

Debate on Downfall of Regime: An Experience of Anti-Rana Movement and its Downfall in Nepal

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Abstract

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To answer the questions of “Why does revolution happen? What components are necessary for the success of the revolution? And whether the political revolution transforms the socio-economic condition of people or not?” is the primary purpose of this paper. I began with the argument of Theda Skocpol and argued through the pieces of evidence of the anti-Rana movement in Nepal. My argument here is the, existing socio-political structure and transnational contexts are significant factors that determine any form of political revolution in the state. People support the political revolution for the expectation of socioeconomic transformation rather than a transformation of political structure. Transformation of people’s socioeconomic status is possible through economic revolution rather than political revolution. However political revolution is essential to create a foundation of financial revolution. Political revolution brings only political structural change rather than economic structure.

Introduction

Political revolution and downfall of regime is a very rare event in the political history of the world. It is believed that the inefficient governance always invites political confrontation, revolution and its own demise too. Whenever political structure does not function according to social structure, the political conflict is inevitable (Tilly 1994). The political stability of any state depends upon the governing system adopted by state mechanism. In terms of exploring how governance and society interact and influence one another at a macro level, political revolution, regime change, socio-economic development and prosperity are widely discussed issues in the field of political sociology. There is general understanding in society that people participate any political movement for the expectation of better life in future. However, there is another question, can political revolution and regime change be a foundation for development? Can existing socio-political structure lead society towards positive direction after the change in political structure? To address the questions of debatable issues about political change, its causes & consequences in a society, this paper, has tried to explore the answer of why does revolution happen? What components are necessary for the success of the revolution? Whether the political revolution transforms the socio-economic condition of people or not? For this purpose, the case of anti Rana movement in Nepal and its demise has been selected as a research unit.

Data and Methods

Because of nature of problem i.e. historical event, content analysis method of data analysis has been applied. Some historical books, journals and newspapers were selected as data and analyzed by applying theoretical model to understand overall context and event of that period. To comprehend the logical connection between contexts, facts and interpret the phenomenon in critical way, I have used multiple theories as a model.

Analysis with theoretical Reflection

As Skocpol (1979) stated that; the Social revolutions have been rare but momentous occurrences in modern world history. From France in the 1790s to Vietnam in the mid-twentieth century, these revolutions have transformed state organizations, class structures, and dominant ideologies. Revolutionary France

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became suddenly a conquering power in Continental Europe, and the Russian Revolution generated an industrial and military superpower. The Mexican Revolution gave its homeland the political strength to become one of the most industrialized of postcolonial nations and the country in Latin America least prone to military coups. Since World War II, the culmination of a revolutionary process long underway has reunited and transformed a shattered China. And new social revolutions have enabled decolonizing and neocolonial countries such as Vietnam and Cuba to break the chains of extreme dependency.

But the question falls in front of us what differences brought the revolution against Rana and the fall of Rana in Nepali society? Its answer is within the answer of “Why the revolutions happen?” what components are necessary for the revolution’s success? Whether the political revolution can transform the society or not? About this Skocpol argues that:

Social revolutions are rapid, fundamental transformations of a society’s state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below. Social revolutions are set apart from other sorts of conflicts and transformative processes above all by the combination of two coincidences: the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social transformation. In contrast, rebellions, even when successful, may involve the revolt of subordinate classes- but they do not eventuate in structural change. Political revolutions transform state structures but not social structures, and they are not necessarily accomplished through class conflict. And processes such as industrialization can transform social structures without necessarily bringing about, or resulting from, sudden political upheavals or fundamental political-structural changes. What is unique to social revolution is that fundamental changes in social structure and political structure and in political structure occur together in a mutually reinforcing fashion. And the changes occur through intense sociopolitical conflicts in which class struggles play a crucial role.

Marxist Perspective: Marx (1852) understood that revolution is not as isolated episodes of violence or conflict but as class-based movements growing out of objective structural contradictions within historically developing and inherently conflict-ridden societies. So, for Marx, the leading causes of revolution in any society is its nature of the mode of production or a specific combination of socioeconomic forces of production and class relations of property ownership and use of surplus. The primary source of a revolutionary contradiction in society is the emergence of disjuncture within a mode of production between the social forces and social relations of production. In turn, this disjuncture expresses itself in intensifying class conflicts.

People of contemporary society were divided by caste and political access (especially, Rana and non-Rana, and within Rana, there were classes or grades and among out of Rana there were Thapa, Basnet, and Chautariya who were competitors for political access) but not class as mentioned by Marx, because it was not capitalistic but feudalistic society. There was an existence of class and class relations were too antagonistic for political power but not surplus as explained by Marx. If we look at the mode of production of contemporary Nepali society it was a purely feudalistic society but the struggle between landlord and serf was minor and the end of Rana is not because of such struggle, but it was the struggle between elites. This movement is also related to the political opportunities theory of Sydney Tarrow. As Marx stated that:

Revolution itself is accomplished through class action led by the self-conscious, rising revolutionary class (i.e., the bourgeoisie in bourgeois revolutions and the proletariat in socialist revolutions). Perhaps the revolutionary class is supported by other class allies such as the peasantry, but these allies are neither fully class-conscious nor politically organized on a national scale.

As we see the limited elites were united at first in against the Rana such as the Koirala Families, Rana from B and C grade, and other some limited elite Brahmin who were socially, politically, and educationally aware of the political system and changing the political trend of the world and their political rights as well. The peasantry was in favor of the anti-Rana movement but because of fear and dependent livelihood with the Rana family, they could not directly participate in the anti-Rana movement. Marx sees revolutions as class-divided modes of production and transforming one mode of production into another through class conflict. But we have seen that the anti-Rana movement and the fall of 104 years Rana regime could not change the mode of production. So it helps to suspect us whether the anti-Rana movement was a class conflict or not.

Aggregate-Psychological Theory: Gurr’s (1970) idea about revolution and political violence is different from Marx. He has tried to explain revolutions regarding people’s psychological motivations for engaging in political violence or joining oppositional movements. Gurr raises the question with the reference to Chalmers Johnson’s systems/value consensus theory and Charles Tilly’s political-conflict approach “Why Men Rebel? Gurr stated that: Political violence occurs when many people in society become angry, especially if existing cultural and practical conditions encourage aggression against political targets. People become angry when there occurs a gap between the valued things and opportunities they feel entitled to and the things and opportunities they get. - A condition is known as “relative deprivation. History shows

that the anti-Rana movement is not because of people but because of the system made by them. Within the Rana System, there were no opportunities for ordinary people to be officer in the military, bureaucracy, and other agencies. But Rana became an army officer before their birth. Every natural and economic resource was in the hands of Rana's family and laws & order were in Rana's mouth. It means there was no rule of law or good governance, and people had no right to speak about political, economic, social, and other issues, so that situation made people angry and encouraged them to be violated against Rana and the regime created by Rana as explained by Gurr. Though in the revolution against Rana, there were Ranas as well. So it was not a class-based movement. But it was an internal political category as well. As Gurr Says;

Revolutions are included in the internal-war category, along with large-scale terrorism, guerrilla wars, and civil wars. What sets internal wars apart from the other forms is that they are more organized than turmoil and more mass-based than conspiracy. Logically, therefore, revolutions are explained as primarily due to the occurrence in a society of widespread, intense, and multifaceted relative deprivation that touches both masses and elite aspirants. For if potential leaders and followers alike are intensely frustrated, then both broad participation in, and deliberate organization of, political violence are probable, and the fundamental conditions for internal war are present.

Nepali Congress has established Mukti-Sena for large-scale terrorism, guerrilla war, and civil war against the Rana regime which people voluntarily participated. But Tilly argues that no matter how discontented an aggregate of people may become, they cannot engage in political action (including violence) unless they are part of at least minimally organized groups with access to some resources. That means people who were engaged in Mukti Sena have some level of expectation after the end of the Rana regime, and the evidence shows that they have got opportunities in the state mechanism. As we see whatever the aggression against political targets or violence was happening during the period of revolution against Rana can be understood as anger of people against the system.

Political-conflict theory: Revolution, for Tilly (1973) is a particular case of collective action in which the contenders both (or all) fight for ultimate political sovereignty over a population, and in which challengers succeed at least to some degree in displacing existing power-holders. As we see in the anti-Rana movement both Rana and revolutionary forces were trying to justify themselves among people and international communities, especially India and the British government as fighting for political (people's) sovereignty. In this movement, King Tribhuvan has a decisive role but it was not seen from the beginning of the movement started but at the last stage of the revolution. So there were multiple sovereignty crises. Given this conception, about the causes of a revolutionary situation of "multiple sovereignty," Tilly says; the first consideration is any long-term societal trends that shift resources from some groups in society to others. Second is a proliferation of revolutionary ideology that increases popular discontent for sovereignty and supports their claims and finally, the success of the revolution. The historical pieces of evidence of the anti-Rana movement show that all three; Ranas, Nepali Congress, and King were in a sovereignty/identity crisis before the agreement initiated by the Indian government between three parties but that agreement shifted the resources from Rana to Congress and King. The resources were accumulated within the hand of Rana and there was a monopoly for utilization of it within the Rana family which was sufficient causes for popular discontent between people and Rana.

Systems/value consensus theory: Violence and change are, Johnson (1966) says, the distinctive features of revolution: "To make a revolution is to accept violence for causing the system to change; more exactly, it is the purposive implementation of a strategy of violence in order to effect a change in social structure. The Mukti Sena of the Nepali Congress committed some tribal violence against Ranas and their supporter but it was not against the people but against changing political regime. As Theda Skocpol says political revolution only change political structure but not social structure. She further says only the economic revolution can change the social structure and system. In the case of Nepal, after the end of the Rana regime, we could not see a noticeable economic change in Nepali society. According to Johnson;

Whenever values and environment become seriously "dis-synchronized" due to either external or internal intrusions, especially of new values or technologies, once dis-synchronization sets in, people in the society become disoriented, and hence open to conversion to the alternative values proposed by a revolutionary movement. At this happens, existing authorities lose their legitimacy and have to rely more and more upon coercion to maintain order. Yet they can do this successfully only for a while. If the authorities are smart, flexible, and skillful, they will implement reforms to "resynchronize" values and environment. But if the authorities are stubbornly "intransigent," then the revolution will instead accomplish systemic change violently. This occurs as soon as some "factor contributed by fortune" comes along to undercut the authorities' necessarily; tenuous and temporary ability to rely upon coercion.

The political history of Nepal shows that Ranas have made some laws such as the Nepal Act 2004, for their legitimacy

of power and they have adopted coercion strategies for their protection. They have also adopted coercion to maintain order in society. But such an effort could not protect them. It shows that Rana was not so politically smart, flexible, and skillful because they did not reform to resynchronize values and environment so the revolution became violent. This violent revolution ultimately created the environment to leave the palace with family for king Tribhuvan. So it can be said one of the primary causes of revolution and regime change is the regime itself for its end as Marx says.

How does a revolutionary situation develop? As Jeremy Brecher (2005) has said that revolutionary movements rarely begin with a revolutionary intention; this only develops in the course of the struggle. Revolutionary organizations and ideologies have helped to cement the solidarity of radical vanguards before and/ or revolutionary crises. And they have greatly facilitated the consolidation of new regimes. Most of the historical evidence shows that Rana themselves did the plantation of the Anti-Rana movement. Rana regime had developed a weak political foundation for their sustainability, so revolutionary ideology and organization emerged within that system/structure which has given the slogan of the new regime i.e. democracy. During a struggle with Rana Nepali Congress established *Mukti Sena* (Revolutionary Army), which was the product of the struggle between Rana and the Anti-Rana movement. Jeremy Brecher further says that the Revolutionary situations have developed due to the emergence of politico-military crises of state and class domination. As far as the causes of historical social revolutions go, Wendell Phillips was quite correct when he once declared “Revolutions are not made; they come.” During the revolutionary period, retired British and Indian Army, civilians, and youths from different communities have joined in Mukti Sena as revolutionary forces. One of the most important causes of this situation was the weakening of the state military. Joshi Bhuwan Lal and Leo E. Rose (1966) stated that whenever the state Army surrendered to Mukti Sena, Rana became ready to negotiate with the Nepali Congress and King without mediating with India. As Marx says that the leading causes of the downfall of the old regime are within its system. The historical shreds of evidence prove that the causes of the downfall of the Rana regime were within the structure and system that developed by the Rana regime but not the Nepali Congress, its *Mukti-Sena* King, or others. Nepali Congress movement, the king’s action, and the Indian government are the products of the Rana system but these are not causes themselves.

Transnational Context: Transnational relations have contributed to the emergence of all social-revolutionary crises and have invariably helped to shape revolutionary struggles and outcomes. All modern social revolutions must be seen as closely related in their causes and accomplishments to the internationally uneven spread- capitalist-economic development and nation-state formation on a world scale. Two different sorts of transnational contexts were relevant to be succeeded the anti-Rana movement in Nepal. One is the end of the British colony especially, in India and the other is the establishment of a democratic government in India. And, on the other hand, there are changes and transmissions in “world time,” which affect both the overall world context within which revolutions occur and the particular models and options for action that can be borrowed from abroad by the revolutionary leadership.

A structural Perspective: As Gurr (1970) says the primary causal sequence in political violence is the development of discontent, politicization of that discontent, and ‘finally its actualization in violent action against political objects and actors’ Similarly, Chalmers Johnson (1966) emphasis upon widespread personal disorientation followed by conversion to the alternative values put forward by a revolutionary ideological movement that then clashes with the existing authorities. Tilly focuses most of his theoretical attention on the clash of organized revolutionaries competing for sovereignty with the government. Yet he also refers to the psychological and Ideological causes highlighted by the relative deprivation and systems theorists to explain the emergence and widespread support of the revolutionary organization.

Barrington Moor J.R. (1967) focuses on the importance of revolution in shaping the nature of the modern state. According to him, there are five actors in this drama. The bourgeoisie, landowners, government bureaucrats, peasants, and workers. As Moor stated the bourgeoisie always prefers democracy as far as possible because they easily can influence democratic government. But if workers and bureaucracy are against the bourgeoisie, they (capitalists) prefer the second choice i.e. ‘authoritarian government’. Usually, this is done through an alliance with conservative landowning and military class. The bourgeoisie class did not strongly exist in the Rana regime because of the feudalistic mode of production but revolutionary forces were getting some financial support from small merchants. It shows this class was in favor of the democratic system. To maintain their aristocratic privileges against the bourgeoisie, peasants, and workers landlords always prefer authoritarian government as Moor says. If this class is weak and bureaucracy is a threat for them, they will favor a mild form of government that is decentralized sharing of power. Landlordism in Nepal was protected by the state (i.e. Rana Regime); it was the organ of the Rana regime. So they were in favor of Rana but not revolutionary forces. The government bureaucrats always favor traditional authoritarian rule as a means of keeping their privileges. Their second choice is surprising ‘socialism’ since it keeps bureaucracy in power but they are likely to make the first choice if they

are recruited from the landed aristocracy. The second alternative is likely when there is a conflict between the central bureaucracy and landowners or when the bureaucracy is recruited from a competitive educational system rather than via a hereditary position. Upper-class bureaucrats of that period were from the Rana family and Rana also appointed middle and lower-class bureaucrats, so they were opponents of revolutionary forces. But some Rana from C grade were in favor of the Nepali congress's movement because of their internal clash. The next actor of political change is the 'Peasant' who cannot take over the state themselves and is always pawns for other forces. They revolt against an absentee landlord who brings down traditional authoritarian government/regime and produce either democracy or socialism. But in the case of Nepal peasant were controlled by the landlord, so they played the minor role against landlordism and political changes. Workers are the strongest opponents of authoritarian government because of its threat of direct coercion in their working condition. If bourgeoisie allies within state and landowners to get control of labor (which happened in Germany during industrialization), workers favor 'socialism'. If the bourgeoisie remains liberal and allows trade union rights, workers' struggle is confined to the limited issue of wage working conditions instead of establishing a workers' state. In the case of Nepal, a protest against the Rana regime was initiated by workers at Biratnagar Jut mill. Workers were united through a trade union in Biratnagar against Rana. In this theoretical explanation, the existing social structure was the significant cause of the success of the anti-Rana movement in Nepali.

Conclusion

Theoretical and historical evidence has proved that the leading cause of political revolution against the regime in any society is its existing political structure, that is how it is constructed, and the system generated by that structure. Every political system is always shaped by the state structure i.e. the composition of people's engagement in state mechanism. Whether the political system is in the favor of 'common people' or 'elite' is determined by its composition of state structure. The political history of Nepal shows, there was no people's participation in state structure/mechanism, it means, Rana regime was not in favor of common people. The state was understood as only 'service Centre of Rana' but not common people. People, who were not getting benefit from the state, became unite and allied Rana. The fundamental principle of Marxism has here proved that the cause of the end of any regime is the regime itself. The downfall of the old regime and the emergence of the new regime (i.e. state structure) is the product of an aligned political revolution. The nature of alignment between revolutionary forces determines the upcoming state's nature. After the end of the old regime, 'what nature of state would emerge' depends upon 'what nature of alliance was there' to make the downfall of the old regime. There was a great alliance between the Nepali Congress, the King, and the Congress party of India, which were rooted in a more traditional/feudalistic mode of economy, therefore, after the end of Ran, people could not feel noticeable differences in terms of people's sovereignty and economic status, other development process and so on except educational and voting rights. My answer to another question is very much close to Skocpol's that political revolution brings an only a difference in political structure but not socioeconomic development. For the economic development economic revolution is necessary which is entirely different than the political revolution.

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