

# Connected Revolutions

## *Local and Global Contexts*

No doubt, too, the universality of revolution owed something to mere contagion: the fashion of revolution spreads. But even contagion implies receptivity: a healthy or inoculated body does not catch even a prevailing disease. Therefore, though we may observe accidents and fashions, we still have to ask a deeper question. We must ask what was the general condition of Western European society which made it, in the mid-seventeenth century, so universally vulnerable—intellectually as well as physically—to the sudden new epidemic of revolution?

Controversial British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper refers to seventeenth-century Western European revolutions as “contagion,” “epidemic,” and “fashion”; whether one agrees with these general observations or not, his plea to delve deeper into the revolutionary context is certainly welcome.<sup>1</sup> To explore revolutions not only with their local and regional constraints as well as freedoms in mind but to view them as part of the global context remains the most meaningful approach. This book is a study of three contiguous and overlapping revolutions, the Russian (1905), Ottoman (1908), and Iranian (1905–11), through the lens of Armenian revolutionaries whose movements within and across these frontiers contributed to connecting the struggles as well as illuminating their study. It seeks to explore the interconnectivity of the Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian revolutions in several ways that interweave global and local. First, the study advocates a novel approach to the three revolutions, previously studied in isolation and, to a lesser degree, in comparison, that draws on a “connected histories” approach to the study of world or global history, which has, over the

last decade, become influential in how historians study the past. A connected histories approach goes beyond an examination of the similarities and differences of revolutions and allows a more revealing understanding of how the revolutions are connected. It does this through an archivally grounded analysis of the circulation of revolutionaries, ideas, and print. The protagonists of our analysis are the roving Armenian revolutionaries and intellectuals who, because of their participation in all three revolutions, their border crossings within the region and beyond, their adoption and interpretation of and adaptation to such influential and global ideologies as constitutionalism, federalism, and socialism, become ideal subjects for a retelling of the complex story of the revolutions—a story of revolutionary linkages, of local and regional actors with global ties to big ideas. This brings us to another aim of this book: to view the revolutions not only within their local and regional milieus but as part of the global context. This approach takes into consideration the interplay of “facts on the ground”—that is, phenomena particular to the region—with larger historical processes, such as revolutions in communication, transportation, and ideology that had deep and wide-ranging ramifications across the world. A consideration of these global factors helps to explain the deceptively narrower world of our revolutions.

Chris Bayly’s astute observation that global philosophies, like liberalism and socialism, originating in the West “had left an indelible imprint on most human communities by 1914” certainly resonates for the Middle East and South Caucasus, where these ideas spread and indigenized according to local conditions, objectives, and aspirations. Bayly notes that often ideas and ideologies took on a discernibly distinct form as they disseminated.<sup>2</sup> In chapters 3 and 4, this kind of adaptation and appropriation becomes apparent. Several ideas or ideologies became malleable in the minds and writings of our revolutionaries and intellectuals, as they selectively applied aspects of anarchism and socialism and synthesized them into an eclectic blend that suited their reality and served their political and social interests. Revolutionaries were keenly aware of and familiar with European (including Russian) social scientific and socialist literature, as well as with leftist movements and revolutionary stirrings, not only in their backyard and in Europe but also farther afield—for example, in Cuba and China. As such, they shared much with each other but also with the world around them, which had, in the course of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, been experimenting with such ideas as constitutionalism and socialism and had witnessed constitutionalism succeed in parts of Europe and

socialism thrive in Western and Central European and Russian political movements. They drew inspiration from such activities and applied their understanding and familiarity to the Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian revolutionary environment.

It is within this larger global context that the Russian, Iranian, and Young Turk Revolutions, occurring almost simultaneously in regions bordering each other, may be understood in fresh and revealing ways. All three revolutions under discussion involved the participation of Armenian revolutionaries and intellectuals who contributed in differing ways and degrees and with varying rates of success to revolutionary preparation, process, and development. Whatever the parallels and dissimilarities among the revolutions, neither the revolutions nor the participants were isolated from each other. In fact, they were inextricably connected, a concept not yet fully explored in the study of revolutions. Activists of all three revolutions knew of and about each other and their actions; they were not operating in a vacuum. Therefore, it is essential that such contemporaneous, geographically close revolutions be considered in conjunction and with reference to the larger contemporary context.

With these concerns in mind, this introductory chapter aims to accomplish several goals. It seeks to introduce the local, regional, and global environment and lay out the methodological concerns that drive the study. It begins with the main protagonists of the study, the roving Armenian revolutionaries and their milieu. Following Roper's advice, the chapter then moves to the "general conditions," not only in terms of the wider regional and global context but also the larger methodological issues. It examines comparative, world, and related histories as well as more specifically comparative revolutions to make a case for applying a "connected histories" approach to the study of the early twentieth-century Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian Revolutions—that is, for viewing them as "connected revolutions." It then explores these revolutions on their own and compares them to each other in order to provide the necessary historical background and, thus, move to a discussion of the *fin de siècle*, 1880s and 1890s, and global transformations that smoothed the way toward revolution. The introduction ends with an overview of the sources and the structure of the book. It seeks to lay the crucial foundations for the rest of the study, which explores the finer points of the circulation of men, arms, print, and ideas that justifies a connected histories method for the study of these revolutions and of the interaction of global, regional, and local contexts that explain circulation and connections.

Before moving on to a discussion of connected histories—and given the considerable importance of Armenian activists and intellectuals in the connected history of the revolutions under discussion here—it is necessary to provide briefly some background on the communities and conditions that produced these historical actors on the move.

#### ARMENIANS AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

At the turn of the twentieth century, Armenians constituted a minority in three empires: the Ottoman, the Russian, and the Iranian. The largest number of Armenians lived in Asia Minor, or Eastern Anatolia, in the six Ottoman provinces of Van, Bitlis, Erzurum, Diyarbakır, Van, and Harput, with a smaller, commercially and intellectually developed minority in the urban hubs of Istanbul/Constantinople and Izmir/Smyrna. It is an impossible task to establish the exact number of Ottoman Armenians at the turn of the twentieth century, partly because the demographic issue has been closely tied to the politics of the “Armenian question,” but according to the Armenian Patriarchate’s census of 1913, the number of Armenians was slightly under two million.<sup>3</sup> A smaller Armenian community existed in the Araxes valley and Ararat plain, as well as the South Caucasus—specifically Tiflis/Tbilisi, Yerevan, Kars, Elisavetpol, Batumi, and others—and hovered above one million.<sup>4</sup> Relative to the number of Ottoman and Russian Armenians, a rather minuscule population of about seventy thousand Armenians resided in the provinces of Azerbaijan and Isfahan in Iran.<sup>5</sup>

The latter half of the nineteenth century was a particularly transformative period for the region and for all three communities of Armenians but was notably more so in the case of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, where most Armenians lived. The period was punctuated by advances in and greater access to education, a journalistic and literary revival, and a changing political landscape at home and abroad, which simultaneously included reforms as well as persecution.<sup>6</sup> Women in both the Ottoman and Iranian Armenian communities were instrumental in the spread of education, especially but not exclusively of girls, starting in the second half of the nineteenth century. Women formed charitable organizations; helped to establish kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools; and often provided students with tuition, clothing, and school supplies. One of the key driving forces behind the opening of secular Armenian schools starting in the late nineteenth century was the cam-



MAP 1. Connected empires. Map created by Bill Nelson.

paign to offset the influence of missionaries and curb the opportunities of assimilation.<sup>7</sup> In the early twentieth century and in particular during the revolutionary early twentieth century in Iran and the Ottoman Empire, Armenian women of the uppermiddle and upper classes expanded their activism to the women's movement in an attempt to bring women's issues to the attention of women themselves and to raise their consciousness. Their organizations tried to educate women in politics and in Ottoman and Iranian constitutionalism, as well as inheritance rights, hygiene, and so forth.<sup>8</sup> Especially significant were women writers Srpuhi Dussap, Sibyl (Zabel Asatur), and Zabel Yesayan, whose writings promoted justice and equity for women in the public and private spheres and educational and employment opportunities.<sup>9</sup> Beginning in the late nineteenth century and early in the twentieth century, women's journals began to appear in Istanbul, Cairo, and Beirut. For example, journals such as Marie Beylerian's *Artemis*, which appeared in Cairo in 1901–3, and Hayganush Topuzian-Toshigian's *Dzagbig Ganants* (Women's flower), published in Istanbul in 1905–7, focused on women's issues. They encouraged girls' education and women's full participation in public life as a crucial part of national development.<sup>10</sup>

The changes taking place among women and women's increased participation in public life were taking place in conjunction with other trends, especially in the Ottoman Armenian communities. In the mid-nineteenth century, a younger generation of Ottoman Armenians, mainly from Istanbul, returned from Europe, where they had pursued their education inspired and motivated by the French revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The struggle they waged along with guild members (*esnaf*) against the power of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the class of magnates (*amiras*) for control over the affairs of the community resulted in the adoption of the Armenian National Constitution in 1860.<sup>11</sup>

The internal cultural and political awakening of the Armenian communities paralleled the Ottoman Empire's administrative, financial, and military breakdown and subsequent attempts to revitalize and preserve the Ottoman state. The Tanzimat (Reorganization) reforms, promulgated during the reigns of Ottoman sultans Abdülmecid I and Abdülaziz between 1839 and 1876 in an effort to safeguard the integrity of the empire and win over the loyalty of its subjects, promised among many other things that subjects would have equal obligations and opportunities regardless of religion. The reforms culminated in the promulgation of a short-lived Ottoman Constitution in 1876.<sup>12</sup> However, the disparity between expectation and actual implementation and even increasing mistreatment and violence against the empire's Armenian population, most evident in the 1894–96 massacres of Armenians, led some Armenian leaders, like their Greek and Bulgarian counterparts, to seek assistance from Western European powers as well as from Russia.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the Bulgarian case proved to be quite inspirational for Armenian activists despite the obvious differences in their situations. The majority of the Armenian population was dispersed between two empires, where Armenians remained a minority.

The internationalization of the Armenian question achieved by the Berlin Congress of 1878 did not bring about the implementation of reforms requested by the Armenians—that is, local self-government, civil courts of law, mixed Christian and Muslim militias, voting privileges for adult men, and the allocation of a large portion of local taxes for local improvement projects. Instead, the European powers—Great Britain, France, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Germany—entrusted the Ottoman sultan to carry out reforms and report the empire's progress to the European states at the same time that they forced Russia out of the equation.<sup>14</sup> Starting in the 1880s, Armenians no longer fully entrusted

their fate to Europe, although hopes and efforts continued. They began to look outward for inspiration to their Bulgarian and Greek neighbors, who had been successful in carrying out revolutionary movements against the Ottoman Empire, and inward to themselves for the solution to the Armenian question. They began by organizing small self-defense groups (for example, in Van and Erzurum) and soon after coalesced around revolutionary political parties with the purpose of achieving reforms and local autonomy for Ottoman Armenians.

It was the South Caucasus, however, that produced the two most important and long-lasting Armenian political parties. Caucasian Armenian youth, unlike their counterparts in the Ottoman Empire who studied in France, pursued their education in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Dorpat/Tartu, Leipzig, and Berlin. Also, unlike their fellow Ottoman Armenians—the majority of whom, with the exception of residents of Istanbul and Izmir, worked on the land—Caucasian Armenians formed a substantial segment of the working class in the urban centers of Tiflis/Tbilisi (which was also a critically important intellectual center), Baku, and Batumi. Even Caucasian Armenian peasants had better access to all the advantages and drawbacks of urban life as these cities became the destination for those seeking work in factories. At the turn of the century, Caucasian cities grew and became transformed by market economies and industrialization, as well as railroads, telegraphy, and improvement of roads, forces of turn-of-the-century globalization to which we will return below. In turn, the growth of the Armenian bourgeoisie in the South Caucasian cities of Tiflis, Baku, and Batumi reflected a disparity between population size and dominant economic position, thus raising tensions between the Armenian bourgeoisie and the larger population of Georgians and especially Muslims, as manifested in the bloody clashes between Armenians and Azeris in 1905–6.<sup>15</sup> These developments paralleled the enactment of Russification policies in the late nineteenth century and increasing Russian concerns about separatist movements in the provinces. The policies enacted under Tsar Alexander III (r. 1881–94) and Tsar Nicholas II (r. 1894–1917) led to restrictions on Armenian cultural, philanthropic, and political institutions as well as schools, and they culminated in the 1903 seizure of Armenian Church properties. The Russification policies and closure of schools also affected Armenian schools such as the Nersisian, Gevorgian, and Lazarian Academies, which had served the Caucasian Armenian community and contributed to producing Armenian literati as well as activists and revolutionaries, some of whom continued their education in Germany and Russia.<sup>16</sup> Like their counterparts

in the Ottoman Empire, Caucasian Armenians returned from their European sojourns strongly influenced by German and Russian intellectual trends and took leadership of the South Caucasian Armenian communities and, more important for us, the revolutionary movements.

It is within this Ottoman and Russian context that the Armenian revolutionary movement emerged, as some Armenian youth, disillusioned with failed legal appeals and inspired by Bulgarian and Greek movements, began in the 1870s to form small and secret local groups in the eastern provinces of Anatolia to protect unarmed Armenians from acts of violence and extortion by fellow Ottoman subjects, Turks and Kurds. Two such groups were the Black Cross Organization (Sev Khach' Kazmakerput'iwn), formed in Van in 1878, and the Protectors of the Fatherland (Pashtpan Hayreneats'), formed in Erzurum in 1881.<sup>17</sup> Other active "small clandestine groups" that "aimed at national and cultural revival" included Miut'iwn ew P'rkut'iwn (Unity and Salvation) and Bardzr Hayots' Gaghtni Ĕnkerut'iwn (Secret Society of Upper Armenia), both formed in Erzurum in 1872 and 1882 respectively, and P'ok'r Hayk'i Kazmakerput'iwn (Armenia Minor Organization), formed in Marsovan/Merzifon in 1885.<sup>18</sup> These organizations were soon followed by much larger and transimperial revolutionary parties, represented most visibly by the Hnchakian Revolutionary Party, founded in Geneva in 1887 (known as Sots'eal Demokrat Hnch'akean Kusakts'ut'iwn/Social Democratic Hnchakian Party, or SDHP, following its Sixth Congress in 1909), and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, or ARF (Hay Heghap'okhakan Dashnakts'ut'iwn), established in Tiflis in 1890. The ARF emerged, at first, as an unsuccessful attempt to organize the rather divergent members of the SDHP, the Russian populist Narodnaya Volya (People's Will), and liberal nationalists.<sup>19</sup> As chapter 4 discusses in detail, both parties attempted to combine the national question and socialism and sought solidarity and collaboration outside Armenian circles. Unlike the SDHP, however, the ARF did not advocate independence or separation from the Ottoman Empire. The SDHP, as its name reflects, leaned toward social democracy, although it never gave up national aspirations. As a socialist party, it had joined the Second Socialist International (1886–1914) by 1904 (perhaps earlier) and participated in its congress in Amsterdam, where it was represented by Marxist theoretician and founder of the Russian social democratic movement, Georgi Plekhanov.<sup>20</sup> The debate over the national question—that is, the idea of the nation-state, national or cultural autonomy, and self-determination, and especially the way the last two played out in



multiethnic or multinational empires—continued to be discussed in the Second International. The ARF espoused a socialism that most closely resembled moderate European reformist socialism, although it borrowed and appropriated quite broadly from a wider array of West and Central European and Russian intellectual and political currents. Although the ARF participated for the first time in the Congress of the Second International in London (21 July and 1 August 1896) and its delegate presented a report of party activities, the issue of membership came up only in 1905, after the party committed itself to opposition to tsarism, solidarity with Russian socialist parties, and renewed commitment to socialism.<sup>21</sup> Membership came in 1907, although the Socialist International Bureau recognized the party's operations only in the Caucasus and as part of the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries. The ARF's demand to create an Ottoman section was accepted after some deliberation and appeals by the ARF in December 1908, and the party went to the 1910 Copenhagen congress with two delegations representing Caucasian and Ottoman branches.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps taking into account the SDHP's reluctance to carry out socialist activity in the Ottoman Empire, the ARF argued that it was the only socialist organization in Anatolia.<sup>23</sup> In addition to these revolutionary parties, there existed also a number of smaller organizations of Armenian leftists of varying degrees of commitment to orthodox Marxism, social democrats, socialist revolutionaries, internationalists, and others who were not aligned with the two parties. They either acted under an Armenian social democratic banner or joined larger parties such as the Russian Social Democratic Party. Unlike the ARF, which operated in three revolutions, and the SDHP, which operated in two (Russian and Iranian), very few of these smaller organizations operated in more than one or in all of the revolutionary movements. They contributed, however, to the intellectual and ideological milieu of the revolutionary period and, therefore, appear in relevant discussions in the following chapters.

Both the SDHP and the ARF spread their influence by establishing cells throughout the South Caucasus, the Ottoman Empire, and even Iran, whose Armenian community began to experience an increase in the number of schools in urban and rural areas starting in the 1870s.<sup>24</sup> This development, especially in northwestern Iran, was quickly followed by politicization, in large part because of Caucasian Armenian influence with the influx of teachers and political activists. Northwestern Iran, bordering Anatolia and the South Caucasus, served as a point of passage or layover for militants, arms, and print crossing imperial

(Russian to Ottoman) frontiers. Just as northwestern Iran, the South Caucasus, and the Ottoman Empire were all linked in the Armenian revolutionary struggle, they continued to act as interlocked loops in the same revolutionary chain during the Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian revolutionary movements. Armenian revolutionaries, therefore, struggled on multiple fronts and brought their expertise and broader vision of the future of the empires into the service of the three revolutions.

The ARF takes center stage in this study for three key reasons: first, it was the leading Armenian party in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian states and even in Europe; second, it was the only organization that took part in one degree or another in all three revolutions; and third, it is the only party that has maintained a very rich private archive. The SDHP is second in importance, followed by Armenian Socialist Revolutionaries and Social Democrats affiliated with the larger Caucasian and Russian Socialist Revolutionary and Social Democratic movements. However, the others pale in comparison to the ARF when it comes to revolutionary participation, sheer numbers and strength, and sources. After all, as the Polish socialist paper *Naprzód* (Forward) in Krakow remarked, the ARF was a “tough walnut”—that is, difficult to rein in.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, all play an important role in the history of this period and therefore help us understand the variety of ideas and ideologies that Armenian revolutionaries espoused.

Momentous changes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries not only shaped the making of these revolutions but also contributed to creating the subjectivities of the revolutionaries who connected all three. Drawing on a large arsenal of internal and external political, social, and economic developments and “pull and push” factors, Armenian revolutionaries and intellectuals took part in the Russian and Young Turk Revolutions and were instrumental in the Iranian Revolution. Key among the factors driving Armenian participation was the revolutionaries’ conviction that the fate of the Armenian populations living in all three empires would benefit from the victory, the establishment of a constitution that promised the end of autocracy and arbitrary rule, and the realization of representative government, social and economic justice, harmonious coexistence, and equality of all citizens regardless of religious and ethnic differences. Therefore, the wider participation and collaboration in these revolutionary and constitutional movements must also be seen as part and parcel of the more limited Armenian struggle in the Ottoman and Russian Empires, as the campaigns and their participants were intertwined and informed by each other. As this study shows, revo-

lutionary participation became possible only because of the ground that had already been set—that is, the transport of arms, circulation of activists, and dissemination of newspapers, all of which served both the larger (Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian) revolutionary goals and methods as well as the kindred Armenian revolutionary movement. Our revolutionaries saw the movements as connected and part of the same fight.

#### THE CASE FOR CONNECTED HISTORIES

In recent historiography, comparative history has faced a formidable challenge for a number of reasons and from a number of academic quarters, especially from those advocating transnational, entangled, *histoire croisée*, or connected histories.<sup>26</sup> What is the relationship of these approaches to each other and to world history, and what case can be made for adopting a connected histories approach in this study?

Historians' views on comparative history, although often cautious and sometimes critical or even censorious, have progressed significantly from those expressed by Raymond Grew in a 1980 essay. Grew opines, "Not only is comparison not a method, but 'comparative history' is a term better avoided . . ." <sup>27</sup> Writing during a time when he believed that the term had been overused and therefore "compromised," Grew wittily cautions, "for many professional historians comparative study evokes the ambivalence of a good bourgeois toward the best wines: to appreciate them is a sign of good taste, but indulgence seems a little loose and wasteful."<sup>28</sup> Writing twenty-five years later, Micol Seigel wonders whether the time has come for a "moratorium." Writing in an exceedingly globalized world, Seigel explains, "It is the charge to illuminate the complex, global network of power-inflected relations that enmesh our world, including those connections generated by academic engagement and observation. For scholars committed to this radical legacy, comparison serves as a better subject than method."<sup>29</sup> Contemporary historians of comparative history advocate a particular and systematic methodology and one that emphasizes complementarity to other approaches—such as transnational, world, and connected—but attempts to avoid the common tendency to conflate them.<sup>30</sup>

Critics challenge a number of additional issues often associated with the comparative approach, ranging from its close attachment to the nation-state and national histories and its universalist or presentist tendencies to its reliance on secondary sources.<sup>31</sup> While herself cognizant and critical of these attributes, Philippa Levine advocates for comparative studies and

criticizes entangled and connected histories, using examples from Eliga Gould and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, respectively, precisely because they seek to sever their ties to the comparative. As Levine points out, for Gould, the main issue with comparative history is its reliance on the necessity to have two distinct and “geographically and temporally remote” wholes.<sup>32</sup> In his study of the English- and Spanish-speaking Atlantic worlds, Gould argues that far from being separate, it is “an interconnected yet porous and open-ended whole,” and its “intertwined” history, therefore, must be studied not comparatively but as entangled.<sup>33</sup> When discussing Subrahmanyam’s plea for connected histories, Levine does not seem to do it justice. What distinguishes Subrahmanyam’s connected histories approach is not some obscure “connectedness” that explores “common salient elements” but a systematic exploration of the circulation of ideas, individuals, and objects. It goes beyond “entangled” by offering circulation as a mode for understanding entanglements. Therefore, comparison may be insufficient compared to the more direct and dynamic circulation as a way to explore and understand connection.<sup>34</sup> While Levine sees these methods as belonging within the larger framework of comparative history, Heinz-Gerhard Haupt argues that transnational history, connected histories, or *histoire croisée* are substantially different from comparative history. He fairly concludes, “Those approaches . . . choose circulation of models, the appropriation of transfers, and hybrid structures more than they choose comparative history.” For Haupt, they are a welcome intervention, even a “provocation,” to comparative scholarship.<sup>35</sup> While recognizing the promise that studies of “transnational entanglements”—including entangled history and *histoire croisée*—hold, Jürgen Kocka seems rather dismissive in his final assessment, warning that the absence of “rigorous comparison” may lead to “speculative or feuilletonistic” studies, an indictment that, one can argue, equally applies to any scholarship that lacks rigor.<sup>36</sup> Levine argues for a “remak[ing of] comparative history through an attentiveness to the interplay of local and global, to the meaning of rupture as well as commonality, and always with an eye to the teleologies of essentialism that plague not just comparative but all forms of historical endeavor.”<sup>37</sup> Much like Jerry Bentley in his explication of world history, she calls for a comparative method that explores and explains “interactions” that make history, thus “comparing ‘across’ and ‘in spite of.’”<sup>38</sup>

This brings us to the question of the relationship of world history, comparative history, and other approaches like *histoire croisée* or connected histories. In several of his essays on the significance and contributions of the world-historical approach to our historical understanding, Bentley

addresses comparative history and world history in the same breath, as world history clarifies relationships between societies “by placing them in comparative perspective.”<sup>39</sup> The approaches have much in common, including an effort to think beyond the nation-state and to reject Eurocentrism.<sup>40</sup> Similar to the aims of contemporary historians practicing a form of comparative history or, even more so, connected histories and transnational history, world history emphasizes encounters, interactions, and “large-scale processes that transcend national, political, geographical, and cultural boundary lines.”<sup>41</sup> For Bentley, the commonalities of connected, transnational, and entangled histories with world history warrant treating them as approaches that “overlap.”<sup>42</sup>

Much of world history and comparative history methods, perhaps until recently, have suffered from the same drawback: a reliance on secondary sources in place of rigorous primary source investigation.<sup>43</sup> This drawback is also the case, more specifically, with comparative studies of revolution, which are characterized by yet another trait: social scientists—not historians—dominate comparative studies of revolutions. This may be partly because, on the one hand, social scientists, particularly sociologists or historical sociologists, have been the initiators of the comparative approach, and, on the other hand, because much of the comparative revolution scholarship concerns itself with creating somewhat all-embracing theoretical models to explain revolutionary causes, processes, and outcomes—a methodology that unnerves historians.<sup>44</sup> Whether we see entangled and connected histories as “shar[ing] some of the characteristics of historical comparison,” as does Haupt; as “forms of comparative history,” as does Levine; in combination, as does Kocka; or “overlap[ping]” with world history, as does Bentley, it is crucial to distinguish more explicitly the unique contribution of the connected histories approach and acknowledge its departure from comparative history.<sup>45</sup>

## REVOLUTIONS: A BRIEF DISCUSSION

In this section, I provide a brief overview of some of the debates in the scholarship on revolution and comparative revolutions, especially on what Jack Goldstone calls comparative historical analysis (CHA) of revolutions, as a necessary theoretical backdrop that will lead to considering a connected histories approach to revolutions.

Debates regarding the definition of revolution, the role of structures and ideas, the question of why individuals take part, outcomes, and even theories to predict revolutions still continue, largely among social scientists

but also among historians of revolutions.<sup>46</sup> No single definition applies to all types and cases of revolution.<sup>47</sup> Social scientists' dizzying array of definitions range from narrower ones that insist on regime change accompanied by mass mobilization to more open-ended ones whose focus lies in the *attempt* to overthrow or transform a regime rather than the actual realization of those goals.<sup>48</sup> In the latter case, one could argue that the process is just as important as the outcome, thus opening the way for a more inclusive definition that emphasizes not merely successful social revolutions that completely transform states and social structures in the short and long term but also others that initiate significant changes that affect the future course of society. Ultimately, however, as Eric Selbin notes, "While definitions and explorations of revolution come and go, decades of social science research have done little to bring us closer to understanding why revolutions happen here and not there, now and not then, among these people and not those."<sup>49</sup> A rather limited definition that insists on a complete and enduring political and social transformation may exclude one or more of the revolutions in this study. However, on the whole, current scholarship treats all of them—Russian, Ottoman, and Iranian—as revolutions. Our revolutions have not been complete successes; however, it would be just as imprudent to dismiss revolutions because they do not measure up to the few classic social revolutions such as the French (1789) and the Russian (1917) as to dismiss twentieth-century genocides because they do not meet the criteria of the Holocaust. Are the revolutions we are looking at successful? What is a successful revolution? Can a failed revolution still be a revolution if one considers process and effort as important as outcome? Should the focus be on process? All are noteworthy questions, but they are not necessarily crucial to our understanding of how these struggles are connected by a larger global context and regional and local circulation of transimperial revolutionaries and global ideologies.

The role of revolutionaries and ideas brings us to the question of the degree of importance of agency and structure in comparative analyses of revolution, a debate inspired by Theda Skocpol's work in the 1970s. The debate over structure versus agency has been a central part of the scholarship on the comparative aspects of revolutions in the early modern and modern periods, whether in Europe or Eurasia. Jack Goldstone's essay on CHA of revolutions provides an insightful examination of CHA methods as practiced by social scientists and some historians. What is clear from his study is CHA's privileging of patterns of events—and, even more so, causal relationships—in most studies but especially in the influential and hotly debated work of Skocpol.<sup>50</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s, studies on revolutions (mainly by Crane Brinton, Lyford Edwards, and George Pettee) focused on similarities in patterns of events and contributed little to our understanding of causes.<sup>51</sup> That focus began to change in the 1950s, and the change intensified throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as scholars sought causal explanations in the uneven relationship between traditional and modernizing elements within society. They were quickly critiqued by the giants in the field of revolution studies, Charles Tilly and Barrington Moore, who challenged the very foundation of modernization theory, which attributed the occurrence of revolutions to society's modernization.<sup>52</sup> Skocpol's intervention, as Goldstone explains, moved modernization from the national to the global level.<sup>53</sup> Although Skocpol's conclusions were, in turn, challenged by new revolutions in places such as Nicaragua, Iran, and Eastern Europe and by scholars who reminded us of the significant role of actors and ideology, nevertheless they left a lasting impression on the scholarship on revolution.<sup>54</sup> Goldstone succinctly describes Skocpol's structural theory as one that insists on three conditions that affect the social and political structures of society and that are necessary for revolution: "international pressure from a more advanced state or states; economic or political elites who had the power to resist state-led reforms and create a political crisis; and organizations (whether village or party) that were capable of mobilizing peasants for popular uprisings against local authorities."<sup>55</sup> As the numerous CHA-inspired studies of revolutions have also clearly proven, there is neither a single cause nor a combination of causes that guarantee the occurrence of revolutions. A number of interrelated and sometimes seemingly unrelated factors on the global, regional, and local level combine to cause revolutions to flare up.<sup>56</sup> For example, in his study on third-world social revolutions, John Foran, who adopts Skocpol's definition of a social revolution—that is, "rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures"—points to five factors, which, occurring in conjunction, result in successful revolutions in the third world.<sup>57</sup> They are "1) dependent development; 2) a repressive, exclusionary, personalist state; 3) the elaboration of effective and powerful political cultures of resistance; and a revolutionary crisis consisting of 4) an economic downturn; and 5) a world-systemic opening (a let-up of external controls)."<sup>58</sup> Foran brings in agency and ideology—in the form of a culture of resistance—to supplement an otherwise structural approach.

Therefore, some scholars have attempted to consider agency—the role of individuals and ideas—in combination with structure to

understand revolutions, whereas others have given agency priority. Many scholars have questioned, to one degree or another, Skocpol's and other structuralists' insistence on the primacy of structure as the key component of revolutionary action and their downplaying of agency and ideology; instead, these scholars have allotted individuals and ideas formidable influence on revolutionary mobilization.<sup>59</sup> For example, in his comparative study of the Iranian, Nicaraguan, and Philippine Revolutions, Misagh Parsa extensively analyzes the collective actions, interests, and ideologies of major social groups, classes, and individuals; he shows that they are "at the heart of revolutionary struggles but are given short shrift" in the scholarship.<sup>60</sup> In a more recent and provocative analysis that offers an antidote to the privileging of structural theories, Eric Selbin calls for "bringing story back in" by delving into the role and power of myth, memory, mimesis, "stories and narratives of popular resistance, rebellion, and revolution which have animated and emboldened generations of revolutionaries."<sup>61</sup> Selbin has long been a strong critic of structuralism, arguing that the role of individuals cannot be excluded from explanations of why revolutions take place and that indeed individuals are central to why revolutions emerge and how they proceed. He emphatically contends that revolutions are "created by people, led by people, fought and died for by people, consciously and intentionally constructed by people."<sup>62</sup> To this, he adds individuals' stories and how the stories contribute to the making of revolution. This aspect of Selbin's analysis relates to the aim and approach of this study, which focuses on the stories of roving revolutionaries and circulating material and ideas and their contribution to connecting revolutions.

The question of agency and the contribution of ideas and individuals to creating revolutions ties in very closely to the reasons that actors participate in revolution. Theories about what propels individuals and groups include, for example, "relative deprivation," when expectations go unmet and people instead encounter deprivation; rational choice theory, when self-interest dictates the decision to become active, and its opposite, when group interests override individual ones; and even "bandwagoning," whereby people join because they see others taking up arms or taking to the streets.<sup>63</sup> In the case of this study of circulating Armenian revolutionaries, the matter of agency and the reasons individuals chose to venture into three simultaneously and/or consecutively occurring and bordering revolutions is particularly important. What ideas and promises drove these actors? What practical circumstances on the ground contributed to action? How did the regional, political scene and global transformations in tech-



nology and ideology encourage and make possible the choices they made regarding collaborative struggle with other revolutionaries? It is these kinds of questions that drive this study. While the debates on revolutionary theory, definition, and other related matters remain admittedly important and may provide breadth and backdrop, a primary-source-driven and historically grounded treatment of the three revolutions that goes beyond comparison and instead highlights connections through circulation and context—local, regional, and global—takes precedence here. Thus, this study departs from earlier comparative approaches and brings a fresh perspective to the scholarship on revolutions. From where does such an approach draw inspiration? What are its foundations and rationale?

#### CONNECTED HISTORIES APPROACH AND ITS POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF REVOLUTIONS

Unlike insular studies of revolution, and unlike comparative scholarship, which compares the common historical traits of revolutions, a third approach occupies itself with revolutions' "horizontal continuity," to use a term introduced by Joseph Fletcher. According to Fletcher, "horizontal continuities" are said to exist when an "economic, social, or cultural historical phenomenon experienced by two or more societies between which there is not necessarily any communication . . . result from the same ultimate source."<sup>64</sup> In our case, of course, there is indeed communication between societies; therefore, Fletcher's "interconnection"—that is, "historical phenomena in which there is contact linking two or more societies, as, for example, the spread of an idea, institution, or religion, or the carrying on of a significant amount of trade between societies"—becomes far more apt.<sup>65</sup> Whether one searches for horizontal continuities or interconnection, Fletcher makes a point similar to that of Bayly but much earlier and for an earlier period, recommending that we look for the larger patterns connecting disparate or related societies.<sup>66</sup> While Fletcher prefers comparative history to area studies or a "parochial outlook," he finds it lacking and inferior to integrative history that explores interrelated historical phenomena.<sup>67</sup> Like Fletcher, Bayly focuses on interconnections and globalization but in the nineteenth century. He observes, "As world events became more connected and interdependent, so forms of human action adjusted to each other and came to resemble each other across the world." These connections, in turn, "created many hybrid politics, mixed ideologies, and complex

forms of global economic activity” at the same time that they amplified areas of divergence as well as animosity.<sup>68</sup>

What distinguishes this school of “integrated” histories of revolutions from comparative histories is its emphasis on integrating, as opposed to isolating or comparing, the study of different revolutions in relation to an underlying common causal mechanism, such as population growth (to name just one example). Fletcher’s integrative approach, in which he emphasizes searching for interrelated causes for “historical parallelisms (roughly contemporaneous similar developments in the world’s various societies),” is associated most with the work of Jack Goldstone on early modern revolutions and rebellions in Stuart England, Ming China, and the Ottoman Empire.<sup>69</sup> Goldstone studies early modern revolutions or rebellions in Stuart England, Ottoman Turkey, and Ming China in an integrated fashion by focusing on common demographic growth and its role in causing revolutionary breakdowns in these seemingly isolated places. He is particularly interested in exploring “a common causal framework rooted in a wide-ranging ecological crisis.” He shows how population growth in a period of stagnant agricultural growth led to a number of economic, social, and political problems—“decline of traditional systems of taxation, overloading of institutions of elite training and recruitment, and decay in popular living standards”—that culminated in revolution.<sup>70</sup>

A related approach to Fletcher’s notion of interconnection is *histoire croisée*, promoted by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann. For Werner and Zimmermann, “The notion of intersection is basic to the very principle of *histoire croisée*,” and “Accordingly, entities and objects of research are not merely considered in relation to one another but also *through* one another, in terms of relationships, interactions, and circulation.”<sup>71</sup> This approach is similar to Fletcher’s concept of interconnection: linking societies through related phenomena. Benedict Anderson’s *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* is an important study of interconnection that focuses on the connections and coordination between subjects of the late nineteenth-century Spanish Empire (Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Filipino anarchists) and the cross-pollination of anarchist and revolutionary ideas and ideologies in the last few decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> While Charles Kurzman presents a notable comparison of early twentieth-century democratic revolutions and their consequences in Russia, Iran, the Ottoman Empire, Portugal, Mexico, and China, his approach remains a comparative, not connected, history of the role of intellectuals.<sup>73</sup> Ilham Khuri-Makdisi’s

*The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism* demonstrates the connections between global transformations and radical networks in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly in Beirut, Alexandria, and Cairo between 1860 and 1914.<sup>74</sup> More recently, but for an earlier period, Janet Polasky's *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* focuses on itinerant revolutionaries and ideas that traversed the Atlantic world before the advent of an international postal system or the technological transformations in transportation and communication.<sup>75</sup>

My approach, which I call “connected revolutions,” owes its conceptual or theoretical debt to Fletcher’s interconnection and Werner and Zimmermann’s *histoire croisée*. In addition, the idea behind connected revolutions is inspired by Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s studies of early modern Indian Ocean and European history, where Subrahmanyam presents his approach as an alternative to historical writing inspired by either area studies, comparative, or nationalist approaches, all of which tend to *parochialize* the study of history by severing the rich and complex connections between historical developments occurring in seemingly dissimilar regions.<sup>76</sup> As Subrahmanyam points out, “Contrary to what ‘area studies’ implicitly presumes, a good part of the dynamic in early modern history was provided by the interface between the local and regional (which we may call the ‘micro’-level), and the supra-regional, at times even global (what we may term the ‘macro’-level).”<sup>77</sup> One way in which Subrahmanyam proposes to deparochialize or deprovincialize the study of the past is by focusing on real connections between regions that otherwise have been studied in isolation. He does this by highlighting the role of the circulation of cultural forms, ideas, capital/commodities, and elites. Similarly, one way of deprovincializing the study of the Ottoman, Iranian, and Russian Revolutions is to explore them through the circulation of Armenian revolutionaries who simultaneously operated in each of these political and social upheavals. The Armenian activists were some of the most active and dynamic of their kind to connect all three revolutions at the dawn of the twentieth century. They were themselves “connectors,” much like Malcolm Gladwell’s Paul Revere but perhaps much less dramatic and much more constant.<sup>78</sup> In studying the circulation of the Armenian revolutionaries and political activities in Russia, Iran, and the Ottoman Empire, this book contributes to the project of connected histories through the study of the connectedness of all three revolutions and, in doing so, sheds light on the tumultuous events at the beginning of the twentieth century that have helped shape the history

of the states and societies in which they occurred. It also seeks to contribute to the concerns of world historians, whose growing interest lies in border crossers. Therefore, what follows in this book both is informed by and aims to give back to world-historical and connected histories approaches and scholarship through the telling of the revolutionary drama that unfolded in the early twentieth century in the Middle East and the Caucasus, as transimperial subjects conceived, espoused, and spouted revolution in both words and deeds.

#### COMPARING THE RUSSIAN, IRANIAN, AND YOUNG TURK REVOLUTIONS

Having briefly touched upon some of the comparative historical analyses of revolutions, I now turn to the constitutional revolutions at the core of this study: the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman. What common threads and aspirations did they share? How can we understand these revolutions beyond their particularities and in global perspective? How do they reflect not only the local and regional but the global context? How can we approach them in an area that triangulates three bordering empires? Why are they important in the larger scheme of world history?

At the risk of simplification, one can say that there have generally been three schools of thought on how the Russian, Iranian, and Young Turk Revolutions have been explored. The conventional school studied revolutions in a rather insular fashion, producing scholarship on each revolution and treating each in isolation from the others. To some extent, although not entirely, this approach may be seen as emanating from the conventional concerns of national historians and area studies specialists in each of these regions, who have privileged the study of the history of nation-states at the expense of exploring shared histories with other states or societies. Nevertheless, the important contributions and foundational knowledge produced by this kind of scholarship, which has been the dominant form until recently, must be acknowledged. Another approach to the study of revolutions in general has been the comparative scholarship that has set for itself the agenda of comparing the common historical traits of otherwise seemingly disparate revolutions.<sup>79</sup> Nader Sohrabi's study comparing the three revolutions is without doubt the only serious sociological and historical study on the subject.<sup>80</sup> Here, Sohrabi compares what he calls two successful constitutional revolutions, the Ottoman and the Iranian, with a failed one, the Russian, arguing that "the support of extraparliamentary resources, including