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Turning to Political Violence: The Emergence of Terrorism by Marc Sageman (review)

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harbors. In this case, too, the comparison favors Europe or, more precisely, Switzerland, suggesting that physical geography, though important, is not the only factor at play.

Ultimately, the challenge for Studor is to link his statistical findings for grain prices back to the larger historical debate that motivated the exercise. Are price differentials an adequate measure of market development? Do we understand the roles of geography, technology, and institutions in the evolution of those markets? Do we know more now than we did before this study about whether market development was at the root of the Great Divergence? Statistical studies like Studer's can only hint at the answers to these larger questions. But this is not to dismiss their value; ultimately they are how we make progress on scholarly debates.

Barry Eichengreen
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Turning to Political Violence: The Emergence of Terrorism. By Marc Sageman (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017) 496 pp. \$49.95

Sageman seeks to explain these causes of political violence in general and terrorism in particular. He argues against the prevailing rational-choice, psychological, and ideological arguments, instead claiming that a social-identity perspective works best. This approach posits that individuals turn to terrorism as a result of their participation in communities of political protest—communities that are imagined in the same way that Anderson describes a nation as an imagined community.¹ Individuals develop loyalty to the community and are willing to make sacrifices for it.

A combination of escalatory rhetoric, a frustration with the pace or ineffectiveness of peaceful actions, and government repression of political protest creates the turn to violence. Government repression leads members of the protest community to see their group as under attack and in need of defense. It also forces the potential terrorists underground, causing their cognitive horizons to narrow as they lose contact with more moderate members of the protest community who might question the morality and efficacy of a turn to violence. In other words, Sageman argues that people are not born terrorists and that grievances alone do not result in political violence. Rather, a combination of grievances and events leads individuals to acts of terrorism. Hence, the best that a state can do to prevent political violence is to avoid overreacting, abstain from escalatory rhetoric, and handle quarrels between various factions of society fairly—all difficult tasks.

1 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

Although the social-identity perspective is highly amenable to small groups, it has broader applicability. Sageman shows that so-called “lone wolf” terrorists exhibit the same patterns of loyalty to an imagined political community as do terrorists organized into cells. Similarly, many of the individuals that came together to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 barely knew each other before the attack. Loyalty to, and a willingness to defend, a larger political-protest community is what drives the turn to violence, not small-group dynamics.

Sageman deftly illustrates his argument in a series of highly detailed case studies of various terrorist groups and individual acts of terrorism in the period between the French Revolution and World War I. The cases focus on France, Russia, and the United States as well as on the international anarchist movement, supplemented by an appendix that examines a wide range of groups from the nineteenth century to the present day. Given this combination of sound theorizing and strong supporting evidence, Sageman’s book is a major contribution to our understanding of terrorism.

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Zero Degrees. Geographies of the Prime Meridian. By Charles W. J. Withers (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2017) 321 pp. \$29.95

For more than two decades, I have taught that a conference held in Washington, D.C. in 1884 fixed the Prime Meridian in Greenwich, and that until 1911, the French refused to endorse this decision, preferring their own prime meridian in Paris. Although this history is not incorrect, the purpose of Withers’ new book is to say “not so fast!” For one thing, more than one conference took place. The 1883 Rome International Geodetic Association (IGA) effectively established the resolutions to which the parties subsequently agreed in Washington. For another, as Withers shows in an interesting chapter at the end of the book, the 1884 conference had a series of “afterlives” in which various interested parties (not just the French) tried to change the outcome.

A prime meridian is a line from which degrees of longitude are measured. Although there is an obvious single line of zero latitude (the Equator), any line joining the poles can act as a longitudinal line of zero degrees. If there is “one line to rule the world,” as Withers puts it (5), thereby uniting all the maps, then having that line in your territory would be a coup. In the late nineteenth century, prime meridians were established (or proposed) in nearly two dozen cities—including Paris, Moscow, Washington D.C., New Orleans, Jerusalem (which had no observatory), the Canary Islands, and even the Great Pyramids of Giza. Yet Greenwich’s primacy was, if not inevitable, more than likely, if only