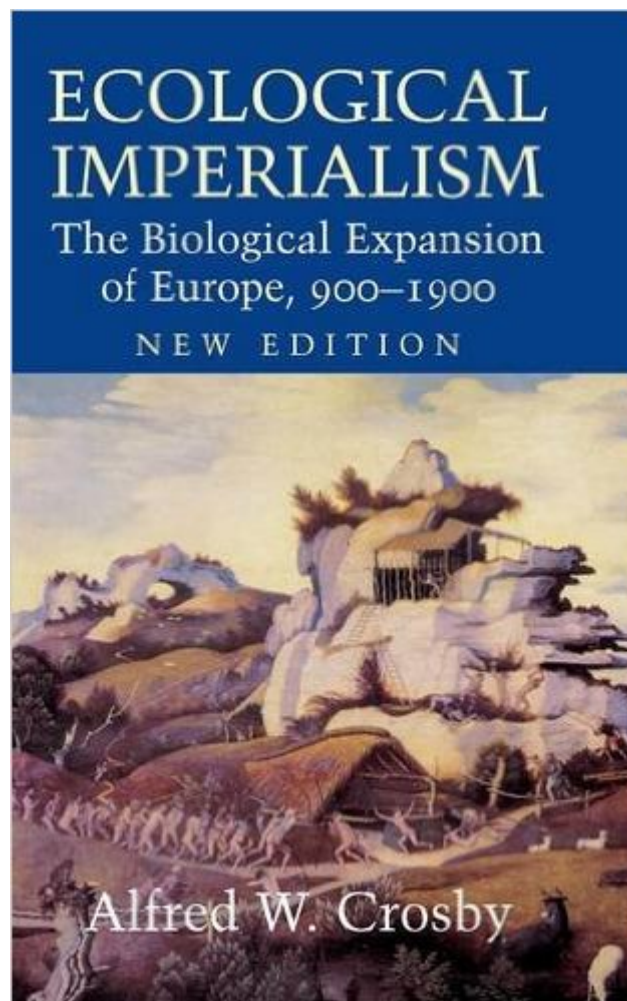


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# Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion Of Europe, 900-1900 (Studies In Environment And History)



## Synopsis

People of European descent form the bulk of the population in most of the temperate zones of the world--North America, Australia and New Zealand. The military successes of European imperialism are easy to explain because in many cases they were achieved by using firearms against spears. Alfred Crosby, however, explains that the Europeans' displacement and replacement of the native peoples in the temperate zones was more a matter of biology than of military conquest. Now in a new edition with a new preface, Crosby revisits his classic work and again evaluates the ecological reasons for European expansion. Alfred W. Crosby is the author of the widely popular and ground-breaking books, *The Measure of Reality* (Cambridge, 1996), and *America's Forgotten Pandemic* (Cambridge, 1990). His books have received the Ralph Waldo Emerson Prize, the Medical Writers Association Prize and been named by the Los Angeles Times as among the best books of the year. He taught at the University of Texas, Austin for over 20 years. First Edition Hb (1986): 0-521-32009-7 First Edition Pb (1987): 0-521-33613-9

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## Customer Reviews

Alfred Crosby is widely credited for popularising the ecological dimension of the history of imperial expansion. For this reason, and perhaps this reason alone, his book is worth a read. The book, first published in 1986, revolutionised the way we think about European imperial expansion into the New World. How a few hundred disoriented Europeans armed with spears and misfiring guns managed to overwhelm entire Inca and Aztec civilisations in the early sixteenth century, for example. Crosby

convincingly casts aside traditional political or military explanations by attributing the astonishing Portuguese and Spanish victories to bacteriology: how diseases such as smallpox and measles that the Europeans unwittingly carried with them wiped out thousands of New World inhabitants, severely crippling their defences. The larger point that Crosby drives across is a profound one. Historical events - in this case, European expansion and imperialism - can be explained predominantly by ecological factors. In the clash of 'biotas' between the Old and the New World, the Old World won. Convincingly. Hence the presence not just of Europeans in the Americas, but also of pigs and dandelions. According to this thesis, ecology shaped European expansion; creating 'Neo-Europes' in the New World that facilitated European migration, precipitating the 'Caucasian wave' from the 1820s to the 1930s. Unlike in most other histories, in Crosby's ecological history, humans form the backdrop and inexorable ecological forces take centre-stage. Refreshing as this perspective is, the way that Crosby has rendered it is problematic in on a number of accounts.

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