# 1. Explanations of Political Violence

> Conflict . . . is a theme that has occupied the thinking of man more than any other, save only God and love.
>
> Anatol Rapoport,
> *Fights, Games, and Debates*

THE INSTITUTIONS, persons, and policies of rulers have inspired the violent wrath of their nominal subjects throughout the history of organized political life. A survey of the histories of European states and empires, spanning twenty-four centuries, shows that they averaged only four peaceful years for each year of violent disturbances.[1] Modern nations have no better record: between 1961 and 1968 some form of violent civil conflict reportedly occurred in 114 of the world's 121 larger nations and colonies.[2] Most acts of group violence have negligible effects on political life; but some have been enormously destructive of human life and corrosive of political institutions. Ten of the world's thirteen most deadly conflicts in the past 160 years have been civil wars and rebellions;[3] since 1945, violent attempts to overthrow governments have been more common than national elections. The counterpoise to this grim record is the fact that political violence has sometimes led to the creation of new and more satisfying political communities. The consequences of the American, Turkish, Mexican, and Russian revolutions testify in different ways to the occasional beneficence of violence.

In this study political violence refers to all collective attacks

[1] Pitirim Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics, Vol.* III: *Fluctuations of Social Relationships, War and Revolutions* (New York: American Book Co., 1937), 409–475. Twelve countries and empires were studied over the period 500 B.C. to 1925 A.D., none of them for the entire span. Only "important" disturbances were recorded, i.e., those mentioned in standard histories.

[2] Based in part on data for 114 polities reported in Ted Robert Gurr, "A Comparative Study of Civil Strife," in Hugh Davis Graham and Ted Robert Gurr, eds., *Violence in America: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, 1969).

[3] According to data collected by Lewis F. Richardson, *Statistics of Deadly Quarrels* (Pittsburgh: The Boxwood Press, 1960), 32–43, to which events after 1948 are added here. The conflicts most destructive of life were World Wars I and II. Of the other eleven all but one were primarily internal wars and all caused more than 300,000 deaths each; the Tai-P'ing Rebellion, 1851–64; the American Civil War; the Great War in La Plata, 1865–70; the post-revolutionary Civil War in Russia, 1918–20; the first and second Chinese Civil Wars, 1927–36 and 1945–49; the Spanish Civil War; the communal riots in India and Pakistan, 1946–48; the Vietnam War, 1961–present; the private war between Indonesian Communists and their opponents, 1964–66 (casualty figures are problematic); and the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–.

within a political community against the political regime, its actors —including competing political groups as well as incumbents— or its policies. The concept represents a set of events, a common property of which is the actual or threatened use of violence, but the explanation is not limited to that property. The concept subsumes revolution, ordinarily defined as fundamental sociopolitical change accomplished through violence. It also includes guerrilla wars, coups d'état, rebellions, and riots. Political violence is in turn subsumed under "force," the use or threat of violence by any party or institution to attain ends within or outside the political order. The definition is not based on a prejudgment that political violence is undesirable. Like the uses of violence qua force by the state, specific acts of political violence can be good, bad, or neutral according to the viewpoint of the observer. Participants in political violence may value it as a means of expressing political demands or opposing undesirable policies. Limited violence also can be useful for rulers and for a political system generally, especially as an expression of social malaise when other means for making demands are inadequate. Ethical judgments are held in abeyance in this study to avoid dictating its conclusions. But it does not require an ethical judgment to observe that intense violence is destructive: even if some political violence is valued by both citizens and rulers, the greater its magnitude the less efficiently a political system fulfills its other functions. Violence generally consumes men and goods, it seldom enhances them.[4]

Despite the frequency and social impact of political violence, it is not now a conventional category of social analysis. Yet some common properties of political violence encourage attention to it rather than more general or more specific concepts. Theoretically, all such acts pose a threat to the political system in two senses: they challenge the monopoly of force imputed to the state in political theory; and, in functional terms, they are likely to interfere with and, if severe, to destroy normal political processes. Empirical justification for selecting political violence as a universe for analysis is provided by statistical evidence that political violence comprises events distinct from other measured characteristics of nations, and homogeneous enough to justify analysis of their common characteristics and causes. For example, countries experiencing

[4] It is possible that political violence can increase the sum total of satisfactions of society's members. This can be true if violence and its immediate effects are intrinsically valued more than the material and human resources it consumes, or if violence serves a popularly approved regulatory function, as it did for the American vigilante movements. A hypothetical relationship of this type is shown schematically in fig. A. It is likely that high magnitudes of violence destroy more than they create, at least in the short run. When the time dimension is taken into ac-

extensive political violence of one kind—whether riots, terrorism, coups d'etat, or guerrilla war—are rather likely to experience other kinds of political violence, but are neither more or less likely to be engaged in foreign conflict.[5] The properties and processes that distinguish a riot from a revolution are substantively and theoretically interesting, and are examined at length in this study, but at a general level of analysis they seem to be differences of degree, not kind.[6] The search for general causes and processes of political violence is further encouraged by the convergence of recent case, comparative, and theoretical studies. One striking feature of these studies is the similarity of many of the causal factors and propositions they identify, whether they deal with revolution, urban rioting, or other forms of political violence. This similarity suggests that some of their findings can be synthesized in a more efficient set of testable generalizations.

However good the prospects seem for a general analysis of political violence, research on it has been quite uneven, both in sub-

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count, however, intense political violence, though it destroys much in the short run, may have the long-run payoffs either of stimulating rulers to increase outputs or of restructuring society in such a way that total satisfactions are substantially increased. This kind of relationship is sketched in fig. B.

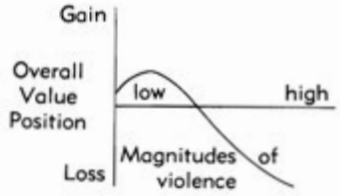


Figure A

Figure A. Hypothetical effects of violence on satisfactions in a society in which violence is valued, at time X.

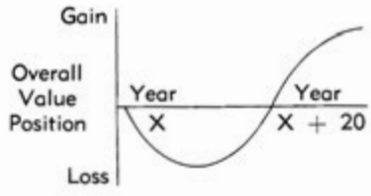


Figure B

Figure B. Hypothetical effects of intense violence on satisfactions in a society in which violence leads to reforms, over time.

[5] Rudolph Rummel, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior Within and Between Nations," *General Systems Yearbook*, VIII (1963), 1–50; and Raymond Tanter, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior Within and Between Nations, 1958–1960," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, X (March 1966), 41–64. There are statistically significant relations among some forms of internal and external conflict, but they are relatively weak. For factor-analytic evidence that types of political violence are independent of most measured characteristics of nations, see Rudolph Rummel, "Dimensionality of Nations Project; Orthogonally Rotated Factor Tables for 236 Variables," Department of Political Science, Yale University (New Haven, July 1964), mimeographed.

[6] Billington points out, for example, that the Russian Revolution comprised an "insurgency" from below—actually extensive rioting and mutinies—followed by a coup d'état and a protracted civil war. James H. Billington, "Six Views of the Russian Revolution," *World Politics*, XVIII (April 1966), 452ff.

stance and in disciplinary approach. There is considerable European historical scholarship on segments of the subject, notably the peasant rebellions of the twelfth through nineteenth centuries and the great revolutions of England, France, and Russia. American and European scholars, most of them also historians, have in recent years contributed a modest case-study literature. American policy scientists have written a small flood of treatises on the causes and prophylaxis of subversive warfare, most of which seem to have had neither academic nor policy impact. The lapses of attention are striking by comparison. Of all the riotous mobs that have clamoured through the streets of history, only the revolutionary crowds of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe and the ghetto rioters of twentieth-century America have attracted much scholarly attention.[7] There are relatively few case studies of political violence in the non-Western world, and fewer systematic comparative studies or attempts at empirical theory. Experimental studies dealing with social-psychological mechanisms of collective violence can be counted on one hand.[8] Among social scientists the historians have been by far the most active; American political scientists have until recently neglected the subject.[9] Of 2,828 articles that appeared in the *American Political Science Review* from its estab-

[7] A useful survey of current knowledge of urban and rural turmoil in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe is George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730–1848* (New York: Wiley, 1964). A representative survey of current knowledge of urban violence in modern societies is Louis H. Masotti and Don R. Bowen, eds., *Riots and Rebellion: Civil Violence in the Urban Community* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1968).

[8] The studies, using a variety of experimental techniques, include Norman Polansky, Ronald Lippitt, and Fritz Redl, "An Investigation of Behavioral Contagion in Groups," *Human Relations,* III (No. 3, 1950), 319–348; G. E. Swanson, "A Preliminary Laboratory Study of the Acting Crowd," *American Sociological Review,* XVIII (October 1953), 522–533; Norman C. Meier, G. H. Mennenga, and H. J. Stoltz, "An Experimental Approach to the Study of Mob Behavior," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* XXXVI (October 1941), 506–524; Kurt Lewin, Ronald Lippitt, and Ralph K. White, "Patterns of Aggressive Behavior in Experimentally Created Social Climates," *Journal of Social Psychology,* X (May 1939), 271–299; and David Schwartz, "Political Alienation: A Preliminary Experiment on the Psychology of Revolution's First Stage," paper read at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 1967. Many other experimental studies are relevant to collective violence; these deal explicitly with social-psychological factors facilitating violence.

[9] The renaissance of systematic theoretical and empirical work on political violence by political scientists can be dated from the publication of three articles that appeared in 1962 and 1963: James C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *American Sociological Review,* XXVII (February 1962), 5–19; Harry Eckstein, "Internal War: The Problem of Anticipation," in Ithiel de Sola Pool et al., *Social Research and National Security: A Report Prepared by the Research Group in Psychology and the Social Sciences* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, March 5, 1963), published in revised form as "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," *History and Theory,* IV (No. 2, 1965), 133–163; and Rummel, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior."

lishment in 1906 through 1968, only twenty-nine appear from their titles to be concerned with political disorder or violence. Moreover twelve of the twenty-nine were concerned specifically with revolution, and fifteen appeared after 1961.[10]

Political scientists might be expected to have a greater concern with political violence than others. Authoritative coercion in the service of the state is a crucial concept in political theory and an issue of continuing dispute.[11] Some have identified the distinctive characteristic of the state as its monopoly of physical coercion. Max Weber, for example, wrote that violence is a "means specific" to the state and that "the right of physical violence is assigned to all other associations or individuals only to the extent permitted by the state; it is supposed to be the exclusive source of the 'right' to use violence."[12] Thomas Hobbes, dismayed by the brutish anarchy of men living outside the restraint of commonwealths, conceived the sovereign's control of coercion to be the foundation of the state and the social condition.[13] Schattschneider sees conflict, which subsumes violence, as the central concept of political science.[14] Nieberg emphasizes the positive functions of nonauthoritative violence and its threatened use as an instrument of social change.[15] From any of these perspectives the occurrence of collective, nonauthoritative violence appears to pose two fundamental questions for political science: From what sources and by what processes does it arise, and how does it affect the political and social order?

## What Is to Be Explained?

This study proposes some general answers to three basic questions about our occasional disposition to disrupt violently the order we otherwise work so hard to maintain: What are the psy-

[10] By contrast, 111 articles deal specifically with Great Britain, some 140 with the U.S. Congress, and about 250 with constitutions or constitutional issues. These counts were facilitated by the use of the Key-Word-in-Context index of article titles in Kenneth Janda, ed., *Cumulative Index to the American Political Science Review: Volumes 1–57: 1906–1963* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

[11] A useful analysis of alternative conceptions of authoritative violence is E. V. Walter, "Power and Violence," *American Political Science Review,* LVIII (June 1964), 350–360. A survey of the origins, functions, and forms of legitimate and illegitimate violence, within and among states, is Chapter 8, "Civil Conflict and War," Alfred de Grazia, *Politics and Government, Vol. 1: Political Behavior,* rev. edn. (New York: Collier, 1952, 1962), 265–301.

[12] Max Weber, "Politik als Beruf," *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1958), 494, translated in E. V. Walter, 359.

[13] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946).

[14] E. E. Schattschneider, "Intensity, Visibility, Direction and Scope," *American Political Science Review,* LI (December 1957), 933–942.

[15] H. L. Nieburg, "The Threat of Violence and Social Change," *American Political Science Review,* LVI (December 1962), 865–873, and *Political Violence: The Behavioral Process* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969).

chological and social sources of the potential for collective violence? What determines the extent to which that potential is focused on the political system? And what societal conditions affect the magnitude and form, and hence the consequences, of violence? The study has four primary objects of analysis. Two are intervening variables: the *potential for collective violence* and the *potential for political violence.* Propositionally, *potential for collective violence* is a function of the extent and intensity of shared discontents among members of a society; the *potential for political violence* is a function of the degree to which such discontents are blamed on the political system and its agents. The remaining objects of analysis are dependent variables: the *magnitude of political violence* and the *forms of political violence,* both of which are discussed below.

Theories of revolution are usually concerned with specifying a relationship between some set of preconditions and the occurrence of revolution. Political violence, however, is a pervasive phenomenon, as was suggested above: few contemporary or historical societies have been free of it for long. It may be useful for microanalysis to specify whether political violence is likely in a given society at a particular point in time. For macroanalysis, however, the more interesting questions are the determinants of the extent of violence and of the forms in which it is manifested. If one's interest is the effects of political violence on the political system, the questions of its magnitude and kind are both highly relevant. And if one is concerned in an ethical way with political violence, then almost certainly one wants to assess its human and material costs, and consequently the determinants of its magnitude. Various measures of the relative extent of political violence have been used in recent comparative studies. Sorokin combined measures of the proportion of a nation affected (social area), proportion of population actively involved, duration, intensity, and severity of effects of violence in assessing the magnitude of internal disturbances. Tilly and Rule make use of man-days of participation. Rummel and Tanter have used counts of numbers of events. The Feierabends have developed a scaling procedure that takes account of both number of events and *a priori* judgments about the severity of events of various types.[16] Some researchers have used

[16] Sorokin, *op. cit.;* Charles Tilly and James Rule, *Measuring Political Upheaval* (Princeton: Center of International Studies, Princeton University, Research Monograph No. 19, 1965); Rummel, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior . . ."; Raymond Tanter, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior Within Nations, 1955–60: Turmoil and Internal War," *Peace Research Societies Papers,* III (1965), 159–164; and Ivo K. and Rosalind L. Feierabend, "Aggressive Behaviors Within Polities, 1948–1962; A Cross National Study," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* X (September 1966), 249–271.

the grisly calculus of number of deaths resulting from violence.[17]

The proposed relation between perceived deprivation and the frustration concept in frustration-anger-aggression theory, to be discussed in chapter 2, provides a rationale for a more general definition of magnitude of violence and a more precise specification of what it comprises. The basic frustration-aggression proposition is that the greater the frustration, the greater the quantity of aggression against the source of frustration. This postulate provides the motivational base for an initial proposition about political violence: the greater the intensity of deprivation, the greater the magnitude of violence. (Other perceptural and motivational factors are also relevant to political violence, but many of them can be subsumed by the deprivation concept, as is suggested in chapter 2.) Intense frustration can motivate men either to intense, short-term attacks or to more prolonged, less severe attacks on their frustrators. Which tactic is chosen is probably a function of anticipated gain, opportunity, and fear of retribution, which in political violence are situationally determined. Hence the severity of deprivation affects both the intensity of violence, i.e. in the extent of human and physical damage incurred, and its duration. Moreover there are evidently individual differences—presumably normally distributed—in the intensity of frustration needed to precipitate overt aggression. Extension of this principle to the deprivation-violence relationship suggests that the proportion of a population that participates in violence ought to vary with the average intensity of perceived deprivation. Mild deprivation will motivate few to violence, moderate deprivation will push more across the threshold, very intense deprivation is likely to galvanize large segments of a political community into action.

This argument suggests that magnitude of political violence has three component variables that ought to be taken into account in systematic analysis: the extent of participation within the political unit being studied (*scope*), the destructiveness of action (*intensity*), and the length of time violence persists (*duration*). Sorokin's empirical work takes all three aspects into account; so does mine.[18]

The intensity and scope of relative deprivation and magnitude of

[17] Among them Richardson, especially chap. 2 and 4; Rummel, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior"; Tanter; and Bruce M. Russett, "Inequality and Instability: The Relation of Land Tenure to Politics," *World Politics*, XVI (April 1964), 442–454.

[18] Ted Gurr with Charles Ruttenberg, *The Conditions of Civil Violence: First Tests of a Causal Model* (Princeton: Center of International Studies, Princeton University, Research Monograph No. 28, 1967); Ted Gurr, "A Causal Model of Civil Strife: A Comparative Analysis Using New Indices," *American Political Science Review*, LXII (December 1968), 1104–1124.

violence are unidimensional variables. Theoretically, and empirically, one can conceive of degrees or quantities of each in any polity. The forms of violence, however, are attributes that do not form a simple dimension. A society may experience riots but not revolution, revolution but not coups d'état, coups d'état but not riots. Hypotheses about forms of violence as dependent variables thus are necessarily different from those about deprivation and magnitude of violence. They are expressed in terms of probabilities (the greater x, the more *likely* y) rather than strict concomitance. The question is how many forms of political violence ought to be accounted for in a general theory. The principle of parsimony, which should apply to dependent as well as independent variables, suggests using a typology with a small number of categories, events in each of which are fairly numerous.

Conventional taxonomies, of which there are many, provide little help. Some, like that of Lasswell and Kaplan, provide simple typologies for revolutions but not for political violence generally.[19] Eckstein proposes a composite typology comprising unorganized, spontaneous violence (riots), intraelite conflicts (coups), two varieties of revolution, and wars of independence.[20] Perhaps the most complex typology is Rummel's list of twenty-five types of domestic conflict, the analysis of which provides an empirical solution to the problem of a parsimonious typology. In Rummel's analysis, and in a number of subsequent studies, data on the incidence and characteristics of various types of political violence were collected and tabulated by country and the "country scores" (number of riots, assassinations, coups, mutinies, guerrilla wars, and so on, in a given time period) were factor analyzed. Whatever the typology employed, the period of reference, or the set of countries, essentially the same results were reported. A strong *turmoil* dimension is characterized by largely spontaneous strife such as riots and demonstrations. It is quite distinct both statistically and substantively from what can be called a *revolutionary* dimension, characterized by more organized and intense strife. This revolutionary dimension has two components that appear in some analyses as separate dimensions: *internal war,* typically including civil war, guerrilla war, and some coups; and *conspiracy,* typically including plots, mutinies, and most coups.[21]

[19] Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 261–268. The types are palace revolution, political revolution, and social revolution.

[20] "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," 135–136.

[21] Rummel's typology appears in "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior," 25–26. Two summary articles on the factor analyses are Rudolph J. Rummel, "A Field

These types are not absolutely distinct. The analyses mentioned on pp. 4–5 indicate that, at a more general level of analysis, political violence is a relatively homogenous universe. Within that universe, however, some kinds of violence tend to occur together, and the occurrence of some types tends to preclude the occurrence of other types. The principal distinction between turmoil and revolution is the degree of organization and focus of violence, a distinction also made by Eckstein in his composite typology. A major difference between the internal war and conspiracy components of the revolutionary dimension is one of scale. General definitions of the three forms of political violence examined in this analysis are as follows:

Turmoil: Relatively spontaneous, unorganized political violence with substantial popular participation, including violent political strikes, riots, political clashes, and localized rebellions.

Conspiracy: Highly organized political violence with limited participation, including organized political assassinations, small-scale terrorism, small-scale guerrilla wars, coups d'état, and mutinies.

Internal war: Highly organized political violence with widespread popular participation, designed to overthrow the regime or dissolve the state and accompanied by extensive violence, including large-scale terrorism and guerrilla wars, civil wars, and revolutions.[22]

In summary, this study is an attempt to analyze, and develop testable general hypotheses about, three aspects of political violence: its sources, magnitude, and forms. The processes by which the potential for violence develops and the kinds of conditions and events that channel its outcome are examined as part of this

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Theory of Social Action With Application to Conflict Within Nations," *Yearbook of the Society for General Systems Research*, x (1965), 183–204, and Tanter, "Dimensions of Conflict Behavior."

[22] Eckstein, in "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," reintroduced the term "internal war," but defined it considerably more broadly as "any resort to violence within a political order to change its constitution, rulers, or policies," 133. In ordinary language, however, the phrase connotes a degree of participation and organization of conflict that is not characteristic of the events I have separately categorized under turmoil and conspiracy. The three categories differ from the categories with the same labels in Gurr, "A Comparative Study of Civil Strife," and Gurr, "A Causal Model of Civil Strife," only in their exclusion of nonviolent strife and of violent conflict between apolitical groups.

analysis. Two topics often examined in theories of revolution are examined here only in passing: the immediate precipitants of violence, about which most generalizations appear trivial; and the long-run outcomes of various kinds of political violence, about which there is little empirical evidence or detailed theoretical speculation.

**Toward an Integrated Theory of Political Violence**

The basic model of the conditions leading to political violence used in this study incorporates both psychological and societal variables. The initial stages of analysis are actor-oriented in the sense that many of the hypotheses about the potential for collective action are related to, and in some instances deduced from, information about the dynamics of human motivation. The approach is not wholly or primarily psychological, however, and it would be a misinterpretation of the arguments and evidence presented here to categorize it so. Most of the relationships and evidence examined in subsequent stages of analysis are those that are proposed or observed to hold between societal conditions and political violence. The psychological materials are used to help provide causal linkages between and among societal variables and the dependent variables specified above: the potential for collective and political violence; the magnitude of political violence; and the likelihood that political violence will take the form of turmoil, conspiracy, or internal war. Use of psychological evidence in this way makes certain kinds of social uniformities more clearly apparent and comprehensible, and contributes to the simplification of theory. At the same time the analysis of societal relationships is crucial for identifying the sources of some common psychological properties of violence-prone men and for generalizing about the many facets of political violence that have no parallels in psychological dynamics. The goal of this analysis, at best only partly realized, was proposed by Inkeles in the context of a discussion of social structure and personality: "What is required . . . is an integration or coordination of two basic sets of data in a larger explanatory scheme—not a reduction of either mode of analysis to the allegedly more fundamental mode of the other." [23]

The outlines of the theory can now be sketched briefly. The primary causal sequence in political violence is first the development of discontent, second the politicization of that discontent, and

[23] Alex Inkeles, "Personality and Social Structure," *Sociology Today* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 272, quoted in Marvin E. Wolfgang and Franco Ferracuti, *The Subculture of Violence: Towards an Integrated Theory in Criminology* (London: Social Science Paperbacks, 1967), 8.

finally its actualization in violent action against political objects and actors. Discontent arising from the perception of relative deprivation is the basic, instigating condition for participants in collective violence. The linked concepts of discontent and deprivation comprise most of the psychological states implicit or explicit in such theoretical notions about the causes of violence as frustration, alienation, drive and goal conflicts, exigency, and strain (discussed in chapter 2).

Relative deprivation is defined as a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining, given the social means available to them. Societal conditions that increase the average level or intensity of expectations without increasing capabilities increase the intensity of discontent. Among the general conditions that have such effects are the value gains of other groups and the promise of new opportunities (chapter 4). Societal conditions that decrease men's average value position without decreasing their value expectations similarly increase deprivation, hence the intensity of discontent. The inflexibility of value stocks in a society, short-term deterioration in a group's conditions of life, and limitations of its structural opportunities have such effects (chapter 5).

Deprivation-induced discontent is a general spur to action. Psychological theory and group conflict theory both suggest that the greater the intensity of discontent, the more likely is violence. The specificity of this impulse to action is determined by men's beliefs about the sources of deprivation, and about the normative and utilitarian justifiability of violent action directed at the agents responsible for it.

Societal variables that affect the focusing of discontent on political objects include the extent of cultural and subcultural sanctions for overt aggression, the extent and degree of success of past political violence, the articulation and dissemination of symbolic appeals justifying violence, the legitimacy of the political system, and the kinds of responses it makes and has made to relative deprivation (chapters 6 and 7). The belief that violence has utility in obtaining scarce values can be an independent source of political violence, but within political communities it is most likely to provide a secondary, rationalizing, rather than primary, motivation. Widespread discontent provides a general impetus to collective violence. However, the great majority of acts of collective violence in recent decades have had at least some political objects, and

the more intense those violent acts are, the more likely they are to be focused primarily or exclusively on the political system. Intense discontent is quite likely to be politicized; the primary effect of normative and utilitarian attitudes toward violence is to focus that potential.

The magnitude of political violence in a system, and the forms it takes, are partly determined by the scope and intensity of politicized discontent. Politicized discontent is a necessary condition for the resort to violence in politics. But however intense and focused the impetus to violence is, its actualization is strongly influenced by the patterns of coercive control and institutional support in the political community. Political violence is of greatest magnitude, and most likely to take the form of internal war, if regimes and those who oppose them exercise approximately equal degrees of coercive control, and command similar and relatively high degrees of institutional support in the society. The coercive capacities of a regime and the uses to which they are put are crucial variables, affecting the forms and extent of political violence in both the short and long run. There is much evidence, some of it summarized in chapters 8 and 10, that some patterns of regime coercive control increase rather than decrease the intensity of discontent, and can facilitate the transformation of turmoil into full-scale revolutionary movements. Dissidents, by contrast, use whatever degree of coercive capacities they acquire principally for group defense and for assaults on the regime. The degree of institutional support for dissidents and for regimes is a function of the relative proportions of a nation's population their organizations mobilize, the complexity and cohesiveness of those organizations, their resources, and the extent to which they provide regularized procedures for value attainment, conflict resolution, and channeling hostility (chapter 9). The growth of dissident organization may in the short run facilitate political violence, but it also is likely to provide the discontented with many of the means to alleviate deprivation in the long run, thus minimizing violence.

The preceding three paragraphs are an outline of the framework in which the hypotheses and definitions of this study are developed, and a summary of some of its generalizations. The hypotheses and their interrelationships are summarized more fully and systematically in chapter 10. The Appendix lists all hypotheses developed, categorized according to their dependent variables, and the chapters in which they are proposed.

The three stages in the process of political violence—those in which discontent is generated, politicized, and actualized in political violence—are each dependent on the preceding one, as the

outline indicates. It is likely but not necessarily the case that there is a temporal relationship among the three stages, whereby a sharp increase in the intensity of discontent precedes the articulation of doctrines that justify politically violent action, with shifts in the balances of coercive control and institutional adherence occuring subsequently. The conditions can be simultaneously operative, however, as the outbreak of the Vendée counterrevolution in 1793 demonstrates: implementation of procedures for military conscription intensified the discontent of workers and peasants already sharply hostile to the bourgeoisie and the government it ruled. Mass action against the bourgeoisie began in a matter of days; the social context for dissident action was provided in part by preexisting communal and political organization, action that was facilitated by the concurrent weakness of government forces and institutions in the region.[24] The point is that many of the attitudes and societal conditions that facilitate political violence may be present and relatively unchanging in a society over a long period; they become relevant to or operative in the genesis of violence only when relative deprivation increases in scope and intensity. Intense politicized discontent also can be widespread and persistent over a long period without overt manifestation because a regime monopolizes coercive control and institutional support. A weakening of regime control or the development of dissident organization in such situations is highly likely to lead to massive violence, as it did in Hungary in 1956 and China in 1966–68, and as is likely at some future date in South Africa.

The concepts, hypotheses, and models of causes and processes developed in the following chapters are not intended as ends in themselves. Intellectually pleasing filters through which to view and categorize the phenomena of a disorderly world are not knowledge. Systematic knowledge requires us to propose and test and reformulate and retest statements about how and why things happen. We know enough, and know it well enough, only when we can say with some certitude not just why things happened yesterday, but how our actions today will affect what happens tomorrow, something we can always hope to know better, though never perfectly. This analysis may demonstrate that too little is known about the violence men do one another, and that it is known too weakly and imprecisely. It is designed to facilitate the processes by which that knowledge can be increased.

[24] Charles Tilly, *The Vendée* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), passim.

## The Nature of Social Theory

*(In this section I wish to comment on some criteria for social theory and their application to political violence. These criteria are not essential for understanding the substance of the book, but they help explain its approach to analysis and form of presentation. Readers not concerned with these questions may turn directly to chapter 2.)*

Many descriptive generalizations and propositions can be made about the origins, processes, and effects of political violence generally, and of its several forms. Variables commonly examined include the kinds of societal and political structures most susceptible to violence, revolutionary ideologies, the developmental sequence of revolutionary movements, the effects of force on the outcome of violence, the nature of revolutionary organization, and much else. Some less common variables for analysis are the nonideological motivations of revolutionaries, the effects of institutional patterns on the forms and objects of violence, the efficacy of different kinds of governmental response, and the long-range consequences of political violence.

Two paradigmatic approaches to "theory" about political violence can be identified. One is to analyze a related phenomenon, like revolutionary organization or ideology, in order to generalize about its origins, characteristics, or effects. An interest in explaining the occurrence or outcome of political violence is often implicit or explicit in such an analysis, but typically the analysis does not pretend to be complete; the relevance of other variables ordinarily is recognized. The second is to choose a particular violent event or class of events as an object of explanation and to specify some more or less exhaustive set of conditions or variables that determines the occurrence, extent, or outcome of the events. Theories of revolution, like those of Edwards, Brinton, Pettee, and Timasheff, are representative of this second approach.[25] A variant of this approach is to select a common, quantifiable property of a variety of events for analysis and explanation (see pp. 8–9).

"Theory" is a term loosely used in the social sciences generally and in the study of political violence specifically. The kind of theory aimed at in this study is an interrelated set of general, falsi-

[25] The three best-known American theories of revolution are Lyford P. Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927); Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Norton, 1938); and George Pettee, *The Process of Revolution* (New York: Harper, 1938). A more recent theory of this type is proposed by Nicholas S. Timasheff, *War and Revolution* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).

fiable hypotheses that specify causal or concomitant relationships between independent and dependent variables. The nature of such relationships can be argued inductively from observations about the relevant phenomena at various levels of analysis, or deduced from other statements comprising the theory, or both.[26]

Such "explanatory" theory is distinct from what Eckstein calls pretheoretical exercises, such as the formulation of classificatory schemes and conceptual frameworks, which are sometimes called theory.[27] Nor are descriptive generalizations about relationships among variables theory in the sense intended here, unless the sources and nature of such relationships are stated explicitly and the generalizations themselves interrelated.

Most hypotheses developed in this study are derived from the juxtaposition and generalization of relationships observed in studies of political violence and of the individual behaviors manifest in it. The approach reflects an assumption that social science theory ought to build on what is already known about the subject being theorized about, and that it ought to be consistent with, or at least not directly contradictory to, what is more generally known about the nature and processes of individual and aggregate human behavior. This is not to say that hypotheses must be consistent with what Levy calls "going common sense," but rather that it is nonsensical and inefficient to invest research effort in testing hypotheses that contradict what is precisely known, unless there are compelling logical or empirical grounds for questioning what is assumed to be "precisely known."

The central scientific criterion for theory is that it be subject to empirical assessment. Four attributes of theory that facilitate its assessment are its falsifiability, definitional clarity, identification of relevant variables at various levels of analysis, and applicability to a large universe of events for analysis. The first two are necessary conditions for assessment, the others desirable. A fundamental limitation of most older theories and conceptions

[26] For a critique of what passes for theory in the social sciences and a proposed set of criteria for good theory, see Marion J. Levy, Jr., "'Does It Matter if He's Naked?' Bawled the Child," in Klaus Knorr and James Rosenau, eds., *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). For a statement of criteria for theory in a field related to the subject of this book, and a survey of extant "theory," see Wolfgang and Ferracuti, chap. 2.

[27] Harry Eckstein, "Introduction: Toward the Theoretical Study of Internal War," *Internal War: Problems and Approaches* (New York: The Free Press, 1964), 7–29, classifies pretheoretical operations as delimitation (statement of the boundaries of the subject); classification and analysis (meaning by "analysis" the dissection of a subject into its components); and problemation (the formulation of specific problems for theory construction). Most of these "operations" with respect to political violence are attempted in this chapter.

of revolution is the difficulty of deriving falsifiable hypotheses from them.[28] Few if any were formulated with reference to applicable empirical methods. The fact that very few case or comparative studies make use of them is further evidence of their limited usefulness even for taxonomic or conceptual purposes. Two general conventions regarding falsifiability are used in social science. One is to state that an independent (causal) variable is a necessary and/or sufficient condition for the dependent variable one wants to explain. This usually means that both variables are defined in dichotomous terms—"disequilibrium" does or does not occur—even if one or both are continuous variables, and typically leads to propositions that are trivial or falsifiable by a single deviant case. The second is to rely on tests of statistical significance of relationships between variables, which has led to the proliferation of weakly supported but not-quite-falsified hypotheses which have yet to be integrated into a more general and parsimonious theory. A third convention is used in this study: a minimum strength of relationship is postulated for each hypothesis in correlational terms; if the relationship found in an empirical test is weaker than stipulated, and no serious sample or instrument error is likely, the hypothesis is rejected. For example, one basic hypothesis is that the greater the intensity and scope of relative deprivation in a population, the greater the potential for collective violence. The proposed relationship is a strong one: if interval-order measurement of both variables for a substantial number of cases gives a product-moment correlation coefficient less than .45 (less than 20 percent of the variance explained), the hypothesis is rejected.[29]

[28] For example, Edwards, Brinton, and Pettee. A sampling of the older theoretical speculation about revolution and political violence, which seldom finds its way even into the footnotes of current writings, would include the work of Gustave Le Bon, especially *The Psychology of Revolution,* trans. Bernard Miall (London: Unwin, 1913); Brooks Adam, *The Theory of Social Revolutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1913); Everett Dean Martin, *The Behavior of Crowds: A Psychological Study* (New York: Harper, 1920), chap. 7, "The Psychology of Revolutionary Crowds"; Charles A. Ellwood, *The Psychology of Human Society: An Introduction to Sociological Theory* (New York: Appleton, 1925), chap. 8, "Changes Within the Group: Abnormal"; Robert Hunter, *Revolution: Why, How, When?* (New York: Harper, 1940); and Mark A. May, *A Social Psychology of War and Peace* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), chap. 7, "Aggressive Social Movements." The flavor of the literature to 1925 can be sampled in Dale Yoder, "Current Definitions of Revolution," *American Journal of Sociology,* XXXII (November 1926), 433–441. Some writings of this period are curious indeed, for example, Sidney A. Reeve, *The Natural Laws of Social Convulsions* (New York: Dutton, 1933).

[29] The same strength of relationship is required of multiple regression coefficients (R) for studies in which multiple measures of a particular independent variable are used. I have reported evidence to the effect that the .45 threshold is by no means too stringent for the hypotheses mentioned in Gurr, "A Causal Model of Civil Strife." Three composite measures of deprivation related to magnitude of civil strife for 114 polities give an R of .60, despite the presence of considerable measurement error.

Other hypotheses specify relationships of moderate strength, requiring a minimum *r* of .30 if they are not to be discarded. Hypotheses about independent variables that do not meet these criteria are not necessarily false in the conventional sense, but they denote relationships that are too weak to contribute to parsimonious theory.[30]

Independent and dependent variables must be defined with sufficient precision so that a researcher can determine what particular conditions or set of events constitute "X" for purposes of empirical assessment. The definitional inadequacy of many theories, new and old, contributes to the difficulty of assessing them. For example, a great many conditions have been said to "cause" or to constitute a basic potential for collective violence, among them general properties of sociopolitical systems labeled "cramp," "disequilibrium," and "strain"; motivational characteristics of violent men such as "frustration" and "discontent"; and particular institutional patterns such as repressive government and inadequate circulation of, or divisions within, an elite.[31] A difficulty of explanations citing such general properties is that the conditions as defined, if indeed they are defined, can usually be found in most societies and among most men, whether or not revolutionary; and usually they are not formulated precisely enough to permit one to assess the effects of their various elements and degrees. The empirical referents of some concepts are more easily isolated than those of others. The concept "participation in clandestine organization" is more readily made operational than "revolutionary mobilization," and revolutionary mobilization is a more malleable concept than "power deflation." This is not to argue that more general concepts be avoided, but that the more general they are the more necessary it is to define them fully and to catalog their manifestations so that they can be evaluated empirically.

It is desirable that theoretical statements be testable at various levels of generalization. Feldman, for example, attributes revolutionary potential to the increasing salience of goal conflicts between the increasingly numerous subsystems that are said to result from

[30] These two criteria imply an absolute maximum of five strong variables or eleven moderately strong variables for any theoretical system. Hypotheses that are not supported at the .30 level but that nonetheless meet statistical tests of significance should lead to postulation of more general hypotheses that might account for a set of such weak relationships.

[31] See Pettee, passim; Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), especially chap. 4; Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), passim; Davies, passim; and Ronald G. Ridker, "Discontent and Economic Growth," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, XI (October 1962), 1–15. A categorization of specific and general causal factors cited in the literature is given in Eckstein, "On the Etiology of Internal Wars," 143–144.

structural differentiation in a society.[32] Ideally it should be possible to observe manifestations of such a process at both the macrolevel of an entire social system, for example eighteenth-century France, and at the level of the community and among small, face-to-face groups.[33] Small-group phenomena are not likely to resemble simply a scaled-down model of macrophenomena, but it should be possible to identify the small-group interactions and individual behaviors that are comprised by macroevents. If this translatability cannot be achieved directly, then at least the macrophenomena postulated in theory should be compatible with what is known about microphenomena. This is not a reductionist argument that analysis of social systems or collective behavior can or should be reduced to analysis of component individual behaviors. The point is that analysis on one level can and should inform the other, and that hypotheses whose relationships are manifested at, and subject to examination at, different levels of analysis are usually more interesting and fruitful than those which refer to one level of analysis only.[34]

The fourth attribute of theory that facilitates its assessment concerns the types and numbers of cases or settings in which the proposed relationships can be examined. The preference is for theory that can be subject to test both in case studies and in large-sample comparative studies using statistical methods. Case studies are useful for elucidating the fine structure of revolutionary events and for providing a sense of understanding of how general variables act and interact. They also can be used to test theoretical statements expressed in dichotomous terms: one can define "accelerators of dysfunction" and "revolution" independently and in sufficiently rigorous fashion that a single case study may be sufficent to falsify the proposition that accelerators of dysfunction are a necessary precondition of revolution.[35] But many variables of interest to social theory can be dichotomized only at great loss of information, and scholars undertaking case studies often find it difficult to distinguish between general relationships and the

[32] Arnold Feldman, "Violence and Volatility: The Likelihood of Revolution," in *Internal War,* 111–129.

[33] Sidney Verba, *Small Groups and Political Behavior: A Study of Leadership* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), demonstrates the usefulness of relating concepts and findings at one level of analysis to those at another. Tilly's case study of an internal war, ***The Vendée,*** shows how analysis can proceed from macrolevel concepts such as urbanization and social change to the individual level, and back again.

[34] On the relative merits of using different levels of analysis in social inquiry see David Singer, "The Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations," *World Politics,* XIV (October 1961), 77–92.

[35] This proposition is adapted from Johnson, *op. cit.*

unique historical and cultural circumstances of each case. Hypotheses that specify systematic relations among continuous variables, or between a continuous and a dichotomous variable, are subject to scientific assessment only if substantial numbers of cases are examined. This provides further justification for the choice of political violence rather than revolution as the subject of this study: the former is far more common than the latter.

In this study hypothetical relationships are formally stated and given alphanumeric descriptors. The first term in each hypothesis is its dependent variable. Definitions ordinarily are proposed in the paragraphs immediately following the first appearance of a theoretical term in a hypothesis. Underlining of a term in this context indicates that the sentence in which it appears is a formal definition. Synonyms are used for several of the frequently cited theoretical concepts to avoid the mind-deadening effects of repetition. "Relative deprivation," defined as a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and value capabilities, is represented by its initials, RD, and the synonyms deprivation, discrepancy, and, loosely, frustration. "Discontent," the psychological state said to be caused by RD, has as its synonyms anger, rage, and dissatisfaction. Synonyms for "value expectations" are wants, aspirations, and expectations. "Values" are the goods and conditions of life which men seek; the phrase "goods and conditions of life" is used synonymously with values. "Value opportunities," the courses of action people have available to them for attaining or maintaining their desired values, are more simply referred to as "means." These synonyms are used only when there is no ambiguity about their referent; the precisely defined terms are used in the development of the basic theoretical arguments.