VI

DEMOGRAPHY AND THE END OF THE REPUBLIC
REVOLUTION AND REBELLION IN THE LATER SECOND AND EARLY FIRST CENTURIES BC:
JACK GOLDSTONE AND THE ‘ROMAN REVOLUTION’

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It should no longer need saying that the standard model of social and economic developments in second-century BC Italy stands in need of a major revision, and the question now is, what will take its place. Over the past few years, population increase among free Romans and Italians has emerged as a promising alternative in the minds of some scholars, myself included. Too many people competing for a finite amount of farmland could just as well have been the source of the second century’s landlessness and rural distress as the displacement of smallholders through military service and the growth of large slave-estates. Yet population increase in and of itself does not explain how the distress it engendered could eventuate in political crisis beginning in 133 BC and finally the collapse of republican government in 89 BC. Demographic expansion in a context of limited agricultural resources occurred at many times in the pre-industrial world, yet it did not inevitably lead to state breakdown. What is needed is a model of how population pressures affect pre-industrial societies and governments, one that can show how they might have caused things to go so badly wrong for the Republic in the early first century BC.

Fortunately, one is lying ready to hand in Jack Goldstone’s classic study, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World*. What makes it so alluring is not simply that population growth lies at its center but the complexity and extent of the ramifications comprised within it. Also attractive is its wide applicability. Goldstone develops his model primarily with reference to the two great revolutions of early modern Europe, England in 1642 and France in 1789, but he also seeks to apply it to a variety of contemporaneous upheavals in Europe, Ottoman Turkey, and even China in order to show in what ways the processes he identifies in England and France were or were not fully played out in other states that felt the effects of the two great waves of population growth during this period. Regardless of whether or not Goldstone’s analysis is correct in any particular case, the versatility and sophistication of