

Forms of political violence



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Political violence: revolutions and terrorism

Political violence has become a part of a daily life of each person living on the Earth. Almost everyone- politicians, mass media, scientists, taxi drivers. and etc. – is talking about this. In this paper I will analyze the reasons of its popularity by investigating its origins and the factors which trigger off political violence. Based on the theoretical framework created by the knowledge I've amassed before, mainly my paper is focused on two prevailing forms of political violence with what this term often is being associated –revolutions and terrorism. I will try to find out more precious definition of revolutions and clarify which historical events can be conceptualized as a revolution, also try to ascertain the main cause of terrorism.

Theda Skocpol's article " France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolution" provided quite good definition of revolution , although in my opinion her study is so tightly squeezed that doesn't fit to all cases in the history. I want to criticize Skocpol's conceptualization of social revolutions . After reviewing the definitions given by S. Huntington and Lenin she combined the content of them and applied it for analysis of revolutions in particular states. According to the author, revolution is a very rapid and fundamental transformation of social conditions and class structures and can be achieved through uprising of the lower class. The main difference of social revolutions from other forms of conflicts and transforming processes is that they attended by class insurrection, political and social transformations in

social structure. But even rebellions with the same characteristics cannot be considered as revolutions as they don't aim to make structural changes.

Skocpol used a comparative historical method, in order to analyze cautiously the history of some modern revolutions, use the data gathered from the cases to make generalizations. Limitation of this method is that it is good to compare only similar cases. For example, comparison of Russian and German revolutions could be appropriate as a lot of common factors had an impact on revolutions, such as forfeit of war. But for France war ended up with a victory and overall situation was different from Russia which makes difficult to compare French and Russian revolutions applying comparative method. Skocpol thought that trouble Russia felt during World War I caused the revolution as its economy couldn't respond to such huge pressure yielded by military expenditure. But the main thing is not how " a boxer was punched, the main thing is how he will he be able to stand this" Not only rapid industrialization but also lack of capacity to respond to this rapid process, played an essential role.

The challenging part of this definition is about the phrase- " very rapid". The " blurred" part about social revolution word is due to vague starting point and the end. For instance, the Russian revolution: did it begin exactly in 1917? Or may be seeds of revolutions were spread before? For defining the paradigm of " rapid" change, we should know whether that revolution ended exactly in October 1917 or not? Main missing point here is that we don't know during which period should structural transformation happen to be called revolution. Probably I can conclude that periods called " revolutions",

transformation happened much more rapid now carried the qualitative character.

If we accept social revolution as a “ fundamental” transformation of society, we should define what is fundamental about it. The author mentioned it dimly: “ changes in the social structure, accompanied by class uprisings”; second, “ political and social transformation”. But which changes “ in the social structure” does she mean? It is known that social structure changes continually. A person is a unit of society. In that sense birth and death of a person is also a change in social structure. Consequently, we’re talking about peculiar types of transformations in society. Skocpol wrote that the changes in society are “ attend by class uprisings”. The fact that two events in society took place at the same time doesn’t mean that one is a result of another one. In contrast with her idea I can state that the social changes happened during social revolutions are definitely the outcomes of insurrection.

The nature of a social revolution can be best evaluated by the outcomes which are accomplished immediately after an insurgency by downtrodden class below. For instance, the nature of the French revolution can be best estimated by process befall after the overthrow of the king. However, it is possible to discuss the upheavals of the downtrodden classes, but also about counter-revolutionary upheavals. Symbolically, we can call them “ rebellions”. Best example is the rebellion of Franco, as result of which a civil war has begun in Spain. Consequently, I can claim that the upheavals of the downtrodden are the inherent segment of a social revolution.

Another point regarding social revolutions which wasn't clarified in the article is about achievement of ultimate goal. Should the notion "revolution" be used for the instances when the downtrodden are finally nullified, or are not able to hold on to the power? Was 1905 events a revolution if to take into account that resistance of revolution was broken and it didn't manage to accomplish its goals? Skocpol considers political revolutions different from social revolutions. As an outcome of the latter, the form of the government (and the government itself) is changed but the social structure and the property relations remains intact. Actually, political revolutions even doesn't fit the term "revolution" from Skocpol's perspective.

As a conclusion of article we can define social revolutions as:

- a) an outcome, but also an origin of a scientific revolution,
- b) entails qualitative and quantitative transformations which become inalterable,
- c) the downtrodden class can try to make changes any times before succeeding,
- d) representatives of this class come to government,
- e) social revolution continues in the consequent transformations in society.

Terrorism as another widespread form of political violence can be analysed and also defined in different contexts such as religion, war, crime and etc.

Some aspects of terrorism are going to stay outside of the outlook you used to study this term. I focused on the M. Chrenshaw's article and can say that I

appreciate the outlook she used in her article to describe the causes of terrorism. The main perceptible and important moment is that she didn't use "populist reasoning", like education level of terrorists or their physiological status, for justifying her arguments which I think makes her article a high-quality paper. But I still want to challenge some points she made regarding the causes of terrorism. Chrenshaw took modernization and grievance as one of the origins of this form of political violence.

Modernization as a precondition can be taken as a factor only in states with less developed and conservative societies with stereotypes and taboos where new technological innovations are being imposed by globalization wave. Conservative people has some distrust to new lifestyle, policies and don't want to give up their traditional life. But I don't agree with the statement, in a sense that, Chernhaw missed intervening variable. It is not modernization itself causes terrorism, rather it is just content of human character to resist to transformations and adjust to new way of life. That's why revolutions which are rapid changes in social structure preceded with terror either by state in order to impose changes on people or by group of people for stopping that change. Even reactionary changes can lead to revolution. In other sense, revolution is a good condition for terrorism to rise. The article published in Foreign Affairs journal states that After Tunisian uprising, which usually depicted as revolution (but just a political revolution according to Skocpol's definition), al Qaeda got greater operational freedom of action, its followers probably will try to stir up and benefit from new uprisings in order to fight for their political goals. (Byman, 2011). The similar trends are noticed in all places where revolution happened.

As a direct condition for terrorisms grievance is very important and I think that it is the factor which is a condition for other direct causes to emerge .

Grievance can be conceptualized as a real or assumed wrong or other cause for discontent or protest. I appreciate Crenshaw's argument about grievance and want to develop it more, that terrorists are driven by grievances about international political issues within particular regions and the world. They nourish a radical will to sacrifice innocent civilians because they ardently dream to expose their feelings and the only way of realizing them is terrorism. Of course, there can be various reasons why people nurse grievance. Some people are religious, some are nationalistic and etc. Most probably "popular reasons" described as causes of terrorism such as education and poverty level therefore is not sufficient to explain the motives of terrorism. There isn't any concrete formula of grievance as in different societies there are people who are ready to devote his life to some goals. If to exclude one origin of grievance, many other factors will serve as an origin to nurse grievance in a violent way. That's why it is hardly possible to prevent the emergence of grievance but is possible to prevent terrorism by fighting against institutionalized terrorist groups. Because terror institution is a safe environment where grievance can be directed to violence path while that radical feeling can be used in favour of humankind as well.

But what about variables like poverty and lack of education – which are the explanations often articulated by mass media and politicians? In reality more highly educated people are those who are aware of their rights and freedoms and persistent enough to fight for their political intentions to be carried out. For instance, results from public opinion polls on support for attacks against

Israeli targets conducted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip indicate that support for violent attacks does not decrease among those with higher education and higher living standards. (Krueger, Alan B. Jitka Maleckova., 2003) High education level in the country promises many favourable things for its people, but analysis of the facts suggests that it doesn't bring about complete consensus and welfare in a society. If we want to look at the terrorism from the "window of education" we should concentrate on its content, rather than merely educational level of the country.

Terrorism and Revolution also other forms of political violence don't have clear border by which we can easily identify them. Because all these terms are socially constructed. For example, Babek for Azerbaijanis is a hero, but for Arabs he was just a rebel, for Italians Julius Caesar is a hero but for French people he is an enemy conqueror, Attila for Turks is a great hero but for Europeans he is a wild, cruel barbarian king who occupied their territory, English troops in Baku in early 20th century were considered as enemies during Soviet times, but friends after independence. The same is true for terrorism. For someone somebody can be a terrorist, for another one he can be a fighter for freedom. This socially constructed character of political violence makes it difficult to define and its analysis depends on the context.

Bibliography

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