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Meghna Melkote

University of Richmond

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Bystanders Without an Excuse: On the Moral Duty to Revolt

By

Meghna Melkote

Honors Thesis

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Advisor: Dr. Claudio Lopez-Guerra

Introduction:

Che Guevara, an Argentine revolutionary who served as a key player in the Cuban Revolution, was known for his forceful rhetoric calling people to action to engage in revolution. His language was the language of duty - when he called on people to act, he did so with moral force behind his words. In the face of nascent revolution and discontent, he called upon those aggrieved to “tremble with indignation every time that an injustice is committed in the world” and act accordingly¹. Guevara is appealing to a common intuition many leaders in social justice seem to have; there is some response, Guevara expressed, that humans in a society should have in the face of injustice. This response is participating in a revolution.

The language of duty comes when he noted that revolution is not something that can be waited for, but something that people have to make happen - “the revolution”, he says “is not an apple that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it fall”². This language - the language of *having to do something*, is the language of obligation. It is the language of having a *moral requirement* to act in a certain way. Guevara called upon his fellow supporters to carry out a duty. His language carries the implicit message that those civilians have a responsibility to be the catalyst to make the apple fall - otherwise it never will.

Guevara is famous in a line of revolutionaries for calling civilians to action using language of obligation. But where the right to revolt is frequently discussed by political theorists, the obligation to revolt is seldom explored in political theory. There may be rhetorical calls for the obligation to revolt, but it is rarely examined whether or not we have a duty to do so. Almost

¹ Raul Da Gama and -, “Che: Remembered by His Brother,” Jazz da Gama, November 2, 2017, <https://jazzdagama.com/booksmiscellany/che-guided-great-feelings-love/>.

² “Comparative History of Ideas,” CHID 250 A: Special Topics: Introduction To The History Of Ideas | Comparative History of Ideas | University of Washington, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://chid.washington.edu/courses/2017/spring/chid/250/a>.

every theory of political authority includes an analysis of redress; what to do when the government has gone too far or when people have a right to depose or replace the current sovereign.

Not all theories of political authority include a right to revolt. Some thinkers that have given accounts of political obligation, like Thomas Hobbes and Immanuel Kant, explicitly deny the justification for a right to revolution. Thomas Hobbes, famous for his analysis of governments forming in the state of nature, justified a particularly strong government that was almost immune to revolution; he argued that revolution cannot be justified beyond self defense³. Immanuel Kant, in his political philosophy, argued a similar point, granting governments almost absolute authority in that one must be willing to endure “the most unbearable abuse of supreme authority”⁴⁵.

However, this is not a common thread of political obligation. Especially during and after the Enlightenment, many thinkers did include a justification of a right to revolution in their theories of governmental legitimacy. These theorists range from the social contract theorists like Locke, who viewed some rights as fundamental and pre-political, and Rousseau, who prioritized the general will of the people, to utilitarian vindications of revolution along the lines of J.S. Mill^{6,7}. The theorists that justify the right to revolt do so for a number of reasons; these include, but are not limited to natural rights, overall utility of the people, a reaction to government subversion of the will or corruption.

³ John Winfred O'Toole (2011), <https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:102351>.

⁴ Pritika Nehra, “A Kantian Defense of the Right to Rebellion,” in *ECPR*, 2017, <https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/35169>.

⁵ Sharon A. Lloyd and Susanne Sreedhar, “Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, April 30, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes-moral/?amp=1>.

⁶ O'Toole

⁷ Brink, David. “Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford University, August 21, 2018. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/>.

However, the reasons that justify a right to revolt may do more than merely justify a freedom. Those reasons may do more work than the original thinkers conceived; they may lead people to feel an obligation to lead or participate in a revolution. Examining the reasons behind the right to revolt leads to a critical question: is there ever a time when those reasons lead to people being *obligated* to participate in a political revolution? While there may be prudential or overriding factors that may override that obligation, does this theoretical obligation exist in the first place?

While theories of the right to revolution clearly exist, these questions remain largely unanswered; we still lack an analysis of major theories that answer whether or not we have the obligation to revolt. The present study aims to make a modest contribution towards filling that gap. If, under theories of political legitimacy, the right to revolution only exists in situations that create harm, then it seems that there may be harm created if people do not exercise this right. If people believe they are justified in rectifying harm created by the government, but are under no obligation to do so, it seems as if harm can go unchecked. If there is no obligation, it also may lead to governments being legitimate under certain theories where they are causing harm and not fulfilling their purposes. Many theories of revolution are meant to keep governments fulfilling their obligations - whether that be to create a certain amount of good, protect rights, further human wellbeing, etc. They are meant to serve as a form of redress when governments fail. If there is no obligation to keep governments fulfilling their goal - to rectify harms that they may create - then a lack of obligation allows governments to exist even when they do not fulfill their purpose or actively work against their purpose.

If the reasons that justify a right to revolt lead to an obligation to revolt, some may see that obligation as unreasonable. This may serve as a criticism of those existing theories of political authority; however, it also may lead to a more serious requirement of those existing

under a certain political authority. If there is an obligation to revolt, there are critical implications on how adherents to major theories of political authority ought to weigh their own political activity. Participation in a revolution, it may turn out, ought to be more seriously considered by those adherents to major theories of political authority.

This theory can be critical for cases of mass movements today on the part of organizers – especially violent revolutions. It can help organizers and revolutionaries philosophically ground their movement in an obligation to their fellow citizens and bring upon those revolutionaries a sense of duty. It also can help citizens understand their decision to participate in a revolution as a moral question rather than just a prudential question.

In this thesis I will argue that the key reasons that justify the right to revolution under social contract theories, Marxist theories, and consequentialist theories also support a duty to revolt. It is a presumptive obligation, meaning that it is not absolute. It can be overridden by factors such as other competing obligations (for example, to oneself or one's family) or by levels of risk that may be incurred. I will show that under social contract theories, the right to revolution serves as a breach of contract remedy. It does so in that revolution is justified when the contract under which government is legitimate is broken or violated in some sense. Under these theories, there would be an obligation to keep the social contract valid. Under Marxist theories, the right to revolution is seen as a historical inevitability, which would lead to an obligation to revolt if people are to fulfill that historical inevitability. Under consequentialist theories, revolution can be justified if it creates a stronger outcome or more utility, which would lead to an obligation as one would be obligated to bring about that stronger outcome.

I am focusing on these three types of theories because they most often justify the governments that exist today, so there is some practical relevance to these theories. The

legitimacy of the United States is often justified on Locke's social contract theory, in which a somewhat limited government was instituted to protect natural rights. This is also the foundation for many liberal democratic states. I will be focusing on Locke and Rousseau because their social contract theories cover two major schools of thought; Locke's protects individual liberty, and Rousseau's protects the general will. These can tell us that revolution is justified as a sort of breach of contract theory; when the social contract fails, often revolution is brought about as a solution to bring about a government that can serve out the contract upon which it is instituted. Marxist theories will be examined because they pose a major criticism to the kind of liberal democracy that social contract theories usually create. They are also more relevant practically based on the number of states who have either tried the practice (such as the Soviet Union) or have been heavily influenced by the practice (such as postwar India). They tell us that revolution is an inevitability, rather than something solely justified; it can tell us that in order to fulfill that inevitability of post industrial capitalist society, revolution may be a feature of existence. Finally, I will focus on general consequentialist theories because these justify many decisions made in legislation worldwide, especially economic ones (focusing on a cost benefit analysis). This is also a separate major school of thought in that the consequences of revolution are more thoroughly examined as opposed to social contract theories and Marxist theories, which focus more on a prima facie justification for revolution regardless of the consequences. Consequentialist theories also provide a strong foundation for just war theory. Just war theory is critical to our justification of war that it provides the foundations for both the start and the methods of many international disputes or conflicts; thus, it adds to the practical significance of this paper⁸.

⁸ Richard Norman, *Ethics, Killing and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 36

I am not intending on endorsing any particular view of the right to rebel or the justification of government. I am focusing on these these three because these are three of the most commonly accepted theories of revolution used to justify movements historically (such as the United States Revolutionary War and Marxist rebellion in Cuba) and are well known as seminal theories that are critical to theories of revolutions. My argument is contingent; it is intended to show that accepting any one of these styles of theory - social contract, Marxist, or consequentialist - can lead one to also accept an obligation to revolt. The specific theorists serve as examples of these larger schools of thought, though this can generally be applied to other theorists falling into these schools of thought.

The essay is structured as follows. I will first examine the idea of a revolution, defining it as a large-scale structural process that operates outside of any current political system and seeks to depose or replace the current authority. In the first section I will also discuss the extent to which violence may be included in a revolution as defined for the purposes of this paper. I will defend this definition against liberal democratic nonviolent revolutions and small-scale internal change proposed by Engels. In my second section, I will outline the justifications of the right to revolt. In my third section, I will then outline the justifications of the duty to revolt. I will show that the reasons that justify the former also justify the latter. In my final section, I will discuss possible objections, including questions of if the duty would nullify the freedom associated with the right.

Section I: The Idea of a Revolution

Revolution, at its heart, includes a “core meaning of large-scale, structural change”⁹. Revolution, although difficult to define, often has a “sameness of the image of the overall revolutionary process” that is shared by those who seek to demarcate what a revolution may entail¹⁰. That shared understanding typically involves “rejection of the existing government’s authority and an attempt to replace it with another government”¹¹.

Different traditions of revolution are characterized by the goals that are pursued (the object of revolution), the means by which they pursue it, and the pace and threshold for pursued transformation¹². I will explore here three competing conceptions of what a revolution is: the Marxist conception, the idea of a revolution within an existing structure, and the notion of a revolt. My definition will seek to capture the sameness of image of these revolutions while also encompassing general notions of revolutions as they have happened in modern times.

The main object of a communist revolution is “the realization of material liberty and equality”¹³. Definitions of Marxist revolutions include those revolutions that lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie class and the imposition of a fundamental new type of governance.

While violence is typically seen as a key element of a radical class struggle - Marxist theories are typically associated with extreme means at a fast pace - this is not always the case. Engels defends a more moderate form of economic revolution. Engels, in his introduction to Marx’s *Class Struggles in France*, defends a form of passive resistance due to how unlikely a violent revolution in the streets “carried through by small minorities at the head of unconscious

9 Patrick Taylor Smith, “Political Revolution as Moral Risk,” *The Monist* 101, no. 2 (March 2018): pp. 200, <https://doi.org/10.1093/monist/onx043>.

10 Rosemary H.T. O’Kane, ed., *Revolution: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, vol. 2 (Routledge, 2000).

11 Allen Buchanan, “Revolution,” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, August 21, 2017), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/revolution/#ConcMatt>.

12 “Political Revolution,” *Internet encyclopedia of philosophy*, accessed 4AD, <https://iep.utm.edu/pol-rev/#H2>.

13 *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Political Revolution

masses” is to succeed¹⁴. Engels discusses how, during social upheavals in France and Germany starting in 1848, the success of the labor movement as it shifted to Germany depended heavily on using the existing franchise as “an instrument of emancipation”, which increased public support and touched the masses. He draws the conclusion that “State institutions, wherein the rule of the bourgeoisie is organized, did furnish further opportunities by means of which the working class can oppose those same institutions”. He discusses how the “slow work of propaganda and parliamentary activity are also recognized as the next task of the party” leads to revolution having a character that is less that of a radical break and more of a moderate, incremental movement that utilizes the existing mechanisms of the state.

I now turn to the second conception of revolution mentioned above. Opposing Marx, recent theories of revolution conceive of it as occurring within the legal system through a slower and deliberate process, with acts of civil disobedience that still operate within the framework of the law and do not directly seek to overthrow the state¹⁵. These are often referred to as social movements; while not all social movements are revolutions, they are both frequently discussed alongside each other for their similarities in creating transformative change.

Social movements are defined by sociologists Anderson and Parker as a pluralistic dynamic behavior that “progressively develops structure through time and aims at partial or complete modification of the social order”¹⁶. These are efforts that take place through an existing legal system through behavior like voting, protest within legal bounds, or lobbying efforts.

¹⁴ Friedrich Engels, “Introduction to Marx’s Class Struggles in France,” in *The Revolutionary Act: Military Insurrection or Political and Economic Action?* (New York News Company, 1922), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/intro.htm>.

¹⁵ Michael S Green, “Legal Revolutions: Six Mistakes About Discontinuity in the Legal Order,” *North Carolina Law Review* 83 (March 2, 2006): pp. 331-409.

¹⁶ “Social Movements: Meaning, Causes, Types, Revolution and Role,” *Sociology Discussion - Discuss Anything About Sociology*, January 21, 2014, <https://www.sociologydiscussion.com/social-movements/social-movements-meaning-causes-types-revolution-and-role/2248>.

Nonviolent revolutions are those along the lines of Gandhi's early 20th century liberation efforts, which relied heavily on civil disobedience such as the salt march or boycotts of British products. These revolutions are often dependent on the aggressor being willing to acquiesce to an extent or existing in a particular set of circumstances; for example, in the case of Indian independence, the willingness of the British to leave India was heavily dependent on the empire's weakening financial situation after their involvement in World War II¹⁷. Additionally, these revolutions often have a goal of not changing the government but rather rectifying parts of it, as Anderson and Parker discuss. It also does not include spontaneous or immediate collective overhauls, but is rather a sustained collective effort over time.

The idea of a revolution as a revolt is different from the above two conceptions in that it does not have an object or end goal, but rather is an action meant to express disagreement with an institution or state¹⁸. This is important because it shows how even though social movements may commonly be seen as revolutions, there is a key distinction between them and revolutions. Julia Kristeva, working in theories of revolt, describes revolt as a "very deep movement of discontent, anxiety, and anguish"¹⁹. Kristeva applies it to nonpolitical matters, but in a political sense it applies in the same manner but towards a ruling party or government. Revolt is reactionary, and while it is typically violent, it is usually more of the maddened display of emotion that Pasternak seeks to condemn. While revolts may signify a nascent revolution, they may be more isolated and simply show discontent towards a situation. Additionally, it does not need to seek to change the material conditions of society or even any aspect of the government; a

¹⁷ Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *Freedom at Midnight* (Beverly Hills, CA: Renaissance Literary & Talent, 2020).

¹⁸ Stanford Encyclopedia, Revolution

¹⁹ Bert Olivier, "Communication and 'Revolt'," *Communicare, Journal for Communication Sciences in South Africa* 25, no. 2 (2006).

revolt could merely be an isolated protest against a particular grievance or criticism of government.

I will present a definition given by Patrick Taylor Smith and modify it. In the following paragraphs, I will defend why it works better for the purposes of my paper than the three pure conceptions above. As Smith discusses, there is a sameness of image in the revolutionary process in that many different visions of revolution share similar characteristics. My definition of revolution includes the key elements of each of these conceptions of revolution, and also presents the most interesting case for analyzing a duty to revolt. I am interested in whether or not we have a duty to revolt when there is a high cost to revolt. In cases as those described above, those acting within the mechanisms of the state are not risking much, if anything.

The following definition encapsulates a revolution that includes key features shared among differing schools of thought, with two important caveats; it is one that assumes risk on the part of participants and one that operates outside the legal realm of government. If the right to revolution is justified by a moral failing of the government (defined by the different frameworks under which theories of political authority operate), then it seems obvious that one should rectify that moral failure to the extent they can if there is no risk to that person. The interesting question of the obligation to revolt comes when there is conflict between different obligations; for example, obligations of self preservation, obligations to one's family and friends, obligations to religious or personal commitments, or others that may be compromised when revolution requires a risk. Thus, the obligation to revolt when it is justified by different frameworks is not an interesting question when there is no reason not to under that framework.

The definition of revolution I want to defend will do 3 things: it will 1) reflect both the sameness of image shared by these major schools of thoughts 2) will reflect the characteristics of modern revolutions and 3) be distinct from political participation. This is where elements from

modern theories that require extralegal means and potentially violence as a feature of revolution are important. In modern times, there has been much focus on revolutions that work outside the frameworks of governments in order to completely remove either the government in power or dismantle the structures of the government (often when there are violations of rights, totalitarian rule, or other abuses of government). The Arab spring, in the early 2010s, featured revolutionaries who were actively trying to dismantle the existing governments in order to replace it with a new regime. The definition of the revolution I am presenting captures features that are inherent to modern revolutions like those that took place in the Arab Spring.

Those working to reform government will not be explored for two reasons: 1) it does not incur any risk or many competing obligations, which is the question of interest and 2) it cannot apply to serious violations of rights or grievances.

First, a revolution ought to be distinguished from acts that merely work within a political framework to enact change of any sort because these actions do not incur any cost or risks to the individual's health, self-preservation, well being, or safety, which makes the question of obligation an interesting one to consider. If the definition of revolution includes reformist change or legal means of remedy, then the question of the obligation to revolt is the same as the obligation of political participation. Political participation involves being an active member of a state and working to accomplish goals within that framework; while important, the extent to which one must engage in political participation or when one should is not being examined in this picture.

A revolution is a sort of last resort, when the very nature of the state in question is far beyond any reparation from within the system. The conceptions of revolution above also define revolution in a way that is changing the state, not legitimizing it by working within it. Civil disobedience may lead to voluntary change on parts of rulers, but it is still in the hands of those

in power to dole out that change. Revolutionaries, on the other hand, are more frequently thought of as those who *take* power from the existing government, not those who negotiate for it.

Second, it does not apply to serious grievances or rights violations. Yehezkel Dror argues that the efficacy of reformist change “varies inversely with the strength of emotional investment in the behavior to be altered”²⁰. With serious violations of rights or widespread or egregious abuses, there is bound to be a strong emotional investment in the remedy sought and in opponents to that remedy. The likelihood of change being achieved within the legal system in these cases is unlikely and it does disservice to those who have their rights violated, as Pasternak discusses in calling for violence in cases of egregious injustices. Additionally, the fundamental change of the government in nonviolent or reformist protests is highly dependent on the other party being willing to cooperate or acquiesce, as in the case of India. This paper is not discussing cases in which governments cooperate or acquiesce to their criticisms, because the reasons that justify revolution are often those that do so in the face of a government becoming illegitimate or harming its citizens in an egregious way. The question of obligation can be brought about by asking whether or not people have a responsibility to act in the face of a dangerous government, and in the cases of nonviolent reformist revolution this condition is not met; this is why reformist purely nonviolent revolutions will not be explored.

Although the Marxist revolution has qualities of general revolutions that I am interested in, it seems too restrictive to analyze in terms of obligation. The Marxist revolutions by definition do not include many historical revolutions, such as the American Revolution and modern revolutions, such as the Arab Spring. The object of revolution - material liberty and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie - seems far too restrictive to include a broader range of revolutions

²⁰ Michael Barkun, “Law and Social Revolution: Millenarianism and the Legal System,” *Law And Society Review* 6, no. 1 (1971): p. 113, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3052915>.

that I want to explore. Revolutionaries that call upon people to participate frequently have objects of revolution other than Marx's goals - these being a more democratic government, cessation of injustice, changes in the political process, etc. While I am not solely taking Marx's understanding of a revolution, the definition and analysis I will use does include it; a revolution may be instituted for Marx's goals, but it is not limited to those.

It also cannot be a mere rebellion because rebellion is far too broad a concept, and does not have an object. A revolution is distinct from a rebellion because there is an aim to be accomplished in a revolution; a new government to be instituted or an existing government to be overhauled. Therefore, it cannot take into account the reasons for the revolution or the end goal of the revolution. When asking if one has an obligation to do something, it is important to take into account why they would have this obligation and what exactly they have an obligation to do. If a rebellion is mere uprising or nondirected random violence, it seems questionable to ask if people have an obligation to participate in this. Revolution is often an avenue to achieve some later goal, and if there is no goal in mind, then the obligation cannot be examined. Additionally, as Kristeva mentions, rebellion is an expression of anxiety or anguish; it is the expression of a feeling or discontent rather than an effort towards something. While there may be an obligation to feel a certain way, this may be dismissed as a question for the philosophy of emotion or even psychological studies. When there is an obligation to rebel, when rebellion is so dependent on feelings and discontent, it leans too much into asking whether or not people are obligated to feel a certain way rather than act a certain way.

The definition that encompasses the qualities I am interested in was best explored by Patrick Taylor Smith. Smith demarcates 4 main facets of a revolution: these are 1) collective political action 2) using illegal, extra constitutional, or violent means 3) to seize and deploy political power in order to 4) restructure fundamental political and legal relationships.

The point of a revolution is often to reestablish a new government or to restructure political relationships to ensure that contractual obligations between the government and its people are being filled. A revolution is one that, if it wins, “undertakes to establish its own authority and program”²¹. This is why prongs three and four of the revolution seem to work. If a revolution does not seek to reestablish its own authority, dissolve a state, or restructure key political relationships, then it seems that it is a movement legitimizing an existing political structure. While there may be key changes to parts of a political structure that are achieved through regular political processes (like voting), then it does not seek to establish a new authority. This is different than some assessments of political rioting or revolt that seek solely to resist injustice and are willing to subsist under the existing authority, but rather this assessment focuses only on those revolutions that seek to reject the current political order and establish a new political authority.

There is also a certain collective nature of revolution; Locke and Rousseau both seem to see revolution as a collective enterprise (Rousseau especially with his general will theory). The social contract theorists who view the establishing of a political authority as a contract do so under the assumption that there is somewhat of a mass agreement or majority agreement to participate in a state, either actively or tacitly (with tacit consent being the more common justification). Even a utilitarian or consequentialist approach to political authority more common to thinkers like Hume would suggest that the foundation of political authority resides in what is good for the mass of individuals, not just an individual or a small minority. These foundations for political authority are almost always rooted in the consent or the overall good of a mass of

²¹ Theda Skocpol, “1 - Explaining Social Revolutions: Alternatives to Existing Theories,” in *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 14.

people. This does not preclude revolution from being an individual obligation, especially when examining the metaphysics of groups; in a later section we will examine whether or not revolution is an individual or collective obligation. However, regardless of whether or not the individual may have an obligation to join a revolution, individual acts of civil disobedience will be shown to be clearly distinct from participation in a larger process. It does seem correct to say that one person cannot engage in a revolution because of its large-scale nature and its intent of establishing structural change. Indeed, revolutions are often preceded by large scale social grievances or disorientations that leads to a mass movement with purpose; conceptions of revolutions that intend to lead to large scale changes cannot be described by the grievances or acts of those who are not 1) capable of creating that change or 2) seeking to establish a new authority.

The extent of violence in a revolution:

Smith's definition includes a clause for permissible violence in point 2) (using illegal, extra constitutional, or violent means) [LGC1]. Clearly, it seems that revolution is not something that exists in the political sphere because this is not an overt rejection of a political order; it is distinct from civil disobedience and legal structural change, as well as protests and mobilizations. Revolutions are often violent because the nature of rejecting a political order often does not lead to the current sovereign stepping down peacefully or without arms, although this is possible. But the key to permissible violence in a revolution is that it has a "communicative

element” rather than being a “display of maddened violence²². A revolution, by definition, may include communicative violence, although it does not need to. The message of defying the legal order communicates messages to the audience.

This communicative element is what distinguishes a revolution from civil disobedience acting within the frame of the state; protestors who “limit themselves to nonviolent persuasive modes of communication comply with these requirements (requirements of their political duties). Political rioters – angry, violent, and defiant– do not”²³. Thus, violence may be in the character of a revolution specifically because of its nature rejecting a particular legal order. Violence itself, though, is hard to define and can consist of anything from psychological harm to lethal force. This paper will take violence to mean uses of force (which may incidentally lead to lethal incidents) to act in a purposive and communicative way (the idea of it being purposive coming from Skocpol’s analysis and the idea of it being communicative coming from Pasternak’s analysis). This definition is inclusive of many violent acts that may take place in a revolution and also to account for empirical examples of violent revolution, such as the Arab Spring and its many outbreaks of different violent protests (and responses)²⁴.

Levels of participation:

When we discuss a potential right and duty to participate in a revolution, we must outline the levels of participation. There clearly are issues with different levels of participation due to collective action problem; if there is no one willing to lead or engage in front line confrontation,

²² Avia Pasternak, “Political Rioting: A Moral Assessment,” *Philosophy And Public Affairs* 46, no. 4 (2018): pp. 384-418, <https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12132>.

²³ Pasternak, 394-395

²⁴ Tansa George Massoud, John A. Doces, and Christopher Magee, “Protests and the Arab Spring: An Empirical Investigation,” *Polity* 51, no. 3 (2019): pp. 429-465, <https://doi.org/10.1086/704001>.

the chance of success is unlikely and seems to render other participation useless. Allen Buchanan, who wrote on the ethics of revolution and intervention, outlines that “it is irrational for individuals to participate voluntarily in revolution” due to a collective action problem because there are “often significant obstacles to achieving voluntarily the collective action needed for revolution”²⁵. Even though they may have strong moral convictions to participate in revolution, people may refrain from participation for a number of reasons. These include a fear of endangerment to themselves or their family, a lack of assurance that their efforts will be matched by others or a fear of futility, or a low chance of success for a revolution.

While this thesis focuses on the moral convictions that one may have in supporting a revolution, these collective action questions are still critical for formulating different levels of participation one may be obligated to fulfill. However, participation in a revolution does not need to be limited to risky or even direct means of support. A helpful analogy is looking at forms of political participation; many elements of the literature do not limit political participation to merely institutionalized actions or clearly defined political leadership. For example, acts such as working in a political party and action group, reaching out to political officeholders, signing a petition, boycotting products, and even wearing a campaign badge or sticker are all considered forms of political participation by some seeking to measure the quality of democratic participation²⁶. Participation in politics need not be limited to political leadership, as even those spots are few and far between.

²⁵ Allen Buchanan, “The Ethics of Revolution and Its Implications for the Ethics of Intervention,” *Philosophy And Public Affairs* 41, no. 4 (2013): pp. 300, <https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12021>.

²⁶ Jennifer Oser and Marc Hooghe, “Democratic Ideals and Levels of Political Participation: The Role of Political and Social Conceptualisations of Democracy,” *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 20, no. 3 (October 2018): pp. 711-730, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1369148118768140>.

Similarly, when looking at revolutionary efforts, participation in a revolution cannot be limited to leadership or armed combat roles, although these may be considered essential. However, mere political participation cannot be a criteria, because However, to define it narrowly, participation will be defined as a mobilization effort that, like the definition of revolution above, incurs some risk upon the participant. Mobilization refers to “an increase in the resources or in the degree of collective control”, with resources including both people (an increased number of individuals engaging in the cause both indirectly and directly) and things (like financial support to aid in the necessary elements of deposing a current authority or system)²⁷. Thus, mobilization can include support to the extent that it advances the cause of the revolution. However, participation does require that there is some aspect of leadership, especially when the particular revolution may inevitably require some element of violence.

The amount of participation required will be explored later in the section on the justification for the duty to revolt and objections, but the relevant participation here is effective participation that incurs some risk as it can then be weighed against competing obligation. The key is that it advances the cause, or engages in the type of mobilization that Kaase is discussing. Thus, even nonviolent support can recruit others who may be more equipped for a greater degree of participation. Going up the hierarchy, mobilization will clearly include armed leadership or participation provided it is communicative and purposive as Skocpol and Pasternak outline is necessary for violence. Armed leadership may not count as participation, for example, if it is senseless and detrimental to the cause. Participation includes that behavior that will aid in mobilization. However, if there is an obligation to participate, this would clearly be dependent on the extent to which one can; if this is true, then there clearly may be a need for some who are

²⁷ Max Kaase, “The Challenge of the ‘Participatory Revolution’ in Pluralist Democracies,” *International Political Science Review* 5, no. 3 (1984): pp. 301, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251218400500306>.

capable to engage in more aggressive forms of mobilization (for example, a majority group with political capital may have a stronger ability to participate and therefore engage at a higher level).

Section II: The Reasons that Justify Revolution

I have outlined what a revolution is, and which theories I will examine. Now, I will turn to outlining the reasons that various theories use to justify the right to revolution. Under social contract theories, revolution is justified when a government no longer serves its purpose for which a contract was instituted. The contract is instituted for multiple reasons; among the major reasons are Locke's theories meant to protect the natural rights of men in a society, Rousseau's theories meant to ensure the general will of the people and guarantee a well functioning society. In general, social contract theories see government as legitimate based on an actual or hypothetical contract between people in society or between people and their government.

Locke envisions a society in which men are naturally free and equal, and governments exist to protect individuals' natural rights. While in the state of nature, there is liberty but not license, and harming one another or their possessions contradicts that state of nature. The state of nature is, to Locke, sacred and worth protecting through government action because this is the only way to protect rights that are guaranteed to individuals by natural law. Governments are instituted by individuals giving up some of the liberties available to them in the state of nature in exchange for protection of those natural rights guaranteed to them by natural law.

Locke argues that the right of revolution does not come in individual cases of unlawful or tyrannical acts by the government. There may be reconciliation that is due through the legal system, or alternative means that have a higher chance of success than a deposition of the government. He discusses the futility of a revolution when only one or a few people have their

rights violated, saying that “it being as impossible for one or a few oppressed men to disturb the government, where the Body of the People do not think themselves concerned in it”²⁸. However, deposing of a government that is violating rights is permissible when the tyrannical acts (which he calls “illegal acts”) have “extended to the Majority of the People” or where “the Precedent and Consequences seem to threaten all, and they are persuaded in their Consciences... that their liberties and lives are in danger”²⁹.

Rousseau argues that a revolution is justified when the general will of the people is subverted. His idea of a social contract is that governments are instituted in order to protect the general will of the people. The general will is something separate from the competing wills of individuals, which should defer to the general will. It is determined by the majority of those in the polity, as is consistent with his strong disposition towards democracy. He sees the overthrow of a despot to be as legitimate as the rule the despot hold, yet the establishment of a legitimate government is necessary to his analysis. He condemns the Glorious Revolution for its failure to establish a more legitimate government, saying that the new government is a “counterfeit version of power to the people”³⁰.

Rousseau is similar to Locke in that he does not justify revolution lightly, and revolution is reserved for egregious violations of the contract. The justification for revolution comes when the general will is subverted but also when the new government is legitimate and fulfilling the democratic nature of legitimacy that Rousseau supports.

The reasons that justify revolution under major conceptions of social contract theories, then, are generally those reasons that break the contract in an egregious manner. For Locke, it is

²⁸ Locke, *Second Treatise*

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Holger Ross Lauritsen and Mikkel Thorup, *Rousseau and Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).pp 23

when there is an egregious violation of natural rights on the part of the government, and for Rousseau, it is when the general will is subverted to an extreme extent. The government's legitimacy, then, depends on them competently fulfilling their end of the contract.

Under Marxist theories, the reasons that justify revolution are inevitable in a capitalist society. Historical materialism, the crux of his argument, is that revolution is not justified so much as it is inevitable. It is justified as a feature of existence in a capitalist society with class or contentions. Revolution occurs when classes in society compete over material benefits, or the means of production; this relationship has existed from classical aristocracies to industrial capitalism, and the development of human society, Marx predicts, will be characterized by this relationship³¹.

The reasons that justify revolution under Marxism, therefore, are not justifiers per say but are more predictors. If a postcapitalist society is to progress in its natural form, then a revolution is not only justified but inevitable. This makes the reasons that justify a duty to revolt stronger and more obvious for Marxism, because if there is a duty to bring about inevitabilities, then that duty seems to *prima facie* exist.

Under consequentialist theories, government is justified in that it produces the best consequences. The most typical consequentialist justification of revolution comes from just war theory. Just war theory typically has an “instrumental, consequentialist approach” because the conditions required to constitute just fighting are based on recognizing the heavy costs of war. The goal of just war theory is to limit harm and “ensure that war takes place only when more good than harm will result”, and generally include the following conditions; there must be a just

³¹ 2020, Gregory Young, and Mateusz Leszczynski, “The Revolutionary Theory of Karl Marx,” *Revolutions Theorists Theory and Practice*, June 4, 2021, <https://pressbooks.buffcreate.net/revolution/chapter/the-revolutionary-theory-of-karl-marx/#:~:text=>.

cause and right intentions, there must be a last resort, there must be a formal declaration of war by a legitimate authority, and there must be a reasonable prospect of success and violence only proportional to aims. Applying just war theory to revolutions uses it in a more limited scope; whilst the revolution does not satisfy the formal declaration of war requirement, “restriction of legitimate warfare to states is premised upon the ability to entrust states with defence of individual rights and interests”; so if the states are not engaging in this, then that requirement falls³². Additionally, the just causes and intentions could contradict this requirement as well.

The justifications for war, then, under this consequentialist framework, is that a revolution cannot be fought on principle alone. It must be fought with a reason to believe that the war will be won - meaning the ultimate achievement of just causes that further the good of the society. This applies particularly to cases of violent revolt, because a cost benefit analysis can clearly be performed in terms of risk to civilians, risk to governments, and risks to soldiers. In fact, in justifying a war, Walzer outlines the terms of the extent of violence outlined by jus in bellum principles (restrictions governing how the war may be carried out)³³. Walzer sees probability of success and violence as a last resort as critical elements of revolt, so the consequentialist calculus in revolution can easily appeal to this when determining whether violence is waged in a war justifiably or not. The reasons supporting the violent right to revolt, in this calculus, are entirely based on whether or not the consequences are worth the risk.

Section III: The Reasons that Support a Duty to Revolt

Sections:

³² D Edyvane (2020). Pp 30

³³ Brian Orend, “Just and Lawful Conduct in War: Reflections on Michael Walzer,” *Law and Philosophy* 20, no. 1 (2001): p. 1, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3505049>.

The reasons that support the right to revolt under all three frameworks would also support a duty to revolt. All the theories of revolution - when it is justified or inevitable, how it should be carried out, and at what point it is viable - also provide arguments for there being an obligation to revolt.

Under social contract theory's reasons for revolution, revolution comes about when there is some right being violated and the government is not doing what it ought to do. In fact, Locke scholars suggest that Locke's right of revolution may be either "a justification of revolution or a demand for revolution", that his work directly suggests it is an obligation^{34,35}. There are some who see Locke as calling for the protection of natural rights to be so at the forefront of our actions that revolution is, by its very purpose, an obligation. To them, the right to revolution is so valuable to consent theory that when the basis of consent is violated, then citizens have an obligation to protect their natural rights because they have their basis in natural law.

Candace Delmas makes a similar point in her book *A Duty to Resist*; she appeals to the natural duty of justice as presented by Rawls, but her presentation of the natural duty of justice is very similar to how Locke explains natural law governing man. She argues that the natural duty of justice "is grounded in our nature as moral beings and binds us all equally, regardless of our relations or voluntary undertakings"³⁶. The duty of justice, as formulated by Rawls, follows from this in that we ought to obey and establish just institutions. Locke's duty to obey natural law is founded also in our nature as naturally free, equal, and moral beings. Regardless of whether it is the duty of justice or the duty to obey natural law, it seems like when it is founded in our nature

³⁴ David C. Snyder, "Locke on Natural Law and Property Rights," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16, no. 4 (1986): pp. 723-750, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.1986.10717145>.

³⁵ Sawyer A. Theriault, "John Locke and the Second Treatise on Government," *Inquiries Journal* 1, no. 10 (2009).

³⁶ Candice Delmas, *A Duty to Resist: When Disobedience Should Be Uncivil* (Oxford University Press US, 2020).

as free, equal, and moral beings, the duty to protect that status would suggest that there is a duty to revolt.

Applying her analysis to social contract theories, the duty to revolt is grounded in natural law such that when a government violates natural rights egregiously, it is acting against the sanctity of natural law governing human interactions. Locke does see preserving natural rights as a paramount obligation; in fact, the highest obligation, as Locke described in section 7 of his *Second Treatise*, is to restrain from invading rights and engage in the preservation of mankind³⁷. Protecting natural law is certainly a reason for the right to revolt. However, when it is so paramount as to be the basis of a duty to follow and preserve natural law, then it seems as if revolution is at times the only way to fulfill that obligation. Of course, it is important to examine when the natural law that is violated by revolution overcomes the natural law violations of the government, which will be addressed in a later objections section.

Rousseau's obligation to revolt may be weaker, but it still exists because his reasons for revolution serve as a remedy for when the government is subverting its purpose. It is similar in that it is somewhat of a breach of contract remedy; it is engaged when the government disobeys the general will. Rousseau's reasons to revolt are based in the idea that government is founded to protect the general will; thus, when there are egregious violations of this will, the people have a right to revolt in order to establish a government that does protect the general will. However, it is not as strong of an obligation because it is not so sacred to Rousseau as the preservation of natural law is to Locke. This is because the general will is somewhat more capricious and

³⁷ John Locke, "Chapter 7: Of Political of Civil Society," in *Two Treatises of Government*, 1689, <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/locke>.

contingent on the agency of members of a political community recognizing their status in that community³⁸.

Even though the obligation is not as strong, it still would follow that there exists an obligation because once the general will is strongly disobeyed, then there is no mechanism for the government to be legitimate. When the government subverts the general will so egregiously as to warrant a revolution, it seemed that the continued existence of a government that engages in this activity would be an affront in itself. Rousseau, as an enlightenment thinker operating strongly in a tradition that searches deeply for a source of political obligation, may take it as an obligation for people to only exist under a legitimate government as far as they possibly can.

Reasons based in social contract theory justifying revolutions suggest that there is some right being violated, and the government is not doing what it ought to do- an obligation to each other and to (in Locke's case) furthering natural law. However, there must be more of an egregious violation and critical mass of people.

While Marx's theory of revolution seems to be predictive, there are interpretations of Marx's theory that root it in a cogently moral philosophy that can lead to a duty to revolt. It is commonly understood that Marx takes moral ideas to "reflect or express prevailing social relations"³⁹. So while Marx did not explicitly dive into ethical questions, a theory of ethics can be extrapolated from his predictive model. Paul Blackledge, in his book *Marxism and Ethics*, argued that Marx's analogizing of men to machines in a capitalist society contains language that reveals a moral framework. As the power of the proletariat increases, so too does the tendency of the productivity of labor to commodify workers; in fact, in *Estranged Labor*, Marx writes that the

³⁸David Hiley, "The Individual and the General Will: Rousseau Reconsidered," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (April 1990): pp. 159-178.

³⁹ Paul Blackledge, *Marxism and Ethics: Freedom, Desire, and Revolution* (State Univ Of New York Pr, 2013).

“misery of the worker” increases so much as the power and volume of production increases⁴⁰.

Blackledge extrapolates on the inhumanity Marx ascribes to capitalism when he argues that,

“Capitalism’s inhumanity compelled workers to rebel against their situation and to grasp toward those forms of association through which they could make concrete that which for Kant was merely an abstract proposition: the goal of treating others not as means to their ends but as an end in themselves”⁴¹.

Indeed, in Marx and Engel’s observations of English and French workers, he noted that the need for revolt had both to do with the material needs of workers but also in their shared humanity⁴². Even those who interpreted Marx’s work in a practical revolutionary sense, like Guevara, believed that man “truly achieves his full human condition” only when he is not treated like a commodity in production and labor⁴³.

To defend that shared humanity is to defend the material needs of workers, and therein lies the obligation. While Marx does not subscribe to the liberal conception of rights, Marx scholar Jay Bernstein argues that Marx sees them as socially realizable facts that have their force in community and in association. They are phenomenological, not natural⁴⁴. In that sense, if they obtain their force through association, then it is critical that those who can join that association. While it is a compulsion for workers to revolt against the inhumanity that capitalism brings, it is a compulsion that allows the rights of man to be realized.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx and Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982).

⁴¹ Blackledge, 75

⁴² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx and Engels Collected Works. August 1890-September 1892* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2002). p 52

⁴³ Ernesto Che Guevara, 1965.

⁴⁴ Bernstein, Jay. 1991. “Rights, Revolution and Community.” In Peter Osborne, ed., *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism*. London: Verso, 91–119.

This analysis of Marx's revolutionary theory presents a new element of obligation to his justification. If revolution achieves the ultimate goal for a society to achieve- material liberty and the realization of rights, it seems that people have an obligation to revolt against the inhumanity that is brought by capitalism. Especially if revolution is a historical process that is inevitable by workers who have their humanity stolen, it seems that it is a particularly human obligation for those workers who are engaging in it.

Consequentialist reasons for revolution most strongly support a duty to revolt in particular cases. This is because consequentialists do not hold a blanket endorsement of revolution if a certain grievance or amount of grievances are committed, unlike social contract theories. It is not necessarily a principled stance that is in response to a certain threshold of abuses being met, but rather a stance that is dependent on likelihood of success. If one is justified in revolting, they are justified in the sense that there are likely good consequences attached to that revolution (an idea commonly outlined by the principle of likelihood of success in just war theory). Thus, it seems as if they are obligated to revolt if the consequences of a revolution will be beneficial to the society in question.

Consequentialism, broadly, holds that normative questions can be answered by what produces the most favorable outcome⁴⁵. While we spent the consequentialist justification for revolution section discussing just war theory's conception, I want to elaborate here that the kind of consequentialism we discuss is not the hedonism variant that seeks only to maximize pleasure. This is because this is both not a widely held view by consequentialists in political philosophy not does it answer questions about when people ought to engage in a particularly painful act (revolution) for a greater good. Consequentialism in political philosophy will be broadly

⁴⁵ Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "Consequentialism," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Stanford University, June 3, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/>.

understood as to both fit Mill's definition (that an act is morally right proportional to its tendency to increase happiness) as well as other general definitions of normative value being dependent on outcomes⁴⁶. It may include rule consequentialism as well, which is the view that the "rightness and wrongness of actions is determined by an ideal moral code", which produces the best outcomes⁴⁷. In a revolution, this would be realized if a particular rule (say that one ought to revolt when the government is denying the majority vote of the people) would consistently have a good outcome if the revolution is successfully carried out.

Thus, if a revolution will likely have the best consequences for the society in question, people have an obligation to carry it out. This is because if they do not, they are not advancing the action that would create the best outcomes. Advancing the action that creates the best outcome is the normative principle that under consequentialism, would judge right action. If that action is engaging in revolution, then it seems that one is obligated to carry it out.

To determine when a revolution would have the best consequences, there are many factors one could look at to determine when one is obligated to participate in it to the extent described in the definitions of participation in section one. One could look at the reasonable likelihood of success in just war theory. To determine this, one can take a historical view of past failed and successful revolutions and determine whether the current revolution would most closely resemble a failed or successful revolution.

For example, during the Arab Spring in 2011, Egypt's revolution led to two weeks of unsettled violence and the replacement of one autocrat with another⁴⁸. In Egypt, Director of

⁴⁶ John Stuart Mill, Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek, and Peter Singer, *Utilitarianism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022).

⁴⁷ Leonard Kahn, "Rule Consequentialism and Scope," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 15, no. 5 (2012): pp. 631-646, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-012-9357-4>.

⁴⁸ Clea Simon, "Ten Years Later: Was the Arab Spring a Failure?," *Harvard Gazette* (Harvard Gazette, February 4, 2021), <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/02/ten-years-later-was-the-arab-spring-a-failure/>.

Research at the Brookings Institute Shadi Hamid in 2011 discussed factors that led to a lack of success. These included the lack of clarity that resided with the military, opposition elites being disjointed from protestors, and compromises being made without the backing of protestors were all factors that both led to a lack of success and were predictable⁴⁹. These factors were apparent throughout history, and allowed historians to predict the likelihood of success of this uprising. Alternatively, Tunisia's success came with different factors that predicted success, such as a strong and united population of youth, the backing of elites and civil society groups with the protestors, and independent leadership of civil society networks acting cohesively⁵⁰. Success in a revolution is much more predictable than thought, with certain factors acting as historical determinants of a positive outcome.

It also must be fought for a just reason, as just war theory outlines. In a consequentialist setting, the grievance must be that which decreases overall happiness or leads to negative outcomes based on the normative definition of consequentialism. If it is a grievance so large as to make society worse off than it would be without the revolution, then it is justly fought under consequentialist theories because the result produces favorable outcomes. When there is a high likelihood of success and the war is fought for a just reason, the positive outcome of the revolution would lead to an obligation of the consequentialist to engage to the greatest extent possible in that revolution.

While revolutions can often be violent, violence to a certain extent can be justified if the violence that is prevented by a switch in government is greater than violence that is perpetuated through the revolution. The calculus for how much violence and risk to civilians can be taken on

⁴⁹“The Elements of a Successful Revolution,” NPR (NPR, February 7, 2011), <https://www.npr.org/2011/02/07/133568676/the-elements-of-a-successful-revolution>.

⁵⁰ “The Roots of Success for Tunisia's Revolution,” The roots of success for Tunisia's revolution | Social Watch, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.socialwatch.org/node/14160>.

both a long and short term basis. Long term, if the revolution causes less harm than the regime would, then it can be justified; short term, this may be a different calculus for individuals if the harm inflicted upon them is so great yet they will not reap the benefits of the revolution. In consequentialism, because it is so based on results, this can lead to different obligations for individuals and groups. The individual may have such a large risk of harm with no positive outcome they can experience as to render their duty to revolt nonexistent. However, a society at large may be responsible for bringing about a largely positive outcome for their society in the future. One can say that even the individuals ought to participate despite the large risk and low reward because they are creating greater happiness and outcomes for the human race and their society at large, which depending on the theory, would be the compelling normative answer.

Section IV: Objections

I will now turn to address an objection to my theory of the duty to revolt and provide two responses. One key objection surrounds the nature of rights and duties. Rights entail a realm of freedom in that they give individuals a choice; one has a right to do something rather than a duty to or not do it. A right to do something both has room to choose to and not to do something. A right is considered by many to be “a justified claim on others”, which correlates to duties by other people to respect that right⁵¹. It follows then, that one may ask to what extent something can both be a right and a duty. If rights entail this realm of freedom, then an obligation to do something would take away that freedom and make it no longer a right at all. In that case, one might say that it cannot be a right to revolution but instead a duty to revolt. My argument is that

⁵¹ Santa Clara University, “Rights,” Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/rights/>.

the reasons that justify a right to revolt also justify a duty to revolt; one could say that the true argument, then, is that those reasons can only justify the duty.

There are two responses one can make. One is that there was never a right - rather, the reasons that are thought to justify a right only in fact justify a duty to revolt, so there exists a lack of freedom. The response is that the reasons that these theories give for the right to revolution do not accurately reflect a right, and instead more accurately reflect a duty. This is compatible with my thesis, as my argument is conditional; it can be modified to say that not only do those reasons also support a duty to revolt, but that they *only* support a duty to revolt. This is along the lines of those revolutionaries, like Che Guevara, who call upon supporters to revolt; they are not compelling people to exercise a freedom, but rather asking them to act from some kind of moral obligation that extends to their fellow citizens. Indeed, in all the three theories I have examined, revolution is justified as a way to both allow government to exist for the purposes by which it is constructed or to fulfill some obligation to others. It seems that it can exist as only a duty given that the reasons are based on rectifying wrongs under differing moral frameworks.

I am willing to concede that it does not need to be a right, but the reason it is often portrayed as such is likely the high risk that comes with it and the amount of competing obligations citizens have that can override this potential duty. It may function more as a right given those circumstances.

The second response is to see it as an individual right but a collective duty, similar to how theories of causal responsibility in voting address this issue. Goldman and Tuck in a seminal work on why citizens should vote against rationality outline an account of moral responsibility in voting. They argue that the duty to vote is intrinsically tied to the likelihood a given outcome will result. Causality is very strongly tied, in many accounts of voting, to the moral responsibility

citizens may or may not have to vote⁵². Under the rational choice theory of voting behavior, individuals do not have a responsibility to vote in that their vote will not be causally efficacious⁵³. Only when their vote is the pivotal vote would it lead to an obligation for a person to vote a certain way. Thus, clearly while individuals may not be morally responsible for the result of an election, collective responsibility can be placed on a group within a society.

There is more to be discussed on tying responsibility to likelihood of influencing an outcome, but for the purposes of this paper, a full analysis of this theory lies elsewhere. While the individual may not have a causal link to the result, and therefore not a moral obligation to vote, collectives and groups of people may in that they are responsible for the fate of their fellow citizens and the laws that govern them.

If a given action may not individually be pivotal, revolting may be seen as more of a right than duty. However, collectively, it is clear that the results of the elections, if they are fair and free, do have an impact on both the future of the population of the country and of the government's future. There is a larger discussion to be had on the metaphysics of groups - if a right can exist on the behalf of the collective but not the individual, but that is a discussion for another paper. If there is a way for collectives to have obligations that individuals do not have - such as working in tandem, focusing on community organizing, etc, - then it seems that this can solve the objection above as well if we do not want to abandon the idea of revolution as a right rather than solely a duty.

Section V: Conclusion:

⁵² Goldman, A. (1999) "Why Citizens Should Vote: A Causal Responsibility Account," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16: 201-21

⁵³ Geoffrey Brennan and Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Voting and Causal Responsibility," *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy, Volume 1*, January 2015, pp. 36-59, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199669530.003.0003>.

The right of revolution is a critical aspect in many theories of political obligation. Typically, it exists to further the ends of whatever moral framework under which the government is justified. I have examined three common theories of government that all present their own justifications of revolution under different moral frameworks: I have examined basic social contract theories, Marxist theories, and consequentialist theories. I have focused on these because of their preeminence in influencing governments historically and worldwide, and the influence that their theories of revolution have historically had. I have outlined the reasons that each of these frameworks gives to justify revolution; for social contract theories, revolution is justified when the government violates their contractual obligations, for Marxist theories, revolution is a historical inevitability, and for consequentialist theories, revolution is justified when it creates stronger outcomes than would exist without the revolution. I have shown that these reasons can also go beyond a justification for the right to revolution - they can justify a duty to revolt. When revolution is justified, the moral frameworks that justify them would not only allow revolutions to occur, but require them to in order to preserve those moral frameworks.

In my discussion of the obligation to revolt, I have also examined risks and competing obligations. This was most relevant in the consequentialist defense of the obligation to revolt, but can be applied more generally; in the outset, I have clarified that I am not defending this as an absolute obligation, but as a presumptive one. I have also addressed objections; most critically, those that would question whether or not a right can be a duty. This is a conditional argument, and thus just focuses on the implications of the reasoning behind the right to revolt. I am not defending the existence of solely a freedom to revolt, but rather looking at what the justifications can actually imply.

This is critical for revolutionaries looking to call upon citizens to take a certain role in a revolution, or for civilians aiming to evaluate their participation in a revolution. Where they have

a right to participate, people may refrain if there is any risk. However, when there is an obligation, there is more to weigh; a higher risk (that can threaten things like self preservation) or more competing obligations must exist to justify not engaging in a revolution. While this is a conditional examination (i.e. only those who accept the theories I examined above would accept the duty to revolt as far as I've argued), those looking to define revolution as only a freedom ought to distinguish some element of their reasoning from a turn towards obligation.

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