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## BOOK REVIEW

**Dincecco, Mark and Massimiliano G. Onorato, *From Warfare to Wealth: The Military Origins of Urban Prosperity in Europe*: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp.196.**

We usually associate material prosperity with peace and stability. Capital flies when armies are mobilised. But here we have a politico-economic treatise, *From Warfare to Wealth: The Military Origins of Urban Prosperity in Europe*, that challenges this notion.

The authors Mark Dincecco and Massimiliano G. Onorato statistically delineate the region stretching from southern England to northern Italy as the most urbanised belt in the continent, and also its 'economic backbone'. Its per capita GDP is approximately 40% more than the non-urban belt. It covers Belgium, the Netherlands, eastern France, western Germany, and Switzerland. And interestingly most of the battles have historically been fought inside this perimeter. The authors hold that wars drove the populace towards fortified urban centres. These centres grew in stature due to industrial acumen and technological advancement. Moreover, a right to property granted the arriving human capital to attain financial independence, which ultimately served metropolitan interests. This phenomenon has been described as 'warfare to wealth effect'.

Now, such a counterintuitive research should have taken hundreds of pages, however the authors to their credit have successfully contained their argument below the two hundred mark. Since parts of this book comprise of graphs, maps, and charts that may sap a readers' stamina, the brevity helps to counterbalance these esoteric segments.

It is divided into 7 chapters, which include introduction and epilogue. Hence, the principle argumentation takes 5 sections.

The sections are titled as follows: 'The Importance of Warfare', 'Europe's Urban Rise', 'Evaluating the Safe Harbour Effect', 'Evaluating the Warfare-to-Wealth Effect', and 'Warfare to Wealth in Comparative Perspective'.

The chapter 'The Importance of Warfare' quantitatively substantiates the argument that conflict has been central to Europe, and the paucity of virgin territory coupled with population density stoked political squabbling. The statistics illustrate that between the years A.D. 1000 and A.D. 1799 a total of 856 military engagements took place in Western Europe.

The succeeding part, 'Europe's Urban Rise', narrates the surge in urbanization precipitated mainly, according to the authors, by the warfare triggered massive rural urban migration. Cities provided a 'safe harbour' that not only provided room for peaceful interaction but also generated an ambience necessary for innovation and intellectual development. This chapter is closely linked with the next two chapters, which statistically test phenomena like the 'Safe Harbour Effect' and 'Warfare-to-Wealth Effect'. With the help of numerous charts, graphs, and maps, the authors claim to establish that greater political wrangling has directly been proportional to urbanization and the accumulation of wealth.

The penultimate section, 'Warfare to Wealth in Comparative Perspective', applies this European model to medieval China and Sub-Saharan Africa. The authors find that whereas China has had relatively low political fragmentation and land-labour ratio, Africa, on the other hand, has had to suffer from high levels of socio-political instability and land-labour ratio. Warfare targeted slaves not land as the latter has always been in abundance in Africa. Greater bureaucratic centralization in China meant that there was little space for autonomous endeavours like investment and trade. Authorities shielded strategic urban spots from restlessness by discouraging rural migration into the cities. Conversely, political instability in Africa pushed people not towards urban centres but in the direction of immense uncultivated fields.

It must be stated that the authors do clarify in the concluding pages that the purpose of their research has not been to promote warfare to achieve urbanization. Rather they insist on migration and relaxed labour mobility.

The book is riddled with statistical formulae decipherable only to the area experts, but, as stated earlier, its succinctness and linguistic simplicity brings it close to a layman's radar.

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