

## The Cambridge Dictionary of Modern World History

In a world where we take for granted the ability to communicate instantly across vast distances and time, world history has come of age. We increasingly reflect on history from a position which no longer privileges Europe or the West, and from a global perspective which ranges from the Pacific Rim to the Balkans, and from Latin America to the Middle East. Compiled by an international team of contributors, area editors and general editors, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Modern World History* provides a much needed guide to the main global events, personalities and themes from the eighteenth century to the present. Major themes of war, politics, society and religion are covered, alongside more recent subjects within the discipline; from globalization and the environment to transnational social movements and human rights. This is an essential new work of reference not only for scholars and students but also for the general public.

Chris Cook is a former Senior Research Officer and head of the Modern Archives Survey at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He has combined the careers of academic historian and distinguished compiler of reference works. His many publications include the *Dictionary of Historical Terms* (1998), the European Political Facts series and the standard *Short History of the Liberal Party* (2010). With John Stevenson he has co-edited the Routledge Historical Companions as well as co-authoring *The Slump* (2009), a major study of Britain in the 1930s.

John Stevenson is a former Reader and Fellow of Worcester College, University of Oxford. He has published widely on British, European and world history, including works on both political and social history. His publications include *A History of Europe* (2005), *The Routledge Companion to World History since 1914* (2005, with Chris Cook), *A History of British Elections since 1688* (2014, with Chris Cook) and *William Cobbett: Romanticism and Enlightenment* (2015, edited with J. Grande). He is currently editing a volume of English historical documents for the period 1914–57.

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*The*  
*Cambridge Dictionary of*  
MODERN WORLD  
HISTORY

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*Edited by*  
CHRIS COOK  
and  
JOHN STEVENSON



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## Contributors

Calvin H. Allen, Jr, Cemil Aydin, William Beezley, Jonathan Bell, Magnus T. Bernhardsson, Carlos Brando, Winnifred R. Brown-Glaude, David Buisseret, Trevor Burnard, Brian Caton, Pratik Chakrabarti, Aryendra Chakravartty, Lily Chang, Elizabeth Clapp, Peter Coates, Frank Cogliano, George Conyne, Philip Cook, R. Douglas Cope, Graham Cornwell, Martin Crawford, Robert Crews, Gareth Davies, Carmen De Michele, Elizabeth Dillenburg, Rod Duncan, Xavier Duran, Martin Durham, Howard Eissenstat, Felipe Tamega Fernandes, Jonathan Goldstein, Pablo Gomez, Leonard Gordon, Harry Harmer, Robert Harrison, Timothy Hawkins, Michael Heale, Gad Heuman, Brian Holden Reid, Nadine Hunt, Emma Hunter, Steve Jacobson, Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, Andrew Johnstone, Tim Keirn, John Killick, Peter F. Klaren, Deep Kanta Lahiri Choudhury, George Lewis, Toby Lincoln, Peter Ling, Brian Loveman, Julie MacArthur, Lisa Maguire, Bertie Mandelblatt, Robert Mason, James McClellan, John McNeill, Martin Meenagh, Ranald Michie, David Milne, Farina Mir, Rana Mitter, Ryoko Nakano, Phillip Naylor, Kendrick Oliver, Kenneth Owen, Sebastian Page, Fabio Parasecoli, Albert L. Park, Graham Pitts, Marshall Poe, Mridu Rai, Monica Rankin, Donald Ratcliffe, Vera Blinn Reber, Christoph Rosenmüller, Haimanti Roy, John Saillant, Friedrich Schuler, Daniel Scroop, Alex Seago, Ronald E. Seavoy, James Seelye, Jr, Jay Sexton, Verene Shepherd, Jeffrey Shumway, Julia Stephens, John Stevenson, John Thornton, Robert Travers, Stephen Tuck, Knut S. Vikør, Adrian Webb, Emily West, Mark White, Merry Wiesner-Hanks, Gary Williams, Wasana Wongsurawat, Khodr Zaarour and Chitralekha Zutshi.

## Editors' Preface

World history has come of age in recent years. Today, we live in an interrelated and mobile environment where we take for granted the ability to communicate instantly across the world. Accordingly, history has gone global as we increasingly reflect on history from a position which no longer privileges Europe or the West. The coverage of the *Cambridge Dictionary of Modern World History* is by definition worldwide, from the Pacific Rim to the Balkans and from Latin America to the Middle East. Its themes range widely from political issues such as civil rights, feminism and revolution to cultural areas such as cinema and romanticism. The great world religions, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism and Christianity, are fully represented, as are more major secular currents of thought from the Enlightenment to democracy and neoliberalism. Within the many entries dealing with individual nation states, countries and geographical regions the *Dictionary* considers issues in a global context such as agriculture, energy, exploration, health and disease, imperialism and decolonization, industrialization, migration, state formation, the transport revolution and the concept of globalization itself.

World history does not fall into neat categories and much of the traditional periodization historians use is Eurocentric or fits into an outdated model of the 'rise of the West'. Historians have shown us that globalization has a long history, that intercontinental contacts existed even in the distant past, possibly as far back as the Bronze Age or earlier, and historians have highlighted the significance of the so-called 'Silk Road', which provided a route for contact between Asia and Europe long before the trans-oceanic voyages of European explorers and traders. These began at the end of the fifteenth century with the first transatlantic voyages and the circumnavigation of the globe in the early sixteenth century led by a European, Ferdinand Magellan. From that period onwards, the impact of Europe on the wider world became a significant feature in global history. It was the Spanish who invaded and conquered the Latin American empires of the Aztecs and Incas rather than the other way round, and Portuguese seafarers who voyaged into the Indian Ocean, the China Seas and the Pacific rather than the reverse. No Polynesian war canoe sailed into the Lagoon of Venice when Cook charted the Pacific; no Chinese junk sailed through the Dover Straits when Dutch and Portuguese merchants and missionaries were navigating those of Malacca. The interventions of Europeans in Latin America, Africa and the Indian Ocean accelerated through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, making decisive steps towards the emergence of an increasingly globalized world.

When, then, did 'modern' history begin? For more than half a century historians have become familiar with the term *early modern* to describe a period approximately from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth in which fundamental changes occurred which acted as precursors to the 'modern' world, including the beginnings of the scientific revolution, the development of printing, the so-called 'military revolution' and the emergence of powerful nation states in Europe which, as stated, were already having an increasingly influential impact upon the rest of the world. The eighteenth century – the approximate starting point for this volume – can be seen as the realization of these developments on an increasingly global scale. Not only were European empires well established in Central and Latin America; interventions in North America, Africa and the Indian subcontinent were beginning to have critical impacts in these regions and upon their indigenous rulers. Something like a worldwide trading network was being established on the initiative of Europeans and having increasingly transformative effects.

Transformative but not one-way, as the fertile notions of the *Columbian exchange* and *orientalism* remind us. Two-way exchanges of goods, peoples and ideas had a long history but became greater as the world grew smaller. Gunpowder and printing, invented in China, were taken up in Europe and utilized to transform power relations and the world of ideas. Potatoes, sugar and tobacco flowed from the Americas to influence the diets and well-being of the whole world, while millions of pieces of Chinese porcelain and countless crates of tea were shipped westwards to Europe, paid for by western merchants with silver mined in Potosi in Peru and opium from India. The Atlantic slave trade moved as many as 10 million people from Africa to the Americas, while the nineteenth century saw tens of millions of migrants from Europe travelling to almost every part of the globe. From the eighteenth century there was an intensification of commercial and economic relationships in which almost every corner of the world was involved.

From the eighteenth century industrialization provided a fresh impetus, enhancing the commerce and power of those states which most rapidly adapted to it. Coal, cotton, iron and manufactured goods flowed from the mines and factories of the first industrial nations, dominating trade in a new range of products and revolutionizing lives. The rise of mechanized production and commercial society, the transport revolution and rapid urbanization created a new world whose repercussions are still being felt. During the course of the nineteenth century steam-powered machines working night and day produced textiles and other goods in unprecedented quantities, railway engines travelled at speeds never before achieved, and steel structures such as the Eiffel Tower were the first to rise higher than the wonders of the ancient world. By the early twentieth century world cities such as London, New York and Tokyo were the largest the world had ever seen, but they in turn would be eclipsed by the megacities of the twenty-first. There would be no turning back from the economic transformation which began three centuries ago, as scientific and technological advances propelled unheralded developments from space exploration to the



### *Editors' Preface*

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Internet. But the transformations were not solely economic. The birth of the 'modern' world owed at least as much to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the revolutionary impact of concepts of democratic and human rights, socialism, feminism and the sovereignty of peoples, ideas which resonate down to our own day.

The 'rise of the West' had a geopolitical reality – by the time of World War I a handful of 'great powers' politically and economically controlled the greater part of the world in formal or informal empires – but so did its decline. Within fifty years the 'Great Empires' had been largely dismantled, creating a world of nearly two hundred nation states. Fresh geopolitical divisions, such as the Cold War, were dismantled in their turn, a bipolar rivalry of the United States and the Soviet Union replaced by a multiplicity of new examples of collaboration and cooperation, tension and conflict. To this end as far as possible, the *Dictionary* brings world history right up to date to the early twenty-first century, including events such as the Arab Spring, conflicts in Islam and the rise of new global economic powers. It tries too, to focus on the larger themes which are more deeply embedded and evolve more slowly. In doing so, it attempts to present a rounded reference work to the history of the modern world.

In compiling the *Dictionary* we have incurred many debts. The many area editors and contributors are acknowledged separately, but particular thanks are due to Victoria Grant for her work at the beginning and Dr H. Harmer, Dr M. Meenagh, Dr P. Thompson and Dr A. Webb for their invaluable assistance in bringing the work to a conclusion. Victoria Parrin assisted greatly with the production and our copy-editor Hilary Hammond considerably improved the original text. To our editor, Michael Watson, we owe a considerable debt of gratitude for his patient support during its lengthy completion. Great thanks are also due to Sandra Byford and Linda Hollingworth for their invaluable assistance with the typing.