

**Overview of Unit 5: The French Revolution and
The Age of Napoleon**
Chapters 9 and 10

General concepts and trends of a revolution

1. based on many contradictions, inconsistencies, gaps, dilemmas and ironies within a given situation
2. this leads to gaps between expectations and reality
3. all of this develops slowly over a long period of time- these deep seeds will eventually result in a
4. **BIG EXPLOSION** as the result of some “immediate spark”
5. Thus, “AHBL”
 - a. Hard to control
 - b. Situation becomes increasingly radical
 - c. Radicals move to the forefront of the situation
 - d. The goal is to tear down the “existing order of things”
6. The problem is, when is enough revolution enough? In other words, when and how do the revolutionary leaders try to become the governing leaders
 - a. Dilemma: how does AHBL transition to stability?
 - b. Dilemma: how do the pent-up frustrations, now released, begin to calm down?
 - c. Dilemma: does the revolutionary forces continue or “settle in”?
 - d. How does a revolution not become too radical but radical enough to bring about real change?
7. The revolutionary leaders thus find themselves in a quandry
 - a. They want to lead so they secure their own power
 - b. yet, to secure their own power, they follow the blueprints of the past
 - c. In following the blueprints of the past, they find themselves isolated from the people
 - d. Because they find themselves isolated from the people, they have to use force to get and keep power

- e. Thus, for the revolutionary leaders, anything they do is done in the name of the people and all methods are, in their minds, justified
 - f. At this point, some of the revolutionary leaders want to “slow things down” and they themselves become victims of their own methods (“revolutions devour their own”)
8. Eventually there will be a conservative backlash
 9. This will set the stage for Napoleon’s rise to power

Observations (*empiricism!*) for pages 374 to 383.

1. There seems to be a dynamic relationship between “official” acts of radicalization / revolution and the “unofficial” acts. This will present major dilemmas for Robespierre and the Jacobins and for the revolution in general. How should the so-called revolutionary “leaders” deal with “unauthorized revolutionary activities and violence?”
2. There seems to be an “all or nothing” character to what is unfolding, especially after the execution of the king on January 16, 1793.
3. The most radical groups “appear” to be the only alternative. The way that certain questions are asked, only seems to yield the most radical responses.
4. The revolutionary “leaders” seem to keep undermining their own previous decisions, which creates certain dilemmas for them and for the overall revolution.
5. Each radical step seems to generate some level of opposition (well, yeah) which then leads to those opponents being labeled as “enemies” of the revolution. This then leads to even more radical steps.

- 6. It appears that an increasingly isolated, small, extremely radical group will begin to dominate the overall revolution.**
- 7. There seems to be an increasingly broader and “inclusive” definition of “counter-revolutionaries” and “enemies of the people” by an increasingly narrower group of revolutionary leaders.**
- 8. Consider the phrase “*revolutions devour their own*”**