

open the question of how successful the institutionalization (or bureaucratization) of the role of the go-between was. Perhaps studies on Africa, the Ottoman world, and Latin America, which are largely missing from this extraordinary collection, will help answer that question. Go-betweens are ephemeral certainly, but equally certainly their roles are never fully supplanted.

Weltgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts

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Hans-Heinrich Nolte ranks among the very few pioneers in West Germany to engage with world history in the late 1970s and 1980s. After starting his career with a dissertation on religious tolerance in early modern Russia (1970), he served from 1980 onwards as a professor in Russian history at the University of Hannover. He became a specialist of Russia's confrontation with Nazi Germany during the Second World War but at the same time developed a strong interest in the slowly emerging debate on world history in the US; as early as 1982 he had published *The one world*, which popularized Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems analysis.¹ In 1992 he took the initiative of organizing scholars who were interested in world history and area studies into the Verein für Weltgeschichte (Association for World History), and in 2000 he founded the *Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte* (*Journal for World History*). After retirement, he started a multi-volume project on a world history starting in the fifteenth century and spanning the whole period from then to the present. The first part, published in 2005, covered the period before the late nineteenth century. It aimed to integrate new scholarship on economic interaction and cultural encounter into the framework of world system studies and insisted on the unequal exchange at times of empire, colonialism, and slave trade. Nolte's explanation of

European superiority in the nineteenth century began with the observation that Europe developed, on the one hand, into a system that was capable of organizing the fast exchange of knowledge and innovation, while, on the other hand, European states were investing heavily in economic and above all military competition. The expansion to so many other parts of the world was, in that perspective, a side effect of intra-European rivalry. Europe was thus able, for a long time, to export its inner conflicts and to profit from resources gained elsewhere, which were transformed into tools for an industrial revolution, thereby increasing the relative advantages compared with other world regions. At the end of his first volume, Nolte provided a summary of what would follow: when European expansion came to an end simply because there was no more possibility for further expansion, its internal tensions turned into disastrous and self-destructive wars, first in 1914 and then, even more disastrously, in 1939.²

Starting the second volume, Nolte explains that there are three possible narratives for a world history of the twentieth century: one focusing on the rise of the West; the second rooted in theories of ongoing dependencies of all peripheries on a core, but, like the first, mainly concerned with an explanation of European superiority and thus referring much more strongly to the nineteenth than to the twentieth century; and a third, which now seems more convincing, based on 'Europe as a province'. Nolte believes that the recent economic performance of Asian countries invites us to rethink the relationship between the West and the rest, combining Chakrabarty's plea for provincializing Europe with previously dominant forms of criticisms towards worldwide inequalities. Nevertheless, the strong statement in favour of a leading narrative does not mean that the structure of the 450-page volume will follow a single line of interpretation. On the contrary, it bears much closer resemblance to a compendium, organized into twenty-four chapters that are sometimes systematically and sometimes chronologically organized: victory and aporias of the European world system; the end of expansions and lack of balance; nation-building and unions; fundamentalist attacks; attempts to establish socialist regimes; the global nation and the Cold War; a new world order; the comeback of South and East Asia; Islam, Africa,

1 Hans-Heinrich Nolte, *Die eine Welt*, Hannover: Fackelträger Verlag, 1982.

2 See, for example, the review by Peer Vries at <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/id=7142> (consulted 9 December 2011).

and Latin America; uniformity and difference: insecure identities; acceleration and technical change; leaders and followers in industrialization; increasing global division of labour; the promise of welfare for all; limited resources and ecological crisis; violence and non-violence; mass armies, cyber-war, and terrorism; exclusion and genocide; migration and expulsion; emancipation and oppression; bureaucratization and mass movements as aids or not to democratization of the world; freedom and coercion; morality and religion; and the battle for a new global order. These chapter titles indicate that Nolte tries to integrate as many aspects as possible into one narrative, but he observes from a European perspective, which might not exactly be what Dipesh Chakrabarty had in mind. The book is written with enormous sympathy for the oppressed and exploited, while attacking the unjust distribution of wealth, the scandalous disparities of chances, and the unequal flows of resources to the Global North.

Individual chapters start in most cases with an overview on the topic, and present case studies often supported by statistics, which sometimes compare data produced by different authors. Compared to the previous centuries, for which professional historiography has already produced a foundation on which a single author can work (if as erudite as Hans-Heinrich Nolte), there are convincing arguments that the world history of the twentieth century needs more collective research efforts. The enormous merit of Nolte's work is that he has put all the topics on the table and shown what is possible now, a decade after the end of the century.

Perhaps the key to Nolte's way of organizing the material is a table displayed on pages 18 to 20, which presents synchronous events in four world regions that he sees as the essential spatial organization of the world: America, Europe (including Russia/Soviet Union, thus reaching to Vladivostok), a region strangely called 'Islam, Africa', and Asia. Following the timeline through the twentieth century, the reader can follow what happened simultaneously: for example, in 1922 Stalin became general secretary of the Communist Party in Russia and secularism was introduced in Turkey; in 1979 Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher won elections in the US and the UK respectively, while the Soviet Union began its intervention in Afghanistan. It is, of course, difficult to fit all events into such a table; however, the major objection against such a visualization of world history might perhaps be that it privileges political history and the history of institutions over economic, social, and cultural phenom-

ena. In fact, Nolte's history of the twentieth century is above all a history of states' powerful interventions and the role of international organizations. Neither economy, nor urbanization, nor the role of women are missing from the narrative, but they do not take a central part. Nolte attacks the multiple realities under analysis in different ways. The advantage of the organizational pattern of his text is that he introduces the reader to conflicting interpretations by changing priorities given to different approaches. What some readers may fail to find is an argumentation that relates one approach to another.

All in all, this very informative book provides an insightful overview of what happened during the twentieth century and how Europe increasingly became part of a world that it was no longer able to dominate. Globalization has reached a new stage, as the author summarizes (pp. 402–4), relating to the accelerated use of natural resources; increasing density of state intervention; secularization; competition of nations; a world system increasingly integrating flows of capital, services, labour, and goods and leading to an even greater difference between rich and poor; a trend towards exclusion and genocide; the capacity of humanity to destroy; and expanding democratization. Nolte ends on a rather pessimistic tone, highlighting the lack of morality in the current state system, a task that he apportions to the next generation's global governance.

Nolte guides students carefully through a century that is far from being reducible to a single label. This volume completes an ambitious project and will, without doubt, serve as an important resource for the fortunately increasing number of courses in world and global history in the German-speaking academic world.

The world in world wars: experiences, perceptions and perspectives from Africa and Asia

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