

# ARE REVOLUTIONS MADE OR DO THEY COME? THE CASE OF ROMANIAN REVOLUTION OF 1989

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## ABSTRACT

Revolutions do not occur spontaneously. An array of conditions must be satisfied if a revolution is to be carried out successfully. The main point of this essay is that, whilst most revolutions have revolutionary elites behind them, not all revolutions are 'made'. Using the example of the Romanian Revolution of 1989, it will be argued that there are, in fact, conditions under which revolution can 'come' when society is pushed to some form of 'breaking point', often triggered by an event which causes popular outrage which acts as the platform for a broader anti-regime movement.

**Keywords:** Communism, Mass revolt, Personalistic rule, Power struggle, Revolution

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## INTRODUCTION

Revolutions have undoubtedly constituted some of the most pivotal events in the history of modern society. They represent the ultimate unleashing of the 'power of the people', a belief that change should and can happen as the product of a mass movement. This mass involvement serves to strip the ruling regime of legitimacy and can, in turn, provide strong legitimation to those who headed the revolution. Revolutions do not occur spontaneously. An array of conditions must be satisfied if a revolution is to be carried out successfully. Many repressed and mismanaged peoples have never been organised to create such a seismic event of political change. It is sometimes assumed, therefore, that one of the necessary conditions for revolution is some form of revolutionary elite, figures who are able to inspire and organise the masses to unite against the ruling regime, and to orchestrate the transition of power. This essay seeks to argue that, whilst most revolutions have such figures behind them, not all revolutions are 'made'. There are, in fact, conditions under which revolution can 'come'. In the absence of any notable revolutionary leadership, a regime which has lost the support of its population and has shown significant vulnerability can be toppled by a leaderless, bottom-up, movement. This essay draws upon the example of the Romanian Revolution of 1989, the last of an unprecedented series of regime changes in Eastern Europe, which had been under the grip of communism since the end of the Second World

War. The juxtaposition of the Romanian revolution in relation to the 'velvet' revolutions which took place across the region make it an informative subject of study. Whilst every other state saw peaceful transitions to democracy, Nicolae Ceaușescu, general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party since 1965, showed no will to follow the example of his counterparts. His approach of resistance and denial culminated in the execution of himself and his wife, Elena, at the hands of a firing squad on the outskirts of Târgoviște, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December.

This essay seeks to address the question of whether revolutions 'are made' or 'just come' in three parts. The first part addresses revolution in a more general sense, defining what revolution is, and exploring the various conditions which are necessary or useful in leading to revolution. These conditions will serve as a framework through which to understand how and why revolution was able to occur in Romania in the absence of any significant direction. The second, and most substantial, section of this essay will specifically address the case of Romania. This will be performed through addressing the wider historical context of Romanian communism, the devastating impact of Ceaușescu's social and economic policies, and the events, starting with the attempted eviction of Hungarian pastor László Tőkés from his residence in Timisoara, which led to the demise of Ceaușescu and his personalistic regime. The final part of this essay will then place Romania in the wider context of revolution, comparing it to scenarios in which revolution was

'made', and discussing the implications of a lack of revolutionary leaders upon post-revolutionary politics. It will briefly discuss useful lessons which can be drawn from Romania on this type of revolution which can be applied to events of the modern era, such as the revolutions of the Arab Spring, which have taken a similar form of social organisation. The majority of source material used is in English, but translation will be given for any material originally in Romanian.

### REVOLUTION: DEFINITION AND CAUSES

Before moving into analysis, it is important revolution is defined for the purposes of this essay. The term 'revolution' is often liberally applied to a number of contexts, and considerable debate surrounds what constitutes a true revolution. This essay adopts Goldstone's definition, which is as follows: "*Revolution* is the forcible overthrow of a government through mass mobilization (whether military or civilian or both) in the name of social justice, to create new political institutions." (Goldstone, 2013, p. 3) This goes beyond other events, such as "peasant revolts, grain riots, strikes, social movements, coups, and civil wars," (Goldstone, 2013, p. 3) but any of these may constitute a part of a revolution. However, this essay also takes into account Michael Mann's discussion of revolution, which bestows upon it a deserved level of significance. Mann states that revolution "transforms substantially at least three of the four sources of social power – ideological, economic, military, and political." (Mann, 2013, p. 246) Revolution goes far beyond being a simple changing of the guard, it is a product of widespread discontent with not only the rulers but with the entire form of social organisation present. Democracies lack the conditions which induce revolution (Mann, 2013, p. 271).

The significance of the revolutions Europe saw in 1989 is undeniable. Only a few years prior, to most Western observers, the Soviet-led socialist order on the other side of the 'Iron Curtain' showed no signs to suggest the dramatic collapse which the world which was to witness. The seemingly indestructible system was, in fact, rotten at its core and had long ago lost the faith of its people (Tismaneanu, 2009). These unprecedented events signified the end of a polarised global order, as the formerly communist states rushed to integrate themselves into Western liberal institutions. These revolutions, and all which have preceded and followed, have been pivotal historical events. As mass-sponsored shifts in political direction, they have heralded in new eras, often on an

international scale. These include the transition from monarchy to republic, authoritarianism to democracy, and communism to capitalism. This is not a change in degree but a complete shift in ideology.

Events of such a magnitude do not occur frequently or easily. An array of conditions must be present if a revolution is to happen successfully. These are conditions which create, as Goldstone calls it, "an unstable social equilibrium" (Goldstone, 2013, p. 10). In the modern (globalised) era, they are, broadly, "economic or fiscal strain, alienation and opposition among the elites, widespread popular anger at injustice, a persuasive shared narrative of resistance, and favourable international relations" (Goldstone, 2013, p. 10). The regime needs to be weakened and fractured, whilst the masses find common cause to rally against it. For the revolutionaries to have "favourable international relations," powerful states must withdraw their support (both physical and political) for the regime, in turn lending legitimacy to the revolutionaries. The Soviet Union's reform in the late 1980s is a strong example of this, as it had previously exercised a tight grip on its Eastern European satellites, which acted as the glue holding the ailing communist structures together. Most of the communist states of Eastern Europe had long ago begun to exhibit the other conditions which Goldstone mentions, demonstrating the extent to which global superpowers are able to maintain the status quo in the face of mounting challenges. It was only when the impending doom facing the USSR was confronted that Gorbachev triggered desperate attempts at reform which opened the door to the disintegration of the majority of the world's communist systems.

It can be said, therefore, that revolution in the East European states loyal to the Soviet Union was, to a significant extent, 'made' by Mikhail Gorbachev and his reforms. These reforms, which ultimately served to mire the Soviet Union in a host of new issues (Brooks, 1998), coupled with warming relations with the West, symbolised a change in direction which few were able to foresee. The people of Eastern Europe were well aware of the consequences of defying the wishes of the Soviet Union, as in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia (Bischof, Karner and Ruggenthaler, 2011). As this threat melted away, populations filled with optimism towards the promises of Western democracy and capitalism saw the window of opportunity standing wide open, and the communist parties of most countries, starting with Poland's, recognised the need to accommodate the

mounting pressure for reform. On a domestic scale, revolutions were 'made' by established prominent groups which had already established themselves in championing reform. Solidarity, for example, was born as a movement for workers' rights in the Gdansk shipyards in 1980. It grew into a huge trade union, the first in a Warsaw Pact country to be independent of the state and became a significant alternative power base to the state, despite the government's attempts to crush it (Eringer, 1982). Thus, Solidarity was the natural choice to enter negotiations with communists in 1989 and experienced a resounding victory in the country's first democratic elections. As revolutionary ideas spread, there was no need for blood to be spilled for Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and others to transition to democracy. Communist leaders realised that their form of rule was no longer sustainable, and that engaging in processes of reform involving other groups from society was the only way to maintain peace. This widespread consensus, therefore, draws attention to the one outlier in this series of events: Romania under Nicolae Ceaușescu's Communist Party. Communist Romania was managed in a way which made it so that revolution could not be 'made'.

### ROMANIA: WHERE REVOLUTION 'CAME'

As a helicopter hauled Ceaușescu from the roof of the Central Committee Building in Bucharest, the masses of crowds storming the lower levels from the square outside began to chant, "Nu vă fie frică, Ceaușescu pică!" (Do not fear, Ceaușescu is falling!) (Hermeziu, 2011). This image has been likened to the storming of the Bastille, one of the most iconic moments in the history of revolution (Siani-Davies, 1996). Ceaușescu had clung on to power until the very last second, maintaining the delusion that the working people of Romania were still loyal to him, and that the mass revolt was the product of foreign saboteurs. Soon after their flight, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu were executed by firing squad after a brief televised show trial (actually broadcast after the execution itself) in front of members of the military. Their blood was neither the first nor last to be spilled in the dramatic and mysterious events which surrounded the fall of communism in Romania. In comparison to Poland and the Soviet Union, for example, Romania has been the subject of relatively little direct scholarly attention. However, its highly unique circumstances within the context of 1989 make it a very interesting and enlightening subject of study. It exemplifies the conditions under which popular mobilisation can

occur in the absence of any particular mobilisers. Whether what happened in Romania was truly revolution has been a source of considerable debate. Whilst Neumann claims that the way power ended up in the hands of former communist party members makes Romania a case of revolt (Neumann, 2001), Deletant and Siani-Davies concur that the "rupture in sovereignty" provoked by mass mobilisation, seen in the transfer of power between the RCP and the National Salvation Front (NSF) constitutes revolution (Deletant, 2019). This essay agrees with the latter conclusion. The essay will first analyse why revolution in Romania had to 'come' and will then provide an account of what happened in December 1989.

As previously mentioned, most communist regimes in Eastern Europe had their fates directly tied to that of the Soviet Union, ultimately acting as little more than puppet regimes. This was not the case for Romania, however. Ceaușescu had, for a long time, pursued policies which diverged from those of other Warsaw Pact members, defying the USSR (Siani-Davies, 2007). Though risky, this served Ceaușescu in a number of ways. Firstly, it ensured favourable relations with the West, which was embroiled in the Cold War. Despite Ceaușescu's Stalinist organisation of society, Romania had access to Western credit and Ceaușescu often placed himself as an intermediary in negotiations. Domestically, Ceaușescu's independent foreign policy stance gained him a great deal of popularity among the Romanian people when he ascended to the leadership after the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. In the early days of his rule, Ceaușescu had also relaxed the coercion which had been present during Dej's leadership and increased the production of consumer goods (Siani-Davies, 2007). As repression grew and living conditions worsened, however, foreign policy did not suffice to maintain Ceaușescu's legitimacy in the eyes of most Romanians. Nonetheless, this distancing from the USSR means that Romania's fate was not tied to that of the Soviets in the way that the fate of Poland, for example, was. Gorbachev made a visit to Bucharest in 1987 but was unable to prompt Ceaușescu into any significant reform (Siani-Davies, 2007). There were no Soviet troops in Romania and, by the standards of a communist country, Romania had a reasonably low level of economic dependence on the USSR (Siani-Davies, 2007). Hence, the elites of the Soviet Union were not able to 'make' revolution happen in the manner which they did for much of the region.

A second factor explaining the lack of organised revolution in Romania is the manner in which

Ceaușescu organised the party elite and state apparatus. Prins outlines Ceaușescu's constant horizontal rotation of officials, which isolated personalities and "set up party officials one against the other" (Prins, 1992, p. 149). Those who demonstrated blind loyalty to the regime were rewarded, ensuring that those in influential positions would not use them as a platform to form alternative power bases. On an institutional scale, similar tactics were employed. In what Prins calls the "deprofessionalisation" of the armed forces, Ceaușescu created a parallel military body, the Patriotic Guard, which was under the direct control of the party. Patriotic Guard officers were given command over the army, which was used primarily as a pool of cheap labour in construction and agriculture (all Romanian males were required to complete compulsory military service) (Prins, 1992). This format fostered mistrust and resentment between the army and Patriotic Guard, as well as the Securitate (security forces, which were given a vast pool of resources), and other state organs. Playing those below him off each other, whilst surrounding himself with a small inner circle of family members and longstanding cronies, Ceaușescu was undoubtedly successful in creating a very stable position for himself atop the party hierarchy. This Neo-Stalinist, or "Sultanistic", (Prins, 1992) organisation of the state was extremely personalistic and tied Ceaușescu into the fabric of the Communist Party, making one inseparable from the other (Siani-Davies, 2007). The atomisation within the Romanian state was such that no significant stable anti-Ceaușescu alliance ever had the opportunity to form.

Thirdly, Ceaușescu also created atomisation among ordinary members of society. His Stalinist policies of systemisation sought the homogenisation of Romanian society. Significant projects in these efforts include the bulldozing of small villages in the countryside, moving their populations into large blocks of flats in 'agro-towns' (Siani-Davies, 2007). The Romanian Orthodox Church, meanwhile, was coerced into maintaining loyalty to the regime in exchange for its privileged position among religious organisations. It was, therefore, mainly comprised of so-called 'red' priests, some of whom have admitted to acting as Securitate informers (Stan and Turcescu, 2007). Dissident priests, meanwhile, were isolated or expelled from the Church (Stan and Turcescu, 2007). In a society with high levels of devout religious belief, neutralising the Church's potential as a form of anti-regime organisation was a strong tactical move, and can be contrasted with the

importance of the Polish Catholic Church in dissidence during the 1980s (especially with the appointment of Polish Pope John Paul II). Nevertheless, Ceaușescu was to ultimately fall at the hands of a movement which was started by a religious (although not Orthodox) congregation.

Having established the most significant reasons as to why revolution was unable to be 'made' in Romania, it is now time to discuss the factors which prompted it to take place nonetheless. The first of these is the dire living conditions which Romanians had increasingly become subject to during the course of the 1980s. Between 1976 and 1981 Romania's external debt had grown from 0.5 billion dollars to 10.4 billion dollars (Ban, 2014). This exponential growth in foreign debt was in part due to Romania's loss of preferential treatment from Western lenders, as well as Ceaușescu's constant push for industrialisation and the spike in oil prices following the Iranian Revolution (CIA, 1982). To rectify this, it was seen as necessary to drastically increase Romania's exports. However, demand for goods from the industrial sector was low, and it was Romania's neglected agricultural sector which was forced to shoulder the burden. In the face of little ability to actually increase capacity, this, in effect, meant reducing the amount of food available to Romanians in order to gain revenue from exports. Basic necessities began to become scarce, people queued for hours outside shops, and rationing was introduced. As well as this, gas and electricity supplies were limited. Streets lay dark and apartment buildings were left without heating on bitter winter nights. State funding for education, healthcare, culture and science was slashed (Siani-Davies, 2007). Romanians felt far from the 'golden age' which their leader continued to proclaim had arrived. As conditions improved and freedoms grew in neighbouring states, Romania experienced regression and stagnation. From this, a strong collective sense of injustice grew. Whilst Ceaușescu appeared convinced that Romanians would take this hardship in silence, he had fostered resentment from every group in society, uniting the often-divided Romanians in their suffering.

Secondly, although Romania's government was not under the strong influence of other communist states, the wave of revolutions sweeping the region undoubtedly had the effect of instilling the population with the urge to rise up against Ceaușescu. Although media was heavily censored, Bucharest was able to receive radio signals from Radio Free Europe, whilst Timisoara could receive them from Belgrade, Budapest

and beyond (BBC, Deutsche Welle, Voice of America). The people of Romania, therefore, were well aware of the events taking place across Eastern Europe (Prins, 1992). As Goldstone states, "It is *relative* deprivation that drives revolution" (Goldstone, 2013, p. 10). That is, it is in middle-income countries where conditions appear to be worsening that people are most likely to revolt. Hearing what was happening abroad, coupled with the dire conditions they had been subject to during the 1980s, December 1989 became somewhat of a 'now or never' moment. Ceaușescu demonstrated no inclination to change course or significantly improve conditions (even though, by 1989, he had more-or-less succeeded in paying off all of Romania's debt) (Ban, 2014) and, with the eyes of the world on Eastern Europe, a popular uprising would perhaps be the least likely to be met with an overtly violent reaction. The revolution did, indeed, gather large amounts of attention, although complicated channels of communication between Romanians and foreign journalists made separating fact from fiction very difficult.

Additionally, revolution was successful in 1989 due to one of the measures Ceaușescu had taken in order to prevent challenges to his power: the 'deprofessionalisation' of the armed forces. Limiting the power and influence of the Romanian army reduced the direct risk it posed to him in the form of military leaders launching a coup, but it simultaneously had the effect of alienating members of the armed forces. Conscripts who had mainly been used as a source of cheap labour did not possess the necessary level of regime loyalty to crush the popular uprising. Many cases of protesters fraternising with soldiers, giving them food and cigarettes, have been noted (Siani-Davies, 2007). A general theme among Ceaușescu's measures to prevent revolution is that they placed him in a very weak position once revolution began taking place. Neutralising alternative power bases reduced the risk of challenges to Ceaușescu's power from within his ranks but resulted in the absence of any parties to enter into negotiations with when the regime began to topple. When Ceaușescu showed weakness, the vast majority of the state abandoned him, and quickly sided with the revolutionaries. It was members of the military who captured Ceaușescu, put him on trial, and executed him (Siani-Davies, 2007).

The primary factors constituting *why* revolution 'came' to Romania are now clear. Now, the essay moves on to a brief explanation of *how* these factors translated into the events of December. Protests began

on an issue which was minorly relative to the toppling of Ceaușescu's repressive regime. László Tőkés was a pastor of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Timisoara with a track record of dissidence. When the government decided to force him out of the city, his congregation jumped to his aid and began protesting against this injustice. The demonstration rapidly grew as ordinary Romanians joined, turning it into an overtly anti-Ceaușescu movement. Over the next few days, an ever-growing group of protesters moved around the city, causing damage to shops and clashing with security forces. Following the night of Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>, 60 lay dead, over 200 lay wounded and around 700 were arrested (Siani-Davies, 2007). On Monday, workers who had returned to their jobs in the large industrial complexes around the city heard of the brutality which had taken place during the weekend. Masses of workers marched on the city centre, overwhelming the troops present, and fraternising with them. As of this moment, the government's power in Timisoara was effectively neutralised (Siani-Davies, 2007). Ironically, the large factories which acted as a pillar of industrialised communist countries acted as one of the regime's biggest downfalls. It is not completely by chance that the revolution began in Timisoara; the city and surrounding region (Banat) enjoy a greater amount of ethnic integration (Romanians, Hungarians and Germans, primarily) than most parts of the country. Romanians in Timisoara were more willing to get involved in protest alongside their Hungarian neighbours than would have been the case in other regions with large Hungarian minorities (such as around the cities of Cluj-Napoca and Târgu Mureș). Additionally, Timisoara's situation (to the far West of the country) has led to a westwards-looking mentality among Timisoarans, feeling more aware of and connected to countries beyond their borders. Timisoara possessed the optimum conditions to act as a flashpoint for the Romanian revolution. Romania was, in late 1989, a powder keg waiting to explode.

Representatives of the protestors (who had little previous notoriety) entered talks with government officials but were unable to exert sufficient authority over the government officials and talks reached stalemate (Siani-Davies, 2007). Meanwhile, protests were sweeping towns and cities across the country. Telephone lines remained largely open (domestically) and word was able to spread around Romania, enraging many at the alleged levels of brutality unleashed in Timisoara. These protests reached varying extents of size and violence. Ceaușescu, who had been on a state

visit to Iran, returned to Bucharest and called for a huge congregation of workers to make a show of support for the regime outside the central committee building on the 21<sup>st</sup>. These workers, who had been bussed in from factories, demonstrated a mixture of apathy and discontent towards Ceaușescu. The crowd went into a panic after an unidentified loud bang, and the address lasted shorter than expected. This was shown on live television, and before the feed was abruptly cut the entire nation was galvanised by the image of frailty and bemusement in the face of a leader who had often been rumoured to have mythical qualities (Siani-Davies, 2007). Violent and deadly clashes between protesters and security forces took place overnight. The next day Ceaușescu attempted to make a speech to the people gathered outside the central committee building one last time. This is when he was forced to flee. Protesters captured government buildings and television and radio stations, effectively ending communist rule in Romania. (Andreescu, 2014)

#### **REVOLUTIONS ‘COMING’: IMPLICATIONS AND WIDER CONTEXT**

Without any overarching organisation behind the revolution in Romania, the aftermath of Ceaușescu's flight has been problematic in a number of senses. Firstly, the trial and execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu was carried out hastily with a pre-determined verdict and without the presentation of necessary evidence (Exceptional Military Tribunal, 1989). This was a questionable manner in which to begin a new, supposedly democratic, era for the nation. Secondly, the power struggle that ensued caused more loss of life than the revolution itself. Gunfights between the army and supposed ‘terrorists’ ensued in the streets. To this day, these events are shrouded in mystery and rumour. It is not known who the different warring parties were or what their goals were. However, Ion Iliescu, Romania's first post-communist president, is currently standing trial for deliberately fostering confusion by spreading disinformation in order to cement the National Salvation Front's grip on power, making unfounded claims such as that opposition armed forces were closing in on the capital. 862 people died after Iliescu took power, both soldiers and civilians (BBC News, 2019). Thirdly, the lack of organisation surrounding the revolution led to long-term stagnation and high levels of corruption. Romania's trajectory was very different to Poland's economic success story (the first to surpass its communist-era peak GDP) (Wydra, 2018). Romania has only in the past decade begun to

enjoy notable levels of economic growth (IMF, 2020). Tackling corruption has remained a persistent effort which has produced mixed results, with various high-ranking officials having been found guilty of corrupt behaviour (including ex-Prime Minister Adrian Năstase) (Mediafax.ro, 2014). The chaos which was a product of the unorganised nature of the Romanian revolution had significant implications upon what happened in the days, months, and years that followed the fall of communism. Its legacy continues more than thirty years later.

The causes and effects of revolution ‘coming’ to Romania can be applied to a variety of situations where relatively spontaneous mass demonstrations have occurred. This is especially applicable to the modern era, where social media and internet access have democratised the spread of information. The events of the Arab Spring, for example, saw huge numbers of citizens in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria amassing to challenge governance which they viewed to be corrupt and coercive. Conditions in the region, such as the availability of arms, have meant that the chaos which followed these uprisings has been of a magnitude far greater than in Romania. Nevertheless, they follow the same basic logic. Revolution can happen in the absence of a unified and coherent opposition, but this makes a peaceful transfer of power far more difficult, fostering chaos during and after the fall of the old regime as different factions struggle to take charge. An even more contemporary example of such a form of mass revolt has been the 2019-2020 protests in Hong Kong. Though not full-blown revolution, these events proved the ability of an urban youth to stand up to the world's strongest authoritarian regime in defence of regional autonomy (Purbrick, 2019). Owing to Hong Kong's unique status, the actions of the Chinese government were able to be scrutinised far more than they would on the mainland. Social media played a fundamental role in the tactical organisation of the demonstrators and the documentation of violence carried out by the police force (Kuo, 2019). The power of social media has also been harnessed by the other side, countering these claims (Fowdy, 2019). It is undeniable that the modern era has ushered in a complete change in dynamic.

Despite the chaotic and imperfect nature of these mass movements, the documentation of these scenarios challenges the preconceptions many hold towards necessary conditions for revolution. No matter how extensive the measures authoritarian rulers put in place to protect their power are, they remain, to some

extent, vulnerable to the will of the masses. While some regimes today restrict access to information, both through traditional media sources and online, modern technology provides the tools to bypass most barriers with sufficient technical expertise. While most information during the Romanian revolution was passed by word of mouth, making the truth extremely elusive, the world is now able to access pictures and videos of many of the abuses which take place. This can damage the legitimacy, both domestically and internationally, of regimes which commit these acts, and encourages restraint from all groups involved in struggles for power. Revolution that 'comes' is, perhaps, the modern form of revolution, in an era where the influence of the average citizen can be greater than ever. To be conscious of its dangers may encourage care in the way takeovers of power are conducted and to which opposition groups support is given.

### CONCLUSION

To address the question directly, revolutions can be 'made' and revolutions can 'come'. Why a revolution happens by one route or the other, however, is determined by a variety of conditions. In essence, these conditions determine whether power can be transferred in an orderly manner once the old regime realises that its form of rule is no longer sustainable. To demonstrate commitment to the transfer of power and the will of the people is the best way for

rulers to avoid the negative consequences of the discontent which has grown towards them. When a pre-existing opposition party with significant popular support exists, the least disruptive transfers of power may occur. When leaders refuse to loosen their grip from power, whether out of stubbornness, greed or delusion, revolution must involve forcibly removing them. This inevitably leads to some degree of violence. When conditions under a regime have been such that coherent opposition groups have not been able to form, revolution can still happen when society is pushed to some form of 'breaking point', often triggered by an event which causes popular outrage which acts as the platform for a broader anti-regime movement. This is how revolution 'comes'. As Romania shows, a lack of revolutionary leadership creates certain issues. There is general disorder, especially as the old regime falls and a power vacuum is created. Whilst various groups, often from within the old regime itself, vie for power, a great deal of instability can be produced and may be encouraged in order to serve the purposes of certain factions. Iliescu and the National Salvation Front cemented their grip on power because the population wanted protection from the 'terrorists' who were apparently causing mayhem on the streets. No two revolutions are the same, but the study of each can teach valuable lessons. As processes of revolution evolve, it remains an extremely relevant political event and must be understood as well as possible.

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