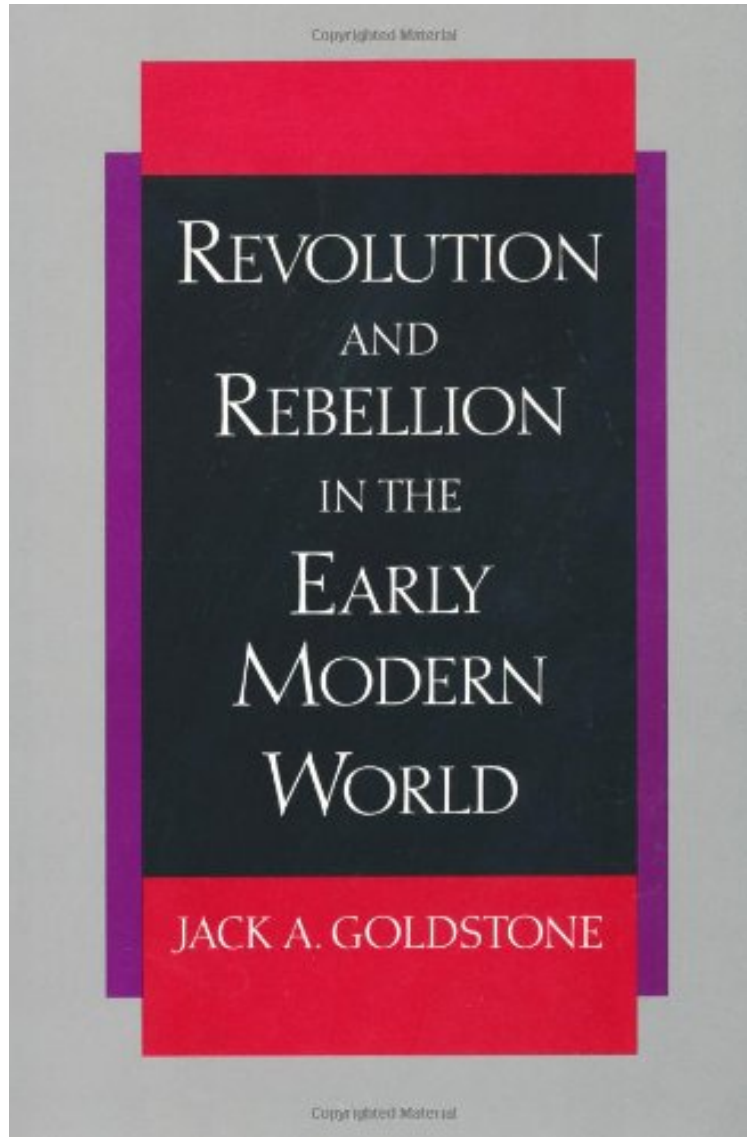


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Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World

Jack A. Goldstone

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Jack A. Goldstone : Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Insurgency and Revolutions ReviewBy Kenneth T KingI found Jack A. Goldstone's Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World was an incredibly informative piece of literature about a very complicated topic in which Goldstone's book does much to de-mystify. I thoroughly enjoyed my first foray into comparative political economics. As a Bachelor of Science in Economics, of which I haven't done

much with since college, it was a fun return to the world of statistics and econometrics. In Michael Richard's review of Goldstone's opus he notes that Goldstone takes a lot from previous sociological disciplines including the works of Moore and Skocpol but states it "goes well beyond both works;" which it does. It is hard to imagine any book could take a more detailed examination of revolutions that Goldstone does in *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*. It is worth noting that both this review and a review of the book by R. Albin, cite demographic expansion as the main operandi of state breakdown. However, the R. Albin review notes that demographic expansion is only a part of a "multifactorial model with three key components: inability of the state to raise sufficient revenues to finance itself, fissured elites and disaffected marginal popular groups that could be mobilized for violence". While Goldstone makes it clear that demographic expansion was definitively a driving force behind state breakdown, the effects of demographic change within the state and the certain cost-benefit analysis and changes in expectations that accompanied that demographic change are what Goldstone is hypothesizing are the facilitators of revolution. This is significant because in a modern world where demographic expansion may not necessarily be correlated with state breakdown (also in a later example of Japan), the factors Goldstone cites as the causes of revolution and rebellion are still highly volatile and continue to have causality. In fact, Goldstone even lays this out in the Preface when he states that revolution is statistically better when "society simultaneously experiences three kinds of difficulties" to include: government revenue crisis, elite discontent and increased pressure from a mobile populace." Notice that demographic expansion is not named. *Revolution and Rebellion* was incredibly informative, especially in the first and last couple of chapters in which Goldstone's theories were laid out for the reader and his hypothesis and theoretical framework were explained. My particular favorite was when he not only lays out the links between his theories of the causes of state crisis but also applies his rationale to the United States and explains why this country might be facing problems in the future as well. It was this linkage between his analysis of the past as it applies to the present and the future that made the other 300+ pages worth reading. Parts of this book reminded me of *Les Misérables*' 2nd book of Volume 5 in which Victor Hugo writes about the French sewers for 100+ pages and all the time you are wondering (unless perhaps you have a PhD in waste management) why it is necessary to go into such minute detail. Unlike Hugo's famous fiction work about the struggles of Jean Valjean and Javert, we are reading a narrative concerning the all too real struggles (during the majority of the book) of France prior to the French Revolution of 1789 and the English Revolution of 1642. In Goldstone's first illustration of his theory's explanatory power, he very systematically explains how England's 1642 Revolution was the eventual manifestation of the problems England was having during that time period. The first variable examined is that demographic expansion that was mentioned in earlier reviews. He explains how an increase in population by over 100% from 1500-1650 due to decreased mortality rates (especially children "between one to nine years") along with more urbanization and a younger population had several effects on the immediate political and economic situation of England during that time period. As noted before, it was not necessarily the population increase that caused the revolution, but more directly the environment in which the population was. These included inflation, inability for the government to efficiently collect revenue, the effect population increase had on the inheritance of elite gentry families and their wealth (and more specifically their multiple sons who were given a lesser and lesser portion of the family wealth) and the factors of the increasingly younger and more urbanized population on mass mobilization. Goldstone then packages these factors into a model of "pressures for crisis". Goldstone then goes on to offer the French Revolution in juxtaposition to the early English revolt to show the dichotomy between a different causal framework which arrives at the same variables for state crisis that England did over a century earlier. Again Goldstone begins with an explanation of population growth in which he notes that while France did not have an overly large increase in population as England did, it was markedly elevated around the time of the revolution; what was harmful to France was an agricultural community that could not support the populace. The younger generations of Frenchman, whose increase was nearly identical to the English, were becoming more urbanized and more industrialized. The nation was flourishing in manufactures at the time. However, the French monarchy continued to try and collect its revenue from an agriculture sector which was stagnant. As the population grew but the French coffers did not, it became harder and harder to keep the country docile. Additionally, increased social mobility caused by inflation, increased mortality and the fall of government revenue ensured the elites were primed for a showdown. Lastly, the increased cost of land, inflation, increased urbanization and a youthful population all have explanatory power concerning France's famous revolution. While the contributing factors leading to inflation, elite discontent and mass mobilization potential weren't necessarily the same as in the English example, the eventual causes of the revolution were very much the same. At this point, we receive a reprieve by Goldstone of his modeling and explanations of French agricultural and English Puritanism (which he also cites as a factor leading to mass mobilization in 1642) and start to move East around the globe. Our first departure from meticulousness is in the countries that Napoleon (a product of the 1749 Revolution) had previously conquered and were now in the throes of pre-revolutionary disaster; including Germany. However, unlike France and England, Germany was able to use controlling forces in Prussia, which was fairly stable, to quell the rebellion in the rest of the country. Germany was much better poised and was more opportunistic than France in maximizing its resources. This shows that while population change (because in fact there was specific cause for alarm concerning this variable) "can generate the conditions of the crisis . . . the exact

shape and outcome of the crisis depend crucially on the precise resources and the institutions of particular states." After this interlude in Germany, Ottoman and Chinese civilizations are discussed. These short chapters offer the explanations of the Ottoman Crisis of 1590-1610 and 1622-1628 as well as the Ming-Qing Transition in 1644. In which primarily an inability to collect taxes, the rise of the merchant class and the landlessness and poverty of the peasant population affected stability. In China we see much the same including an increase in inflation, a decrease in willingness of wealthy families to sponsor China's own version of a noble scholar class and the unpaid mercenaries and postal workers who led the revolt on a fiscally deprived dynasty. Lastly, Goldstone takes a look at the Tokugawa Shogun Japan where, though it is a completely different demographical situation, the results tend towards the same outcome. Japan, unlike the previous examples, did not have an increasing population prior to the revolution, agricultural yields were improving and there was a strict caste structure. It was an excellent example for Goldstone to end on because it shows that though the reasons may be different, the increase of the psi of revolutionary pressure ultimately reaching a tipping point can cause state crisis. Interestingly enough the biggest problems in France, England, the Ottoman Empire and China were related to inflation caused by decreasing revenues as costs of goods rose. But Japan did not collect taxes in money but instead bartered in rice and its population did not increase, but remained stagnant prior to the revolution. As rice production increased but there were not enough citizens to eat it, the price of rice dropped and so the problem in Japan was essentially deflation; as far as the government revenue streams were concerned. Alternatively, the merchant class was expanding its breadth of services and was eclipsing the samurai in wealth, something that was to turn the tide of the military caste. At this point, the models have explained what Goldstone is trying to prove and the book embarks on a quest to explain how ideology, once the initial mechanisms of revolution have taken hold, run with revolution. He explains that while psi may explain how revolutions and state crisis develop, but once the "Old Regime" is no longer, "ideology and culture . . . play the leading, rather than a following role." He further goes on to show that it is not necessarily the ideology that wins support during a state crisis it is in fact the "organization in comparison to their opponents and competitors" that appeal to people's since of order and thus garner their fraternity. Additionally, radicalism during a revolutionary period is usually followed by an authoritarian regime taking control and establishing peace. Finally, Goldstone discusses the propensity of psi in the United States and though the country is close to a fiscal crisis the democratically representative government may be a stop-gap to prevent a state crisis. Overall, it Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World was an eye opening book on the mechanisms of state crisis and the very specific past examples and how they relate to present examples. At times it was tedious but only to clearly define the instigators of change. 15 of 15 people found the following review helpful. Outstanding Effort at Synthesis By R. Albin This very interesting and provocative book is an effort to explain the genesis of recurrent rebellions/revolutions in early modern Europe and comparable other Eurasian societies. It is based on careful reading of the enormous literature surrounding 17th century Europe, the French Revolution, the Ottoman Empire, the Ming-Qing transition, and the fall of the Tokugawa shogunate. Goldstone is also a clear writer who presents his ideas very well. Rather than taking on the whole issue of revolution, Goldstone begins by restricting himself largely to a smaller but crucial question; what was responsible for state failure in the early modern world? Goldstone introduces a multifactorial model with 3 key components; inability of the state to raise sufficient revenues to finance itself, fissured elites, and disaffected marginal popular groups that could be mobilized for violence. This sounds fairly vague but Goldstone introduces a single driving force that generates the 3 key components; demographic expansion. In Goldstone's model, population growth in these pre-industrial economies leads to inflation with subsequent erosion of state (and individual) purchasing power. Coupled with the increasing real costs of important state activities like the costs of warfare, this leads to fiscal crises for the state. Population growth, often accompanied by considerable turnover of the upper classes, leads to increased competition among elites for privileged positions, especially state patronage which the financially strapped states cannot accommodate. The resulting insecurity among and competition among elites often leads to an adversarial relationship to the state as it seeks to improve its revenue base. Finally, demographic growth leads to a reservoir of groups, displaced peasants, marginalized urban workers, who can form popular shock troops for any violent actions. Goldstone applies this model systematically to early modern Europe, specifically 17th century Britain and 18th century France. His formulation is a considerable success in the context of explaining the outbreak of the English Civil War and the French Revolution. Goldstone's model also does well in explaining why other turbulent events, like the revolt of Catalonia or the default of Louis XIV's government didn't generate state failure. He then proceeds to demonstrate the generality of the model by thoughtful application to Ottoman Turkey and Ming China. There is also an interesting discussion of Tokugawa Japan, something of an outlier and Goldstone argues well that this is an exception that proves the rule case. It's certainly possible to argue with aspects of Goldstone's model and its application. For example, I think some aspects of his interpretation of late 17th century Britain are wrong, and I would argue with his exact explanation of how demographic upturns ended, but this is overall a very impressive effort. Goldstone also discusses what can happen after state failure. He has more speculative but quite interesting set of discussions of how state failure can lead to revolution and what factors lead to specific revolutionary outcomes. Like the rest of this book, this is based on a shrewd reading of much interesting literature and is presented well. In addition to the value of Goldstone's broad synthesis, this book also contains a number of valuable

summaries of relevant topic. The discussion of the difficult issue of French public finance during the 18th century, for example, is outstanding. While Goldstone may not have everything correct, this book provides a very creditable framework for understanding a broad sweep of history. An outstanding achievement.

What can the great crises of the past teach us about contemporary revolutions? Arguing from an exciting and original perspective, Goldstone suggests that great revolutions were the product of 'ecological crises' that occurred when inflexible political, economic, and social institutions were overwhelmed by the cumulative pressure of population growth on limited available resources. Moreover, he contends that the causes of the great revolutions of Europe—the English and French revolutions—were similar to those of the great rebellions of Asia, which shattered dynasties in Ottoman Turkey, China, and Japan. The author observes that revolutions and rebellions have more often produced a crushing state orthodoxy than liberal institutions, leading to the conclusion that perhaps it is vain to expect revolution to bring democracy and economic progress. Instead, contends Goldstone, the path to these goals must begin with respect for individual liberty rather than authoritarian movements of 'national liberation.' Arguing that the threat of revolution is still with us, Goldstone urges us to heed the lessons of the past. He sees in the United States a repetition of the behavior patterns that have led to internal decay and international decline in the past, a situation calling for new leadership and careful attention to the balance between our consumption and our resources. Meticulously researched, forcefully argued, and strikingly original, *Revolutions and Rebellions in the Early Modern World* is a tour de force by a brilliant young scholar. It is a book that will surely engender much discussion and debate.

"A book of real stature--high-powered, provocative, and ambitious."--John A. Hall, "Contemporary Sociology" About the Author Jack A. Goldstone is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Comparative Research in History, Society, and Culture at the University of California, Davis.