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George Lawson. *Anatomies of Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. ISBN: 9781108482684 (hardback, \$74.99); 9781108710855 (paperback, \$25.99).

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“There are two main ways” of studying revolution, George Lawson asserts in his new book, “and they are both wrong” (1). *Anatomies of Revolution* endeavors to forge a third path for the study of revolution, one that relies on a novel “global historical sociology of revolution” (10). With meticulous and occasionally incisive prose, Lawson succeeds in making a thorough case for his typology of revolution. Despite its ambivalent conclusions, *Anatomies of Revolution* represents a valorous attempt to strike a balance between narrative and theoretical methods.¹

One of the “wrong” ways to study revolution, according to Lawson, is to take a too-broad definition of the term, applying “revolution” to so many kinds of political change as to dilute its meaning. The other “wrong” way stems from a much narrower definition of revolution, one that deems “revolution” a historical category of analysis with little applicability to the contemporary world (1). These two paths—diluting or dismissing revolution—constrict the study of revolution as a form of social and political change. Setting aside this dichotomy, Lawson argues that revolutions matter, regardless of whether they are everywhere or nowhere, and thus they deserve a more cautious scholarly approach.

The book unfolds in three parts. In Part I, Lawson sets out his theoretical models, which he calls “ideal-type anatomies of revolutionary situations, trajectories and outcomes” (9). Part II relates a series of six historical revolutions, examining them against Lawson’s “ideal-type” anatomies. Over three chapters, Lawson compares the revolutionary “situations” in seventeenth-century England and twentieth-century Chile, revolutionary “trajectories” in 1950s Cuba and the last decades of apartheid South Africa, and revolutionary “outcomes” in Iran in the 1980s and in Ukraine in 2004 and 2013-2014. Part III examines future developments in revolutionary anatomies, including the “negotiated revolutions” of 1989 in Eastern Europe, as well as populist and militant Islamist strains in the Arab Spring of 2011 and in Occupy Wall Street (among other contemporary political movements).

From the outset, Lawson sets as his aim three contributions to scholarship on revolutions. First, he seeks to overcome what he characterizes as the “analytical bifurcation” that separates studies of international and domestic causes of revolution (8).

¹ Examples Lawson cites of historical-narrative studies include Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), Robert Roswell Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), and Ada Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Examples of theoretical studies include Charles Tilly, *Stories, Identities, and Political Change* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), Vincent Pouliot, *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), and David Little, *New Directions in the Philosophy of Social Science* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).

According to Lawson, “inter-social” accounts of revolution—that is, accounts that focus on both describing and analyzing relationships between groups across political boundaries during revolutions—overcome this bifurcation, illustrating more clearly how domestic and international actors both instigate and shape revolutions.

Lawson’s second contribution pertains to “historicizing” revolutions, in his words “by being attentive to the constitutive impact of time and place on revolutionary practice and theory” (9). Here Lawson argues against purely theoretical models of revolution, arguing that every revolution is unique—but that each unique sequence of events contains within it some generalizable principles that are recognizable in other revolutions. The book’s third contribution, developing a “relational” understanding of revolution, posits that revolutions themselves change with the passage of time, and cannot represent a static category of change. Lawson in particular offers a corrective to the implicit scholarly tendency to view revolutions as inherently progressive, or left-wing, occurrences.

These are ambitious goals for a slim volume, and the argument occasionally strains against the parameters Lawson has laid out in Part I. After a useful overview of four generations of revolutionary theory, Lawson describes the “critical configurations” that comprise the anatomies of revolutionary situations, trajectories, and outcomes. These configurations constitute variable but visible patterns that manifest in modern revolutions. For example, Lawson’s three critical configurations for revolutionary outcomes are the emergence of a “melded order” that blends elements of the post-revolutionary social order with elements of the pre-revolutionary order, the persistence of inter-social interactions—ongoing and often contested, international involvement in domestic matters—and what he calls “ambivalent outcomes,” results that depend on “situational logics that arise from purposeful action taken in contested social fields” (92-3).

In the case of Iran and the Ukraine, Lawson demonstrates the utility of these configurations in describing revolutionary outcomes. Post-revolutionary Iran saw the continuation of a Pahlavi-like “coercive apparatus,” and, after both the 2004 and 2013 uprisings in Ukraine, elites in Kiev negotiated moderated resolutions (169, 190). Both Iran and Ukraine played important roles in the international system after their revolutions, the former as the foundation of an anti-United States coalition and the latter as a focal point for tensions between the United States and Russia. And, finally, both Iran and Ukraine have seen ongoing contestation of their revolutions—Iran in 2009, and Ukraine to the present day. Both revolutions failed to “foster the creation of a single revolutionary subject,” leaving “existing cleavages in place” (193).

Yet, Lawson points out, the Iranian and Ukrainian revolutions also hint at the ways in which he explores the changing anatomies of revolution in Part III—“fluid factional alliances,” “ongoing contestation between states and publics,” and the absence of a real alternative vision to the status quo all form part of what Lawson envisions as prospects for future revolutions (196). Here is where Lawson’s theory flirts with Lawson’s own version of a “wrong” way to study revolution. If Lawson’s anatomies of revolutionary outcomes can illustrate both his “ideal-type” configurations and prospective future configurations, it suggests the models are too flexible in the first place.

Lawson intends for his anatomies of revolution to serve as “analytical constructs that simplify historical circumstances” into generalizable configurations, or “sequences” which will then “serve as a means of facilitating empirical enquiry” (47). *Anatomies of Revolution* certainly succeeds in providing a comprehensive language for the study of revolutions on both a theoretical and historical level. Whether or not it *simplifies* the subject remains unclear. Lawson’s impressive grasp of historical detail sometimes overwhelms his efforts at theorizing, and on rare occasions, leads to flat prose.

The book bears other minor flaws: Lawson’s case studies are uneven; although many scholars do consider seventeenth-century England’s Glorious Revolution one of the first modern revolutions, it stands out rather awkwardly among cases from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Lawson’s remarkable breadth of knowledge leads to some overgeneralizations. For example, he characterizes the relationship between the Iranian revolutionary regime and Hezbollah in straightforward terms, with the latter a direct offshoot of the former. Yet in doing so, he overlooks the murky, ambiguous, and occasionally constitutive relationship between Tehran, Hezbollah, and the Syrian regime—a relationship that might bear fresh insights into the post-revolutionary Iranian experience. Despite these shortcomings, Lawson’s ambition and creativity in this volume are to be applauded.

Anatomies of Revolution is most effective in its initial chapters, when Lawson provides a thorough overview and critique of existing scholarship on revolution, including the work of Crane Brinton, Theda Skocpol, and John Foran.² Lawson's work is similar to Keith Baker and David Edelstein's 2015 edited volume, *Scripting Revolution*, although Lawson does not dwell on questions pertaining to the role of violence or the relationship between revolutions and civil wars.³ Ultimately, Lawson's book is an interesting contribution to the ongoing study of revolutions in the contemporary world, and should inform future scholarly endeavors on the topic.

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² Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, revised ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); John Foran, *Taking Power: On the Origins of Third World Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³ Keith Baker and David Edelstein, *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015).