have the spiritual status of the Imams – that is to say he is not infallible – but he has to have the same authority”. See Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 120-122.

large landholders, while others were starved of economic assistance. Despite government claims that agricultural production was rising by about four percent a year, more and more peasants were forced off the land and into the cities for work. This posed a serious threat to the regime because it created a dangerous revolutionary underclass.

The problems with the Iranian economy were further aggravated by the industrial policies of the regime. In the 1970s, the shah had made the claim that Iran would become one of the leading economic powers by the end of the century. But domestic growth soon fell and Iran found itself having to import more and more goods from abroad. Rather than invest in local industry and reduce domestic unemployment, the regime seemed to favour vast construction projects supported by the West. Over time, this led to the concentration of the market in Tehran and generated widespread discontent with the regime.⁵²

As the situation began to deteriorate in the mid-1970s, Washington unwittingly opened the door on revolution. Following the inauguration of Jimmy Carter in 1977, the president announced that any foreign country guilty of human rights violations would be deprived of American arms and aid. This had profound implications for Iran. Only two years earlier, the shah had agreed to merge the two existing political parties into the new Resurgence Party. The purpose of this change was to strengthen the regime through the creation of a new party. To make sure that everyone complied with the arrangements,

⁵² Ansari writes that: “The White Revolution had altered the fabric of Iranian society in ways which the Shah...had failed to predict. It was certainly true that the country had benefited from economic growth, but this had been both uneven and erratic, and accompanied by social and economic tensions. These tensions, exemplified by the migration of the peasants to the cities, were inadequately disguised by the dramatic increase in oil revenues. Oil revenues certainly protected the shah from criticism insofar as it allowed the Pahlavi state a degree of autonomy which was dangerously disconnected. Far from recognising the need for a measure of accountability to his ever cynical and fractious public, the shah used the oil revenues to compound his error by further developing his image of ‘Divine Righteousness’...which his people found difficult to relate to”. See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 194.

political activists permeated every of aspect of Iranian society and the security forces suppressed the opposition.

Though they had enjoyed great success over the years, opposition towards the regime remained. The secular nationalists were drawn from the ranks of the modern middle class and they demanded strict compliance with the Iranian constitution. This contrasted with the traditional classes who wanted a government that was more faithful to Islamic principles. They formed a powerful adversary. The clerics not only had a robust organisational network, their followers also shared a common value system. Even though Khomeini was the most admired leader among this group, there were others who proposed a secular type of government in which lay bureaucrats would govern according to the principles of Islam. While these differences were important, they were often overlooked in practice.⁵³

As the situation degenerated, opposition to the regime grew stronger. Even though returns from the sale of oil rose from about \$5 billion in 1973-74 to \$20 billion in 1975-76, most of the benefits went to the Iranian elite. These problems were made even worse when the end of the Arab oil embargo prompted an unexpected economic crisis. With oil revenues falling behind the cost of imports, the government was forced to cut spending in a drastic bid to reduce inflation. As the economy slowed, unemployment rose and wages fell. When the shah passed a law requiring the country to adopt a monarchical calendar,

⁵³Abrahamian writes that: “Khomeini intentionally propagated a vague populist message and refrained from specific proposals, and thereby created a broad alliance of social forces ranging from the bazaars and clergy to the intelligentsia and the urban poor, as well as the political organisations varying from the religious Liberation Movement and the secular National Front to the new guerrilla groups emerging from Shari’ati’s followers in the universities. Khomeini has often been described as the traditional mullah. In fact, he was a major innovator in Iran both because of his political theory and because of his religiously-oriented populist strategy”. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 479.

the opposition movement was outraged. With the nation sliding into disaster, the shah seemed more intent on celebrating the achievements of the monarchy than helping the Iranian people.⁵⁴

These problems were exacerbated when Washington pressured the shah into releasing three hundred political prisoners from jail. Almost immediately, the leaders of the newly revived National Front wrote an open letter to the shah in which they criticised the monarch for his disregard of human rights. They then went on to attack the regime for its failure to uphold the Iranian constitution and called on the shah to hold fresh elections. Unsurprisingly, the letter circulated widely throughout Iran and was extremely influential among the modern middle classes. Emboldened by their newfound freedom, forty well known authors and professors sent a letter to the prime minister in which they demanded an end to press censorship. This was followed by a series of subversive poetry readings at the German Institute in Tehran.

As opposition to the government became more intense, the shah removed Prime Minister Hoveyda and replaced him with Jamshid Amuzegar. Unfortunately, his efforts to lower inflation without reducing the military budget led to even more problems. Large construction projects were frozen and unemployment continued to rise. As many Iranians experienced significant wage cuts, Khomeini became more vocal in his opposition to the regime. From his home in exile, he called on the clerics to form Islamic revolutionary

⁵⁴ Keddie writes that: “By 1977 an economic recession, inflation, urban overcrowding, government policies that hurt the bazaar classes, glaring income gaps, and conspicuous-style consumption by the elite and the lack of political freedom or participation were all widely felt...The effective suppression of secular oppositionists, whether from the National Front or the Tudeh, left room for the religious opposition, whose sermons, processions, and plays with themes like the martyrdom of Imam Hussain by tyrants were understood to refer to contemporary tyranny, but could not be suppressed. In addition the association of the shah’s regime with Western culture, commodities, and vices brought on a traditionalist reaction”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 168.

committees to help lead the faithful in their struggle against the shah. This dramatic outburst once again forced the regime to respond. In an anonymous newspaper article published in January 1978, Khomeini was accused of being an adventurer in the service of the British government. This proved to be a costly mistake. The article prompted widespread public outrage and forced the regime onto the back foot.⁵⁵

Over the coming days, hundreds of angry students in the seminary city of Qom demonstrated against the regime. Determined to impose his authority, the shah sent in the security forces to subdue the protesters. Unfortunately, ten students were shot and killed. In no mood to compromise whatsoever, Khomeini called on the enraged Iranian public to continue their protests against the regime. Only a month later, a commemorative rally turned violent when protestors in the city of Tabriz attacked the offices of the Resurgence Party. Praising the valour of those who had died, Khomeini asked the Iranian people to come out and commemorate the tragic loss of life:

“Here was a brilliant example of political use of Shi’i traditions; the government would risk truly massive demonstrations if it outlawed traditional mourning gatherings occurring at the proper and traditional intervals; such a prohibition would have been unheard of, even under the shah. In addition, the forty day interval gave an excellent hiatus to regroup forces, spread the word orally, bring people together almost automatically without the need to argue about date and place, and to utilise spontaneous or ritual emotion to intensify opposition to the regime”.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Keddie writes that: “The newspaper attack on Khomeini...may be seen as a key point...in which much of the initiative in the protest movement swung away from the secular forces, with their letters, petitions, organisations, and political poetry readings, to the religiously led opposition”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 225.

⁵⁶ Keddie goes on to say that: “At one of the first demonstrations, in Tabriz in February, many banks, shops, and cinemas were attacked and destroyed, and the cry, ‘Death to the Shah,’ was first heard. These and other such acts of destruction continued in later protests”. See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 226.

Herein lay the successful application of the *why* dimension of revolutionary leadership. When the protests resumed, demonstrations were held in twenty-five cities across Iran. Again the protestors turned violent and attacked public office buildings throughout the country. Many people were killed and fresh mourning processions were soon arranged. Never before had a prominent cleric used the traditions of Shia Islam to undermine the authority of an incumbent Iranian monarch in this way.

By this time, Khomeini had certainly come to represent the saviour of the nation. His stubborn refusal to cooperate with the regime and his unwavering belief that religion could solve the numerous problems facing the country increasingly held sway among the Iranian masses. Yet none of this changed the fact that the shah still believed he could restore the authority of the crown. This is why he removed the head of the security forces and promised free elections. Even though some people seemed willing to accept the shah at his word, Khomeini continued to insist that the monarchy needed to be overthrown.⁵⁷

On September 7, five hundred thousand people marched to the assembly building in Tehran chanting slogans in support of Khomeini. As if to demonstrate their willingness to die, many wore the traditional shrouds of martyrdom. Recognising that his concessions had only inflamed the opposition movement, the shah suddenly decided to impose martial law. Unaware that the regime had banned public assemblies, over fifteen thousand people

⁵⁷ Arjomand writes that: "Khomeini's courage and unswerving determination in challenging the shah were indeed extraordinary personal qualities that could and did generate charisma. It would, however, be wrong to conceive charisma too restrictively as the extraordinary quality of the individual to whom it is attributed. Charisma is also much in the eye of the beholder and is determined by his or her cultural sensibilities. Khomeini's embodiment of Islam, which most of his followers considered he engendered, had as much to do with his charismatic appeal as did his heroic stature and resolution. Khomeini's embodiment of Islam, which most of his followers considered endangered, had as much to do with his charismatic appeal as did his heroic stature and resolution. As an individual, Khomeini had the making of a revolutionary transformer of tradition". See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Turban for the Crown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 100.

gathered in Jaleh Square early the following morning to protest against the shah. Not long after, troops equipped with tanks surrounded the square and opened fire on the protesters. Even though the regime insisted that only eighty-six people had died in the confrontation, others put the figure closer to three thousand. Whatever the case, the regime seemed even more brutal than ever and would soon be overthrown by a radical revolutionary coalition.

Later that month, staff at the Iranian Central Bank decided to release information showing that a number of prosperous Iranians had sent over \$2 billion out of the country. This news only seemed to encourage the opposition movement further because it showed that the regime was beginning to collapse. Doubtless hoping to reassert his authority, the shah managed to persuade Saddam Hussein to expel Khomeini from Iraq. On October 6, he flew to Paris where he became the centre of attention for the international press. This proved to be important because it confirmed his position as the most influential leader in the revolutionary movement. It also explains why representatives of the National Front began arriving to consult with Khomeini and draft coordinated policies:

“From France, Khomeini’s refusal to compromise with either the shah or the liberal constitutional monarchists, which was wholly consistent with his nature and ideology, was also just what his style of revolution needed. Karim Sanjabi visited him in the name of the National Front and emerged with a short declaration that spoke of both Islam and democracy as basic principles; once the revolution was won, however, Khomeini explicitly refused to put the same word, democracy, into either the title of the Republic or its constitution”.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Keddie goes on to say that: “The...visit and statements were of great importance to the outcome of the Revolution, as they brought about a Khomeini-National Front association and probably foreclosed the possibility of a solution midway between the monarchy and the Islamic Republic.” See Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 233-234. Ansari writes that: “It is important to remember that the movement which resulted in the overthrow of the shah was fundamentally nationalist in orientation, suffused with a righteous religious energy which sanctified the nation. That this symbiosis was as yet an incomplete, awkward and highly fluid dynamic was paradoxically in 1978 a source of peculiar strength. Ambiguity allowed a disparate plurality of groups to unite against the Shah.” See Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), 201.

Herein lay the successful application of the *what* dimension of revolutionary leadership. Even though Khomeini had written in detail about the importance of clerical leadership, he had often couched his opposition to the regime in terms that were acceptable to the secular nationalists. He denounced the formation of the Resurgence Party because it challenged the laws of the constitution and confined his criticisms of the regime to the Pahlavi elite. He was thereby able to bring a large number of different social and political groups into his radical revolutionary movement.

This was further demonstrated when Khomeini called on the oil workers to strike in late October. Even though the industrial classes had traditionally supported the Tudeh Party, an increasing number of people were attracted to the revolutionary ideals being expressed by Khomeini. On the anniversary of the death of Imam Hussein in early December, over two million people came out in the capital to protest against the regime. This proved to be an important turning point. Only a few days later, five hundred troops defected to Khomeini in the city of Tabriz. For the opposition movement, the end of the regime seemed to be in sight. In a final attempt to save the monarchy, the shah managed to persuade one of the leaders of the National Front coalition to become prime minister. Even though he insisted that the shah should leave the country and return as a constitutional monarch, he was publicly condemned for his cooperation with the regime. Under pressure, he agreed to reopen the airport and allow Khomeini to return home.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Abrahamian writes that: "To the petty bourgeois, he was...the guardian of private property, of traditional values, and of the hard-pressed bazaars. To the intelligentsia, he appeared...to be a militant nationalist who would complete Mossadeq's mission of liberating the country from the twin burdens of foreign imperialism and domestic fascism. To the urban workers, he was a man of the people, eager to enforce social justice, redistribute wealth, and transfer power from the rich to the poor. To the rural masses, he was the man who would bring...the material good the White Revolution had failed to deliver. And to all, he appeared to embody the spirit of the Constitutional Revolution". See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 532-533.

Shortly after arriving in Tehran, Khomeini appointed a provisional government to oversee the country. In early February, low-ranking representatives from the air force met with Khomeini and declared their loyalty to the new government in the capital. Unwilling to cede authority, the high command sent in the Imperial Guards to capture the rebels. But in a fierce confrontation, the royalist forces were quickly defeated. Arms were then distributed to thousands of young people and pro-revolutionary reservists at Tehran University. As the rebels seized one government office building after another, the prime minister fled Iran and the revolutionaries declared victory.

Even though differences soon emerged in the revolutionary movement, Khomeini successfully consolidated control by drawing on his vast organisational network. He built a tough volunteer force, known as the Islamic Republican Guard, to defend the emerging theocracy from those who did not share his vision for Iran. He also insisted upon holding a nationwide referendum in which people were asked if they wanted an Islamic Republic. In a striking show of unity, twenty million people turned out to vote in favour of the idea. This led to the writing of a new constitution in which it was stated that ultimate authority over the Iranian political system belonged to God and that divine will was best expressed through the rule of an Islamic jurist. A short time later, Khomeini became the first clerical ruler in the history of Iran, thereby completing the only Islamic Revolution the world has ever seen.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Milani writes that: “Nations, like individuals, each have a consciousness. They go through occasional periods of self-examination, introspection, and soul-searching...Shi’ism, with its apocalyptic overtones, its emphasis on spiritual purification, its insistence on equality before God, and its deep-seated roots in Iranian culture and psyche became attractive to millions of Iranians. Khomeini capitalised on this and energised a populist movement that surfaced in the first year of the Islamic Revolution”. See Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran’s Islamic Revolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 246.

Conclusion

Though his victory came as a surprise to many outside observers, there can be no doubt that Khomeini represented a powerful synthesis of Iranian nationalism and Islamic religious identity. Confronted by the brutal and repressive Pahlavi regime, he articulated a popular message of radical social justice that drew on the traditions of Islam. For many years, Iran had been subjected to the influence of foreign powers and Khomeini appeared to offer the best hope of redemption. He vehemently opposed corruption at the heart of government and promised to restore a sense of dignity. Such was his popularity among the people, there may never have been an Islamic revolution without him.

Structure and Agency Revisited

It should be clear by now that in the encounter between state and society, revolutionary leaders emerge to play a far more important role than traditionally recognised by existing theories of revolution. At the heart of this argument lies the radical claim that structure and agency are equally critical to the revolutionary process. Even though we have seen how the practices of similarly repressive neo-patrimonial regimes contributed to their eventual overthrow by revolutionary leaders in Cuba and Iran, many social theorists continue to dispute their explanatory primacy. This is why the relationship between them needs further analysis before revolutions can be fully understood.¹

An Ontological and Methodological Dispute

In many ways, revolutions are difficult to analyse because the social world is unique. Even though social structures depend on human activity for their existence, they also condition much of the activity that takes place. This explains why so many social theorists have found it hard to reconcile the explanatory claims of structuralism and

¹ Mary Fulbrook writes that questions about individual agency are often contentious: “The antimony between those emphasising the actions of individuals (with reasons, motives and behaviour constituting the main explanatory elements in the story) and those emphasising structural or collective features (political and economic organisation, institutional arrangements, collective ‘mentalities’, social circumstances) has run deep among historians. At its heart lies the question of the extent to which human beings – their beliefs, their actions, and the consequences of these – are conditioned and shaped by aspects of their environment; and the extent to which, or conditions under which, in turn, humans can alter the world into which they were born”. See Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 122-123.

individualism. Whilst structuralism gives ontological primacy to the structural properties that guide social action, individualism focuses exclusively on human behaviour.

Mary Archer writes that the main problem with both these approaches is that one disregards the effect of reflexive human action on social change, whilst the other overlooks the various ways in which different structures affect human decision-making. This leads to what is known as epiphenomenalism. If all social outcomes can ultimately be reduced to unique forms of individual action, social structures are robbed of their autonomy. Given that this process works both ways, one variable is always in danger of becoming a redundant feature of social analysis.²

In order to overcome this ontological dichotomy, it is vitally important to move beyond the different approaches described here. This is necessary because the analyst of society needs to know what social reality is, and how to explain it, before addressing the particular problem under investigation. Given that the nature of what exists in the social world is fundamentally related to the way in which it is studied, the focus of any social analysis is determined by the ontological commitments of the approach in question.³

² Mary Archer writes that: “Both evade the encounter with the vexatious ambivalence of social reality. They can be epitomised as the ‘science of society’ versus the ‘study of wo/man’: if the former denies the significance of society’s human constitution, the latter nullifies the importance of what is, has been, and will be constituted as society in the process of human interaction. The former is a denial that the real powers of human beings are indispensable to making society what it is. The latter withholds real powers from society by reducing its properties to the projects of its makers”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.

³ Archer writes that: “The aim of the social theorist is two-fold. On the one hand, the task is to explicate in what general terms ‘society’ should be conceptualised. Since theories are propositions containing concepts and since all concepts have their referents (pick out features held to belong to social reality), then there can be no social theory without an accompanying social ontology (implicit or explicit). On the other hand, the point of social theory is practical. It is never an end in itself but a tool for the working social analyst which gives explanatory purchase on substantive social problems, the terms or framework for their investigation, through supplying the terms or framework for their investigation”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12-13.

This should be evident from the conceptual limitations that the different social ontologies impose. For individualists, the ultimate referents of social reality are always individual human beings who take action in light of their own personal dispositions. By contrast, structuralists maintain that social action cannot be understood properly without taking into account the influence of social structures. In both cases, the choice of social ontology inherently restricts the kind of explanatory terms that can be employed.

These problems would seem to support the far reaching ontological claim that neither structuralism nor individualism provides an adequate basis for social theorising. Even though they both provide some valuable insights into social reality, the idea that a specific variable accounts for every possible social outcome is necessarily reductive and mistakenly blocks any examination of the interaction between the two.

Unfortunately, this still does not explain why both these approaches continue to cause so much friction in the field of social theory. According to Archer, the main reason is the methodological commitment to empiricism among individualists. For those who believe the foundation stone of the social world is the individual, the reality of human existence is indisputable. Though there are many people who disagree, the individualists maintain that structural properties can be defined as the stable collection of individual sense attributes.

In a typically robust defence of this approach, Max Weber claims that the modern state is nothing more than the collective embodiment of the actions of individual people. This helps explain the difficulty in accounting for the rise of revolutionary movements in

his work. If structural properties have no independent causal effects of their own, there is no satisfactory way to explain the emergence of charismatic forms of authority.⁴

Even though critics respond by arguing that it is absolutely impossible to isolate individual dispositions prior to their manifestation in a social context, the real difficulty with the reductionist case is that it appears to preclude a priori the possibility of human action being the dependent variable in social analysis. Whilst some people insist that a number of pre-elementary dispositions do in fact exist, others seem to believe that any causally significant interpersonal features of the social world can ultimately be reduced to the dynamic interaction of individual people. Unfortunately, most practitioners do not recognise that only their non-individualistic properties can be verified empirically.⁵

Given these problems, it comes as a surprise that structuralists do not advance a more vigorous account of social structure. Even though they defend the methodological indispensability of structural factors in their analysis of social reality, it often appears as though their overriding concern is the deficiency of reductionism. This argument largely rests on the fact that references to the structural features of the social context have to be included for explanatory adequacy because accounts cast solely in terms of individuals do

⁴ Weber writes that: “When reference is made in a sociological context to a state, a nation, a corporation, a family, or an army corps, or to similar collectivities, what is meant is, on the contrary, *only* a certain kind of development of actual or possible social actions of individual persons”. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 14.

⁵ Archer writes that: “The defects of Individualism and its explanatory programme derive directly from empiricism. This marks and mars both the concepts which are used to conceptualise the ‘individual’ and ‘social structure,’ as well as the links between them, since the same concepts are employed to account for their relationship...The Individualist is committed to social atomism, that is to the claim that the important things about people can indeed be identified independently of their social context. Here is the real difficulty of this procedure, for both description and explanation, namely that it presumes it is possible to isolate more elementary dispositions as they prior to their manifestations in a social context. The real oddity of the reductionist case is that it seems to preclude *a priori* the possibility of human dispositions being the dependent variable in historical explanation – when in fact they...always are”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 34-35.

not work. This means references to social structures are often defended as ineradicable remainders without which individualist accounts remain incomplete.⁶

But the fact that individuals and their personal dispositions cannot be separated from the social context in which they act is rarely used by structuralists to challenge the empiricist hegemony of methodological individualism. Even though the institutions of society are an independent and external fact for every individual, the structuralists shy away from articulating the independence of structural properties in order to avoid the charge of reification. Since social structures are denied any real existence of their own, individual human beings inevitably become the only moving agents of history.

Needless to say, a number of social theorists regard this approach as inadequate because it overlooks the autonomy of structural variables. Some people rightly insist that social institutions and organisations are important historical agents because they have their own distinct causal effects. Even though they depend upon human activity for their existence, all social structures are characterised by systemic relationships that exert an enduring causal influence over social action.

This explains why the state must be included in any comprehensive theory of revolution. As the principal actor in modern society, the state imposes the fundamental

⁶ Archer writes that: "The irony of Collectivism is that whilst it defends the methodological indispensability of 'structural factors,' no overall conception of social structure is advanced ontologically...In other words, the Collectivist [is] playing an inordinately defensive game. References to 'societal facts' are defended as ineradicable 'remainders,' without which Individualists' descriptions remain incomplete, and also as indispensable adjuncts when Individualists' explanations come up against the 'irreducible.' The very language of 'remainders' and 'unreduced concepts' casts the Collectivist in the role of critically supplementing Individualism, rather than confronting it head on. Instead of articulating a robust counter-concept of 'social structure,' the Collectivist cautiously indicates points at which some aspect of society is necessary to explain this or that and only becomes exuberant when detecting Individualists busily committing sins of commission, on their own terms, by incorporating such references anyway". See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 46-47.

rules of political order and defines the social context within which consciously evaluating human beings act. Given that social revolutions only became possible with the emergence of the contemporary states system in early modern Europe, it comes as no surprise that the state is an essential feature of the revolutionary process itself.

This immediately leads to the question of what sort of ontological status social structures possess if they depend on human activity for their existence, but are not in fact identical to such activity. According to Archer, the answer to this question lies well outside the methodological framework of empiricism, with what are known as emergent properties. Emergence implies a stratified social world in which all talk of its ultimate constituents makes no sense because it also includes structural properties. Even though emergent properties come into existence through social interaction, they are responsible for structuring all activity in the social world.⁷

Whilst there is nothing mysterious about the development of emergent properties, many structuralists fail to pursue these claims through to their logical conclusion. One of the main reasons is the irrefutable fact that such efforts inevitably run into the brick wall

⁷ Archer writes that: "Instead of a one-dimensional reality coming to us through...the senses, to speak of 'emergence' implies a *stratified* social world including non-observable entities, where talk of its ultimate constituents makes no sense, given that the relational properties pertaining to each stratum are all real, that it is nonsense to discuss whether something (like water) is more real than something else (like hydrogen and oxygen), and that regress as a means of determining 'ultimate constituents' is of no help in this respect and an unnecessary distraction in social or any other type of theorising". See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 50. Andrew Sayer goes on to say that we would not try to explain the power of people to think by reference to the cells that constitute them: "Nor would we explain the power of water to extinguish fire by deriving it from the powers of its constituents, for oxygen and hydrogen are highly flammable. In such cases, objects are said to have 'emergent powers', that is, powers or liabilities which cannot be reduced to those of their constituents...Emergence can be explained in terms of the distinction between internal and external relations. Where objects are externally or contingently related they do not affect one another in their essentials and so do not modify their causal powers, although they may interfere with the effects of the exercise of these powers...In the case of internally related objects, or structures...emergent powers are created because this type of combination of individuals modifies their powers in fundamental ways". See Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science* (London: Routledge, 1992), 119.

of empiricism. This effectively encourages structuralists to go on playing a game whose rules are unfavourably designed. Of course, they cannot really win this contest because there is no way in which to establish the reality of the concepts they adduce.

In the end, the power of empiricism explains why individualists are so resolute in their belief that the ultimate constituents of social reality are independently acting human beings. Many practitioners continue to formulate their methodological injunctions on this basis, despite the obvious shortcomings of their methods. And even though structuralists maintain that social structures cannot be discounted in any proper analysis of the social world, they fail to ground these insights in a robust ontological account of reality.⁸

Over the years, the failure to establish a coherent working relationship between a truly accurate social ontology and a consistent methodology has become more and more problematic. It should be remembered that no social theory can ever be advanced without making some basic assumptions about the kind of social reality it is dealing with and how to explain it. This is important because all social theories are ontologically shaped and methodologically moulded even if the process is overlooked by the practitioner.

This should be evident from the fact that all social theories entail concepts and such concepts always include and exclude certain things at both the methodological and ontological levels. Whilst some people insist they can avoid this problem by ignoring the structure-agency debate, there are others who think that using heuristic concepts saves them from having to make an ontological commitment altogether. The first approach

⁸ Fulbrook writes that: ‘Some of the most popular historical works are works which seek to ‘bring to life’ some historical individual and his or her acts. The focus on individual agency appears in some ways to be the easiest or most accessible approach to understand. After all, our own lives are predicated on a belief in our own individuality, as we daily go about our business what appear to us private thoughts, taking decisions and acting on them’. See Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2002), 126.

inevitably falls into the trap of instrumentalism, whilst the other fails to see that all heuristic concepts are themselves ontological.

A New Ontological Approach

In recent years, a number of social theorists have attempted to overcome this debate by challenging the hegemony of empiricism. Despite some resistance, their efforts have met with great success and the terms of the old debate have now been recast in entirely different terms. In transcending the schism between the study of man and the study of society, social theorists have advanced a number of new approaches.⁹

According to Archer, elisionism and emergentism are among the most influential in contemporary social theory. On the one hand, elisionism seeks to transcend the dualism between structure and agency by insisting upon their mutual constitution. To differentiate this approach from structuralism and individualism, the elisionists fully reject the ontological separability of structure and agency. This is important because it means elisionism becomes completely a-reductionist in approach.

By contrast, the emergentists insist upon the autonomous powers of all structural properties within the social system. For Archer, emergentism implies a stratified social world in which different social structures come into existence through social interaction.

⁹ Archer writes that: "Only after the empiricist hegemony had been challenged and the closely associated domination of positivism had been similarly undermined did siding with neither Individualism nor Collectivism become a genuine option. For with the progressive demise of empiricism, not only were the terms of the old debate rejected, but the debate itself was recast in entirely different ones. These transcended the antimony between the 'study of wo/man' and the 'science of society' by re-conceptualising 'structure' as intimately rather than tristically 'activity-dependent' and the 'individual' as intrinsically rather than extrinsically the subject of social constitution.' What did not disappear, despite the vastly premature celebration of a new consensus by many commentators, was the enduring necessity of making a choice. For the new terms in which 'structure and agency' were re-conceptualised and linked together were again represented by *two standpoints*". See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 59.

But when these structures emerge, they develop sovereign powers that condition all activity in the social world. Whilst advocates of this particular approach reject the reductionism that is inherent to individualism and structuralism, their claims are also diametrically opposed to the central principle of elisionism. Structural properties are not only autonomous, they are also causally efficacious when it comes to individual social action.¹⁰

Since the claims of emergentism are incompatible with the central premises of elisionism, social theorists are once again forced to make a choice. This is extremely difficult because different ontological conceptions of the social world have significant implications for the social theorist. On the one hand, the elisionist ontology of praxis seeks to transcend the traditional debate by insisting upon the duality of structure. Given that agency and structure are conceptualised in relation to one another, it follows methodologically that neither the reductionism advocated by the individualists, nor the anti-reductionism defended by the structuralists, can play any part in this kind of approach.¹¹

¹⁰ Archer writes that: “The very notion of ‘emergent properties...is necessarily antithetic to the tenet of inseparability because such structural and cultural features have autonomy from, are pre-existent to, and are causally efficacious *vis-à-vis* agents – their existence, influence and analysis therefore being incompatible with the central premises of elisionism”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 60-61.

¹¹ Archer writes that: “The Elisionists’ new ‘ontology of praxis’ seeks to *transcend* the traditional debate through replacing the two sets of terms in which it was conducted by their notion of the ‘duality of structure,’ in which structure and agency can be conceptualised in relation to one another. From this, it follows methodologically that neither the reductionism advocated by Individualists nor the anti-reductionism defended by Collectivists can play any part in the Elisionists’ approach to explanation – which takes up the novel position of *areductionism*. This is the direct logical consequence of their redefining structure and agency as *inseparable*. Whilst this frees both from being an epiphenomenon of the other, it does so by holding them to be mutually constitutive”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 61.

By contrast, the dualistic ontology of the emergentists is deployed to furnish an activity-dependent conception of structure that is genuinely irreducible and in no danger of reification. Since emergentists endorse the existence of autonomous structural properties, they advance a far more stratified view of the social world. In doing so, they resist what is known as central conflation, one of the principal features of elisionism. Instead, they endorse what is known as analytical dualism. Precisely because the social world is made up of both agents and structures, it is necessary to explore the interaction between the two.¹²

Even though the real differences between elisionism and emergentism have often been obscured, it is clear that the emergentist approach provides a forceful account of the social world. It does this by combining analytical dualism with an effective methodology, known as morphogenesis. Though the emergentists insist upon the activity-dependence of emergent properties, they do not claim that generative activities and emergent consequences have to be regarded as inseparable. Instead, they endorse the possibility of distinguishing between them. This is absolutely critical because it allows practical social theorists to examine the different ways in which structure and agency interact with one another over time.

¹² Archer writes that: “Emergentists’ combined repudiation of both reductionist and conflationary theorising means a principled avoidance of the epiphenomenalism which is embedded in Holism and Individualism, where ‘agency’ and ‘structure’ respectively become inert as wholly dependent features – consequently, introducing downwards and upwards conflation into social theorising. It also constitutes a principled departure from the ‘duality of structure’ by which ‘structure’ and ‘agency’ are inextricably compacted by Elisionists. In place of all three forms of conflationary theorising, the Emergentist substitutes *analytical dualism*. Because the social world is made up, *inter alia*, of ‘structures’ and ‘agents’ and because these belong to different strata, there is no question of reducing one to the other or of eliding the two and there is every reason for exploring the interplay between them”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 61-62.

There is no doubt that this marks a crucial break with elisionism. It comes as a welcome development because structure and agency are not only distinctive ontological entities with different properties and powers, but also because social theorists need to draw a methodological distinction between the two in order to explain why things are so and not otherwise. Given that understanding the interplay between them is vital for effective theorising, it is unfortunate that elisionists insist upon their mutual constitution, when it precludes just the sort of analysis that practical social theorising demands.

According to Archer, it is only through analysing the processes by which structure and agency shape and reshape one another that social theorists can successfully account for variable social outcomes at different times. Though this necessarily presumes a social ontology in which the pre-existence, relative autonomy and causal influence of structure and agency are both recognised, it can also be said to demand a rigorous explanatory methodology that makes such claims realisable for the practical social theorist.¹³

Morphogenesis and Social Revolutions

This is worth mentioning because the debate over the explanatory primacy of structure and agency gets right to the heart of the dispute between voluntarism and determinism. Even though these issues are important for the reason that it is impossible to study sociology without dealing with them effectively, this is not some abstract problem that imposes itself on social theorists alone. This can be explained by the fact that those

¹³ Archer writes that: "It is only through analysing the *processes* by which structure and agency shape and re-shape one another over time that we can account for variable social outcomes at different times. This presumes a social ontology which presumes speaking about 'pre-existence,' 'relative autonomy' and 'causal influence' in relation to these two strata (structures and agents) and an explanatory methodology which makes such talk practicable for the practising social theorist". See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp.63-64.

who recognise that their experience of social reality is ultimately conditioned by powers beyond themselves have the same job of reconciling this experiential bivalence if they want to navigate their way through the social world.¹⁴

Since this problem can never be properly resolved without the incorporation of time, it is important to adopt a methodological approach that focuses upon the interaction of structure and agency over time. This means that structure and agency cannot be examined simultaneously because they are neither co-extensive nor co-variant through time. In fact, both variables can be said to possess autonomous emergent properties that are quite capable of independent variation. This allows social theorists to examine them separately in order to better understand their distinctive causal influence.¹⁵

Thus, the claim that a particular social structure predates our contemporary constitution as citizens, is fully compatible with the idea that previous generations of social actors created that structure, or that our actions in the present may change it in the future. This means that structure and agency are not only analytically separable for the particular purposes of social analysis, they are also distinguishable because they operate over different tracts of time.

¹⁴ Colin Hay writes that: “Arguably what renders the social sciences qualitatively different from the physical sciences is that the former must deal with conscious and reflexive subjects, capable of acting differently under the same stimuli, whereas the units which comprise the latter can be assumed inanimate, unreflexive and hence entirely predictable in response to external stimuli. Agency injects an inherent indeterminacy and contingency into human affairs for which there is simply no analogy in the physical sciences”. See Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 50.

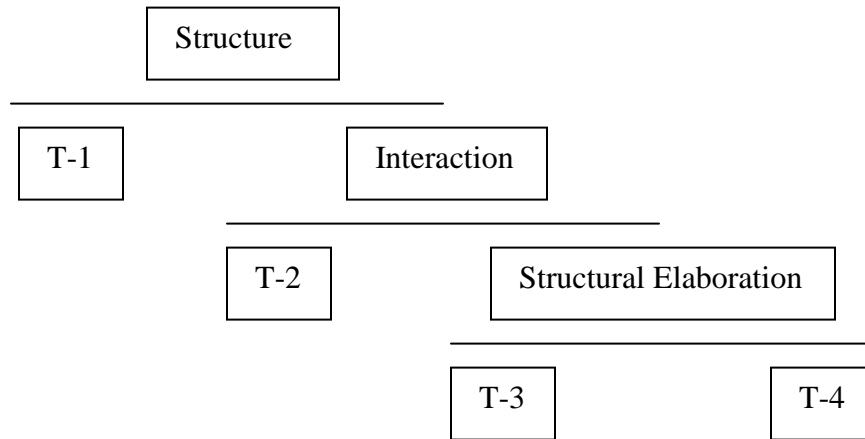
¹⁵ Archer writes that: “The central argument is that structure and agency can only be linked examining the *interplay between them over time*, and that without the proper incorporation of time the problem of structure and agency can be satisfactorily resolved... It is precisely [the] methodological notion of trying to peer at the two simultaneously which is resisted here, for the basic reason that they are neither co-extensive nor co-variant through time, because each possesses emergent properties which are thus capable of independent variation and therefore of being out of phase with one another”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 65-66.

This explains why our analysis of the revolutions in Cuba and Iran spent so much effort focusing on the early history of both countries. In each case, previous generations of actors helped shape and reshape the state as it interacted with society. This was important because it helped demonstrate the processes by which neo-patrimonial regimes emerged in both countries. Those regimes then adopted the kind of brutally repressive practices that ultimately led to their overthrow by radical revolutionary movements.

All this would seem to confirm that morphogenesis can rightly be seen as a methodological approach to social theory that supplements emergentism by making analytical dualism explicit and demonstrating its practical utility in social analysis. In contrast to all forms of conflationary theorising, the morphogenetic approach gives full significance to the timescale through which structure and agency emerge, interact and subsequently redefine one another. In fact, the morphogenetic argument that structure and agency operate over different time periods is based on the very simple proposition that structure necessarily predates the actions that transform it, and that structural elaboration necessarily post-dates those actions. This is known as the morphogenetic sequence and it is reproduced in visual form below.¹⁶

¹⁶ Archer writes that: “Fundamentally, it is maintained that the ‘problem of structure and agency’ is conceptualised entirely differently by non-conflationary theorists because of their emergentist ontology, which distinguishes them from every type of social theory which endorses conflation. This conception is ‘analytical dualism’ and it is based on two premises. Firstly, it depends upon an ontological view of the world as stratified, such that the emergent properties of structures and agents are irreducible to one another, meaning that in principle they are analytically separable. Secondly, it asserts that given structures and agents are also temporally distinguishable (in other words, it is justifiable and feasible to talk of pre-existence and posterity when dealing with specific instances of the two), and this can be used methodologically in order to examine the interplay between them and thus explain changes in both – over time. In a nutshell, ‘analytical dualism’ is a methodology based upon the *historicity of emergence*. The main claim of the morphogenetic/static approach is that ‘analytical dualism’ provides the most powerful tool in practical social analysis, yet one which has been slow to develop and whose full potential in terms of its theoretical purchase and practical utility have still to be fully recognised”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 66-67.

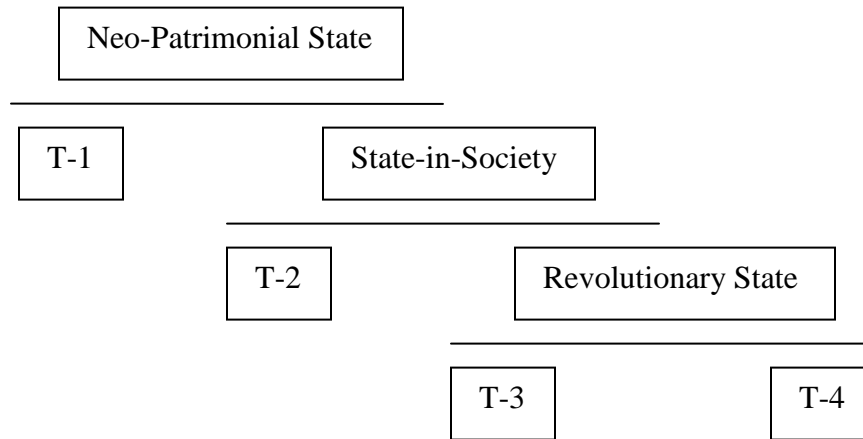
Figure 1: The Morphogenetic Sequence



Even though the three lines are in fact continuous, the morphogenetic approach breaks them up into intervals for analytical purposes. Whilst it might not be immediately obvious from the diagram, it should be noted that the initial structure of a property at T-1 influences the amount of time taken to eradicate it. This can be explained by the fact that all structures manifest temporal resistance because they are responsible for conditioning the context of social action. This involves dividing the population into different social groups who work towards the maintenance or change of a given structural property.

When such change does occur, it takes place during the interaction of structures and agents between T-2 and T-3. Here social agents not only encourage the elimination of old social structures, they also determine the way in which new structures are developed. As we have seen, this happened in Cuba and Iran, where similarly repressive neo-patrimonial regimes were eventually overthrown by popular revolutionary leaders. Over time, the fundamental transformation of state and society gave rise to completely new structural properties in the form of radical revolutionary states. This dynamic interactive process is shown in the diagram below.

Figure 2: The Morphogenetic Sequence and Social Revolution



Such is the importance of analytical dualism to the morphogenetic approach that analysts use the term fallacy of conflation to describe theories that elide the interaction of structure and agency. The main reason for this is that such theories involve the truncation of the time-span that comes under their purview. In essence, time-referents are always too short because too much time past or time future tends to be excluded. Basically, this means that the conflation of the two levels of analysis always takes place in a particular direction. Among the different possibilities, two are the direct antithesis of one another because conflation always takes place in the opposite direction.

In one, social structure is held to organise social interaction, whilst in the other, interpersonal interaction is presented as orchestrating the entire structure of society. Thus, in what may be called the downwards version, structural properties tend to engulf agency through the basic processes of regulation and socialisation, whilst in the upwards version, social interaction shapes and reshapes those social structures whose basic properties are

the outcome of social interaction. Even though they completely disagree about which of the levels is epiphenomenal, they always treat one as the epiphenomenon of the other.¹⁷

In the end, the real problem with making agency dependent upon structure and structure dependent upon agency is that it is impossible to study the interaction between the two. Since one level is always rendered inert, the dependent element is robbed of the capacity to influence the determining element because it lacks the independence to do so. As a result, adherents of both approaches are reduced to advancing rather crude unilateral accounts of the social world. Whilst the individualists believe that all structural properties are generated and sustained by autonomously acting social agents, their opponents insist that structural properties impose their unique choreography on all social interaction.

This is what makes the morphogenetic approach so important. In contrast to the approaches described above, morphogenetic analysis clearly accords time a special place in social theory. By working in three-part cycles, the morphogenetic approach cleverly integrates time in sequential phases. This allows social theorists to distinguish between the independent effects of structure and agency over different tracts of time. Of course, when it comes to structural conditioning, such properties are thought to be the consequences of past social action. It is only when they have been elaborated that they exert any casual influence over social interaction. They do this by shaping the situations

¹⁷ Archer writes that: “In both...versions, the fundamental drawback is that by making agency *dependent* upon structure, or vice versa, they automatically preclude any two-way interplay between the levels – because in each, one level is rendered inert/ Consequently, the dependent element is robbed of the capacity to exploit or to influence the determining element, for it lacks the autonomy and independence to do so. This then blocks an adequate conceptualization of the processes explaining social stability and change. Instead, adherents of both approaches advance rather crude unilateral accounts”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 80.

in which later generations of actors find themselves and by endowing agents with interests according to the positions they hold in the system.¹⁸

Yet the structural elaboration that follows is always the consequence of social interaction in the present. The modification of all pre-existing structural properties and the introduction of new ones is the necessary product of the different outcomes pursued simultaneously by various social groups. Here it is important to note that the ideological creativity and organisational tactics of each competing group gives some indication of who is most likely to be influential in the development of new structural properties. This was certainly true in Cuba and Iran, where Fidel Castro and Ayatollah Khomeini influenced the kind of state that developed after the overthrow of the previous regime.

It was also true in early twentieth century Russia, where Vladimir Ilyich Lenin dramatically brought the revolutionary tradition out of the wilderness and into political power. Returning home in a sealed train through war-ravaged Europe, this revolutionary firebrand overthrew the moderate provisional government in October 1917, successfully managed to hold on to power through a long civil war, and eventually founded the Communist International. As in the Cuban and Iranian Revolutions, none of this would have been possible without the ideological ingenuity and organisational brilliance of the Bolsheviks. Having adopted Marxism as a blueprint for changing society, Lenin created the Bolshevik Party to help raise consciousness among the proletarian classes. When the

¹⁸ Archer writes that: “*Morphogenetic analysis*, in contrast to the three foregoing approaches, accords time a central place in social theory. By working in terms of its three-part cycles composed of (a) structural conditioning, (b) social interaction and (c) structural elaboration, time is incorporated as sequential tracts and phases rather than simply as a medium through which events take place. For the very occurrence of events, like the progressive structuring of an educational system, necessitates our theorising about the temporal interplay between structure and agency”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 89.

Tsarist regime finally collapsed, the Bolsheviks rapidly grew in strength and successfully managed to take over the country.

At the practical level, this would only seem to confirm that the state-in-society approach is perfect for studying revolutions. An important attribute of the state-in-society approach is its focus upon process. Researchers are thus pointed to the interaction of state and society as they are shaped and reshaped through time. Even though much has been made of past theories of revolution, there is no doubt whatsoever that this morphogenetic approach is best suited to the study of this complex social phenomenon.¹⁹

Conclusion

In conclusion, then, it should be obvious by now that the morphogenetic approach to the social world is absolutely invaluable because it insists upon distinguishing between three distinct analytical phases. Even though structural properties condition social interaction, all social activity depends in part on the freely-made choices of independently acting social agents. This means that as they interact systemic change is brought on by the transformation of pre-existing structural properties by autonomous social agents. Eventually, this process leads to structural elaboration and the morphogenetic cycle begins again.

¹⁹ Migdal writes that: "Social scientists need to understand the effects, not only of revelation, but also the quest for redemption. Revelation is an act fixed in time, in which Truth is collectively discovered and assimilated. It creates the founding principles that inspire people to act within a shared framework of meaning, displacing their own material desires in favour of those hallowed principles, even to the point of martyrdom or die for one's own country. But the quest for redemption is ongoing. It holds out the hope for deliverance from the ills and decline that are part of the human condition...Redemption offers the promise of collective deliverance and restoration. It prompts ongoing reactions to the world in which people find themselves, continually motivating responses to the failed human condition, to the failed promise of revelation." See Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 25.

Of course, the process leading to structural elaboration must take into account the independent effects of autonomous social action because structural variables certainly do not determine social outcomes. This is because social activity depends in some way upon the independent actions of individual social agents. Herein lies the most important feature of the morphogenetic approach. Whilst the structuralists insist that all social outcomes are in fact determined by pre-existing structural properties, the individualists claim that social action alone can explain everything that occurs in social reality. Even though adherents of morphogenesis do not deny that purposive social action is the ultimate source of complex social phenomena, they maintain that it is impossible to reduce structural elaboration to different forms of social action because such action is always structurally conditioned.

This means the activities of social agents provide the necessary but not sufficient conditions for structural change. In order to account fully for the occurrence of structural elaboration, a detailed analysis of social interaction is imperative, although it would be inadequate unless undertaken in conjunction with the study of structural conditioning. Hence the distinctive feature of the morphogenetic approach is its specific recognition of the temporal dimension through which structure and agency gradually shape and reshape one another through time.

Of course, it is not simply the importance attached to time in morphogenesis that ultimately distinguishes it from other approaches that conflate structure and agency. The actual time-span that the morphogenetic approach addresses in its wide ranging analysis of the social world is much longer than one finds in other versions of social theory. Even though all theories have to make some reference to time, morphogenetic analysis demands a much greater emphasis on time because social theorists need to understand the

ways in which social structures come into existence if they are to examine their influence on social action. Only then, is it possible to come to terms with the way in which social change occurs in the real world.²⁰

²⁰ Archer writes that: “Every morphogenetic cycle distinguishes three broad analytical phases consisting of (a) a given structure (a complex set of relations between parts), which conditions but does *not* determine (b), social interaction. Here, (b) also arises in part from action orientations unconditioned by social organisation but emanating from current agents, and in turn leads to (c), structural elaboration or modification – that is, to a change in relations between parts where morphogenesis rather than morphostasis ensued. The cycle is then repeated. Transition from state (a) to (c) is not direct, precisely because structural conditioning is not the sole determinant of interaction patterns. Only Holists conceptualise movement straight from (a) to (c), without mediation; the realism endorsed here cannot countenance such a move. What Methodological Individualists claim is that action alone, (b), constitutes the necessary and sufficient conditions for the explanation of (c). To them (a) can be eradicated. Advocates of the morphogenetic perspective do not deny that social interaction is the ultimate source of complex phenomena (which include unintended aggregate and emergent consequences): they simply maintain that because this causal chain unravels over time and each anterior action sequence was itself structurally conditioned, we must acknowledge that we cannot deduce (c) from (b) alone and thus have to consider agents’ activities to be necessary but not sufficient conditions for change. Therefore to account for the occurrence of structural elaboration (c), interactional analysis (b), is essential, but inadequate unless undertaken in conjunction with (a), the study of structural conditioning”. See Mary Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 91-92.

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