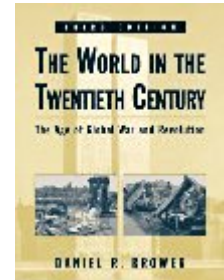


Daniel R. Brower. *The World in the Twentieth Century: The Age of Global War and Revolution*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996. xvii + 366 pp. \$28.67, paper, ISBN 978-0-13-190844-4.



Reviewed by Neal R. McCrillis

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For instructors trying to find a textbook for their students in 20th century world history, Daniel R. Brower's *The World in the Twentieth Century* should be considered carefully. The book's chief advantages are that it is well-organized, of manageable proportions, and relatively inexpensive. The third edition of this textbook has been updated to keep pace with the dramatic, almost pell-mell, pace of recent developments, especially in Europe.

In world history the historian's usual task of selecting and organizing material becomes absolutely vital. Any author who tries to cover world history, even the 20th century alone, has to avoid becoming bogged down in the intricacies and innumerable variations that students would, rightly, consider more confusing than enlightening. By necessity a good world history textbook must be selective and thematic, and Brower's *The World in the Twentieth Century* is exactly that.

In his preface Brower states that his organizing principle is "that the single most important trend of the twentieth century has been the increasing interaction among states and peoples on a global scale [xi]." Brower explains that the three

themes of global interaction that he offers are international politics, political ideology, and the world economy. All of these themes are subsumed under Brower's general argument that the 20th century is the history of "collective action . . . through wars, revolutions, and state building [xii]." For Brower the history of our century is shaped by the two world wars, the Bolshevik revolution, and the transformational legacy of these episodes. This analysis follows upon Brower's previous publications, especially his books on Russian urbanization, Communism, and the 1917 Revolution.

Although the textbook is comprehensive, it tends to focus upon the West and its impact upon the world. In this sense the book generally relies upon the westernization or modernization approach developed successfully by Theodore von Laue, among others, in his *Why Lenin? Why Stalin? (1971)* and *The World Revolution of Westernization_ (1987)*. Hence, the first chapter of Brower's textbook introduces the world in terms of western imperialism, industry and trade, and the ideologies of liberalism, socialism, and nationalism. Four of the next five chapters relate the story

of Europe's collapse into world wars and extremism.

In the first half of the textbook (pre-1945), except for one chapter which covers Japan, China, and India, Brower presents the non-western world as the (sometimes reluctant) recipient of the ambiguous contributions of western civilization. At times the focus narrows even further to emphasize the role of the United States, particularly the legacy of Woodrow Wilson. Occasionally this produces questionable interpretations. Thus, without American participation after 1919, Brower writes, the Versailles settlement "could not succeed [61]." Similarly, the origins of the Second World War seems to lie in the United States rather than Europe, and the war begins when the U.S. is attacked by Japan in December 1941.

A more serious question concerns the western focus in general. What about the indigenous culture and characteristics of the non-western peoples, such as those who were part of the ancient Indian and Chinese civilizations? Should Chinese nationalism and communism, for instance, be understood almost exclusively in terms of western imperialism and western ideologies? Moreover, what impact did the Chinese have upon American and European governments, and western civilization generally?

In the second part of the textbook Brower largely shifts his attention away from Europe to the non-western world. After discussing the origins of the Cold War, Brower devotes each chapter to one region of the globe, including East Asia, South Asia, Africa and Latin America, and the Middle East. In the final chapter Brower returns to his theme of global interaction by summarizing contemporary developments in Europe, concerns about the environment and the changing economy, and the altered patterns of international relations after the Cold War.

This very solid account of the history of our century at times leaves the reader feeling that historical developments happen without human in-

volvement. Thus, in 1899 "the British" "became involved in a colonial war in sub-Saharan Africa [16]" and unnamed "liberals" propagated liberalism [21]. On the other hand, separate sections of the text lighten what, at times by necessity, is a fairly dry book. Particularly in the second half of the textbook, these thematic "Highlights" and biographical "Spotlights" provide a more lively and accessible text. Hence, for example, in studying postwar East Asia in chapter 8, readers focus upon the Stalinist command economies and Ho Chi Minh, illustrating the vital role of economic change and nationalism.

The textbook offers few illustrations, probably in order to keep down costs, but the time chart is helpful. In addition, the recommended reading list at the end of each chapter offers memoirs and novels as well as secondary sources. If you are looking for a textbook for a world history course, Daniel Brower's *The World in the Twentieth Century* is a reliable, inexpensive, and brief account.

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