

Title—After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire Since 1405
Author—John Darwin
Year—2009

Categories: Empire, World History, Economy

Place: World

Time Period: 1405-1990

Argument Synopsis:

A comprehensive history of empires beginning with the fall of Tamerlane in 1405, with a focus on the roots of globalization in Eurasia. Darwin emphasizes the transformational influence of the Eurasian Revolution in the early modern world. He argues that it is wrong to view the early modern period as the prelude to European supremacy. Three aspects of the Eurasian Revolution: **geopolitical, cultural, and economic.**

Darwin takes issue with the tendency of historians to describe the path to **“modernity”** as merely Europe’s trajectory. Europe’s path to modernity should not be taken as “natural” or “normal.” Fundamental to Darwin’s arguments is the understanding that during the time of Tamerlane, China Europe and the Islamic realm of Middle Eurasia all had high degrees of socio-political organization and material culture.

After Tamerlane seeks to tackle assumptions regarding empires and the study of empires: especially the assumption that only the colonial European empires matter, until Japan starts to borrow techniques from the Europeans to become their own colonial power. Darwin uses chronological exploration to counter this assumption by showing that the model followed by Western Europe was **not universal**. If this model is not the only one, Darwin posits, those empires are not the only important ones. In particular, the close link between culture and state found in the European cases was not followed across of much of Eurasia.

Darwin focuses on the development of the global economy of the present day, identifying the roots of globalization as early as the fall of Tamerlane in 1405. Throughout the book, Darwin strives to emphasize the need to break down historical assumptions that place Europe as the driver for all of world history.

In terms of the global economic convergence, Darwin claims the role played by Asia cannot be overlooked. He points to the interactions between Asian merchants and European states, arguing against the tendency to paint these merchants as passive victims of a European takeover.

Key Themes and Concepts:

- The rejection of the idea of linear change
- The need to set Europe’s age of expansion firmly in the Eurasian context
- The need to think carefully about what “Europe” really was
- The broadening of the notions of East and West