



Andreas Heuer. *Globales Geschichtsbewusstsein: Die Entstehung der multipolaren Welt vom 18. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart.* Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2012. 194 S. ISBN 978-3-643-11641-3.



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A. Heuer: Globales Geschichtsbewusstsein

Although in recent years there have been a number of global histories, there has been none as comparative in character as this small book. Central to it is a conception of modernization, but one fundamentally different from the Eurocentric approaches to global history, which dominated Western historical thought until recently. A belated example of the latter is Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History*, published at the end of the cold war in 1989, which assumed that America represented the high-point and fulfillment of history, and that a free market economy would be accompanied by the gradual emergence of democratic institutions world wide, and an end to military conflicts. The developments since the end of the Cold War have proved Fukuyama wrong, except on one point, the world wide extension of capitalist market economies, which, however, except possibly in South Korea and Taiwan, generally led to authoritarian governments. The hopes we had of a democratic development in Russia have been betrayed, as were those of the Arab Spring which led to military dictatorships as in Egypt, and the emergence of Islamic terrorism elsewhere, not to forget the millions of refugees from civil strife in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia.

Heuer is aware of this. He deals in this book with the modernization of all parts of the world since the eighteenth century. But he proceeds with a very complex conception of modernization, realizing, as did Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe*, that it takes very different forms in different countries, in each reflecting specific historical traditions.

In a number of chapters, each devoted to a country or in the case of Latin America and Black Africa to a region, Heuer examines the process of modernization. The first two of these chapters deal with the American and the French Revolution which both initiate a modern world. The basis of that is the declaration of the rights of man, particularly as formulated in France, which create norms which ultimately after the horrors of two world wars and the Shoah are affirmed by contemporary Europe. Nevertheless Heuer notes a deep difference between modernity as it emerges in the American Revolution and the French Revolution, which for him lies in the relation of religion to public life. While to the French Revolution the rejection of every form of religion is central, especially that represented by the Catholic Church,

the First Amendment of the American Constitution decrees the separation of church and state which does not result in the suppression of religion but in its free exercise, with the result that the United States in contrast to France remains a deeply religious country. There is a good deal of truth to this, but also simplification. The France of the French Revolution is seen in many ways, particularly in its secular outlook, as a European model in contrast to the allegedly religious United States. Heuer, of course, stresses rightly that "modernization cannot be understood onesidedly according to a normative model, but can only be grasped from the specific historical development of a country" (p. 123). France is not Europe, also with respect to religion. Great Britain is missing, and with it the impact of industrialization on Europe. And France is much more complex than it is portrayed here. Side by side with a republican tradition, which kept the legacy of the French Revolution alive there has been a strong Catholic counterrevolutionary force exemplified by the Action Française before World War I and the Front National today. When the Vichy government replaced the motto *liberté, égalité, fraternité* with *travail, famille, patrie*, it built on this counterrevolutionary legacy.

Heuer then in the rest of the book turns to the modernization of non-Western countries and regions, pointing out how each went its own ways. He first turns to the independence movements in Central and South America. According to the author these movements aimed at state sovereignty, not to the fulfillment of democratic rights. Next comes a chapter about the Meiji Restoration in Japan, which perhaps should be called a revolution rather than a restoration, because of the speed with which Japan was hurled into a modern industrial world. He sees parallelisms between modernization in imperial Japan and in imperial Germany, which served as a model for the Meiji Restoration. In both countries the economy and the educational system were modernized, while politics and society would only very gradually be brought into conformity with the changes which modernization involved. The powerful role of the emperor and the military and the lack of democratic political institutions were parts of the political culture of the two nations. This led

to a comparison of German and Japanese fascism, the rise of which has to be understood in the context of these traditions. Thus the Great Depression did not undermine political democracy in the United States and Great Britain. But in the aftermath of the horrors of World War II and the Shoah, in Germany and more generally in Europe, unlike in Japan, these terrible events led to an *Erinnerungskultur*, a critical examination of the past and the affirmation of equal human dignity.

After a chapter on the history of Black Africa from European colonization to independence, there follows a chapter on South Korea's way to democracy, stressing the role, which Christianity played in the struggle for independence from Japan, although, as Heuer stresses, Christianity in a Korean historical context takes on different forms from those in the West. Finally there is a chapter on the restoration of Chinese national sovereignty from its subjugation and humiliation by the Western powers and Japan in the century following the first Opium War to the establishment of the People's Republic, in which economic modernization with its authoritarian character follows a very different path than the democratic developments in the West, which in China were crushed bloodily in the massacre on Tiananmen Square.

Although I have pointed at limitations in Heuer's discussion of how modernization varied in different countries and regions, I strongly feel that he is very much on the right track with his comparative intercultural approach. I also think that his basic thesis regarding the way modernization operates is correct. It can be the basis of a more comprehensive book that will go into greater detail and depth on both the common elements of modernization worldwide and the diversities. And this small book lends itself well even in its present form to basic undergraduate courses in contemporary world history. Brief chapters on Great Britain and Russia, which each went very different ways with global consequences, might be added, Britain with both its development of parliamentary democracy at home and colonialism abroad, Russia with the rise and fall of communism. I very much hope that this small book with slight corrections will be made available to English readers.

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