

THE REVOLUTION AND THE MILITARY. AN ANALYSIS OF THE EGYPTIAN AND IRAQI REVOLUTIONS

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Abstract

The paper tries to assess the role the military plays in revolutions. The first part of the study focuses on the manner in which the competing theories of revolutions try to explain and accommodate the military's participation in revolutions, attempting to show that the limits of these theoretical enterprises call for a renewed research into the subject at hand. The second part of the paper tries to build a conceptual model, starting from the hypotheses of Charles Tilly, Samuel Huntington and Mehran Kamrava, tested on two particular cases – that of the 1958 Egyptian Revolution and that of the 1958 Iraqi Revolution that can better account for the military's participation in revolutions and explain when does the military become a revolutionary force and what are the characteristics of revolutions in which the military plays a key-role.

Keywords: *theories of revolution, military, Egyptian Revolution, Iraqi Revolution*

Introduction

Theories of revolution have looked over time at different aspects of this particular political phenomenon. Be it the characteristics that may make the revolutionary dynamic similar to natural occurring phenomena (such as disease or storms and hurricanes), the powerful, violent and sudden overthrow of an existing political structure and its replacement with a new regime, the all-encompassing transformations of social and political structures, most theories of revolutions have very little to say about the military's involvement in these events. Most theories regard the military's participation as only one of the multiple elements that enforce and make possible the revolutionary conjecture, whereas other theories limit themselves to noticing the empiric-derived presence of the military (or of military representatives) in the core of the revolutionary dynamic, without attempting to find an explanation for these occurrences or to conceptualize the participation of the military to revolutions.

The paper looks present theoretical outlook on this matter and underscores the limits of explanations provided by theories of revolution on the involvement of military in the revolutionary dynamic, especially in terms of explanatory power. Debating the most important theories of revolutions (and especially the outreach of the few ones that do try to tackle the problem of military involvement), I am trying to ascertain whether the military can be a leading revolutionary force (1), and if so, identify under which conditions can the military set out on a revolutionary path (2) and underline the main characteristics of these events (3), by looking at the Egyptian Revolution of 1956 and the Iraqi Revolution of 1958. Furthermore, I am trying to underline which of the hypotheses of revolutionary theory can be tested against these two cases and to what extent can we build upon these previous findings in order to develop a conceptual model of the military's

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involvement in revolutions (4). The result should be hopefully a more accurate explanation of the relation between the military and revolutions.

Theories of revolution and the military

In discussing the relation and debates between different theories of revolution I follow the order used by Jack A. Goldstone¹ and John Foran², which analyzes theories of revolution from a combined chronological and methodological perspective. The earliest remarks about the role the military may play during revolutions are made by the first generation of revolution theorists, the “natural history³” school, best represented by the works of Lyfford P. Edwards and Crane Brinton. The “natural history” of revolutions is the first attempt to study the field of revolution in a scientific manner, trying to free the analysis of the phenomenon from the inherent moral or ideological influences of previous undertakings (be they Marxist or, on the contrary, conservative writings). It is the firm belief of the theorists of the “natural history” school that revolutions can be studied in a quasi-natural scientific manner, by means of comparing the most important cases (generally, the study is confined to the American, French, English and Russian Revolutions) and theorizing on the repeated empiric occurrences identified as a result of the comparative undertaking.

The “natural history” theories of revolution seem to be the first attempt of explaining the phenomenon in social sciences (formulating a comprehensive research program, Brinton, for example emphasizes the need of applying natural scientific methods to the study of revolutions⁴). However, “natural history” theories remain within the field of understanding⁵ (there are several underlying assumptions about the nature of revolution – its similarity to natural phenomena, the natural tendency of social systems to regain their balance, the phased dynamic of the revolution etc.)

The role of the military in revolutions is not particularly an important one, from the point of view of the “natural history” theorists. Not only isn’t the military discussed as an institution *per se* (the only remarks in regard to the military concern the military defeat suffered by the Old Regime as one of the probable multiple causes of revolution⁶), but the “natural history” theories concern themselves mostly with identifying political regularities, in order to enforce their view of revolutions as a naturally occurring phenomenon and as a dynamic that, while following its own internal conditions has a virtually preset course. The other reference to the military’s involvement is also indirect: according to Brinton and Edwards⁷, the conflict between the radical and moderate revolutionary factions opens the possibility for a military’s accession to power, which ends the radical overtone of the revolution and leads the New Regime through a period of pragmatic and status-quo accommodating period.

A somewhat different theoretical account of revolution is given by Louis Gottschalk⁸, who compares the revolutionary process with the change of goods and commodities in capitalist

¹ Jack A. Goldstone, “The Comparative and Historical Study of Revolutions,” in *Revolutions, Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies*, Jack A. Goldstone ed. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008), 2-4

² John Foran, “Theories of Revolution Revisited: Toward a Fourth Generation,” *Sociological Theory*, 11, no. 1(1993): 1

³ Goldstone, *Revolutions*, 2

⁴ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution (Vintage Edition)*, (New York: Random House, 1968), 8-13

⁵ Martin Hollis, Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 1-5

⁶ Goldstone, *Revolutions*, 3

⁷ Goldstone, *Revolutions*, 4

⁸ Louis Gottschalk, “The Causes of Revolution”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 50, no.1 (1944): 1-3

economies. The essential elements of this model are the “revolutionary demand” (seen as the existence of several “challenges”, political or social problems that require a swift solution, of whom the public opinion is aware), the “revolutionary offer” (the existence of a political revolutionary problem and of possible revolutionary leaders) and the weakness of the counter-revolutionary forces. In opposition to the conceptual scheme of Brinton and Edwards, Gottschalk’s arrangement can eventually accommodate the military’s involvement, but has very little to say about their specific participation to revolutions.

Summarizing, the “natural history” theories encounter serious problems in regards to their explanatory power and their generalizing capacity. The comparative undertakings are based on only a handful of exceptional cases and the attempts of building categories lead only to an oversimplified division between “popular” or “democratic” revolutions, “rightist” revolutions, “territorial-nationalist” revolutions and “abortive revolutions”⁹. In regards to the military’s role in revolutions, the “natural history” theories ascertain only the possible ascension to power in the late phases of the Revolution of a leader with military background, who moderates the states policy and ends the revolutionary radicalism.

For the two selected cases, not only do the theories fail to accurately explain the role of the military, but there are also problems in regards to the predictions that can be drawn from Brinton’s or Edwards’ conclusions. In both cases, the military is the critical military actor, who manages to perform a successful takeover of power and implements the essentially revolutionary policies. The moderate “finale” of the revolution, under a military’s leadership predicted by Brinton can be accounted for, but the dynamic in both the Egyptian and Iraqi case is totally different from the natural course the revolution was supposed to take.

The relation between the moderate and radical revolutionary factions, as set out by the “natural history” theories is partly inconclusive. There are several tensions between the revolutionary factions, but the leading actors (be they moderate or radical) are part of the military. Even if we attempt to divide the revolutionary leaders into factions (such as the conflict between the more radical Nasserite group against the rather moderate faction led by Neguib in Egypt or the more radical view on revolution of Qasim confronted with the radical pan-arabic projects of the Arif brothers in Iraq), Brinton’s conclusion (the accession to power of a soldier) is misleading, as the most important conflicts that concern maintaining or gaining political leadership are all between military (in the Egyptian case, the feeble attempts of the Liberal Wafd party or of the Muslim Brotherhood to gain power are easily thwarted, whereas in Iraq the Ba’th led challenge is successful only on the long run, after a decade of political struggle). Moreover, for a considerable period, it is the radicals, not the moderate military who hold the upper hand and shape the institutions and policies of the New Regime. In addition to that, the particularities of the Iraqi case make the radical-moderate divide extremely superficial – the confrontation between the nationalism of Qasim, the Socialism orientation supported by the Ba’th party and the adherence of several key-figures to the Nasserite model make the labelling process an extremely subjective undertaking.

Summarizing, while the “natural history” hypotheses can explain for the moderate and pragmatic nature of the revolutionary state, the theories cannot explain why is the military the main (and to a certain point, the only) revolutionary actor and why the conflict between moderates and radicals (if we assume there is such a manifest divide in the Egyptian and Iraqi cases) is limited solely to actors coming from the military ranks. Furthermore, the moderate’s eventual win, the onset of the Thermidorian reaction or the “convalescence” Brinton is talking about¹⁰ can be

⁹ Brinton, *Anatomy*, 21

¹⁰ Brinton, *Anatomy*, 205-7

accounted for only if we make concessions to the temporal frame (in the case of Iraq, the period may be shorter, the radicalism waning by 1963, when the Ba'th-ists eventually gain power, but in the case of Egypt, only the 6-Days War may mark the conventional end of the revolutionary entanglements¹¹).

The second “generation” of revolutionary theorists¹² tries to explain the revolutionary phenomenon focussing on a thorough identification of its causes and on the relations between the birth of modern states and processes of political violence¹³. The underlying assumption is that revolutions (and many other violent political conflicts) stem from the increased dissatisfaction of an increasingly share of the population of the current state of affairs (reflected in sudden economic and/ or political downturns). The “second generation” category is nevertheless a very ambiguous label (Goldstone and Foran, the main proponents of this taxonomy disagree over several writer’s inclusion into this category, Charles Tilly’s works being one of the most relevant cases for the problems encountered when talking about the precise temporal and methodological limits of the second generation¹⁴). Moreover, Goldstone’s own view towards the matter seem to have changed (in his 1982 article he considered the second generation one concerned with the task of elaborating “general theories of revolution”, whereas in his 2008 revised version of the study he considered the second school to be one developing the “theories of collective violence”).

Several theories that fall into this category have little to say about the military’s role in revolutions, although, by expanding the field of research (no more are only the “great revolutions” the main field of study, rebellions, revolts and coups become a legitimate focus of attention for the scholar) and by undertaking a more thorough look at the causes of such phenomena, develop several instrument of studying revolutions.

James C Davies’ theory of “relative deprivation”¹⁵ explains revolutions (and the Egyptian Revolution in particular) as the result of a gap between expectations and actual popular satisfaction. The ever-existent gap between needs and their satisfaction only becomes revolutionary when its sudden increase comes after a period of marking improvements in the standards of living (after a period in which the gap has decreased). The main conditions are therefore (in resonance with de Toqueville’s findings about the French Revolution) the sudden overthrow (1) of a rather positive trend (2).

Davies’ theory is questionable however on several levels. On the one hand, identifying the exact indicators of deprivation is an almost insurmountable task – GNP, unemployment (in the case of a rural agricultural society as that of Egypt and Iraq) are hardly the adequate tools to prove the exact level of deprivation a group can withhold (the challenge is to explain why other Middle-Eastern countries that experienced the same decrease in GNP, or rise in unemployment). Furthermore, the period of time covered by Davies in both the Iraqi and the Egyptian case questions his assumption of a “sudden” drop in estimated general satisfaction (the foreign policy of Egypt, considered a serious reason for dissatisfaction is scrutinized over a period of more than a decade). Last, but not least, Davies does not discuss the role of the military (contrary to his

¹¹ Mark N. Cooper, “The Demilitarization of the Egyptian Cabinet,” *International Journal of Middle-East Studies*, 1, no. 2 (1983), 203-6

¹² Foran, *Sociological theory*, 2

¹³ Jack A. Goldstone, “The Comparative and Historical Study of Revolution,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 8 (1982): 190

¹⁴ Foran criticizes Goldstone over Tilly’s inclusion in the second generation, considering the latter to belong to the structuralist wave by “both period and perspective”. In spite of the problems with the classification system, I used it because of its widespread use in theory of revolution studies and in order to assure a greater degree of coherence in discussing competing theories of revolution.

¹⁵ James C. Davies, “Toward a Theory of Revolution,” *American Sociological Review*, 27, no. 1 (1962): 17-9

intentions, he does not dwell on the dissatisfaction or resentment of the military towards the political establishment).

Similarly, Neil Smelser's and Chalmer Johnson's theories point to a downshift, in terms not of popular discontent, but of social institutions development¹⁶. Both consider that revolutions are the likely outcome of an imbalance between different societal subsystems and a catastrophic economic or political event. Neither Smelser's, nor Johnson's account, tries however to explain the military's participation in revolutions.

Samuel Huntington tries to build a synthesis¹⁷ of the two previous directions of research (the relative deprivation and systemic imbalance theories). Defining revolution as a "rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership and government activity and policies"¹⁸, Huntington sees the revolution as a modern phenomenon. Its political character resides in the inability of existing political structures and institutions to assimilate the participation in the political arena of newly mobilized groups. In discussing different types of revolutions, Huntington manages to set out an explanation for the military's involvement in revolutions.

Huntington proposes several kinds of divisions between revolutions. First, he argues that modern revolutions fall into two different categories (each following a different pattern of events). Therefore, we encounter "Western" revolutions (in which a traditional regime, dominated by a landed aristocracy is confronted with fiscal and financial problems and is the subject of critics of the intellectual elite, eventually succumbing on an institutional level, being unable to institutionalize the participation of new groups to political life) and "Eastern" revolutions (where a partially modernized regime coexists with a new set of political institutions, specifically designed to accommodate the participation of new groups to policy, the struggle between the two forms of organization ending with the victory of the challenger, who eventually manages to extend the scope of the new institutions to the entire society).

Furthermore, Huntington divides political conflicts into four different categories¹⁹, based on their duration, the mass participation they involve, the intentions of the revolutionary leaders and the domestic violence the conflict spurs: internal war (the attempt of both political and social structures), the revolutionary coup (which generates important political changes and possible social structure changes), the palace coup (whose essence lies only within the plotter's desire of leading the executive institutions) and the reformatory coup (whose objectives are the modification of political structures).

At the same time, Huntington also focuses on the political transformations of the regimes, following political conflicts. Keeping true to his modernization theory, Huntington considers that considering the degree of political participation (setting out three possible categories – medium, superior and inferior political participation) and the degree of institutionalization of the regime, we can identify six different types of polities – praetorian regimes (mass regimes and participative regimes), civic regimes (liberal and radical) and traditional regimes (oligarchic and organic regimes)²⁰.

¹⁶ Jack A. Goldstone, "The Comparative and Historical Study of Revolutions," in *Revolutions, Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies*, Jack A. Goldstone ed. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008), 5

¹⁷ Goldstone, *Revolutions*, 5

¹⁸ Samuel A. Huntington, "Revolution and Political Order," in *Revolutions, Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies*, Jack A. Goldstone ed. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008), 37

¹⁹ Raymond Tanter, Manus Midlarski, "A Theory of Revolution," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 11, no. 3 (1976): 265-6

²⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *Ordinea politica a societătilor în schimbare*, (Iași: Polirom, 1999), 70-9

Huntington tries to explain the causes and the effects of the military's involvement in the Egyptian Revolution, attempting to identify the causes and the particular characteristics of the process. His theoretic undertaking remains fluid mainly because the military's role is not the focus of Huntington's attention (the references to the military are basically scattered throughout the *Political Order*, a book that remains dedicated in the end to theorizing the relation between modernization and political change). Huntington considers that the military's revolutionary role is limited solely to societies on the verge of modernization – in complex, modern societies, the military tends to play a more conservative part. The cause of the appearance of numerous praetorian regimes in the Arab world is, for Huntington, the direct result of Ottoman conquest and rule. The military is more adept at gaining power simply because in these countries (and in Egypt in particular) the military is the only political competitor able to build governments and to enforce a certain political and societal order (students, monks, nascent political parties can challenge the political establishment quite successfully, but cannot build governments). The new regime manages to move away from the praetorian sphere, but remains within the confines of the radical civic regime, because the military is incapable of creating new political institutions (their attempts of building parties fail, resulting most of the times in a single-party political system)²¹

Huntington's analysis explains, at least partially, several outcomes of the Iraqi and Egyptian Revolutions. The military revolutionary leaders, while the most capable political competitors in the two countries (the religious challenge of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt or the communist challenge in Iraq are easily thwarted in the early stages of the revolution) are unsuccessful at creating new political institutions in the post-revolutionary period. Huntington's insight, as to the artificial character of the political parties created by the regime seems to be vindicated by the empiric evidence – most mass political organization both in Iraq and in Egypt have a superficial nature, counting little towards the institutionalization standards Huntington emphasizes.

Several arguments have to be made about Huntington's theory of political modernization. First, we can argue that the theory, as Charles Tilly puts it, remains one that emphasizes a gap (no longer a psychological one, but still a powerful imbalance)²², which opens the gate for all the criticism directed at the second generation theories – the utmost impossible task of adequately measuring the main indicators (in this particular case, modernization) and the circular logic behind the model (basically, Huntington's theory predicts that all successful political conflicts account for an imbalance between political mobilization and political institutionalization, whereas the lack of such conflicts is explained by the inexistence of such an imbalance).

Furthermore, Huntington's explanations as to the nature of military involvement in revolutions are superficial – he merely sets out a number of conditions for the military participation, insufficiently defined however (the nature of the Old Regime is not thoroughly explored, as is the nature of the revolutionary one; the “regime complexity” variable that can set the difference between the “conservative” military and the revolutionary one is another element that can only explain difference in outcome but not the internal logic of military enacted revolutions). There is no indication whether the few conditions he emphasizes are necessary or sufficient conditions for the military's involvement in revolutions.

Summarizing, the second generation theories have little to say, with the notable exception of Huntington, on the role of the military in revolutions. The military is merely a part of the conjectures that may make a revolution probable (military defeat remains an underlying, but not necessary and neither sufficient cause of revolution). Huntington's insight on the military focuses

²¹ Huntington, *Ordinea politica*, 218

²² Charles Tilly, “Does Modernization Breed Revolution,” in *Revolutions, Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies*, Jack A. Goldstone ed. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008), 48-9

mainly on the capacity of military-enacted revolutions to transform political regimes, albeit in a limited manner, based on their superior capacity of competing in a political arena.

As a precursor of the “structuralist wave”, Barrington Moore also chooses to focus on the process of modernization, considering however that the essential relations that determine a country’s historical path towards democratic development or dictatorship is shaped by the economic relations between the landed aristocracy and the peasantry. The shaping of a balance between the nascent bourgeoisie and the landed upper classes, the lack of a reactionary alliance between the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy and the development of commercial agriculture account, in Moore’s opinion, for France’s, England’s and the US’ transition towards democracy. In Moore’s words, “no bourgeoisie, no democracy”²³.

The development path of Japan and Germany however shows a different story. The existence of a powerful landed aristocracy (and of bureaucratic statist elites) prevents the nascent bourgeoisie of asserting its role. The landed aristocracy and state bureaucracy alliance manages at the same time to strike a bargain with the bourgeoisie (by which the latter forfeits its political rights in exchange to the right to make money²⁴), prevent the occurrence of peasant and bourgeois revolts or rebellions (by means of a powerful coercive instrument) and incorporate the anti-capitalist claims of low-level military officers with a possible rural background (or sympathetic to rural anti-capitalist claims) in the form of a renewed emphasis on traditional hierarchy and social organization. Revolutions from above, such as these, Moore considers, enact only political changes envisioned by a part of the landed aristocracy and bureaucratic elites against their most reactionary counterparts.

In Moore’s account, the military plays a dual role. On the one hand, the leaders of the military are part of the bureaucratic elite that forges the new political institutions of a society in which the bourgeoisie is a reliable albeit politically limited actor. Junior officers, sympathetic to rural claims are played by the dominant alliance in furnishing a renewed symbolic emphasis on traditional forms of authority (their initial objective – a dismantlement of the emerging commercial capitalist structures – remaining elusive).

Another structuralist explanation of the revolution is the one given by Charles Tilly. His initial account of the revolutionary process is built in marked opposition to Huntington’s theory on modernization. Consequently, Tilly stresses the fact that revolution is first of all a political phenomenon²⁵. Considering that a key factor in his analysis is the breaking of the unitary conceptual frame of revolution (i.e., in order to better explain revolutionary dynamic and outcomes, one need to stop looking at the revolution as a unitary phenomenon), Tilly initially considers that revolutions occur whenever a government initially controlled by a single polity (defined as a set of contenders that “regularly lay successful claims on the government”) becomes the object of mutually exclusive competition between different polities²⁶. The revolution ends when the government is once again the object of a single polity. Tilly underscores the fact that the essential element of his model is the capacity of different competitors of mobilizing resources (gaining and maintaining membership inside a polity depends on passing several membership tests, all of which are basically tests of a competitor’s capacity to mobilize resources).

In a later development of his theory²⁷, Tilly considers that the defining character of revolution is given by the relation between *revolutionary situations* and *revolutionary*

23 Barrington Moore Jr., *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 418

24 Moore, *Social Origins*, 437

25 Tilly, *Revolutions*, 48

26 Tilly, *Revolutions*, 49

27 Charles Tilly, *Revoluțiile europene (1492-1992)*, (Iasi: Polirom, 2002), 26-32

consequences. The revolutionary situation occurs whenever a coalition of political contenders formulates demands of state control unacceptable for the existing political leadership (1), a significant part of the population supports the contesting coalition's claims (2) and the political leading elite is incapable of effectively repressing the contesting coalition (3). Tilly also identifies two facilitating conditions – the adherence of a part of the leading political elite to the contesting coalition (1) and the leading elite's loss of control over the military instrument (2). The essence of the revolutionary situation is however the question of multiple sovereignty, a concept which Tilly takes from Brinton, who considers that dual sovereignty appears whenever “within the same society, two sets of institutions, leaders and laws demanding obedience, not in one single respect but in the whole interwoven series of actions which make up life for the average man”²⁸.

The *revolutionary consequences* are an expression of political and not social change: the structure of power, the meaning of justice, the legitimacy of the state, the way in which the state engages in international warfare²⁹.

There are two important findings of Tilly in regard to the military's participation in revolutions: first, we have the first formulation of the military's role as one of the facilitating conditions of a successful revolution (a position also supported by Goldstone³⁰). Secondly, we have the first discussion about the military officer's relative advantage in the political struggle, given the military's better capacity of mobilizing the resources demanded by the political struggle during the revolutionary situation. On the other hand, looking at both the Iraqi and the Egyptian case, we encounter several problems in regards to the theory's explanatory capacities. Even if Tilly tries to build a model that can successfully accommodate proximate forms of political conflict³¹, both the multiple sovereignty and the contesting coalition concepts require a considerably larger time frame, than that of the Iraqi and Egyptian revolutions. Secondly, if we look at both the Iraqi and Egyptian case, we note the total lack of a contesting coalition – all revolutionary leaders stem and remain an active part of the military for a considerable period.

A different explanation of revolutions is that given by other structuralist theories. Their common starting point is a series of assumption about the nature of the state, as scored by Goldstone³²: all states are organizations tasked with extracting resources (1); there is a permanent competition between states (2); some states fare badly under these circumstances and experience political crises (3).

Eisenstadt, for example sees the military as one of the contending forces in a neopatrimonial state³³ - a state with seemingly modern bureaucracy and institutions, but in which political leadership is exercised through a network of patronage by the leader. His inability to cope with economic or political challenges and his lack of success in playing the military leadership, the bureaucratic elites and the traditional aristocracy against each other accounts for the revolution. Eisenstadt's and Goldstone's is however a highly contextual model (there is no way to evaluate the scope and extent of the patronage network except as the highly subjective interpretation of a series of budgetary allocating decisions), in which the military plays no determining role.

Ellen Kay Trimberger's account of revolutions understresses the inability of civil elites leading the states to enact the necessary measures in order to increase its competitiveness in the international arena. The necessary reforms are to be implemented by a group of officers if two

²⁸ Crane Brinton, *Anatomy*, 133

²⁹ Foran, *Sociological Theory*, 4

³⁰ Goldstone, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 190

³¹ Tilly, *Revoluțiile europene*, 26-9

³² Goldstone, *Revolutions*, 7

³³ Jack A. Goldstone, “Revolutions in Modern Dictatorships,” in *Revolutions, Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies*, Jack A. Goldstone ed. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008), 70-3

conditions are met: a significant group of officers is “independent of the classes in control of the means of production” and there is a significant cohesion between the members of this group³⁴. Postulating relative state autonomy to class relations and conflicts (an element Trimberger shares, as we will see, with Theda Skocpol), Trimberger however is challenged by the somewhat inconsistent selection of case-studies. As Quee-Young Kim accurately show, Trimberger fail to accurately define the process of “revolution from above” and fails to take into consideration cases such as Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. All in all, Trimberger deals with states where the military’s intervention in political affairs plays the role of catalyst of identification and mobilization along national lines. Peru, Japan and Turkey may all face different international challenges, but in all the three studied cases the military’s resort to nationalism is radically different from the case of unstable and radically divided states, where state-building is the main priority of government.

In a later attempt³⁵ to look at the military’s role in Latin America, Trimberger considers that in states unable to enact economic and political development, the military comes to play the role of the main initiator of development measures. The conditions under which the military can become such a force are identified by Trimberger: the military are not recruited from the dominant “landed, commercial or industrial dominant class” and they “do not have vested interests in the dominant means of production” (1); and these bureaucrats aren’t controlled by an institution representing vested interests of the dominant class (2)³⁶.

Once in power, the military can set on a course of economic development that can follow three paths – *state initiated national capitalist development* (military and civil bureaucrats gain power, enact a nationalization program, but allow small external financial investments, destroying at the same time the landed class’ economic power), *state initiated dependent capitalist development* (different from the first path by the fact that the civil bureaucrats foster those sectors of the bourgeoisie tied to international capital) and *state directed socialist development* (in which autonomous civil and military bureaucrats who gain power after a mass revolution set out to nationalize all foreign investments, the state becoming the sole promoter of economic change and development).

Although Trimberger’s is the main account that is fully dedicated to the role of the military in revolutions there are several issues concerning its validity. First of all, the case of both Iraq and Egypt follow more likely the third path, that of *state directed socialist development* (perhaps more evident in the case of Egypt). The problem is that there is no coalition of civil and military bureaucrats taking power in either country. In the case of Egypt, directly emulated by that of Iraq, it is the military that decides to take power and enact the necessary reforms. Furthermore,

Secondly, both the Iraqi and Egyptian cases are instances of revolution from above and not of mass-mobilizing revolutions. The new leader’s accession to power is swift and is not the result of a prolonged social and political struggle that extends beyond the rank of the military. In addition to that, Trimberger’s path-oriented model cannot account for Egypt’s and Iraq’s subsequent development – although the landed class’s influence and economic power is seriously hampered, the relation to foreign capital in the initial phase of the revolution is virtually non-existent (In Egypt, it begins only as a result of Sadat’s 1970’s policy³⁷ of opening up the economy to foreign

³⁴ Quee-Young Kim, review of *Revolution From Above: Military Bureaucrats and Development in Japan Turkey and Peru*, by Ellen Kay Trimberger, *Social Forces*, 60, no.4, June 1982, 1201

³⁵ Irving Louis Horowitz and Ellen Kay Trimberger, “State Power and Military Nationalism in Latin America,” in *Comparative Politics*, January 1976, 223-5

³⁶ Horowitz, Trimberger, *Comparative Politics*, 226

³⁷ Alain Rousillon, “Republican Egypt interpreted: revolution and Beyond,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. Martin W. Daly, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), vol 2, 334

investments, whereas in Iraq signs of the reversal of nationalizing policies emerged only after the Ba'th-ist coup of 1968³⁸).

Theda Skocpol's explanation of revolutions is perhaps the most influential theory in the structuralist category. However, we must observe that the theory initially proposed by Skocpol has undergone several changes. The model, elaborated initially with Ellen Kay Trimberger tries to build on several Marxist hypotheses: Marxist theory is not generally relevant, but relevant only to specific circumstances and specific societies (1); successful revolutionary movements exist only in objective revolutionary situations (2); the class domination concept remains a valid instrument of social structure analysis(3)³⁹.

Revolution is under these conditions a complex relation between three important sets of variables, the first being the "non-reductionist"⁴⁰ view of the state (in spite of influences from the dominant class, the state maintains its own logic as an organization that extracts and distributes resources in order to maintain internal order and cope with external pressure). The second variable is the relations between the peasantry and the landed classes; whereas the third variable is the intense military and commercial competition between states integrated in a world-wide economic system (Skocpol and Trimberger's view is based on Immanuel Wallerstein world-system theory)⁴¹.

Skocpol further elaborates the theory in her influential 1979 *States and Social Revolutions*. According to her refined theory, revolution occurs whenever two conditions are simultaneously met: a political crisis (set in movement by the incapacity of a monarchy or dominant class to deal with the challenges of a predominantly agricultural economy and the pressure of the international competitive environment) and a peasant rebellion (Skocpol draws on the research of Eric Wolf about causes and conditions for rural rebellion⁴² in discussing this element). The result of the revolution is a state more powerful in weberian terms, capable of undertaking economic enterprises, which uses political mobilization in order to better fight its foreign and internal enemies⁴³.

The applicability of Skocpol's theory to the Egyptian and Iraqi cases shows the limits of this particular structuralist outlook. While revolutionary regimes are decidedly more centralized and more bureaucratized than their Old Regime counterparts (with a possible exception in the case of Iraq, where the struggle for power inaugurated by the 1958 Revolution lasts for nearly a decade), there is no adequate instrument to measure their performance in regards to their external or internal coercive performance (in the case of Egypt, the proximate conflict, that with Israel, will see the Egyptian army time and again defeated by the Israeli forces, whereas in the Iraqi case the only important military involvement – the Iraq-Iran War – leaves open the question of the regime's new found military prowess).

Furthermore, even if we consider the revolutionary outcome to be true, in Skocpol's terms, both the Iraqi and Egyptian revolutions do not follow the causal pattern laid by the aforementioned scholar. Both revolutions are top-down movements. Furthermore, there are no serious signs of a state breakdown neither in Egypt, nor in Irak. The military's accession to power is surprising and the most important aspect is that systemic conditions, for both states (as for most Middle Eastern states) are roughly the same – the end of the colonial age and the opening stages of the Cold War.

³⁸ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 207

³⁹ Ellen Kay Trimberger and Theda Skocpol, "Revolutions: A Structural Analysis." in *Revolutions, Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies*, Jack A. Goldstone ed. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008), 64

⁴⁰ Trimberger, Skocpol, *Revolutions*, 66-7

⁴¹ Trimberger, Skocpol, *Revolutions*, 68

⁴² Eric R. Wolf, "Peasants and Revolutions," in *Revolutions, Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies*, Jack A. Goldstone ed. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008), 55

⁴³ Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions. A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4

From Skocpol's point of view, the challenge is not necessarily to question why did the Iraqi or Egyptian revolutions occur, but why similar movements were not a common occurrence in the 50's all over the Middle East. Moreover, both states are rather functional up to the point of the revolution and neither experience peasant rebellions (although the conditions for such movements – the existence of a powerful landed class and its tense relations with the peasantry did exist: in Egypt the landed classes and the monarchy are the owners of roughly 40% of arable land, whereas in Iraq, 95.8% of the arable surface is the property of the top 18% owners⁴⁴).

In addition to that, there is also the problem of the military background of the officers. Skocpol asserts that whenever the military that do take power have rural backgrounds; their immediate objective is not the enactment of far-reaching reforms but cementing their hold on power⁴⁵.

A reviewed view⁴⁶ on the link between revolution and mass mobilization (and in an attempt to bridge the differences between her own theory and Huntington's hypotheses), Skocpol concedes that there is an element of democracy in the development of revolutions, namely the increase of popular participation in political life. Skocpol concludes that while the economic success of the revolutionary regimes may still be a matter of debate, their ability to motivate the populace to undergo excruciating sacrifices in times of war is certain. The revolutionary elites, considers Skocpol, were able to build (in all the three cases studied in *States and Social Revolutions*) the strongest states in those countries facing the most dire geopolitical situations or which demanded the waging of humanly costly and prolonged international wars.

All in all, Skocpol's attempt to refine its previous theory, while making important steps from the Wallersteinian-like image of international relations (the addition of geopolitical concepts or the discussion about hegemonic power⁴⁷) becomes a rather confusing picture of revolutions. She does not discuss the sometimes different and mutually exclusive underlying assumption of realism or geopolitical thinking. Furthermore, her exploration of mass military mobilization is merely an acknowledgement of a known fact (the revolutionary's regime ability to tap into new resources, based on the cunning use of ideology) that is not positively linked with her previous structuralist model she continues to uphold. Moreover, the ascertainment that revolutionary regimes fare better in strenuous circumstances is really a matter of debate – fact is military revolution is difficult to export and the cases of revolutions that succumbed under the material pressure of Old Regimes are quite numerous⁴⁸. All in all, Skocpol's late attempt to improve her theory tries to make way in for the influence of ideologies and a more subtle picture of the international environment.

A different conceptual scheme for the analysis of revolution is presented by Mehran Kamrava⁴⁹. He tries to move away from the agent-structure debate that has been renewed in the wake of the Iranian Revolution and the East European Revolutionary wave⁵⁰. Contesting Skocpol's neglect of the ideological factor in revolutions, Kamrava sets out to build a new classification of revolutions. He distinguishes between spontaneous, planned and negotiated revolutions. Structural forces are predominant in structural revolutions, whereas the agent's action

⁴⁴ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, (London: Saqi, 2008), 55

⁴⁵ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 290

⁴⁶ Theda Skocpol, "Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization," in *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, Theda Skocpol, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 279-280

⁴⁷ Skocpol, *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*, 288

⁴⁸ Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 330-5

⁴⁹ Mehran Kamrava, "Revolution Revisited. The Structuralist-Voluntarist Debate," in *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 32, no. 2, 317

⁵⁰ Said Amir Arjomand, "Plea for an Alternative View of Revolution," in *Debating Revolutions*, Nikki R. Keddie, ed. (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995), 144

is the main characteristic of the planned type of revolutions. Negotiated revolutions lie in between the two other categories.

Planned revolutions can be further divided into two different categories – those that result after a prolonged guerrilla struggle and those performed by superior military officers. Not all coups can be classified as revolutions, Kamrava argues, the difference between them being the objective of the military leaders (enacting a change in the social or political structures of the state contrary to the preservation of the same factors in the case of a coup without any revolutionary impact)⁵¹.

Furthermore, there are other criteria which set the two types of planned revolutions apart: the background of the military leaders (middle class educated leaders in the case of guerrilla movements; peasants or petty bourgeois in the case of the superior officers that take power); their ideological objectives (the sudden change in resource extraction and distribution in the case of the guerrilla movements versus the nationalist overtones of the second case); the phases of the revolution (guerrilla movements need to encompass rural areas, in order to build up their legitimacy and resource poll, whereas superior-officer led revolutions are largely confined to urban areas.

Trying to draw a conclusion from the analysis of the structuralist theories, we must conclude that in spite of the numerous controversies and debates that regard the role of the military, the structuralist school offers the most detailed account of the military's involvement or participation in revolutions. In some cases (most notably Moore and Tilly), the military's participation is rather a secondary, more likely facilitating cause of successful revolutions (in particular Goldstone and Tilly emphasize the need of the political leadership to maintain control of the military in order to prevent the contesting coalition's claim to political power). There is also a debate as to the influence of the background of the military officers – whereas Moore sees junior officers as mere pawns in the schemes of high level bureaucrats, providing the regime with a renewed ideological vigour, Skocpol denies their ideological commitment. On the whole however, the most important aspect is the debate as to whether the military can play a leading role in revolutions, Trimberger offering the only positive answer to this question.

Discussing military revolutions

In discussing the nature of the military's involvement in revolution I propose a conceptual model composed of four elements: the internal structural conditions of the revolution (mainly those discussed by Trimberger and Skocpol), the particular elements of the military ethos and organization, the facilitating factors of revolution and the international systemic conditions.

In terms of the aforementioned *structural conditions*, we notice that both regimes correspond to the template set by Skocpol and Trimberger. Both Egypt and Irak are exclusivist and somewhat repressive regimes; with an economic structure based primarily on agriculture (oil revenue in the case of Irak is not yet an important part of the national budget). State bureaucracy is underdeveloped (a somewhat expected occurrence, since both independent Egypt and independent Irak are fairly recent creations). Whereas in the case of Egypt one can argue about its semi-autonomous existence during the latter period of the Ottoman Empire, Irak is a state created from scratch in the aftermath of the First World War, from the administrative divisions of the defunct Ottoman Empire.

Essentially, state-building and nation building in both cases is one of the utmost imperative of both governments. The question of national identity is at the same time paramount – in the case

⁵¹ Kamrava, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 334-5

of Egypt, particularly because of its recently gained independence (and because the Sudan problem – its union with Egypt or its independence – is a fresh wound) and one of the most important problems in the case of Iraq, a deeply ethnically and religiously divided society, in which the underlying Sunni and Arab domination is a cause of many manifest conflicts. Moreover, in the case of Iraq, there is also the problem of powerful and autonomous tribal structures (reinforced by the land distribution, as a consequence of Ottoman reforms in the mid 19th century⁵²) and the question of parallel religious structures manifest in Shia communities.

We noticed earlier that neither regime breakdown, nor peasant uprisings precede the military's accession to power – there are however cases in both countries of urban unrest in the years preceding the revolutions. One has to note that, ironically, the revolutionary regimes undertake agrarian reforms: the more radical Egyptian take on the situation (several wave of nationalization and dividing state and private-own arable land to landless peasants) results a transfer of almost 42,000 hectares in favour of almost 300,000 families⁵³; in Iraq there is only one attempt of enacting these reforms, however the land distribution figures indicate a major shift in the land owning pattern (in 1973, the top 18% of land owners' quota has shrunk from 95% to 34.9% of arable land)⁵⁴.

On an international level, we notice that the largest claim for both countries is the alleviation or diminishment of British influence. However, we must observe that there is no recent occurrence in the international arena that can signal the intensification of pressures on the two states in the period immediately preceding the revolution – British influence is not increasing (on the contrary, British military requirements are largely symbolic, except for the Suez Canal Status in the Egyptian case, which, however, is almost a decade old problem) and military defeats (if we consider the 1948-1949 Arab Israeli War a relevant military undertaking in the case of Iraq) are also relevant only as a vivid recollection for the military.

The most important structural factor remains the absence of a politically motivated bourgeoisie. Neither in Iraq, nor in Egypt, does the bourgeoisie strike the bargain Trimberger talks about or resign itself to the position of economic actor devoid of political stakes Moore insists upon. Furthermore, in Trimberger's defense we must add that in neither country the bourgeoisie manages to become a promoter of economic development (the ups and downs of the Egyptian economy and the steadily increasing oil revenue flows in Iraq are a proof of the bourgeoisie's inability to foster development).

Summing up, the most important structural conditions in regard to both cases are different than those set by Skocpol or Trimberger. There is no considerable international pressure (or the kind of international pressure leading to regime breakdown) and this condition is not accompanied by the peasant rebellion factor Skocpol underlined in *States and Social Revolutions*. As to the bourgeoisie, neither in Iraq, nor in Egypt, do we encounter the typical bourgeois alignment indicated by either Moore or Trimberger and certainly not the politically motivated bourgeoisie whose role is essential for evolution towards democracy. However, one has to notice that both pre-revolutionary Iraq and Egypt are weak, unstable and recent states, marked not only by underdevelopment but by divisive ethnic and religious conflicts, in which the search answers to questions such as the role of the nation-state remain elusive.

The military's own organization and position within the state remains a key element of the analysis and it can explain why the Iraqi and Egyptian military became an effective revolutionary force. On the one hand, their success is also a measure of their possible competitor's inability to

⁵² Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 13-6

⁵³ Alain Rousillon, *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, 346

⁵⁴ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 1117

gain power. In Egypt, the “liberal” Wafd party is discredited by its cooperation with British authorities during the Second World War, whereas the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Communist party, although can develop a quite extend base of followers are unable to lay claims on the government (in Tilly’s terms, both never manage to pass the resource mobilization test). In Iraq, the military’s advantage is also a reflection of the same factors: the Ba’th is a reluctant partner of the military who eventually manages to gain power after almost a decade of subversive and political manoeuvres (basically learning to mobilizing resources and to contend political power), whereas the communists (the only mass-based political organization) is hindered by two factors: widespread hostility of many actors towards communist ideology and the parties favourable attitude to minorities in a country deeply divided along ethnic and religious lines.

On the other hand, there are several key rules that define the military profession which, under certain conditions, allow the military to perform a revolutionary role. Samuel Huntington stresses the divide between civilians (defined as groups or institutions that concentrate sufficient power in order to establish the objectives of the military) and the military (defined as members of a profession that involves the state’s legitimate use of armed force)⁵⁵. Members of a profession are linked by three elements – *expertise* (the continuous gaining of skills and knowledge, which serves as an objective base of the membership and as a standard of evaluation within the profession), the *responsibility* of the profession (the military performs an essential role for the functioning of the state) and the *corporate spirit* of the profession (the solidarity among the ranks of the profession and the acute awareness of the differences between the member of the profession and the “outsiders”). Moreover, the military is both a bureaucratized profession and an organized bureaucracy – the military consists of a very solid hierarchy of ranks (which are supposed to denote their holder’s competence).

The military profession’s scope and use remains a state monopoly. Although all citizens are ultimately responsible for a state’s security, it is only the military that are held to this obligation. Consequently, the military is loyal not to the political leader who draws his objectives but to the state/ society he is obliged to serve and to protect.

In the Iraqi and Egyptian case several arguments have to be made about the military. First, of all the state institutions, it is the only highly bureaucratized one. In comparison to the feeble education, healthcare systems or the inadequate legislatures (which express only the contextual results of a highly pernicious electoral system in both countries and are unable to curb the power of the Executive), the military is probably the only functioning institution. The example of pre-revolutionary Iraq is perhaps the most relevant – the state’s only attempt to enforce its monopoly over traditional power structures is the forceful imposition of conscription. Military expertise also explains why the military fares better in comparison to civilian contenders of political power – they are better adept at preparing and using violence.

Secondly, another reason for which the military becomes engaged in political undertakings is the evolution of their relations with the civilian government. Normally, the military are trained to respect this division – the formulation of political objectives and the dual nature of warfare (both military and political) is deep instilled through a process of military education. However, the military can pass this threshold. The reason for this encroachment into political space is precisely the social responsibility of the military profession. Ultimately, the civilian authority becomes a largely contextual representative of the society or the state. The military does not regularly question whether this authority (be it a parliament or a monarch) is legitimate and is not concerned whether the authority is autocratic or democratic. As long as the political objectives set for the military are attainable, there is no need to investigate the nature of the relationship.

⁵⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, (Cambridge: Bellknap, 2008), 8-10

When military failures occur (such as the loss of the 1948-1949 Arab Israeli War) in a situation where winning was highly probable or whenever they are pitted against largely superior forces, the military seeks to identify the causes of failure (and the meddling of both monarchs into the affairs of the military, their dependence on foreign assistance, their inconsistent and highly unpopular promotions at the top of the army can all be considered among the ranks probable causes of the defeat). Moreover, these lines of questioning of the political authority's role, coupled with the fact that the military perceives its own failure as the inability to perform the function it was created to perform open the way to questioning the political authority's legitimacy.

Some authors have asserted that the military's intervention in the political arena depends on the influence Western education had in the training of the military⁵⁶. The Egyptian and Iraqi record is contradictory – while initial military schools designed to train the military were established by the British (in 1881 in Egypt and in the 1920s in Iraq) and a increasing number of higher officers received education in British military academies, almost all the participant at the revolutions were the products of national military schools and academies (with the single notable exception of a Iraqi military leader⁵⁷, graduate of the London Engineering School).

Third, the military in pre-revolutionary Iraq and Egypt is one of the few (if not the only) meritocratic institutions. The army is a mean of social ascent in both societies (not only are children from modest backgrounds exempt from paying tuition fees, but in Egypt there is a 10% admission quota dedicated to children of peasant origins). Nearly all the Egyptian leaders have humble origins and are the product of such a policy⁵⁸. This factor can account for both their receptivity to problems related with land distribution and the revolutionary role the military plays (in spite of Moore's or Skocpol's considerations about the limits of the middle officers' role in revolutions).

The success of a revolution accomplished by military leaders is also the result of several contextually favourable conditions. In the case of both Iraq and Egypt, recent military defeat plays this role – but not in the way Charles Tilly and Jack Goldstone emphasize (military defeat produces a large number of disaffected men with military training, who can be mobilized by contending coalitions). As I showed earlier, the role of defeat is not a leading factor that contributes to state breakdown, but a cause of the military's questioning of the legitimacy of the precise keeper of civilian authority.

Another favourable factor is the revolution itself. Mark Katz conclusively shows that the most dangerous type of revolution is not that spread with military means, but the one who risks to occur independently (without foreign direct intervention) in other countries as well⁵⁹. The fact that the Iraqi revolutionary leaders emulated their Egyptian counterparts in all aspects (even the name of the conspiratorial cell, the "Free Officers" is common to both groups) is certain. Although it is difficult to speak of a revolutionary wave (as Katz does) in the Middle East, the influence of the Egyptian military on their Iraqi counterparts is eloquent.

In terms of Mehran Kamrava's concept of planned revolutions accomplished by military officers, both the Egyptian and Iraqi revolutions confirm his hypotheses. The July 1956 taking of power comes as the result of the military's careful planning of the event, whereas the Iraqi Free Officers show a slighter decreased degree of coordination (but manage nevertheless to assume

⁵⁶ William E. Odom, *On Internal War. American and Soviet Approaches to Third World Clients and Insurgents*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 132

⁵⁷ Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes*, 778-81

⁵⁸ Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt. From the Arab Conquest to the Present*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 117

⁵⁹ Mark N. Katz, "The Diffusion of Revolutionary Waves," in *Revolutions, Theoretical, Comparative and Historical Studies*, Jack A. Goldstone ed. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008), 150

power in the same way). Both regimes enact nationalisation policies and shifts in foreign policy by following a rather similar program that encompasses the elimination of feudalism⁶⁰, elimination of foreign dominance, increased Arab cooperation⁶¹ etc.

The role of ideology cannot be totally neglected. After all, Nasser's pan-Arabic nationalism forces him to pursue regional designs such as the United Arab Republic or the United Arab States. But there is a powerful instrumental value of ideology in both states – its role is at the same time one of legitimising the new government and outplaying the political opponents (either by discrediting them, as is the case of Egyptian liberals and communists in both countries, either by outbidding their political project – such as the case of the Muslim Brotherhood). The fact that the nationalism of the two revolutionary regimes is an eclectic combination of socialist ideas (the references to the “feudal” character of the Old regime, the condemnation of external “imperialism”), Arab, and Iraqi or Egyptian nationalism respectively partially contradicts Kamrava's conclusions. The military is by virtue of its organization a conservative institution. Its focus in both revolutions is therefore conservative, but not in a classical manner. Careful not to crush traditional structures (both regimes are careful around religious figures and organizations), the military embarks on a project of reforms meant to strengthen the state, offer a plausible definition of the nation, but maintain social order in a legitimate regime. The military's intervention in internal politics is first of all a move meant to strengthen order and legitimacy.

Last, but not least, one must also look at the *international systemic conditions*. Both revolutions occur during a period marked by the end of the colonial rule and the outset of the Cold War. The inability of the former colonial powers to intervene both before the revolution and against the revolutionary regimes offers the military an increased freedom of action. The decisive Suez episode only reinforces this argument (the US and the USSR are unwilling to tolerate the colonial convulsions of either France or Great Britain).

At the same time, the Cold War also enhances the military's freedom of action. Seeing the competition between them as a zero-sum game, both superpowers challenge each other over the acquiring of regional allies, in the hope of tipping the scales of the balance of power. Consequently, both try to court revolutionary regimes, in the hope of gaining an advantage that may prove decisive on the long run. In this context, the both superpowers are able to tolerate the excesses of the revolutionary regimes and to rein in on their allies who have direct interests in the region, hoping to gain the revolutionary's regime trust.

Conclusions

In discussing competing theories of revolution, I have tried to prove that while there are possible explanations for the military's involvement; neither is conclusive when tested against the Iraqi and the Egyptian case. While my endeavour certainly doesn't affect their general predictability and explanatory powers, I consider there are strong reasons for looking further into the matter.

The military's participation in revolutions is not a contextual or conjectural factor leading to revolution occurrence. On the contrary, the Iraqi and Egyptian case most definitely prove the existence of revolutions accomplished by the military. The conditions I have tried to set forth for their successful occurrence are neither those of political break-downs of the state or peasant uprising, nor that of a certain dynamic between the political establishment and the influential bourgeoisie. Other structuralist assumptions (particularly those in regard to the influence of the military's background) are also disproved for the cases here.

⁶⁰ Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., *A brief History of Egypt*, (New York: Facts on File, 2008), 144

⁶¹ Phebe Marr, *The History of Modern Iraq*, (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004), 84

More likely, if the Egyptian and Iraqi cases tell us anything, is that the military sets out on a revolutionary path in weak, internally divided states, where the army is the most bureaucratized and functional institution. The reason for such behaviour is determined by both the position of the military in that particular society (an outlet of social ascension and meritocratic organization) and internal organizational norms and values (their capacity of questioning the legitimacy of political rule when confronted with failures and their desire of a more legitimate state). Several contextual factors (military defeats and the example set forth by other successful revolutions) play an important part. In addition to that, international systemic conditions (in the two cases, the disintegration of colonial empires and the advent of the Cold War) can seriously increase the military's freedom of movement.

Military revolutions are planned revolutions from above, during which class and social relations change as a result of state-implemented policies. The ideological factor plays a secondary role (mainly that of legitimising the regime), but, on the long run there are moments when policy is directed under the sway of ideological constraints.

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