Legal Imperialism examines the important role of nineteenth-century Western extraterritorial courts in non-Western states. These courts, created as a separate legal system for Western expatriates living in Asian and Islamic countries, developed from the British imperial model, which was founded on ideals of legal positivism.

Based on a cross-cultural comparison of the emergence, function, and abolition of these court systems in Japan, the Ottoman Empire, and China, Turan Kayaoglu elaborates a theory of extraterritoriality, comparing the nineteenth-century British example with the post World War II American legal imperialism.

He also provides an explanation for the end of imperial extraterritoriality, arguing that the Western decision to abolish their separate legal systems stemmed from changes in non-Western territories, including Meiji legal reforms, Republican Turkey's legal transformation under Ataturk, and the Guomindang's legal reorganization in China.

Ultimately, his research provides an innovative basis for understanding the assertion of legal authority by Western powers on foreign soil and the influence of such assertion on ideas about sovereignty.

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