

Framework for Crane Brinton: The Anatomy of Revolution

According to Brinton, these revolutions are part of the still on-going transition to post medieval Europe in that they are, fundamentally, clashes between an old regime that does not quite yet recede and the modern world that has not quite yet revealed itself.

General Statements:

1. The nation in question, in this case, France, is experiencing major contradictions, inconsistencies, ironies and dilemmas as it attempts to progress into the modern age.
For example, France was the most absolute of the absolute monarchies and yet, France was the home of the philosophes who endorsed free speech, tolerance, and a rational / modern approach to society and politics. Kind of schizo, huh?
2. Because of the situation mentioned above, there tend to be many gaps between expectations of various subgroups of the population and what they perceive to be their reality.
For example, the landed gentry expected to maintain their privileges and traditional powers that had been in existence since feudal times, while the growing middle class expected to continue to make political, economic, and social gains and to experience rights that they had never had before.
3. These revolutions, like all great and paradigm-shifting events in history, usually develop over a long period of time (deep seeds) but are precipitated by some immediate crisis, which leads to a huge explosion of long-brewing pent up frustrations.
4. Thus, once unleashed, the revolution becomes increasingly radical as time passes. Thus, in many respects, the original goals of the revolution become lost amongst the upheaval. In other words, AHBL!

Specific Trends / Patterns Identified by Brinton:

1. Economic upgrade just prior to the outbreak of the revolution YET some type of major financial crisis / breakdown which brings the gap between expectation and reality into play
2. There is an already underlying foundation of bitter class antagonisms dating far back into history. These antagonisms can revolve around economics, politics, and social standing, etc.

3. Those who are discontented begin to make demands and more significantly, begin to organize. The discontented can actually be from all levels of society. In any event, if the demands of any of the discontented are fulfilled, it will mean the end of the regime and the ruler as they presently existed.
4. Two specific groups begin to abandon the regime:
 - a. The intellectuals (liberals) begin to see the regime as archaic and unresponsive to the needs of the people
 - b. The landed gentry (conservative nobles) begin to see the regime as unable to protect their traditional privileges
5. The government is clearly ill-equipped to deal with the rising tide of frustrations and in fact, when they try to use force to put down the uprising it only makes things worse.
6. The revolutionaries actually begin to gain power and achieve some of their revolutionary goals. **HOWEVER**
 - a. This only intensifies the problems = more AHBL
 - b. The revolutionaries themselves begin to split apart
7. Certain dilemmas arise:
 - a. Should the revolutionaries settle in and embrace the changes they have made thus far OR should they continue to make increasingly radical demands?
 - b. For some, the revolution is TOO radical; for others, not radical enough
 - c. Should the revolutionary leaders truly LEAD the revolution or should they follow the lead of the common folk?
 - d. The revolutionary leaders thus become more isolated and begin to revert to “old habits” and follow the old “blueprints” for staying in power. They justify using any means necessary since they claim that it is all being done “for the people” yet, are they doing these things just to stay in power?
 - e. Thus, the revolution, which began “in the name of the people” soon evolves into a revolution to maintain the revolutionary leaders in power.
8. Overall scope of the revolution
 - a. Things will get “crazy radical AHBL” before they settle down. The crazier things get, the more the radicals take advantage. The more the radicals take advantage, the crazier things get.

- b. It is very difficult to transition from a revolutionary leader whose job is to tear down the existing structure of things to a governing leader whose job is to establish stability and to govern
- c. Eventually, revolutions “devour their own”
- d. There will be a pendulum swing back to a more conservative, less radical agenda