Conditions of Successful Communist Movements in Asia: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Currently, Asia is home to all except one existing communist regimes in the world. This paper investigates why Asian communist regimes came into existence in the first place. Previous research on the communist movement in this region, albeit abundant and diverse, produced little comparative and systematic knowledge about this question. This paper analyzes the conditions that made possible the communist's seizure of power in sixteen East, Southeast and South Asian countries during the inter-war period using the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method. We find that there are two routes to a successful communist revolution in Asia. One path ("grassroots route") combines the conditions of the exclusionary colonial regime, weak state control, the congruence of communism with the national independence cause, and an encompassing coalition among various social groups. The other path ("elite route") combines the first three conditions in the first path plus international military support for the communist movement. Our analyses also suggest that gaining the leadership as the key nationalist movement force during the period toward decolonization was a crucial point for the Communist movement to seize power in Asia. This further suggests the importance of adapting the Communist doctrine and strategy to the local contexts.

Introduction

As of 2018, Asia houses all except one of the existing communist regimes in the world: China, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam. The resilience of autocratic rule in these countries defies the once-dominant view that the world will be more democratic after the end of the Cold War (e.g., Fukuyama 1989). While scholars have studied a plethora of factors that contributed to their contemporary resilience (e.g., Dimitrov 2013), in this paper, we ask why they come into being in the first place.

Among the Asian countries that experienced colonization, why did some emerge as a communist regime in the wake of decolonization? As we review later, the existing studies address this question mostly through historical narratives rather than through systematic analyses in search of generalizable patterns and causal factors. Employing a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method, we attempt to answer this question by testing the conditions and the conjunction of conditions that have been suggested in the existing studies. In so doing, this paper contributes to providing a systematic understanding of the factors that influenced the origins of Asian communist regimes. More specifically, we build on Goodwin's (2001) four-country study of Southeast Asian communism. Our study expands the scope of country coverage to sixteen Asian cases and tests the additional conditions he suggested but did not seriously examine using QCA.

Our analysis reveals several points. First, the theory advanced by Goodwin on four Southeast Asian countries is, in principle, applicable to other Asian countries at large. Exclusiveness of the colonial regime and the weak state, two conditions that Goodwin argues, are necessary conditions when we expand our cases to other Asian countries using QCA. Second, we find that there are two paths to a successful revolution in Asia. One is the scenario where conditions of an exclusionary regime, weak state, broad societal coalition, and nationalist framing of the communism co-existed. These are the cases of China and North Vietnam. The other path combines the conditions of an exclusionary regime, weak state, international military support, and nationalist framing of communism, as in the cases of North Korea, Mongolia, and North Vietnam. Third, our analyses underscore the importance of cultural congruence between communist activities and the pro-independence nationalist movement. Given the particular historical context in which the Asian Communists operated, that is, during the period towards national independence, they co-

existed with various streams of nationalist movements and had to compete with them for popular sympathies. As a result, Asian communists never came to power in the wake of decolonization in those places where they failed to position themselves as a nationalist, pro-liberation force consistently.

This paper proceeds as follows: The next section situates our study in the existing studies by reviewing the relevant literature. Section 2 describes our method and conditions we test. The third section reports the results of QCA analyses. In the conclusion, we discuss the theoretical implications of our analyses, together with future research avenues.

1 Asian Communist Regimes in Comparative Authoritarianism
1.1 Studies of Asian Communist Regimes

With the rise of China as an economic superpower in recent decades, the study of Asian communist regimes has become increasingly popular. Political scientists, in the context of the study of authoritarian resilience, paid attention to several central aspects of politics. First, they focused on the institutionalization of the ruling parties that allow for power-sharing among regime elites. For example, the post-Mao era of the Chinese Communist Party (CPP) is an exemplary model of party institutionalization, as it developed clear rules of leadership selection and day-to-day management of the party affairs (e.g., Shambaugh 2008, Svolik 2012, p.91, Shih, Adolph, and Liu 2012).

Second, scholars investigate how autocratic regimes counter actual or potential resistance to authority through the state apparatus and repressive capacity. For example, Shambaugh (2007) details how Chinas political propaganda became institutionalized through state bureaucracies. Cai (2008) argues that the multi-layered nature of state structure in China makes it possible to balance repression and concession so that the government can maintain legitimacy to govern. King, Pan, and Roberts (2013) study how the Chinese government conducts the censorship of Internet information.

Third, Asian communist regimes, often in comparison to the Soviet and Eastern European counterparts, are examples of successful economic reform from a planned economy to capitalism. Starting in the late 1970s, China undertook economic reforms, gradually focusing on the agricultural sector, then in state-owned enterprises (Naughton 1995, Huang 2008). Vietnam followed a similar path, using Chinas reform as a role model (Fforde and Vylder 1996). While a planned economy is still preserved in North Korea, scholars are witnessing signs of opening through special economic zones (Armstrong 2013).

Chinas high economic growth rate is claimed to be a result of performance legitimacy (Zhao 2009, Yang and Zhao 2015) that contributed to the regimes survival. In short, Asia's communist regimes are regarded as a prototype of authoritarian adaptability.

Against these backdrops, one of the aspects that has escaped scholarly attention is why they came into being in the first place. Comparativists often treat the origins of communist party regimes as given and do not investigate why they came into being.[1] Conversely, historians, as will be reviewed below, produced many monographs that describe how the Chinese, Vietnamese, and North Korean communists won the revolutionary wars as single-country studies. Understanding the origins of Asian communist regimes from a comparative perspective is a gap that awaits to be filled in comparative political studies. Why did the communist regime arise in some Asian countries and not in others? We review how the existing studies tackled this question in the next section.

1.2 Explaining Successful Communist Revolutions in Asia

Most of the studies analyzing the origins of communist rule in Asia are historical narratives of two types. The first type is single-country case studies describing how the Communist forces came to power. Probably the most well-studied is the Chinese Communist revolution in 1949 (e.g., Bianco 1971; Meisner 1977; Zarrow 2006; Shambaugh and Brinley 2008), followed by the Vietnamese revolution of 1945 (e.g., Hodgkin 1981; Olson and Roberts 2014; Duiker 2018) and North Korea (e.g., Cumings 2002; Armstrong 2004). The second type is a narrative of comparative case studies, describing essential developments that led to the success or failure of revolutions. For example, Scalapino (1969) describes the communist movements in East Asia and van der Kroef (1981) for Southeast Asia.

Goodwin (2001) is one of the few studies that adopt a comparative approach with the aim of identifying causal relations. In studying four Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam), he argues that the formation and fate of the Communist movements depended upon two factors: the nature of Japanese rule during World War II and the political character of Western colonialism. More specifically, his first point concerns whether the Japanese relied on Europeans (as in Vietnam) or indigenous elites (as in Malaysia and the Philippines) on the one hand, or sponsored populist nationalists (as in Indonesia) on the other. When the Japanese did not sponsor local

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[1] The origins of non-communist dominant party regimes have been studied in recent years. For example, see Reuter 2017.

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nationalists, a strong communist movement emerged out of the anti-Japanese resistance movement.

Goodwin's second point addresses the exclusive or inclusive nature of European colonial rule. He argues that in the cases where the Japanese did not sponsor local nationalists (Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines), if the local elites (beyond traditionally collaborating ones) were allowed to participate in political processes, moderate nationalists came to power and radical revolutionary movements were defeated (as in Malaysia and the Philippines). When the colonial rule was exclusionary and repressive (as in Vietnam), the Communists were able to gain substantive popular support and succeeded in seizing power (Goodwin 2001, 130-131).

This paper builds on Goodwin's study and introduces several modifications for more systematic and general understandings of the origins of Asia's communist regimes. First, we redefine one of the variables suggested in his theory so that a broader range of cases can be accommodated. Goodwin argues that one of the necessary conditions of a successful communist revolution was the reliance of the Japanese on Europeans or collaborating indigenous elites when it occupied Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. In essence, what Goodwin attempts to capture by this condition is twofold: first, it allowed the communists to obtain grassroots support and legitimacy because the non-collaborating leaders were excluded (thus became popular); second, the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia meant a breakdown in the administration and policing of the colonies… which provided the requisite political space for the building of revolutionary movements (Goodwin 2001, p,102). The first point or mechanism is already captured in his second condition mentioned above, namely, the inclusionary or exclusionary colonial rule. The mechanism about the political space can be the ground for a new condition whether the colonial state lost their control over the colony. In the absence of strong state control, the colonial regimes lost their capacity to repress the opposition, which opened the political opportunity structure for the communist mobilized support. Hence, we reformulate Goodwin's two conditions for a successful revolution (Japanese reliance on Europeans or collaborating local elites and exclusionary colonial regimes) into a more generic set of conditions, namely, the exclusionary colonial regime and weak colonial state.

Second, with the reformulation of Goodwin's theory, we expanded the country coverage from four to sixteen. These are India, Indonesia, Cambodia, China, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, North Korea, North Vietnam, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea,

South Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Taiwan. These are the countries that experienced colonial rule alongside the attempts of communists to seize power.

Third, in addition to Goodwin's central theory, we test the other factors he suggested were essential, but not seriously examined in his analyses (2001, p.5, pp.130-132). They can be grouped into three conditions: (1) international support for the Communists, (2) broad coalition of politicized social groups on the side of the Communists, and (3) congruence of the Communists with the cultural and ideational framework held by the people. These factors are also stressed in some of the general theories of revolution (e.g., Goldstone 2001, Foran 1993). Thus, including them in our analysis may shed new light on our understanding of Asian revolutions.

Fourth, we use the Qualitative-Comparative Method (QCA) to examine the relevance of the conditions influencing the outcome of interest. Further details on QCA are discussed in the next section.

2 Configurational Analysis

2.1 Method

The QCA is a set-theoretic method that combines elements of qualitative and quantitative approaches. It represents conditions and the outcome as sets,[2] in which empirical cases have a certain degree of membership. The QCA seeks to formalize qualitative insights in order to disentangle set relations and distill necessary and sufficient conditions (or their combinations) for the outcome (Ragin 1987). Thus, with QCA, one can test if a given condition is sufficient, necessary, or neither in yielding the outcome of interest. Moreover, this method was developed to analyze complex causality, understood in terms of equifinality and conjunctural causation. This renders it particularly relevant for our research because Goodwin's theory hypothesizes about the factors behind a successful communist revolution in set-theoretic terms as combinations of necessary conditions. Additionally, the QCA is appropriate for examining causality with a relatively small number of cases, which makes our research setting conducive to applying it.

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[2] This paper employs set-theoretic terminology, which refers to independent variables as conditions and dependent variables as outcomes.

While QCA became increasingly popular in political science when the number of cases was small (Rihoux and Ragin 2008), thus far, only a few scholars have employed QCA to analyze the success or failure of the Communist revolutions.[3]

For example, Wickham-Crowley (1992) studies Latin American guerrilla movements and finds that the presence of the following five conditions sufficiently leads to successful revolutionary guerrilla movements in Latin America: guerrilla attempt, peasant support, guerrilla military strength, patrimonial praetorian regime, and the withdrawal of the U.S. support to the sitting government. Foran (1997) studies various types of Third World Revolutions including the anti-colonial revolutions that led to communist regimes. Comparing Algeria, Angola (Mozambique), Vietnam, and Zimbabwe, he finds that the presence of dependent development, repressive state, political cultures of opposition, economic downturn, and the opening of international trade are the conditions jointly present for a successful revolution. As far as we are aware, no study has attempted to employ QCA to compare Asia's communist movements.

As in the standard practice of QCA, we test separately for the occurrence and non-occurrence of the outcome (Schneider and Wagemann 2012). Our analyses consist of two different procedures: the test of necessity and the test of sufficiency. The test of necessity precedes the analysis of sufficiency and evaluates if a condition or disjunctions of conditions are supersets of the outcome. In other words, we first test whether the outcome cannot be achieved without these conditions. The test of sufficiency uses the so-called truth tables to examine whether a condition or conjunctions of conditions are subsets of the outcome. Each row of a truth table exhibits one of the logically possible combinations of conditions, and it is used for the logical minimization that produces different and mutually non-exclusive explanations for the outcome of interest.

Set relationships during the analysis are assessed based on the so-called parameters of fit: consistency, coverage and measures or relevance (RoN for necessity and PRI for sufficiency). Most importantly, consistency values express the percentage of cases membership in super- or subset relations. This is an indicator of the degree to which the empirical data is in line with these relations. Coverage, on the other hand, reflects the empirical importance of solutions, by calculating the share of cases they cover.

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[3] For the studies using QCA to analyze regime transition in which communist revolution is a subset, see Berg-Schlosser and De Meur (2002) and Schneider (2008).

At this version of our paper, we employ crisp-set QCA, which only works with full set relationships and binary variables, such as the outcome in our case. The advantage of crisp sets when analyzing purely qualitative data is that it helps to avoid arbitrary coding when deciding the degree of each cases set membership. The alignment of thresholds between sets with data that is not easily quantifiable or with unreliable quantitative data (as historical statistical data tends to be) can be more controversial under a fuzzy approach.

2.2 Operationalization

This subsection describes the coding of variables, which is done based on our reading of historical developments in countries under study from various secondary sources. Our outcome variable is whether the Communists seized the state power at the time of independence or the collapse of a colonial regime. This is dichotomously coded: 1 for a successful communist revolution and 0 otherwise. In some cases, the collapse of a colonial regime was not simultaneous to the formal establishment of an independent state. In these instances, our coding referred to the period preceding the de facto liberation (i.e., pre-1945 China, Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan). In the case of Mongolia, our coding refers to the period from 1919 to 1921 when Beijing warlords controlled the country. These temporal thresholds were set considering that the impact of the colonial periods had more significant repercussions for the type of regimes established upon the liberation rather than the civil war in China, the Indochinese war in Vietnam, trusteeship in Korea, and the brief occupation of Mongolia by the White Army. Our dataset includes 16 cases, 4 with the outcome: China, Mongolia, North Korea and North Vietnam. The proportion between cases and conditions is close to the Marxs (2006) benchmark of 0.33, which can be seen as sufficient for avoiding random results.

We test the following five conditions that are coded as binary variables. EXCLUSIVE refers to whether the colonial regime excluded the political participation of indigenous elites. By colonial regime, we understand any colonizing nations (European, American, or Asian). It is coded 1 if the authorities did not introduce broader participatory institutions and mechanisms that allowed the oppositional and nationalistic elites to take part in decision-making, and 0 if they did. The coding benchmark is the presence or absence of elected or semi-elected bodies or the creation of an independent government as it happened in the Philippines under the American occupation and in Indonesia under the Japanese rule. We

do not consider the participation of collaborating elites to the colonial regime as part of the inclusionary regime but only count oppositional or reformist elites.

WEAKSTATE refers to the colonial states strength. It is coded 1 if the colonial authorities lost their control over the colony and 0 for strong colonial states. Our coding benchmark is the full or partial loss of territorial control over the colony, in the course of a war, occupation, and so on. Territorial control is a standard indicator of the state strength in the studies of insurgency (e.g., Adhikari and Samford 2013).

SUPPORT is concerned with international support for the Communists. It is coded 1 when the Communists in a given country under study received military support from the Communist block, and at the same time, the ruling elites did not receive military support from the Capitalist block around the time of the decolonization. It is coded 0 for all other cases. The communist movements in Asia, in most cases, are associated with the Comintern, and this association guaranteed some financial support and organizational guidance. Thus, the association with the Comintern is a poor proxy for external interference. Given that communist movements in Asia are usually armed insurgencies, it is appropriate to focus on military support by external actors. This coding also accounts for the support that the colonial elites could receive from the Capitalist bloc, including the colonial masters. This condition also overlaps with the notion of associational networks and material resources that Goodwin mentions as a factor influencing successful revolutions (Goodwin 2001, p.132).

COALITION is to examine whether a broad coalition of politicized social groups was on the side of the Communists. This condition is coded 1 if the communists relied on a broad spectrum of social groups, regarding class, ethnicity, and regional location, and 0 otherwise.

NATIONALISM refers to the congruence of the communists activities with the local cultural framework. Cultural framework, which concerns norms, traditions, and religious beliefs, is admittedly a difficult concept to set demarcation and to operationalize. We adopted a narrower notion of culture, confining the normative goal of gaining independence. Around the time of decolonization, the encompassing instrument of mobilization was the call for national independence or nationalism. Asian communists generally faced a dilemma between internationalism (protecting the Soviet interest) and pursuing their relatively autonomous strategy to liberate the nation. This condition is coded 1 if the communists consistently represented a nationalist pro-independence force and 0 if not.

3 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Summary of the Findings

Table 1 reports the results of the analysis of necessity. Several conditions pass the formal threshold for necessity (0.9). Exclusiveness of the regime, its weakness, and association of communists with nationalism all have a maximum consistency of 1, which means that communists never come to power in the absence of these factors (albeit the presence of these conditions alone does not guarantee their success). Similarly, non-communist governments were never established when local communists received military support from the Soviet bloc, unrivaled by the US and its allies. This, however, does not mean that a Communist government could not come to power without external support.

Table 1 Analysis of Necessity

Conditions	Communist government (OUT)			No Communist government (out)		
	Consistency	Coverage	RoN	Consistency	Coverage	RoN
EXCLUSIVE[1]	**1**	**0.5**	**0.67**	0.33	0.5	0.67
WEAKSTATE	**1**	**0.31**	**0.25**	0.75	0.69	0.43
SUPPORT	0.75	0.75	0.92	0.08	0.25	0.8
COALITION	0.5	0.67	0.93	0.08	0.33	0.87
NATIONALISM	**1**	**0.57**	**0.75**	0.25	0.43	0.96
exclusive	0	0	0.5	0.67	1	1
weakstate	0	0	0.81	0.25	1	1
support	0.25	0.08	0.27	**0.92**	**0.92**	**0.8**
coalition	0.5	0.15	0.21	**0.92**	**0.85**	**0.6**
nationalism	0	0	0.43	0.75	1	1

There are two reasons to be reluctant in passing the final judgment on the necessity of these conditions. Firstly, theoretical expectations for the necessity of any individual condition are rather low. Although Goodwin's theory could be interpreted in terms of conjunctural necessity, it only suggests a combination of two conditions as necessary. Secondly, the indicator of relevance (RoN) is very low for one of his key conditions (state weakness) and only moderate for others (maybe, except for absent Soviet support). This means that these conditions might be trivial due to skewed set relations. This is particularly

clear with state weakness, which applies to over 80% of all the cases. In other words, it could represent a superset of almost any outcome. Trivialness of this condition, on the other hand, is also indicative of the significant role that World War II played in disrupting established patterns of colonial governance and triggering liberation movements around the world.

Other potentially necessary conditions are not as skewed and could be rendered almost necessary. Their high consistency does offer some support for Goodwin's theory. It also shows that conditions related to the agency of the Communists and geopolitics may have an equally important role as the statist ones. The following analysis of combinations of conditions and their sufficiency for the outcome should help to illuminate their role further.

Analysis of sufficiency relies on truth tables—binomial matrices listing all possible combinations of conditions with the outcome, its negation, and corresponding cases. Those rows that pass the consistency threshold (0.75 at minimum) are considered sufficient. Consistency may be lowered due to contradictory rows that cover cases that have the outcome of interest and that do not have it. In this truth table, such rows are absent, and consistency in all rows equals 1, so the consistency scores are not included in Table 2.

Table 2   Truth Table

EXCLUSIVE	WEAKSTATE	SUPPORT	COALITION	NATIONALISM	OUT	out	n	cases
1	1	1	0	1	**1**	**0**	2	North Korea, Mongolia
1	1	0	1	1	**1**	**0**	1	China
1	1	1	1	1	**1**	**0**	1	North Vietnam
0	1	0	0	0	**0**	**1**	4	Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar
1	1	0	0	0	**0**	**1**	3	Taiwan, South Vietnam, Indonesia
0	0	0	0	1	**0**	**1**	2	Pakistan, Sri Lanka
0	0	0	1	0	**0**	**1**	1	India
0	1	1	0	0	**0**	**1**	1	Malaysia
1	1	0	0	1	**0**	**1**	1	South Korea

The analysis reported in Table 2 has 23 logical remainders[4](They are not reported in the table due to space constraints). Combinatorial logic is used to minimize the truth table, and a conservative solution is produced if no remainder rows are included in the procedure. The parsimonious solution makes simplifying assumptions about the outcome of selected remainder rows, which allow for producing the most compact solution. An intermediate solution is only based on easy counterfactuals that correspond to the theoretical expectations. Given that the number of remaining rows is large, this study uses intermediate solutions,[5] to avoid spurious, empirically, and theoretically unjustified results.

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[4] Rows that do not correspond to any empirically observed cases.
[5] The analysis also excluded contradictory assumptions about the remainder rows, making sure that the same rows were not used during the minimization for the presence of the outcome and its absence. The result is called an enhanced intermediate solution. Contradictory assumptions covered the rows with either inclusive or strong states or both. Considering that such a

Table 3 Intermediate Solutions for the Outcome and its Absence[6]

Outcome	Solution	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Cases
OUT	EXCLUSIVE*WEAKSTATE*COALITION*NATIONALISM	0.5	0.25	China, North Vietnam
	EXCLUSIVE*WEAKSTATE*SUPPORT*NATIONALISM	0.75	0.5	North Korea, Mongolia, North Vietnam
	Overall solution	1		
out	support*coalition	0.83	0.5	Pakistan, Sri Lanka; Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar; Taiwan, South Vietnam, Indonesia; South Korea
	exclusive*coalition*nationalism	0.42	0.08	Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar; Malaysia
	exclusive*weakstate*support* nationalism	0.08	0.08	India
	Overall solution	1		

The analysis of the outcome includes two paths, both of which combine the three conditions with perfect consistency in the analysis for necessity. They also include an extra condition each (Soviet support or domestic coalition), which help to distinguish between the two types of communist success in Asia. North Vietnam is included in both paths, as it is the only case where the local communists were successful at gaining both exclusive

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combination would not be seen as sufficient for communist success, according to Goodwin's theory, these rows were only coded as 0 in the analysis of sufficiency for the presence of the outcome.

[6] The consistency and PRI in all solution terms are equal to 1 and, as a constant, were not included in the summary table.

international and robust domestic backing. However, since the Soviet troops did not occupy the territory of the country, unlike in Mongolia and North Korea, it can be considered more qualitatively similar to the path including China. This assigns almost equal weight to both solution terms.

The solution for the absence of communist success is more complicated, with three paths. The latter two solutions in the table correspond to Goodwin's theory, suggesting that communist revolutions do not occur in inclusive states that accommodate popular grievances by voluntarily devolving power and in strong states that can suppress protests. Nonetheless, most cases are covered by only one path (absence of Soviet military support and absence of widespread support), which constitutes an essential addition to the existing theory by stressing the link between resources, networks, and revolutions.

3.2 Discussion

Our analyses confirm the relevance of Goodwin's core theory when applied to Asian countries other than the four Southeast Asian countries he closely examined. The combination of two conditions, namely, the exclusive nature of the colonial regime and the power vacuum created by weakened state control, are present in other successful revolutions (China, Mongolia, and North Korea). Instead, where the colonialists initiated devolution of power themselves, it was the moderate nationalists that took over after the independence. Participatory mechanisms dampened communist appeal and allowed more centrist parties to claim national leadership. The British colonies, where electoral institutions were introduced even before the war, are the most representative of this scenario. Japanese reliance on local nationalists served the same function in other places, such as Indonesia or Cambodia, where the local leaders were even encouraged to announce independence.

More interestingly, our analyses identify two paths to a successful Communist Revolution in Asia, which can be called a grassroots revolution and an elite revolution. China and North Vietnam represent the first. In both countries, communists managed to gain a substantial social following and built broad social coalitions during their fight against the Japanese colonial occupation. In both cases, the post-WWII authorities were averse to power-sharing and prevented influential new forces from participating in governance, which enabled further mass-mobilization against the KMT and the French neo-colonial authorities, respectively.

Mongolia and North Korea had an elite revolution. In these countries, the window of opportunity was narrower, preventing mobilization from below. There was no dearth of protest potential in Korea since its occupation in 1910. However, the colonial authorities preserved much repressive capacity there until the very capitulation. Similarly, the re-imposed Chinese rule in Mongolia, which stripped it off autonomy, was an impetus for the formation of several communist/nationalist groups. However, changes of authority between the Chinese and the White Army, as well as the changes of their policies, made it difficult to preserve a stable social coalition and reach an agreement with the theocratic Khan, who switched sides depending on the situation. Hence, where social support was lacking, the communists turned to the third party for support and came to power using the strength of the Soviet army rather than the strength of mass mobilization.

Another critical issue that emerges out of our QCA analyses is the question of whether and how the communists gained the leadership among the various streams of nationalist movements during the period leading towards decolonization. The conjunction of nationalism with structural conditions suggests that the revolutionaries in Asia at the time of decolonization had to overcome a double hurdle. On the one hand, they required a favorable external environment to initiate the revolution in the first place. On the other hand, they also needed to win against other competitors for the leadership in a newly liberated state.

The analysis, thus, supports the opinion that communism in Asia substantially deviated from the original doctrine and showed flexibility and adaptability to the local environment (Belogurova 2014; Mackerras and Knight 1985; Scalapino 1965). In many cases, it was not an ideological preference defined by ones class but a synonym of nationalism, a vehicle of people as a whole and a key to gaining power in the anti-colonial struggle. In contrast, those communist parties that collaborated with the colonial authorities, to assist the Soviet Union on another front, accumulated resources and experience but lost moral appeal. This disadvantage was further revealed in their failure to garner support in the 1947 uprisings, as in Malaysia and India, where the communists ended up rebelling against the newly independent governments, instead of the colonial authorities. The ability to create an attractive and credible profile, accumulate resources, and build networks between domestic and international actors requires specific strategic skill. The communists had to strike the right balance between the internationalism of the ideology they espoused and the nationalism of the populace they wooed. Some credit should be given to the local

communists for attracting Soviet support too. Despite the Soviet aspirations for a global proletarian revolution, its army only intervened in exceptional cases. How they won the leadership and legitimacy to lead the independence movement appears to be a crucial point in understanding the success or failure of the communist revolutions in Asia.

Conclusion

This paper analyzed the conditions for successful communist revolutions in Asia by applying QCA. Building upon the theory advanced by Goodwin, our analysis confirmed the relevance of two conditions that Goodwin argued for a successful communist revolution: the exclusiveness of the colonial regime and the weak state. These were necessary conditions not only for Southeast Asia that he studied but also for the rest of the Asian countries with colonial experience. Our analyses also found that there are two paths to a successful revolution in Asia. One can be called a grassroots path, as in the cases of China and North Vietnam, and the other is an elitist path, where North Korea and Mongolia are examples. Another noteworthy finding is the importance of the Communist credibility within the nationalist movements, as different pro-independent forces co-existed and competed during the period toward the end of colonialism. When we analyze the Communist revolution in Asia, this particular historical context, the Communists operating along with the various streams of pro-independence movements, should be taken into consideration. While we employed crisp-set QCA, in the future, we can conduct a fuzzy-set QCA with refined coding so that a more nuanced understanding can be obtained.

One of the theoretical implications of our findings is concerned with the study of the social revolution. Our findings point to the importance of legitimacy accorded to the revolutionary movement in the context of a power vacuum. In the Asian context, World War II created a breakdown in the colonial administration and military power. However, this itself was not enough for the Communists to stage a revolution; they needed to co-opt the agenda of the moderate nationalist movements, gain legitimacy in pro-independence struggle, and take the lead in it. While the canonical studies of social revolution (e.g., Skocpol 1979) stresses the importance of a power vacuum for a revolution to succeed, what kind of agents pick up power lying in the street (Arendt 1965, p.122, cited in Scott 2012, p.137) depends on which actor or movement was in the position of leadership. In this regard, we need more research on how the independence movements in Asia related to the Communists, and how the Communism in Asia balanced the ideological doctrine and

direction from the USSR on the one hand and the local contexts on the other. One might find the deep roots of the adaptability of Asian Communist regimes at this point in history.

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