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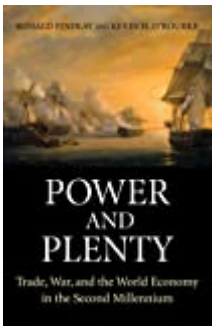

Ronald Findlay, Kevin H. O'Rourke. *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. xxvi + 619 pp. $39.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-11854-3.

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A Global History since 1000

One thousand years of global history! But the co-authors of *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* have both undertaken and achieved this challenge. They are not only writing economic history, but *in nuce,* they provide us with an all-out history. The history of trade, of course, cannot be written without a general look at economic developments. It is a basis as well as an explanation for the rise and decline of trade exchanges–the "plenty" of the title. But "power" signifies even more: it is the use of force, of military instruments, in the course of history. These authors correctly criticize conventional economic historians for neglecting the factor of war as a constitutive factor in historical development. War, as both authors acknowledge, is more than an intervening variable. The great merit of this approach lies in its worldwide coverage. Especially in postcolonial studies of the last decades, it has become common to "provincialize" Europe Ã la Dipesh Chakrabarty and thus to remove it from the mental center of world developments or to mention it only when the "discovery" of other continents by European merchants or conquerors is dealt with. Of course, these authors are not postcolonial cultural historians. Their approach can best be described as a follow-up to the works of Philip Curtin or David Landes.

In this volume, Ronald Findlay and Kevin H. O'Rourke manage to offer a balanced account of world trade on an equal footing for all or most parts of the world. They start with an inventory around the year 1000. Following an approach attempted by Martin W. Lewis and Karen Wigen, they distinguish between seven "world regions" as "multi-cultural agglomerations, defined not by their supposed physical separation from one another ... [b]ut rather ... on the basis of important historical and cultural bonds" (p. 3). With rough population figures in millions, these are western Europe (25), eastern Europe (15), North Africa and Southwest Asia (28), Central or Inner Asia (9), South Asia (79), Southeast Asia (9), and East Asia (67). This division implies that sub-Saharan Africa will be unimportant for centuries to come, while the Americas enter into consideration only beginning with the seventeenth century.

The authors briefly characterize these regions in political, geographical, cultural (religious), and also economic terms by giving available political and cultural data for all the defining political entities, which are here and in consequent chapters mostly characterized as "states." The subsequent chapters try to develop an overview of "the world economy at the turn of the first millennium" (p. 43). Surprisingly, only North Africa and Southwest Asia (which is plausibly merged into the Muslim world), conducted trade relations with all of the other world regions. This heritage certainly gave this region a central role in communications and trade over the next centuries, "the golden age of Islam" (p. 48). Exact figures are not available also for the centuries to come, but the authors try to summarize as closely as possible the transport capabilities, commodities of trade (grain, spices), and regional prices and their differences in other parts of the world, the spring that made trade exchange attractive. While sea trade was important, in the thirteenth century the Mongols under Genghis Khan commanded more than half of worldwide horse power, the khan was proclaimed "universal ruler" (p. 103), and the world lived under a kind of "pax Mongolica" (p. 106). This level of interconnection already constituted a kind of globalization, according to the authors. But sea-trade centers such as Melaka (now in Malaysia) were also "remarkably cosmopolitan" (p. 135).

In the sixteenth century, the Americas became important, and it was Portugal which maintained major lines of trade in the Indian Ocean as well as with the New World, as silver and other precious metals became the source of European wealth. Here–as throughout–the authors try to avoid moral judgments in favor of compiling the best data they can. I found this a strength of the work, but some readers might regard it as moral indifference when they speak of the " 'comparative advantage in violence' that the Military Revolution conferred on the early modern European powers" (p. 144). Structural explanations hold first place in the narrative. Portuguese expansion "seems to have been an inextricable mixture of religious zeal, geopolitical grand strategy, and commercial profit" (p. 145). The Pacific Ocean became a kind of Spanish lake in the sixteenth century as well, and exchange of Chinese silk for American silver became a rewarding enterprise. The wealth of information that the authors present for different regions and exchange between them cannot be completely presented here. Some passages of the work may remind readers of Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987), but emphasis in this book clearly falls on economics without linking them causally to political developments, as Kennedy had done.

Beginning with the industrial revolution, more and better statistical data are available, and consequently the style of argument changes. More figures are inserted in the text, more research discussions are included on the causes of relevant developments, and more correlations are tested between combinations of different factors. This section is naturally accompanied by a wealth of statistics and graphs to lend plausibility to the arguments preferred by these authors. They underline the enormous shift of power to Europe since the industrial revolution, a development closely connected as well to the expansion of blockade systems during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, during which "[t]he French wars saw the end of many mercantilist restrictions associated with early modern European colonialism" (p. 377). After that, data provides that production in Europe increased to an unforeseen level, but this tendency was followed *inter alia* by the "deindustrialization of India" as characterized by the influx of machine-made textiles from Lancashire (p. 334). A new type of globalization appeared that was driven by technology rather than by geopolitics. Trade, which had been noncompetitive to a large extent during the first part of the nineteenth century, now became a source of conflict, especially in the phase of modern imperialism. "Why Britain? Why Europe and not Asia?" is the headline of a well-written subchapter in which the authors combine several long-time factors with short-time explanations from political history–often closely following the arguments of Landes.

The twentieth century, with its growing complexities, is dealt with comparatively briefly. World War I and the world economic crisis are seen as major factors for a relative deglobalization. This chapter ends with the expansionist plans of Japan and Germany on the eve of World War II. This greatest war in history, with its new destructive potential and reality, is barely touched upon in four pages of the last chapter, "Reglobalization: The Late Twentieth Century in Historical Perspective" (p. 473). Nothing more? This limited treatment cannot be regarded as adequate unless one remembers that in some cases, developments from almost three centuries are treated in only one chapter. The problems of decolonization and the decline of the upcoming Third World in particular receive some attention as the authors heavily criticize the politics of import substitution. The transatlantic economy was gradually restructured after 1950, while the communist world largely stayed out of the world trade system, which is now partially organized by the United Nations. "Reglobalization" (p. 496) was

thus the dominant characteristic of the last decades of the twentieth century.

Findlay and O'Rourke have written a book that covers an impressive range of time and space. This is real global history, but the approach has shortcomings, too. They have to paint their arguments with a very broad brush, and this strategy occasionally (over)simplifies matters. A narrative that may be appropriate for describing the long-term structures of economic or trade relations is less convincing for providing political history. It is remarkable to see economic historians taking into account non-economic factors as independent basic historical structures. But the character of states has changed so much in the last thousand years that without further explanation, the employment of this notion to characterized personal and more or less feudal structures (itself a Eurocentric notion) is problematic.

Finally, if I am not mistaken, the relationship between war and economy is never appropriately discussed in the work. War intervenes at some times, interferes with structures, and facilitates or disturbs trade–but are trade and economic exchanges or rivalries important roads to power politics and war? To be sure, general or systematic answers to this question would be better provided by political scientists or philosophers than by historians, but a closer inspection of these relationships would have been highly desirable at many points in the book. Too, not all regions of the world are treated with the same intensity. There are good reasons not to regard central Europe as a separate world zone for the purposes of this book. But in the twentieth-century section, the capacity of Germany to wage war and the character of the FRG as the leading world exporter are mentioned only in passing. And Latin America as well as Africa are only rarely treated more than in passing.

But to expect that any book written at this level of detail could cover everything in 546 pages would be ridiculous. All in all, the work is a well-informed history of world trade that always looks beyond the margins of its own approach. Even I, who prefers to deal with political history, would be glad if I could develop such a birds'-eye view of my own field.

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