

## البيئة الثورية

عادل الرشيد

يتعلق هذا البحث بدراسة الكيفية التي ينتقل بها النظام الاجتماعي في بلد ما من مرحلة الاستقرار والثبات، الى مرحلة التوتر ثم الثورة. بمعنى آخر يعني بكيفية خلق البيئة الثورية في المجتمع، وهي مرحلة تسبق الثورة.

ويعنى القسم الاول بأهم الدوافع التي تقود الى ظهور هذه البيئة بينما يحوي القسم الثاني، النتائج والخلاصة.

أن أهم ما يدفع بالنظام الاجتماعي نحو وضع الاحتلال هو فشل الحاجات الحاضرة في التجاوب مع الحاجات المخططة (المتوقعة)، وهناك عدة عوامل تعمل دائما على توازن النظام الاجتماعي وهذه هي: الهيكل السياسي - الهيكل الاقتصادي - الهيكل الاجتماعي - والهيكل العسكري. فإذا أخل أحدها بالمهام المناطة به خرج المجتمع الى وضع غير متوازن يهيئ لوجود البيئة الثورية. وهنا يلعب الجيش دورا هاما، فإذا حازت الحكومات السيطرة على القوات المسلحة فبإمكانها التوصل الى الحيلولة دون وقع الأحداث العنيفة في البلاد. والا حدث خلاف ذلك.

وهكذا تكون البيئة الثورية هي عبارة عن وضع عام يسوده عدم الرضا بفعل اختلال أو أكثر في هيكل النظام الاجتماعي.

ولكن هذه البيئة الثورية في الواقع بحاجة الى ما يخرجها فورا الى طور الفعل، وهذا ما يساعد عليه وقوع أحداث كبرى مع وجود البيئة الثورية التي تفجر الثورة. وهذه الأحداث الكبرى قد تكون مولد نبي قائد أو حزب ثوري، أو ربما كانت هزيمة في حرب، ولربما جاء ذلك من خارج المجتمع بصورة أو بأخرى.

# THE REVOLUTIONARY ENVIRONMENT

*University of Colorado*

by

Adel M. Al-Rasheed\*

## Introduction

Revolution is not a spontaneous phenomena. It arises from the human responses and reactions to changing conditions of the social system and environment.

The breakout of revolution represents at least the failure of the political administration of the social system. In the great cases it represents the general failure of the social system itself.

Meanwhile there is no reasonably adequate theory as to the nature of revolutions. Utterly contradictory theories enjoy wide acceptance. None of them can make pretenses to scientific realism or detailed analysis, except the marxist, which is both unable to win acceptance, and imperfect from the point of view of science. It is superior to any other theory of revolution now available, but not good enough.<sup>1</sup>

Outside the Marxism, some scholars have tried to generalize about the causes of revolutions. They have tried to find patterns in the prerevolutionary situation and to predicate certain types of conditions and circumstances as the explanation of revolutions.

This paper will be a discussion of how the social system shifts from the stage of stability to the stage of tension and then revolution. In other words this paper will deal with the creation of the revolutionary environment in the society and when revolution is likely to occur.

This paper consists of two chapters; the first one is concerned with the cause that lead to the creation of a revolutionary environment; and the second one will be a conclusion from the first one.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Revolutionary Environment

Revolution signifies a comprehensive and deep change in the social system. We believe that revolution arises because the social system is not working in the way it must in order to satisfy the needs (in all their forms) of the society members. So, a compre-

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\* Adel M. Al-Rasheed, graduate Student at Colorado University.

1— George Pettee, *The Process of Revolution*. (Howard Fertig, New York, 1971), p. ix.

hensive and deep change is required to correct this wrong situation.

In this chapter, we shall concern ourselves with the discussion of how the social system shifts from the stage of stability to the stage of the revolutionary environment.

Our point of departure in analyzing social change is the model of a functionally integrated social system. A system whose structures cooperate with each other by acting out various roles that, taken together, permit the whole system to function. The main purpose of this function is **the satisfaction of the members' needs**, where they were political, economical, ideological, religious or cultural needs.

In other words, the basic assumption in this model is that the structures of the social system work together in order to achieve a reasonable degree of need satisfaction to the members of the society which is to be the ultimate end of every society.

It is important, in this context, to draw the attention to the existence of two important facts in the society. The first is the fact that we call «expected needs satisfaction.» This means that in the normal conditions of the society the members expect a certain degree of needs satisfaction. This degree has to be met by the structures of the social system to keep the system in a state of equilibrium. If the actual needs satisfaction, which is the outcome of the structure's functions, failed to meet the expected needs satisfaction, then the social system would be out of balance.

The second fact is well related to the first one. It is concerned with the concept of consent. In general, the degree of consent of the society's members runs in a parallel line with the degree of actual needs satisfaction. The only exception to this fact is the case of war or the case of natural disaster. In these two cases the society's members accept a low degree of needs satisfaction without declining in their consent upon the existing government.

We said that our model of analyzing is a functionally integrated social system. This system — as we see it — consists of four structures. These are as follows :

- 1 — Political Structure
- 2 — Economical Structure
- 3 — Social Structure
- 4 — Military Structure

These four structures co-operate with each other so as to keep the system in a state of balance. If one of these structures does not function in the way it must in order to keep equilibrium, and if no remedial action occurs, then the entire system will move out of equilibrium, and a revolutionary environment will be created. The condition that causes the disequilibrium, and that demands remedial action in order to restore or to create a new equilibrium, Chalmers Johnson calls «dysfunction,»

Dysfunction is a potential condition of any functionally integrated system, and dysfunctional conditions within an imbalanced social system vary in degree of severity over a broad range from slight to mortal. Dysfunctional conditions are caused by pressures that compel the members of a substructure to do their work, or view their roles, or imagine their potentialities

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differently from the way that they did under equilibrium conditions.<sup>1</sup>

In order to create a revolutionary environment, dysfunctions in one or more than one structure of the social system must be large enough; sufficiently widespread among the inhabitants. Revolutionary environments represent a state of unrest and discontent upon the present situation of the social system.

### Sources of Dysfunctions :

#### The Political Structure :

Unrest may come about because of political agitation and the appeal of political slogans; it may result from ideological absorption; or it may be the product of nothing more serious than a large excess of political energy, left over from a strenuous campaign or a political struggle over these issues.<sup>1</sup>

Unrest and discontent may result from the weakness of the existing government. Where the government displays energy and determination, where it is alive to the issues that move the mass, then revolution will rarely take place. Much is made of the fact that the old regimes in both France and Russia were decadent, impotent, and moribund. The same could be said of the Egyptian government prior to its revolution in 1952.<sup>2</sup>

When the existing government is a weak one, it becomes increasingly unable to solve or resolve the problems facing it. In the opposition's view such government is inefficient, stupid, corrupt, oppressive, or combines two or more of these traits. The goal of the opposition, is to replace inefficient and stupid personalities by efficient and intelligent ones, corrupt functionaries by models of honesty, abject tyrants by men respecting the freedom and dignity of their fellow men.<sup>1</sup>

A weak government is one in disrepute.

It is one without respect and increasingly without support. All governments rest on the myth of their supremacy ; weakness in government is an acid to that myth. As the myth declines so also does the base of loyalty upon which every government rests.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the government weakness, the deterioration or disintegration of the ruling elite is often noted in the government weakness. Trotsky believes elite decline is a necessary element for revolution. He writes :

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1 — Chalmers Johnson, **Revolution and the Social System**. (Hoover Institution Studies, No. 3. Stanford, 1964) p. 5.

1 — Cf. Leiden and Karl Schmitt, **The Politics of Violence : Revolution in the Modern World** (Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey, 1968), p. 44.

2 — *Ibid.*, p. 46.

1 — Nicholas S. Timasheff, **War and Revolution**, (Sheed and Ward, New York, 1965), p. 141

2 — Leiden and Schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

The ruling classes, as a result of their practically manifested incapacity to get the country out of its blind alley, lose faith in themselves ... All This constitutes one of the political premises of a revolution, a very important although a passive one.<sup>3</sup>

Let us summarize the analysis of the revolutionary environment to this point. The political structure is one of the main components of the social system. It has definite things to do, ends to achieve, goals to maintain. These are its function.

The main function of this structure is to coordinate the activities of individuals and groups acting in the society in order to achieve a reasonable degree of needs satisfaction to the members of the society. This function can be done successfully by : 1 — preventing and — if they happen — resolving conflicts in the society; and 2 — by directing the individuals and group activities in the right direction as the society — as a whole — sees it.

The coordination and centralized direction is effected by assigning to individuals and to groups definite social status, each possessing a specific set of rights and duties. Behavior conforming with the assignments is eventually enforced by coercion since the power nucleus (the government) disposes the forces of individuals possessing and acting in the set of statuses assigned. In way order, or negatively, the absence of conflict between citizens, is assured.<sup>7</sup>

But, if the government was weak, inefficient, corrupt or oppressive; and if it was unable to solve the problems facing it especially the financial problems; and if it was unable to accommodate itself with the new political ideals of equality, liberty and social justice then it will be unable to function in the way expected and it must. This leads to a gap between the expected political performance and the actual performance which means a dysfunction in the political structure. If the society members were aware of the existence of this dysfunction, this will result in a large discontent and opposition to this government, which helps in creating a revolutionary environment.

We can represent the situation by this chart :

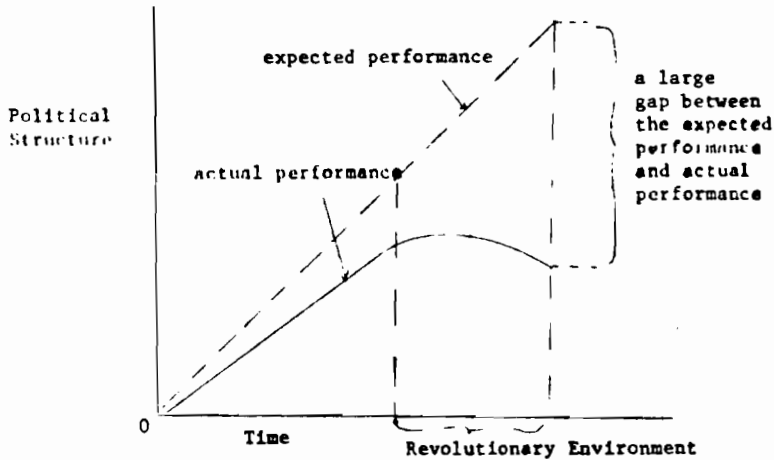
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3 — L. D. Trotsky, «The Art of Revolution,» in **Struggle in the State** : Sources and Patterns of World Revolution, Georg Kelly and Clifford Brown Jr. eds. (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, 1970), p. 336

7 — Timasheff, *op. cit.*, p. 41

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**Figure 1 — Political Structure and Revolution**



### **The Economic Structure :**

The economic system includes all institutions, organizations and actors in so far as they are concerned with the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services.<sup>8</sup>

In our analysis of economic structure we are concerned primarily with the state of dysfunction that might occur in this structure and leads to the creation of a revolutionary environment in the social system.

Unrest and discontent may well follow generally deteriorating economic conditions. «Wild inflation, large-scale unemployment, famine, the familiar cycles of boom and bust -- all these contribute to discontent in large measure.»<sup>9</sup>

As James Davies demonstrates with several case studies that «Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal.»<sup>10</sup>

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8 — Bob Jessop, *Social Order, Reform and Revolution*, (Harder and Harder, New York, 1972), p. 60

9 — Leiden and Schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 41

10 — James Davies, «Toward a Theory of Revolution», *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 27, February, 1962, p. 6.

Dysfunctions in the economic structure may come as a result of economic developments. As Nicholas Timasheff pointed out that :

Economic developments create new interests endorsed by new social classes but may remain rather unnoticed or not taken care of by the government. Trade and industry may have been added to traditional agriculture; but the government may remain in hands of landlords and it may arbitrarily protect the latter's interests and delay the reforms which would make the law and administrative practice adequate to the new economic structure. The development of industry may result in the formation of a large and self-conscious labor class demanding a higher share of the produce and equal status with management as to industrial relations, but the government may stubbornly refuse to pay attention to these demands and support the traditional structure of industry giving autocratic economic power to the owners of plants and mills. On the other hand, the economic conditions may deteriorate owing to soil erosion, exhaustion of valuable resources, too rapid population growth, loss of foreign markets, and so on; the situation demands resolute and well planned action, but the government remains inert, or acts in the wrong direction, at least in the judgment of many. Under these conditions, the rise of opposition, eventually revolutionary opposition, is likely.<sup>11</sup>

To sum up the various theories on the contribution of economic conditions to the creation of a revolutionary environment, all major interpreters from Tocqueville to Davies, with the notable exception of Marx, have a common theme that runs through their many specific variations of economic situations. That theme holds that the actual state of material well-being (or ill-being) of people does not in itself produce revolutionary fervor, but rather that the attitudes of people toward conditions constitute a major factor.<sup>12</sup> In other words people have to be aware of the dysfunctional conditions in the economic structure in order to create a revolutionary environment.

### **The Cultural Structure :**

The cultural structure includes the values, ideology, beliefs, customs, religion, heritage and the way of life, etc. of the society.

In this section we shall concern ourselves with the developments that might occur in this structure and held to create a revolutionary environment.

An important factor in the creation of a revolutionary environment is the spread of education and information. As Nicholas Timasheff pointed out, the uneducated masses may remain docile for centuries despite misery and oppression. The situation

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<sup>11</sup> — Timasheff, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

<sup>12</sup> — Leiden and Schmitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

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changes if and when the spread of education opens to many access to information about the possibility of life under conditions involving more satisfaction, more justice, more participation in wealth and culture. Sometimes the rise of class consciousness or national consciousness is caused by a small minority receiving education abroad and then diffusing knowledge around themselves; such had been the case in India, and also in vast areas around her in Asia and Africa.<sup>13</sup>

Another factor could be found in multinational states where the government often fosters the interests and aspiration of one or more than one ethnic group but not all, and grants privileges at the expense of the residue. «The policy may be of the assimilationist type : the idea of cultural homogeneity is taken for granted by the dominant group, so that the recessive groups are demanded to forfeit their cultural heritage and to merge with the dominant group». <sup>14</sup> When this group (or groups) begin to realize that they were not taken care of by the government then, it will demand equality, justice or autonomy, or even political independence. «This has been the case of Austria-Hungary where two, groups, the Germans and the Magyars, dominated over nine Allo-ethnic groups.»<sup>15</sup>

Also, in a state of more than one religious or ideological background; the government may favor one group and exert pressure on the others.

This prejudice, from the side of the government against one or more ethnic groups is likely to help the social system to be in a state of instability and unrest.

Another factor helps in the creation of revolutionary environment is the adoption, from the side of the governing elite, of new social customs, or new philosophers that are alien to their people. Harry Eckstein noted that «the late nineteenth century, the most prolonged period of civil unrest in American history witnessed a conscious effort on the part of the American plutocracy to ape European manners.» Says Eckstein : «At no other time in American history was the elite so profoundly estranged from American life.» <sup>16</sup>

### **The Military Structure :**

The military structure consists of the armed forces. «The position of the armed forces in a modern state runs parallel to that of the civil service. The armed forces are responsible for the maintenance of law and order and for the defence of the real». <sup>17</sup>

Writing about the causes of dysfunction in the military structure of the social system, Chalmers Johnson pointed out that :

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13 — Timasheff, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-144.

14 — Timasheff, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

15 — *Ibid.*, p. 143.

16 — Leiden and schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

17 — Katherine Chorley, «Armies and the Art of Revolution», in Ronald YE-Lin Cheng, ed., *The Sociology of Revolution*, ( Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1973), p. 228.

The first generalization to be made about the position of armies in revolutionary situations is that the officer corps and the rank-and-file have radically different attitudes toward the social system. Officers play elite roles in a social system and, as a consequence, are more commonly the target of revolution than the participants in it. However, if officers are mobilized by one of the sources of dysfunction, they may make an elitest revolution, i.e., a coup d'etat. Other things being equal, officers' revolutions will always succeed when the officers are in fact commanding the army. They need not worry about armed force being used against them when making their revolution. Because of this advantage, officers' revolutions are very frequent in dysfunctional societies.<sup>18</sup>

Defeat in war may serve as a prime source of dysfunction within the specific context of the officer corps. There are many examples of this effect. German officers turned toward politics after the defeat of 1918. Arab military dictatorships were promoted by the debacle of 1948 in Palestine.<sup>19</sup>

In a revolutionary environment, the position of the army is one crucial determinant of the success or failure of any revolution. If the governments are in full control of its armed forces and are in a position to use them then she has a decisive superiority which enables her to control the revolutionary situation in the social system. «Revolutions, therefore, might particularly be expected in the last stages of an unsuccessful war.<sup>20</sup>

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18 — Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

19 — *Ibid.*

20 — Peter Calvert, *Revolution* (Praeger Publishers, New York, 1970), p. 98.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Conclusions

In the previous chapter we reviewed how the social system reaches the stage of the revolutionary environment. We said that the revolutionary environment is a precondition to revolution. If we want to define this stage we say : revolutionary environment is a situation of large discontent which results from a wide spread dysfunction in one or more than one structure of the social system, and the members of this system are fully aware of this (or these) dysfunction (s).

We said that the ultimate end of the society is to achieve a reasonable degree of needs satisfaction to its members. But in this stage the gap between the actual needs satisfaction and the expected needs satisfaction is a large one, still that does not lead to immediate revolution. For in this stage the government may still get support from some potential powers in the society, or the masses may still have hopes of reform from the side of the government to the dysfunctions in the structures of the social system. In other words, though the society's members do not get what they expect of needs satisfaction, the consent upon the existing government in this stage is wavering.

In the stage of revolutionary environment, if remedial actions to the dysfunctions in the social system took place on the part of the government then, the consent upon the existing government will rise again (Figure 2). But if no reforms took place, the consent on the government will continue to decline (Figure 3) and we could expect more discontent and more unrest in the social system.

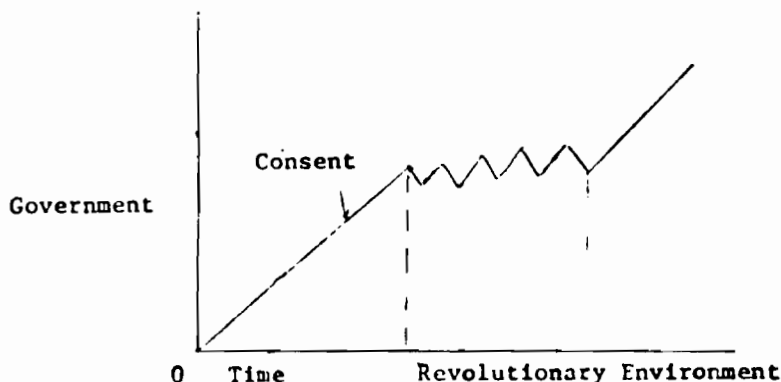


figure 2 — Consent if Reforms Took Place

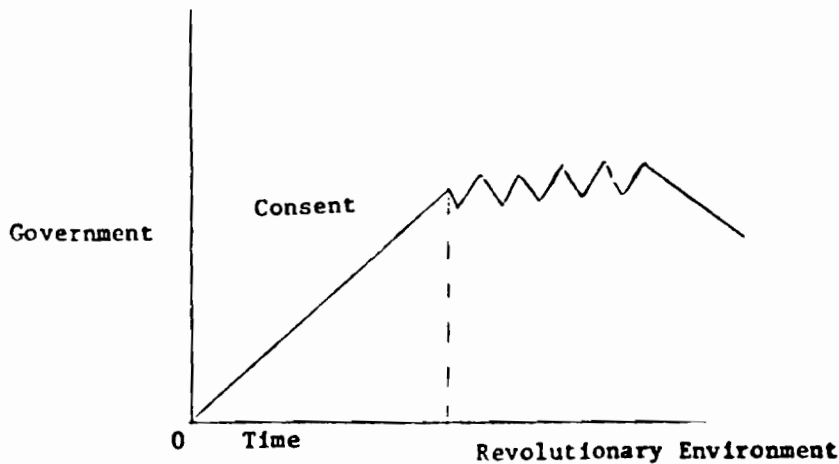


Figure 3 — Consent if Reforms Did Not Take Place

In other words, the social system will be in a state of tension, and if it becomes pervasive, it will cause serious erosion or disappearance of that fundamental mutual harmony between the government and the governed, and emergence of mutual distrust and fear between the two sides.<sup>1</sup> But this in itself does not lead to an immediate revolution. There must be factors that escalate the situation and lead to immediate outbreak. These factors we call «great events.» If a great event happened in a social system in which it is well prepared for revolution because of the dysfunctions and tensions, then, revolution will take place.

These great events may be the emergence of a prophetic leader causing a revolutionary millerarian to develop; or it may be a revolutionary party who tries to create a rebel infrastructure in order to launch a militarized mass insurrection.<sup>2</sup> The great event may be a defeat in foreign war of a system already suffering from widespread dysfunctions. The great event may also come from outside the society. Such was the case of the Hungarian Revolution. For by 1956 a revolutionary environment of unrest and frustration existed in Hungary. What was lacking for the revolution to break out was the great event, and it was supplied by the agitation in Poland.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, let us summarize the analysis of revolution as follows : a state of widespread dysfunction may occur in one or more than one structure of the social system. This state means that the structures of the social system do not function in the way they must in order to satisfy the needs (in all their forms) of the society's members, which is the main purpose of the function of these structures. Thus, a state of tension will soon occur in the society if no remedial actions take place and thus, a revolutionary environment is

1 — Traketsugu Tsurutani, «Stability and Instability», A Note in Comparative political analysis *The Sociology of Revolution*, p. 45.

2 — Chalmers Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

3 — Leiden and Schmitt, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

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created. In this stage if a great event happens, then a revolution will take place.

We can represent the situation by this chart :

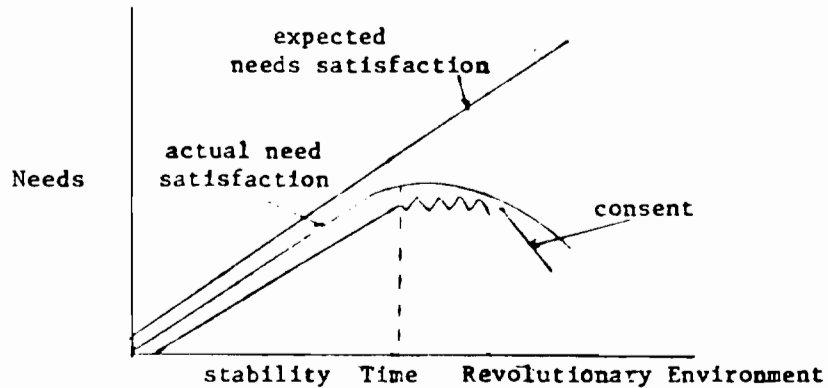


Figure 4 -- Need Satisfaction and Revolution

- 1) Widespread dysfunction + consciousness + large discontent = Revolutionary Environment.
- 2) Revolutionary Environment + Great Event = Revolution