

# **IRD 315: REVOLUTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

## **WEEK 1: The Concept of Revolution: Definition, Process, Types and Stages**

### **1.0. INTRODUCTION**

Here, we deduce the backbone concepts that aid our understanding of what revolutions in International Relations.

### **1.1. WHAT IS A REVOLUTION**

Revolution as a concept in International Relations can be defined in various context depending on the perceptions of scholars. Nonetheless, for **Samuel Huntington**, it can be said to be a rapid, fundamental and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, be it in its political institutions, leadership, government activities and policies. While for **Theda Skocpol**, revolutions are rapid and basic transformation of a society, state and class structure as they are accompanied and in part carried out by class-based revolt from below. Also, **Katz** interpreted revolutions to involve the downfall of an old regime through violent means and its replacement by a new regime that attempts to establish a new political and social order. In all, a revolution is centred on change from an established structure to a new one be it for better or worse, all with their inherent consequences and realities.

Revolutions can be of different types such as

- 1) **Social Revolution**
- 2) **Political Revolution**
- 3) **Religious Revolutions**
- 4) **Cultural Revolutions**
- 5) **Scientific Revolutions**
- 6) **Moral Revolutions.**
- 7) **Health Revolutions. etc.**

Likewise, Revolutions can be characterized by four main traits; they are

- (1). **Sudden**
- (2). **Violent**
- (3). **Require political replacement, and**
- (4). **Lead to major replacement (political, socio-economic, etc.) changes to the system.**

For **Simon Hawkins** he discerned revolutions as being as much social as political change but warns of the dangers of revolutions to give rise to its own form of oppression, he cites the French Revolution as an example. It should be of note that in contrast to No. 2 in the above-stated traits of a revolution, **Mary Ellen O Connell**

reiterates the view of some scholars that Revolutions can occur in non-violent forms. A moderate response to such opinion is that revolutions involve violence not necessarily from the revolutionary movement, but from the various system they canvass against, to change. In said situation, the power of established systems and their desire to maintain the status-quo will make their use of force to retain such a condition unavoidable.

## **1.2. THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS**

### **1.2.1. WHAT IS THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS**

The Revolutionary Process can be viewed as a series of actions or steps taken by elements germane to a revolution in order to achieve a revolutionary end. Such a process is not set in stone, i.e. any of this may come before the other. The process involves step, decision, response. In understanding the revolutionary process, it must be stated that the process of a revolution may begin but must not necessarily end.

### **1.2.2. REVOLUTIONARY CONDITIONS/SITUATIONS**

For a revolution to occur, certain conditions/situation must be met, the most important of which must be a situation that requires a change, this condition must have lingered over time such that it warrants a revolutionary response. E.g. the Sit-Tight Syndrome of Authoritarian regime.

### **1.2.3. THE REVOLUTIONARY**

Revolutionary is an individual or group who have a desire to pursue a revolutionary change in society. These persons are driven and committed as well as will most likely populate the leadership ladder of the Revolution. They most times are the initiator or sustainers of a revolutionary movement. Likewise, they are a rallying point for revolutionary activities. E.g. Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, etc.

### **1.2.4. REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS**

Revolutionary Ideas entails the dominant views that form the ideological foundation of the revolutionary groups. It covers the idea of the change that is clamoured for and how that change should be achieved. It can be said to be the Revolution in mind. E.g. Mahamat Gandhi "Non-Violent", The American Revolution "Non-Taxation without Representation" etc

### **1.2.5. REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT**

A revolutionary movement is a group of persons who are joint together in a platform. They have as their core objective a desire or commitment to bring about a change to the established system. They are violent in their operation or non-violent. E.g. Red Card Movement (Nigeria), The Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), etc

### **1.2.6. REVOLUTIONARY WARFARE**

Revolutionary warfare is a campaign of violence by a revolutionary movement representing an alternative to a current regime. Such occurs by mobilizing sufficient element of the population to threaten the established system. It usually results from the failure of peaceful means to change a revolutionary condition. E.g. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND).

### **1.3. TYPES OF REVOLUTION**

Revolutions are tagged various labels as a form of typological nomenclature. Said typological nomenclature emerge for their instigators, core issues, agenda or purpose, which lead to the Revolution.

#### **1.3.1. ARISTOCRATIC REVOLUTION**

Such Revolution occurs from a crack in the unison of the aristocratic (privileged and entrenched elites) class of society. In such a situation, factions are formed, and one of such emerge to challenge the established order. The cause here could be because of lost benefits from the current system or other reasons. E.g. The Meiji Revolution

#### **1.3.2. BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION**

Here, this Revolution emerges from the non-aristocratic or noble, wealthy elites of society. Said class is populated by wealthy entrepreneur, merchants, profession who

have the resources to form a potent political force. The Bourgeois seeks to open up the space of political participation from the hands of a privileged elite few. Hence, they seek expanded power in a change of unfair conditions that inhibit them. E.g., The French Revolution etc

### **1.3.3. PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION**

A proletarian Revolution is one championed mostly by the working class or as **Karl Marx** term it as the "Have Not." Here, the group that leads said Revolution are usually radical. They seek to unseat an unjust economic or political order, that keeps them subservient, exploited and downtrodden. E.g. The Bolshevik Revolution

### **1.3.4. PEASANT REVOLUTION**

Peasant Revolution is such that has been phased out of modern International Society. It occurred in the past, in a situation where peasants (serfs or subservient class; tied to the land), as the lowest class in society, rise to overthrow their landlord or landed masters. E.g., the Red Turban Revolution

### **1.3.5. COUP D'ETAT**

Coup D' Etats are seen controversially as a type of Revolution. However, that is not without challenge to its suitability in being termed as such. A Coup is a forceful action aimed at the overthrow of the political leadership of a system. It usually

involves a small group within the government structure. Not necessarily linked to fundamental change. E.g. January 15<sup>TH</sup> 1966 Coup in Nigeria,

#### **1.4. STAGES OF A REVOLUTION**

Scholars of revolutionary events in international relations have from their observations deduced that Revolutions do not occur in isolation, some actions lead up to what pans out as Revolutions. Such logic lead to what they term the stages of a Revolution. Hence, several of such Stages have been proposed by scholars based on their perspective. And so, one of the most prominent is that given by **Crane Brinton** in his book "**The Anatomy of A Revolution.**" Hence, Crane Brinton, in his book "The Anatomy of A Revolution" presented four stages of a revolution.

##### **1.4.1. THE INCUBATION STAGE**

In this stage, the symptoms of a revolution are shown before the outbreak of the Revolution. Such symptoms can include economic crisis, sense of government injustice, weak rules. Also, it can consist of half-hearted reforms, intellectual opposition, class division and antagonism, defeat or recruitment of armed forces by revolutionaries.

#### **1.4.2. THE MODERATE STAGE**

At this stage, the Revolution has begun in its peaceful attributes. Here, a call for a change is made or requested. Also, at this stage, participants try to compromise and seek reforms to the issues being clamoured for by the revolutionaries.

#### **1.4.3. THE CRISIS STAGE**

Here, this stage occurs as a result of the failure of parties to the Revolution to reach a satisfactory agreement. At this stage, there is an escalation of violence. Violence increases and more radical element on both side rear up. And so, revolutionary warfare occurs, especially in its more violent forms. Exhaustion or victory will lead to the end of this.

#### **1.4.4. THE RECOVERY STAGE**

At this stage, the Revolution is at its winding down phase. Here, hostilities are brought to an end. In this stage, the revolutionaries or counter-revolutionaries have achieved success, or the parties come to a mutual conclusion