

From *Library Journal*

Turchin, Peter. *War and Peace and War: The Life Cycles of Imperial Nations*.

Pi Press: Pearson Education. Oct. 2005. c.400p. maps. index. ISBN0-13-149996-3.

\$27.95. HIST

Here scientist Turchin (ecology & evolutionary biology, Univ. of Connecticut) takes on the apparent chaotic nature of history and through the prism of mathematical models and behavioral theories concludes that there are persistent cyclical historical patterns that he calls cliodynamics. Unlike many contemporary observers of human nature, Turchin does not believe that rational choice or self-interest motivates humans to create such powerful entities as nation-states or empires. Instead, it is the impulse, in times of imminent danger, to abandon personal interest and through cooperative effort conquer threatening cultures. Turchin examines the conflicts between such rivals as the Romans vs. the Gauls, the Russians vs. the Tartars, and the English vs. the French. He maintains that it was the conflict on meta-ethnic frontiers that led to the collective action necessary for the creation of such imperial powers as the Roman, Russian, and British empires. Turchin argues that it was the gradual erosion of this collective impulse that led to the demise of these once great powers—a timely message for the American Empire. He renders his thesis in a lively fashion. For a more technical study of the statistical model behind his hypothesis, see his earlier work, *Historical Dynamics*. In many respects, Turchin's vision of world history conflicts with Jared Diamond's view as expressed in the highly popular *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. His hypothesis promises to generate controversy. Recommended for academic and public libraries.

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