

Do You Really Want a Revolution?  
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Being angry is not the best reason for voting for a "revolution." One might not like aspects of the way our leaders are leading, but trashing the entire institution of governance under law will not achieve a brave new world. It never has.

Many of those with only vague historic knowledge talk boldly about having another American Revolution like the first one. Our founding, however, was not the result of a revolution, but of a revolt by people who wanted all British laws and protections applied to the colonies as well. A revolution means turning things completely upside-down, not reforming them. American colonists resented being deprived of legal protections that the English enjoyed (such as taxation with representation).

Our primary election system is a well-intentioned mistake. Rather than allowing the public to select candidates in a more democratic manner than the old system of political parties making these choices, primaries have turned into circuses of extremists from both ends of the political spectrum, financed by dark money. Rather than having Primary Elections on the same day throughout the country, which might be representative, they are held piecemeal in extremely unrepresentative states such as Iowa and New Hampshire. California, which has a huge population and a history of innovation, votes in June, diminishing their voice in the outcome.

Living as we do in a time of change almost too rapid to absorb, many people feel displaced and discouraged. Demagogues are selling them on "revolutionary" solutions. The extremes among the conservative primary voters have long been nursing anti-government hostility. They "hate" government, wanting instead to elect someone who can "get things done" (their issues) at any cost.

Donald Trump, a huckster with an uncanny sense of public fads, offers "revolutionary" changes, the Constitution be damned. Deport illegal Hispanics, all 12 million of them; bar all Muslims, even those fleeing Islam, from immigrating here; build a "beautiful" wall to keep Mexicans out (that, of course, Mexico will gladly pay for). He will know how to negotiate with Russia and China, using a big stick, of course. His supporters do not reckon with Congress in all this nonsense.

Primary voters on the far left have fallen in love with Bernie Sanders, a grandfatherly "democratic socialist." He rightly condemns the corrupting role of money in our political process, condemns the banks and wants them punished, but ignores the role of government in messing up our economic system. Government action led to a well-intentioned program to have all Americans able to own a home, whether they had the money or not. The banks obliged and made a fortune out of human folly and greed. Sanders wants free tuition for university students, a European model that produces perpetual, unemployable candidates for "demonstrations 101" and revolution.

Let's hope that when the parties finally nominate candidates, sense will prevail. All deals are made in the middle, not at the extremes, and parties that forget this lose elections.

What angry voters do not understand about revolutions is how bad they are! Revolutions (I include here the Russian, Chinese, and French) start in poetry (idealistic youth) but end in bitter prose (demagogues and dictators). The recent Arab Spring looked to some like a much-needed revolution. The youth who promoted it wanted total change in their societies, governments that would be honest, diligent, and open to modern values. They brought down their dictators, only to discover that the brave new world didn't happen.

They underestimated their reactionary religion, authoritarian family life, and the general ignorance of the majority of their fellow countrymen. Most now have anarchy (look at Iraq, Libya, and Syria). Only one, Egypt, was saved by a new authoritarian figure, General Sisi, who, as in other historic revolutions, replaces a revolution with a new dictator. Egypt lucked out that the "democratic" vote for the Muslim Brotherhood turned sour. Islamic government is neither democratic nor corruption free.

Democracy can only work when the population is literate, mostly middle class, and values rule of law over religion. Bad as democracy is, every other system is worse. Revolutions get dictatorships.

677 words

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