

# **Testing of the Ottoman Empire's Performance between West and East in the Great Divergence Debate**

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The Great Divergence refers to the process by which socioeconomic disparities between civilizations increased because European countries deviated from their pre-modern patterns of growth. Comparative studies on this subject have revealed the presence of a divergence between Western civilizations and others, shedding light on its origins and magnitude. Some of these comparisons are based on GDP per capita levels, while others are based on wage data. The methods for wage comparisons have undergone significant advancements during the past thirty years. Şevket Pamuk (2000) has compiled the most comprehensive wage and price statistics for the Ottoman Empire. However, these data have not been compared with those of other countries using the latest methodology until now. This research aims to compare Ottoman wages with the accessible data sets of Western and Eastern countries by employing the latest methodology and subsequently presenting its findings for further discussion.

Allen et al. (2011) methodology and subsequent adjustments to this method were applied in the study. This approach initially transforms wage data into silver grams and subsequently calculates annual income, assuming the working men are the only breadwinners for their families. Subsistence baskets, which take into account variables unique to each nation, such as dietary preferences, climate, and body mass index, divide annual incomes. Subsistence rates are obtained as a result of these calculations. If this ratio equals one, the family's income is considered adequate for surviving. The subsistence ratios of different countries are compared to determine the presence of a Great Divergence. This analysis helps identify the timing and magnitude of this divergence.

According to the analysis, real wage inequality between skilled and unskilled construction workers in London and Istanbul gradually increased from the late 16th century to the late 19th century, favoring London. Although the disparity diminished throughout the latter part of the 18th century, it notably escalated in the 19th century. However, upon considering India in the analysis, it becomes evident that the same situation holds for India. However, during the same era, the purchasing power of wages in India experienced a gradual decline, whereas it underwent a modest rise in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the 19th century stands as an exception to this circumstance. While wages for construction workers rose in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, a higher rate of increase in the cost of necessities caused subsistence ratios to fall.