

## BOOK REVIEWS

Goldstone, Jack A., Ted Robert Gurr, and Farrokh Moshiri, eds. *Revolutions of the Late Twentieth Century*. Boulder. Westview: 1991.

The editors of *Revolutions of the Late Twentieth Century* would argue that these revolutions are different from other forms of conflict. Late twentieth-century revolutions are not “classics” in the mold of the French, Russian or Chinese Revolutions. They are not always progressive and they are not always predictable. They are fought against oppression rather than for some idealistic concept. Unlike revolutions that occurred under the Westphalian world system, they have been subjected to international intervention and are, therefore, a changing part of the changing world order. In that they do not fit into any of the established paradigms they deserve to be explored as an alternate model.

However, this does not ensure that these revolutions have so much in common that they can be established as a distinct model. Even if such a model became apparent, it is really too soon to tell what lasting impact these revolutions will have within the context of our changing world. Nonetheless, it is worth the effort to try to make order out of chaos. “Indeed, one main theme of this volume is that *revolutions are a highly varied phenomena*, whose results – some happy, some sad – reflect particular constellations of casual factors and background conditions.” (p. 3)

Although I would have found a list of acronyms and/or a glossary helpful, the work itself is very well appointed, providing a history of the research involved in the book, the contributors, an index and an extensive reference section. The main body of the work is composed of case histories of ten revolutions by ten knowledgeable authors: Vietnam, by H. John LeVan; Nicaragua, by Dévora Grynspar; Iran, by Farrokh Moshiri; Poland, by Jaroslaw Piekalkiewicz; Afghanistan, by Anwar-ul-Hag Ahady; the Philippines, by Richard J. Kessler; Cambodia, by Barbara Harff; Zimbabwe, by James R. Scarritt; South Africa, by C.R.D. Halisi, Patrick O’Meara and N. Brian Winchester; and the West Bank and Gaza, by Joshua Teitelbaum and Joseph Kostiner. Each case history is a well-organized chapter presented in the same general outline beginning with descriptions of the pre-revolutionary conditions, the onset of revolution and revolutionary outcome(s). In addition to extensive notes, all of the end matter include such helpful touches as a map and chronology. As in any edited work, there is a variance in the quality of the different individual pieces. Nonetheless, they are well written.

What makes this collection especially productive is a well-disciplined theoretical and analytical framework. In the first essay, “Revolutionary Conflict Theory in an Evolutionary Perspective,” Farrokh Moshiri presents an excellent overview of the theory of revolution from Marx, through behaviorist, post-behaviorist, systems theory and neo-Marxist. In the next chapter, Jack A. Goldstone introduces the framework for analysis. Goldstone’s model is interactive and complex. He posits that although certain conditions (e.g. state resource failures,

elite alienation and divisions, and popular mass mobilization potential) may create their own political problems and disturbances, it is only when all these conditions work in conjunction that there is sufficient force to shatter existing institutions and create a revolution.

The book provides a synthesis in the final chapter, "Comparisons and Policy Implications," by Ted Robert Gurr and Jack A. Goldstone. The authors present their findings within a framework that assumes all revolutions occur in three phases – a state crisis, a struggle for power and state reconstruction. Within this framework they managed to identify the internal factors, the external factors and the dynamics that define a revolution. The dynamics begin with the failure of the state to perform as expected (a crisis of legitimacy) leading to a coalition of alienated elites and mobilized masses. The coalition of the elite and the masses is a necessary condition for a successful revolutionary outcome. These indicators, however, are not easily coded.

Although the formation of a coalition is considered a necessary condition, there are other conditions such as violence which are not necessary for a successful revolution. This is not to say that violence is irrelevant. In every case the degree of violence has had a direct impact on the ability of a nation to heal its wounds and develop a democratic system.

As mentioned above, the new world order has placed new import on international intervention. In a way the Cold War has caused a reduction in superpower interest. Nonetheless, new revolutions do not occur in a vacuum and international involvement will remain as critical in shaping the revolutions and their outcomes. The foreign policies of other nations – prior to, during, and after a revolution – will have an impact on the ability of those nations to interact with new regimes. It is not incumbent on the study to proscribe detailed policy. However, it does present a sensible and orderly overview of priorities and alternatives for avoiding unexpected crises, achieving non-hostile relations during and after revolutionary struggles and minimizing the threat of war. Given the variance among cultures, it is very difficult to create a measure of legitimacy, or define the exact nature of a successful revolutionary coalition. But these indicators exist and it would be wise policy to stay alert for them.

This is an authoritative work. Although it is well laid out as a text, it is not for the lazy instructor. Some of the case studies were of revolutions in progress. The discussions of those unresolved conflicts are a bit outdated. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the reader/ instructor to fill in the blanks. It will take years before the nature of the post-Cold-War revolution can be fully analyzed. I expect this work to be valid and valuable for some time to come. Besides, there is honesty in teaching a bit of uncertainty – for it is dangerous indeed to have students leave a course thinking that they know everything.

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