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‘The sixth great power’: on the study of revolution and international relations*

FRED HALLIDAY

Introduction: a case of mutual neglect

The discipline of International Relations has long had an uneasy relationship to revolution. Hannah Arendt’s remark that the twentieth century has been shaped by wars and revolutions is often quoted, but it is striking how, within the institutionalized research and teaching on International Relations, these two historically formative processes receive differential treatment. Courses, journals, departments and institutes on war are plentiful. Study of war, in its historical, strategic and ethical dimensions, as well as in policy terms, is central to the academic study of IR. Revolutions, by contrast, enjoy a marginal existence. Standard textbooks and theoretical explorations devote little space to them. There is no journal specializing in this question. We have yet to meet the Oliver Cromwell Professor of Revolutionary Studies: there are no invitations to speak at the Thomas Paine International Institute for the Comparative Study of Revolutionary Change.

There is no single reason for this marginalization. A variety of factors within the intellectual tradition and institutional context of IR have converged to produce this situation. IR itself began as a study of war and the causes of war, and remains focused, as do such war-preventing documents as the UN Charter, on the belief that war between states is to be seen in terms of rationally decided aggression rather than in the internationalization of social conflict. The subsequent theoretical development of IR has, in several ways, confirmed this. In the incorporation of US and British political science into IR there was a complementary disdain and neglect of revolutions, which were seen as breakdowns of otherwise regular processes in national and international society. With the rise of behaviourism, the concept of ‘revolution’ along with that of the state, was dissolved into a spectrum of violence and ‘internal war’ that denied it analytic and historical specificity. Neo-realism in its Waltzian version, casting all references to internal and transnational processes as ‘reductionist’, has in its turn blocked off consideration of the interaction of international and internal change.¹ Other factors can be traced to the broader climate of the social sciences. The

* An initial version of this paper was given to a panel of the BISA/ISA Annual Convention held in London in March 1989. I am grateful to my co-panelists, David Armstrong, Margot Light and Andy Williams, and to John Vincent, for their many helpful comments.

¹ This is a core tenet of realism and neo-realism, despite concessions by many realists that the exclusion of internal factors is merely an analytic convenience. Waltz’s argument is clearly spelt out in *Theory of International Politics* (New York, 1979), chapter four. I have discussed this assumption and the shifts in argument involved in ‘Theorizing the International’, *Economy and Society*, 18, 3 (August 1989). Examples of conventional IR suppression of the question of the international dimensions of revolution are legion. Jack Plano and Roy Olton’s *The International Relations Dictionary* (fourth edition, 1988), has no discussion of the general interrelationship of the two subjects: an (unindexed) item on revolution and war discusses only internal aspects. IR literature is replete with discussion of alliances. Rarely is it

study of revolution is not at home in any of the social sciences, although it has received more attention within sociology and history. In these disciplines, however, it has tended to do so with little reference to the international dimensions of the phenomenon. Most sociological works until Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions* treated revolutions as if they happened within discrete national-political entities.²

Realism does discuss revolutions but they are invoked not as objects of study in themselves, but in order to prove the pressures of conformity, the socialization, that the constraints of the system impose on even the most deviant or revisionist of states. No realist textbook is complete without the assertion, of dubious validity, that the Bolsheviks had settled into the system by 1922. Chicherin wore a top hat and tails: even revolutions cannot duck the system.³ Other trends of the 1970s and 1980s allow equally little space to revolutionary upheavals: international political economy and interdependence are concerned with relations within the capitalist world, and mainly its developed capitalist parts, without much need to look at the poorer revolutionary states. Strategic studies, long adrift of its Clausewitzian and historical moorings, has examined East-West arms racing in almost complete abstraction of the conflicting socioeconomic compositions of the Soviet and US systems. Too little attention is paid to the social and political conflicts of the Third World that, far from constituting another, secondary, dimension of the Cold War, have been central to it and a major catalyst of the nuclear arms race itself.⁴ In terms of shaping the postwar world, guerrilla warfare, in its revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forms, has been at least as influential as nuclear weapons: yet it hardly figures in the orthodox curriculum of strategic studies. Beyond factors of academic and intellectual climate, other influences, what Kuhn politely terms 'institutional' ones, have certainly also played their part: with the brief exception of the late 1950s and early 1960s, there has been a shying away from a difficult and contentious topic, and, as the price of greater academic integration with the 'real' world, a growing concentration on those aspects of 'reality' deemed suitable for study by donors of funds, at corporate and state levels.⁵

There are, none the less, three respects in which this mutual neglect has not been

made clear that (a) many alliances have as their original purpose the suppression of revolution within member states and (b) that one of the main reasons for the collapse or ending of alliances is that revolutions occur within some of the constituents: the fates of SEATO, CENTO and the Warsaw Pact should make this latter point evident enough, victims, respectively, of the Vietnamese, Iranian and Eastern European upheavals. Indeed CENTO fell victim to revolution twice over: its initial form, the Baghdad Pact, had to be abandoned in favour of CENTO after the Iraqi revolution of 1958.

² See for example the overview of the sociological literature in Stan Taylor, *Social Science and Revolutions* (London, 1984).

³ Fred Northedge, *The International Political System* (London, 1976), pp. 28–30; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 127–128.

⁴ I have developed this argument in my *The Making of the Second Cold War* (London, 1983). Some writers on strategic studies, including Alexander George, Raymond Garthoff and Michael Mandelbaum have discussed this interrelationship, but it has in the main, failed to find sufficient place in analyses of the postwar arms race and strategic competition. For example, Garthoff's *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington, 1987), makes mention of Soviet fears of a US invasion of Cuba but greatly understates the importance of this, eminently rational, concern in the Soviet decision to station missiles on the island. In conventional British academic studies of the nuclear arms race the impact of Third World revolutions rates hardly a mention.

⁵ The chronology of funding and publication of US works on internal wars and their international dimensions tells its own story: a rush of interest, motivated by concern in the wake of the Cuban revolution, in the early 1960s, followed by a taut silence once the difficulties of the Vietnam War became evident. The impact, explicit and tacit, of the Vietnam War on the academic study of International Relations has yet to be analysed.

absolute and where elements of an interaction of IR and revolution can be identified. There is, first of all, a body of literature within IR that has explicitly focused on analytic and comparative issues presented by revolutions: the works of Kissinger, Rosecrance, Wight, Rosenau, Kim, Calvert.⁶ The compensation here is that, despite its exiguous quantity, the quality, the sharpness with which central issues are posed, is usually high. Despite the fact that most of this literature is a decade or two old, it merits careful reading and assessment and has, in the permanence of the issues it poses, stood the test of time. Secondly, revolutions are present within IR in a disguised form, within topics presented from an alternative analytic starting point, but where the existing literature can be re-read and reconstituted so as to be of relevance to revolutions: this is true of some of Rosenau's works on transnational linkages, of the literature on intervention (causes, practicalities, ethics), and, albeit in a most distracted way, in some of the literature on terrorism.⁷ Thirdly, there is some literature in cognate social sciences that is accessible and relevant for the construction of an IR discussion of revolutions: if this is true of certain historical works that stress international aspects of revolution (Palmer, Rude, Hobsbawm on the late eighteenth century, Carr, Liebman, Deutscher, Harding on the Bolshevik revolution⁸) it is even more so with the 'third wave' of sociological writings on revolution that stresses the role of interstate competition in the causing of revolutions and in the formation of post-revolutionary states. As with the IR writings on the subject, these sociological texts may be meagre in number, but their analytic and theoretical implications are considerable.⁹

Examination of the place of revolutions in IR would seem to comprise three broad areas of inquiry. The first is historical: that of locating the place and influence of revolutions in the history of the international system, and in the formation of the international milieu of the twentieth century. The least that can be said here is that the role of revolutions, à la Hannah Arendt, has been systematically understated. The second area of enquiry is descriptive, the examination of the international dimensions of revolutions themselves, to ascertain how far any regularities of political behaviour can be identified. The existing, mainly realist, account of the international system assumes that it has already ascertained what these regularities are, and finds them confirmatory of realism's assumptions: there may, however, be more to the story than that. The third, most fundamental, area of enquiry concerns theory, that is, what theoretical issues the study of revolutions poses for IR. This leads to an examination

⁶ Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored* (New York, 1973); Richard Rosecrance *Action and Reaction in International Politics* (Boston, 1963); Martin Wight, *Power Politics* (London, 1966), chapter 7; James Rosenau (ed.), *International Aspects of Civil Strife* (Princeton, 1964); Kim Kyong-won, *Revolution and International System* (New York, 1970); and Peter Calvert, *Revolution and International Politics* (London, 1984).

⁷ The hypostatization of terrorism in academic writing on IR has been one of the discipline's more sloppy chapters. Terrorism, in the sensational sense in which it has normally been used, is a subaltern feature of International Relations. See Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (second edition, London, 1989); Fred Halliday, 'Terrorism in Historical Perspective', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 9, 2 (Spring 1987).

⁸ R. R. Palmer, 'The World Revolution of the West', *Political Science Quarterly*, March 1954; R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution, 1760-1800*, 2 vols. (London, 1959 and 1964); George Rude, *Revolutionary Europe 1783-1815* (London, 1964); Jacques Godechot, *La Grande Nation* (Paris, 1956); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848* (London, 1962); E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, vol. 3 (London, 1973); Marcel Liebman, *Leninism under Lenin* (London, 1975), part 4; Isaac Deutscher, *Marxism, Wars and Revolution* (London, 1984), and his biographies of Stalin and Trotsky; Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought*, vol. 2, (London, 1981).

⁹ These points are well brought out in Jack Goldstone, 'Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation', *World Politics*, April 1980.

of how far each of the established paradigms can, and cannot, cope with a proportionate acknowledgement of the importance of revolutions, and how far apparently central assumptions of the discipline may need re-examination in the light of such an investigation. This theoretically probing should, however, take us beyond the domain of IR: it should be a two-way process, that is, should examine not only how revolutions affect IR, but how far proper consideration of the international context can pose questions for established sociological or political explanations of revolution.

Revolutions and their effects

The first point of discussion is what is meant by the term revolution itself. As with all other concepts in social science, the concept 'revolution' has evolved over time, and contains variant meanings. The use to which concepts are put within IR depends, to a degree unacknowledged within our discipline, on definitions imported from other areas. If this is true of concepts such as state, power, and system, revolution is no exception. The discussion that follows here uses it to refer to revolutions in the restricted, 'hard', sense of the term, defined by the Skocpol and others, that is, social and political revolutions of a major kind. It rests, in particular, on three major contributions to the study of revolutions which serve to delimit them as a separate and comparatively rare historical events, but ones that, far from being marginal or atypical for the history of states and the international system, are major points of transition and formation without which the modern world would not be as it is.

The first of these contributions, published in 1979, was Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions*: this identified revolutions on the basis of degree of transformation of the society, and destruction of the old state as a distinct category of historical event:

Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below. Social revolutions are set apart from other sorts of conflicts and transformative process above all by the combination of two coincidences: the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social transformation.¹⁰

Beyond these specifications, Skocpol, while allowing for mass mobilization and democratic aspiration, focused on the relation of revolutions to states—they sought both to overthrow existing ones and to consolidate new ones. In doing so, she highlighted how interstate competition, through economic, military and political domains served to weaken states and so prepared the way for revolution—something evident in the three cases she considers, France, Russia and China.

The second foundation of this study of revolutions is J. B. Barrington-Moore's *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, published in 1967. This examined the contrasting paths to industrialization and liberal democracy of a range of major states and showed how their contrasted trajectories owed much to the patterns of agrarian power present in the pre-industrial period. But Barrington-Moore's work also developed two arguments that ran in the face of much conventional thinking on

¹⁰ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolution* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 4.

revolution: in contrast to the prevailing idea of a 'peaceful', non-revolutionary, path pursued by England and the USA, he pointed to the extremely violent chapters through which those countries made the transition to modernity, the latter including the first industrialized war of modern history, that of 1861–5, which he considered to be a revolution. At the same time, in discussing countries which apparently avoided violent transitions by not having revolutions, Germany and Japan, he brought out the violence that did accompany their transitions, both through repression within and through aggression without. In sum he argued that there was not a choice between a violent and non-violent path, but that both the revolutionary and the non-revolutionary paths were riven with human cost. Revolutions were, therefore, not aberrations from a non-violent alternative, but one form of an inevitably violent transition to a modern society and often a form that, on the international scale, was less violent than that of the German–Japanese alternative.

The third constituent of the conception of social revolution used here is the as yet untranslated classic by the German writer Karl Griewank, *Der Neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff, Entstehung und Entwicklung*, published in Weimar in the GDR in 1955. Griewank traced the development of the concept of 'revolution' from its early astronomical and constitutional sources through to the 'modern' concept that issued from the French revolution.¹¹ This enabled him not only to identify different meanings of the term, but also to discern more clearly the constituents of that modern usage: that revolutions involved not only political or constitutional change, but also mass involvement in that process; that the central object in revolutions was control of the state, and, hence, that no concept of revolution was possible before the modern state emerged (the same being true, incidentally, of any concept of the interstate or international system); that revolutions were now seen as moments of transition to a new, better or even perfect, world, the beginnings of an age when all would be different. It is this 'modern' conception of revolution, analyzed by Griewank and inherited from the French revolution, that has permeated so much subsequent discussion.

The questions of definition and historical role of revolutions are, of course, central to any discussion of these upheavals in the international context. Much of the discussion of revolutions in the IR literature uses revolutions in a much looser sense to include coups and outbreaks of violence, where it does not simply dissolve them into a behaviourist spectrum. Most IR literature also assumes that revolutions are moments of breakdown, rather than transition, and that these moments are distinguished by violence, in contrast to stable but repressive regimes, which are not. In fact, while each of the major contemporary IR paradigms consider revolutions to some degree, the conceptual bases of these considerations vary to such an extent that their findings approach the incommensurable. This is not only because of general conceptual differences, but because each uses a different concept of revolution. A condensed, necessarily summary, overview of how each of these three main paradigms treats revolutions can make this clearer.

For realists, revolutions tend to be seen in terms of the changing foreign policy styles and priorities of states, such that these now constitute a 'revisionist', 'dissatisfied' or unbalancing factor in the international system and must be suitably tamed: revolutions are a breakdown in an otherwise orderly world. In themselves, they

¹¹ A classic article that covers some of the same ground as Griewank is A. T. Hatto, "'Revolution'", An Enquiry into the Usefulness of an Historical Term', *Mind*, October 1949.

require neither explanation nor historical contextualization. Even the most perceptive realist analysis, that of Rosecrance, operates with this model. Kissinger's *A World Restored* exemplifies it. For behaviourists, such as Rosenau, revolutions are part of the spectrum of violence, and like viruses can spread transnationally: but this violence is seen in psychological terms, abstracted from social cause or international context, and is again implicitly contrasted with a supposedly non-violent, because stable, alternative. Historical materialism, present in IR in its tamed 'structuralist' variant, pays much more attention to revolutions and sees them as forming precisely the formative, transitional, role identified by Skocpol and Barrington-Moore, and as involving substantial social and political change. In contrast to the realists and behaviourists, historical materialists regard revolutions in a positive light, and also start by looking at the international factors, defined by capitalism and imperialism, as the context in which any one individual revolution is to be located. In an apt aside, Marx criticized the assumptions of a theory based on the great powers by stating that the pentarchic nineteenth-century order, that of the five powers, would be swept aside by 'the sixth great power' revolution. However, such is the focus of historical materialism on the international dimension of revolutions that it has difficulty in explaining why revolutions appear to be confined to specific states and exhibit such distinctly national and nationalist characteristics. A summary examination of three areas of analysis already identified—historical, descriptive, theoretical—may bring these respective anomalies more clearly into focus.

Revolutions and the formation of the international system

In a striking passage in chapter 6 of his *Power Politics*, itself entitled 'International Revolutions', Martin Wight observes: 'It might well be asked why unrevolutionary international politics should be regarded as more normal than revolution, since the history of international society has been fairly equally divided between the two'.¹² In an attached footnote he develops this point: 'If, taking conventional dates, we regard 1492–1517, 1643–1792 and 1871–1914 as unrevolutionary, and 1517–1648, 1792–1871 and 1916–60 as revolutionary, there are 256 years of international revolution to 212 unrevolutionary'. There can be dispute about a date or phase here or there, but the underlying point Wight is making is cogent: that for much of the history of the international system, relations between states have been determined not by 'normal' factors—Wight names law, custom and power politics—but by abnormal, revolutionary, ones in which ideological divisions play an important part, and in which it is the aim of states to alter, in a substantial way, the political and social orders of others. Wight argues that in the end, doctrine gives way to power politics, but his recognition of the importance of revolution in the international system, dominant for over *half* the history of the system, is striking. The 'anarchy' has been as much one of ideology as of a sovereignless system of states.

The earlier examples of this importance need only the briefest of mentions: in the sixteenth century, the ideological and political upheavals of the Reformation, itself a case of transnational 'linkage' and ideological interaction; in the seventeenth century, the wars and revolutions of the 1640s, when no less than six European states saw

¹² Wight, *Power Politics*, p. 92.

upheaval in the same year, 1648;¹³ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the 'Atlantic Revolution' of 1760–1800.¹⁴

The importance of revolution in the twentieth century has been immense. The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 established the fundamental fissure of this century's international relations, one that, on the basis of two competing and distinct socio-political systems, has dominated and contributed to the frictions of the inter-war period and of the postwar world. In the four decades since 1945 this already constituted divide has been compounded by, and interacted with, the spate of third world revolutions whose very enumeration is that of the major postwar crises—China, Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, and in the late 1970s and 1980s, Cambodia, Angola, Ethiopia, Iran, Nicaragua, Afghanistan. It has been these issues above all which have fuelled international tensions and it has been policy towards Third World revolutions that has led to US presidents giving their names to 'Doctrines'. Equally, it has been Third World challenges that have done more than anything to challenge the positions of US presidents—as Truman, Johnson and Carter especially had cause to reflect. The partial decline of US hegemony in the 1960s was to a considerable extent a result of Vietnam.

The history of the postwar world is largely, but not exclusively, that of the response of the international system to revolution. In the four decades up to the late 1980s, revolution provided the historical foundation for the bipolar system, fuelled the nuclear arms race, provided case after case of great power competition, and threatened the domestic political stability of major powers. If the world of the late 1980s appeared safer it was at first because of the (debatable) belief that 'regional issues', most of them revolutionary, were now being resolved.¹⁵ There then followed the upheavals in Eastern Europe of 1989, which dealt a mortal blow to the bipolar world that had subsisted since 1945.

Historical generalizations

Revolutions are international events in their causes and effects and betray a striking degree of uniformity. Generalization on the basis of historical examples cannot provide a substitute for theoretical investigation, but it can provide raw material for identifying a number of problems that themselves affect theoretical work. In the case of revolutions, there are at least four areas in which such generalizations can be examined: cause—that is, how far international factors produce revolutions; foreign policy—that is, how revolutionary states conduct their foreign relations; responses—that is, the reactions of other states; formation—that is, how, over a longer time-span, international factors, the system as a whole, constrain the post-revolutionary internal development of states and shape their political, social and economic evolutions.

As already observed, revolutions occur when two broad conditions are met—that the dominated revolt, and the rulers cannot go on ruling. Most intuitive discussion of

¹³ On the revolutions of the 1640s, see Geoffrey Parker and Lesley Smith (eds), *The General Crisis of the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1978).

¹⁴ See Palmer, 'World Revolution', and *Democratic Revolution*.

¹⁵ I have gone further into the relation between East–West conflict and Third World revolution in my *The Making of the Second Cold War* and in *Cold War, Third World*, (Routledge/Hutchinson, 1989). An interesting, if belated, recognition of the linkage is to be found in the Pentagon report, *Discriminate Deterrence* (Washington, 1989).

international causes of revolutions focuses on the first of these two factors, the stimulation of revolt, but it is mainly via the second dimension that international factors promote revolution. International factors play a multiple role in bringing about revolutions, but it is above all because of this second factor, the weakening of states, that they contribute to change: through defeat or debilitation in war, through international economic changes that destroy traditional orders, through provoking conflict between states and societies as a result of the states' mobilization of resources to pursue international competition, through the removal of guarantees by a hegemonic power. In other words, while states may use the international dimension and the resources it provides to consolidate their position at home, they may also find themselves weakened internally as a result of their international activities and alliances. The collapse of the Eastern European communist regimes in 1989 was above all a result of the removal of a Soviet guarantee to intervene militarily on their behalf. The other kind of cause, the encouragement of revolutionaries, is evidently important: arms, political backing, above all ideological encouragement and the force of example. But without the concomitant weakening of states such external stimulation is limited in its effects: witness the example of South Africa, where, despite immense pressure from below, the state retained its power for many years.

The foreign policy of revolutionary states is a large area in itself, and remarkably understudied. Some of the literature focuses on the issue of 'new diplomacy', that in the role of ideology and unconventional action in the foreign policy of revolutionary states.¹⁶ But this ideological challenge to the norms of international behaviour is, at most, a secondary issue: ideology and interference also play a part in the foreign policies of status quo powers, and revolutionary states have distinctive foreign policies above all because of the different goals they pursue, rather than just the methods they use. This is an important matter to examine, because in much of the literature, realist and liberal, there is an assumption that the goals of revolutionary states are little different from those of other states. Liberals, for their part, argue that if only revolutionary states were treated better, they would not seek to 'export' revolution, to alter relations within other states. The historical record is rather different: all revolutionary states, almost without exception, *have* sought to promote revolution in other states. The challenge they pose to the international system is not so much that they propound a new form of diplomacy, or conduct international relations in a distinct manner, but that they make the altering of social and political relations in other states a major part of their foreign policy and regard themselves as having not just a right, but an obligation, to conduct their foreign policies on this basis. Much of the literature, realist and transnational understates this, as does much of the policy produced to resolve differences between the USA and Third World revolutions in the postwar epoch: with regard to China, Cuba, Iran, or Nicaragua. No such resolution was, however, possible given the internationalist commitment present within the foreign policies of these states: this reflected both ideological components of their revolutions and domestic pressures to pursue such a foreign policy.¹⁷ Over time, such commitments are tempered, but this should not detract from

¹⁶ For example, Andrew Scott, *The Revolution in Statecraft, Informal Penetration* (New York, 1982).

¹⁷ An example of such an argument with regard to the Iranian revolution is to be found in the conclusions to James Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion* (New Haven and London, 1988); Bill proposes twelve ways in which US policy in such revolutionary situations can be improved, to reduce conflict with the revolutionary state. These are, in the main, counsels of perfection.

the recurrence of the internationalist commitment in modern revolutions, from the Girondins, through the Comintern, Lin Piao and Che Guevara, to the pan-Islamic appeals of Khomeini: indeed in this, as in many other respects, it is striking how true to form, how conventional, the Iranian revolution has been, beyond its particular religious form.¹⁸

The argument as to which provokes which, international revolution or international counter-revolution, is in historical perspective misplaced: both processes begin, for internal and systemic reasons, and feeding on each other lead to confrontation. If revolutionary internationalism is an almost universal result of revolutions, so is its opposite, counter-revolutionary internationalism, the attempt by status quo powers to prevent the spread of revolutions and reform and, where possible, overthrow revolutions. Two more issues that this interaction poses are, perhaps, more rewarding and take us to the heart of the international system. One is the issue raised by Richard Rosecrance and Raymond Aron, and further developed by Stanley Hoffmann, of the tendency of the international system to homogeneity, that is, towards a similar organization not just of relations between states, but of the internal political and social systems of states.¹⁹ Both revolutionary and counter-revolutionary internationalism derive from this tendency to homogeneity, beyond specific international security considerations about the military threat posed by one state to another (the point is *not* whether the Sandinistas, did, or could ever, pose a military threat to the USA). The second issue which the record of both forms of internationalism points to, despite the claims of intervention, is the durability of the states system. All revolutionary states have tried to promote revolution abroad, to 'export' it: in the straightforward sense of the term, none has ever succeeded. Khomeini's failure to promote revolution in Iraq was true to form. The creation of comparable regimes in neighbouring states come only through interstate wars that *then* permit the implantation of homologous regimes (the *republiques soeurs* in the 1790s, the 'People's Democracies' in the late 1940s). In the same vein, counter-revolution nearly always fails as well, except in rare cases, either of interstate war again (France 1815, Hungary 1919) or of severe internal division within the revolutionary regime itself (Iran 1953, Dominican Republic 1965, Grenada 1983). For all the battering which it takes in periods of revolutionary conflict, the state system tends to hold in the short run.

This 'short-run' is however, significant, in that most of the realist discussion of 'socialisation' of states focuses upon the immediately post-revolutionary period and the apparent taming of states. The fact that they introduce truces, abandon internationalist rhetoric and participate in diplomacy does not, however, mean that revolutionary states have been entirely socialized. A brief look at the longer-run record of revolutionary states shows that, as long as post-revolutionary internal orders remain intact, they continue to pose a challenge to the system in other states. The USSR promoted revolution abroad effectively not in the 1920s, when it was weak, but in the 1940s, in the aftermath of World War II, and in the 1970s, when the USA was challenged by a tide of Third World revolutions. The Cuban revolutionary

¹⁸ Fred Halliday, 'Iranian Foreign Policy since 1979: Internationalism and Nationalism in the Islamic Revolution', in Juan Cole and Nikki Keddie (eds), *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven and London, 1986).

¹⁹ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War* (London, 1966), pp. 373–81. This presumption of homogeneity in internal political and social arrangements is distinct from that found in the English school concept 'international society': the latter is concerned only with homogeneity of international values and practices. See Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (London, 1977), chs. one and two.

wave failed in Latin America in the 1960s: but in 1975 Cuban forces intervened to consolidate the MPLA in Angola, in 1977 they helped fight off the Somali invasion which threatened, with a degree of external encouragement, the Ethiopian revolution, and in 1979, the Sandinistas, to a considerable extent, armed and encouraged by Cuba, came to power in Nicaragua. In January 1989 most experts were arguing that the Iranian revolution, humbled by war and economic crisis, would now make its peace with the West. One old man thought differently: the Rushdie crisis ensued.

This longer-run perspective suggests that the 'socialization' of revolution is less easy than realist orthodoxy would have us believe, and it also suggests that this recurrent, if usually frustrated, challenge of revolutions is a product as much of internal as of external factors. The conclusion this leads to is that until there is a reimposition of homogeneity, that is, until the internal orders of divergent revolutionary states revert to the conventional orders of other powers, revolutionary and non-revolutionary powers will remain in conflict. There could be no more obvious testing ground for this supposition than the current changes within the USSR: here a new, more conciliatory foreign policy is being evolved *pari passu* with a reform of Soviet politics and economics. The latter appear set substantially to reduce the differences between the Soviet and capitalist systems: it is on the basis of such a diminished heterogeneity that the changes in Soviet foreign policy have evolved and have, to some degree, been accepted in the West.

Five theoretical problems

The present paper has argued that examination of the interaction of revolutions and the international system raises questions not only for the study of revolution, but also for IR itself. By way of eliciting these implications, it is possible briefly to outline five areas in which, by placing revolutions more centrally in the picture of IR, some broader theoretical rethinking may follow.

International and domestic links

Revolutions force us to question the central, realist, assumption that internal/domestic structures can be excluded from the study of international relations. The major exponents within IR of the international effects of revolutions—such as Rosecrance and Rosenau—have posed this very clearly by arguing for the inclusion of domestic factors in the study of foreign policy making and its effects, and it is not an accident that Waltz, in his 1979 restatement of realism, should have argued so strongly against. His division of theories into 'systemic' and 'reductionist', 'elegant' as it may be, is untenable: the briefest examination of how revolutions have contributed to international conflict, to war in its strictest sense, shows how the interactive chain—international system/domestic system/international system—provides a central feature of how these wars came about.²⁰ The wars of the 1760s contributed to the

²⁰ Rosenau's concept of 'fused linkage' captures this interrelationship well. On Waltz's refusal to accept this as a legitimate part of IR theory, see note 1 above.

French revolution which led to the Napoleonic wars. The pressure on the Ottoman empire led to the Young Turk revolution of 1908, which precipitated the Balkan wars and hence stimulated World War I. The First World War led to the Bolshevik revolution which determined Russia's role in World War II and beyond. By focusing only on the 'systemic', Waltz's model paradoxically understates the force of the international. As a result of interstate competition and its impact within society, changes occur that then lead to further interstate conflict. This is the formative interaction that has shaped so much of international history.

The concept of the state

Revolutions are about states, and yet IR operates with a problematic, increasingly contested, concept of the state itself.²¹ As much as other developments in IR and elsewhere and the social sciences, revolutions compel introduction of a new, second, concept of the state, a sociological category of the state as an administrative-coercive entity, in addition to the legal-political one normally used in IR. The concept of the state conventionally used (if rarely defined) in IR precludes examination of precisely those processes that make revolutions international: the effects of interstate competition on state-society relations, the weakening of state-society links by the impact of revolutions in other states, the determination of revolutionary foreign policy by the state-society conflicts of post-revolutionary periods. The second, more restricted concept of the state enables us to see states in their Janus-like character, as the two-faced entities that look both inwards, towards the society they seek to dominate, and externally, towards other states and/or societies with which they interact with the goal of strengthening their own internal positions. With this two-faced concept of the state it also becomes possible to re-examine a feature of the international system that conventional theory takes for granted but to which it supplies tautological or axiomatic replies, namely *why* states compete. The conventional answers, in terms of maximization of power in the international arena, leave out the domestic determinants.

Homogeneous and heterogeneous systems

The domestic factor in interstate activity brings us to the still unpacked question posed by Rosecrance, Aron and Hoffmann, namely, that of homogeneity and heterogeneity. At one level, it might appear excessive to see a tendency to homogeneity of internal orders within the international system. After all, states with different orders can trade and exchange ambassadors with each other. If they respect non-interference and agree to a diversity of internal system, that is, 'co-exist'

²¹ I have discussed this point further in my 'State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda', *Millennium*, 16, 2 (Summer 1987), reprinted in Hugh Dyer and Leon Mangasarian (eds), *The Future of International Relations, The State of the Art* (Macmillan, forthcoming). For a discussion within realism of the two-sided activity of states, see Michael Mastanduno, David Lake and John Ikenberry, 'Towards a Realist Theory of State Action', *International Studies Quarterly* 33, 4 (December 1989).

peacefully, then heterogeneity should not be a cause of conflict: Kim, for example, on the basis of his study of the French revolution, sees this as a practicable solution. Moreover, an element of heterogeneity could be seen as beneficial to states, since it provides an 'other', an alien and menacing object in the external world, on the basis of which states can mobilize social and political support within. These are not imaginary considerations: cases where such toleration or reinforcement through diversity have operated are plenty. But the balance is, on the historical evidence, in the other direction; that is, heterogeneity does promote conflict. There is, in other words, a presumption of homogeneity within the system. This is most obviously true in a negative sense: if states are organized on different bases, then they are more likely to feel threatened by the other.

The most important international and internationalist impact of revolutions lies not in the deliberate actions of states, but in the force of example: the French revolution proclaimed the rights of man, seized the land of the aristocrats and cut off the heads of the king and queen. The Bolshevik revolution overthrew the monarchy and proclaimed a state of the working class. Iran's impact has been exemplary and ideological, way beyond the identifiable reach of the Islamic Republic. Even where states do not seek to promote their model, as most do—the 'malignant charity' denounced by Burke—the knowledge of what they have done, or are believed to have done, acts as a catalyst: it disturbs established orders. The serial collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989 was a remarkable instance of such a demonstration effect. The problem of homogeneity goes, however, beyond this issue of exemplary alternatives, in that it obscures what is perhaps the more fundamental issue namely the role of homogeneity in a positive sense in reinforcing states, that is, in reinforcing the 'normal' interaction of stability of states. States are not isolated units: they exist in an international context, and their practices, constitutions, social and economic orders derive reinforcement from the fact that other states behave like them. Nor is this a recent development, as the literature on 'interdependence' too easily implies. Capitalism and the modern state arose in an international context, not the other way around.

This points to the idea that the international dimension is central to explanation not only of the destabilization of states when there is heterogeneity, but also to the stability of political and social orders when there is homogeneity. Most of the sociological literature on this underplays the international dimension: whether in the Durkheimian debate on common culture and its role in social cohesion, or in the Marxist debate on the dominant ideology, there is inadequate recognition of how the force of example through similarity and reinforcement serves to consolidate specific social orders.²² Yet the most important underpinning of any ideology, the claim that what exists in a given social and political order is eternal, natural and immutable, derives confirmation from such a reinforcement. Once it becomes evident that there

²² On the contrasting powers of 'dominant ideology' and 'common culture', theses, see Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Brian Turner, *The Dominant Ideology Thesis* (London, 1980). These writers do not discuss how international factors, ideological and more material, can contribute to the formation, strengthening and weakening of specific ideologies, dominant or subordinate, within any one society; but it is not difficult to see how their argument can be extended to show how important such external factors, confirmatory and challenging, can act upon a specific society. The force of example alone plays an important part. One has only to chart the global spread of such phenomena as universal suffrage or respect for human rights, or of religious trends, be these in the Reformation or contemporary Islamic societies, to see how external forces can shape internal ideological systems.

can be different orders—that there can be republics, or countries where women have the vote, or where houses can be properly insulated—then the ‘naturalness’ of any given order collapses.

In other words, the key to understanding the ideological challenge of heterogeneity lies in identifying the pre-existing ideological role of homogeneity and reinforcement. If nothing else, this serves to bring out the importance of the ‘international’ in analyzing any one social or political order: the ‘international’ does not just become relevant when things break down—when there is a political menace from outside, an invasion, a rival economic power—but is equally important in the constitution and reproduction of stable, apparently self-standing and autonomous, states. The ‘international’ matters when things ‘go right’ as much as when they ‘go wrong’. As the historical sociologists have reminded us, the ‘international’ created the State, not vice-versa.²³

Revolutionary induced war

The relationship of revolutions to wars hardly needs underlining, both in the ways wars cause revolutions and vice-versa. Many revolutions have led to wars, and at no time more than in the early 1980s: in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iran, Angola, Nicaragua. The historical record alone suggests that any study of the causes of war, and of means to predict or prevent war, requires identification of the onset and impact of revolutions. Yet to do this involves broaching a difficult but recurrent feature of the debate on international relations, namely the relation of security between states, ‘vertical’ security, and security within states, ‘horizontal’ security. The assumption of most literature, and of the UN Charter, is that it is possible to discuss the one, vertical security, without addressing the second, what goes on within states. The reason for avoiding this is evident, since if too close a relation is established, then the unwelcome policy and moral conclusions follow that those concerned to prevent wars, conflicts between states, should prevent radical changes within them. Security requires stability and ‘counter-revolution’.

Those who recognize the linkage are compelled either to be consistent and thorough-going counter-revolutionaries, or to argue for a permanent world-wide revolutionary process, on the grounds that conflict between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary states is inevitable and that therefore there cannot be security for revolutionary states as long as its opponents remain in existence. Of those who have drawn the first connection, Metternich and, in his *A World Restored*, Kissinger, were perhaps the most prominent and lucid, but the Brezhnev Doctrine expressed a similar outlook. Lenin, Stalin and Mao, with their theory of the inevitability of war between socialism and capitalism, have represented the second conclusion. Even before nuclear weapons, however, it was evident that despite the close link between the two dimensions of security such a combination of the two was not inevitable. The consensus has been to avoid the problem, with the result that the international community was unprepared for the outbreak of wars that followed the Third World

²³ Recent contributions to the field include John Hall, *Powers and Liberties* (London, 1986) and Michael Mann, *States, War and Capitalism* (Oxford, 1988).

revolutions of the 1970s. Beyond more realistic and historically informed awareness of how interstate conflict may follow social revolution, this recurrent linkage also suggests that greater attention needs to be given to ways of making the international system more flexible, so that challenges to security within states do not lead to interstate war. The greatest mistake would be to maintain the idea that conflict at the international level can be isolated from that within states.

Character of the international system

These four issues within IR theory as a whole lead to a fifth, one underlying the way in which each of the major paradigms within IR treats the question of the international dimensions of revolution, namely the character of the international system itself. As with the concept of revolution, so with that of international system, each of the paradigms presumes concepts that differ significantly from each other. For realists the system is constituted by interacting states. For pluralists and behaviourists states remain important, but the system allows of other interactions that do not operate through states—variously categorized as linkages, interdependence, transnational processes. For historical materialists, the international system is constituted by one global socio-economic system, that of capitalism, superimposed on which there exist political structures playing various important, but ultimately secondary, derivative or superstructural, roles: for one, orthodox, school of historical materialists the socialist countries had abstracted themselves from this system, for others, such as Wallerstein, no such partial escape is possible. In either case there exists an international system not by virtue of interaction between separate units, as is the case with the realists and transnationalists, but by virtue of the unity of the determinant level, the socio-economic.²⁴ The subsequent formation and development of states, later nation-states, takes place within an already established system. International politics is not politics between states but civil war, within one, international, social system.

The implications of revolutions for these three models of the 'system' are considerable. On the one hand, the realist and transnational theorists understate the degree to which the apparently separate states and societies have been formed and continue to exist within an international context defined by common social, economic and ideological features. In other words, their model of the 'system' makes it difficult to discern why revolutions have international effects. The conventional Marxist model suffers, however, from the opposite problem, namely the exaggeration, on the basis of socio-economic factors, of the unity of the international system, and the underestimation of how states—artificial, arbitrary, interactive as they may be—and associated nationalist ideologies nevertheless act to fragment and cushion the international system as a whole from revolutions in particular states. The argument therefore leads to an examination of how the international character of the economy and of capitalist society and culture as a whole interact with the division of the world

²⁴ For historical materialist analyses of international dimensions of revolution, see: Giovanni Arrighi, Terence Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Anti Systemic Movements* (London, 1989); Michael Lowy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: the Theory of Permanent Revolution* (London, 1981).

into states, and the attendant fragmentation of territories, populations, coercive capacities and particularist ideologies this entails. The choice comes down to a theory that sees international relations as, in the end, one between states, and an alternative that looks at the system as one of social conflict on a world scale, mediated and fragmented by states.

The historical sociologists, international political economists and analysts of revolution all confront this question of what constitutes the system, also the central issue in IR. The least we can say is that no adequate answer, framed in historical and theoretical terms, has yet been arrived at. The study of revolutions as international phenomena, beyond its intrinsic validity, can provide one means of approaching that question, and quite a few others.