

# Social Revolutions I: Explaining Revolution

## Section 8

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Sima Biondi

Fall 2024

Gov 20: Foundations of Comparative Politics

- 1 Reminders
- 2 Discussion: explaining collective action
- 3 Discussion: explaining revolution

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  - Goodwin



Last week: we talked drivers of autocracy.

In this section, we're talking about **revolution**, in particular:

1. What is revolution?
2. What explains revolution?
3. How do you get to revolution?

- 1 Reminders
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# Let's play a game!

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Close your eyes

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Close your eyes - we know that revolution requires collective action.

You have two options:

1. you may leave 5 minutes early no questions asked or
2. you may gamble for the chance of leaving 10 minutes early (you will not miss any material from the last 5 minutes).

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You have two options:

1. you may leave 5 minutes early no questions asked or
2. you may gamble for the chance of leaving 10 minutes early (you will not miss any material from the last 5 minutes).

For each person who chooses to gamble, I will roll a die. **If I get a 6 just once, then everyone will get to leave 10 minutes early.** If I do not roll a 6 then only those who did not gamble will get to leave early.

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Moment of truth: <https://freeonlinedice.com/>

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⇒ collective action problem

## Collective action: building blocks of revolution?

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- Olson: group of individuals that tries to efficiently provide a public good
- Key problem: overcoming free-riding



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- Olson: size and makeup of group matters; small groups provide →
  - creates *social selective incentives* which ease collective action

## Collective action and revolution?

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- Skocpol: the mirs
- Davis: relative deprivation

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What is a (social) revolution?

## Defining revolution

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What is a (social) revolution? How does a revolution differ from a coup?

- Davis: violent civil disturbances where one ruling group with a broader base of support displaces the previous group
- Skocpol: rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures a.k.a. political revolution + social change

Do revolutions require violence? What role does the military play?



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Do revolutions require violence? What role does the military play?

Was what happened in Egypt and Tunisia during the Arab Spring considered a revolution?

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  - Has this process happened before? Yes, the Industrial Revolution was the result of revolting against feudal system

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3. Marginal elites:

## Causes, otherwise known as timing

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3. Marginal elites:

- Revolutionary sects emerged out of politically-organized group of university-educated Russians

When are revolutions most likely to occur? Out of prosperity, decline, or a combination of the two?

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What prevents revolution?



<https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/turkey-attack-leaves-mail-carrier-with-broken-hip-13012235/>

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