Women in Transition: The Revolution Effect on Gender (In)equality

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I. Introduction and Research Question

Successful revolutions can be seen as critical junctions in countries' histories because they dismantle or transform existing institutions and distributive mechanisms (Arendt, 2016; Charles. Tilly, 1995). In many cases, transition or revolutionary projects have prioritized vulnerable groups, such as peasants, women, and indigenous or black communities. However, little has been said by political science scholars about the reasons why some groups are favored over others. This paper aims at explaining why and when women are included or excluded from state transitions, and more specifically evaluate why revolutionary or transition leaders target gender inequality via two key channels: property rights and political citizenship. It presents a review on the current theoretical and methodological debates around this question and proposes a new theoretical argument.

In the wide spectrum of the history of revolutions in the 20th century, countries that experienced revolutions with socialist aims seemed to exhibit higher indicators of gender equality in the immediate post-revolutionary period. This paper examines three cases that stand on a spectrum of socialist outcomes: Mexico, Cuba, and Vietnam. It argues that the inclusion or exclusion of women in post-revolutionary spoils depends on the initial power imbalance at the time of revolutionary ignition. If women's oppression stems primarily from the existing political system (top-down/ vertical oppression), revolutionary leaders will

adopt an ideological motive to promote gender equality. On the other hand, if women's oppression stems from society itself (horizontal oppression), then revolutionary leaders will adopt a pragmatic approach to women's incorporation in the revolutionary regime.

II. Theoretical Framework

When did revolutionary leaders treat women's property rights and citizenship differently? Were they subject to different political or wartime opportunities or constraints? Were there organizational features or specific interests that pushed them in one direction or another? While the literature has yet to highlight the specific mechanisms through which revolutions tackle gender inequality, the current theoretical debates can help us understand why gender inequality stems from in the first place and whether theories on revolutionary change respond directly to these differences.

1. What does gender inequality stem from?

In terms of historical explanations for gender inequality, authors have focused on several themes: production structures or divisions of labor (Alesina et al., 2013; Baumann, 1928), traditional family structures (Tur-Prats, 2018), factor endowments (Ross, 2008), and shocks to labor markets (Kranton, 2016), among others. These arguments either present a path-dependent theoretical explanation for gender inequality or attribute it to shocks in productive structures. All of them tie together women's role at home and in the economy as a continuous pull-and-push dynamic that informs their interactions within and outside their household based on their bargaining power vis-à-vis others.

2. Why revolutions?

Given their transformative nature, revolutionary outcomes are particularly useful for evaluating how institutionalized gender inequality can be reinforced or overcome. A revolutionary outcome, borrowed from Tilly (1995), refers to transfer of state power to a new ruling coalition.

Recent literature on gender and sudden change focuses on the forgotten or ignored role of women in revolutionary movements (Deb, 2021; Painter, 2021), or explores the concepts of martyrdom and revolutionary heroism in the construction of a new revolutionary state (Lachenal, 2021; Vu, 2021). However, a broader inspection of studies shows that pro-women laws emerging from revolutionary movements have allowed women to reconstruct gender dynamics by claiming new rights within the family and the state (Desan, 1997; Frenier, 1983; Jacobs, 2002).

3. Women under Socialism

Socialist revolutions throughout the world have generally led to women's increased access to property, higher education, and recognition as full political citizens. Research has shown that increased property rights for women can lead to higher education. For example, Bose and Das (2017) found that India's 2005 inheritance reform led to an increase in the women's years of schooling because it gave them more bargaining power regarding household resources, which allowed them to reallocate these resources to invest in their own development.

Socialist transitions have traditionally incorporated legislation that gave women equal representation before the law, equal pay and working conditions, and equal authority

and responsibility within the household. For example, communist countries in the 20th century exhibited uniform reforms on issues such as protective labor legislation, childcare provisions, and abortion rights (Matynia, 1994).

This goal was clear in the ideological rhetoric of Communist leaders. For instance, a close examination of Vladimir Lenin's revolutionary discourse demonstrates a systematic incorporation of women as a vital component of the socialist movement in Russia. This movement would not only transform the power dynamics between and within classes, but would provide women their emancipation (Lenin, 1965). Further, Marxist rhetoric attributed women's oppression to their forced confinement in the home, isolation from social life, and economic dependence on their husbands (Stone, 1981). I therefore focus on gender equality as pursued via women's increased property rights and political citizenship.

Hypothesis (1) a more Leftist (Socialist) revolution will lead to more pro-women legislation.

What remains unclear is whether this incorporation of women into Socialist projects stemmed from an ideological commitment to gender equality or from a pragmatic strategy to mobilize and include women in the revolutionary struggle. Given that women in pre-revolutionary contexts represented a large percentage of the peasant population and could thus identify with class-based calls for change, it is logical that revolutionary leaders would appeal to women groups and organizations to assemble more people in the revolutionary coalition. [A more thorough examination of the literature that specifically speaks to this mechanism is missing at this point].

Hypothesis (2) transition leaders incorporate women to increase the size of the revolutionary coalition (suppor ters).

Further, despite uniform pro -women legislation in Communist regimes, the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality remained; "despite laws guaranteeing women and men equality in marriage under Communism, women endured the double burden of primary responsibility for household labor as well as paid employment. The total workload of women in Communist Eastern Eu ropean countries approximated 70 hours per week, about 15 hours more than in Western Europe" (Pollert 2003, p. 2) . This suggests that the extent of women's empowerment after a socialist transition depends not only on whether the revolution had a socialist character, but on the types of formal and informal arrangements instilled by revolutionary leaders.

4. Participation and Representation

Another set of arguments suggests the importance of women's participation in policymaking to ensure their substantive representation. While only a few of these arguments focus on revolutionary outcomes, their insight can be applied to all policymaking processes. Some studies highlight the importance of not only participation of women, but also *representation* , when creating a new state or legislature. For example, Deere (2017) examines variations in the gap between women's formal land rights and their attainment in practice by comparing four agrarian reforms carried by leftist governments in Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela after the turn of the century. She finds that only the reforms in Bolivia and Brazil resulted in a *de facto* significant share of women landowners due to strong national rural women's movements that were able to advocate for women's land rights because they had been part of the coalition that initially brough the current regime to power.

Hypothesis (3) if women are part of the transition movement, they can ensure their interests are represented.

Yet, women's participation in transitions may still face constraints that a lack of political will and the normative framework may pose in certain contexts. In a case study of Tanzania, Collins et al. (2019) find that despite legislative reforms aimed at increasing rural women's landholding, effective protection of marginalized women groups is hindered by a lack of understanding of customary practices that shape land acquisition. Similarly, Bessis (2021) explores differences in gender equality outcomes following the Arab Spring and concludes that even though women were a critical component of mass mobilizations across these countries, the advances made in gender equality in some countries –and the setbacks in others —are not only linked to women's participation in the revolutionary struggle, but to the role they had been historically given in these societies.

Despite progress made in gender equality policies, politics remains a man's world. Of course, a simple explanation would point to the lack of women in positions of power throughout the world. Yet, even in cases when a female sovereign has been elected or appointed to lead a nation, substantive and descriptive representation of women remains significantly lower than that of men. When government transitions meant to dismantle existing power structures have taken place, only some have led to better outcomes for gender equality than others, regardless of the participation, or lack thereof, of women in these movements. As such, the mere absence of women does not fully explain why some transitions lead to lower gender inequality and others do not, nor does it speak to the gaps between formal rights and their exercise in practice.

5. Revolutionary Effects Grounded in Intersectionality

Recent literature on women's increased property and citizenship rights points to a spectrum of effects grounded in intersectionality. For example, Prasad (2021) places the deemed success of the Bodhgaya Land Movement in Bihar, India to the literature's disregard of preexisting caste inequalities. As such, he points to initial readings of this movement as having successfully assigned women land titles. However, a deeper examination of caste dynamics demonstrated how different castes were subject not only to a patriarchal hierarchy but also to a caste hierarchy which resulted in landed women being trapped in a structure that forced them to transfer their land back to their sons or daughters-in-law. By generalizing the effects of land reform on Indian women, scholars have casted a shadow over the additional barriers that specific groups of Indian women face, thus ignoring the circumstances under which the Bodhgaya Land Movement failed. Understanding the layers of oppression that *different* groups of women face at the time of revolutionary ignition is essential to understanding if and how these transitions promote gender equality.

6. Towards a New Theory of Revolutionary Change

So far, there exists no systematic understanding of why revolutions treat women differently. As presented above, history suggests that leftist revolutions may lead to better outcomes for women, but no theoretical arguments clearly state under what conditions this is true. Further, the success of legal outcomes aimed at the protection of marginalized women groups has been shown to depend on women's participation in policymaking and on the additional divisions and challenges that different groups of women experience. Yet, these

theories do not necessarily apply to revolutionary outcomes, nor do they explain the decision-making progress of the post-revolutionary regimes.

~~While~~ the proposed theory ~~is a new development, it~~ builds on the presented theories on revolutionary change as well as on state interventions meant to protect and empower women. I propose that whether women's interests are represented in post-revolutionary *de jure* and *de facto* outcomes depends on the nature of the system of oppression to which they are subject at the time the revolution ignites. If women are oppressed by the same 'enemy' as that of the revolutionary coalition (vertical oppression), revolutionaries will incorporate women in their policymaking via an ideological appeal to their liberation. They will do so by explicitly incorporating gender equality in their revolutionary goals and strategies. If women are oppressed by the revolutionaries and their support base (horizontal oppression) then a pragmatic appeal will be made resulting in women's active but controlled participation in the revolutionary struggle in order to capitalize on a greater support base. Ideological appeals will then lead to long-term normative changes in society, whereas practical appeals will remain adaptable to the needs of those in power and thus lead to intermittent progress in gender equality outcomes.

It must be noted that both mechanisms take place in a patriarchal structure in which men either (1) take the role of protectors of women against an outside oppressive force, or (2) directly take the role of the oppressing force. In the long term, a vertical system of oppression should lead to a progressive normative change towards gender equality, while a horizontal system of oppression should lead to intermittent progress in gender equality outcomes. The logic of this theory is that the system of oppression dictates the source of men's utility calculation from their relationship with women and according to preexisting

norms and beliefs around gender roles. In an extreme and seemingly controversial example, if revolutionaries benefit from normalizing the sexual abuse of women (horizontal oppression), they have little incentive to promote women's empowerment. Whereas, if men see that other soldiers or regime forces are the ones implementing sexual abuse of women in their war tactics (as has been commonly the case), then revolutionary elites will be incentivized to empower women and reclaim their manhood.

Hypotheses 4 & 5:

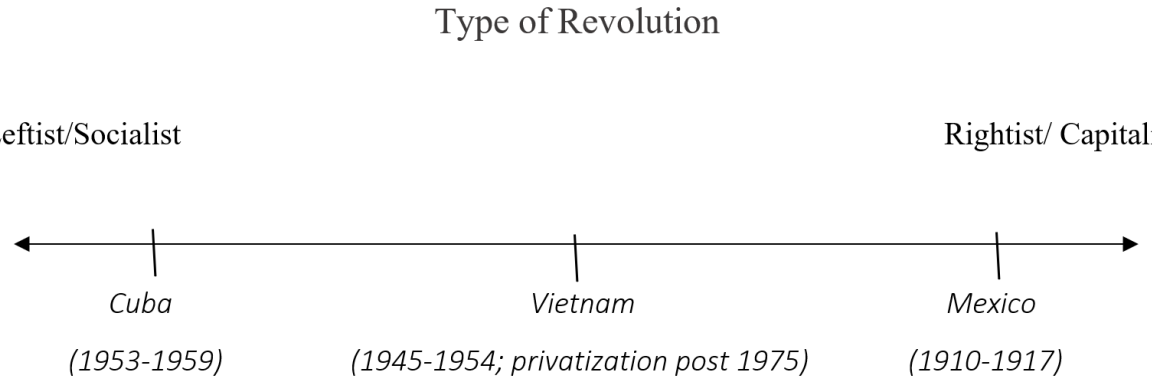
Nature of System of Oppression	Revolutionary Approach to Gender Inequality	Long-term Normative Changes
Vertical Oppression →	Ideological →	Progressive
Horizontal Oppression →	Pragmatic →	Intermittent

This mechanism will only hold as long as the revolutionary distributive system stays in place. A new distributive system (and thus a new system of oppression) will restart the mechanism. By distributive mechanism, I mean the set of formal rules that guide the state's distribution and regulation of goods and services. If normative changes accompany or follow the revolutionary outcome, a progressive move towards gender equality will most likely occur, whereas unsuccessful normative changes will most likely revert any pro-women reforms if a new regime comes to power.

III. Case Selection

This paper employs a case study design of revolutionary outcomes on a socialist spectrum. Cuba is in one extreme as the archetypal example of socialism in the Western Hemisphere. Vietnam is in the middle of the spectrum with an initial socialist push followed

by a market-oriented economic transition. Lastly, Mexico is located on the other extreme representing what historians have coined as a failed socialist revolution (Knight, 1985), given its initial bottom-up mobilization but a resulting power structure that exacerbated class inequality and served to consolidate a hegemonic party (Magaloni, 2006).



The literature suggests that increased land ownership among women, for example, is closely associated with their well-being (Deere & León, 2013). The effect of increased access to land is twofold (1) women's increased productivity and (2) increased empowerment (Agarwal, 1997, 2018). In developing countries where the main factor of production is land, revolutionary leaders often implement land reform projects that redistribute its ownership from a concentrated group of individuals to the masses. I therefore focus on land rights when discussing property rights of women. By political citizenship, I focus on women's right and ability to vote, ability to freely partake in political life, and legal recognition as full citizens.

IV. Case Studies

1. MEXICO

Women Before the Revolution

The period before the Mexican Revolution is known as the *Porfiriato* (1876-1911) and was named after the Dictator Porfirio Diaz that ruled Mexico during 7 terms that totaled 31 years. During his ruling, Mexico quickly experienced an unprecedented period of development and industrialization characterized by the expansion of the railroad system and other infrastructural projects, the privatization of public and communal land in rural areas, and an influx of foreign investments (Fowler-Salamini & Vaughan, 2003). The rapid industrialization and urbanization across the country resulted in an increased demand for manpower, which opened new avenues for women to undertake both paid and unpaid labor (ibid.). In 1902, women comprised 17% of the textile-industry workers and by 1910, 8.8% of the economically active population in the country (Macias, 1980). Rural women, however, spent most of their time outside the home, raising crops, cattle and working informally in the markets (ibid.).

Women in the late 19 and early 20th Centuries lived under full authority of men and their lives were limited to domestic life, even when they worked outside the home. According to the 1870 Civil Code, it was women's duty to obey their husbands in all matters related to family life, including the administration of family goods and children's education. Women who had the financial resources to receive an education did so as a means of becoming more suitable and knowledgeable wives and mothers, under the expectation of becoming respectable additions to society and abiding by a complete submission to the husband

(Ramos Escandón, 1987). Any civic or political participation was limited to social and philanthropic events (ibid.). The growing class of working women were also subject to ideals of obedience to the husband and the father, but under an additional layer of social submission. Above any necessity to pursue paid work, a working woman's highest aspiration was, too, to become an exemplary wife and mother. While the division of labor between rural men and women has been less documented, rural women generally worked in the fields alongside their husbands in addition to being responsible for childcare and domestic tasks (Turner, 1967).

Nature of the Revolution

While historians have emphasized the social nature of the Mexican Revolution due to its mass mobilization of the peasant class against the Diaz dictatorship, the Mexican revolution was leftist in process but not in consequence; it resulted in the consolidation of a central political machine that exacerbated class inequalities by design for decades to come. It was a failed socialist revolution "which challenged but could not defeat an established, centralized bourgeois order" (Knight, 1985, p. 2).

Revolution's Treatment of Women

The Mexican Revolution provided new avenues for women to separate themselves from the imposed domestic life. While historiographers for many years ignored their participation in the struggle, in the later years of the 19th century, more and more studies uncovered the vital role that women played in the revolutionary movement and how and why they were excluded from official transcripts (Linhard 2005). The romanticization of women revolutionaries as *'Adelitas'* or sweethearts of male revolutionaries disregarded the relevance

of their work—not only as nurses and companions, but as "soldiers, spies, even commanders" (Mitchell and Schell 2007, p. 13), and justified the victors to exclude them from the spoils of war granted as political influence, economic opportunities, or land rights (ibid.).

Yet, their participation has continued to be constructed around their relationship to men, and particularly to the husband. While hundreds of women were pushed out of their homes due to a prevalence of domestic violence and alcohol abuse (Mitchell & Schell, 2007; Turner, 1967), many others' engagement was attributed to their dependence on their husbands, as hundreds more followed their *'Juanes'* to the battlefield. Women soldiers or *'soldaderas'* were exploited to support the work of the men soldiers; they worked in gunpowder factories, and transported medicine, clothes, food, mail, military equipment and ammunition, as well as information about enemy troops from one camp to the next (Mac Gregor, 2009; Turner, 1967). Even legislative actions that passed to support them, such as the censuring of prostitution, were designed to win their loyalty to the revolutionary struggle (Ibid.).

The Mexican Revolution is understood as the first time that women were allowed to develop their own skills along with men, but never incorporated the emancipation of women as a social objective.

Property Rights

The revolutionary mobilization culminated in the *Plan de Ayala* which was signed and proclaimed by the peasant leader Emiliano Zapata in November 1911. The Plan called the people to take immediate possession of the lands that had been illegally appropriated during President Porfirio Diaz' privatization campaigns. This Plan formed the basis of one of the

largest land reforms in history, which in 1920 officially granted half of the Mexican territory to over 3 million peasant heads of household and turned large idle estates into 30,000 *ejidos* (Warman, n.d.). The actual distribution of land began with the *Plan de Ayala* and took decades to finish. In 1915 alone, territory in 1500 communities was distributed to over half a million people (Knight, 1985), although most of the distribution took place during Lázaro Cárdenas' presidency (1934-40) when 17.9 million hectares were distributed to 814,537 households (Deere & León, 2001).

However, the 1920 reform did not explicitly include women as land beneficiaries and instead stipulated that land should be distributed amongst heads of household. Later additions included single or widowed women as long as they had dependents under their care and expanded to include all men over eighteen regardless of whether they supported a family (Deere & León, 2001). "In addition, widows sometimes lost their access to parcels when their sons became of working age, making women's land rights temporary whereas those of men were permanent" (Deere and León, 2001, p. 70). Further, if an *ejidataria* married an *ejidatario*, she lost her previous land rights, whereas men could apply for land regardless of their family status (Deere, 1985). The presumption that an *ejidatario* was a man was preserved in the Mexican Constitution until 1971.

While the 1971 modification to the land reform recognized equal land rights for men and women, it granted priority to heads of household, which still comprised a male majority. Additionally, its article 200 required beneficiaries to be agriculturists and the law implied that women were not; it required *ejidatarios* to work in the land directly, assuming women's primary duties were the house and their children (Deere, 1985). Only female heads of household were exempt from this provision because they were "constrained by domestic

work and the attention to small children who depend upon [them]" (qtd. in Deere, 1985). By 1981, less than 6% of *ejidatarios* were women, the majority of whom had inherited land from their late husbands or fathers (Deere and León, 2013). By 1984, only 15% of women in the country had benefited from the land reform (ibid.). "Women's participation in the revolution, as soldaderas, spies, secretaries, publicists, won them neither the pensions of soldiers not the right to an ejido […]" (Schell, 2007), p. 119).

Citizenship

The post-revolutionary Constitution which continues to reign Mexican law today, was ratified on February 5th, 1917, in a room full of men who laughed at the suggestion of guaranteeing women their full citizenship. As a result, the original document was vague about whether women were considered Mexican citizens (Mitchell & Schell, 2007). A Domestic Relations Law passed that same year granting both women and men equality within the marriage, whereas previous civil codes had bestowed upon women their husbands' protection in exchange for their obedience (Ramos Escandón, 2007). Yet, the law gave full authority to women over the household and children and made women's adultery the basis for divorce in all cases, but men's adultery the basis for divorce only in some. Even though women had the right to own property, they could not, without their husbands' permission "encumber, alienate, or mortgage it" (Ibid. p. 62).

As Mexican feminist pioneer and suffragist, Sofía Villa de Buentello, wrote in her 1921 book *Woman and the Law*:

"[…] here as in all laws, men have formulated them on the basis of their own convenience, taking as a pretext the supposed inferiority of women, whom they consider

incapable of managing their own property, even when the aforesaid Law of Domestic Relations orders otherwise" (Villa de Buentello, 1921).

Women won the right to vote first at the municipal level in 1946, and then nationally in 1953. A combination of factors led them to gain the right to vote when they did, first because the church and opposition parties had lost fervor, which took away also any credible threat to the establishment from feminist groups within these organizations; second, because the international system increasingly demanded an institutionalized uphold of human rights and Mexico wanted to project a democratic image in the world; third, because the women's movement had been divided and lacked the cohesion necessary to influence politics at the national level; and most importantly, because it took decades for social norms and attitudes throughout the country to catch up with the sudden political and social changes brought by the revolution, particularly regarding women's contestation of gender roles via their active participation in the revolutionary fight (Buck, 2007).

The pattern of mobilizing women and promoting their political participation was observable only when it represented a tool for the state to materialize its social objectives that continued for decades to follow. Notable examples of this tactic are the government's mobilization of women in its temperance campaigns and social welfare service provision. Educated and middle-class women were assigned an active role as social workers and volunteers, while women across all classes were empowered to 'influence' the men in their household against the vicious evils of alcohol consumption (Mitchell 2007). As soon as the government's objectives shifted, so would their reliance on women, whose main role in society was limited to the boundaries of the family.

Through their paternalistic manipulation of women as a group, the post-revolutionary government claimed its legitimacy and simultaneously maintained control over the threat that increasingly educated and aware women organizations represented. For example, the few educational reforms intended for women that the revolutionary state had implemented were overturned as early as 1922, given the pressures of elite groups who feared mass education of peasants. At the same time, intermittent reforms such as these allowed women groups to continue educating themselves and each other, and gaining effervescence to claim their full citizenship, a goal that even to this day, they have accomplished only in part.

2. VIETNAM

Women Before the Revolution

Vietnamese women before the Revolution enjoyed virtually no privileges or rights. The millennial passage of the Chinese invaders through Vietnam revoked matriarchal and communalism tribal traditions and imposed Confucian hierarchy (Bergman, 1975). Following Confucian tradition, women in North Vietnam were subject to the 'Three Obediences' —the father, the husband, and the elder son (Jacobs, 2014). The Chinese rule also imposed feudalism, polygamy, patriarchy, and instilled the belief that wives were the property of husbands, and their main duty was to provide them with a male heir (Jacobs, 2008). Marriages were arranged based on dowries and bride wealth; and child marriage and domestic violence were widely accepted (ibid.).

French colonization further subjugated women by commercializing sex, forcing them into prostitution, and selling them as property (Bergman, 1975). In 1919, the French liberalized

the education system for wealthy women, which led to the first groups of educated women organizing against French oppression by the mid-decade (ibid.). For example, the Women's Labor Study Association, which organized skill-development programs for women in acceptable trades, also urged them to organize against French colonialism and to reject the Three Obediences. The feminist movement that ignited in urban areas naturally excluded peasant women and was quickly repressed by the French. Yet, by the early days of the revolutionary movement, women "of all classes were allowed no social roles, no freedom of choice in determining their futures and little chance of exercising authority in social groups" (Turley, 1972). In 1943, 98% of women were illiterate (Bunck, 1997).

Nature of the Revolution

The Vietnamese Revolution was socialist in character and aim. Liberation leader Ho Chi Minh established the Viet Minh nationalist independence movement in North Vietnam in 1941. The revolutionary struggle lasted three decades and survived both Japanese intermittent rule during WWII and U.S. military intervention. In 1976, the Vietnam Communist Party took over a reunified nation.

The major revolutionary reforms included radical land reform aimed at reorganizing all farmland into cooperatives and mass investments in health and education, which led to improvements in life expectancy, infant mortality, and child malnutrition (Tarp, 2019). By 1957, 37% of the cultivable land in North Vietnam had been granted to 2,104,000 families (Pingali & Xuan, 1992). In the South, land redistribution began in 1970 and resulted in the distribution of "1.3 million hectares of agricultural land to over 1 million farmers" (ibid.).

Meanwhile, in the south, U.S. military intervention condoned mass rape and forced millions of women into prostitution. At its height, there were twenty times as many prostitutes as the combined number of women doctors, or 400,000 total: one for every GI (Bergman, 1975). Women thought of taking part in the Vietnamese liberation movement were called "Vietcong Whores' and forced into 'gang bangs' whenever captured (ibid. p. 74). In 1970, a well-publicized dual rape of a mother and daughter pushed a group of women to organize into the Women's Committee to Defend the Right to Live. They organized strikes, demonstrations, and boycotts with four demands: the withdrawal of U.S. troops, the outcast of the President in South Vietnam, a new coalition government, and respect for the dignity and civil rights of women. Many of their members were imprisoned for years.

Revolution's Treatment of Women

Vietnamese Marxist intellectuals took on women's subjugation as a symbol for analyzing parallel oppressive conditions under colonialism (Bunck, 1997). As a result, women were mobilized into the revolutionary fight because they saw their survival depended on the success of the revolution. Women led the mass political movement that led to the august revolution in 1945 and continued to be a key driver of success for the revolutionary struggle. As early as 1930, the Indochine Communist Party had pledged to fight for gender equality (Bergman, 1975). Further, Ho Chin Mihn made it a priority to include wome n and liberate them from the feudalistic lifestyles they had been forced to take. Additionally, and in contrast with Mexico, guaranteeing equal rights for women was listed as the ninth of ten "'essential tasks of the revolution"' (qtd. in Turley, 1972, p. 796).

Cadre Training schools included women who mobilized other women in the villages as a necessary component of the revolutionary fight against the French; "[..] even grandmothers learned to read and write so they could make their reports to the revolutionary committee" (Bergman 1975, p. 125). Women of the "long-haired army" were the primary drivers of the movement's spread. They practiced the 3 togethers: living, eating, and working with the people to gain their trust. That way, revolutionary propaganda was spread from the bottom up, and came from the people and not the government.

Pulling men into war efforts pushed the revolutionary elites "to accelerate establishment of nurseries in order to free women for labor in agriculture and industry" (Turley, 1972, p. 799). Women-led managerial teams and their participation in politics and paid work increased rapidly since 1965 (ibid.). "The great majority of women have participated in the revolutionary struggles in both Northern and Southern parts of Viet Nam because they saw that their own survival and liberation depended on gaining two goals: the expulsion of the U.S. invaders from the South and building socialism in the North" (Bergman, 1975, p. 244). The Vietnamese have a saying that encompasses women's role in this period: "Women are the greatest victims of the war, but they are also its greatest heroes" (Bergman, 1975), p. 134).

Citizenship

The Viet Minh legally declared women equal to men. It granted them the right to vote, to hold office, to hold custody of their children, and to divorce (Jacobs, 2014). The revolutionary regime also implemented a minimum marriage age and banned child marriage and polygamy (ibid.).

In 1967, the initial National Liberation Front's policy around women declared women equal to men in social, political and cultural realms, equal in rights and pay, maternity leave with full pay, "progressive marriage and family regulations", protection of other and children, childcare services, and the promotion of women cadres (Bergman 1975, p. 186-87). The Union of Women for the Liberation of South Vietnam organized a special school for training women in political and military leadership. In North Vietnam, the central school for women had trained almost 3,000 women cadres by 1973, most of whom returned to work at district offices of the Union. Women were praised for organizing birth control campaigns, for encouraging South Vietnamese soldiers to desert, and young women were trained and encouraged to take on jobs that had been previously reserved for men.

In 1974, 40% of the People's Liberation Armed Forces regimental commanders were women, and a higher percentage of women were part of the local militia and regional guerilla units; in the north, nearly all women were part of the militia. By 1975, there were more women in leadership positions in the provisional government than in any other country and 43% of the People's Provincial Council members were women (Bergman, 1975). At the village level, women led 4,300 of the 5,000 People's Councils (ibid.).

Women over fifty were part of the Association of Mothers of Fighters, a mass organization that encouraged fighters, and took care of the disabled soldiers and of families of casualties. Many also worked as undercover intel pretending to be peasants serving GIs. Household chores were collectivized and when men were back from the frontlines, they were expected to share the load; men were legally expected to share all the household, childcare, and marketing work.

Property Rights

As soon as Vietnamese territory was liberated, private profit - making was banned, and land reform was designed to benefit both men and women equally as every person who was a peasant received a parcel. By 1975, women were responsible for 70% of agricultural production in the country. Additionally, the land reform removed preexisting concentrations of wealth that provided the need and economic means to take second wives and concubines (Turley, 1972). Additionally, the abolition of private property improved wo men's status (Spichiger, 2013).

However, the Population Classification Decree which land distribution was based on classified brides according to their husbands' class. This represented a caveat for wealthy women who married peasants or working - class men in order to escape the reform, while peasant women or those in working families who married above their class lost their rights to land titles after having lived three years with their husbands (Turley, 1972). On the contrary, men's class status was not af fected by marriage.

In 1986, the Vietnamese regime implemented a set of market - oriented reforms known as Doi Moi. Among others, these reforms comprised the privatization of agriculture and state enterprises, the liberalization of foreign investment, the elimination of state subsidies, and a lowering of the exchange rate (Bunck, 1997). The privatization of state firms led the state to lay off 900,000 workers, of which 60% were women (Bunck, 1997). And while an expanding private sector quickly absorbed many of the states' employees, the lost control over working and pay regulations dismantled the previous support of the state towards equality in the workplace.

Land was decollectivized and land titles were granted without mention of gender. The new land policy reallocated communal land towards land controlled by individual households (Menon et al., 2017). As such, decollectivization opened avenues for women to enter the labor market, but devolved control over the land, and thus over family resources, to men (Jacobs, 2008). During the immediate post Doi Moi period (1993-1998), women's wages declined compared to men's despite their increased incorporation into both informal and formal labor markets (Liu, 2004). In rural settings where women worked in agriculture, the reforms provided an independent source of income but further confined peasant women who had participated in cooperatives to domestic roles. Additionally, rural women were often pressured into giving birth to increase the supply of labor to the farm, which continued even after the state had implemented the Two-Child policy in 1988 (Jacobs, 2014).

3. CUBA

Women Before the Revolution

Cuban women before the revolution lived under much better conditions than both their Mexican and Vietnamese counterparts. Cuba became the first country in the Latin American region to legally grant divorce and granted women the right to vote and run for office in 1934 (Macías, 2011). Its 1940 Constitution was widely regarded as one of the most progressive for gender equality in the entire Western Hemisphere (ibid.). The number of women working outside the home, attending school, and using birth control surpassed those of almost every other country in Latin America or the Global South (Bunck, 1997). There were women, mayors, judges, and members of cabinet (ibid.). Between 1934 and 1958, 26 women held legislative office (Lamrani, 2016).

Although Cuban women performed better in many indicators than women around the world, throughout the fifties, about one third of women in Cuba were illiterate and only 1% went beyond secondary education (García, 2011). Before the start of the Cuban Revolution, women comprised 12% of the labor force and performed only jobs that were considered appropriate for women (Caram León, 2005), even though the roles they played were significantly broader and more varied and fulfilling that those of Vietnamese and Mexican women (Bunck, 1997).

Nature of the Revolution

Cuban independence from Spain left the island vulnerable to the influence of other great powers . Notably, the U.S. played a decisive role in its social and economic development in the 19th and 20th centuries. Fulgencio Batista, a dictator and American ally that ruled from 1952 to 1959, was domestically resented, having lost most of his public suppo rt through the manipulation of elections, the press, the university, and Congress. Cubans despised his lack of protection of national sovereignty, veiling for the interests of foreign businessmen while turning Cuba into a Vegas - style destination for wealth y Americans.

The Cuban Revolution was a national liberation movement led by a small group of intellectuals, but notoriously supported by the masses. Cuba's revolutionary government immediately introduced egalitarian policies: land and wealth distribution, public education and food and essential goods distribution, but was careful not to align with either the Soviet or American superpower. Afraid that Castro's socialist policies would spark a chain of socialist uprisings in Latin America, the U.S. administr ation planned a failed invasion in the

Bay of Pigs in April 1961. As a response, Castro declared the socialist character of his revolution.

Revolution's Treatment of Women

Like the Communist regime in Vietnam, Cuban revolutionary leaders employed a revolutionary rhetoric that placed women's struggles *a la par* with revolutionary goals. While women took an active and critical role in the revolution, most of them worked to promote the revolution's mass literacy campaign, teacher training programs, and childcare programs (Bunck, 1997)[1]. Unlike Mexico and Vietnam, only a few women participated in the battlefield as part of the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon, in part because the Cuban Revolution was significantly more rapid and less bloody than the other two. Nonetheless, many women did participate as messengers and spies, collected supplies for the guerillas, organized demonstrations, hid revolutionaries, transported weapons, and created local hospitals (Stone, 1981).

In addition to leading the revolution's social program, women in Cuba worked as mechanics, drove tractors, controlled mills, became police officers and doctors, and increasingly took on high-profile administrative positions in agriculture and increasingly in other sectors as well (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1979). The revolutionary state also implemented a set of policies with the goal of alleviating women's workload in the house and allowing them to enter the labor market. For instance, the Family Code implemented in 1975 divided domestic chores equally between husbands and wives, declared equality within the marriage, and protected women's individual and joint property (Nazzari, 1983; Stone, 1981). "In all, the

[1] In 1961, the UNESCO named Cuba the 'first territory free of illiteracy' (Lamrani, 2016).

number of women in the labor force more than doubled between 1959 and 1970, growing from 295,000 to 600,000" (Hewitt de Alcántara, 1979).

Property Rights

Like the other two cases, the Cuban revolutionary regime implemented a radical and widespread land reform. Similarly to the Vietnamese case, the 1959 land reform substituted all *latifundios* , or large plantation estates, with cooperatives that allowed for l arge-scale cultivation and maximized use of idle land (Valdés García, 2003). The law specifically stipulated that every "natural or legal person" would benefit from the land reform and land would be granted to whomever worked it without distinction. Noneth eless, priority was given to heads of households and families of those who had joined the revolutionary struggle. This first draft of the law did not specifically target women as beneficiaries, but gender equality did become one of the goals of the revolut ionary state's policies (Deere & León, 1998).

The law was accompanied by a set of reforms that directly benefited women. It divided agricultural land into Agrarian Development Zones which comprised boarding schools for general and agrarian education, peas ant maternity houses, relief houses, medical and dental health clinics, recreation salons, libraries, and sports fields (Valdés García, 2003). This was complemented by other policies guaranteeing mandatory prenatal care, prenatal classes, and hospital birt hs, as well as full access to contraception and abortion (Johnson, 2011). In the 1970s, eligibility for cooperative membership expanded from household heads to include individuals. Mass female brigades provided women in cooperatives technical assistance on agronomy, veterinary care, and administration skills (Deere, 1985). Further, in 1982, the Law of Agricultural Cooperatives declared equality of men and women, whether

married or single, to be members. Through this process, peasant women were guaranteed equal job opportunities; by 1985, women comprised 25.4% of cooperatives, a higher percentage than that achieved by any other Latin American land reform (Deere & León, 1998).

Citizenship

As mentioned above, the Cuban Constitution of 1940 was widely regarded as progressive at the time. Yet, the revolutionary state quickly incorporated additional laws that were designed to support women's development. It declared full legal equality for women and men and gave women full and free access to all professions. It also implemented gender quotas: 50% of state employees must be women. Historically, Cuba has maintained a high-ranking position in the number of women parliamentarians; it ranked 3 in 2016. This trend holds for women ministers, at the Council of State, as heads of provincial assemblies, members of the Community Party's Central Committee, and union leaders of the Confederation of Cuban workers (Lamrani, 2016).

Its 1963 Maternity Law for Working women stipulated the state's provision of specific maternal and pre natal care, paid and unpaid leave, financial aid to mothers and regulation to workplaces employing women (Stone, 1981). Maternity in Cuba is considered a right of personal choice and no state-led campaigns have been carried out to control or influence this decision (ibid.). Its 1976 Constitutional ratification declared that "Women have the same rights as men in the economic, political, and social fields as well as in the family" (Stone, 1981).

While feminist movements and organizations developed in the prerevolutionary time, their focus and leadership excluded rural women, apart from philanthropic endeavors also led by urban groups (Macías, 2011). The centralization of all civil society organizations led to women's groups dissolving and being forced to operate under the umbrella of the Federation

of Cuban Women, which was led by Raul Castro´s wife Vilma Espín—a revolutionary who dedicate her life to fight for gender equality until her death in 2007—but lacked autonomy from the Communist Party. Women in Cuba are free to vote in all elections, partake in political life, and are considered full citizens, but their political citizenship is limited to participation in—and thus compliance with—the central Communist organ's aims and scope.

I. Concluding Thoughts

In Mexico, the essence of women's submission was their role as wives and the nature of their oppression horizontal. The revolutionary state knew how to capitalize on the concessions it granted to women and allowed them to join a struggle that would not have succeeded without their support. Women did not gain the right to vote until two decades later than Cuban women. Additionally, most of the strides made for women's land rights up to this point were reverted under the PRI. In 1992, the government passed Article 27 of the Constitution which effectively dismantled all protections for women: the parcels for family use within the *ejido* could now be part of the individual *ejidatario's* private property and they could inherit to anyone. Thus, women lost their access to land through marital or kinship ties. Any progress made during the revolutionary years in terms of gender equality served only the revolution's aims and was made malleable to the interests of those who rose to power.

In Cuba, the system of oppression that women faced stemmed primarily from the general oppression of the U.S.-supported dictatorship. For that reason, the revolutionary regime adopted an ideological rhetoric that called for gender equality and capitalized on women's appropriation of the revolutionary goals as a means to their own development. In

1966, Fidel Castro triumphantly declared his revolution a 'double liberation for women' (Stone, 1981). Land reform policies not only benefited women and men equally but were also accompanied by a set of state-led services that alleviated women's domestic work and led to increased levels of human development, both in terms of health and education, that were unheard of in the region.

In Vietnam, women's oppression was vertically imposed due to the passage of Chinese, French, and U.S. invaders. Their emancipation was declared one of the ten objectives of the revolution which led to magnificent strides in their acquisition of both citizenship and property rights. However, decollectivization of land and the capitalistic reforms under Doi Moi reverted great part of the efforts made for gender equality under the revolutionary regime and led to a resurgence of Confucian ideals that discriminated against them. While gender equality is guaranteed under the law, it is not followed in practice (Spichiger, 2013).

Today, Cuba has one of the highest levels of women education in Latin America. It averages 10.9 years of schooling for women over 25 years old. Mexico's average is 8.4, and Vietnam's is 7.9. These are all above the Latin American average of 7.7 years of schooling. Cuba also has the highest percentage of female parliamentarians at 53.2% in 2019, compared to Mexico at 48.4% and Vietnam at 26.7%. Vietnamese women older than 15 (53.3%) perceive higher levels of community safety than both Cuban (46.2%) and Mexican women (37.3%), and exhibit higher levels of female employment at 76%, compared to 41% in Cuba and 46.4% in Mexico. Women in both Mexico and Cuba are active participants in the informal sector (2020 Women's Peace and Security Index and UNDP 2020 Human Development Perspectives Report).

The highlighted efforts made by each revolutionary regime in the three cases are notable and commendable at least in comparison to the levels of oppression that women were subject to in the pre-revolutionary period. However, it must be noted that none of the three cases have achieved full gender parity nor been led by a woman head of state. None of the revolutionary elite who ruled each country in the immediate post-revolutionary periods were women, except for Vilma Espin in Cuba. And even in her case, the reach of the Federation of Cuban Women was confined to promoting revolutionary ideals. While the revolutionary regimes in Vietnam and Cuba promoted gender equality in both rhetoric and policy, it is still unclear whether their leaders (the vast majority of whom were men) valued women's equality on its own terms apart from the broader revolutionary aims. In all cases, women's role in the economy or society in the post-revolutionary regimes remained secondary to their role as mothers.

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