

The Embourgeoisement of Revolutionary Regimes: Reflections on Abdallah Laroui

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This article analyzes the evolution of revolutionary regimes. In it, I argue that the theory of revolution advanced by the Moroccan scholar Abdallah Laroui in the 1960s and 1970s is especially useful for understanding this evolution. Unlike classic Marxism, and the many "Marxian" interpretations of revolution drawing inspiration from it, Laroui's theory of revolution provides an explanation of how the embrace of capitalism and the West by revolutionary regimes is far from being aberrant behavior: it is the logical consequence of the normal process of embourgeoisement in revolutionary states. The problems with his theory as examined here, however, illustrate how the decision by a revolutionary regime to pursue embourgeoisement might not necessarily be successfully implemented.

With the downfall of almost all communist governments and the wholehearted adoption of capitalism by most of the few remaining ones, Marxist class analysis and theories of revolution have, to put it mildly, fallen into disfavor. Few now predict that the proletariat or the peasantry will rise up to overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish socialism anywhere—and those who do predict this are not taken seriously.

Revolutionaries, however, are active in many countries. Some, such as the Zapatistas in Mexico as well as Sendero Luminoso and Tupac Amaru in Peru, are Marxists of one variety or another. These groups appear to have little prospect of leading a successful revolution, however, and no prospect of "building socialism" even if they do (Palmer 1996; Dresser 1997). By contrast, religious fundamentalist revolutionary groups are active in many countries and appear to enjoy much greater prospects for leading successful revolutions than do the few remaining Marxist revolutionary groups (Juergensmeyer 1993). This is especially true in the Muslim world, where Islamic revolutionary groups have already come to power in three countries (Iran, Sudan, and Afghanistan) and are actively attempting to do so in many others (Roy 1994).

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In classic Marxism, feudalism is replaced by capitalism, which in turn is replaced by socialism. But the Islamic revolution in Iran defied Soviet observers, as it appeared to be neither capitalist nor socialist (Papp 1985, 59-61). Nor, obviously, did classic Marxism predict the downfall of socialism and its replacement by capitalism in the late twentieth century. Yet virtually all the revolutions of the twentieth century—Marxist-Leninist, Arab nationalist, Islamic fundamentalist, or other religious and/or nationalist varieties—had or have a highly important class element. These were all conflicts in which the struggle between the "haves" and the "have-nots" played an important role. A theory of revolution must account for the class factor in order to understand this phenomenon fully, even after the downfall of communism.

It will be argued here that the theory of revolution advanced by the Moroccan scholar Abdallah Laroui in the 1960s and 1970s is especially useful for understanding revolution in the post-Cold War era. Unlike classical Marxism and the many "Marxian" interpretations of revolution that draw inspiration from it, Laroui's theory of revolution provides an explanation of how the embrace of capitalism and the West by revolutionary regimes, far from being aberrant behavior, is the logical consequence of the normal process of embourgeoisement in revolutionary states.

In this study, I will (1) examine the inadequacy of Marxist and "Marxian" theories in explaining the evolution of revolutionary regimes occurring in recent years; (2) outline Laroui's theory of revolution and discuss how it differs from Marxist and "Marxian" theories; (3) analyze the extent to which Laroui's vision appears applicable at present; and (4) discuss the implications of Laroui's theory for the future.

Marxist and "Marxian" Theories

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there have been a wide variety of viewpoints held by and disputed among thinkers who considered themselves to be Marxist. Marxist thinking, then, was not a uniform phenomenon, and portraying it as such must be avoided. Nevertheless, Marxist thinkers as a whole shared certain basic assumptions about history and what its direction was. For Marxists, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were the era in which the main focus of history was the struggle between the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the proletariat and/or the peasantry on the other—the struggle between capitalism and socialism. Marxists also believed that they knew the outcome of this struggle: capitalism would inevitably lose out to socialism, which would then reign triumphant.¹

There was a great divide in the Marxist tradition between those who believed that the triumph of socialism could occur peacefully and democratically (the social-democratic tradition) and those who believed it could occur only through violent revolution (the communist tradition). Among the latter, there were differences over the precise means by which they envisioned revolution occurring. But in whatever manner it occurred, all believed that socialism was the "end of history." And once the revolution succeeded, the worker and/or peasant solidarity

that was one of the most important ingredients of that success would remain strong as it faced the task of "building socialism."

Socialist revolutionary regimes would of course be threatened by the capitalist imperialists externally and "class enemies" internally; this was a basic tenet of Marxism-Leninism. Marxist-Leninists, however, did not expect that the workers and peasants in whose name the revolution had been made would seek to dismantle socialism (anyone who sought this was, by definition, not a worker or peasant). Even less did Marxist-Leninists expect that Marxist-Leninist ruling parties would seek to dismantle socialism or their own monopoly on power.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, Marxist-Leninists seemed to believe that the most likely way in which a revolutionary socialist government could be overthrown was through a successful "imperialist" invasion. However, the deployment of a powerful nuclear arsenal by the USSR from 1949 on made such an invasion increasingly risky for the imperialists, and hence unlikely. The frustration of the L.T.S. effort to halt the spread of Marxist revolution in Indochina and the development of the "Vietnam syndrome" made imperialist invasion against aspiring Marxist revolutionaries, let alone an established Marxist-Leninist regime, even less likely. By 1980 Moscow appeared to be calling for an extension of the Brezhnev Doctrine (the justification for the Soviet use of force to prevent the downfall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe) to Third World Marxist states (Katz 1982, 114-15).

Marxists, of course, were not the only ones to write about revolution. Theories of revolution—often more sophisticated than Marxist-Leninist ones—were advanced by several non-Marxist Western scholars such as Barrington Moore (1966) and Theda Skocpol (1979). Ironically, while these non-Marxist as well as anti-Marxist thinkers often took issue with Marxism-Leninism, they usually accepted its key elements with regard to revolution. Leftist but non-Marxist scholars seemed to agree (though for different reasons) with Marxist-Leninist predictions about socialist revolution being inevitable, at least in the Third World. Nor did they challenge the notion that such revolutions were irreversible; Anti-Marxist theorists tended to see such revolutions as not necessarily inevitable, but definitely irreversible once they occurred (Kirkpatrick 1979; Wiles 1985).

To the extent, then, that non-Marxist and even anti-Marxist thinkers and policy-makers accepted certain Marxist or Marxist-Leninist assumptions about revolution, they can be described as "Marxian." And like their Marxist counterparts, these "Marxian" theories did not predict the downfall of communism, or explain it after the fact.

Laroui's Theory of Revolution

Abdallah Laroui did not set out to write a general theory of revolution, but sought instead to explain why Arab nationalist revolution occurred and how Arab nationalist regimes evolved after coming to power. He published two books on this subject: *L'ideologie arabe contemporaine* (1967) and *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?* (1976).

In these books, Laroui could be seen as someone attempting to apply Marxist analysis to the Arab world. Laroui made frequent reference to Marx and accepted Marx's notion that class struggle was the predominant feature of politics. However, Laroui felt that Marx's analysis, and Western Marxist analysis generally, did not accurately describe the nature of class conflict in the Arab states of the mid-twentieth century before the success of Arab nationalist revolution in them. Like the Marxists, Laroui saw the bourgeoisie as one of the two principal protagonists in the class struggle; but unlike the Marxists, Laroui saw both the proletariat and the peasantry as being too weak to challenge the bourgeoisie. In the Arab states, however, there was another class which was strong enough to do so: the petite bourgeoisie (1976, 162-163).

In Laroui's terms, the Arab petite bourgeoisie has the following characteristics:

- It represents the majority of the urban population, so that town life is synonymous with petit bourgeois life, above all when the economically or politically dominant class is a foreign one.
- It indeed represents a minority in relation to the mass of peasants; but these [the peasants], insofar as they leave the communal framework to enter a cash economy, transform themselves into small independent landholders before social differentiation reinforces the large and middling properties and increases the number of agricultural workers and landless peasants; they consolidate the power of the urban petite bourgeoisie since both classes share an attachment to independence and to private property (1976, 163).

Unlike the glowing terms in which most Marxists (or the hysterical terms in which most anti-Marxists) described how the revolutionary proletariat and/or peasantry sought to "build socialism," Laroui portrayed the "revolutionary" petite bourgeoisie as possessing a mundane "attachment to . . . private property." Indeed, he characterized the petite bourgeoisie as seeking immediate access to the high-consumption lifestyle that it sees the bourgeoisie enjoying.

In its consumerist aspirations, the Arab petite bourgeoisie is "modern"—even "Western." On the other hand, the Arab petite bourgeoisie is also extremely traditional. It fears that Westernization will destroy Arab culture and identity, and thus it seeks to halt the Arab bourgeoisie's seeming collaboration in this process by isolating the Arab world from the West through the assertion of an anti-Western Arab nationalism. There is an inherent duality, then, in how the Arab petite bourgeoisie views the West: it seeks to emulate the West in some ways, but it also rejects it. Laroui "argues that it is the culture of this class, rather than anything inherently Islamic or Arab, which leads to the rejection of the dialogue with the West" (Binder 1988, 337).

In class terms, Laroui saw Arab nationalist revolution as the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the petite bourgeoisie. The petite bourgeoisie's success was due largely to the small size and relative weakness of the bourgeoisie at the time of its overthrow. In Laroui's theory, then, Nasser's "petit bourgeois Egyptian state represents not a transition to bourgeois domination, but a premature overthrow

of the bourgeois state in Egypt. It was premature because the process of em-bourgeoisement . . . had not yet been achieved when the bourgeois state of pre-1952 Egypt was overthrown" (Binder 1988, 332).

In addition to examining what led up to Arab nationalist revolution, Laroui also theorized about what happened afterward. Although Arab nationalist revolution brought the petite bourgeoisie to power, the new regime did not represent that class as a whole. It was only a small part of the petite bourgeoisie that ruled over the rest of the nation, including the rest of the petite bourgeoisie.

The Arab nationalist regimes that arose in the 1950s and 1960s had many ambitions: to bring about "revolutionary socialism," to "stand up to" Israel and its Western backers, to overthrow "backward" Arab monarchies, and, most ambitiously, to unite the Arab world into one great state (Nasser 1955; Kerr 1971, 1-7). But the petit bourgeois Arab nationalist regime placed the highest priority on one goal: remaining in power. All other ambitions were subordinate to this overriding ambition and, indeed, were pursued only insofar as the regime believed (sometimes mistakenly) that they supported it. And the petit bourgeois regime sought to take full advantage of modern technology (such as sophisticated weapons) in order to remain in power (Laroui 1976, 165-166).

To remain in power, the petit bourgeois regime sought to promote modernization and traditionalism simultaneously: "On the one hand it profits from modern culture . . . by economically and militarily consolidating its power; on the other hand it profits from its fidelity to traditional culture by legitimizing an exclusive authority" (Laroui 1976, 163-164). The regime used the authoritarian aspects of traditional culture, then, to justify not allowing the political modernization or Westernization that could lead to challenges to its authority.

The regime's desire to foster some aspects of modernization while retaining some aspects of traditionalism required a dualistic educational policy:

The scientific, technological, commercial, and other institutes, which prepare students for service in the modern sector, offer (frequently in a foreign language) the most advanced programs and methods. Thus is educated, on a pattern different from that of the nation at large, a bureaucratic elite that is detached from the population and committed to the service of the State. . . . As for the other educational institutes . . . either they remain faithful to the traditional methods or they are dedicated to defending the same values in a slightly updated manner (Laroui 1976, 165).

What happens, though, is that the bureaucratic elite that receives a modern higher education gradually changes its mind about some of the most firmly held beliefs and policies of the petit bourgeois regime when it first came to power. For example, while the original petit bourgeois leadership saw nationalization as an economic panacea, the bureaucratic elite increasingly comes to see the disadvantages of a state-run economy and the advantages of free enterprise. While the initial revolutionary leadership seemed to delight in "confronting" the West when

it first came to power, the bureaucratic elite it raises up finds this counterproductive to cooperation with the West, which it values more and more.

In short, though it might not necessarily value democracy, the educated bureaucratic elite does become embourgeois. Its plan of action increasingly becomes the embourgeoisement of society as a whole—a task that the prerevolutionary bourgeoisie signally failed to accomplish before it was overthrown.

As far as Laroui is concerned, this is a highly positive development, for, as Binder put it, Laroui "believes that the establishment of a bourgeois state is a prerequisite to the achievement of an Islamic-Arab cultural authenticity, which can then enter into a conversation with the West on the basis of cultural equality" (1988, 338). The tragedy of Arab nationalist revolution is that it delays this realization unnecessarily: "Laroui seems to think that a traditional monarch can do a better job of completing the 'bourgeois revolution' and constructing a bourgeois state than can a Bonapartist ruler such as Nasser" (Binder 1988, 337). This, of course, is a highly prudent point of view for a scholar making his career in the Kingdom of Morocco to espouse, but if embourgeoisement is the eventual fate of nations, a government that sets about this task calmly is clearly superior to one that insists on first going through a destructive and futile revolutionary attempt to avoid it.

The Applicability of Laroui's Vision

Important aspects of Laroui's theory appear to be validated by the research findings of other scholars as well as by events. Others have noted the leading role of the petite bourgeoisie in several revolutions. In her comparative study of the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions, Farideh Farhi noted that the "polar" classes (proletariat, peasantry, bourgeoisie) played a less important role than the "intermediate" classes (educated but impecunious professionals as well as the "petty bourgeoisie" (1990, 16-17, 37-41). In both cases, she notes, there were multiclass alliances that supported revolution. Forrest Colburn cited Cape Verde as a typical example of a Third World country that underwent Marxist revolution; the peasantry was not particularly revolutionary, and in the cities there was no real bourgeoisie or proletariat, but there was a large petite bourgeoisie which supplied the revolutionary leadership (1994, 43-44).

Nazih Ayubi argued that the main support for Islamic revolution in the Middle East does not come either from workers or peasants, but from intermediate classes, including the petite bourgeoisie, the "'new' middle strata," and students (1991, 158-163). He noted in particular that the "'virtually proletarianized members of the state-employed petite bourgeoisie, the under-employed intelligentsia, and the larger student population' are the main sponsors of the most militant of the Islamic tendencies" (161).

And just as Laroui did with regard to Arab nationalist regimes, others have observed the process of embourgeoisement occurring in other types of revolutionary regimes. Jerry Hough has described how Leninism appealed to the "half-peasants, half-workers of Russia" frightened of "westernization and those promoting it" in 1917. Over time, however, "the Westernized elite of Peter the

Great" was recreated, resulting in the formation of a "huge middle class" that had "very different values from the peasants and workers who were its fathers and grandfathers" (1990, 10). By the 1980s,

The broad educated public—the bureaucrats and the professionals—were eager for a relaxation of the dictatorship and an opening to the West. They were able to say that the closed nature of Soviet society was a central cause of the country's backwardness and a major threat to long-term defense. They could convincingly urge that what they wanted for themselves personally was absolutely necessary for the achievement of the most basic national goals (Hough 1990, 12).

Although he does not use this term, Hough described a process of gradual embourgeoisement of young Soviets from the 1950s onward. Far from being the initiator of embourgeoisement, Mikhail Gorbachev (one of the 1950s youths) represented the culmination of pent-up demand for it.

Ervand Abrahamian observed this process at work shortly after the success of the Iranian revolution. He noted that during the early years of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini's populist rhetoric aroused anger "against the propertied middle classes" (1993, 51). Later, though, Khomeini emphasized that the middle class was, in fact, the backbone of the regime. On one occasion, for example, he stated that while parliamentary deputies "should always help" the lower class, they "must come predominantly from" the middle class: "'The revolution will remain secure,' Khomeini concluded, 'so long as the Parliament and the government are manned by members of the middle class'" (1993, 53). Abrahamian concluded, "Although Khomeini has often been hailed as the champion of the deprived masses, his own words show him to be much more the spokesman of the propertied middle class" (1993, 58). After Khomeini's death, Iran's embourgeoisement accelerated as a result of the Rafsanjani government's emphasis on private investment and the overwhelming voter preference for a perceived moderate and liberal, Khatami, over a hard-line revolutionary purist, Nateq-Noori, in the 1997 presidential elections ("Islam and the Ballot Box" 1997).

Indeed, the past decade in particular has witnessed the rapid embourgeoisement of a remarkable number of revolutionary regimes. Several countries in Eastern Europe that had previously been ruled by hard-line Marxist-Leninist regimes have firmly embraced both liberal democracy and a free-market economy: Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, the Baltic states, and most dramatically, the former East Germany's voluntary absorption into a united Germany dominated by the former West. Indeed, the embourgeoisement of these countries has been so all-pervasive that in some of them, former communists have been elected back into office who, far from seeking to reverse this process, have sought to enhance and even accelerate it (Gebicki and Gebicki 1995).

It is hardly surprising, of course, that the embourgeoisement of Eastern Europe has occurred so rapidly. Except for Yugoslavia and Albania, these nations

did not experience indigenous Marxist-Leninist revolutions, but had Marxist-Leninist regimes imposed upon them by the USSR. For East Europeans—even former communists—getting rid of Marxism-Leninism was part and parcel of getting rid of foreign domination. Yet embourgeoisement has also proceeded rapidly in the former USSR—particularly Russia—where the original Marxist-Leninist revolution took place.

Unlike most of Eastern Europe, some of the strongest Russian political parties—including the communist one—are openly hostile to democracy. Boris Yeltsin—widely touted as a democrat in the period just before and after the collapse of the USSR—has resorted to the use of force against his political opponents on more than one occasion. Nevertheless, contested elections and a free press have become an established feature of post-Soviet Russian politics (White et al. 1997). And although the commitment of the former communists in the Yeltsin regime to democracy may be questionable, their commitment to capitalism is not. It is the former communist enterprise managers—not the dissidents—who have overseen the considerable (though far from complete) capitalist transformation in Russia. These managers have of course used their position to acquire for themselves much of the equity in these privatized state enterprises. Having done so, however, it is these embourgeoisied former communists who now have the greatest stake in the development of a capitalist economy domestically as well as collaboration with Western multinational corporations ("In Search of Spring" 1997). However much or little democratization has occurred in the other former Soviet republics, the ex-communist rulers of most of them have also embraced—and personally benefited from—embourgeoisement.²

Chinese society has experienced a rapidly expanding embourgeoisement ever since Mao's successor, Deng Xiaoping, initiated capitalist economic transformation in the late 1970s. The Marxist leadership has been unwilling to allow democratization, but, as in Russia, it has a large personal stake in the continuation and expansion of a capitalist economy and trade with the West (Overholt 1996; Chan and Senses 1997). A similar process has been launched by the Marxist rulers of Vietnam (Elliott 1995). Whether or not they have made any progress toward democratization, most other former Marxist states in the Third World have also embarked on the path of embourgeoisement (Colburn 1994, 89-96). Indeed, there are only a handful of Marxist regimes that have not.

As Laroui himself noted, embourgeoisement has occurred—at least at the elite level—in some Arab nationalist revolutionary regimes. Egypt has advanced the farthest along this route; though its process of privatization has been relatively slow, it has accelerated in recent years ("The Retreat of Egypt's Islamists," 1997). And no matter how anti-Western the oil-rich Arab nationalist regimes have been, none of them has been unwilling to sell their oil to the West—though certain Western countries (most notably the United States) have been unwilling to buy it.

Another example of an embourgeoisied revolutionary regime is Mexico. After decades of maintaining a policy of nationalization of major industries and economic isolation from the United States, a new leadership generation in Mexico's

ruling party—educated largely in the United States—began in the 1980s to pursue a policy of privatization and economic integration with the U.S., culminating with Mexico's joining the U.S. and Canada in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and even an increasing degree of democratization (Castaneda 1996; Dresser 1997).

The near universality of revolutionary regimes embracing embourgeoisement in recent years suggests that this process is part of their normal evolution and not something exceptional. Indeed, the fact that there are only a handful of revolutionary regimes that have failed to undergo embourgeoisement indicates that these are somehow abnormal cases. These include, to a greater or lesser extent, Cuba, North Korea, Cambodia, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Belarus.

How have these states managed to avoid embourgeoisement, at least so far? Some have been unable to pursue it because of chronic civil war, which has severely limited private investment and consumed most government resources in military expenditures, such as in Cambodia, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. It is not clear, however, that all revolutionary regimes experiencing civil war at present would pursue embourgeoisement even if they succeeded in defeating their domestic opponents. And some not experiencing civil war have basically refused to permit embourgeoisement (Cuba, North Korea, Iraq, Libya, and Belarus). In most of these cases, a very strong leader—often the initiator of the revolution—has remained faithful to what Laroui would call his original petit bourgeois revolutionary vision as well as strong enough to enforce it. Such has been the case with Fidel Castro in Cuba, Kim II Sung (until his death in 1994) in North Korea, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi in Libya, and Hasan Turabi in Sudan. This is significant, because in virtually all cases in which revolutionary regimes have embraced embourgeoisement, it has not been done by the initial revolutionary leadership, but by its successors. Whether or not the successors to Castro, Hussein, al-Qadhafi, or Turabi pursue embourgeoisement—assuming that their regimes survive to be passed on to successors—remains to be seen.

Two cases appear somewhat anomalous. North Korea's Kim Jong II, although a successor leader, has not retreated from his father's revolutionary fervor or permitted embourgeoisement. This may be because he is fearful that any change along these lines might unleash political forces that he could not control (Noland 1997).

Belarus's Lukashenka is hardly the originator of a revolution or a figure with any sort of charisma at all. Unlike virtually all other post-Soviet leaders, however, he has been adamantly unwilling to allow embourgeoisement to proceed in his society. His goal appears to be to keep himself as well as Belarus's uncompetitive Soviet-era economic managers in power by convincing Russia to underwrite them financially. But as the Russian government has demonstrated that it is not willing to do this, and as Belarus becomes increasingly impoverished while its neighbors prosper (Markus 1996), it appears that Lukashenka—or more probably, a successor to him—will have to change course.

Revolutionary regimes that have not experienced embourgeoisement, then, seem to be special cases. There appears to be no permanent obstacle to their

eventually embarking along this route once their civil wars come to an end, successor leaderships come to power, or a sufficient amount of time passes for disillusionment with the original revolutionary vision to develop.

Implications of Laroui's Theory

Laroui's theory indicates that petit bourgeois revolutionary regimes eventually embrace embourgeoisement in the sense that they come to see privatization of their economies and cooperation with the West as being in their interest. Although embourgeoisement does not necessarily imply democratization, the former can precede or even be accompanied by the latter. The fact that most revolutionary regimes that were once hostile to the West and to market economics are now, irrespective of the extent to which they have democratized, pursuing cooperation with the West and marketization suggests that Laroui's theory is a powerful explanation of the evolution of revolutionary regimes.

What Laroui's theory implies is that, just as previous revolutionary regimes have done, revolutionary regimes that are now extremely hostile to the West will eventually embrace embourgeoisement and cooperation with the West. This would suggest, then, that we may look forward to the day when the Islamic Republic of Iran will drop its anti-American stance and seek cooperation with the United States instead. Indeed, Iran can already be said to be in the process of embourgeoisement, since the private sector plays an important role in the Iranian economy, Tehran cooperates with virtually all Western states except the United States, and competitive (if not completely free) elections play an increasingly important role in Iranian politics.

Laroui's theory implies, moreover, that even anti-Western petit bourgeois revolutions that occur in the future will also experience embourgeoisement eventually. The one country in which Western governments as a group fear the consequences of revolution the most is Saudi Arabia. An anti-Western revolutionary regime there could limit Western access to Saudi petroleum, thus dramatically driving up the price of oil and seriously damaging Western economies. Laroui's theory, however, would indicate that no matter how anti-Western a revolutionary regime overthrowing the Saudis might be at first, it will eventually see cooperation with the West as being in its interest. Indeed, the fact that such vehemently anti-Western revolutionary leaders as al-Qadhafi, Saddam Hussein, and the Ayatollah Khomeini were always willing to sell oil to the West suggests that a revolutionary regime in Saudi Arabia would too; it would, after all, need the money.

Laroui's theory further implies that permanent hostility on the part of Western states toward revolutionary regimes—such as the United States has shown to Iran—may actually be counterproductive. While revolutionary regimes are likely to be highly anti-Western in their early, petit bourgeois phase, Western governments need to be aware that the embourgeoisement of such regimes is part of their natural evolution. Implacable Western hostility to such regimes may unnecessarily delay or prolong this process. This is the gist of the argument currently being made by some former American foreign policy makers criticizing the U.S.

government's continuing hostility toward Iran despite numerous signs of that country's retreat from revolutionary fervor (Brzezinski et al. 1997; Murphy 1997).

Nevertheless, Laroui's theory does not imply that the West should be complacent about anti-Western petit bourgeois revolutions, since they are destined to evolve into embourgeoisied pro-Western regimes in the long run. There are two problems with Laroui's theory that unsettle this optimistic conclusion. First, Laroui does not indicate whether there is any particular time frame in which the embourgeoisement of revolutionary regimes can be expected to occur. And as the actual experience of such regimes shows, this process can take a very long time indeed—seven decades in the case of the Soviet Union. The status quo Western powers can hardly be expected to forgo acting to prevent a revolutionary regime from exporting anti-Western revolution (if that is what it is trying to do) because of the conviction that it will eventually abandon such efforts as it undergoes embourgeoisement. Indeed, Western efforts to frustrate attempts to export revolution may play an important role in convincing revolutionary regimes to abandon this and other revolutionary goals as well as to embark upon embourgeoisement.

The fact that the embourgeoisement of a revolutionary regime may not begin, much less be completed, for a relatively long period of time poses a problem for Western foreign policy makers. They will oppose revolutionary regimes that, in their petit bourgeois phase, seek to export revolution. On the other hand, they should be prepared to collaborate with revolutionary regimes embarking on embourgeoisement. These phases, however, may overlap, such as when a "moderate" faction in a revolutionary regime embarks on embourgeoisement domestically while an "extremist" faction continues the policy of attempting to export revolution—as appears to be occurring now in Iran. Such a situation calls for a nuanced policy on the part of the West that demonstrates its determination to thwart the export of revolution but also encourages embourgeoisement so that the "moderates" within the revolutionary regime can credibly argue that the West is not implacably hostile and that cooperation with it is possible. Such a policy, of course, is extremely difficult to devise and sustain, especially when there are strong domestic political pressures favoring one policy extreme. While American foreign policy makers and business people may increasingly favor a friendlier U.S. policy toward Iran, the Republican-controlled Congress and American public opinion in general is unprepared to pursue anything except a hard-line policy toward that country at present (Morgan and Ottaway 1997).

The second problem with Laroui's theory is a more important one. Laroui appears to suggest that once a revolutionary regime embraces embourgeoisement, then embourgeoisement will occur. But while this might be a necessary condition for embourgeoisement to take place, it is not a sufficient one. In order for this project to succeed, society in a revolutionary regime must be willing to embrace embourgeoisement despite the economic hardships it inevitably gives rise to. And experience has shown that some societies are less willing to do this than others.

The societies that have most enthusiastically embraced embourgeoisement are those of most of the Eastern European nations as well as China. And in these countries, embourgeoisement appears to be secure; it seems highly unlikely that

forces will rise up in these nations that seek to destroy their free-market economies despite the significant economic dislocations experienced while creating them.

Mexican society has exhibited a somewhat lesser degree of enthusiasm for the rigors of the free market. One of the political parties that did especially well in the 1997 parliamentary and Mexico City mayoralty elections was the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution. Its egalitarian and nationalistic economic policies appeal to many of those who have been hurt by Mexico's opening itself to economic competition from the United States and Canada through NAFTA. Should this party's candidate win the presidential elections, it is not clear that Mexico would remain as committed to NAFTA as the recent reformist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) governments have been. On the other hand, Mexico's other leading opposition party, the National Action Party, appears to be at least as committed as the PRI to open markets and free trade with the U.S. ("Mexico Enters the Era of Politics" 1997).

One country in which a wide gap has developed between the government's and a significant segment of society's degree of commitment to embourgeoisement is Russia. There are powerful communist and nationalist parties there that have vociferously denounced the extent to which the Yeltsin government has pursued economic privatization and cooperation with the West. If either of these parties captured the Russian presidency, they might well attempt not just to halt but to reverse what progress has been made toward embourgeoisement. Survey research, however, shows that attitudes toward the free market and cooperation with the West tend to divide along generational lines in Russia. It is primarily the older generation that opposes and the younger generation that supports embourgeoisement (Dobson 1996, 10). Assuming that the younger people in Russia now embracing embourgeoisement do not renounce it as they grow older, the passage of time should lead to steadily decreasing support for political parties opposed to it.

The countries in which there appears to be an especially wide gap between the government's and society's commitment to embourgeoisement are the post-revolutionary Arab nationalist states—especially Egypt. This is ironic, because it was Egypt in particular where Laroui expected embourgeoisement to proceed as the government became increasingly committed to it. But in Egypt and most other postrevolutionary Arab nationalist regimes, there have arisen powerful Islamic fundamentalist groups generally opposed to embourgeoisement. As noted earlier, several observers have described the main supporters of these movements as hailing from the petite bourgeoisie—the group that supported Arab nationalist revolution to begin with. And unlike in Russia, the younger generation is the basis of support and leadership for these opposition movements in the Arab world (Roy 1994, 49-55).

There are several possible explanations as to why some societies are extremely willing to embrace embourgeoisement while others are resistant to it. Some might cite complex cultural and historical factors. Others might see a society's level of education as having a strong impact on both its willingness and its ability to embrace embourgeoisement. Still others might see the manner in which the

government pursues embourgeoisement as being the primary determinant of society's reaction to it: if embourgeoisement is carried out inefficiently and appears to benefit only certain privileged groups, it should hardly be surprising if society as a whole does not support it.

Discovering precisely why some societies are not amenable to embourgeoisement at present, though, is less important for purposes of this study than the observation that their being so—for whatever reason—can have consequences that Laroui did not anticipate. In Laroui's terms, a petit bourgeois revolutionary regime that itself becomes embourgeoised but that fails to embourgeois the petit bourgeois society it rules over may find itself the target of revolutionary forces arising from that society. Instead of merely postponing embourgeoisement, the original petit bourgeois revolution may eventually lead to yet another petit bourgeois revolution—which in turn must go through the time-consuming process of becoming embourgeoised itself before it too can try (and possibly fail) to embourgeois society.

Thus, in Egypt and Algeria, embourgeoised Arab nationalist regimes that have failed to embourgeois society are being challenged by petit bourgeois Islamic fundamentalist revolutionaries. If these groups come to power and also fail to embourgeois society, they too may eventually discredit themselves and be opposed and even overthrown by another generation of revolutionaries. It is also possible that Islamic fundamentalist regimes might prove more successful at embourgeoisening countries than the Arab nationalist regimes they might overthrow. And it is even possible that the present Arab nationalist regimes that have so far failed to embourgeois their societies might somehow succeed in doing this—though as Islamic fundamentalist opposition to them mounts, this appears to be increasingly unlikely.

Laroui's theory of revolution does not foretell which—if any—of these alternatives will occur in the postrevolutionary Arab nationalist states. His theory, though, is useful for understanding how the decision by revolutionary regimes to embark on embourgeoisement is a normal part of their postrevolutionary evolution. The problems with his theory examined here, however, illustrate how the decision by a revolutionary regime to pursue embourgeoisement might not necessarily be successfully implemented.

Notes

1. Leszek Kolakowski (1978) authored a massive study examining the breadth of nineteenth and twentieth century Marxist thought.

2. See, for example, Aslund (1995) on Ukraine; Geller and Connor (1996) on Uzbekistan; Jones (1996) on Georgia; Haghayeghi (1997) on Kyrgyzstan; Dudwick (1997, 99-101) on Armenia; Altstadt (1997, 137-141) on Azerbaijan; Olcott (1997, 216-218) on Kazakstan; and Ochs (1997, 340-346) on Turkmenistan. Three successive visits to Almaty during the early 1990s demonstrated to me just how rapidly and enthusiastically the ex-communist leadership of Kazakstan was embracing capitalism.

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