

## Key terms + ideas

- social revolution
- free-rider problem
- J-curve
- Foco Strategy
- Narodniks vs. Bolsheviks
- War Communism
- Collectivization/Kulaks
- The German Social Democratic Party

## Key questions

**Q: What is a social revolution? How is it different from political revolution or a coup?**

**A:** For Skocpol, social revolution characterizes a change in the state's institutions and society's social structures. She differentiates the idea of social revolution from political revolution through its rapid impetus and fundamental consequences for broader social order. Unlike Davis's description of revolution as as violent civil disturbances where a group with a broad base of support displaces the previous ruling group, Skocpol emphasizes the rapid and basic transformation of the state and class structure. Neither describe a coup, however, which shares similarities to Davis's definition of revolution with its violently-natured displacement of a government but without the broad base of support.

**Q: What is Olson's key argument? How does it relate to the themes discussed this week?**

**A:** Olson tries to explain why collective action, or a group of individuals that tries to efficiently provide a public good, is so difficult to achieve. He concludes that smaller and more similar (otherwise known as homogenous) groups are better able to overcome the free-rider problem inherent to collective action dilemmas. Per Olson, these groups can more easily leverage positive and negative selective incentives to solve free-rider problems.

Olson's logic of collective action can help us explain why revolution, or other collective action problem, is not as common as other authors this week might suggest. Olson's logic can also be applied in other parts of our semester such as to motivate Bates' logic behind African marketing boards.

**Q: What are the key structural factors of social revolution that Skocpol identifies?**

**A:** Skocpol identifies three necessary conditions for social revolution. First, the state must be weak via (a) agrarian bureaucracy and (b) military defeat. State weakness is necessary because the incapacitation of administrative and military structure provides an opening for peasants revolution. Second, peasants must be insurrection-prone by through bolstered solidarity and autonomy. Finally, Skocpol points to the role of marginal elites (often radical urban elites) in coordinating and channeling the mass movement to reform the state's institutions and society's social structures.

## Week's readings

- Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations*, pp. 17-25 (Parts I-IV).
- Skocpol, "France, Russia, China: A Structural Analysis of Social Revolutions", pp. 133-166.
- Marx and Engels, "The Communist Manifesto", pp. 128-146.
- Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution", pp. 5-19.
- Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 16-93) and Chapter 6 (pp. 150-174).

## Review questions

Check your understanding of this week's material and key ideas with the following questions.

1. According to the authors this week, when does revolution happen?
2. How does each author define revolution, and are they trying to explain the same outcome? Are Davies' cases truly revolutions?
3. What are the important drivers of collective action or social revolution according to each author?
4. What type of argument does each author make (ie. voluntarist or structuralist), and which do you find most compelling?
5. What is an example of a collective action problem from your life? What about an example from another week this semester?
6. Skocpol cites a quote from abolitionist Wendell Phillips: "Revolutions are not made; they come." Do you agree? Would Skocpol? Marx? Davies?
7. To what extent is Davies responding to Marx? (To what extent is Skocpol responding to Marx?) What does Davies mean by the "mood" of a people? Where do societal expectations come from, and how are they met or not met?