Political Sociology Lectures: Revolutions, Civil War and State Failure

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with thanks to James Tilley

Contents

Notes on the topic for this course

- There are massive academic literatures on each of revolutions, civil wars and state failures
- Focus for this course on *general* theories and evidence for their onset (as opposed to their dynamics or outcomes).
  - So more focus on comparative rather than case study method.
- When, where and why does politics get so violent that the regime is endangered, fails, or forcibly changed?
- There are some common issues across the literatures, especially, economic expectations and resources, social structure, state structure and weakness, and foreign influences.
- Potentially instructive to compare and contrast the different literatures and consider the similarities and differences between the historical grand revolutions and more recent problems of state failure and civil war.

Definitions

- Following Tilly (1995), distinguish between:
  - coup: top-down power grab
  - civil war:
  - revolt
  - great revolution: with economic and social as well as political transformation
- Social revolutions involve a major change in the distribution of power between (typically) classes
- American Revolution and (for Skocpol) the English Revolution are political but not social revolutions
- Debate as to the extent to which violence is necessary for a revolution, e.g. Eastern European 'Velvet revolutions'

Marxist theory of revolution

- Marx and the inevitability of revolution.
  - Revolutions occur when the relations of production cannot accommodate changes to the means of production.
  - Inevitable instability in capitalist system, inevitable class conflict, inevitable overthrow of capitalist economic/social/political system.
- Fairly obvious empirical problems as a Marxist model fails to predict revolutions.
- French, Chinese and Russian revolutions primarily peasant rather than industrial proletarian revolutions

1920s/1930s 'natural history' approach

i. Brinton and Sorokin attempt to identify common patterns of revolutions. Factors such as intellectual dissent; state attempts to meet criticism; fall preceded by problems; switches of power from moderates to radicals back to moderates.

ii. Generalizations re. famous Western revolutions are fairly robust, but where did the sources of opposition arise from?

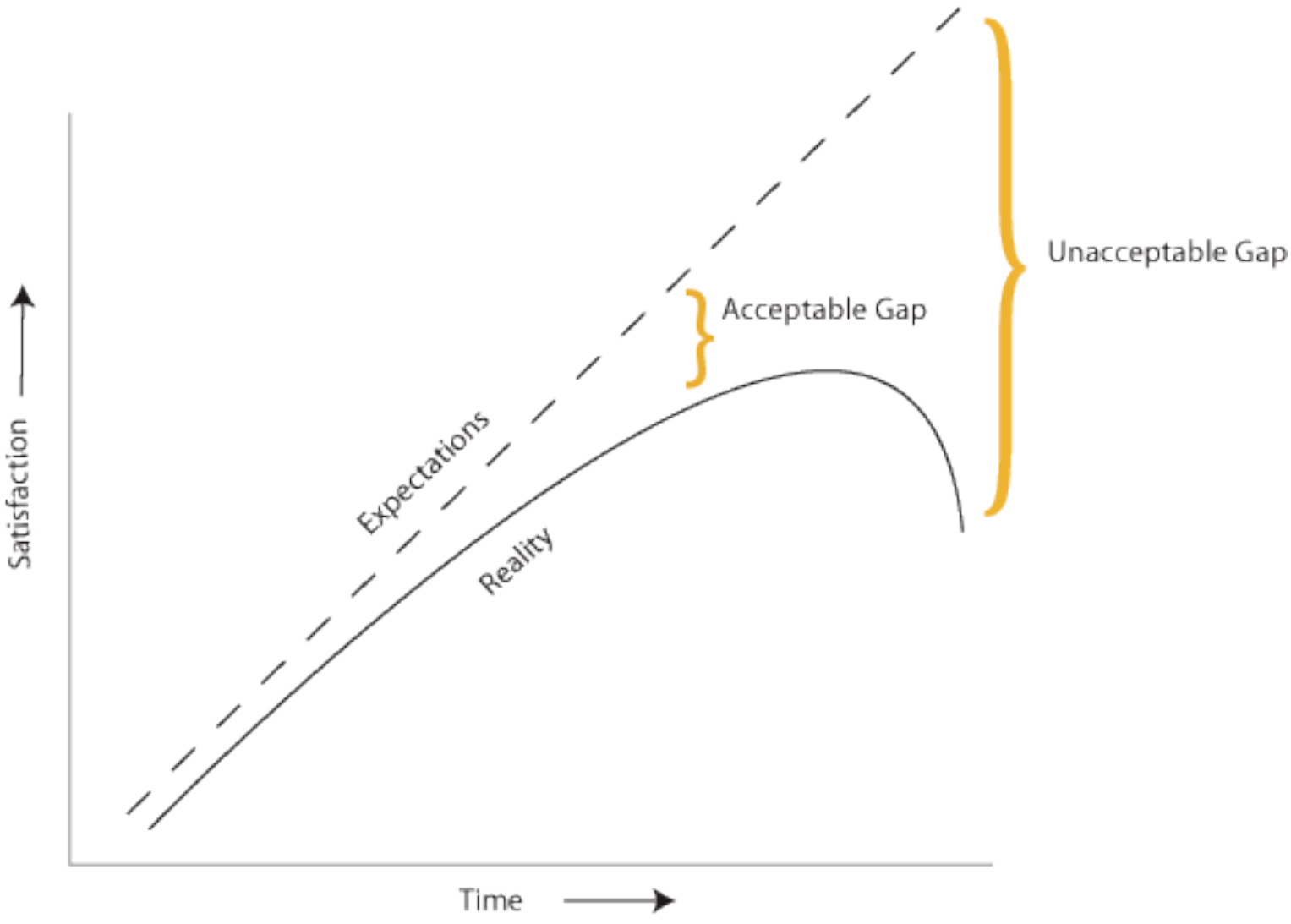
2nd Generation theories of revolution I

i. Psychological theories, based on the 'misery = revolt' idea.

a) Davies and Gurr claim that changes in expectations are important and lead to frustration that leads to revolutionary situation.

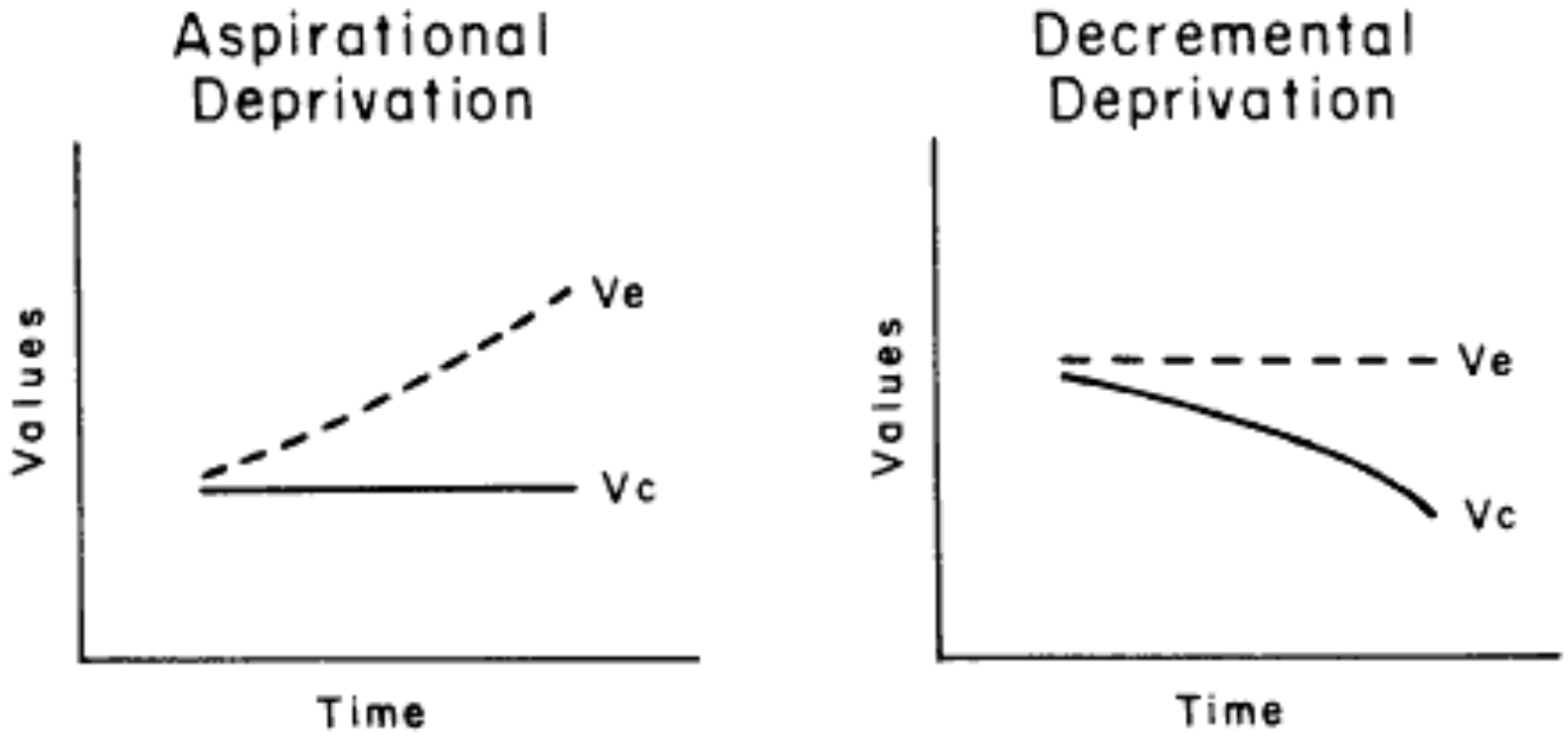
2nd Generation theories of revolution II

b) J-curve of economic growth (Davies 1969)



2nd Generation theories of revolution III

Models of aspirational and decremental **relative deprivation** (Gurr 1970)



2nd Generation theories of revolution IV

ii. Sociological theories, based on ideas of (dis)equilibrium in social systems and structural-functionalist theories.

a) Smelser and Johnson focus on social institutions and changes in the growth of social subsystems (economy, political system, education system etc).

b) Imbalances in growth lead to revolution. Huntingdon claims that growth in these subsystems outstrips institutional change, thus increasing frustration.

- Rapid economic, demographic and educational change but political stasis fuelled the classic revolutions through a combination of relative deprivation and system-disequilibrium.
- This can be considered a modernization theory

2nd Generation theories of revolution V

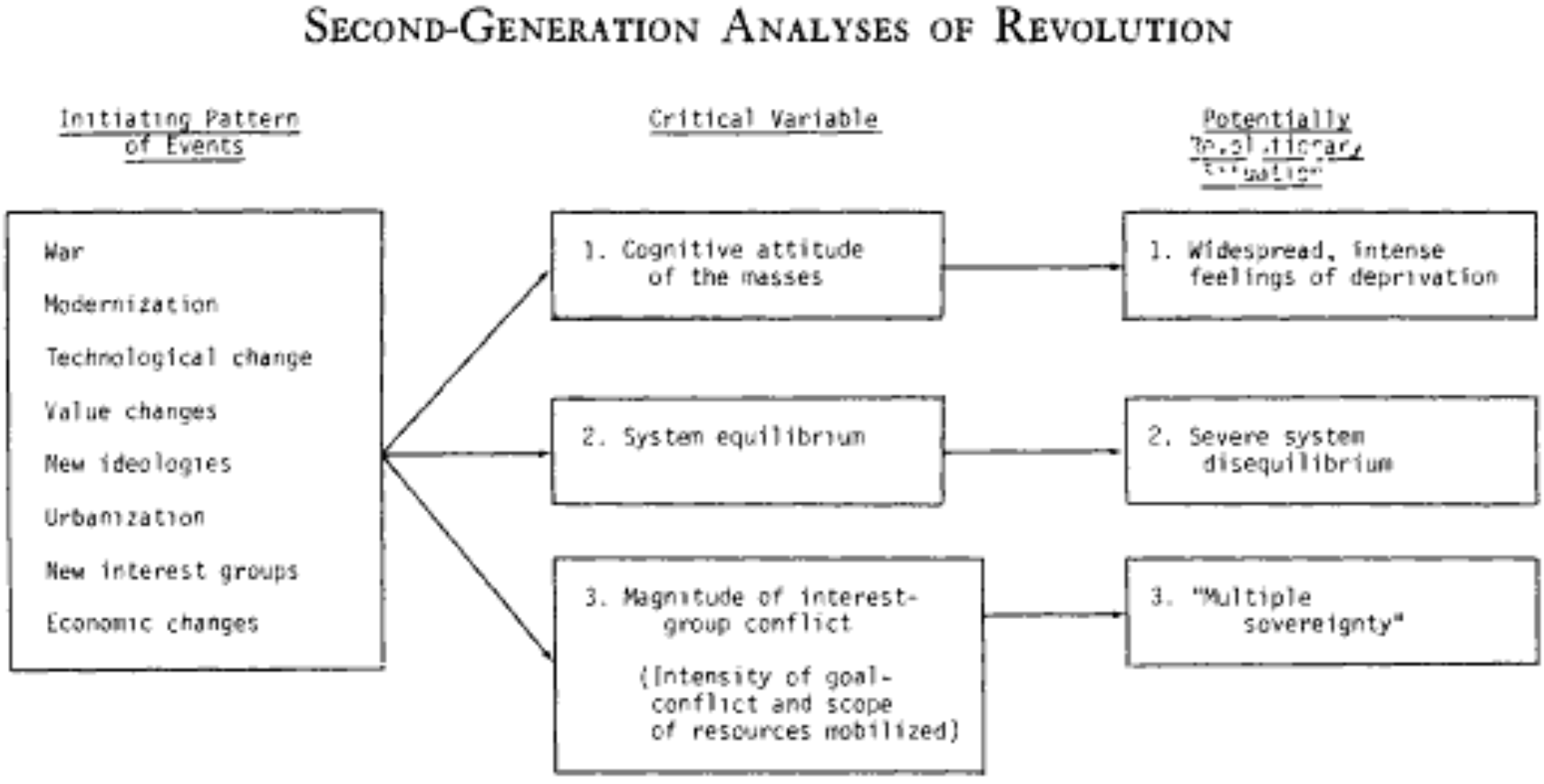
iii. **Resource mobilization** approaches, based on interest group conflict.

a) Tilly argues that discontent needs to be accompanied by organization.

- Most peasant revolts do not last long because of disorganization.

b) Revolutions need regime opponents to be able to mobilize resources.

Summary of Second Generation Theories



Third Generation: Structural theories of revolution I

State structure is important - "bringing the state back in".

i. Skocpol - *States and Social Revolutions*

a) Political crisis arises when states cannot meet external challenges (i.e. military problems) because of internal obstacles.

b) Successful revolutions only occur in agrarian-bureaucratic societies. Elite and social structures determine whether revolutions occur.

Third Generation: Structural theories of revolution II

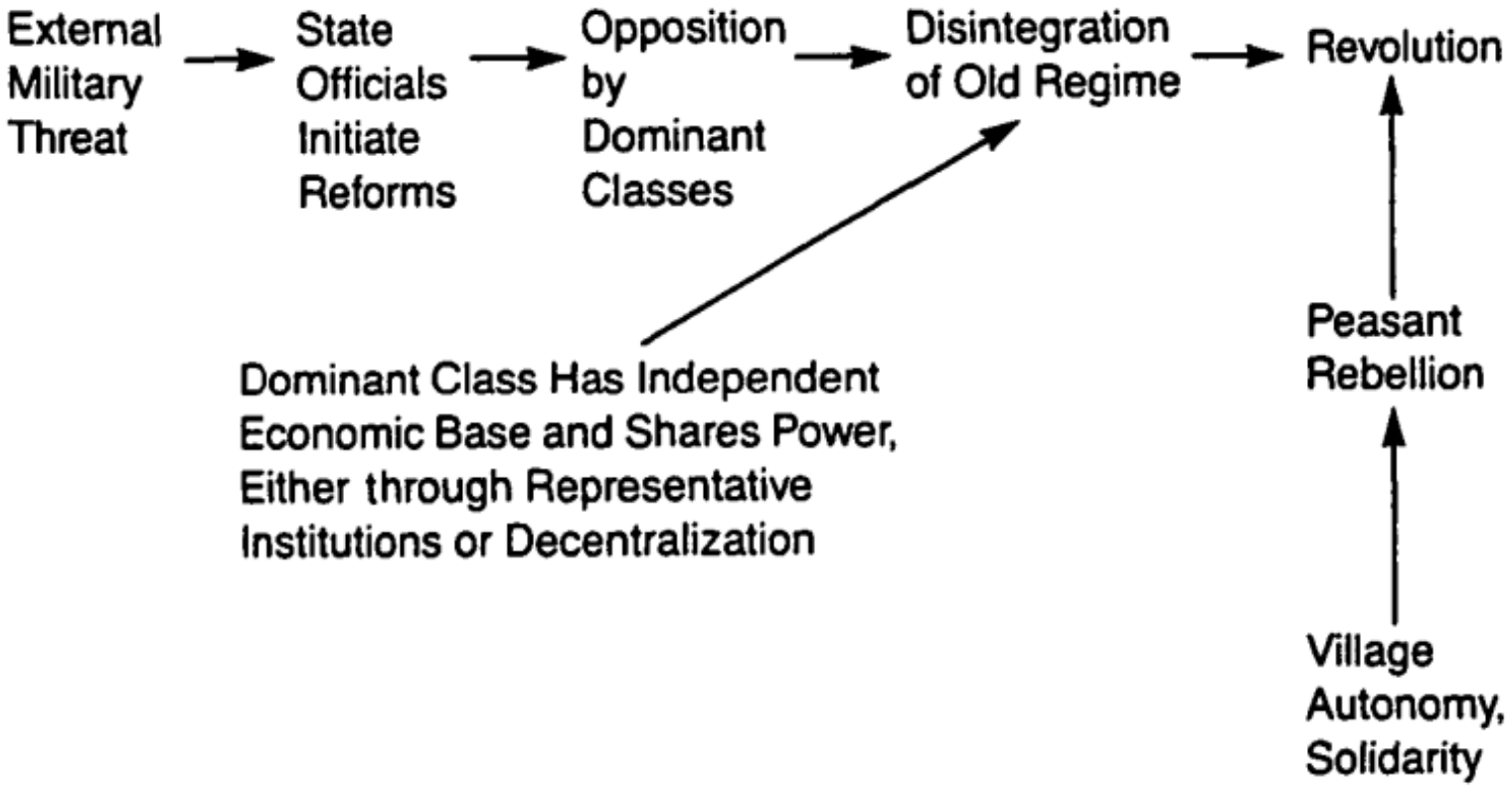


Fig. 7. Schematization of Skocpol's argument

Third Generation: Structural theories of revolution III

ii. Eistenstadt emphasizes these structural factors but also cultural orientations.

a) In patronage based states, executive depends on patronage. When patronage is reduced, patronage network crumbles and executive is vulnerable.

b) Possibly more applicable to modern revolutions in authoritarian regimes.

Skocpol and comparative methodology I

- Key problem with early studies was 'selection on the dependent variable', which primarily refers to picking only cases of actual revolution
- Comparativists argue that to explain the causes of revolutions you need to show what factors increase the chances of a revolution and this means studying cases of non-revolution too.

Skocpol and comparative methodology II

- Skocpol considered two non-revolutionary cases (Britain and Germany) along side her revolutions (Russia, France and China) to establish the effect of village autonomy.

	Revolution	No Revolution
Village Autonomy	Russia France China, in area controlled by Communists	
Village Dependent		Britain, 1640–60 Germany, 1848 China, before Communists

Fig. 9. Effect of elite split

Skocpol and comparative methodology III

- But not all aspects of her theory are substantiated in this way, e.g. external threat where different cases would lead to different conclusions (Geddes 1990)

- Ideally use data on all countries at all time points, but practically impossible.

Towards a fourth generation: Goldstone (1991) model of the English Revolution

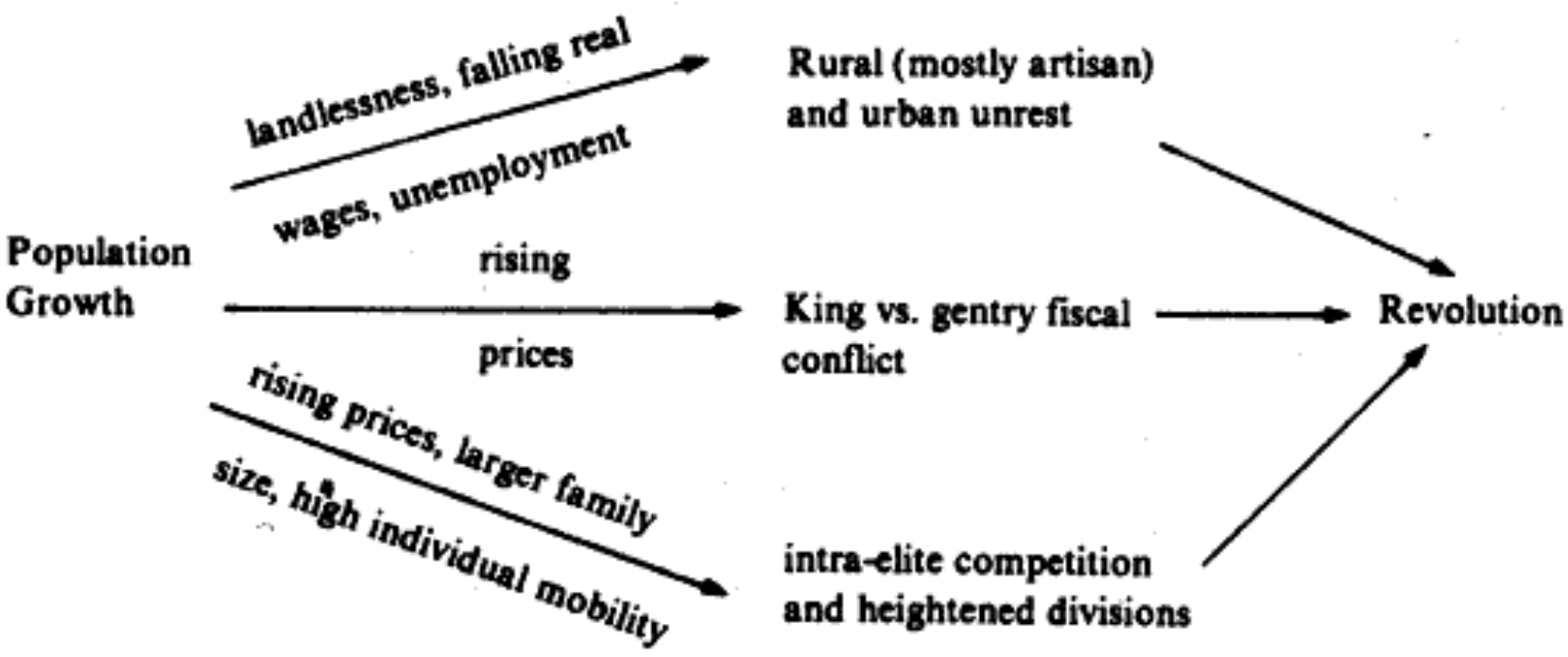


FIGURE 1
DEMOGRAPHIC ORIGINS OF THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

Civil Wars

- Mean number of deaths in the 146 civil wars that took place between 1945 and 1999 is 143,883
- Main explanations for civil war onset:
  1. 'Greed', especially for natural resources (Collier and Hoeffler)
  2. Ethnic antagonism (or 'grievance')
  3. State weakness
  4. Structural issues: guerrilla warfare technology and the proliferation of fragile states from decolonisation (Fearon and Laitin 2003)
  5. Regime type and factionalism (Goldstone et al. 2010)

Civil Wars: Collier and Hoeffler 'greed' theory

- "Countries with low, stagnant, and unequally distributed per capita incomes that have remained dependent on primary commodities for their exports face dangerously high risks of prolonged conflict. In the absence of economic development neither good political institutions, nor ethnic and religious homogeneity, nor high military spending provide significant defences against large-scale violence. Once a country has stumbled into conflict powerful forces—the conflict trap—tend to lock it into a syndrome of further conflict."
- Problems: various different possible causal mechanisms and not much evidence at the micro level.

Civil Wars: Ethnic group conflict theory

Three main stories:

- State collapse places groups in a security dilemma; groups build defensive military capacity; this is interpreted as aggressive.
- "commitment problem" when no third party to guarantee agreements between two groups (Fearon 1998)
- ethnic secessionism; especially as result of rise of empires and nationalism (Wimmer and Min, 2006)

Problems:

- Ethnolinguistic fractionalization index tends to be statistically insignificant as a predictor of civil war onset;
- "evidence on all armed groups that formed in Uganda since 1986 indicates that ethnic mobilization was unimportant to the initial formation of rebel groupsbut mattered after nascent groups had already formed." (Lewis CPS 2016)
- Grievances difficult to measure.
- Preferences and identities can change during the course of a war (Kalyvas 2006)

Ethnic conflict depends on exclusion: Wucherpfennig et al (AJPS 2016)

- Ethnic groups more likely to fight if some are excluded from accessing state power
- Peripheral ethnic groups were more likely to be excluded in French than British colonies

FIGURE 1 Colonial Rule and Group Power Access

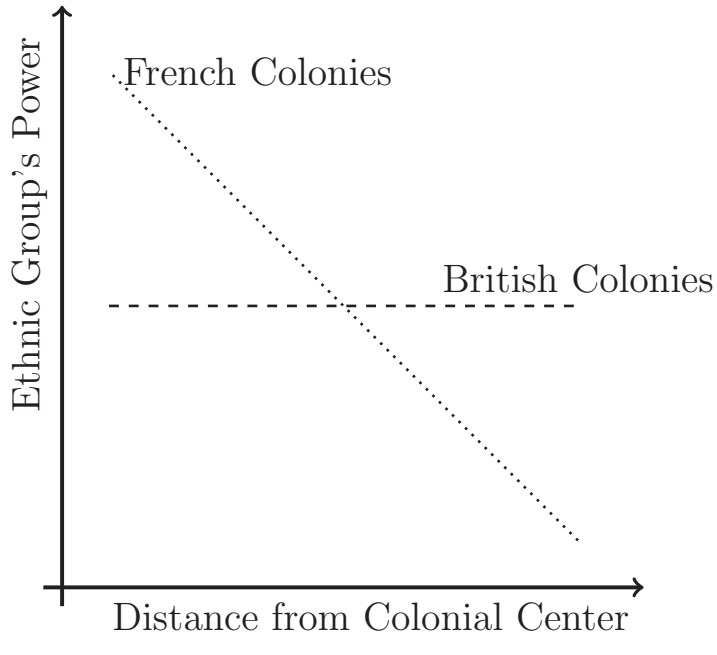


FIGURE 5 Identification Strategy

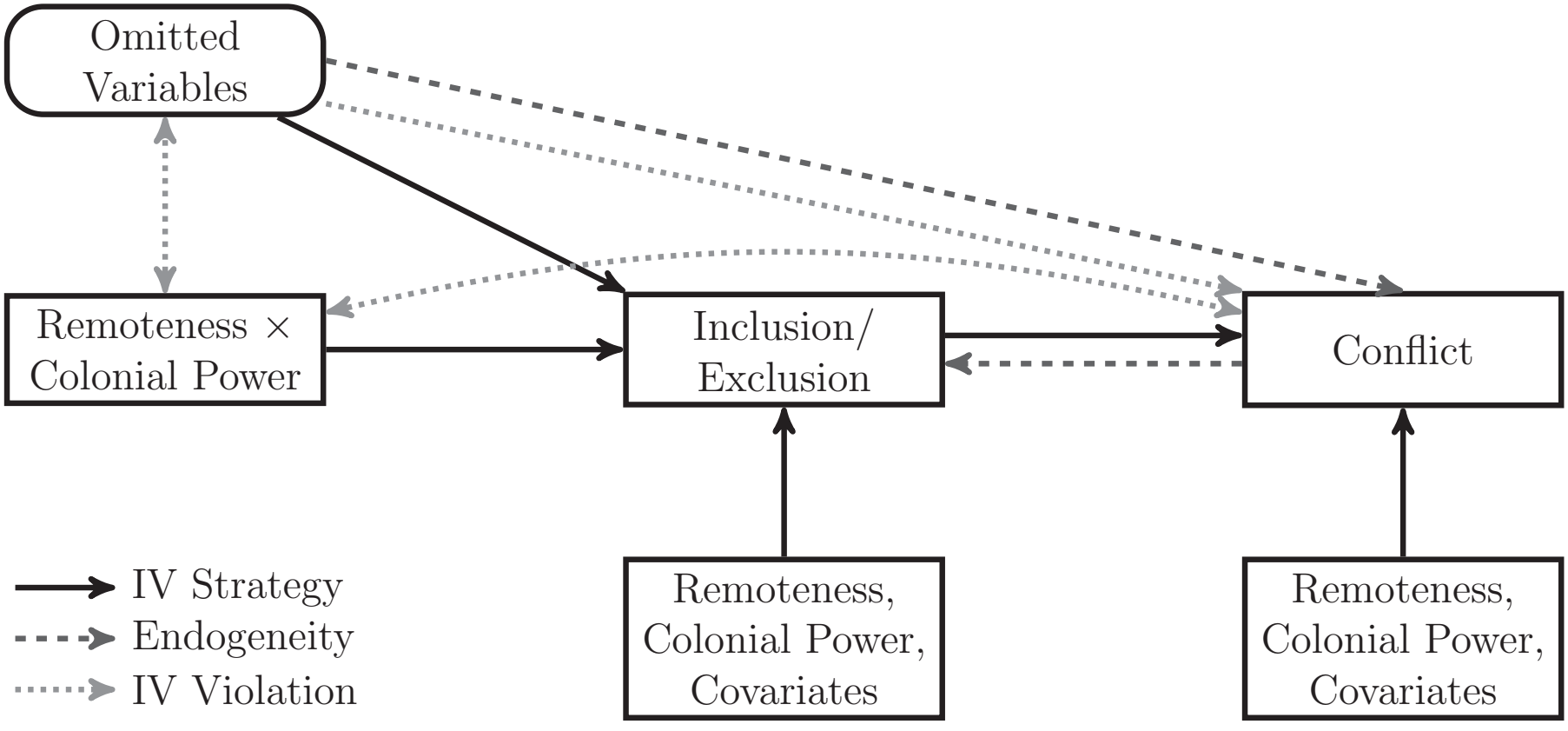


TABLE 2 Full Results

	(3) Separate Probits	(4) Bivariate Probit
Equation 1: Explaining Inclusion		
British Colony	−3.72*	−4.28**
	(1.45)	(1.27)
ln Distance to Coast	−0.55*	−0.65*
	(0.24)	(0.22)
ln Distance to Coast × British Colony	0.68*	0.77**
	(0.27)	(0.23)
Group Size	2.33*	1.75
	(0.93)	(0.92)
ln Group Area (km^2)	0.10	0.15
	(0.14)	(0.13)
ln Country Area (km^2)	−0.34	−0.40*
	(0.18)	(0.18)
ln Population	0.18	0.18
	(0.11)	(0.13)
ln GDP p.c.	0.24	0.26
	(0.24)	(0.23)
Violent Independence	0.23	0.23
	(0.34)	(0.33)
Constant	1.72	2.51
	(2.67)	(2.59)

Equation 2: Explaining Conflict		
Inclusion	−0.73*	−2.03**
	(0.30)	(0.25)
British Colony	−0.68*	−0.48
	(0.33)	(0.25)
ln Distance to Coast	0.20	0.16
	(0.18)	(0.11)
Group Size	−0.91	0.46
	(1.00)	(0.69)
ln Group Area (km^2)	−0.11	−0.05
	(0.14)	(0.11)
ln Country Area (km^2)	0.15	−0.08
	(0.19)	(0.15)
ln Population	0.14	0.23*
	(0.14)	(0.12)
ln GDP p.c.	−0.13	0.06
	(0.29)	(0.20)
Violent Independence	−1.53*	−1.12*
	(0.53)	(0.50)
Constant	−2.73	−2.30
	(2.64)	(1.74)
Observations	169	169
ρ		0.94
Prob > χ^2		0.03
Log-Likelihood	−4.34/−76.22	−168.09

Note: Robust standard errors are clustered by country in parentheses.

*p < .05., **p < .001.

Civil Wars: State weakness

- Certain groups may covet the state but can only hope to capture it if the state is relatively weak
- States are weaker when they are poorer and have to operate in difficult (e.g. mountainous) terrain
- Problems:
  - Danger of tautology: state strength is sometimes defined as the ability to deter and face down threats, so states with civil wars must be weak by definition
  - Difficult to measure weakness. E.g. Chechen insurgency in Russia and Bosian civil war both reflect state weakness but not equal or similar

Political Instability Task Force: Goldstone et al (2010) I

- Considers both civil war onset and adverse (less democratic) regime changes (inc. state failure)
- Data 1955 to 2003, with instability in just 1.9% cases
- forecasting instability two years ahead with case-control matching on region and year
- Aiming for parsimonious model with max predictive power
  - Some statistical significant factors excluded if not adding much to prediction
- Results emphasise the importance of regime type
  - Full Autocracy and full Democracy the most stable, while partial democracy with factionalism the least stable

Political Instability Task Force: Goldstone et al (2010) II

TABLE 1 Results of Global Analysis of Onsets of Instability

	Full Problem Set		Civil War Onsets		Adverse Regime Change Onsets	
Independent Variables	**Coefficient (S.E.)**	**Odds Ratio (95% CI)**	**Coefficient (S.E.)**	**Odds Ratio (95% CI)**	**Coefficient (S.E.)**	**Odds Ratio (95% CI)**
Regime Type (Full Autocracy as Reference)						
Partial Autocracy	1.85***	6.37	1.94***	6.98	2.85***	17.32
	(0.47)	(2.53, 16.02)	(0.62)	(2.05, 23.8)	(0.86)	(3.19, 94.0)
Partial Democracy with Factionalism	3.61***	36.91	3.35***	28.5	5.06***	157.0
	(0.51)	(13.5, 101)	(0.73)	(6.86, 118)	(1.02)	(21.1, 1164)
Partial Democracy without Factionalism	1.83***	6.22	.981	2.67	2.58***	13.23
	(0.54)	(2.17, 17.8)	(0.79)	(0.57, 12.4)	(0.91)	(2.20, 79.5)
Full Democracy	0.981	2.67	.545	1.73	1.26	3.51
	(0.68)	(0.70, 10.2)	(0.92)	(0.29, 10.4)	(1.09)	(0.42, 29.5)
Infant Mortality†	1.59***	6.59	1.64***	4.19	1.38*	4.56
	(0.35)	(2.91, 14.9)	(0.48)	(1.82, 9.60)	(0.58)	(1.30, 16.0)
Armed Conflict in 4+	3.09***	22.0	2.81***	16.7	.091	1.10
Bordering States	(0.95)	(3.42, 142)	(0.82)	(3.36, 83.0)	(1.49)	(0.06, 20.4)
State-Led Discrimination	0.657*	1.93	1.17***	3.23	−.502	0.61
	(0.30)	(1.08, 3.45)	(0.36)	(1.59, 6.55)	(0.62)	(0.18, 2.04)
N = Total (Problems, Controls)	468 (117, 351)		260 (65, 195)		196 (49, 147)	
Onsets Correctly Classified	80.3%		80.0%		87.8%	
Controls Correctly Classified	81.8%		81.0%		87.8%	

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$. †Odds ratios for continuous variables compare cases at the 75th and 25th percentiles.

Unearned foreign income, Ahmed (APSR, 2012) I

Unearned foreign income (aid and remittances) lead to increased state provision of public goods among democracies, but autocrats cut back.

TABLE 6. The Effects of Aid and Remittances on Government Welfare Goods Provision

	Government subsidies and transfers (% govt expenditures)	
	OLS	2SLS
	(1)	(2)
Autocracy × aid and remittances (% GDP)	**−7.105** **[3.708]***	
Instrumented aid and remittances (% GDP)		**−1.509** **[0.785]***
Aid (% GDP)	**1.259** **[0.465]*****	**1.363** **[0.777]***
Aid and remittances (% GDP)	−0.624 [0.468]	
Autocracy	49.129 [68.584]	−43.127 [38.526]
Log GDP per capita (1995 US$)	5.074 [2.428]*	3.875 [2.222]*
Constant	−5.565 [20.423]	11.528 [17.156]
Number of observations	315	315
R^2	0.24	0.19

Notes: Robust standard errors, clustered by government reported in brackets. In column (2), aid and remittances (%GDP) is instrumented with Muslim × *p* (oil).
*Significant at 10%; **significant at 5%; ***significant at 1%.

Unearned foreign income, Ahmed (APSR, 2012) II

Autocrats use the freed resources to sustain themselves in power and repress opposition and their states.

TABLE 3. Unearned Foreign Income and Political Stability

Dependent variable	Turnover			High Political Discontent	Regime Collapse
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Aid and remittances (% GDP)	0	0.003		0.006	0.003
	[0.002]	[0.003]		[0.004]	[0.001]***
Autocracy		−0.411	−0.396	0.359	−0.239
		[0.277]	[0.276]	[0.181]**	[0.086]***
Autocracy × aid and remittances (% GDP)		**−0.031**		**−0.032**	**−0.025**
		[0.018]*		**[0.016]****	**[0.007]*****
Aid (% GDP)			0.003		
			[0.003]		
Autocracy × aid (% GDP)			−0.026		
			[0.016]		
Remittances (% GDP)			0.005		
			[0.009]		
Autocracy × remittances (% GDP)			−0.071		
			[0.060]		
Finite term	0.019	−0.035	−0.039	−0.136	−0.012
	[0.033]	[0.041]	[0.042]	[0.060]	[0.017]
Log GDP per capita (1995 U.S.$)	−0.053	0.017	0.014	−0.148	−0.001
	[0.060]	[0.056]	[0.057]	[0.135]	[0.034]
Growth in GDP per capita, % annual	−0.005	−0.005	−0.005	−0.011	0.001
	[0.002]***	[0.002]**	[0.002]***	[0.003]***	[0.001]
Log population	−0.363	−0.317	−0.319	−1.481	0.189
	[0.179]**	[0.171]*	[0.171]*	[0.519]***	[0.095]***
Incidence of civil war	0.054	0.06	0.06	0.43	0.016
	[0.037]	[0.037]*	[0.038]*	[0.079]***	[0.017]
Incidence of low internal discontent	0.045	0.03	0.032	0.173	−0.005
	[0.028]	[0.026]	[0.026]	[0.044]***	[0.013]
Incidence of high internal discontent	0.121	0.12	0.12		−0.007
	[0.040]***	[0.039]***	[0.039]***		[0.014]
Duration dummies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Country dummies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Year dummies	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Number of observations	1,639	1,639	1,639	1,278	1,545
Pseudo-R^2	0.22	0.24	0.24	0.33	0.12

Notes: Estimation via probit. Standard errors clustered by government reported in brackets. Coefficient estimates are marginal effects, calculated at the means of each covariate.
*Significant at 10%; **significant at 5%; ***significant at 1%.

So aid and remittances reduce state failure for autocracies.

Conclusion

- Despite big differences in the phenomena there are important links and themes in the theories of and evidence for the causal factors behind revolutions, civil war and state failure.
- Key factors include economic expectations and inequalities, social structure, technology, state structure and strength, and foreign influence
- The role of ethnicity is particularly disputed