

**Murat Iyigun.** *War, Peace, and Prosperity in the Name of God: The Ottoman Role in Europe's Socioeconomic Evolution.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015. xix + 195 pp. \$55.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-226-38843-4.

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When I first picked up Murat Iyigun's book, I was sitting in the courtyard of the Borgo San Marco, an olive agritourist hotel in Puglia, the province deep in the heel of the Italian boot. The hotel/olive plantation itself is built on the foundations of a fortress of the Knights of Malta (also known as the Hospitallers), who were given control over this part of Italy by the pope in the late 1300s, in part to protect the coast from piracy and invasion. Otranto, gateway to the Adriatic Sea, is another hour down the coast. As the sole Italian port on the Adriatic occupied by the Ottomans (1480-81), its claim to fame is to have confronted and vanquished the Muslim hordes. The Chapel of the Martyrs of the Cathedral of Otranto still displays the skulls and bones of the eight hundred said to have died on that particular occasion.

Similar memorials, more or less visceral, are simply part of the scenery in all the countries that once bordered the Ottoman Empire from 1300 to 1918. Though I have written at length on the European-Ottoman confrontations, and have a fine-tuned sense of the pitfalls of writing about faith and conflict, I am less well acquainted with econometric history, which Murat Iyigun has applied here to explore the role of monotheism in the development of human societies, especially the idea of faith as the "foundation of social stability" (p.

xiv) in sixteenth-century Europe. His chief arguments are two: that the Protestant Reformation, which led to religious tolerance and national sovereignty in Europe, was facilitated and ultimately successful by having to confront the sustained Ottoman assault on the European frontier; and that the effects of that confrontation have had a much longer lasting socioeconomic impact than we might imagine, accounting for much of present-day Muslim-Christian economic inequality. Iyigun acknowledges the significant body of work by European and Ottoman historians and others, but distinguishes his effort by his unabashed (his word) emphasis on sociopolitical stability and development and "the degree to which internal peace was sustained among and within social groups and politics" over a time frame of four millennia, from 2500 BCE to 1750 CE. His subject is "monotheist civilizations," that is, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (p. 27)

*War, Peace and Prosperity* is divided into four parts and eleven chapters: part 1, "The Preliminaries," which sets out the project and Iyigun's aims; part 2: "The Rise of Monotheisms"; part 3: "Monotheisms, Conflict, and Cooperation"; and finally, part 4: "Pluralism, Coexistence, and Prosperity." All of the data analysis is available online as appendices. The book itself includes

some explanations, but is largely a summary of the models and the author's conclusions.

Each part is posed as a series of questions, hypotheses, and conclusions. Part 1 covers the relevant econometric literature. Part 2 (chapters 2-3) maps the emergence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and establishes the base study of 277 societies, demonstrating that those that had a preponderance of adherence to one of the three monotheisms had higher survival odds and larger territorial domains at their peak. By Iyigun's calculations, the medieval world was predominantly a monotheistic domain and, by the turn of the fifteenth century, conflict and cooperation were part of its historical legacy.

Christian-Muslim interactions in Europe inform the remainder of his book. In part 3 (chapters 4-7), his argument, to the extent that I can understand the economic modeling, is that all other factors being equal, interfaith conflicts lasted longer and were more catastrophic than intrafaith conflicts. His Muslim example is the Ottoman Empire: the Turks, described as arriving in Anatolia (present-day Turkey) imbued with the single objective of conquering Christian Europe (chapter 5 is called "The 'Dark Side' Arises") and perceived as an existential threat. Quoting Stanford Shaw, Iyigun mentions the landing at Otranto as sending Rome into a panic while the pope called for a new Crusade (p. 85).

While I would agree that the rapidity of the conquests must have been terrifying to the buffer territories of Europe (what he calls the continental European states), it is worth noting the house of Osman struggled with multiple other candidates, both in the west and the east, for domination of imploding Byzantium for close to two hundred years. The "leg up" of Osman and his successors was that his warriors were hired by the late Byzantines to fight against the unruly Balkan kingdoms and occasionally allied with them—what used to be called "Ottoman pragmatism." Iyigun prefers Gaza ideology as monocausal in

the Ottoman case, that is, the warrior impulse fired up by Islam.

Iyigun then applies the intrafaith negotiations versus interfaith enemy to the Habsburg-Ottoman post-Reformation struggle, based on an earlier article.[1] Using data on violent conflict for the period 1451 to 1700, Iyigun finds that the "deeper the Ottomans penetrated into Europe, the greater their impact on subduing intra-European feud" (p. 102).[2] The high level of Ottoman aggression in the period 1450-1550 (thirty-seven conflicts, with more than 85 percent of those initiated by the Ottomans) led to the survival not just of Protestantism but of the fringe and marginalized groups such as adherents of Calvin and Zwingli and Anabaptists (p. 106).

The Ottoman imperial household serves as another indicator of amelioration of the Christian-Muslim conflict (chapter 7, "Those Harem Nights"). Iyigun is not the first to observe that harem of the sultan was made up of female slaves from immensely diverse backgrounds, some of whom became extremely powerful. He is, however, the first I have seen to claim *statistically* that the matrilineal identity of the sultan might have determined the ferocity/generosity with which the Ottomans treated the homeland of their mother (*valide*). Surely, the early Ottomans, like other dynasties, saw the value of strategic alliances. Karen Barkey (*Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* [2008]) argues that the founders of the empire drew on the frontier lands zone to create a powerful Muslim-Christian symbiosis which was central to their early success.

Part 4 takes up the debates about ethnolinguistic differences and religious fractionalization as engendering direct or indirect influences on stability and development. Departing from his 1750 cutoff date, Iyigun examines 953 violent confrontations in 52 countries from 1400 CE to 1900 CE. Not surprisingly, the countries with the greatest degree of religious fractionalization corre-

spond to the buffer zones of the Habsburg-Ottoman-Romanov empires, echoing William H. McNeill's classic *Europe's Steppe Frontier 1500-1800* (1966), which introduced Europeanists to the cauldron-like nature of those frontiers. The literature on imperial borderlands or "shatterzones" has grown exponentially since then.

Comments on fractionalization and homogeneity, with the former occurring present-day as a result of intrafaith conflicts, and the latter generally the result of sustained historical interfaith conflicts, preface Iyigun's discussion of the impact of long-term patterns of conflict on political systems and their institutions. He tentatively notes that the homogeneity may also result from sustained repression, as in inquisitions and pogroms. His conclusions determine that religiously motivated conflicts over the long haul have an influence on political borders, the size of countries, and the ways in which they might be fragmented.

Religious coexistence and its impact on the sustained prosperity of Europe underlie Iyigun's final two chapters. He rehearses the discussion of Max Weber's theory of the significant impact of Calvinism on the development of capitalism, and modifies the theory to suggest that the Reformation placed a strong emphasis on human capital accumulation, which resulted in the development of a European moral code of conduct that resembled a secularized business ethic which triggered the Industrial Revolution.

The final chapter, "Meanwhile, in the Orient ...," contrasts European individual initiative and corporate mentality with the impact of *sharia* contract law on Muslim wealth accumulation. Here, Iyigun is indebted to Timur Kuran, whose *Long Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East* (2010) makes those arguments and others about Islamic legal and corporate instruments, and weak private property protections. The development gap in the present-day Muslim world, by Iyigun's account, is very large and unlikely to be closed anytime soon. Surveying some

Ottoman historians, Iyigun then suggests that "economic calcification" brought down the Ottomans and wonders if an Islamic (economic) Reformation is pending, using patterns of seventh- and eighth-century Muslim institutions to suggest its possibility and recent Gulf State changes to the economic sphere as evidence. Finally, perhaps his real message, he offers the Turkish republican model as an example of a highly successful Muslim modernization program post-1918.

I am certain to have done injustice to the spirit of inquiry and collaboration evident in this brief work, which is written in an accessible, sometimes breezy, and informative style. Still, I feel compelled to comment on the historical assumptions of Iyigun's project. The rationale for stopping at 1750 was the determination of a decline in conflict frequency and length of warfare, replaced by a rise in shorter and more fatal conflicts, a remarkable statement. In this view, the post-1750 era is no longer a religious age and perhaps (I extrapolate) it cannot be quantified as such? Military historians of these later centuries prefer to view "religion" as ideology, rhetoric mustered with armies to justify invasion. Perhaps the problem becomes too muddled for statistical analysis, with modern conflict technologies and victimhood to sort out as part of the clash of monotheistic civilizations.

And yet, as noted, Iyigun does not actually stop at 1750, but offers his model of post-1750 violence as fractionalization, described above—what a historian might term sectarianism. After 1750 Europe is on the offensive globally with the new religions—secularism, capitalism, and nationalism—engendering an extraordinary set of revolutions worldwide. In the Eurasian (Ottoman) borderlands (buffer zones), fractionalization or ethno-religious national struggles began slightly later, in the early 1800s, and continued to play themselves out as the "geographies of homogeneity" were constantly remapped then and now. Nativism, irredentism, or Nazism, the hatred of eth-

nic-religious others, is one product of such national debates. The most tragic (and triumphant) of these remappings is, of course, the geography of Judaism, the third of Iyigun's monotheisms, which he abandons early on as not being statistically significant in the long European-Ottoman tango of violence. But Jewish nationalism (Zionism) emerges precisely as the Ottoman Empire is falling apart in the process of reengineering itself in the late nineteenth century, and the diaspora finds a homeland in Palestine, one of some twenty-five "nations" to emerge from the collapse of the empire in WWI.

Iyigun's chief historical source for his contemporary arguments is Bernard Lewis and in particular, *What Went Wrong?* (2002). The immensely popular book makes for dangerous reading as it sets up a completely ahistorical conflict which basically blames Muslims for failing to modernize, sometimes hilariously, as when he suggests that one of the reasons was the failure to wear neckties. More insidiously, the religion of Islam itself, its early history and aggression, is to blame for current Muslim fortunes and backwardness. Lewis was part of the generation when "modernization" was the new panacea for developing countries, and the author of the still much-admired *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961), which celebrated the republican secular miracle by simply ignoring the Armenian genocide of 1915 and the suppression of other ethno-religious objectors to the new Turkish Republic, such as Muslims and Kurds. It is disingenuous to suggest that 1) secularism is profoundly Christian and therefore rejected by Muslims and 2) that the French British imperial age was brief and benevolent and ended fifty years ago. If only.

Muslim civilizations largely writ—think Mali to Bali—have all been, without exception, under attack since 1750. The onslaught was particularly relentless from 1798 onwards in the Middle East proper, from the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon to the bombing of Syria today. As Cemil Aydin's new

book (*The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual Inquiry* [2017]) argues, the universal imperial vision of the nineteenth century, in its new Anglo-American Christian progressive and evangelical form (my addition), simultaneously racialized Muslims and empowered them to think of themselves, arguably for the first time, as a global phenomenon. The Ottoman intellectual class, striving to be part of the Concert of Europe by promoting universalism, however, could never quite escape the label of failed and barbaric Muslim empire. The modern political discourse around capital "M" Muslims begins then, as do the various strands of Islam-based revival and resistance we now call Muslim terrorism. So if there is a Muslim Reformation underway, it has nothing to do with economics but resembles more the 130 years of the Catholic-Protestant wars leading not to religious plurality but to the homogeneity of the worst aspects of nationalism.

The rhetoric of the Crusades is particularly popular in the United States, the successor to France and Britain in the Middle East after WWII, which now styles itself the Judeo-Christian world (remarkably, the Jewish population of the world [14,000,000] is now fairly evenly split between the United States and Israel). As Marilynne Robinson recently wrote, "You may have noticed that the United States is always in an existential struggle with an imagined competitor. It may have been the cold war that instilled this habit in us. It may have been nineteenth-century nationalism, when America was coming of age and competition among the great powers of Europe drove world events. Whatever etiology is proposed for it, whatever excuse is made for it, however rhetorically useful it may be in certain contexts, the habit is deeply harmful, as it has been in Europe as well, when the competition involved the claiming and defending of colonies, as well as militarization that led to appalling wars." [3]

There are two American versions of the present-day rhetoric on the "clash of civiliza-

tions”: Obama addressing “Muslims” in Egypt, with his Judeo-Christian plea for understanding, and the Trump version, which revives the new cold war existential threat generated post-9/11 by the Bush dynasty in its itch to take down Iraq. Incidentally, Lewis served as a consultant in that administration. The victims in all of this manipulation of our basest fears continue to be Christian, Jewish, and Muslim.

Ironically, it is a particularly vibrant moment for new work on the Turkish, Arab, Persian, and Balkan versions of the story, with younger scholars seeking to recover a more nuanced history instead of the bipolar teleology of religious history/secular miracle. The Ottoman Empire, *the* Middle East before 1918, is the subject of widely popular soap operas and serious investigations into its tragic past, as generations of young global citizens want to learn what really went wrong.

#### Notes

[1]. Murat Iyigun, “Luther and Suleyman,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 123 (2008): 1465-1494.

[2]. Iyigun relies here on Peter Brecke, “Violent Conflicts 1400 A.D. to the Present in Different Regions of the World,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Peace Science Society (International), October 8-9, 1999, Ann Arbor, MI; and “The Conflict Dataset: 1400 A.D.–Present,” forthcoming, Mimio, Georgia Institute of Technology.

[3]. Marilynne Robinson, “What Are We Doing Here?” *New York Review of Books*, November 9, 2017.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-nationalism>

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