

## POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS AND THEIR ROLE

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**Abstract:** Political revolutions are transformative events that reshape societies and states. This paper examines the concept of political revolutions, classifying them based on their objectives, methods, and scope. It explores the diverse range of factors that trigger such upheavals, from socioeconomic inequalities to authoritarian rule and ideological clashes. Through comparative analysis of key revolutions, such as those in France, U.S.A, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Iraq, this essay highlights the complex legacies and long-term impacts of revolutions, emphasizing their significance as catalysts for political, social, and economic change.

**Key words:** political revolution, economic inequality, political oppression, social injustice, external pressures, autocracy, independence, human rights

A political revolution refers to a fundamental and often sudden change in the political structure of a society. Unlike reforms, which tweak existing systems, revolutions aim to overthrow the old order and replace it with a new framework. Revolutions are characterized by mass participation, often involving the lower and middle classes, and are driven by the desire to end perceived injustices or oppression. These events may involve violence, though some revolutions occur peacefully. In so far as “revolution” is employed to describe political transformation, conceptual historians understand its origins to be genuinely modern. Critically informed by the

experience of the revolutions in England, America, and France, the term in common usage designates the epitome of political change, that is, change not only in laws, policies, or government but in the established order that is both profound and durable.

### **Types of political revolutions.**

Political revolutions can be classified into various types based on their goals and outcomes:

1. *Democratic revolutions*, whose goals, first of all, are associated with the transformation of the political system. Here we define the following sub-types: (1a) *anti-monarchic* (the Portuguese revolution of 1910; the revolution in Monaco in 1910) and (1b) *anti-dictatorial* revolutions differing in some respects from anti-monarchic. Such revolutions were typical for Latin America. So, for example, both revolutions in Cuba in 1933–1934 (against Machado dictatorship) and Castro's revolution in 1956–1959 (against the authoritarian government of Batista) were anti-dictatorial revolutions. However, the latter revolution transformed into the communist one. Many revolutions that started as democratic would change their character. For example, the Russian revolution 1917–1921 or the Spain revolution in 1931–1939. Nevertheless, for the 20th century, we have identified 22 purely democratic revolutionary events;
2. *Social revolutions* that sought primarily to address social injustices (in relation to land use, income distribution, labour rights, etc.), while democratic, political, legal and other transformations were only tools to achieve this goal (the Mexican revolution 1910–1917, revolution in Spain 1931–1939);
3. *Anti-communist revolutions*: These revolutions to a certain extent may be considered as democratic. But since anti-communist

revolutions tend to solve a number of complicated issues, such as restoration of private property, economic freedom etc., it is reasonable to consider them as a special type of events. This also explains the reason why the revolutions of the late 20th century had a different type of conflict compared to classic revolutions;

4. *Power-modernist revolutions*, which supported the rise or restoration of the power of states. During such events revolutionaries were usually well aware of the backwardness of their state and tried to use revolution as a means of accelerating modernization (like the revolutions in the East of the early 20th century, e.g., both revolutions in Turkey: the Young Turk Revolution and the Kemalist Revolution; yet the latter was at the same time the war against the Greece occupation and for the Turkish national state);

5. Nationalist revolutions: These focus on unifying or liberating a nation, like the unification movements in Italy and Germany during the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>

## Causes of political revolutions

Political revolutions typically arise from a combination of long -term structural issues and short -term crises. Some of the common causes include:

1. Economic inequality: Widespread poverty, unemployment and wealth disparities create social tensions. For example, the French Revolution was fueled by economic hardships, including food shortages and taxation disparities between the estates.

2. Political oppression: Authoritarian regimes and lack of political representation often ignite revolutions. The Russian Revolution arose from dissatisfaction with Tsar Nicholas II's autocratic rule.

<sup>1</sup> [Humanities and Social Sciences Communications](https://scientific-jl.org/obr) volume 9, Article number: 124 (2022)

3. Social injustice: Discrimination based on class, race or religion can lead to revolutionary movements.
4. External Pressures: Wars, foreign invasions, or external colonial control often destabilize regimes, creating an opening for revolutions. Anti-colonial revolutions in Africa and Asia frequently arose after World War II.

### The American Revolution (1775-1783)

The American colonies were not considered as part of the British politics. The English American question was purely the consequence of the colonial system; a struggle for monopoly on one side and free labor on the other. In the history of the western world it was a struggle between hereditary prerogative and inalienable rights (Greene, 1865). The people in the colonies worked hard in order to build a comfortable home and enjoy them in their own way, but the English parliament claimed a legal supremacy of constitutional principles over the colonies (Greene, 1865)<sup>2</sup> Obviously there were political, economic and social changes which took place during and after the American Revolution. There were illegal waging wars, conventions, boycotts, demonstrations and riots and violence during the American Revolutions.

The American Revolution was not just a war for independence; it also brought about a profound transformation in governance:

- End of Monarchical Rule: The revolution overthrew British colonial governance, severing ties with the monarchy.
- Establishment of a Republic: The United States of America adopted a republican form of government, enshrined in the Constitution of 1787, which introduced a system of checks and

<sup>2</sup> Gebil, Alazar, "Causes of Political Revolution" (1990). Masters Theses. 2296.  
<https://thekeep.eiu.edu/theses/2296>

balances and divided power among the executive, legislative and judicial branches

- Expansion of Democratic Ideals: Although initially limited, the revolution planted the seeds for broader democratic participation. Over time, voting rights expanded beyond property -owning white men to include other groups, such as women and African Americans.

The American Revolution was a defining political revolution that not only secured independence from British rule but also fundamentally altered the political landscape of the colonies. By replacing monarchical rule with democratic governance, it redefined the relationship between citizens and their government.

#### The French Revolution (1789–1799)

The French Revolution is one of the most iconic examples of a political revolution. Sparked by economic hardship, social inequality, and the influence of Enlightenment ideas, the revolution sought to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republic. The revolution abolished feudal privileges, introduced the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, and inspired future democratic movements worldwide.

#### The Russian Revolution (1917)

The Russian Revolution was a social and political upheaval that dismantled the Tsarist autocracy and led to the creation of the Soviet Union. It was driven by widespread discontent with the monarchy, compounded by the economic devastation of World War I. The revolution occurred in two main phases: the February Revolution, which overthrew the Tsar, and the October Revolution, which brought the Bolsheviks to power. The revolution's impact was immense, as it established a communist state that would influence global geopolitics for much of the 20th century.

#### Uzbekistan's Political Transition (1991)



Uzbekistan was one of the Soviet republics since the formation of the USSR in 1924. The central government heavily controlled its political and economic systems, which led to growing discontent among the population. The centralized Soviet economy led to inefficiencies and shortages. By the late 1980s, economic discontent grew as the population faced declining living standards. The Soviet government established rigid political control, which led to widespread discontent. Calls for reforms and autonomy grew increasingly forceful. Uzbekistan, a former Soviet republic, experienced a political transformation following the collapse of the USSR in 1991. On August 31, 1991, following the failed coup attempt in Moscow, Uzbekistan declared independence from the Soviet Union. This was a decisive moment, as it reflected the desire of the Uzbek people for self-determination. After independence, Uzbekistan began the process of establishing its own political and legal systems, culminating in the adoption of a new constitution in 1992. In summary, the political revolution in Uzbekistan in 1991 was a complex interplay of nationalist sentiments, economic grievances, political repression, and the influence of broader Soviet reforms. These factors culminated in a strong push for independence, leading to the establishment of a sovereign state.

Political revolutions have far-reaching effects on societies, both positive and negative:

1. **Advancement of Human Rights:** Revolutions often lead to the expansion of civil liberties and political representation. For example, the French and American revolutions inspired democratic ideals worldwide.
2. **Economic Restructuring:** While some revolutions disrupt economies in the short term, others pave the way for new economic systems, as seen in the industrialization that followed the Russian Revolution.
3. **Cultural Shifts:** Revolutions can bring about profound cultural transformations, redefining national identities and values.

4. Global Influence: Successful revolutions often inspire similar movements in other countries. For instance, the French Revolution influenced uprisings across Europe in the 19th century.

5. Unintended Consequences: Revolutions can lead to instability, violence, or authoritarianism. The Reign of Terror in France and the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union illustrate how revolutionary ideals can be undermined.

The most common characteristics in each pre-revolutionary nation was the corruption, abuse of power, and irresponsibility; societies were not provided with the necessities of life and there was suppression of human rights and dignity. Governments failed in introducing political reforms and this caused social unrest such as demonstrations, strikes and upheavals. When opposition groups were well organized and led by intellectuals and other leaders equipped with political theories and ideologies, they could transform the social unrest into a revolution<sup>3</sup>.

Political revolutions are powerful engines of change that arise from societal dissatisfaction with the status quo. While they can lead to progress in governance, human rights, and social equality, they also carry risks of instability and unintended consequences. By understanding the dynamics of these movements, we can better appreciate the complexities of political change and its impact on societies.

In summary, political revolutions are more than just historical occurrences; they are powerful events that can reshape political landscapes and alter the course of nations. This research demonstrates the urgency of addressing inequality and developing peaceful methods for political change through the examples of the above-mentioned countries and their political revolutions.

Resources:

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<sup>3</sup> Gebil, Alazar, "Causes of Political Revolution" (1990). Masters Theses. 2296.  
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