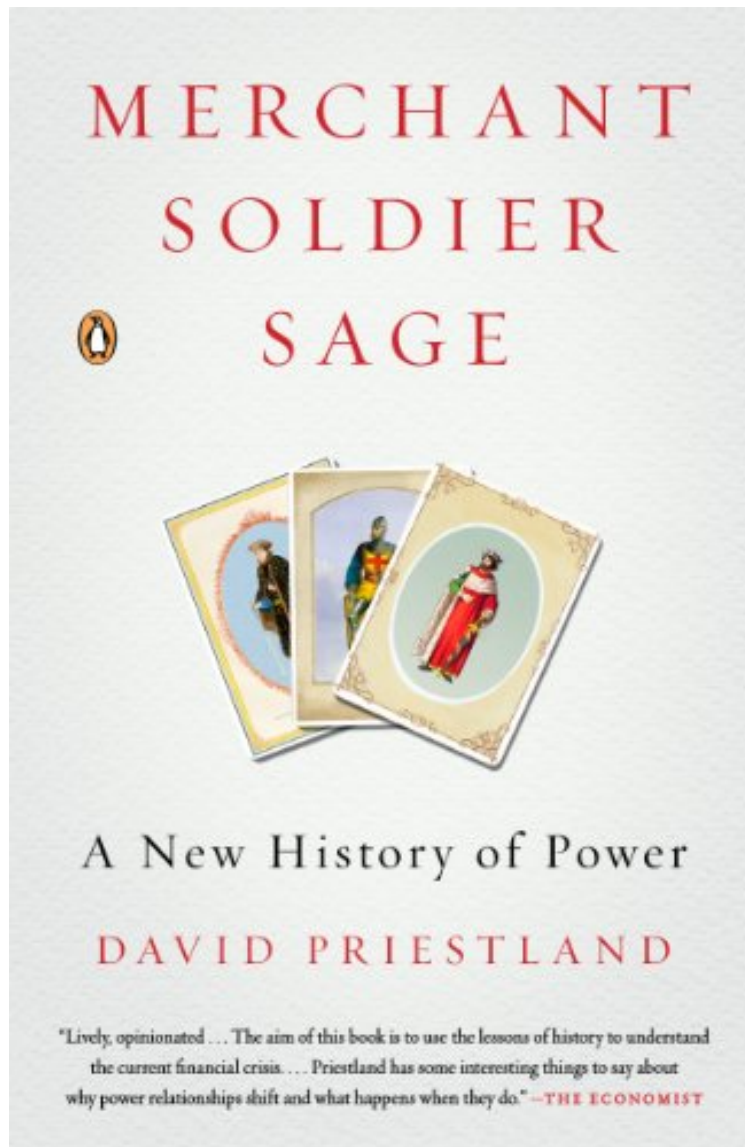



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Merchant, Soldier, Sage: A New History of Power

David Priestland

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David Priestland : Merchant, Soldier, Sage: A New History of Power before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Merchant, Soldier, Sage: A New History of Power:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Excellent,non conventionalBy Diego F. TheumannAn excellent book with a non coventional approach to history and sociology. It was real pleasure to read this work by David Priestland.Worth to reflect on.5 of 8 people found the following review helpful. looking at history as a power struggle between academics, merchants and soldiersBy A. MenonMerchant, Soldier, Sage is a history of the world by looking at the struggle between merchant, bureaucratic and military. A history of the world from the lense of class struggle

isn't particularly new and thus neither is this analysis. The author brings back the debate of class incentives and how the difference in power distribution between classes has created different social outcomes and he analyzes various periods in history to illustrate the differences. Clearly through time society and its institutional arrangements have changed. There are many accounts of the ways in which different societies organized themselves and how those led to different outcomes and social contracts. Francis Fukuyama's recent *The Origins of Political Order* is a precise account of many of these frameworks, or see *Violence and the Social Order* by North. The writing of *Merchant, Soldier, Sage* seems an attempt to resonate like the Communist Manifesto (with different content) but the labeling of categories seems in a similar literary vein and can be quite annoying to read. The author discusses China and its mandarin class, the 20s and the social darwinist merchant class days. It discusses totalitarian regimes of Germany and Russia and the rebuilding of Europe in the aftermath of the second world war. It discusses recent history and the resurrection of the merchant class in writing the rules of society and tries to look at the financial crisis through the lens of class struggle. The analysis is often on point and illustrates some of the philosophical differences that different actors have in organizing the means of production. Yet it is just descriptive and not prescriptive- discussing how a class has overbearing power and the problems witnessed are due to them is not insightful given almost every combination of power distribution among classes has led to a form of conflict in history. This is because classes are never bucketed like the author pretends they are. The book is fairly easy to read and a modern account of the class struggle society has often faced if we divide society into the 3 classes the author chooses. It can be interesting at times but its writing is written like a revolutionary pamphlet for non-revolutionary ideas. Am glad I read it but am glad it didn't take very long to finish. 1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. History through power struggle By jpz The book expresses a new way to look at the succession of government types caused by the dominance of Business, Military and Academy-Philosophy through the ages; from 10000 years ago to the present. It is written for the general learned public. It makes for good reading and thinking.

A bold new interpretation of modern history as a struggle between three economic groups We are now living in an age of merchants, but it was not always so. The history of civilization, in large part, is a story of a battle between agrarian aristocracy, the military, and a class of learned experts, or priests. Yet in seventeenth-century England and in the Netherlands, another group entered the race for power: the merchants. For the last four decades, the merchant's power has been unfettered. In *Merchant, Soldier, Sage*, acclaimed Oxford scholar David Priestland proposes a radical new approach to understanding today's balance of power, and analyzes the societal and economic historical conditions required for one of these three value systems to dominate. Priestland asserts that, in the wake of the Great Recession, the weakened and discredited merchant still clings to power; but the world is again in the midst of a period of upheaval.

From Booklist We have, of course, seen this before. From Adam Smith to Karl Marx to even Francis Fukuyama, sages have attempted to explain the unfolding of history and the evolution of societies with overarching theories; then the theories turn to dust as individuals and societies define, act, and reinvent themselves according to their own lights. Priestland explains history as a recurring conflict between the castes of merchants, aristocratic warriors, and men (or women) of ideas, all of whom comprise a bureaucratic elite. Left out of the power struggle are the masses of workers. Unlike Marx, Priestland does not assert the historical inevitability of the triumph of one caste. But he warns that the recent domination of the merchants reached a critical and dangerous point with the financial crisis that wracked the West in 2008, and he maintains that failure to adjust by elites could lead to economic and political collapse. Priestland provides many interesting and provocative insights into the workings of these groups. Yet he often tries to force square pegs into round holes in order to validate his theory, which remains unproven and unconvincing. --Jay Freeman "The story of man, Oxford academic David Priestland writes in his new big-idea history entitled, can be told through the will to power of three castes of civilization; The book covers almost the entirety of human history, but really serves as an extremely long-tailed investigation into the financial crisis of 2008 and how civilization's failure to properly rein in the merchant in its wake might negatively affect the future; Priestland keeps things moving at a lively and readable pace." "The Daily Beast"; "Priestland is consistently engaging, whether in his discussion of the marshaling of Confucius's teachings for political ends, or in pegging former President George W. Bush as a warrior; ambitious, well organized, and insightful, and will appeal to scholarly and popular audiences." Publishers Weekly; "Priestland marches us through history, showing us how his model applies to and illuminates everything from the Reformation to Robinson Crusoe, Adam to Adam Smith, Andrew Carnegie to Ayn Rand, Hitler to Putin, and Richard Wagner to Sinclair Lewis; He notes; no real surprise; that the world tends to get in trouble when it permits one caste to dominate; Useful, often-clarifying trifocals through which to view the world.; Kirkus; "Stimulating; In illustrating these larger processes of caste conflict and caste collaboration, [Priestland] offers crisp portraits of entrepreneurs, economists and warriors; Priestland has a wonderfully arch description of Davos, the Swiss mountain village where the world's leading businessmen and pro-market politicians meet every January; [with] sparkling prose and often arresting

comparisonsrdquo;mdash;Ramachandra Guha, Financial Timesnbsp;ldquo;[A] concise but extremely ambitious bookhellip; a schema well worth pondering and reflecting on. And among the many contributions to the dissection of our current predicament, this is surely one of the most thought-provoking.rdquo;mdash;Sir Richard J. Evans, Guardian (UK)nbsp;ldquo;Lively, opinionatedhellip; The aim of this book is to use the lessons of history to understand the current financial crisishellip; Priestland has some interesting things to say about why power relationships shift and what happens when they dohellip;rdquo;mdash;Economistnbsp;ldquo;We have here a gripping, argument-led history, effortlessly moving between New York, Tokyo and Berlin, from the Reformation to the 2008 economic crisis ... dazzling ... here, at last, is a work that places the current crisis in a longer history of seismic shifts in the balance of social powerrdquo;mdash;BBC History MagazinePRAISE FOR THE RED FLAGldquo;Mesmerizinghellip; deftly combining academic rigour, personal histories and an engaging narrative.rdquo;mdash;Tristram Huntldquo;Priestland writes with elegance and stylehellip; he introduces art, poetry, film and literature to illustrate his themes, which makes this a riveting cultural as well as political history.rdquo;mdash;Victor Sebestyen, Sunday Timesldquo;The best and the most accessible one-volume history of Communism now availablehellip; A far-reaching, vividly written account.rdquo; mdash;Foreign Affairsldquo;Entertaininghellip; astutehellip; a fine new history of Communism.rdquo; mdash;John Gray, New Statesmanldquo;In place of demonologies and apologies, a real history of modern communism from the beginning to the present.nbsp; It is an extraordinary story told with sympathy and with an incisive use of significant detail.rdquo; mdash;Gareth Stedman JonesAbout the AuthorDavid Priestland is the author of the widely acclaimed book *The Red Flag: Communism and the Making of the Modern World* and teaches modern history at the University of Oxford. A fellow of St. Edmund Hall, he lives in Oxford, England.