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Host: Axel Dreher

**Foreshadowing Mars:
Religiosity and conflict in pre-Enlightenment Europe***

Abstract

Can religiosity alter societal propensity for large-scale organized violence? We introduce annual religiosity measures for several pre-Enlightenment European states with the shares of religious terminology in books and Christian names of newborns. To identify causality in predicting interstate warfare, we study locally visible solar eclipses – phenomena orthogonal to cultural, economic, environmental, and institutional characteristics that, in pre-Enlightenment Europe, were interpreted as supernatural, religious occurrences. We observe sizeable, positive religiosity effects. Empirical patterns support the idea of religiosity exacerbating ingroup-outgroup demarcations along religious trenches: Religiosity particularly predicts inter-religious warfare. Pre-Enlightenment city-year-level solar eclipses also predict Jewish persecution and witch trialing.

*Joint work with Luke Barber and Tim Krieger