Revolutions: A Comparative Study

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Analysis of comparative studies of revolution published from 1970 to 2009 reveals that the field overall is most amenable to knowledge about particular cases rather than the phenomenon of revolution broadly. Analysis of the changing structure of comparison over time reveals that comparison precedes the development of an epistemology. Revolutions offer an opportunity to study state building under pressure. Revolutionary leaders come to power after the old state has collapsed or been defeated, and are faced with the need to quickly reconstruct the machinery of administrative, political, and economic control. In this chapter, we look at the resources that revolutionary leaders have drawn on for state building, and the factors. Comparative politics is a field in political science, characterized by an empirical approach based on the comparative method. In other words, comparative politics is the study of the domestic politics, political institutions, and conflicts of countries. It often involves comparisons among countries and through time within single countries, emphasizing key patterns of similarity and difference. Arend Lijphart argues that comparative politics does not have a substantive focus in itself, but rather a
Revolutions have been studied for many different reasons—some involving the scholarly task of understanding the transformations of societies, and some involving the pragmatic problems of promoting or preventing revolution. However, the contributions to the study of either orientation and of the social sciences as a whole remain quite unimpressive. Analytical talent and availability of information are not in question here.  