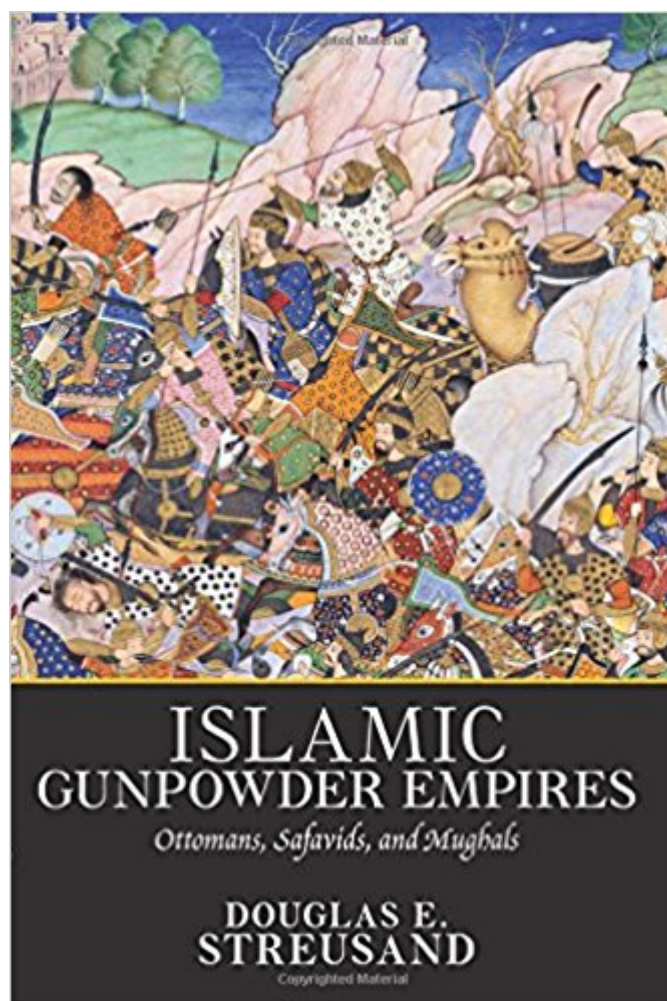


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# Islamic Gunpowder Empires: Ottomans, Safavids, And Mughals (Essays In World History)



## Synopsis

Islamic Gunpowder Empires provides readers with a history of Islamic civilization in the early modern world through a comparative examination of Islam's three greatest empires; the Ottomans (centered in what is now Turkey), the Safavids (in modern Iran), and the Mughals (ruling the Indian subcontinent). Author Douglas Streusand explains the origins of the three empires; compares the ideological, institutional, military, and economic contributors to their success; and analyzes the causes of their rise, expansion, and ultimate transformation and decline. Streusand depicts the three empires as a part of an integrated international system extending from the Atlantic to the Straits of Malacca, emphasizing both the connections and the conflicts within that system. He presents the empires as complex polities in which Islam is one political and cultural component among many. The treatment of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires incorporates contemporary scholarship, dispels common misconceptions, and provides an excellent platform for further study.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"With Islamic Gunpowder Empires, Douglas Streusand has contributed a masterful comparative analysis and an up-to-date reinterpretation of the significance of the early modern Islamic empires. This book makes profound scholarly insights readily accessible to undergraduate students and will be useful in world history surveys as well as more advanced courses." —Hope Benne, Salem State College; Streusand creatively reexamines the military and political history and

structures of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires. He breaks down the process of transformation and makes their divergent outcomes comprehensible, not only to an audience of specialists, but also to undergraduates and general readers. Appropriate for courses in world, early modern, or Middle Eastern history as well as the political sociology of empires.

•Linda T. Darling, University of Arizona

•Streusand does a very good job of narrating and describing these three empires, despite their unique sets of conditions and characteristics. He is to be commended for navigating these hearty and substantial historiographies to pull together an analytical textbook which will be both informative and thought provoking for the undergraduate university audience.

•Colin Mitchell, Dalhousie University

•Douglas Streusand has brilliantly complemented, filled out, and updated Marshall Hodgson's pioneering study of the Islamic gunpowder empires of the early modern era. This is an absolute must for students of early modern world history, especially those who focus on political and military structures.

•Alfred J. Andrea, Professor Emeritus of Medieval History, University of Vermont; Past-President, World History Association

•Islamic Gunpowder Empires is a significant contribution. We now have a scholarly, but concise, history filling what is usually a gap in World, Eurasian, and Middle-Eastern texts for middle and upper level undergraduate courses

[Douglas E. Streusand] restores action and reaction to the imperial and provincial leaders, who emerge as anything but the doctrinaire, lock-step authorities presiding over inevitably expanding states, which many histories portray

I recommend the book highly.

•Ray Zirblis, Norwich University

"Islamic Gunpowder Empires "provides readers with a history of Islamic civilization in the early modern world through a comparative examination of Islam's three greatest empires the Ottomans (centered in what is now Turkey), the Safavids (in modern Iran), and the Mughals (ruling the Indian subcontinent). Author Douglas Streusand explains the origins of the three empires; compares the ideological, institutional, military, and economic contributors to their success; and analyzes the causes of their decline. Streusand depicts the three empires as a part of an integrated international system extending from the Atlantic to the Straits of Malacca and emphasizes both the connections and the conflicts within that system. He presents the empires as complex polities in which Islam is one political and cultural component among many. The treatment of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires incorporates contemporary scholarship, dispels common misconceptions, and provides an excellent platform for further study."

Douglas Streusand's *Islamic Gunpowder Empires* is a very nice book, an interesting read, especially about a topic that many western and American readers are unfamiliar with. The concept of 'gunpowder empires' comes from William McNeil's *The Pursuit of Power*. The introduction of gunpowder, artillery and muskets gave the armies of early adopters a great advantage over their less-developed rivals. This was particularly important in the swath of Islamic territories from Turkey to Northern India, where the dynastic regimes of the Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals were attempting to establish their authority against the nomadic and tribal groups that had traditionally contested power in the region. Streusand's task is much greater than just to explain the military dominance for these dynasties. They were relatively long-lived empires, and their military dominance explains only part of their longevity and authority. Their early adoption of firearms was a foundation of their regimes, but not the foundation. Governing structures, ideology, the character of the ruler, social, political and economic adaptation to complex environments, all played a role in establishing and maintaining the empires. He looks for the similarities between the empires, but isn't afraid to point out where there are dissimilarities and discontinuities. Indeed, one of his cases, the Safavid regime in what is now Iran, really failed to carry out completely the changes that the Ottomans and Mughals succeeded with, and in the end collapsed after a relatively short regime. Don't read this book expecting it to be full of battle descriptions and purple prose. This is a scholarly work and written in a scholarly style. It's straight forward and a bit dry in places, but is informative and interesting on a topic that the general reader may find they know little about. I liked this book, and I would recommend it as an introduction to any one interested in this time period--roughly from 1500 to 1730--and this topic. He provides a very nice bibliography for anyone who wants to follow up with more detailed analysis of particular empires or topics.

I know of one other book, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* that covers the same territory. I mention that only to state that I am not familiar with that book by Stephen Dale and you may want to look at it before you decide which to buy. I used the Kindle version of Streusand's book. It is pretty well Kindlized. The footnotes work as they should; taking you effortlessly back and forth to the text. The publisher has not taken the time to paginate the electronic version so you have to find your way around with the Kindle numbers. There are several useful scholarly apparatus some of which need to be better Kindlized. There is a very useful glossary indicated by the use of italics in the text but you have to jump back and forth from the glossary via the Kindle numbers. There is a good chronology and a dynastic table for each empire which was helpful to refer to now and then. Streusand includes a bibliographic essay which is an excellent

guide to further books to read/study. The work itself is straight forward. Each empire is introduced with a brief narrative of the main political and military events. Then each empire is examined for ideology, for military strategy and organization, for economy, for religion and for the ways that all these facets of each empire responded to the stresses of their competition among themselves or with various European powers. I am currently reading a narrative history of the Ottomans by Finkel. She is a wonderful, lucid writer but I found that I understood her much better having come to her book fresh from Streusand's. I knew very little about any of these empires. I now feel like I can begin to study all three. All-in-all, a quick and very useful read. I would be curious to hear from someone who has read both this books and Dale's as to their relative merits.

This is a pretty dense read, but Streusand makes some good points in comparing these three empires (Ottomans, Safavid, and Mughals). I didn't really care for the structure of the book, as each chapter gives a long, confusing history of an empire, followed by for focused studies of politics, society, and culture. Many hugely important events get glazed over, while less important ones seem over-emphasized. Much of the analysis and conclusions seems to be left to the reader. This book is helpful in understanding and comparing these empires, but it is not going to do all the work for you and many readers may be left feeling a bit unsatisfied. Certainly lays some groundwork, but could have been structured in a more logical and helpful way.

Very clear and useful as a source.

Great read!!!

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