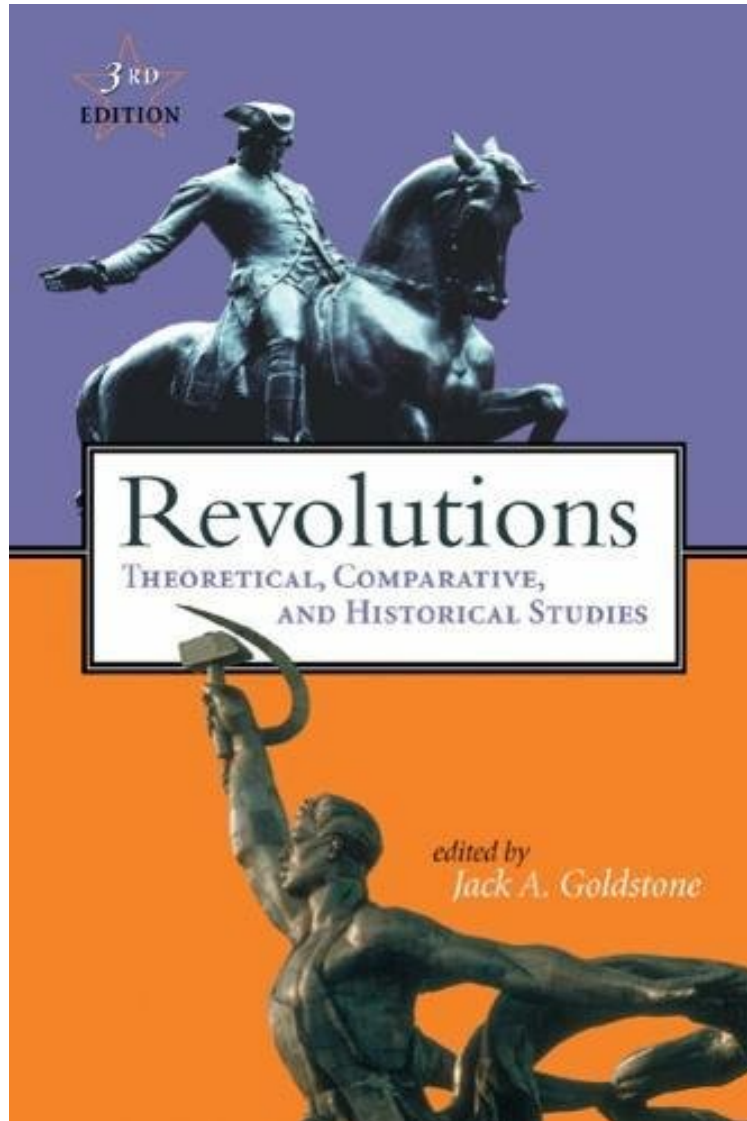


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Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies

Jack A. Goldstone

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Jack A. Goldstone : Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Horribly writtenBy Timothy SalesThe book is very hard to follow... NOT FRIENDLY USABLE....11 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Excellent primer for any student of social revolutionsBy D. BarnettThe following is a book report I wrote for a course in Revolutions - it has not been

edited and may appear a bit impersonal :) Jack A. Goldstone's *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies* is an extraordinary presentation of revolutionary theory and historical application. It presents both a successive, almost evolutionary evaluation of revolutionary theory as well as scholarly debates between competing theories that aids in constructive reconciliation between said theories as well as in understanding the breadth and significance of differing viewpoints. This is particularly true with the presentation of case studies which ultimately reveal the significance of certain theories, depending on the conditions specific to each revolution. However, such variations do not undermine Goldstone's work; in fact, they support one of his early assessments of structural theories. Within the introductory essay, "The Comparative and Historical Study of Revolutions," Goldstone asserts that, since the Russian Revolution of 1917-1921, comparative studies of revolutions have gone through "three generations of scholarship: the natural histories of the 1920s and 1930s, the general theories of political violence of the 1960s and 1970s, and the structural theories of the 1970s and 1980s." (1) This summation is intended to explain the dominant trends of scholarship and it succeeds in providing a framework of consideration that the rest of *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies* may be evaluated from. Goldstone explains that the natural history of revolutions was an overarching attempt to understand common patterns between major Western revolutions up to that time. (2) Such scholarship revealed dominant trends between these Western revolutions including intellectual dissidence, state attempt at reform, state inability at redress, seizure of state operations by moderates, radical supplantation of moderates, and the struggle between moderates and radicals that leads to a phase of pragmatism. (3) Looking to the French Revolution, the chronological pattern of these trends is rather evident. (4) However, later analysis, as will be demonstrated, reveals rather divergent theories regarding early Western revolutions. The revolutions, coups, and civil unrest in the mid-Twentieth Century led to competing general theories of political violence: the psychological approach which sought to identify the types of discontent that would lead to social revolution, and a social institution approach which asserted that unequal development of social sub-structures could spur revolution. Huntington attempted to synthesize these approaches by arguing that "modernization led to institutional imbalance because the resulting education and economic growth would increase people's desire to participate in politics faster than political institutions could change to accommodate this desire." (5) However, this synthesis appears to be somewhat trumped by Tilly's assertion that "discontent alone is unlikely to lead to revolution and lack resources." (6) In fact, the example of the Soviet Union appears to validate Tilly's resource mobilization theory, especially if information is considered a resource. It wasn't until Gorbachev began attempts to reform Communist rule that the disenfranchised Soviet populace was able to essentially effect the dissolution of the Soviet Union. (7) Thus, while the collapse was inherently related to Huntington's imbalance, it wasn't until the populace had greater access to resources (especially intangible resources related to information-sharing and political process) that social revolution was able to occur. Goldstone then discusses structural theories of revolution by asserting that "structural theories argue that states vary in structure and are thus vulnerable to different kinds of revolution. They further contend that revolutions begin from some combination of state weakness, conflicts between states and elites, and popular uprisings." (8) This essentially establishes a "catch-all" theory, which implies that it is the complex interconnectedness of variables (many of which are unknown) which leads to revolution: thus, one size really doesn't fit all. Interestingly, when structural analysis is regressively applied, classic revolutions that were previously explained through the comparative analysis of commonality that natural history scholarship addressed appear much different. For example, Goldstone examines the English Revolution using a structural analysis approach, revealing the Marxist understanding that it was a bourgeois revolution to be inaccurate. (9) The disproving of Marxist theory in explaining the English Revolution as a bourgeois revolution notwithstanding, Goldstone does include a portion of Marx and Engels' "Manifesto of the Communist Party" as a classic and influential approach of understanding revolution. However, as influential as the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" is (and regardless of how many revolutions are undertaken in its name), it presents a total misunderstanding of economic forces that underlie the classes it discusses. For example, in asserting that "the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world-market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country," (10) and "The bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns," (11) Marx and Engels neglect to discuss competing opportunities that capitalism presents, thus they completely miss the fact that it was the advantage (in increased pay and less risk) urban employment presented which led several workers to choose to leave their rural forms of employment. (12) Furthermore, Marx and Engels discuss Trade Unions as an instrument of social change supporting their argument pitting disenfranchised workers against the bourgeoisie. However, if capitalism, which (even taking into consideration the division of labor) is rooted in the concept of freedom, (13) operating within a free society allows for the establishment of worker Trade Unions, then how can exploitation of the bourgeoisie be demonstrable (i.e. if the bourgeoisie were exploiting workers, then why would workers be provided with a politically effective means of redress)? This economic ineptitude aside, the Manifesto of the Communist Party presents a rather exceptional philosophical work in at least addressing the disenfranchised as agents of revolutionary change. Thus, its inclusion by Goldstone is well-founded, particularly as Goldstone dedicates a section of his work to discussing the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban Marxist Revolutions (particularly how Marxism influenced these revolutions and how it was inherently changed to fit either the

understandings or needs of the revolutions' leaders). Interestingly enough, Goldstone points out, "In one of the great ironies of history, it was not the most advanced capitalist countries but relatively backward ones that responded to the Marxist call for revolution." (14) Thus, the criticism of economic misunderstanding within the Manifesto of the Communist Party is inherently justified. Alexis de Tocqueville's *The French Revolution and the Growth of the State* presents a better classic understanding of social revolution, asserting that while the French Revolution destroyed the power of the aristocracy, the end result was a strong, centralized state: (15) "Never since the fall of the Roman Empire had the world seen a government so highly centralized. This new power was created by the Revolution, or, rather, grew up almost automatically out of the havoc wrought by it." (16) An interesting parallel could be illustrated by the American Civil War (which was only glossed over in a fleeting passage on pg. 48), which saw a formerly federalist republic transformed into a centralized state, with greater emphasis on federal authority and executive power. Furthermore, Max Weber presents an intriguing classic model which amplifies de Tocqueville's view and emphasizes charismatic authority. (17) Given the recent attention that spontaneously-ordered organizations have received and the creative spark that charisma represents in the formation of said organizations, (18) Weber reveals intriguing insight into those net-expansive threats that nation-state governments must contend with today. Ultimately, Goldstone asserts: "As de Tocqueville and Weber suggested, [revolutions of the Twentieth Century] usually led to stronger, more centralized, and more bureaucratic states. But the origins of these revolutions rarely fit the pattern that Marx and Engels set forth." (19) Extending beyond classic approaches, Goldstone includes a most intriguing debate on modernization as a significant factor within revolutionary theory between Samuel P. Huntington and Charles Tilly. While Huntington argues modernization causes a profound desire for increased worker participation in politics (20), Tilly once again trumps Huntington in his response: "The structure of power, alternative conceptions of justice, the organization of coercion, the conduct of war, the formation of coalitions, the legitimacy of the state - these traditional concerns of political thought provide the main guides to the explanation of revolution. Population growth, industrialization, urbanization, and other large-scale structural changes do, to be sure, affect the probabilities of revolution. But they do so indirectly, by shaping the potential contenders for power, transforming the techniques of government control and shifting the resources available to contenders and governments. There is no reliable and regular sense in which modernization breeds revolution [emphasis mine]." (21) Tilly's statement is most apropos, not only when considered within the context of his response to Huntington's assertions, but also within the context of Goldstone's further presentation of the origins of revolutions, which includes Eric R. Wolf's assertion that peasant rebellions are generally defensive as well as his argument that peasant revolutions occur with the support of cadre factions. (22) In fact Wolf's argument appears to feed Goldstone's own theory regarding elite divisiveness found within dictatorships. (23) In examining the outcomes of revolutions, Goldstone asks the question that he asserts must be asked in revolutionary cases: "have the accomplishments been worth the price?" (24) Here, Goldstone presents a number of essays that provide a variety of evidence which seeks to understand and, at the very least, partially answer this question. Interestingly enough, the first essay, Jonathon Kelley and Herbert S. Klein's "Revolution and the Rebirth of Inequality: Stratification in Postrevolutionary Society," establishes a rather classic, Marxist model as its basis of consideration, particularly in establishing peasants within an exploited role and highlighting the effects of class stratification. (25) Kelley and Klein establish several hypotheses based on their research all of which point to their conclusion that radical revolutions lead to short-term advantages for the disenfranchised but long-term effects tend to be disadvantageous. However, the American revolutionary model, which presents a case of political and economic disenfranchisement, disproves this overarching conclusion; as Gordon S. Wood states: "[The American Revolution] made the interests and prosperity of ordinary people - their pursuits of happiness - the goal of society and government. The Revolution did not merely create a political and legal environment conducive to economic expansion; it also released powerful popular entrepreneurial and commercial energies that few realized existed and transformed the economic landscape of the country." (26) A further view of exploitation may be inferred from Susan Eckstein's assessment that: "The underdevelopment and dependence on the world economy that characterize much of the Third World may severely constrain attempts to transform socioeconomic structures radically unless the new leadership is able to link up with a powerful foreign sponsor - which, of course, only recasts the problem of dependency in a different guise." (27) However, China presents a most relevant example antithetical to this premise. China's largest foreign sponsor, Japan, used Chinese labor for the production of Japanese engineered goods. China took lessons from this engineering (often times illicitly) and began engineering their own goods, resulting in Chinese economic and political preeminence on the world stage. Of course, many nations still export production to China and China is rather dependent on exportation but this reveals the interdependence that globalism encourages, not political dependency. Moving away from the precepts of classic exploitation, Fred Halliday presents a most intriguing exploration of counter-revolution, particularly in his assessment of revolutions in an asymmetric context. He asserts that counterrevolutionary forces tend to have economic and military advantages whereas revolutionary forces tend to have political advantages (or potentially so). (28) This assessment places revolutions within the context of comparative advantage in and of themselves; thus, those who would view the disenfranchised with a sympathetic eye are now shown a more complex relationship of exploitative advantage (i.e. both forces may exploit one another based on their own capabilities). One

need merely look to the Afghan revolution against the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) regime to see the validity of this conclusion: the PDPA state was experiencing economic expansion but its unpopular political reforms were exploited by revolutionary forces, which led to the disintegration of the PDPA regime's military support.(29) Thus, the revolutionary forces used their primary advantage to undermine the primary advantage of the PDPA's counterrevolutionary forces. As previously stated, Jack A. Goldstone's *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies* is a phenomenal exploration of competing revolutionary theories and historical examples, which addresses the inherently complex topic of social revolutions with clarity and lucidity. While this author would disagree with several of the conclusions of its contributors, there is also much that this author finds to be rather profound. Such is the glorious nature of Goldstone's work: it is intended to be comprehensive and balanced and it succeeds in presenting the significance, if not the relevance, of each theory (including those that one might be disinclined to view as valid). Ultimately, *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies* is a work of profound importance and, this author would contend, should be included within any corpus of revolutionary theory.

(1) Jack A. Goldstone, "The Comparative and Historical Studies of Revolutions," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 2.(2) Ibid.(3) Jack A. Goldstone, "The Comparative and Historical Studies of Revolutions," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 3-4.(4) John Markoff, "The French Revolution: The Abolition of Feudalism," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 172-177.(5) Ibid., 5.(6) Ibid.(7) Jack A. Goldstone, "Revolution in the U.S.S.R., 1989-1991," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 266-270.(8) Jack A. Goldstone, "The Comparative and Historical Studies of Revolutions," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 6.(9) Jack A. Goldstone, "The English Revolution: A Structural-Demographic Approach," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 158, 165-170.(10) Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 26.(11) Ibid.(12) Pietra Rivoli, *The Travels of a T-Shirt in a Global Economy* [audio recording], read by Eliza Foss (Prince Frederick, MD: Recorded Books, 2007).(13) Mark Skousen, *The Big Three in Economics: Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and John Maynard Keynes* [audio recording], read by Jeff Rigenbach (Ashland, OR: Blackstone Audiobooks, 2007).(14) Jack A. Goldstone, "Marxist Revolutions [Introduction]," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 183.(15) Jack A. Goldstone, "Alex de Tocqueville [Introduction]," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 31.(16) Alex de Tocqueville, "The French Revolution and the Growth of the State," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 32.(17) Ibid., 33.(18) Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* [audio recording], read by Sean Pratt (Prince Frederick, MD: Your Coach in a Box, 2008).(19) Jack A. Goldstone, "The Debate on Modernization [Introduction]," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 37.(20) Samuel P. Huntington, "Revolution and Political Order," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 44.(21) Charles Tilly, "Does Modernization Breed Revolution?" in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 53.(22) Eric R. Wolf, "Peasants and Revolutions" in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 56-57, 62.(23) Jack A. Goldstone, "Revolutions in Modern Dictatorships" in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 56-57, 76.(24) Jack A. Goldstone, "The Outcomes of Revolutions [Introduction]" in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 85.(25) Johnathon Kelley and Herbert S. Klein, "Revolutions and the Rebirth of Inequality: Stratification in Postrevolutionary Society," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 87-89.(26) Gordon S. Wood, "The American Revolution: The Radicalism of Revolution," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 181.(27) John Foran and Jeff Goodwin, "Dictatorship or Democracy: Outcomes of Revolution in Iran and Nicaragua," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 109.(28) Fred Halliday, "Counter-Revolution," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 139.(29) Anwar-ul-haq Ahady, "The Afghanistan Revolutionary Wars," in *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, ed. Jack A. Goldstone (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 316-319.

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By Carla L. Reay
Worked out great for my class.

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