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The Limits of Modern Revolutions: Global Constraints on Domestic Change

Abstract:
The scholarship on revolutions, while vast, mainly focuses on the variety of domestic and international factors that instigate or sustain revolutionary movements rather than whether revolutions meet their stated social objectives beyond initial regime change. However, in examining supposedly successful revolutions decades later when the afterglow of the struggle has subsided, the majority of aims for social transformation remain unachieved and often abandoned by the former revolutionaries themselves. In order to make sense of the limited success of social revolutions, this article proposes two sets of tensions between the international on the one hand and the domestic and local on the other that constrain and hamper revolutionaries in the aftermath of initial revolutionary success. First, though successful revolutionaries capture the instruments of domestic state power, to achieve revolutionaries' aims for wide social transformation necessarily requires change in international social, political, and economic forces. Hence the mismatch between domestic control and international forces limits revolutionary success. Second, successful revolutions depend on narratives full of imminent possibility and radical transformation, but the reality of post-revolution social change is slow and nonlinear. This mismatch between narrative and international process hampers the achievement of revolutionary aims. We illustrate this argument with two exploratory examples in the Haitian Revolution and the Colour Revolutions.

Introduction

The 'successful'[1] revolution[2] produces iconic images of process and conclusion: crowds amassing in the streets and surging over the barricade to confront the instruments of state power; guerrilla fighters relying on revolutionary fervour to overcome hardships and to defeat superior state forces; a corrupt and unjust regime is toppled before a righteous coalition of dedicated revolutionaries; and the promise of a brighter future, paving a new path, as new leaders take power. After the first modern revolutions in the late-18th century, revolutions in the post-World War Two context have been discussed within a narrow framework of democratization, social and economic liberalization, and alignment with international norms and institutions. However, are these expectations of revolutionary change reflective of actual revolutionary transformation, which is understood as resulting in social and political innovation (transformative change)? Or, as argued in this article, is revolutionary transformation constrained by an existing international structure, which often does not align with domestic revolutionary narratives?

In examining 'successful' revolutions, when the afterglow of the struggle has subsided, we find that the majority of revolutionary aims remain unachieved and abandoned by the former revolutionaries themselves. Some scholars have argued that the burden of political rule moderates radicals (Schwedler 2011; Wickham 2004), which may be true, but raises another question: why have former radicals found it necessary to scale down their ambitions of innovative transformation? Other scholars have argued that the leaders of revolutionary change often emerge from an elite political class, sometimes with close ties to the ousted regime (Laverty 2008; D'Anieri 2006). In these cases, revolutionary leaders have been portrayed as opportunistic rather than contenders for *real* change and it is possible to question whether this shift from one elite to another is actually all that revolutionary. In this article, we problematize the categorisation of success in relation to revolutionary movements. But rather than focus on what revolutionary leadership did wrong, we highlight the unsustainable tensions within contemporary revolutionary projects and contend that international structural contradictions make the achievement of social and political innovation on the terms of revolutionaries all but impossible. Here we define revolution as a fundamental change in the socio-political order 'brought about through a massive shift in people's expressed political views', whereby revolutionaries are those who seek socio-political transformation (Kuran 1989; Friedrich 2017). We add to this definition that such social-political transformation, to be revolutionary, attempts to break the mould to create a truly transformative context that is not bound by existing international constraints.

When we question the *success* of revolutionary movements, we do not intend to suggest that revolutionary movements do not matter in world politics or that groups of committed people do not have very real intentions to overturn social, political, and economic structures they consider irredeemably unjust. Rather, we stress that these unjust and uneven social structures do not stop at state borders or the water's edge. Instead, we argue that local and domestic social structures are co-implicated in transnational flows and processes that produce injustice at a global scale, limiting the capacity of revolution in one state to achieve truly transformational social change. In other words, to understand why some 'successful' revolutions fail to achieve their social and political

[1] Here, 'successful' refers to revolutions where the revolutionary faction topples the existing government and takes control. However, for most revolutions, the aim of this regime change is not simply to supplant the old government, but to achieve social and political transformations. In this article, we use the term 'successful' in quotes to highlight and challenge the assumed link between success in the first instance – regime change – and success in achieving wider social and political transformation. For example, a 'successful' revolution such as the Iranian Revolution of 1979, might still fail to achieve broader transformations because of the international and structural forces we highlight in this article.

[2] When discussing revolutions throughout this essay, we refer to social revolutions (see Skocpol 1979, p. 142; 1994). Social revolutions are often an attempt to bridge social movements and the state. Social movements can be defined as collectives that come together over shared grievances and concerns and engage in collective action (see Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 2004, p. 3). Social revolutions often emerge in the wake of class struggle (broadly defined) and seek to alter social and political structures.

aims, we must understand and examine the international forces that structure injustice and inequality and how they limit a revolution's domestic capacity for social change. While prominent revolutionary ideologies such as Marxism recognize the implicit international character of revolutionary enterprise, we argue that international structures are both material and ideational and revolutionaries remain trapped by these two processes: first, a domestic-international mismatch and, second, a narrative-process mismatch. The domestic-international mismatch occurs when domestic revolutionary movements are constrained by international norms and structures that alter and circumscribe the goals of revolutionary change. This is compounded by the narrative-process mismatch where revolutionary narratives and repertoires come into conflict with the administrative and bureaucratic processes required to make change. These mismatches force us to reconsider the bifurcation of the domestic and international. For example, while revolutionaries' aspirations might not be international, their potential to control levers of power and institute social change remain bound by the international modern state system, the particularities of that specific state in that system, and international normative enforcement of 'good' governance.

By considering the relationship between domestic revolutions and international structures and the relationship between revolutionary narratives and international norms, we hope to make an intervention in the scholarship on revolutions that helps to explain why even 'successful' revolutions are limited in their transformative capability to usher in new systems of power, governance, and institutions. By outlining these mismatches, and some of the multiple contexts from which they develop, it is possible to outline constraints on revolutionary transformations and provides scholars of revolutions with a manner to theorize the international 'all the way down' (Lawson 2015). We begin our argument with a discussion of revolutions and methodological nationalism,[3] stressing that the social structure revolutions seek to transform are inherently international. Then, we turn to the domestic-international distinction in international politics and contend that the separation of these spheres introduces an irreconcilable tension to revolutions since revolutionary social aims are embedded in international structures while the practical changes brought on by even 'successful' revolutions are domestic. Further, the paper will highlight the narrative-process mismatch that also hampers revolutionaries from confronting global socioeconomic realities.

Finally, this paper will turn to the Haitian Revolution and two illustrative cases from the Colour Revolutions of former Soviet Republics (Georgia and Ukraine) as recent examples of 'successful' revolutions that remain subject to the mismatches we identified. We have selected these exploratory examples as illustrations of our theoretical argument regarding the importance of international constraints.[4] Separated by almost two centuries, these cases frame the modern period. In doing so, we stress that focusing our analytical lens on international social structures forces us to rethink our ideas about success and failure, agency and structure, and the revolutionary narratives we tell ourselves and future generations.

Theorizing Revolutions and the International

Since the 1970s, scholars of revolutions have explored various international factors that have shaped and sustained revolutionary movements. International factors have been treated as an external force that acted upon localized and domestic revolutions. Here, scholars have theorized the international as a structure that creates the oppressive social conditions that required revolutionary intervention (Skocpol 1973; 1979; Goldfrank 1979); as a permissive condition to

[3] Methodological nationalism refers to the assumption that the nation-state "is the natural social and political form of the modern world" (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002).

[4] Due to the limitations inherent in this exploratory theoretical intervention, our choice of illustrations are not representative of the full diversity of revolutionary movements since the late-18th century. We selected these illustrations based on how well they demonstrated our key contributions, and future studies are likely necessary to flesh out the full implications.

allow revolutionary forces to come to the forefront of political action (Goldstone 2014); or as a source of inspiration and depository of continuous repertoires for local revolutionaries to take up arms (Katz 1997; Kurzman 2008). While they have engaged with international forces that enabled revolutions, these works still treat the international as an exogenous factor that permeates through state borders to instigate and support local revolutions. Where revolutions are thought to be supported by international forces and structures is particular to revolutionary engagements that seek liberal-international alignment (Pevehouse 2002). In other words, these studies leave methodological nationalism intact as the analytical point of departure, where revolutionary impetus follows a hegemonic and determined path of progress and development. However, as George Lawson noted, in the wealth of scholarship on revolutions, the international has not been "theorized 'all the way down'" (Lawson 2015). Building on recent scholarship that has sought to theorize the international as a constitutive part of revolutionary dynamics in a variety of different ways (Lawson 2015; Ritter 2015), we argue that placing the international front and centre in considering the limitations and failures of revolutionary movements reveals important tensions and contradictions within revolutions as a force for social change.

We do not wish to imply that the international has remained constant since the first modern revolutions of the late-18th century. Indeed, our argument is founded on a dynamic understanding of the international and its capacity for change. Nevertheless, revolutionary movements are subject to the specific temporal and ideological international contexts in which they occur. The very interactions and combinations of political multiplicities drive change in the international in a combined and entangled but differentiated and uneven way. The international forces that constituted inter-imperial transatlantic competition in the late-18th century and stalled the Haitian Revolution differed markedly from the Cold War international of the mid-20th century that encumbered the Cuban Revolution. However, our argument stresses that international social forces have remained salient in understanding the limits of revolutionary movements and transformations since the late-18th century. This, we argue, is regardless of the exact nature of those forces and how they interacted with local revolutionary movements have evolved across time. If the international has not been theorized all the way down to the analysis of on-the-ground revolutionary dynamics, then we suggest that the effects and limitations of revolutions have not been theorized all the way up to a consideration of international structures.

This article posits that to understand why even 'successful' revolutions are limited in achieving their social aims, we must examine the domestic and international forces that structure injustice and inequality as co-constitutive rather than distinct. As Justin Rosenberg (2016) does, we theorize the international as the co-existence of a multiplicity of polities that engage in interaction, combination, and uneven but intertwined change. Therefore, the specific expression of social injustices experienced in one locality by one group of oppressed peoples[5] emerge from more pervasive international forces that configure global socioeconomic flows and hierarchies. This limits the capacity for revolutionary movements to contest their position within international structures and overturn oppressive structures. For example, the Haitian Revolution, as will be discussed in greater detail below, sought to end racialized social hierarchies, economic exploitation, and colonial repression through self-rule, but had limited effect on the international socioeconomic forces that undergird Haiti's slave economy, with its flow of coffee and sugar. These forces constituted Haiti's place in inter-imperial competition and was central to the revolution from its beginning. Similarly, the Cuban Revolution, considered successful in relation to its overthrow of the Batista dictatorship, had limited effect on international forces that underpinned US hegemony in Latin America and the Caribbean. While the Haitian and Cuban Revolutions could be considered successes in that revolutionary forces toppled the old regime, their limited power over

[5] Or peoples who perceive their oppression can emerge through a change of circumstance, often in the form of a declining advantageous economic or political situation for individuals.

the international structures and global social forces limited their capacity to achieve intended social transformation.[6] Additionally, within this domestic-international mismatch, the narrative-process mismatch constrained and limited revolutionary success. For example, the narrative underpinning Haitian freedom against oppressive racial hierarchies did accompany an acceptable process that matched. While freedom from French rule was eventually recognized, it came at an economic cost that facilitated the continuation of racial hierarchies and oppression. This economic cost was a debt that was forced onto Haiti in 1825, only being paid off in 1947.

The domestic-international and narrative-process mismatches that limit the transformative qualities of revolutions emphasize the paradoxical tension within revolutionary movements between individual-oriented narratives and the domestically-oriented aim of state capture. In this context, larger international forces that constitute both the revolution itself and the socioeconomic injustices it aims to overthrow can become barriers to achieving broader social aims. Discussed below, we further unpack the domestic-international mismatch and, subsequently, the narrative-process mismatch by building on the existing scholarship on revolutions.

The Domestic-International Mismatch

In cases of the domestic-international mismatch, the objectives almost never stop at national borders (Halliday 1999). The iconic Western revolution, the French revolution, for example, aimed to overturn aristocratic privilege not only in France, but as a universal Enlightenment project to assert the natural rights of and equality between men. As Article I of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen declares, "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can be founded only on the common good." Perhaps the most influential revolutionary ideology of the past two centuries, Communism, draws a stark opposition between the interests of the international working class and an international capitalist structure that oppresses them. Indeed, following Marx and Engels, Lenin's analysis of imperialism, Gramsci's discussion of hegemony, Rose Luxembourg's insights on grassroots spontaneity, and Trotsky's theory of uneven and combined development all stressed the deeply international nature of the communist enterprise.

However, even in cases where revolutions successfully overthrow the old regimes, revolutionary outcomes were national or regional rather than global. In the early-19th century, French revolutionary forces swept across Europe toppling aristocratic regimes, but the new political regimes that arose in their wake, in Switzerland and across Germany, looked inwards towards the nation. While making some efforts towards international revolution, communist regimes from Stalin's Soviet Union to Mao's China and to Castro's Cuba, all eventually retreated to defensible statist bunkers – either by force or by necessity due to international conditions. Even the Soviet Union disbanded the Comintern and operated more as a core-periphery empire with its satellite nations rather than a truly international workers' coalition.[7] The same can be said regarding the Iranian Revolution, Colour Revolutions – as discussed below, and the so-called Arab 'Spring'.

To untangle the incongruity between revolutionaries' transformative social aims and the limited outcomes of even the most 'successful' revolutions, we argue that a domestic-international mismatch constrains and entraps revolutionary movements. This mismatch stresses that the socioeconomic structures revolutionaries seek to transform are maintain a strong international dimension, while the levers of political power available to even the most successful revolutionaries

[6] Although an argument can be made that domestic success, despite limited outcomes on international forces, was evident, domestic success continued to be constrained due to external socio-economic impositions of international forces. This includes Haiti's 'independence debt' and the American embargo of Cuba.

[7] It can be argued that 'socialism in one country' developed by Stalin and Bukharin in 1924 and adopted as state policy by the Soviet Union was an attempt to limited Soviet aims to the state level; however, the logics behind socialist thinking still aimed towards international goals and international structural factors still encumbered Soviet policy making (Carr 1961, 275-278).

are domestic and inwardly-oriented. In other words, the revolutionaries run up against the structure of the international which divides legitimate political authority between the domestic and international realms. For example, in 1979, Iranian revolutionaries contended that the concept of the *umma* transcended state boundaries (Saleh and Worall 2014), but in order to survive, the new Iranian regime was forced to operate within the constraints of the existing international system, employing the norms of statehood – such as non-interference and sovereignty – in defence of their politics.

Mainstream theories of International Relations have long understood the modern state system as a way to separate the domestic realm of political authority – characterized by law and hierarchical order – from the international realm of anarchy, equality, and difference (Waltz 1979; de Carvalho, Leira, and Hobson 2011; Blaney and Inayatullah 2000). Here, by dividing the domestic from the international, state sovereignty operates as both a marker of legitimate internal authority and a normative argument against outside interference. However, a host of IR scholarship has challenged this orthodoxy (Milner 1991; Lake 2007; Butt 2013; Zarakol 2017), with some positing hierarchy as an alternative structuring mechanism for international politics. Following Trotsky's insights on uneven and combined development, Justin Rosenberg argues that the modern territorial state is a product of larger international socioeconomic forces, and by framing the state as the central concept of international politics, mainstream theories conceal these structural forces (Rosenberg 1994). Collectively, this scholarship questions the empirical validity of anarchy as the single organizing principle of international politics and stresses the importance of international socioeconomic forces in constituting hierarchies within and beyond the state (see Giddens 1991).

However, the sovereign state as a normative concept remains a powerful legitimating idea in the international order. Since the late-18th century and the first modern revolutionary movements, state sovereignty as a separation of the domestic from the international sphere remains pivotal to our thinking on legitimate authority as a self-determined domestic order coupled with international non-interference. The consolidation of the modern territorial state in the 19th century coincided with the globalization of international society as European powers extended their material and normative influence globally (Osiander 2001; Branch 2014; Dunne and Reus-Smit 2017). From this process of globalization, the sovereign state became a hallmark of legitimate rule and a standard that separated a successful and civilized state from an illegitimate one. Sovereign states as the only legitimate holders of territorial authority became codified in international law. As the European empires dissolved in the post-WWII context, the notion of the sovereign state as the basic legitimate unit of international politics lived on in Article 2.1 of the United Nations Charter, which centres on the principle of sovereign equality of states. Hence, international law maintains that only sovereign states can hold legitimate authority over a given territory and be a recognized member of international society.

The role of revolutions in these developments is not clear-cut. Indeed, while revolutions often target state apparatus, they are also co-implicated in the production of the modern state (Tilly 1992; Skocpol 1994). Early revolutions, including the American and French, aimed to create modern nation states based on democratic and egalitarian domestic orders. The anti-imperialist revolutions starting with Haiti and culminating in the mid-20th century wave of revolutions sought independence in the form of modern sovereign statehood. Ironically, in rising up against the colonial or monarchical state, these revolutions reinforced a notion of statehood that jealously guarded the domestic-international divide. In doing so, these recognized states reaffirmed a particular understanding of statehood as the main legitimate unit of authority in an 'anarchic' international system. By reproducing the state and bifurcating the domestic and the international, the hegemonic order of international statehood and its associated norms and institutions shaped the possible outcomes of revolutionary engagement. Where the state has been reproduced but

continues to challenge hegemonic, normative, and institutional orders, the revolutionary state has been typified as an outlier or considered to be rogue; existing outside an accepted rule book while still being recognized as an actor.

Despite the potent rhetoric of self-determination, post-colonial states were born into a global network of socioeconomic forces that hamstringed states' control over domestic affairs. Former colonised states that embraced foreign capital and open financial flows, such as much of Southeast Asia, relinquished control over areas of domestic policy and often suffered from neoliberal excesses that resulted in periodic crises (Beeson 2003). On the other hand, former colonised states that resisted these entanglements faced poverty and increasing sovereign debt followed by structural adjustments and imposed conditionality. Therefore, even after official independence, former colonies have not been free to order domestic affairs as they wish but had been forced to abide by globalizing forces that dictate how they should configure domestic institutions and practices to become well-functioning, economically viable, and legitimate international actors. In many ways, successful anti-imperialist revolutions seeking self-determination resulted in little actual autonomy, and domestic populations continued to suffer economic and social injustice. Even the post-revolutionary states which have otherwise been cut off from regular international diplomacy and global markets due to sanctions, or due to self-isolation for ideological reasons, they remain trapped by the domestic-international divide.

This domestic-international divide and the role international hierarchy plays in constraining revolutionary change is particularly important to consider. Historically, during periods of colonialism, socioeconomic relations in colonized territories were reconfigured to support imperial political and economic structures, and upon de-colonialization, new states were thrown into the global economy with these colonial-era structures still in place. If revolutionaries wished to legitimize their own ambitions, then their only recourse was to seize and remake the organs of the sovereign state. In other words, the legitimacy of revolutions and the domestic change they hoped to create rested on the norm of self-determination and the domestic-international bifurcation. But if revolutionaries pushed beyond national boundaries and crossed the domestic-international divide, they risked losing legitimacy and opening their enterprises up to counter-revolutionary forces that seek to preserve the modern international order.

However, because revolutionaries must operate within the existing domestic-international divide, they are trapped by the deeper socioeconomic forces that structure the international and must face the limits of their ambitions for social transformation. With perhaps the exception of the French revolution, when revolutionaries undertook campaigns to transform the continent and unseat monarchs, other instances, including the Iranian and Haitian revolutions, led to isolation and a general inability to change international structures (Lefebvre and Tackett 2015). Furthermore, even if revolutionaries wished to mount a global revolution, there is no world government for them to topple and seize, which leads us to the problem of revolutionary narratives and a second and interrelated mismatch that limit revolutionary movements. They can simply resist, as the Occupy Movement has done since 2011, but when the streets are cleared and the tents removed, the processes of global social structures continue unabated.

The Narrative-Process Mismatch

If what we outlined above is the structural preconditions upon which modern revolutions are built, and the domestic-international mismatch prevents revolutionaries from targeting and transforming the global socioeconomic forces that structure their oppression, then a second mismatch between narrative and process hampers the revolutionaries as agents who must inspire and organize grassroots collective action. As Eric Selbin emphatically maintains, revolutions do not just happen, they are *made*. Selbin and other 'fourth generation' theorists of revolutions have stressed the

importance of agency and narrative in the development of revolutionary movements (Selbin 1997; 2010; Parker 1999; Foran 2005). Despite their embellishments, revolutionaries mean much of what they say, as Fred Halliday noted at the beginning of his book on revolutions and world politics, even if many who support them resort to instrumental tactics. If we examine what revolutionaries say, the objectives almost never stop at national borders (Halliday 1999; Lawson 2015), and the premise of real structural and institutional transformations that motivate revolutionaries are rarely fulfilled.

Given that revolutions are high-risk activities, often with little pay-off, it is possible to ask: what makes people join revolutions? Theorists have emphasized a variety of factors that push populations to rebel from psychological (Gurr 1970) to interest groups and competition over power (Tilly 1973) to state repression (Walton 1984; McDaniel 1991) to economic and political marginalization (Davies 1962; Goodwin and Skocpol 1989). Selbin's (2010) work stresses the importance of narratives in instigating revolutionary action, particularly the role of myth, memory, and mimesis. He separates revolutions from resistance and rebellions. In doing so, he contends that revolutions are not a defensive posture, a position taken out of desperation, or a reaction driven by a single issue, but rather a proactive and hopeful project based on deep-seated dreams and hopes. While academics may debate whether structural factors or agents are most responsible for revolutions, in order to risk life and limb, the revolutionaries themselves must believe that agents matter and can successfully confront seemingly impregnable social and political forces.

Here we argue revolutionary agency is encumbered by a mismatch between the type of stories necessary to inspire revolutionary movements and the type of agency necessary to fashion change in international socioeconomic structures. The narrative tropes required to inspire revolutionary action must be idealistic, clear, and arousing, full of imminent possibility, while the complexity and diffuse nature of global structures require a more nuanced approach that is attuned to the slow and nonlinear pace of social change. This mismatch traps revolutionaries as their message must be simple and alluring to inspire a broad coalition to take action, but after the initial victory, the process of confronting global social forces, to borrow from Weber, can be akin to the slow boring of hard board. As Jack Goldstone unintentionally highlights when he states that 'making a revolution is one thing…creating a stable democracy is quite another' (2014), democracy and democratization, embedded in the structures, norms, and institutions of global politics, become the limitation to revolutionary transformation.

Revolutionary narratives are constituted by international ideational forces and flows. In analysing the interconnected myths of revolutions reaching back to the 18th century, Noel Parker puts forth the notion of a revolutionary imaginary, which carries the concept of a revolution and its possibilities (Parker 2003, 45-46). It is a modern imaginary that speaks to ideas of progress and the ability of dedicated groups of individuals to transform society through an act of collective will—the revolution. Some have theorized that the revolutionary imaginary, which foregrounds the role of the individual in world historical affairs, emerges from a globalized European cultural system that harkens back to the European Renaissance and Enlightenment (Meyer and Jepperson 2000; Beck 2011). During this period in European thinking, the individual took on the agency once given to supernatural or natural forces and became the protagonist in modern storytelling. Concurrently, the temporality of modern stories became a linear narrative of increasing progress. Different revolutionary narratives that emerge from this imaginary also draw on assumptions about the individual and progress to inspire would-be revolutionaries to take up arms.

This is not to suggest there is an ideal-type revolution or narrative preconditions for revolutions, but this narrative is more akin to a script (Selbin 2010, 34; Beck 2011, 171) that is constantly written and rewritten for each time and place and is situated in repertoires of past action (Tilly 2008).

Theorists of revolutions have written about demonstration effects whereby successful revolutionary strategies are adopted by other seeking to emulate them (Huntington 1991; Tarrow 2005). But the scripting of revolutionary narratives is more than borrowing successful strategies; rather, it is the adoption of symbols and myths that speak to a certain ethos or sense of agentic possibility. Anti-government groups from Anonymous to the Occupy movement have embraced Guy Fawkes masks while Che Guevara's ubiquitous face has been used to epitomize the revolutionary spirit from 1979 Nicaragua to 1979 Iran (Lawson 2015, 19; Selbin 2010, 140). These symbols and myths give meaning to the revolutionary struggle and are key in holding together revolutionary coalitions of often disparate groups and causes.

However, as much as stories underpin social life and spur collective action, there is a problematic mismatch between the narratives revolutionaries construct and the global social realities they confront. Revolutionaries take to the streets believing their actions can spur the changes they seek, but if we take the solidity of international socioeconomic structures seriously, real change occurs along a different temporality. As Tilly noted, people tell their lives in stories but "social science's strongest insights do not take the form of stories and often undermine the stories people tell" (2002, 26). Standard stories often focus on individual action as the central driving force behind events, while social scientific analysis emphasizes the importance of unintended, collective, and indirect forces that frustrate individual intentionality. Hence, the methodological individualism underlying our stories hinder our understanding of the social world. Similarly, revolutionary stories told of great individuals and world-changing deeds becomes problematic the morning after the fall of a corrupt regime, when revolutionaries still must confront the multi-layered and entangled international forces that gave rise to those oppressive regimes in the first place. The socioeconomic structures that maintained injustice and subjugation remain firmly in place. These thrilling revolutionary narratives that inspire revolutionaries to action rarely prepare them for the slow and frustrating pace of the political work necessary after the revolution to create and sustain transformative change. This narrative-process mismatch, then, creates intense psychological disappointment when realities after the revolution do not match the sense of possibility created by revolutionary narratives.

The two mismatches we identified above—the domestic-international and the narrative-process—create tensions within revolutionary episodes that have implications for the way revolutions play out after the initial stage. The remainder of this paper examines revolutions that at first seemed 'successful', the Haitian Revolution at the turn of the 19th century and two examples of the Colour Revolutions in the early 2000s – Georgia and Ukraine, to illustrate how these mismatches affect revolutions and limit their potential for transformative change. These historical cases span two centuries of revolutionary activity from one of the first and perhaps most influential modern revolutions to a recent post-Cold War example of the quest for liberal, democratic freedoms. The international socioeconomic forces that gave rise to and constituted these revolutions were different—the inter-imperial competition of the Atlantic at turn of the 19th century cannot be equated to the post-Soviet space of the 2000s—but what we want to highlight here is the similar ways in which the international encumbered each revolutionary episode and limited the extent of social transformation.

The Haitian Revolution

The Haitian Revolution at the turn of the 19th century is often described as the only successful slave revolution in history (James 2001, xviii; Garraway 2008, 1) and as the most radical in challenging the modern global order (Shilliam 2017). It is one of the first modern revolutions, and even in this early example, scholars have highlighted the importance of the international in transatlantic political, economic, and ideational flows that constituted local revolutionary forces

and amplified the revolution's outcomes (Lawson 2015; Mulich 2017). Spanning over a decade, the revolution began in 1791 with coordinated uprisings across the lucrative French colony of Saint Domingue.[8] While Haiti officially achieved independence in 1804 and Jean-Jacques Dessalines became its first governor-general, the revolution's radical racial agenda only progressed to a limited degree and post-revolutionary Haitian society continued to be configured by racial hierarchies and transatlantic economic structures. Internationally, it would be decades before the abolition of slavery, and in many ways, racial hierarchies still underpin international society today (Gruffydd Jones 2008; Henderson 2013; Delatolla and Yao 2018).

The Revolutionary Narrative

The multiple, overlapping, and complex revolutionary narratives that inspired and sustained the Haitian Revolution showed how transatlantic ideational and material flows of the late-18th century were central to the formation of local revolutionary ideas. In the late-18th century, Saint Domingue was an economic powerhouse and produced 40 percent of France's foreign trade, but coffee and sugar production rested on a brutal plantation system of exploitation (Geggus 1982). At the eve of the revolution, 500,000 slaves, half of whom had recently arrived from Africa, worked the plantations for the white population of only 25,000.[9] During the 1791 vodou ceremony at Bwa Kayiman which precipitated the first wave of violent rebellion, the priest Dutty Boukman inspired in his followers a will for freedom and the power to overthrow their oppressors. The exact meaning of these concepts for the early revolutionaries, Robbie Shilliam contends, was informed by a spiritual cosmology that originated from central Africa as Kongolese political philosophy was applied to the plantation social structure through the practice of vodou (Shilliam 2017; 2008, 788). These transatlantic ideas combined with the local context of Haiti's plantation system to create a specific revolutionary narrative of liberation.

Boukman was soon dead, and Toussaint Louverture rose to become leader of the revolutionaries. As a freed black, Louverture had received a Western education, and his understanding of freedom in Haiti was entangled with French Enlightenment notions of universal freedom and liberty. His conceptualization of his own role in the revolution was even framed by French Enlightenment ideals. According to John Beard's biography, Louverture stated "a secret voice said to men, 'since the blacks are free, they need a chief, and it is I who must be that chief, foretold by the Abbe Raynal'".[10] In 1801, Louverture drafted and ratified a constitution for Saint Domingue which did not only abolish all slavery and servitude in Haiti, but declared an end to racial hierarchy so that "no distinctions exist than those of virtues and talents…the law is the same for all whether it punishes or protects" (Article 5). However, Saint Domingue remained French and its newly freed inhabitants remained French citizens. For Louverture, the Haitian Revolutionaries brought an Enlightened war of liberation as part of an international struggle to transform an irrational and unjust social structure – and this revolutionary project was not distinct from the French Revolution that played itself out at the same time on the European continent.

By May 1805, Louverture had died in a French prison, and Jean-Jacques Dessalines' new Haitian government issued another constitution, this time rejecting French rule. Rather, the newly established "empire of Haiti" is "independent of any other power in the universe" (Article 1) and

[8] The story of the Haitian Revolution is multi-layered and complex, particularly in the context of the French Revolution and the rapid social and political changes in the Atlantic region. Even in Haitian society itself, there were several groups vying for status and power including the white plantation owners, the *petit blancs*, the *gens de colour*, and the slaves, and all had differing conceptualization of independence, freedom, and liberty (Knight 2000; Geggus 2011). As this is section is a brief case to demonstrate the theoretical framework outlined earlier in this paper, we have not fully explored the intricacies of the case, but rather focused on the tensions between narratives, domestic policy, and international structures.

[9] There was roughly the same number (25,000) of freed blacks. See Shilliam 2017, 274; Knight 2000, 108.

[10] Guillaume Thomas Raynal was a French writer of the Enlightenment whose works greatly influenced the French Revolution. In evoking Raynal, we can see how Louverture's revolutionary narratives blended European and indigenous Haitian ideas of liberation and struggle (Beard 1983, 46).

that "no white man of whatever nation he may be, shall put his foot on this territory with the title of master or proprietor, neither shall he in future acquire any property therein" (Article 12).[11] In addition, the constitution declared an end to all distinctions of colour and that "the Haitians shall hence forward be known only by the generic appellation of Blacks" (Article 14). Hence, Dessalines' new constitution reframed the revolutionary narrative as an anti-colonial and anti-white struggle that sought to create an explicitly black empire.[12] However, like the other revolutionary narratives, this Haitian rationale for revolt was also shaped by international ideas through the language of sovereignty, independence, citizenship, and empire. These international influences combined with local sociocultural contexts to give rise to the revolutionary narrative behind thirteen years of bloody struggle. As will be discussed in the next section, despite Haitian's remarkable success in capturing and controlling domestic state institutions, international forces also limited the success of these narratives and the political actions they inspired.

The Limitations of Revolutionary Success

By contending that international and structural factors hindered the Haitian Revolution from fully achieving its revolutionary aims, we do not wish to dismiss the Haitian Revolution's importance in world politics. In particular, the revolution succeeded in establishing independence and abolishing slavery in Haiti; it emboldened abolitionist movements; energized the debate that de-legitimatized slavery as an accepted international practice; encouraged Simón Bolívar and his struggle for independence in Latin America; and even inspired the Cuban Revolution in the mid-20th century (James 2001; Lawson 2015). However, the revolutionaries' ambitions to overturn a social and economic structure predicated on racial inequality was encumbered by both the domestic-international and narrative-process mismatch.

First, the international socioeconomic structures that had shaped Haitian society for decades continued to hamper transformative racial change by subjecting the newly independent Haiti to global economic flows. While global socioeconomic forces created Haiti's economic position as France's prized colonial possession and constituted the dire conditions that pushed Haitian slaves to rebellion, these transnational forces also shaped poverty, isolation, and authoritarian rule in post-independence Haiti.

Although it can be argued that domestic politics led to Haiti's rogue status, first with Dessalines' massacre of the white elites after independence; causing international consternation and hostility towards the new country. Second, with the elimination of the educated elite from Haitian society; hindering Haiti's capacity to rebuild its infrastructure and institutions and become economically viable on the global markets (Girard 2010, 61). By looking at the domestic context, both these factors handicapped the economic recovery of the new Haitian state. However, Haiti's blood-soaked birth as a cause for its geopolitical isolation ignores the long history of bloodshed that France engaged in while it was a colony. As Liliana Obregón details, 'Saint Domingue became the most productive colony in the hemisphere fuelled by the permanent import of Africans; anywhere from 25,000 to 40,000 slaves died each year […] close to three million slaves were brought in total' (2018, p. 601). Here, we argue is one aspect of the domestic-international mismatch, where there is a failure to view African deaths, freedom, and emancipation as equivalent to white European. The other domestic-international mismatch, possibly having a direct effect on Haiti's succession of military dictatorships restrained its ability to develop into a more just and egalitarian society, was the debts that were owed to France. These debts, being revised down from the original

[11] The story goes that Dessalines ripped out the white on the French tricolour to create the Haitian flag by symbolically removing the white race. The removal of whites was not only symbolic as Dessalines' forces massacred whites across the country (Girard 2010, 59).

[12] However, despite the language of empire, the constitute does stipulate that "the emperor shall never form any enterprise with the view of making conquests, nor to disturb the peace and interior administration of foreign colonies" (Article 36).

150million francs to 60million francs in 1838, were referred to as Haiti's 'independence debt'. Although the debt was revised down, the total debt amounted to 166million francs with much of the total being paid to French banks and creditors following the withdrawal of loans required to make payments to France (Obregón 2018, 613). Haitian debt to France and French financiers ultimately constrained the revolutionary process, structuring Haiti's internal economic and political development and limited the promise of revolutionary transformations despite control over domestic levels of state power.[13]

Furthermore, in the early-19th century, longstanding competition between France, Britain, Spain, and newly independent America continued to shape geopolitics in the Caribbean region. These forces featured prominently during the revolution when Louverture had briefly allied himself with the Spanish while the whites of Saint Domingue joined the British. After the French Revolutionary Government abolished slavery in 1794, Louverture re-joined the French to expel the Spanish and British from Saint Domingue (Geggus 1978; Popkin 2010). After the revolution, as Dessalines organized massacres of whites and forbade whites from land ownership, the Atlantic powers ostracized Haiti. What united the political and economic ruling elite of the Atlantic region was the fear of black rule. As Napoleon Bonaparte noted, "the prospect of a black republic is equally disturbing to the Spanish, the English, and the Americans" (Hunt 2007, 180).[14] By including the Americans, Napoleon implied that the Haitian Revolution's radical racial agenda upset the socioeconomic institutions of not only old-world empires, but also the newly independent American republic. Hence, the threat that the Haitian rebellion posed extended beyond contestations within and between empires but endangered the racial hierarchies at the root of early-19th century international order. The Haitian Revolution demonstrated the effectiveness of black fighters against European armies, and the lesson learned for these elites was that the Haitian Revolution should not be repeated at all costs (Knight 2000, 114). Therefore, Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues, international elites worked not only to limit black freedom and prevent black revolts elsewhere, but to silence the history of the Haitian Revolution, reframing it as a non-event and sweeping the Haitian experience away under the idea of "Haitian exceptionalism" (Trouillot 1995; Clitandre 2011, 148). These maneuverers limited the use of the Haitian model to inspire other revolts.

Second, Haiti's post-independence struggles also illustrate the narrative-process mismatch where the radical social transformations promised by main revolutionary narratives did not materialize overnight, frustrating those who fought for the new order. Despite narratives of liberation from the socioeconomic injustices of the French colonial system, first Louverture and then Dessalines exercised political and economic control through a centralized and militarized plantation system that extracted forced labour from the peasants (Girard 2010, 65; Shilliam 2008, 793-794). And despite Dessalines' declared end to racialized social hierarchies, tensions between blacks and mixed-race individuals continued to divide and structure Haitian society. As Shilliam notes, the mixed-race individuals used their liminal position "to defend and maintain their elite status", particularly internationally, and Dessalines' domestic efforts to undercut that status further exacerbated other ingrained internal division (Shilliam 2008, 795-797; Girard 2010, 63). These policies bred disappointment and anger, and within two years, Dessalines suffered a violent death at the hands of his own military followers. Hence, in the narrative-process as well as the domestic-international mismatch, Haiti's new leaders were only able to initiate domestic policy changes. However, these changes, no matter how radical or well-intentioned, continued to be dictated by the co-constituted domestic and international forces that structured Haiti's place in the transatlantic economic system and the racialized hierarchies and fears of the transatlantic empires.

[13] A similar process is described by Susan Eckstein (2004) with regards to Cuba
[14] Shilliam (2008) characterizes this as the original colour line.

While this brief empirical exploration only scratches the surface of the complexity that underlie the Haitian Revolution as an explosive revolutionary event, the Haitian Revolution effectively illustrates both the importance of the international in constituting the revolution's aims and narratives and in limiting the scope of post-independence social transformation.

The Colour Revolutions

The Colour Revolutions, most notably of Georgia in 2003 (the 'Rose' Revolution) and Ukraine in 2004 (the 'Orange' Revolution),[15] sought the overthrow of post-communist regimes.[16] Scholarship on the Colour Revolutions has highlighted the role of international players such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and transnational processes of democratic diffusion in spreading contentious repertoires across Eurasian countries (Galbreath 2009; Ambrosio 2007). However, a decade later, many analysts have concluded that these revolutions, while 'successful' in capturing political power, were limited in following through on the sweeping social changes that mass demonstrators on the streets had at first demanded (Cheterian 2009; Finkel and Brudny 2012). Explaining their inability to achieve the sweeping social changes of the Colour Revolutions, Sharon Nepstad (2015) and Mark Beissinger (2009) argue that they were less ideational than other revolutionary movements, and thus avoided what Crane Brinton (1938) calls the radical phase of revolution. While this may be true, the revolutionaries in Georgia and Ukraine did make use of revolutionary narratives that facilitated mobilization.

While the examples of Georgia and Ukraine, as discussed here, are not in-depth case studies and what we have selected to highlight serves to illustrate our theoretical intervention of the domestic-international and narrative-process mismatch. In doing so, we acknowledge that the Colour Revolutions were a complex set of political events with their own situated histories that are not elaborated in detail here. This may be a jarring argument to make with respect to these particular revolutions, especially because the goals of the revolutionary movement in Georgia and Ukraine were broadly met; having sought liberal democratization and economic engagement, acceptance of liberal international norms, and support from the US and Europe in the process of political and economic transformation. Still, the constraints on revolutionary 'success' that both cases exemplify can be attributed to a domestic-international and narrative-process mismatch. Moreover, the 'success' that these revolutionary movements achieved by overcoming *some* international constraints reproduce a normative liberal order already in existence and bound by democratization.

The Revolutionary Narrative

A decade after the Soviet Union's collapse, many post-Soviet states remained bound by Cold War political legacies. New governing elites who remained close to Russia frustrated efforts to protect civil liberties, promote transparency, end widespread corruption, and strengthen democratic institutions such as the rule of law and free and fair elections (Cummings and Ryabkov 2008; Laverty 2008). The Colour Revolutions sought to oust these corrupt political elites and place post-Soviet states on a path towards civil and political liberties—liberties often already written into post-Soviet constitutions but constrained due to Russia's continued influence.

In Georgia, President Eduard Shevardnadze's post-Soviet regime had at first cultivated an image as the champion of a free and open society, but rampant corruption and nepotism eroded both

[15] The war in Ukraine is not considered within the analysis of this article due to the continually developing circumstances at present. We bracket our analysis from the moment of revolutionary mobilization to political turnover and the relatively immediate consequences.

[16] The Colour Revolutions of the early 2000s began with protests that toppled Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, and included mass mobilization in Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Lebanon. Since these revolutions demanded Western-style civil and political liberties and overthrew regimes friendly to Russia, Putin saw these revolutions as a Western policy to deliberately isolate Russia. In this brief empirical illustration, we focus on Georgia and Ukraine to illustrate our argument (Newnham 2015; McFaul 2005).

public trust in the government and Georgia's tax base leading to inadequate funding for public programs.[17] By 2001, Shevardnadze's reformer image was tarnished as he tried to shut down opposition media, and his inability to address corruption led to the suspension of all IMF programs in Georgia (Kandelaki 2006). According to polls before the November 2003 parliamentary elections, Shevardnadze's popularity plummeted to 5 percent, however, his party – according to election results – was victorious with 90 percent of the vote. Unsurprisingly, observers reported widespread voter fraud and intimidation (Fairbanks 2004; OSCE/ODIHR 2003). The day after the election, tens of thousands of protesters crowded into the streets of Tbilisi to demand free and fair elections and the resignation of Shevardnadze's government. After 20 days of demonstrations, Shevardnadze was forced to resign, and new elections on 4 January led to a sweeping victory of US-educated Mikheil Saakashvili.

A similar story unfolded in Ukraine in 2004 as the Orange Revolution also began with an unpopular incumbent and fraudulent presidential elections.[18] The outgoing president, Leonid Kuchma, had served two terms marred by corruption and erosion of media freedoms. The ruling class favoured Russia-backed Viktor Yanukovych as Kuchma's successor, but Viktor Yushchenko, who had a reputation as a liberal reformer, was ahead in the polls. Even before the November elections, the opposition suffered from voter intimidation. activists arrested and even a suspected dioxin poisoning that put Yushchenko out of commission for weeks. On election day, tactics included filling pens at polling states with disappearing ink and a last-minute surge of 1.2 million votes, over 90 percent of which was for Yanukovich (Karatnycky 2005, 36-37). The morning after, crowds wearing orange moved towards Independence Square demanding free and fair elections and an end to corruption. After three weeks in freezing temperatures, the demonstrators forced a re-run of the elections (D'Anieri 2006, 344).

In both Georgia and Ukraine, the revolutionaries who took to the streets called for free and fair elections, liberal political reforms, and an end to rampant and systemic corruption. These narratives emerged from the interaction between the specific local context of societies frustrated by post-Soviet social and political change and international forces that promoted certain standards of Western liberal democracy. For example, Ukraine's and Georgia's NGOs and civil society benefited from funding and support from US and European governments, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Open Society Institute (Fairbanks 2004, 115; Karatnycky 2005, 43). Demonstrators in Tbilisi waved American flags, and after Shevardnadze's resignation, set up a billboard stating "Thank you, USA" (Mitchell 2006, 671). Hence, the Colour Revolutions were produced by the co-constitution of international and local factors that were configured in specific historical moments to create mass mobilization for change. The narrative of this moment followed from the premise of international liberalism and democratization; reproducing an existing and well-trodden path of politics that constrained revolutionary and transformative possibilities.

The Limitations of Revolutionary Success

Despite the apparent parallels between domestic and (Western) international goals of liberalization and democratization and therefore the potential for narrative-process engagement, the constraints that encumbered the Colour Revolutions to institute the changes demanded by demonstrators are illustrative of the two mismatches outlined above. First, the Colour Revolutions were impeded by the domestic-international mismatch: when revolutionary movements succeed in capturing the state's policymaking apparatus, this domestic success did not address the international socioeconomic forces of the post-Soviet context that previously structured domestic economic

[17] For a more thorough account of Georgia's domestic politics in the Rose Revolution see the volume edited by Zurab Karumidze and James V. Wertsch (2005).

[18] For a more thorough account of Ukraine's domestic politics in the Orange Revolution see the volume edited by Anders Åslund and Michael McFaul (2006).

corruption and electoral fraud. Indeed, the pre-revolutionary domestic situations in Georgia and Ukraine were deeply intertwined with international post-Cold War transformations. The post-Soviet transition to democracy rested on structural changes, particularly the switch from the Soviet planned economy to a capitalist market-based economy, though "little thought was given to whether mass privatization and monetary reforms were necessary solutions for the economic ills of Russia or other post-Soviet states" (Cheterian 2009, 136). In addition, the close link between private and state interests during the Soviet era continued to shape the economic incentive for post-Soviet elites to remain in political office (Jones 2006, 38). Post-Soviet states' integration into global economic flows further intensified elites' incentives to translate government positions into economic profit. The demonstrators' limited ability to confront these international socioeconomic forces hindered their ability to end rampant corruption within their own states. Here, a domestic-international mismatch is evident, and while this was later abetted by relying on sympathetic Western states and organisations, Russian interests continue to play a role within the domestic spheres of these states. Here, it is possible to argue that the initial domestic-international mismatch between revolutionaries and the Russian sphere of influence became marginal in some respects, but these countries continued to be entangled in broader US-Russia contests for influence, constraining social and political possibilities and ultimate 'success'.

Furthermore, the geostrategic choice between Russia and the West dominated post-Soviet states with some ruling elites following the Western neoliberal script while others gravitated towards Russian patronage. Following the Soviet Union's collapse, Ukraine attempted to balance between political independence and cordial relations with its economically and militarily powerful neighbour (Rumer 1994; Samokhvalov 2005). While Western organizations such as the OSCE spread liberal democratic values and anti-corruption norms, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) ensured Russia's continued engagement in post-Soviet states and worked to limit Europe's influence in states like Ukraine (Dimitrova and Dragneva 2009). As such, Russian influence continued to impact regional politics, constraining possibilities for transformation.

Similarly, since the 1990s, Georgia has sought a closer relationship with the West with aspirations to join NATO and the European Union. However, Russia has continued to assert its influence in Georgia by supporting secessionist minority movements, manipulating energy supplies, instigating trade and transport embargos, and deporting ethnic Georgians (Cornell 2007). Georgia's geographic proximity to Russia and its economic structure built on its past cultural and economic ties to Russia made the country particularly vulnerable to Russian threats and sanctions, as Russia attempted to maintain influence on internal Georgian affairs (Newnham 2015). Despite revolutionaries' successes in ousting one illegitimate leader and remove Russian influence, these international forces continued to dominate politics in both countries. In the case of Georgia, Russian attempts to isolate post-revolutionary Georgia to encumber change have largely failed as the country has undergone dramatic political and structural transformation. Yet, such transformation followed and depended on Americano- and Euro- centric international norms and structures. Highlighted here, is the ongoing impact of international influence on domestic political change that constrain political possibilities for revolutionary transformation and innovation.

Second, the Colour Revolutions were hampered by a narrative-process mismatch that assumed that once protestors in the streets overturned dishonest election results and overthrew corrupt leaders, then democratic values, an end to corruption, and transparent institutions would naturally follow. But, in both Georgia and Ukraine, the leaders that emerged were part of the incumbent elite themselves and limited by a series of structural constraints. Once in power, and unable to fulfil the demands of revolution, the new leadership, in an attempt to be accommodating, either forfeited power to effect change or moved to reinforce prevailing political and social structures. Chairman of the National Bank of Ukraine in the 1990s and briefly the Prime Minister under

Leonid Kuchma's regime, Viktor Yushchenko (Tudoroiu 2007), once in power after the Orange Revolution, altered the constitution, giving more power to the parliament and Prime Minister, and limiting those of the President (D'Anieri 2006). His attempt to diffuse executive power throughout the state, arguably, was an attempt to democratise by means of decentralisation. However, it provided opportunities for others to engage in corrupt practices without ensuring checks and balances. As such, he was unable to match the narrative with the process, leading to Viktor Yanukovich's victory in the 2010 elections, only to be ousted in another violent revolutionary movement in 2014.

Similarly, in Georgia, Saakashvili was briefly the Minister of Justice under Shevardnadze, becoming familiar with state structures. During his first term, Saakashvili instituted a series of policy changes aimed at ending corruption and quickening market-oriented reforms and neoliberal economic development. This followed from domestic revolutionary narratives but was later perceived as the continuation of profiteering from government positions. However, by the time of his second term, Saakashvili's government was seen as a continuation of kleptocracy, using authoritarian tactics to suppress the media and suspend due process (Jones 2006; Kukhianidze 2009). As Fairbanks notes, leaders who come to power through popular movements soon find that there are difficulties in satisfying the high expectations generated through their rise, where Georgia's weak state compounded this disconnect (Fairbanks 2004, 118-119). Hence, as Melinda Haring and Michael Cecire (2013) conclude, supporters of the Colour Revolutions "took the revolutions themselves as the apogee of democracy rather than focus on the hard, grinding work of institution-building".

The Colour Revolutions showed the intricate interplay between domestic and international factors in creating revolutionary movements. While the interaction between international and domestic forces structured revolutionary narratives in both Georgia and Ukraine, these mutually constitutive forces also shaped the structural contexts that the demonstrators sought to address. In stressing the mismatch between the domestic change, revolutionary narratives, and international social structures, we highlight the interplay between international and domestic factors in creating not only the underlying conditions that precipitated these revolutionary movements, but also movements themselves and the social and political demands they made, the practices they adhered to, the stumbling blocks they eventually faced, and the ongoing contestations about their ultimate 'success'.

Conclusion

In this paper, we highlighted two mismatches that hamper even the most 'successful' revolutions. First, the domestic-international mismatch emphasizes the disconnect between the political objective of most revolutionary movements – the instruments of domestic policymaking – and the international socioeconomic forces that structure domestic injustice and oppression. Revolutionaries' legitimacy as political actors rest on the domestic-international divide between internal self-determination and external sovereign equality and non-interference. Revolutionaries can speak for the people only so far as it pertains to a domestic context. Even the perception that the Haitian Revolution sought to inspire global racial transformation created intense international backlash and hampered the newly formed Haitian government. The international's central role in constituting domestic institutions and practices means revolutionaries' attempts to introduce lasting domestic change that diverges from hegemonic politics will always be impeded by international socioeconomic structures.

Second, the narrative-process mismatch highlights the tension between revolutionary narratives that spur people to take to the streets and the slow and nonlinear processes necessary to forge lasting change in international socioeconomic structures. Revolutionary narratives that resonate

and inspire are simple and alluring stories that stress the possibilities of human agency, while the actual work of confronting oppressive social structures can be long, circuitous, and frustrating. The two also operate on different temporalities. Revolutionary narratives, as illustrated by the example of the Haitian and the Colour Revolutions, stress immediate tangible successes in dramatic moments of people power while social change requires more than storming the barricades.

Both mimatches highlight the understudied centrality of international socioeconomic structures in understanding how revolutionary movements arise, succeed, and fail. Both mismatches also pinpoint the incomplete nature of analysing revolutions through the lenses of methodological nationalism and methodological individualism. In arguing that revolutions are incumbered by international forces that make their full success all but impossible, we are not suggesting that actors should not pursue social change or that meaningful social change is impossible. We are merely underscoring the disappointing effect when domestic and narrative expectations that do not confirm with international social reality. For revolutionaries that take to the street, such as in the Haitian and Colour Revolutions, the disconnect between the promise of revolutionary narratives, the limited domestic possibilities of change, and the international structures that continue to oppress can translate into disappointment and disengagement.

Hence, it is perhaps our very discourses about revolutions that hampers us from understanding what can create meaningful social and political innovation and realistic strategies to achieve them. As such, it would benefit both academics and social activists alike to rethink the language and narrative tropes of revolutions as a single moment of transformative change. A reformulation of revolutionary mobilisation that accounts for the diffuse and persistent nature of international social structures by emphasizing long-term struggle and common solidarity required may help address the disenchantment that arise from the mismatches we have identified.

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