REVOLUTIONS: THEORISTS, THEORY AND PRACTICE

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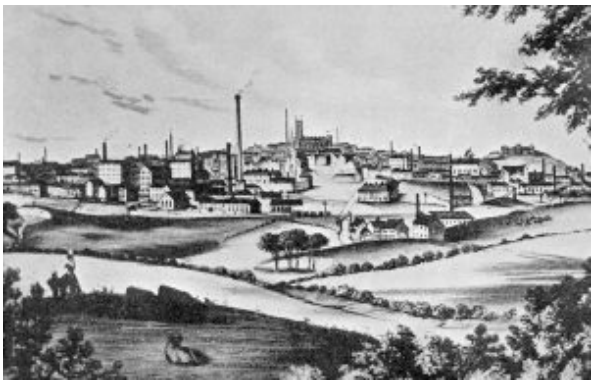

Industrialization: 19th c. town in Lancashire is licensed under CC BY 4.0

“...We may simply register strong agreement with the Marxist thesis that a vigorous and independent class of town dwellers has been an indispensable element in the growth of parliamentary democracy. No bourgeois, no democracy.”

– Barrington Moore 1966

Karl Marx methodically laid the groundwork for the founder of structuralist revolutionary theories, Barrington Moore. Barrington Moore takes one of the first leaps among revolutionary theorists, as he sought to build

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Barrington Moore

Barrington Moore worked as an American political sociologist, known for constructing theories concerning societies’ structure and revolutionary outcomes. Moore attended Yale, where he received his Ph.D. in sociology, and later became a Harvard professor where he taught for 28 years (Harvard Gazette, 2005). Many scholars lump Moore into the “neo-Marxist” school of thought, as he held a set of beliefs that concentrated on the importance of an economic system within a society. His beliefs materialized in a less idealistic manner than that of Marx’s Utopia. However, he emphasized the importance of the correlation between class conflict and economic systems within revolutions (Moore, 1966). The main goal of Moore’s theory outlined the explanation of the “differences among the sequences characteristic of major routes” of revolution (Skocpol, 1973: p. 5).

Barrington Moore and Karl Marx

Before exploring Barrington Moore’s theory of revolution, one must compare Karl Marx and Moore as the latter’s ideas build on those of the former. Marx’s ideas of structuralism, and the division of classes based on economic terms, work as a foundation of Moore’s theory of revolution.

In Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, Moore sets out to understand structural revolutions throughout industrial modernization and the roles of different classes, such as the landed upper classes, bourgeoisie, and the peasantry played in societal development (Moore, 1966). While Marx focused mainly on economic aspects when predicting changes in society, Moore focused on the social structure of the State systems themselves while also incorporating economic structures. A stark difference between Moore and Marxist theorists includes their outlook of the peasantry’s role in revolutions, which Moore describes as communist revolutions. Marx believes these revolutions remain impossible to achieve without the presence of discontented intellectuals who take the peasantry’s reins and lead them to a revolutionary outcome (Moore, 1966). Even then, Moore argues the peasant class, or proletariats, exist as the first victims of reconstruction of a new society. Despite bringing about the revolutionary situation, they fall victim to the revolutionary outcome (Moore, 1966).

Moore’s work in Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy attempts to predict what certain factors within a structured society present favorable conditions for particular

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The Capitalistic-Democratic Route:

Barrington Moore, first, dives into the capitalistic-democratic route. This path directly aligns with Moore’s famous quote- “no bourgeois, no democracy’, which means the existence of a bourgeoisie endures as a fundamental prerequisite for a democratic revolutionary outcome (Moore, 1966: p. 418). This theoretical route relies heavily on the inclusion of a powerful bourgeois class, which wields power to overtake or dissolve both the peasant and the aristocratic classes through seven sequential steps.

Moore offers the Puritan Revolution, the French Revolution, and the American Civil War as the three case studies that fall under capitalism and parliamentary democratic revolutions (Moore, 1966). Moore places a heavy emphasis on social structures within his theory of revolutions. He divides society into three classes: the bourgeoisie, the landed upper class, also referred to as the aristocracy, and the peasantry class. These social classes play essential roles in each of Moore’s routes, as their actions, or lack thereof, drive the revolutionary potential towards a distinct revolutionary outcome.

The capitalist-democratic route incorporates several key elements that lead to a democratic version of capitalism, such as the blooming of an economically independent class and the bourgeoisie that seeks to destroy obstacles within the societal structure (Moore, 1966). The aristocracy exists as a substantial component. In the dawn of the revolution, which chooses to either join the capitalistic and democratic tide or the revolution’s wrath consumes the aristocracy (Moore, 1966). Similarly, the peasant class either jumped into the tide of revolution or became engulfed in the storm of progress (Moore, 1966). Barrington Moore considers the capitalistic-democratic route as the revolution of the bourgeoisie, which he defines as the “…independent class of town dwellers has been an indispensable element in the growth of parliamentary democracy. No bourgeois, no democracy,” (Moore, 1966: p. 418).

Moore illustrates his capitalistic-democratic route as an archaic path, which each case relatively follows. The first step of a democratic system relies on a balanced relationship between a moderately strong crown and a semi-independent landed aristocracy (Moore, 1966). These two groups’ strength remains essential when considering that an overly powerful crown could lead down the path of a communist revolution. In contrast, an aristocracy with full independence already established could lead down the path of a capitalist-reactionary revolution (Moore, 1966).

The second development exhibited during the democratic-capitalistic revolution occurs

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structure (Moore, 1966). An example of this idea presents itself in England in its movement towards commercial agriculture via the landed aristocracy’s will, which led to hostilities between the aristocracy and the crown.

Moore explains that in the third step of the revolution, the peasantry’s destruction represents a crucial component of the revolutionary process. Moore believes that the survival of a large peasant class leads to tremendous problems for democratic advances, at best, and, at worst, provides a reservoir for a peasant revolution or communist uprising (Moore, 1966). Therefore, “…the elimination of the peasant question through the transformation of the peasantry into some other kind of social formation appears to augur best for democracy,” (Moore, 1966: p. 422). This elimination manifested itself in the form of England’s enclosure acts, as the landed aristocracy stripped what little claim to land peasants had, which eventually wiped peasants clean from the map of revolution and the social structure (Moore, 1966).

According to Moore, the bourgeoisie emerges from the cracks of the social structure as the peasants begin to dissipate into the memory of revolutionary potential. The bourgeoisie typically took the form of the upper stratum of peasants, commercial and industrial leaders within the towns’ urban areas (Moore, 1966). Here, Moore feels inclined to agree with Marx and Marxist theorists, as the bourgeoisie exists as an irreplaceable element of parliamentary democracy, as he wrote, “No bourgeois, no democracy” (Moore, 1966: p. 418).

After the emergence of the bourgeoisie, the next step alludes to aligning the interests between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Moore believes the coalitions, and counter-coalitions, occur as an integral aspect of political framework and an environment for action, creating opportunities, contributing to the revolutionary potential (Moore, 1966). This occurrence leads to the sixth step, an alliance of the two classes. Eventually, the aristocratic society adapts to the bourgeoisie society’s characteristics, as the populace weens off the agrarian aspect of the economy and expands commercial industrialization (Moore, 1966). The coalition of the bourgeoisie and the upper landed elites, combined with the modernization of the rapidly growing capitalist economies, leads to an opposition of the royal authority (Moore, 1966). As seen in France, the monarchy could not reform adequately, which led to its quick demise.

Ultimately, these conflicts lead to a final climax of political violence, which one witnesses during the American Civil War, as well as the French and Puritan Revolutions. The Puritan Revolution allowed the new coalition of the upper stratum of society to maim

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Finally, the bourgeoisie, with or without the help of the aristocracy, attains a revolutionary outcome, which consists of restructuring society as a bourgeoisie democratic society. Key elements of this new capitalistic and bourgeoisie society include voting rights, representation in a legislating body, a system of objective law concerning birthrights, and secure property rights (Moore, 1966). Moore admits that, although the steps of revolution do not always occur in practice, Moore emphasizes the outcomes of these revolutions, a capitalistic-democratic society (Moore, 1966).

The Capitalistic-Reactionary Route

Barrington Moore names his second route the Capitalistic-Reactionary Route. This path also exists as a capitalistic revolution; however, society experiences intense revolutionary upheaval: a revolution from a fascist regime above, as exemplified by Germany and Japan (Moore, 1966). Throughout this revolution, seven steps exist that range from a peasantry posing a threat to the other classes to the final product of a fascist dictatorship. Ultimately, those at the top of the capitalistic-reactionary system (the aristocracy and bourgeoisie) maintain the peasant society’s structure with a strong, central government, allowing them to extract surplus capital from the peasant class to sell and make a profit (Moore, 1966).

The first step of the Capitalistic-Reactionary route manifests itself as the aristocratic and bourgeoisie classes recognize the threat the peasant class presents to their power and the structure of society, which leads to the second step: the bourgeoisie and aristocracy existing as entities, independently, too weak to suppress this menace (Moore, 1966). However, one must understand the bourgeoisie in this situation, although weak, the bourgeoisie must fare well enough to present itself as a formidable ally of the upper class; otherwise, the route could turn down the path of communism through a peasant revolution (Moore, 1966). This leads to a coalition between the aristocratic and bourgeoisie classes (Moore, 1966).

Moore’s third step outlines the aristocratic-bourgeois alliance turning to the state to protect their economic interest, emphasizing the use of the structured society’s labor repressive system. The repressive labor system involves using political mechanisms, such as the state, to provide an adequate labor force, rather than a free market as seen in the democratic-capitalistic route – the state ultimately exists as the “invisible hand” (Moore, 1966). Ultimately, in order to ensure their survival, the bourgeoisie class, according to Moore, gives itself up to the upper landed aristocracy and royal bureaucracy, opting out of any

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tarian state. After forming the coalition between the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, the labor-repressive agriculture system insufficiently competes with more technically advanced societies (Moore, 1966). The landed aristocracy then faces economic fallout as the system fails to compete, which leads the landed upper class to wield the state’s power to preserve its own rule (Moore, 1966). As the coalition continues to succeed, a prolonged period of a conservative, authoritarian government falls just short of fascism (Moore, 1966). One may see this in Germany, from the Stein-Hardenberg reforms to the end of World War I, and in Japan, from the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate to 1918 (Moore, 1966).

One should note that these mildly authoritarian regimes lead to weak parliaments, such as the Weimar Republic in Germany and the Taisho Government in Japan (Moore, 1966). Here, in democracy, the door to fascism opens (Moore, 1966). Moore then explains his fifth step: the regime fails to reform in the face of an economic crisis. Ultimately, the democracies cannot remain reluctant to change the fundamental structure of the failing economic system (Moore, 1966). It thrusts the state into a revolution.

Moore’s sixth step defines the central government’s power, which leaves behind the weak democracy and establishes itself as the strong central authority, wielding a unified administrative system and a uniform code of law and system of courts (Moore, 1966). This exists as an essential step towards modernization for nations experiencing this route. To complete the third step, the leadership drags along and controls the landed upper class (Moore, 1966). This leadership, then, establishes a powerful bureaucracy, and within it, the “agencies of repression,” such as the military and police forces (Moore, 1966: p. 441). This allows the government to exist in an incubated state, free from society’s compulsion and extreme reactionary pressures (Moore, 1966). Crucially, the government’s stability allows it to remain vigilant, oppressing revolutionary situations, and ultimately, revolutionary outcomes (Moore, 1966).

Due to the shortcomings of the authoritarian regime, the final step in the capitalistic reactionary route ultimately leads to an outright fascist dictatorship. The strong, conservative regime has advantages, such as controlling economic growth by paying close attention to the peasantry class’s economic success, not allowing for too much growth that would ultimately threaten the upper strata’s power (Moore, 1966). However, it became clear for these societies that there existed an inherent problem with their modernization: they attempted to modernize without changing their social structures. According to Moore, modernization cannot succeed without these changes (Moore, 1966). For the upper classes, militarism presented the only relief from this dilemma, brought on by a fas-

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clysmic demise as they sought out foreign expansion, choking on their aspirations (Moore, 1966).

Communist Route

Moore continues with the Communist Revolution, the final route, exemplified in China and Russia. This revolution’s general element manifests itself within an agrarian bureaucracy, hindering commercial and industrial growth (Moore, 1966). In these societies, the bourgeois never became more than a frail class, making it an unviable partner for other social classes (Moore, 1966). The lack of modernization allowed for the proliferation of a substantial peasantry, which existed as fuel for a revolutionary force, set to overthrow the existing agrarian structure and propel itself into a revolutionary outcome (Moore, 1966). Moore explains that societies that heavily rely on a powerful central government to extract surplus capital remain prone to these types of revolutionary outcomes (Moore, 1966). Moore believes there exist eight archaic steps that guide a revolution to a communist dictatorship.

One can see the initial step society takes down the path of communism as the inability of the upper landed elite to develop commercial agriculture, aiding in the survival of a large peasant social organization (Moore, 1966). The failure to modernize the economy by transitioning to commercial agriculture led to slow economic growth, while the pressures on the peasantry to produce continued to rise.

The lack of a bourgeoisie to drive democratic-capitalistic reforms, the second aspect of the communist revolution, creates a power vacuum within society. In Russia, for instance, the small, weak bourgeoisie committed itself to the preferred capitalism of the Czar, hothouse capitalism, which did not adequately expand urban commercial industrialization (Moore, 1966). Moore argued that this lack of growth experienced by the bourgeoisie allowed for a power vacuum, an opportunity for the peasants.

Moore emphasizes the peasantry’s immense size within societies enroute to communism, which correlates with their power. The emergence of a powerful peasantry, the third step to a communist revolution, creates the tinder of revolutionary potential (Moore, 1966).

The fourth characteristic Moore identifies manifests itself in the existence of a healthy bureaucratic state. As the larger central state begins to expand its authority over the market and society itself, the relationship between the peasantry and the upper landed

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Then, Moore identifies the fifth step, the growing power of the central government and the peasant’s dependency on this state, rather than the landed aristocracy. At one point in history, the landed upper class, the immediate overlord, played an essential role in the peasants’ lives (Moore, 1966). However, as the central government grows, it takes over the tasks of the overlord, such as providing protection from outside threats, acting as an extension of the law when peasants had disputes amongst themselves, and offering economic advice and assistance as misfortunes fell upon the peasants (Moore, 1966). In return for the old services of the aristocracy, the upper classes would extract surplus of capital from the peasants (Moore, 1966). Slowly, this change eats away at the legitimacy of the entire aristocratic class in the eyes of the powerful peasantry.

As the central government encroaches on the aristocracy’s powers, siphoning off its legitimacy, the state infuriates the peasants through arbitrary extraction, the sixth step of the route. Here, Moore asserts Marxist theories make excessive oversight, focusing too much on the peasantry class. Moore believes that Marxists miss the revolution’s actual cause, the upper class’s actions that provoked the revolution (Moore, 1966). The sudden change with an increasing obligation to the upper landed aristocracy, and the larger central government overwhelms the peasantry class (Moore, 1966). The grievances of individuals within the peasantry class become grievances of the entire class, lighting the fire of a revolutionary desire (Moore, 1966). With a lack of institutional links between peasants and the upper classes, aggravated by an exploitative relationship, the peasants set aflame the aristocracy, consuming it in the revolutionary destruction (Moore, 1966).

Moore identifies the seventh step towards a communist dictatorship in a successful, peasant-led revolution from below. During the peasant-led revolution, Moore believes Marxists accurately assume that “[b]y themselves the peasants have never been able to accomplish revolution” (Moore, 1966: p. 479). Moore believes, for the sake of the revolution, peasants must weld a coalition with an upper stratum of society, intellectuals, who could do little without the power of the peasants, which they wield (Moore, 1966). One can see elements of this idea as Trotsky’s Vanguard of the Proletariat.

Unfortunately, for many of the peasants, they achieve a revolutionary outcome. In the dawn of creating the new system of government, the new social structure, the peasants bring little to contribute (Moore, 1966). Although Moore acknowledges “[t]he peasants have provided the dynamite to bring down the old building, [t]o the subsequent work of reconstruction, they have brought nothing…” (Moore, 1966: p. 480). Instead, the peasants become the first victim of the government’s attempt at the modernization of the economy, which one can see during China’s Great Leap Forward and in Russia with

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however, the class seeking freedom from oppression only finds itself back at the bottom of society.

French Revolution

One must note the French Revolution chapter of this book, chapter 11, delves deeper into Barrington Moore’s analysis of the French case study. Moore understands the case studies do not fit entirely within the steps outlined by the routes; instead, the steps exist as rough guidelines for the revolutionary outcomes.

Moore uses the French revolution to illustrate his capitalist-democracy route, which emphasizes the bourgeoisie destroying obstacles to a democratic version of capitalism, the most important dynamic of the route (Moore, 1966). The obstacle manifested itself as the French monarchy and feudal system. The French monarchy attempted to retain a system of inherited legal and social inequalities while failing to provide a proper structure for the commercial expansion waiting at its doorstep (Kaiser, 1976).

In France’s case, commercial agriculture did not destroy the peasantry, not to an extent as one saw in England. Instead, it put a more considerable burden on the peasant class to produce excess capital, which fed into the peasants’ revolutionary potential (Moore, 1966). Ultimately, the Third Estate felt threatened by the nobility’s proposals to introduce enclosures, which sought to extract the excess capital from the little surplus produced by the third estate (Moore 1966). Although the aristocracy, or nobility, typically attracted the interests of the bourgeoisie, creating the alliance of the upper class and the bourgeoisie, the nobles who did have parliamentary power alienated the bourgeoisie with the threat of enclosures, adding to the revolutionary potential (Moore 1966). Due to this added pressure, the peasant class’s upper stratum named the Third Estate, and the urban town dwellers, the bourgeoisie, united in opposition against the crown (Moore 1966). This united front manifested itself as the Tennis Court Oath. This oath was taken on June 20, 1789, as members of the Third Estate, the bourgeoisie, and sympathetic nobility agreed not to disperse until the monarchy granted access to parliament for all three classes, which would rid the monarchy of its perceived authority (Johnson, 2009). The combination of the alienation of the bourgeoisie against sects of the nobility and the growth of capitalism showed the monarchy’s inability to reform the monarchy’s failure then led to a dramatically violent uprising with the Storming of the Bastille (Moore 1966). The revolutionary outcome in France resulted in cutting off the nobility’s power, the initial destruction of the monarchy, and eventually leading to a democratic capitalist system (Moore

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American Civil War

Barrington Moore classifies the American Civil War as the last Democratic-Capitalist Revolution he observes within his case studies. However, one must understand, the form the revolution took does not follow the exact steps set out by Moore’s revolutionary route. Instead, Moore focuses on the outcome, the restructuring of society, with a parliamentary democracy, on which he based his classification (Skocpol, 1973).

Elements of Moore’s Democratic-Capitalist Revolution exist in the American Civil War throughout the events leading to war. The interests of the bourgeoisie and the upper, aristocratic class of the industrial North merged in the desire to tear down the system of labor within the South (Moore, 1966). The repressive labor system of the South grinded against the type of capitalism sought by the North, specifically, competitive democratic capitalism (Moore, 1966). As the North’s economy became stronger, the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the Northern aristocracy realized the South’s labor system ill-suited the Union’s inevitable industrialization, and, subsequently, modernization (Oakes, 2016). Similar to England and France’s monarchies, the South’s social culture emphasized hereditary status, defined one’s human worth by birthright, which Northerners rejected, as these social structures repressed the society they envisioned (Moore, 1966). The South’s aristocracy made a desperate attempt to retain control of these social structures, leading to the South’s secession from the Union (Oakes, 1966). Here, one may observe the alliance of the northern bourgeoisie and aristocracy joining together against the South’s feudal system, the undemocratic feature of society, and employing a violent revolution upon the South, the Civil War.

Ultimately, the Civil War results led to the abolishing of the South’s slave labor system, and, with it, the bourgeoisie and industrial upper class of the North, quite literally, burned down the undemocratic institutions of the South, plantations (Feigenbaum, 2018). In the final campaign of the Civil War, Union General William Sherman implemented a scorched earth policy, burning the most productive plantations, the sheer power of the Southern aristocracy, all across the state of Georgia (Feigenbaum, 2018). Moore highlights the significant political consequences resulting from the revolution, such as preserving the Union and the ending of federal enforcement of slavery. The destruction of this social system resulted in a more democratic future (Moore, 1966). For Moore, the American Civil War achieved a successful reconstruction of American society, ending the reign of a monarchial system of power held by the southern upper class, abolishing slavery, and a significant expansion of suffrage (Moore, 1966).

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Barrington Moore’s theories of revolution, the three routes, offer a lens through which one may apply to other revolutions, providing one with a basis of possible predictions for revolutionary outcomes. Applying Moore’s neo-Marxist theories to societal structures’ development highlights the importance of economic, social structures driving revolutions (Moore, 1966). Through the necessary steps that Moore outlines in his three routes, he explains, in an archaic manner, the societal shift, or lack thereof, from agrarian to industrialized societies and the possible development of a democratic outcome, in which the presence of a bourgeois class is essential.

The statement “no bourgeoisie, no democracy” alone provides deep insight into Moore’s theory of why capitalistic-democratic revolutionary outcomes occur: a discontent middle class with an established economic base takes the reigns of revolutionary potential, building alliances with other sympathetic classes, creates swelling support for a democratic version of capitalism, drowning any obstacles to the establishment of the new system (Moore, 1966). The English Civil War, the French Revolution, and the American Revolution illustrate these capitalistic-democratic revolutionary outcomes.

Then, Moore emphasizes how, independently, weak bourgeois and aristocratic classes offer one insight into the proliferation of a capitalistic-reactionary system, seen within the rise of Germany and Japan’s fascist government. In these cases, the peasant classes threatened the relatively weak aristocracy and bourgeois classes, causing the latter two to manipulate the state for protection. However, the formation of the regime stalled economic growth, leading to an economic crisis, which allowed for the rise of a militaristic and fascist leader, inevitably leading to the destruction of these societies (Moore, 1966).

The final route, the communist revolution, as seen in China and Russia, occurs when industrialization is non-existent, leading to a weak middle class, while a strong peasantry, embedded in the roots of a powerful central government, guided by revolutionary intellectuals, lead the peasants to a communist revolutionary outcome, destroying the aristocracy and any bourgeoisie that existed (Moore, 1966). Unfortunately, for the peasants, they typically fall victim to the destruction of the very revolutionary outcome they desire, a communist government (Moore, 1966).

Although no revolution, in either revolutionary route, follows the exact steps put forth by Moore, a generic pattern exists that revolutions follow. According to Moore, revolutionary outcomes depend predominantly on the relative strength, or weakness, of the bourgeoisie within a society (Moore, 1966). For Moore, revolutions occur due to society’s need to modernize through industrialization. Depending on which class drives this indus-

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others’ works, students of his in fact, such as Theda Skocpol and Charles Tilly. However, Barrington Moore is unique amongst structuralists, as he underlines, for him, the determinant of revolutionary outcomes exists within the bourgeoisie, “no bourgeoisie, no democracy” (Moore 1966: 418).

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