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Halliday's Revenge: Revolutions and International Relations

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Abstract

Fred Halliday saw revolution and war as the dual motors of modern international order. However, while war occupies a prominent place in International Relations (IR), revolutions inhabit a more residual location. For Halliday, this is out of keeping with their impact – in particular, revolutions offer a systemic challenge to existing patterns of international order in their capacity to generate alternative orders founded on novel forms of political rule, economic organization and symbolic authority. In this way, dynamics of revolution and counter-revolution are closely associated with processes of international conflict, intervention and war. It may be that one of the reasons for Halliday's failure to make apparent the importance of revolutions to IR audiences was that, for all his *empirical* illustrations of how revolutions affected the international realm, he did not formulate a coherent *theoretical* schema which spoke systematically to the discipline. This paper assesses Halliday's contribution to the study of revolutions and sets out an approach which both recognizes and extends his work. By formulating ideal-typical 'anatomies of revolution', it is possible to generate insights which clarify the ways in which revolutions shape international order.

Halliday's revenge¹

In many ways, Fred Halliday would have enjoyed 2011. In particular, the events of the Arab Spring demonstrated the continuing vitality of two aspects of his approach to International Relations (IR): first, the centrality of revolutions to world affairs; and second, the conviction that inhabitants of Muslim-majority states were motivated by the same basic concerns as other peoples around the world: state power and legitimate authority; inequality, unemployment and corruption; freedom, justice and rights. At the same time, Halliday would have been dismayed by other aspects of 2011: the easy turn to bellicosity by both Western powers and local elites; the short-sighted commentary of those more concerned with the role of Facebook than the mobilizing power of labor movements, political parties and social movements; and the ways in which the collapse into civil war in Libya exposed mistakes made by the institution he cared about deeply: LSE.² In many ways, therefore, 2011 was the year of Fred Halliday's revenge. Without his presence, our knowledge of these events – and of international relations more broadly – is much diminished.

Revolution was, perhaps, the issue Halliday cared about most, a conviction stemming from his wider appreciation of modernity as the starting point for social scientific enquiry – a common position in most disciplines, but less so in IR. Halliday saw nothing inevitable about a world built on dynamics of coercion and resistance, and on historical accident as well as broader determinations. As such, he saw contemporary international relations less as an 'iron cage' than as a 'rubber cage' containing some degree of 'plastic control' for its actors.³ Revolution was central to this understanding of 'plastic control', representing the most extensive means by which the oppressed rose up against conditions of servitude. In this article, I unpack Halliday's approach to revolution, provide a balance sheet of its successes and shortcomings, and offer an extension of his argument in the form of ideal-typical 'anatomies of revolution'. This, in

¹ This paper was first presented at a Chatham House reading group in May 2011. My thanks to Caroline Soper for the invitation to take part in the group and to all the participants for their comments and contributions. Particular thanks are offered to Amnon Aran, Barry Buzan and Roland Dannreuther, who served as thoughtful, probing discussants at the reading group; their comments and suggestions substantially improved the final version of this article.

² LSE's difficulties arose, in large part, from gifts provided by the Qaddafi Foundation for the school's work on global governance. Halliday's 'dissenting note' to LSE's Council urging the rejection of these gifts can be found at: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/fred-halliday/memorandum-to-lse-council-on-accepting-grant-from-qaddafi-foundation>.

³ Fred Halliday, *International relations: a critical introduction* (Unpublished Manuscript), p. 30.

turn, provides the means by which to assess the place of revolution in the contemporary world.

Revolution and International Relations

Like Hannah Arendt, Halliday saw war and revolution as the two 'master processes' of the twentieth century.⁴ Although IR paid due attention to the former, Halliday argued, there was no equivalent interest in revolution: no Cromwell Professor of Revolutionary Studies; no Paine Institute for the Study of Revolutionary Change; indeed, very little study of revolution at all.⁵ Halliday sought to rescue revolution from the 'complacent rejection' of conservative theorists, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. As he wrote, 'there are few things less becoming to the study of human affairs than the complacency of a triumphal age'.⁶ However, Halliday was equally determined to move beyond the 'romanticized celebration of blood, mendacity and coercion' offered by uncritical supporters of revolution.⁷ For Halliday, although revolutions were often heroic, they were also cynical. And for all their power to create novel social orders, revolutions were also deeply destructive.⁸

Halliday wrote extensively on revolution, coming to see it as the 'sixth great power' of the modern era, equivalent in influence to the pentarchy which Marx saw as dominating international relations during the nineteenth century.⁹ There were four main reasons for this assessment. First, revolution offered an alternative periodization of the modern international order, recalibrating the sixteenth century as a time of political and ideological struggle unleashed by the European Reformations, re-establishing the central optic of the seventeenth century around the upheavals which followed the Dutch Revolt and the English Revolution, re-centring the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries around the Atlantic Revolutions of France, America and Haiti, and

⁴ Hannah Arendt, *On revolution* (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 11. This section of the paper draws on: Alejandro Colás and George Lawson, 'Fred Halliday: achievements, ambivalences, openings', *Millennium* 39: 2, 2010: pp. 235–58.

⁵ Fred Halliday, *Rethinking international relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1994), ch. 6.

⁶ Fred Halliday, *Revolution and world politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999), p. 1.

⁷ Fred Halliday, 'Revolutionary internationalism and its perils', in John Foran, David Lane and Andreja Zivkovic, eds., *Revolution in the making of the modern world* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 65–80.

⁸ Although Halliday was never uncritical of the destructive tendencies of revolution, his views did change over the years, in keeping with his general transition from 'revolutionary socialist' to 'critical liberal'. For more on this transition, see Colás and Lawson, 'Fred Halliday', p. 242.

⁹ Karl Marx, 'The European war', *New York Daily Tribune*, 2 Feb. 1854.

understanding the 'short twentieth century' as one in which the primary logic was the challenge – and collapse – of the Bolshevik Revolution and its Third World inheritors.

Second, Halliday saw revolutions as having causes rooted fundamentally in international processes: comparative weakening vis-à-vis rival states, the uneven and combined spread of modern capitalism, the removal of support from regional or global hegemony, and the transnational spread of ideas. As he noted, conjunctural crisis of international order, featuring a breakdown of extant hierarchies, often prefigured revolutionary epochs. In this way, the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev, the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the removal of the military guarantee for client states at the end of the 1980s had a decisive impact on the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. In similar vein, the invasion of Spain by Napoleon's forces in 1808 provided scope for anti-colonial revolutions to emerge in Latin America. Such challenges, Halliday argued, were often met by international counter-revolution and, subsequently, war. Revolutions were formed within an international context and had, in turn, a formative influence on the make-up of the international order. Halliday, like John Dunn, argued that: 'there are no domestic revolutions'.¹⁰

Third, Halliday took the major claim of revolutionaries seriously: that because the international *system* (whether understood as capitalist, imperialist or as a mixture of the two) was the fundamental source of their oppression, the legitimacy of revolutions rested on establishing a novel, more emancipatory system in its place. As a result, revolutionary states did not see their struggle as contained within the limits of state borders, but as transcending existing boundaries. Marx and Engels, for example, thought that communism could not exist 'as a local event. The proletariat can only exist on the world-historical plane, just as communism, its activity, can only have a world historical existence'.¹¹ Lenin makes this point starkly: 'global class, global party, global revolution' (*Weltklasse, Weltpartei, Weltrevolution*).¹² And Che Guevara turned it into a battle-cry of anti-imperialism in his 'Message to the People of the World':

How close and bright would the future appear if two, three, many Vietnams flowered on the face of the globe ... what difference do the

¹⁰ John Dunn, *Western political theory in the face of the future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 90.

¹¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German ideology* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970/1846), pp. 46–7.

¹² Cited in Halliday, 'Revolutionary internationalism', p. 70.

dangers to a human being or people matter when what is at stake is the destiny of humanity. Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism and a call for the unity of the peoples ... Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome.¹³

The centrality of international oppression to the analysis of revolutionaries, Halliday argued, meant that revolutionary movements ran counter to the ground-rules of international order (sovereignty, international law and diplomacy), proclaiming ideals of 'universal society' and world revolution. Revolutions challenged international order in a number of ways ranging from disrupting existing patterns of trade and alliances to questioning underlying rules, norms and principles. To take one example, the challenge of the Bolshevik Revolution was at once short-term (prompting the withdrawal of Russian forces from World War One), medium-term (in the provision of support for allied states) and long-term (in the establishment of a systemic alternative to market-democracy). As Halliday argued, revolutionary states forced great powers to act by challenging their credibility as great powers. In other words, in order to justify their position at the apex of the international system, great powers were required to quell revolutions.¹⁴ As such, counter-revolution was not an instrumental reaction to moments of revolutionary upheaval, but a process hard-wired into the fundamentals of international relations itself.¹⁵

The fourth international component of revolution lay, for Halliday, in its close association with war. As Stephen Walt notes, revolutions intensify the prospects of war in three ways.¹⁶ First, revolutions provide a window of opportunity for states to improve their position vis-à-vis other states, for example by seizing territory, attacking a state previously protected by the old regime or by generating conflict between the revolutionary state and its rivals. In particular, because revolutionary regimes are beset by civil strife and elite fracture, other states may seize the chance to attack the

¹³Che Guevara, 'Create two, three, many Vietnams', in María del Carmen Ariet García, ed., *Global Justice* (New York: Ocean, 2002/1968), p. 62.

¹⁴ Often this reaction took the form of containment, as espoused by the former US ambassador to the Soviet Union, George Kennan: 'if you go out and light a fire in a field, it begins to spread a little bit, but it has died out where you lit it. It burns only on the edges – and so it is with Russian communism' (cited in Halliday, *Rethinking*, p. 12). Both Kennan and Halliday argued that the coercive overthrow of a revolutionary regime was a rare event. In fact, the latter was fond of quoting a headline from *The Times* published during the Iran-Iraq war: 'Never invade a revolution'.

¹⁵ A point also made in: Nick Bisley, 'Counter-revolution, order and international politics', *Review of International Studies* 30: 1, 2004, pp. 49–69.

¹⁶ Stephen Walt, *Revolution and war* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

revolutionary regime. Second, this 'window of opportunity' generates 'spirals of suspicion' as the uncertainty produced by the revolution heightens levels of insecurity that, in turn, raise perceptions of threat.¹⁷ Finally, revolutionary states seek to export their revolution both as a way of shoring up their fragile position at home and because of their ideological commitment to an alternative international order. Concomitantly, counter-revolutionary states assume that the revolution will spread unless it is 'strangled in its crib' and that revolution will be relatively easy to reverse.¹⁸ This 'perverse combination' of insecurity and overconfidence heightens the prospects of inter-state conflict.¹⁹ By increasing uncertainty and fear, by altering capabilities and by raising threat perceptions, revolutionary states begin a process which, quite often, leads to war.

For Halliday, therefore, revolutions are always international events: revolutions have international causes, revolutionaries seek to export their revolution abroad and revolutions share a close relationship with both counter-revolution and war. In this sense, revolutionary states exhibit a particular form of 'revolutionary sovereignty', one which simultaneously legitimizes domestic autarchy and international intervention. However, as Halliday recognized, the effects of revolutions on the international system are uneven. Hence, while the Bolshevik revolution ushered in over eighty years of conflict between state socialism and market-democracy, it is difficult to see many large-scale ramifications that arose from the Mexican or Ethiopian revolutions. At the same time, there is a paradox at the heart of the relationship between revolutionary states and the international system – revolutionary states must establish relations with other states and co-exist with the system's rules, laws and institutions, even while professing to reject these practices. As such, pressures to conform provide a counter-weight to claims of self-reliance and international contestation. Despite challenging existing patterns of interaction and hierarchy, revolutionary states play their part in reproducing regimes governing trade, alliance-formation and security. Indeed, the often tenuous nature of revolutionary regimes, besieged from without and within by counter-revolutionary forces, means that they take claims to domestic sovereignty and state security seriously. As such, they often serve to strengthen the very states-system that

¹⁷ Walt, *Revolution and war*, p. 33.

¹⁸ Walt, *Revolution and war*, p. 43.

¹⁹ Walt, *Revolution and war*, p. 40.

they seek to undermine. Although this is some way short of domestication or 'socialization', in order to function as states, revolutionary states give up many of their revolutionary aims.²⁰

Halliday did not see revolution merely as an important topic for International Relations, he also thought that IR had much to offer sociological and historical accounts of revolution. First, international factors (defeat in war, the vicissitudes of the market and shifting alliance structures) often precipitated and prompted revolutionary crisis. Second, international actors played a major role in encouraging revolutions via arms, aid and the power of example. Finally, revolutionary foreign policies were committed to the export of revolution, albeit with mixed success. As such, IR scholarship aided the general study of revolution by making apparent the modular features of revolution: the 'period of grace' offered to revolutionary regimes as foreign powers assessed its challenge; 'active confrontation' as this challenge was met by counter-revolution and war; and finally, long-term 'accommodation' as both sides of the conflict took part in symbiotic, if unequal, exchanges.²¹ The history of international relations also demonstrated that, for all the 'voluntarist delusions' of revolutionaries from Trotsky to Guevara, the particular contexts in which revolutions emerged meant that emulation was, at best, a remote possibility.²²

A provisional balance sheet

What can be said of Halliday's analysis of revolution? In carrying out a provisional balance sheet of his work on revolution, it is possible to highlight three strengths and two weaknesses. First, the strengths.

Halliday was right to see revolutions not as static objects of analysis, but as processes which change in form and content across time and place – there is no supra-sensible revolutionary form from which empirical references can be drawn. Revolutions

²⁰ A point made in: David Armstrong, *Revolution and world order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). As Halliday often pointed out, it is revolutionary states themselves that often 'nationalize the international' dimensions of their struggle. In 1920, the Soviet leadership laid down twenty-one conditions for membership of Comintern; in 1928, fidelity to the Soviet Union became a requirement of membership; and during the 1930s and 1940s, the Soviet Union instituted a policy of 'socialism in one country', dissolving the 'Third International'.

²¹ Halliday, *Rethinking*, ch. 6

²² Halliday, *Revolution and world politics*, p. 129. On the 'cognitive shortcuts' which lead revolutionaries to overestimate the possibilities of emulation, see: Kurt Weyland, 'The diffusion of revolution: "1848" in Europe and Latin America', *International Organization* 63: 3, 2009, pp. 391–423.

have been conducted by nationalists in Algeria, communists in Afghanistan, Russia, China and Vietnam, radical military groups in Egypt and Ethiopia, peasants in Mexico and Islamists in Iran. At the same time, the concept of revolution exists in every major language group in the world: a study of its etymology would need to take in the Greek concepts of *epanastasis* (revolution), the Arabic terms *inqilab* (to rotate) and *thaura* (revolution), the notions of *mered* (rebellion), *hitkomemut* (uprising), *meri* (revolt), and *keshet* (plot) in classical Hebrew, the Chinese word *geming* (change of life, fate or destiny) and the Latin verb *revolvere* (to return).²³ Probing deeper into the European meaning of the term reveals further diversity. In Ancient Greece, the idea of revolution was linked to a circular movement contained within Aristotle's trinity of democracy, oligarchy and tyranny. During the Middle Ages, revolutions continued to be seen as recurrent or circular processes, the turning of wheels rather than fundamental ruptures.²⁴ The late medieval astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, for example, titled one of his major works, 'On the Revolution of Celestial Spheres' (*De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*), using the concept of revolution to illustrate the elliptic motions of planets. It was only during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, deriving in part from the work of Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau, that the concept of revolution became more circumscribed, coming to mean a radical break from existing conditions. In this way, the English Civil War of the 1640s was reinterpreted as a revolution during the eighteenth century, as was the Revolt of the Netherlands and, later on, the American War of Independence. After the French Revolution, the concept of revolution was universalized, naturalized and, ultimately, mythologized around the French experience.²⁵ And it is the French model of revolution – as the inevitable, final reckoning of historical progress itself (*la révolution en permanence* as Proudhon put it) – that has come to stand as the principal understanding of revolution in the modern era. Halliday both recognized the diverse meanings of revolution and did much to enhance appreciation of the multiple forms that revolutions take.

Second, Halliday highlighted the close relationship between revolution and the making of the modern international order. As he – following Martin Wight – noted, over

²³ Halliday, *Revolution and world politics*, pp. 29–35. Thanks to Amnon Aran, Katerina Dalacoura and Chris Hughes for sharpening my understanding of these concepts.

²⁴ Arendt, *On revolution*, pp. 42–3.

²⁵ Krishan Kumar, *1989: revolutionary ideas and ideals* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 117.

half of the last five hundred years have featured some kind of conflict between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary states.²⁶ Although no revolution has delivered in full on its promises, revolutions have brought dramatic changes in their wake. The French Revolution, for example, introduced modern notions of nationalism and popular sovereignty, concepts of 'left' and 'right', the metric system and a conflict between absolutism and republicanism that dominated European politics during the nineteenth century. Other revolutions can claim almost as great an impact: the Russian Revolution pioneered a model of state-led industrialization and social development that proved a powerful draw for many states around the world during the twentieth century, just as the Cuban Revolution stood as the exemplar of the possibilities of sustained insurgency and guerrilla warfare, the Chinese Revolution of the radical potential of the peasantry, and the Iranian Revolution as the event which unleashed a militant form of Islam onto the world stage. For its part, the 1952 Egyptian Revolution established a form of military-led social transformation which inspired revolutionary movements in the region during the 1950s and 1960s, just as a comparable uprising served as the linchpin for a wave of unrest in North Africa and the Middle East during 2011. Revolutions, by virtue of the example they set in overcoming apparently insurmountable forces, and in generating substantial changes both to the texture of their home societies and the wider world, have played a central role in the development of the modern world. Indeed, revolutions and the *avoidance* of revolutions, whether through autocratic modernization, reform programmes or counter-revolution, are one of the central referent points in modern world history, less occasional punctuation marks than the very grammar of modernity itself.

Third, as noted above, Halliday did much to highlight the international features of revolution. Although recent revolutionary theory provides a thicker conception of the international dimensions of revolution than previous generations of study, even contemporary scholarship tends to maintain a somewhat inert account of the international, resting on the 'permissive context' provided by the international system,²⁷ an understanding of 'world time' as the static setting for revolutionary epochs,²⁸ or a notion of international waves which arise, for example, through long-

²⁶ Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995/1946), p. 92.

²⁷ John Foran, *Taking power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁸ Theda Skocpol, *States and social revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

term demographic pressures.²⁹ Given this residual role for international processes, it is little surprise that, quite often, empirical accounts of revolution remain ‘caged’ within domestic borders or its effects treated, as in Barrington Moore’s phrase, as ‘fortuitous circumstances’.³⁰ However, as Halliday showed, the ‘international’ is more than a passive backdrop to revolutionary processes. To the contrary, international dynamics, including the destabilizing impact of wars, the symbolic transmissions which accelerate or redirect revolutions, and broader patterns of market expansion and contraction, play leading roles in revolutions. Halliday was at the vanguard of analysis which saw revolutions as arising from multiple interactions between international processes and state-society dynamics.

In this way, Halliday can be seen as one of the architects of an ‘inter-social’ approach to revolutions.³¹ Such an approach starts from a simple premise: events which take place in one country are both affected by and affect events elsewhere. In other words, events contain an interactive, relational dynamic which necessarily supersedes the nation-state frame. For example, the onset of the French Revolution cannot be understood without paying due heed to the expansionist policies of the French state during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – between 1650 and 1780, France was at war in two out of every three years.³² This bellicosity, a product of pressures caused by developments in rival states as well as domestic factors, brought increased demands for taxation which, over time, engendered factionalism in the *ancien régime*. The interactive properties of inter-social relations also affected events during the revolutionary period. For example, in late 1792, as the Jacobins were losing influence to the Girondins, leading Jacobins pressured the state into international conflict. As France’s foreign campaigns went increasingly badly, the Committee of Public Safety, a central site of Jacobin authority, committed France to a process of radicalisation: the Terror. In this way, domestic political concerns induced international conflict which, in turn, opened up space for domestic polarization. The Jacobins identified the Girondins

²⁹ Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and rebellion in the early modern world* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

³⁰ Barrington Moore Jr., *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 214.

³¹ For more on this approach see: John Hobson, George Lawson and Justin Rosenberg, ‘Historical sociology’ in Robert Denemark, eds., *The international studies encyclopaedia* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

³² Bailey Stone, *Reinterpreting the French revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 259–60

as ‘unrevolutionary’ traitors, speculators and hoarders, while identifying themselves as the guardians of the revolution, a process which allowed them to institute a wave of militancy through policies such as the *levée en masse*.³³ In addition to the dynamic roles played by inter-social relations in fostering both the revolutionary situation and revolutionary trajectories in France, inter-social relations also played a key role in the outcomes of the revolution. First, the revolutionary regime annexed Rhineland and Belgium, and helped to ferment republican revolution in neighbouring countries, including Holland, Switzerland and Italy. Second, the revolution prompted unrest throughout Europe, including Ireland, where a rebellion against English rule led to war and, in 1802, the Act of Union between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Third, the threat from France was met by extensive counter-revolution in neighbouring states. In England, for example, *habeas corpus* was suspended in 1794, while legislation ranging from the Seditious Meetings Act to the Combination Acts was introduced in order to disrupt the spread of republicanism. Although the French did not generate an international revolutionary party, many states acted as if they had done just that, instituting domestic crackdowns in order to guard against the claim made by Jacques-Pierre Brissot, a leading Girondin, that: ‘we [the French revolutionary regime] cannot be at peace until all Europe is in flames’.³⁴

Halliday’s work on revolution, therefore, produced a research agenda brimming with vitality. It also left behind a series of challenges, of which two stand out. First, in keeping with his desire to interlace normative and analytical registers, Halliday was keen to stimulate discussion of the ethical dimensions of revolutions. Criticizing the lack of a tradition of ‘*ius ad revolutionem*’ or ‘*ius in revolutione*’ which could match debates around ‘just war’, Halliday argued that such discussion was crucial lest revolutionary excesses be excused by those (advocates and theorists) who saw revolution as inevitable.³⁵ Questions about when it was legitimate to take up revolutionary struggles and what methods revolutionary movements could reasonably deploy in these struggles

³³ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 323–5.

³⁴ Cited in Robert Palmer, ‘The world revolution of the West’, *Political Science Quarterly* 69: 1, 1954, p. 11.

³⁵ Fred Halliday, ‘Revolution and the international’, *Millennium* 24: 2, 1995, pp. 279–87.

were, Halliday thought, central to their assessment.³⁶ This agenda remains to be filled in. Second, Halliday did not engage systematically with revolutionary theory, whether in IR or outside the discipline. Rather, he had a tendency to move from abstract levels of analysis (for example, the dictum (following Lenin) that revolutions took place when ‘rulers could not go on ruling and the ruled could no longer go on being ruled’) to detailed analysis of individual cases.³⁷ Some of this analysis was brilliant. But it was also frustrating in its failure to construct a schema, however proximate, by which to study revolutions outside their specific instantiations.³⁸ Although analysis of the first of these shortcomings lies beyond the scope of this paper, the next section provides a partial response to the second charge.³⁹

Anatomies of revolution

As noted above, Fred Halliday understood that revolutions were dynamic processes which changed in form, content and character across time and place. Indeed, the diversity of revolutionary instances, their myriad causes and diverse rationales precluded any sense of revolutionary singularity. As Jack Goldstone notes:

Analysts of revolution have demonstrated that economic downturns, cultures of rebellion, dependent development, population pressures, colonial or personalistic regime structures, cross class coalitions, the loss of nationalist credentials, military defection, the spread of revolutionary ideology and exemplars, and effective leadership are all plausibly linked within multiple cases of revolution, albeit in different ways in different cases.⁴⁰

³⁶ It is, however, worth noting the scholarly debate around the use of terrorism by revolutionary groups. See, for example: Jeff Goodwin, ‘Explaining revolutionary terrorism’, in Foran, Lane and Zivkovic, eds., *Revolution in the modern world*, pp. 199–221.

³⁷ V.I. Lenin, *On culture and cultural revolution* (Moscow: Progress, 1970/1923), p. 74.

³⁸ Interestingly, Halliday worked more on Third World revolutions than he did European revolutions. His work on specific revolutions includes: Fred Halliday, *Revolution and foreign policy: the case of South Yemen, 1967-1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Fred Halliday and Maxine Molyneux, *The Ethiopian revolution* (London: Verso, 1982). However, this point also holds for the text Halliday considered to be his major statement on the subject – *Revolution and world politics*. In each of these books, irrepressible empirical synthesis is not matched by comparable depth of theoretical insight. On this issue, see: Stephen Walt, ‘Nothing revolutionary’, *Review of International Studies* 27: 4, 2001, pp. 687–92.

³⁹ For a (limited) discussion of the normative features of revolutions, see: George Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution* (Forthcoming), Introduction and ch. 6.

⁴⁰ Jack Goldstone, ‘Toward a fourth generation of revolutionary theory’, *Annual Review of Political Science* 4: 2001, p. 172.

Revolutions, therefore, take place in a range of circumstances, including: when a relatively autonomous peasantry enjoys a position of 'tactical freedom';⁴¹ when the effectiveness of the state is reduced by economic mismanagement, military defeat or corruption;⁴² or when neighbouring states are experiencing revolutions of their own.⁴³ In this sense, revolutions arise not from fixed preconditions, but from the alignment of a confluence of relational dynamics. This section teases out the pay-off of such an understanding of revolutions. Its basic goal is to map 'how particular configurations of ideal-typified factors come together to generate historically specific outcomes in particular cases'.⁴⁴ The task is to develop abstractions which contain enough flexibility to accommodate empirical variation, but which retain sufficient strength so that their core wagers remain stable.

Revolutionary Situations

Revolutionary situations tend to emerge in eras of international upheaval, in which state effectiveness is threatened not just by internal processes but also by pressures from outside: international conflicts, economic crisis and shifts in prevailing patterns of hierarchy, authority and rule.⁴⁵ In short, revolutions thrive in 'abnormal times', a point recognized vividly by Mao: 'there is great chaos under Heaven; the situation is excellent'. In this sense, both the breakdown of semi-colonial monarchies at the beginning of the twentieth century and the winding-down of the Cold War at its end acted as a spur for revolutionary change. In the case of the former, the collapse of the Persian, Ottoman, Moroccan, Mexican and Chinese monarchies induced 'crisis periods' in which relative anarchy fostered the conditions for revolutionary situations to emerge.⁴⁶ In the case of the latter, as long as revolutionaries framed their story as one of a return to normalcy, emancipation from the Soviet yoke or as liberation from a system

⁴¹ Eric Wolf, *Peasant wars of the twentieth century* (New York: Harper, 1969).

⁴² Jack Goldstone, *Revolution: theoretical, comparative, and historical studies* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2003), p. 13.

⁴³ Halliday, *Revolution and world politics*, pp. 230–33.

⁴⁴ Patrick Jackson, *The conduct of inquiry in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 114.

⁴⁵ There are, of course, exceptions to this point. For example, revolutions in Ethiopia, Iran and Cuba all took place without an apparently facilitative international environment. Yet this does not mean that these revolutions were without international causes. On this latter point, see Halliday, *Revolution and world politics*, pp. 184–91.

⁴⁶ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Revolution' in Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich, eds., *Revolution in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 18.

whose time had past, so the great powers welcomed what had previously been outcasts into the society of states.

States most susceptible to these openings are those on the semi-periphery of the international system, dependent geo-politically and economically on other states, and facing the systemic challenges of modernization, i.e. cycles of rapid growth and sharp downturns. Pertinent examples include Mexico, Turkey, Iran and Russia. Revolutionary situations emerge when the double (geopolitical and economic) dependency of states becomes unsustainable. In other words, revolutionary conditions surface in states in which the ruling regime does not cope effectively with these challenges and when an opposition group emerges which offers a viable plan for change, holds sufficient resources to provide a credible challenge and carries the support of significant social groupings. For example, in 1970s Iran, the Shah's regime was over-reliant on foreign backing (particularly that of the United States), oil money and a repressive apparatus, including a secret police that used torture as a routine instrument. A major chasm emerged between an autocratic elite, buttressed by cronyism, and the bulk of civil society. This chasm was filled by an alliance between the Shi'ite clergy, who were able to organize opposition through networks of mosques, leftist groups and an urban *bazaar* discontented with rising costs, high inflation and new legislation which hindered their working practices. Although these groups could agree on little in terms of a constructive revolutionary programme, they could agree that the Shah was the source of their problems.⁴⁷ In the face of well-organized, sustained protest, the Shah vacillated, hoping for US support.⁴⁸ In the meantime, the opposition amassed levels of material and social capital which presented a considerable challenge to the authority of the old regime. The legitimacy of the Shah's regime collapsed, and both elites and wider social groups came to assume that radical change was inevitable.

There are, therefore, three main points to observe in the development of revolutionary situations. First, changes in the broad configurations of international relations act as the overarching fuel for revolutionary change – hence the rapid increase in revolutionary movements at the end of world wars and after the collapse of empires: changing geo-political contexts are the causal crucibles that allow domestically oriented

⁴⁷ Misagh Parsa, *State, ideology and revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 216.

⁴⁸ Nikki Keddie, 'Can revolution be predicted? Can their causes be understood?' in Nikki Keddie, ed., *Debating revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 3–26.

movements the chance to redefine their positions. Second, some regimes are more vulnerable than others to these shifting international dynamics, most notably personalistic regimes which are based on the authority of a single individual and authoritarian states which are despotically strong, but infrastructurally weak. This point is discussed further below. Third, revolutionary situations emerge from: political-coercive crisis in which the legitimacy of the old regime collapses and a viable alternative is offered; a symbolic crisis in which alternative ideas, a widespread perception of failure and a belief that things are getting intolerably worse induces the possibility of revolutionary conflict; and a relative economic crisis. On this latter point, consider again the case of Iran. During the mid 1970s, a mini-recession meant the withdrawal of a number of welfare programmes, the freezing of wages, the suspension of state subsidies to the clergy and increased taxation demands. At the same time, the regime established price controls and passed an Anti-Profiteering Act which reduced the capacity of urban *bazaaris* to keep prices in line with inflation. During 1977, over 100,000 shopkeepers in Tehran (half of all the shopkeepers in the city) were investigated under price control and/or anti-profiteering legislation.⁴⁹ During the same year, over 20,000 *bazaaris* were deported from Iran's major cities to remote areas.⁵⁰

In Iran, as in other revolutionary situations, pressures built up over the long term through the appeal of immanent political ideologies (such as Islamism) and cycles of protest (such as the 1906 Constitutional Revolution, the 1953 coup against President Mosaddeq and the White Revolution of the 1960s). These long-term pressures were augmented by the emergence of a revolutionary coalition in the form of an accommodation between the Liberation Movement (an Islamic-nationalist organization created by Mehdi Bazargan), the pro-Moscow Tudeh Party, guerrilla organizations (such as *Mujahedin-e Khalq* and *Fedayeen-e Islam*) and the United Islamic Societies. During 1977 and 1978, transformative events (like the 'Black Friday massacre' in which police killed hundreds of protestors) and 'suddenly imposed grievances' (such as the removal of state subsidies to the clergy) meant that the opposition became increasingly vociferous in its demands.⁵¹ By the time the regime awoke to the scale of the

⁴⁹ Parsa, *State, ideology and revolution*, p. 206.

⁵⁰ Parsa, *State, ideology and revolution*, p. 206.

⁵¹ McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, pp. 201–4.

revolutionary challenge and deployed its despotic power, in late 1978, it was too late – its legitimacy and authority had been fatally undermined.

Revolutionary trajectories

Revolutionary trajectories take their character from the type of social order in which the revolution takes place. In democratic orders, polarization is limited by the presence of institutional sites for the resolution of conflicts. But in more impermeable social orders, where there are few institutional sites to manage conflict, the social order is often *compelled* to accommodate rival movements – as Trotsky noted, ‘the history of revolution is first of all a history of the forcible entry of the masses into the realm of rulership over their own destiny’.⁵² In these states, early reforms by an incumbent regime can decompress revolutionary pressures by splitting opposition, moderating public opinion and isolating extremists.⁵³ This was the (apparently successful) strategy pursued by a number of regimes in North Africa and the Middle East during the 2011 uprisings, most notably Saudi Arabia and Morocco. But, as Alexis de Tocqueville first noted, reform programmes are a risky strategy, providing space for opposition movements to thrive – hence the escalation of protests against Syrian, Yemeni and Jordanian rulers following measures intended to defuse demonstrations.⁵⁴ For those who have been fighting for scarce resources with little chance of success, the chance to operate in more amenable circumstances means an opportunity to spread messages, organize resistance and build alliances more widely. As such, if a strong revolutionary movement exists alongside a weak regime, reform may escalate rather than defuse protests.

The first determinant in how revolutionary trajectories unfold, therefore, is state effectiveness.⁵⁵ This, in turn, is correlated to the type of regime which is in power and, in particular, its capacity to institutionalize dissent. As Jeff Goodwin notes, although revolutions are a response to economic exploitation, they are more conditioned by

⁵² Leon Trotsky, *The history of the Russian revolution* (London: Pluto, 1997/1932), p. 17.

⁵³ Lawrence Stone, ‘Theories of revolution’, *World Politics* 18: 2, 1966, p. 67.

⁵⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The ancien régime and the French revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998/1852).

⁵⁵ On this point, see: Goldstone, ‘Toward a fourth generation’; and Jack Goldstone et al, ‘A global model for forecasting political instability’, *American Journal of Political Science* 54: 1, 2010, pp. 190–208.

political oppression than by concerns about inequality.⁵⁶ Indeed, what ties revolutionary movements together is not class-based solidarity (to the contrary, class-based antagonisms often hinder the formation of revolutionary coalitions) but the fact of political exclusion.⁵⁷ Unsurprisingly, therefore, states are the basic targets of revolutionary movements – they are the means by which local grievances, revolts and rebellions are politicized. Goodwin differentiates between authoritarian states (which contain a degree of autonomy from civil society, but not from core elites) and Sultanist regimes (personalist, exclusionary dictatorships in which power is vested in the hands of a single ruler).⁵⁸ Sultanist regimes ‘incubate’ grievances by foreclosing opportunities to reform the political order – they turn moderates into radicals and unify opposition forces.⁵⁹ During times of state weakening, such as demonstrably fraudulent or deeply contested elections, the state often uses its despotic power in arbitrary ways. However, the use of state violence only serves to escalate tensions. Because the state is disembedded from both society and alternative elites, opposition groups are able to mobilize beyond its reaches. Thereafter, if the ruling elite fractures, revolution becomes a plausible scenario.⁶⁰ Crucial factors in elite fracture include the evident corruption of a personalistic regime. Hosni Mubarak and his family, for example, are reported to have accumulated tens of billions of dollars of personal wealth through rents on official contracts.⁶¹ In general, regimes most likely to fracture are those with an excessively personalistic form of rule and which are under the subordination of foreign powers – hence the vulnerability of Iran in 1979 and Egypt in 2011. These states are ‘suspended in a void’, polarized between an ‘arbitrary state’ and a ‘quicksand society’.⁶² When alternative voices are excluded from the political process, all forms of opposition serve

⁵⁶ Jeff Goodwin, *No other way out* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁵⁷ Goodwin, *No other way out*, p. 23; Parsa, *State, ideology and revolution*, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Goodwin borrows the term ‘Sultanism’ from Max Weber. Weber saw Sultanism as a sub-set of ‘patrimonialism’ which was, in turn, a sub-set of ‘traditional authority’. See: Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978/1922).

⁵⁹ Goodwin, *No other way out*, p. 177; Parsa, *State, ideology and revolution*, pp. 10–11.

⁶⁰ The importance of elite fracture is often traced to Plato, who argued that, while a united ruling class can resist popular threats, a disunited elite opens up the space for opposition to emerge and mobilize: ‘the constitution cannot be upset so long as that class [the ruling class] are of one mind’. Plato, *Republic* (London: Wordsworth, 1997/420BC), p. 262.

⁶¹ Jack Goldstone, ‘Understanding the revolutions of 2011’, *Foreign Affairs* 90: 3, 2011, p. 11.

⁶² Tim McDaniel, *Autocracy, modernization and revolution in Russia and Iran* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 100, 229.

to weaken the state's legitimacy. In these circumstances, reform programmes initiated by the old regime hasten rather than contain the development of revolution.

The second determinant of revolutionary trajectories is the part played by the coercive apparatus, which contains something close to a veto power over revolutionary uprisings. Once again, regime type matters. Revolution is most likely in autocratic states where the coercive apparatus is contained within a single command structure. However, authoritarian regimes in which coercive power is parcelled out between the armed forces, the Ministry of the Interior, the secret police and paramilitaries are also fragile.⁶³ Although political ideologies can stabilize regimes by promoting elite cohesion, processes ranging from economic downturns to elections can prompt elite defections, particularly if these processes weaken the patronage system propping up the coalition.⁶⁴ In this way, authoritarian strongmen, such as General Suharto in Indonesia, sew the seeds of their own demise by allowing powerful sites of institutional authority to emerge which are subsequently used as power bases for rival factions.⁶⁵ Elite fracture, in turn, provides the space for protests to both widen and deepen. As the infrastructural power of authoritarian states is weakened, they are forced to rely increasingly on despotic power. This, in turn, tends to radicalize the opposition and make revolution more rather than less likely.

As Perry Anderson notes, revolutions have the capacity to break the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence in three ways: first, by delegitimizing the authority of the old regime to such an extent that the coercive apparatus will no longer employ violence against its own people (as in Iran in 1978–9 after mass protests effectively paralysed the Royal Army); second, by seizing power and, thereby, generating a condition of 'dual sovereignty' (as in Russia during 1917); and third, by using a regional stronghold as a base by which to conduct long-term guerrilla campaigns (as the Chinese communists did in Yan'an).⁶⁶ There is a degree of contingency to such dynamics. For example, the decision by Czech leaders in 1989 not to call in the army during the general strike which preceded the Velvet Revolution contrasts starkly with the decision by the Chinese politburo to employ the army against

⁶³ Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive authoritarianism: hybrid regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶⁴ Stephen Hanson, *Post-imperial democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶⁵ Dan Slater, *Ordering power: contentious politics and authoritarian leviathans in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 140–1.

⁶⁶ Perry Anderson, 'Two revolutions', *New Left Review* 61: Jan/Feb, 2010, pp. 59–96.

student protesters in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, a policy which helped to successfully defuse large scale opposition to the regime. It is now common knowledge that in East Germany, Erich Honecker came close to deploying the armed forces against protesters, until Mikhail Gorbachev, amongst others, persuaded him otherwise. In Romania, Nicolae Ceausescu's elite force, the *Securitate*, failed to defend the leadership against a determined uprising. Neither China nor Romania experienced revolutionary transformations, yet East Germany did. In each case, it was a configuration of elite action, domestic opposition and external agency that determined the path of the insurrection. And in each case, the role of the coercive apparatus was germane to the path taken by the revolutionary challenge.

The third determinant in revolutionary trajectories is the formation of a close-knit identity within the revolutionary movement. Revolutions feature the formation of multi-class coalitions in which diverse strands of protest are linked through decisive leadership, common ideological frameworks and shared narratives, often inspired by stories of national awakening. In this way, 1,000 committed Sandinistas were joined by a broad front made up of intellectuals, priests, labour activists and some business leaders during the latter stages of the Nicaraguan Revolution.⁶⁷ Revolutionary 'protest identities' tend to be a promiscuous bricolage of the indigenous and the transnational: protestors in Tehran in 1979 wore Che Guevara t-shirts just as revolutionaries around the world sang local variants of the Internationale.⁶⁸ These eclectic tropes provide 'repertoires' which can be mobilised in order to legitimate and sustain the revolutionary struggle.⁶⁹ Lying behind these repertoires are stories, vehicles of mobilisation, which, as Eric Selbin argues, serve as 'tools of connection' between everyday life and collective protest. Selbin highlights four such revolutionary narratives: 'civilizing and democratizing revolutions' (such as the American War of Independence); 'social revolutions' (e.g. France, Russia, and Cuba); 'freedom and liberation revolutions' (like Haiti and Mexico); and 'lost and forgotten revolutions' (such as the Green Corn Rebellion of Oklahoma). The first two categories are 'elite histories', foundational stories told by the victors; the latter two are 'stories from the periphery', representing

⁶⁷ Robert Dix, 'Why revolutions succeed and fail', *Polity* 16: 3, 1984, p. 433.

⁶⁸ Eric Selbin, 'Zapata's white horse and Che's beret: theories on the future of revolution', in John Foran, ed., *The future of revolution* (London: Zed, 2003), p. 86.

⁶⁹ Charles Tilly, *Regimes and repertoires* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006).

the struggle of slaves, serfs and sans-culottes to free themselves from bondage.⁷⁰ Because revolutions are polarizing processes featuring mutually incompatible claims over a particular polity, revolutionary adversaries are locked into apparently irreconcilable narratives. In other words, stories are used to legitimize both sides of the struggle – they are the ‘social technologies’ of revolutionary struggles.

Revolutionary trajectories, therefore, feature the interaction of ‘social technologies’ which bind groups together within a context of weakening state effectiveness in which control of the coercive apparatus is the prime determinant. Revolutionary trajectories are neither inevitable nor miraculous, neither the necessary consequence of particular structural alignments nor solely the intended consequence of participant’s strategic behaviour. In short, there is rhyme to the revolutionary unreason. Key to understanding their trajectories are three factors: first, levels of state effectiveness which are, in turn, correlated with regime type; second, the hold of an elite over the coercive apparatus; and third, the organization of opposition into a coherent revolutionary movement through the use of ‘social technologies’ ranging from revolutionary stories to networks of social movements, political parties, labor organizations and peasant associations.

Revolutionary outcomes

The ‘minimum condition’ of revolutionary success is the takeover and establishment of state power or its equivalent by revolutionaries – in other words, when institutions are sufficiently robust as to appear fixed and unbreakable.⁷¹ John Foran puts this well – revolutionary success is defined by a revolutionary party ‘coming to power and holding it long enough to initiate a process of deep structural transformation’.⁷² In short, successful revolutions should be understood as cases where a revolutionary regime takes control of the principal means of production, means of violence and means of information in a society. By this reckoning, the immediate condition of revolutionary success is when the new regime is no longer directly challenged by domestic rivals, marked, for example, by the end of the Civil War in Russia in 1921.

⁷⁰ Eric Selbin, *Revolution, rebellion, resistance* (London: Zed, 2010), p. 78.

⁷¹ Hobsbawm, ‘Revolution’, p. 24.

⁷² Foran, *Taking power*, p. 5.

The 'maximum condition' of revolutionary victory is the institutionalization of a new political, economic and symbolic order – in other words, a 'new framework for historical development'.⁷³ It is, therefore, essential to wait at least a generation after the end of the revolution – until the 'children of the revolution' emerge onto the public scene – to assess the success, or otherwise, of a revolution. Only if the principal institutions in a society are *systemically* transformed can a revolution be considered successful.⁷⁴ Not everything changes after revolutions. Some institutional features of the old order are so entrenched they cannot be altered, other measures are blocked by surviving members of the opposition and there are some things that revolutionaries do not attempt to change. Nevertheless, revolutions represent fundamental transformations in a society's principal institutional configurations.

The transformative outcomes of revolutions apply to both a state's domestic and international relations. Domestically, revolutions tend to lead to the formation of stronger states, both despotically and infrastructurally. In Iran, for example, nearly 3,000 people were executed and over 12,000 dissidents were killed in clashes between the *ulama* and its opponents between 1979 and 1983. The claim made by George Saville, Marquis of Halifax, some four hundred years ago still stands as a sound assessment of the impact of revolutions on those who made them: 'when people contend for their liberty, they seldom get anything by their victory but new masters'.⁷⁵ However, it is not only through despotic power that states increase their authority after revolutions – states are also the principle vehicles for projects of social transformation, ranging from policies of nationalization and collectivization to land reform and redistribution. In Cuba, for instance, over 1,500 laws were enacted in 1959 alone.⁷⁶ Material transformations of this kind are buttressed and reinforced by symbolic transformations. After the 1959 revolution, Cubans turned in large numbers from suits and ties to the *guayabera* and other local fashions. At the same time, local words were either invented or restored so that Americanisms could be dropped (such as *jardinero* for a home run in baseball). Even holidays were transformed – the figure of Don

⁷³ Hobsbawm, 'Revolution', p. 24.

⁷⁴ George Lawson, *Negotiated revolutions* (London: Ashgate, 2005), p. 74.

⁷⁵ Cited in Christopher Hill, *The century of revolution* (London: Routledge, 2002/1961), p. 186.

⁷⁶ Jeffery Paige, 'Finding the revolutionary in the revolution', in Foran, ed., *Future of revolution*, p. 24.

Feliciano came to replace the Christmas Tree and Santa Claus.⁷⁷ Politically, economically and symbolically, revolutions stand for the systemic transformation of domestic orders.

A state's international relations are also transformed after a revolution. Indeed, the international effects of revolution endure long after the initial flame of revolution has been extinguished. For example, the Bolsheviks 'Decree on Peace' in November 1917 called for revolution throughout Europe and Asia, and was sustained by a two million Rouble fund to support international revolution. Although the short-term success of the Bolsheviks in fostering revolution was slight, by 1950 a third of humanity lived under regimes which took their inspiration from the Russian Revolution – a Tsarist empire covering one-sixth of the size of globe had been disbanded and put back together. In comparable vein, Cuba provided troops for liberation movements from Algeria to Nicaragua, as well as technical support to a number of allied states around the world. And for their part, the Iranian revolutionary regime meddled repeatedly in regional affairs, sending around 1,000 Revolutionary Guards to Lebanon in 1982, and gifting over \$500 million to Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and other militant Shi'ite groups. The regime mobilized Shi'a organizations in Sudan, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia in the interests of *sudur-i inqilab* (the export of revolution), while Iranian officials used forums as varied as international congresses and the *hajj* as a means of spreading their revolutionary message.⁷⁸

However, as noted above, the impact of revolutionary regimes on the international system rarely matches the rhetoric of either their supporters or their opponents. Not only has Iran, for example, failed to provide support for Chechen rebels fighting the Russians, the regime backed the Armenians against the Shi'ite Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Americans in Afghanistan and the Chinese against Muslim insurgents in Xinjiang. Soviet internationalism was similarly uneven in both design and impact. Indeed, splits within the left often arose precisely over the issue of internationalism, whether seen in Soviet distaste for Cuban 'adventurism' or in specific debates over Soviet non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The weakness and pragmatism of revolutionary states on the

⁷⁷ Paige, 'Finding the revolutionary', p. 24.

⁷⁸ Mark Katz, *Revolution and revolutionary waves* (New York: St Martin's, 1997); Asef Bayat, 'Is there a future for Islamist revolutions?' in Foran, Lane and Zivkovic, eds., *Revolution in the modern world*, pp. 96–111 .

one hand, and the strength of counter-revolutionary forces on the other, serves to inhibit the spread of revolution.

Whither revolution?

These ideal-typical anatomies of revolutionary situations, trajectories and outcomes extend Fred Halliday's contribution to the study of revolutions by seeking to better link examination of specific cases with broader theoretical claims. They also supplement Halliday's understanding of revolution in three ways: first, by highlighting the ways in which revolutions are crucial to the development of international order; second, by sustaining an 'inter-social' approach which conjoins international and domestic events; and third, by seeing revolution as a flexible rather than fixed category of analysis. It is the association of revolution with inalienable characteristics (in particular, violence) which led many commentators to claim that revolutions were irrelevant to a world in which the big issues of governance and economic development had been settled.⁷⁹ However, the events of 2011, as Fred Halliday would have been the first to recognize, have reminded observers of what should have been obvious all along – because revolutions are dynamic processes which change according to the context in which they emerge, they remain of significance both to contemporary societies and to broader dynamics of international order.

If there were little doubt that revolutions would occupy a central place in the contemporary world, there was a more open question as to the form they would take. Here the issue is more vexed. For all the demonstrations against autocratic regimes, for all the student protests, food riots and other forms of contemporary revolutionary contestation, there is less sense today than in the pre-1989 era as to the collective *goal* of these struggles. Fred Halliday shared this reservation. Although convinced that the exploitation, oppression, inequality and waste of the contemporary world left states vulnerable to challenges from below, Halliday was hostile to many forms of contemporary resistance, describing them as 'a fungible crew of ruckus societies, windbags and conspiracy theorists'.⁸⁰ Halliday's assessment was clear – he considered contemporary insurgents to be utopian without a concomitant sense of realism, guilty of

⁷⁹ See, for example, Robert Snyder, 'The end of revolution?' *Review of Politics* 61: 1, 1999, p. 6; Ghia Nodia, 'The end of revolution?' *Journal of Democracy* 11: 1, 2000, p. 170.

⁸⁰ Fred Halliday, 'Getting real about Seattle', *Millennium* 29: 1, 2000, pp. 123–9.

amnesia towards the history of revolutionary success and failure, and holding, at best, a fuzzy conception of revolutionary agency.⁸¹

Halliday may or may not have been right in this assessment. But the anti-globalization ‘movement of movements’ he saw as central to contemporary revolutionary protests makes up only one of four revolutionary currents in the contemporary world. A second strand lies in the persistent capacity of pre-1989 revolutionary states – China, Cuba and Iran above all – to punch above their weight in international affairs. Revolution is a central feature of these state’s self-conception. As such, many of their activities, both domestic and international, can be examined through the anatomies surveyed in this article. A third current exists in concrete instances of revolutionary protest, such as the 2011 Arab Spring, which share some overlaps with previous cases of revolution.⁸² The fourth – and most important – dimension of revolution in the contemporary world is the challenge prompted by the two most powerful utopian visions of the current conjuncture: liberalism and Islamism. The former, a viewpoint Halliday came increasingly to embrace, combines assumptions about progress as resulting from the freedom (founded on the idea of the purposive, autonomous, rights-bearing individual) generated by the rationality of market exchange (as embodied in the concept of private property) and government consent (as constituted in representative democracy). It is the core transformative project in the contemporary world. The latter, which borrows much of its rhetoric and techniques from past revolutionary movements, is, to a great extent, conceived in opposition to liberalism.⁸³ Like liberalism, Islamism was also a political ideology Halliday knew much about, although without comparable levels of sympathy. The conflict between these two revolutionary utopias tells us much about both the contemporary shape of international relations and the challenges that are to come. Their judicious assessment, alongside the other ways in which revolution continues to play a central role in world affairs, would have been the subject of Fred Halliday’s keen interest. His reflections on the subject are sorely missed.

⁸¹ Fred Halliday, ‘The challenge for “revolution” in our times’ in Foran, ed., *Future of revolution*, pp. 300–309.

⁸² Lawson, *Anatomies of revolution*, ch. 6.

⁸³ Lawson, *Anatomies of Revolution*, ch. 6.