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Mathmatical Constructs of the Ancient Bohemians: This is a fake book title just for testing the system

John Darwin
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The British freetraders of the early nineteenth century imagined globalization—or the global colonialism that was then practiced by European states—as a great social panacea that would distribute the earth's resources and promote harmony among nations.

John Darwin's *After Tamerlane* might be seen as a history of the process, albeit non-linear and turbulent, of globalization. And Darwin argues that the freetraders have so far been wrong. At the end of this exhaustive *Global History of Empire Since 14*05*, he compares the "Eurasian Revolution" of the late eighteenth century, which saw the emergence of the industrialized economies of Europe, with the current "extraordinary moment" in world affairs that has come about since the fall of the Soviet empire and the movement toward free markets in China.

Darwin shows that patterns of trade, migration, and conquest—the rise and fall of empires—have not "homogenized" the world (as the freetraders predicted), but have generally kept its nations diverse and resistant to outside interference. He adds that globalization, and the industrial capitalism that has been its distinguishing feature for the past two hundred years, has wrought uneven benefits upon both citizens and subjects.

Except where support and detail are abundant, Darwin distances himself from generalizations, easy answers, and popular theories. His stance is generally neutral and his tone is scholarly and dispassionate, but his voice rings with authority. John Darwin is an Oxford fellow and renowned global historian.

His previous books, *Britain and Decolonization*, *The End of the British Empire*, and *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*, establish him as an expert on modern British imperial history. But here he broadens his focus to the competitive empire-building that occurred over the past five hundred years in Eurasia, which he calls the "center of gravity" of modern history. Darwin foregoes a Eurocentric or Western view of "smiling fields and bustling towns," or of

progressive European states acting upon a passive, less-than-civilized outer world. He consistently refuses to associate the West with “modernity” or “progress,” unless genocide, slavery, fascism, or the denial of voting rights for women can be considered modern. His purpose here is to chart the ebb and flow of the wealth and power of nations, and to discuss causes and effects, trends and meanings.

Darwin begins his analysis with the death of Tamerlane, the last of the great Mongol conqueror/generals, who gained control, but could not keep control, of the bulk of Eurasia. His study then covers the empires of the Ottomans, Mongols, Muscovites, Mughals, Savafids, and the Chinese Ming, as well as that “loose confederacy of Christian European states,” some of whose ships would soon discover new worlds.

Later, Darwin breaks rank with many of his colleagues by arguing that European ascendancy in Eurasia did not become apparent until the “great divergence” at end of the eighteenth century. He also contends that the Industrial Revolution was only a contributing factor to Europe’s first economic giant steps—the growth of world trade was the driving force. He grants that after 1815, industrial power accelerated the colonizing process of Europe, which, he notes, became by then “the West,” stretching all the way from the northeast US to Russia.

Darwin pulls no punches as he takes European empires to task for an arrogance and brutality that brushed aside indigenous peoples, toppled governments, set up puppet dynasties, and “wrecked social cohesion and cultural self-confidence.”

His work is rich with examples, from the Aztecs, Mayans, and Inca of the Far West, through regions of Africa and the Middle East, and into India, China, and the Malayan states. But Darwin has no beef with empire per se. He calls it “the default mode of political organization,” a natural outgrowth of the desire to explore the globe and trade goods and ideas. Still, his critique of European-style imperialism is damning. Darwin dubs it “the moral and cultural aggression of one part of the world.” Its distinguishing feature, he adds, was “expropriation” of land, of slave labor, of cultures and identities. Darwin’s survey reveals the forces that have prompted the growth and decay of empires. Some of these forces were, and still are, the crucial balance of power among rivals, the abundance of and demand for resources, the ability of the state to avoid conflict within its borders, and the acquiescence of the colonized. Darwin notes, for example, the “tenacious traditions of political and cultural autonomy” in China, a state that was often considered by the West to be insular, uncivilized, and anything but modern.

Today, China joins empires and “quasi-empires” America, Europe, and Japan in a “great convergence” that manages, however precariously, a renewed global economy.

Joe Taylor