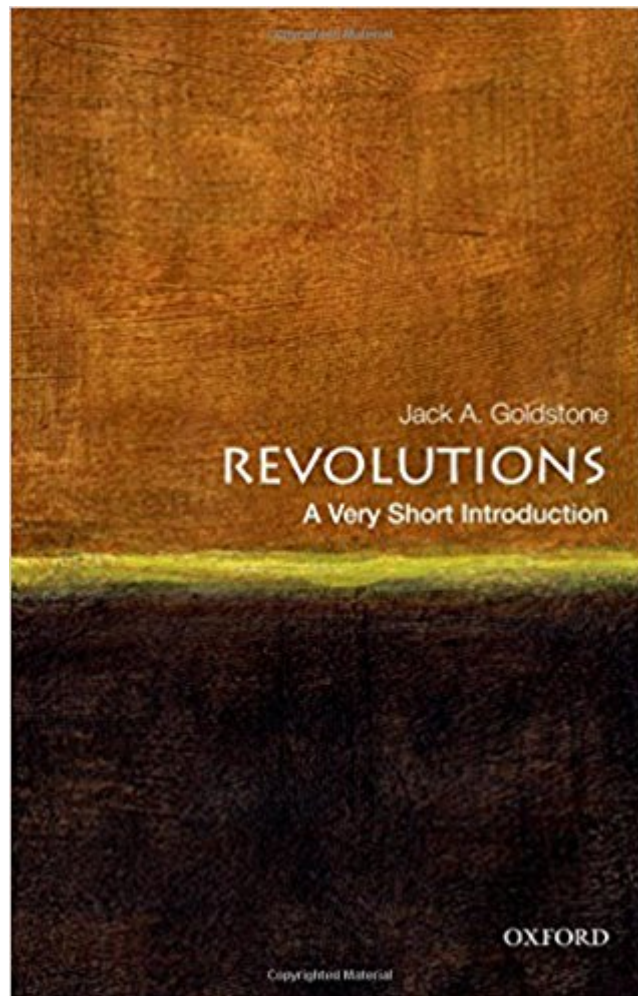




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Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)



Synopsis

From 1789 in France to 2011 in Cairo, revolutions have shaken the world. In their pursuit of social justice, revolutionaries have taken on the assembled might of monarchies, empires, and dictatorships. They have often, though not always, sparked cataclysmic violence, and have at times won miraculous victories, though at other times suffered devastating defeat. This Very Short Introduction illuminates the revolutionaries, their strategies, their successes and failures, and the ways in which revolutions continue to dominate world events and the popular imagination. Starting with the city-states of ancient Greece and Rome, Jack Goldstone traces the development of revolutions through the Renaissance and Reformation, the Enlightenment and liberal constitutional revolutions such as in America, and their opposite--the communist revolutions of the 20th century. He shows how revolutions overturned dictators in Nicaragua and Iran and brought the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and examines the new wave of non-violent "color" revolutions--the Philippines' Yellow Revolution, Ukraine's Orange Revolution--and the Arab Uprisings of 2011-12 that rocked the Middle East. Goldstone also sheds light on the major theories of revolution, exploring the causes of revolutionary waves, the role of revolutionary leaders, the strategies and processes of revolutionary change, and the intersection between revolutions and shifting patterns of global power. Finally, the author examines the reasons for diverse revolutionary outcomes, from democracy to civil war and authoritarian rule, and the likely future of revolution in years to come.

About the Series: Oxford's Very Short Introductions series offers concise and original introductions to a wide range of subjects--from Islam to Sociology, Politics to Classics, Literary Theory to History, and Archaeology to the Bible. Not simply a textbook of definitions, each volume in this series provides trenchant and provocative--yet always balanced and complete--discussions of the central issues in a given discipline or field. Every Very Short Introduction gives a readable evolution of the subject in question, demonstrating how the subject has developed and how it has influenced society. Eventually, the series will encompass every major academic discipline, offering all students an accessible and abundant reference library. Whatever the area of study that one deems important or appealing, whatever the topic that fascinates the general reader, the Very Short Introductions series has a handy and affordable guide that will likely prove indispensable.

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Customer Reviews

What exactly is a "revolution"? Jack Goldstone defines the term this way: "Revolution is the forcible overthrow of a government through mass mobilization...in the name of social justice, to create new political institutions. It is "...the process by which visionary leaders draw on the power of the masses to forcibly bring into existence a new political order." Revolution includes, "...all the elements of forcible overthrow of the government, mass mobilization, the pursuit of a vision of social justice, and the creation of new political institutions."The author defines 5 coincident and crucial elements for a revolution to occur. These are:1) National economic or fiscal strains, which disrupts the flow of rents and taxes to rulers and elites2) Growing alienation (meaning perceived exclusion from favor) and opposition among the elites (competition, rivalries, factionalism)3) Increasingly widespread popular anger at injustice4) Bridging popular and elite grievances (requires an ideology)5) Favorable international relations (external support or at least non-interference by foreign powers).Goldstone uses this framework to great success throughout the book, with reference to specific events, ancient and modern. His insights and generalizations are interesting and informative.Goldstone notes that ancient philosophers (Plato and Aristotle) believed that the cause of revolution is social injustice. Obviously, that is neither necessary nor is it sufficient to provoke revolutionary change. Not until various elements in the pre-revolutionary society realize that an alternative is possible (i.e., there is another alternative to the miserable status quo), does the potential for change become evident: put otherwise, simple misery doesn't suffice.

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