



The World Revolution of Westernization: The Twentieth Century in Global Perspective

Theodore H. Von Laue

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In this stunningly original and controversial book, Theodore Von Laue presents an entirely new perspective for understanding the dynamics of 20th century history. The author argues that the global violence and warfare of this century are the consequences of the little understood world revolution of Westernization. Accounting for world wars, the rise of communism and fascism, decolonization, third world dictatorships, and contemporary terrorism, he describes the twin processes of the expansion of western power and the emergence of global interdependence.

The ascendancy of Europe had, by the turn of the century, brought all parts of the world under its influence and control. Westerners have seen such global emulation as a "civilizing" process. But Von Laue contends that the rest of the world's attempt to catch up with the West militarily, economically, and politically has been a traumatic experience as societies have been forced to undergo in a few decades, changes that Europeans underwent in many centuries, causing many countries to fall prey to totalitarian regimes and military strife. "Western power and western culture" Von Laue writes, "have inflicted a permanent cultural revolution upon the unprepared non-western peoples by foisting upon them the necessity of abject imitation." Von Laue's journey through the 20th century begins in the 1870s with the British raj in India. He considers the colonization of Africa, the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the special case of Japan, before moving on to the World War I era, the communist and fascist "counter-revolutions," the Great Depression, Stalinism and Hitler's unleashing of World War II. In his analysis of the post-war era, the United States emerges as the foremost superpower, and the nuclear arms race the most dangerous of all global tensions. He pays special attention to the experiences of leaders in newly independent nations: Nehru in India; Sukarno in Indonesia; Nasser in Egypt; and Nkrumah in Ghana; he also analyses Mao's China.

As a challenging history of the contemporary age, this book will make its readers think, whether in agreement or disagreement, more globally and compassionately about the complex issues that threaten our peace and survival as we prepare to enter the 21st century.

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