



After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire Since 1405

By John Darwin

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A *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* for the post–Cold War era? a brilliantly written, sweeping new history of how empires have ebbed and flowed over the past six centuries.

The death of the great Tatar emperor Tamerlane in 1405, writes historian John Darwin, was a turning point in world history. Never again would a single warlord, raiding across the steppes, be able to unite Eurasia under his rule. After Tamerlane, a series of huge, stable empires were founded and consolidated? Chinese, Mughal, Persian, and Ottoman?realms of such grandeur, sophistication, and dynamism that they outclassed the fragmentary, quarrelsome nations of Europe in every respect. The nineteenth century saw these empires fall vulnerable to European conquest, creating an age of anarchy and exploitation, but this had largely ended by the twenty-first century, with new Chinese and Indian super-states and successful independent states in Turkey and Iran.

This elegantly written, magisterial account challenges the conventional narrative of the "Rise of the West," showing that European ascendancy was neither foreordained nor a linear process. Indeed, it is likely to be a transitory phase. *After Tamerlane* is a vivid, bold, and innovative history of how empires rise and fall, from one of Britain's leading scholars. It will take its place beside other provocative works of "large history," from Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* to David Landes's *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* or Niall Ferguson's *Empire*.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Was Europe's domination of the modern international order the inevitable rise of a superior civilization or the piratical hijacking of an evolving world system? A little of both, and a lot of neither, this ambitious comparative study argues—because world history's real center of gravity sits in Eurasia. Historian Darwin (*The End of the British Empire*) contends that an ascendant Western imperialism was a sideshow to vast, wealthy and dynamic Asian empires—in China, Mughal India, the Ottoman Middle East and Safavid Iran—which proved resistant to Western encroachment and shaped the world into the 21st century. Europe's overseas colonial empires as well as the expansions of the United States across North America and Russia across Siberia—was not inevitable, but rather a slow, fitful and often marginal enterprise that didn't accelerate until the mid-19th century. Darwin analyzes the technological, organizational and economic advantages Europeans accrued over time, but shows how dependent their success was on the vagaries of world trade (the driving force of modern imperialism, in his account) and the internal politics of the countries they tried to control. Nicely balanced between sweeping overview and illuminating detail, this lucid survey complicates and deepens our understanding of modern world history. Photos. (Feb)

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Review

“Undoubtedly a great work, a book that goes truly global in chronicling the history of one of our abiding concerns: the pull and limitations of absolute power. It forces the reader to rethink commonly held assumptions about our collective past. For that alone, it should be read.” ?Vikram Johri, *St. Petersburg Times*

“Nicely balanced between sweeping overview and illuminating detail, this lucid survey complicates and deepens our understanding of modern world history.” ?Publishers Weekly

“In this marvellously illuminating book, John Darwin accepts much but not all of the revisionist analysis. With an awesome grasp of global history, he demonstrates that the continental peninsula of Europe was peripheral for most of the time since the 14th-century conquests of Tamerlane...Darwin sustains an intricate thesis with enormous panache.” ?Piers Brendon, *The Independent*, 4 May 2007

“An astonishingly comprehensive, arrestingly fresh and vivid history of the forces that underlie the world we live in today, After Tamerlane sets aside ideologies in which European power - sometimes seen as liberating and at others as diabolically oppressive - is the driving force of modern development...After reading this masterpiece of historical writing, one thing is clear. The world has not seen the last empire.” ?John Gray, *Literary Review*, April 2007

“A work of massive erudition, After Tamerlane overturns smug Eurocentric teleologies to present a compelling new perspective on international history. Though the subject of empire stirs partisan passions these days, Darwin exudes fairmindedness...Big topics demand big treatments, yet few are brave or knowledgeable enough to hazard them. Darwin has provided an ambitious, monumental and convincing reminder that empires are the rule, not the exception, in world history.” ?Maya Jasanoff, *Guardian*, 12 May 2007

“A wonderful and imaginative addition to the select library of books on world history that one really wants to possess, and dip into, for ever...It is rather wonderful to doff one's hat to a historian who can range across

time and space, giving the reader continual cause for pause, in the way that Darwin has done.” ?*Paul Kennedy, Sunday Times*

“Darwin ‘gives us world history on the grand scale, equipping his readers with the knowledge and insights to make their own assessment of what is coming next. If only his book could find its way into the right hands, it might also serve to make the world a less dangerous place.’ ” ?*Tim Blanning, Sunday Telegraph*

About the Author

John Darwin is a university lecturer and a fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford. Britain's preeminent scholar of global history, he is the author of *Britain and Decolonization*, *The End of the British Empire*, and *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*.

Users Review

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