

Turkey Transformed 1875 - 1915

The Wars of Ottoman Succession

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The purpose of this lecture

- Was the Ottoman Empire the sick man of Europe?
- How did it change in the 19th Century?
- Options for survival
- How did it survive the First World War?
- All background to the contemporary history of the Middle East, Israel, Gaza

The Most Extensive Boundaries of the Ottoman Empire





“Trasformismo” – Europe from 1850

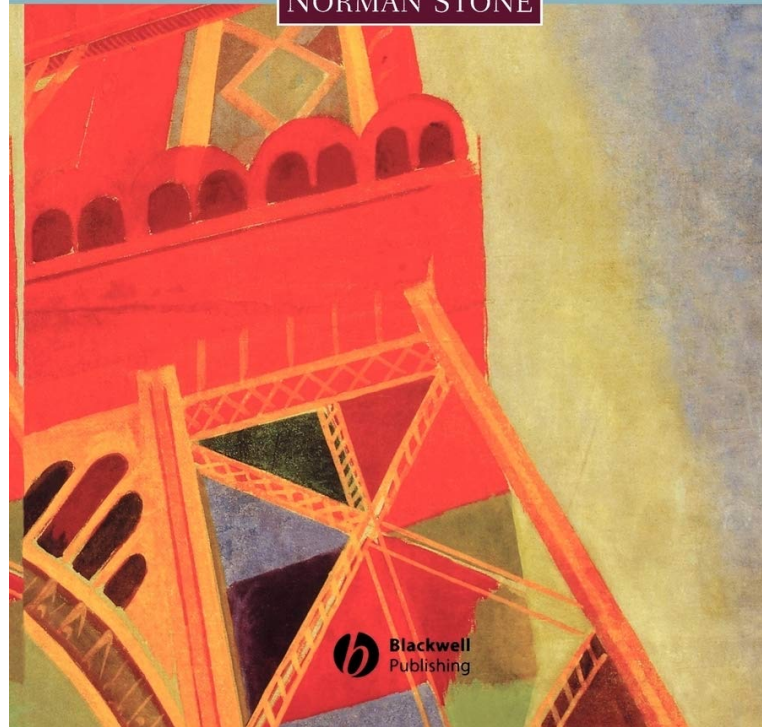
- Transformation describes how a Europe of the countryside in 1850 became industrialised by 1914
- Europe between 1850 to 1914 sees the political landscape, in particular liberalism and nationalism, move to the right
- This is an Italian term describing the desertion of liberals to the right which can also be applied to many countries, including the Ottoman Empire

Blackwell Classic Histories of Europe

EUROPE TRANSFORMED 1878–1919

SECOND EDITION

NORMAN STONE



 Blackwell
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Which way for reform or revolution?

- A reformed Ottoman Empire (1800 – 1909) – Ottoman, Muslim or Turkish?
- Geopolitical Ally - Foreign banks – Br/FR or obtaining foreign support for OE's economic and military infrastructure including the army (Germany post 1900) and funding, for economic development
- A secular revolutionary state culminating in the Constitution and Union Party – revolutionary popular nationalist party (1909 to 1918)
- A nationalist state - Turkism – an extreme vision to extend Turkish Empire to Central Asia based on ethnic identity (Golkap)
- Turkish secular republic (Ataturk post 1923) – the eventual winner

Reforming from above: 1800 to
1919

Administrative reforms 1789 to 1839

- French invasion of Egypt 1798 and Syria; Nelson at Battle of the Nile
- Selim III (1789-1807) (military reform) (New Order) (regulations (“nizamnames” (writings about order), tax reform – c.f. Joseph II Austria, Catherine the Great in Russia and Frederick the Great Prussia) (Benevolent despots)
- Mahmud II (1808 – 39) (abolish Janissaries 1828 greatest barrier to centralised reform) but lost Greece 1821-30 and Egypt 1830.
- Free trade with Ottoman-British Trade Treaty 1838, Gulhane decree 1839 establishes universal rights regardless of religion – to harness foreign economic and political strengths

Mid-century European Pivot

Political changes in Europe

- Failure of liberal revolution in Europe in 1848, pivot to European nationalism, Prussia suppresses Frankfurt Parliament, Russia invades Hungary 1849
- State unifications in Italy and Germany (1870)

Foreign investments in the Levant

- Mehmet Ali controlled Egypt, Syria and Crete 1840 leading to British investment in Suez and Egypt
- Crimean War 1853-4 leading to reforms in England, Russia

Tanzimat (house in order) 1839 – 76 – “liberal” political and administrative reform

- Western style reforms: universal equality & citizenship before the law for all (40 years to implement (liberalism))
- Armenian Constitution of 1863 served as a model for the Ottoman Constitution 1876 which refers to all as “Ottomans” not on a religious basis (i.e. Muslim and Millet)
- Reformed local government on the French model 1839, 1849 and 1852, 1867 and 1871
- Reformed penal law in 1840, 1850-54, and 1857 and 1857 (French model)
- Commercial Courts established outside Sharia law in 1865

Hamidian reforms 1876 - 1909

- Abdul Hamid II is viewed as presiding over gradual collapse which is in accurate
- However, current view is that important changes were happening internally politically and most importantly in terms of foreign affairs
- Default in 1875 – British and French debt supervision and Capitulations (advantageous concessions to great powers)
- Constitution in 1876, dissolved within a year
- Looking for partnership with a European power – was this the way out? Particularly as the OE's problems seem to stem from Europe

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Societal developments

- Limited but growing public opinion, especially with the growth of newspapers
- Incipient middle class
- State sponsorship of changes in society (Tanzimat)
- It is within the state institutions of the civil service, the Army, the colleges that the seeds of change develop (Napoleonic?) – giving rise to the Constitution and Progress Party
- An example: Talaat Pasha – the “Postman of Salonica”
- All future leaders of the Turkish Republic were army men



A black and white portrait of Talaat Pasha, a man with a mustache wearing a dark cap and a highly ornate, patterned jacket. The portrait is positioned on the left side of the book cover.

Hans-Lukas Kieser

Talaat Pasha

Father of Modern Turkey,
Architect of Genocide

Nationalism, CUP

See lecture 3 on rise of modern Turkish nationalism
and the Armenian Genocide

A Pariah Partnership – Germany and Turkey from 1890

Foreign Policy

- Germany the new Ally
- OE and Germany obviously had common interests – against Russia
- Direct investment and development (Army and its infrastructure)
- Berlin – Baghdad Railway
- Hejaz Railway
- Sponsoring Jihad and Muslim Revolt against the British in Middle East and India

A single Pomeranian Grenadier's bones...

When generals tried to get Germany involved in the Balkan wars, to get a piece for themselves, Bismarck reportedly said, 'The whole of the **Balkans** isn't worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier.' (Bismarck, 1888)

Ten years later "To extend the railway from Haydarpasha to Baghdad ... to build the line with German materials and for the purpose of bringing goods and people to [Asia] via the most direct path from the heart of Germany .. will bring closer the day when [Bismarck's] remark about the **entire Orient** not being worth the bones of a Pomeranian Grenadier will seem like a curious historical memory" (Baron Marschall von Bieberstein, German Ambassador to Constantinople, 1899)

European overtures to the Ottoman empire

- OE had previously relied upon financial and military support from GB/FR during and after the Crimean War in 1853-6 until Ottoman default in 1875 caused the banks to impose onerous terms
- The Congress of London 1878 sought to reset Turkish supervision by means of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration in 1881 after the disastrous invasion by Russia, in order to keep Turkey afloat against the Russians. Customs and tax collections – 80% raised to pay debt interest, capitulations over finances, transport and the post (all strategic infrastructure)
- Ottoman relationship with BR dissolved with annexation of Cyprus 1878 and Egypt occupied 1882 by the Gladstone government
- Once Kaiser Wilhelm II ascended the throne 1889, a new phase started: Germany's supplanting GB/FR as the principal power supporting the Ottoman Empire
- Ottoman relationship with FR ends with FR's dual alliance with Russia I 1894
- Kaiser's visits to Constantinople in 1889 and to Constantinople and Jerusalem 1898 were viewed as comic/crazy, but these visits were sadly underestimated.

German army moves east

- German army leadership and training
- Military infrastructure – gun emplacements
- A new German military mission (the “German Reform Mission”) of 42 officers arrives headed by Otto Liman von Sanders in December 1913 to re-organise the Ottoman Army after OE’s defeat at the end of the First Balkan War.
- Sultan Mehmed V names Liman commander of the Ottoman First Army Corps in December 1913, effective command of the Bosphorus to a German
- Liman appointed Marshal and Inspector General of the whole of the Ottoman Army in January 1914
- Enver Pascha had been OE military attache in 1909, spoke fluent German and devoted to germanising the OE Army

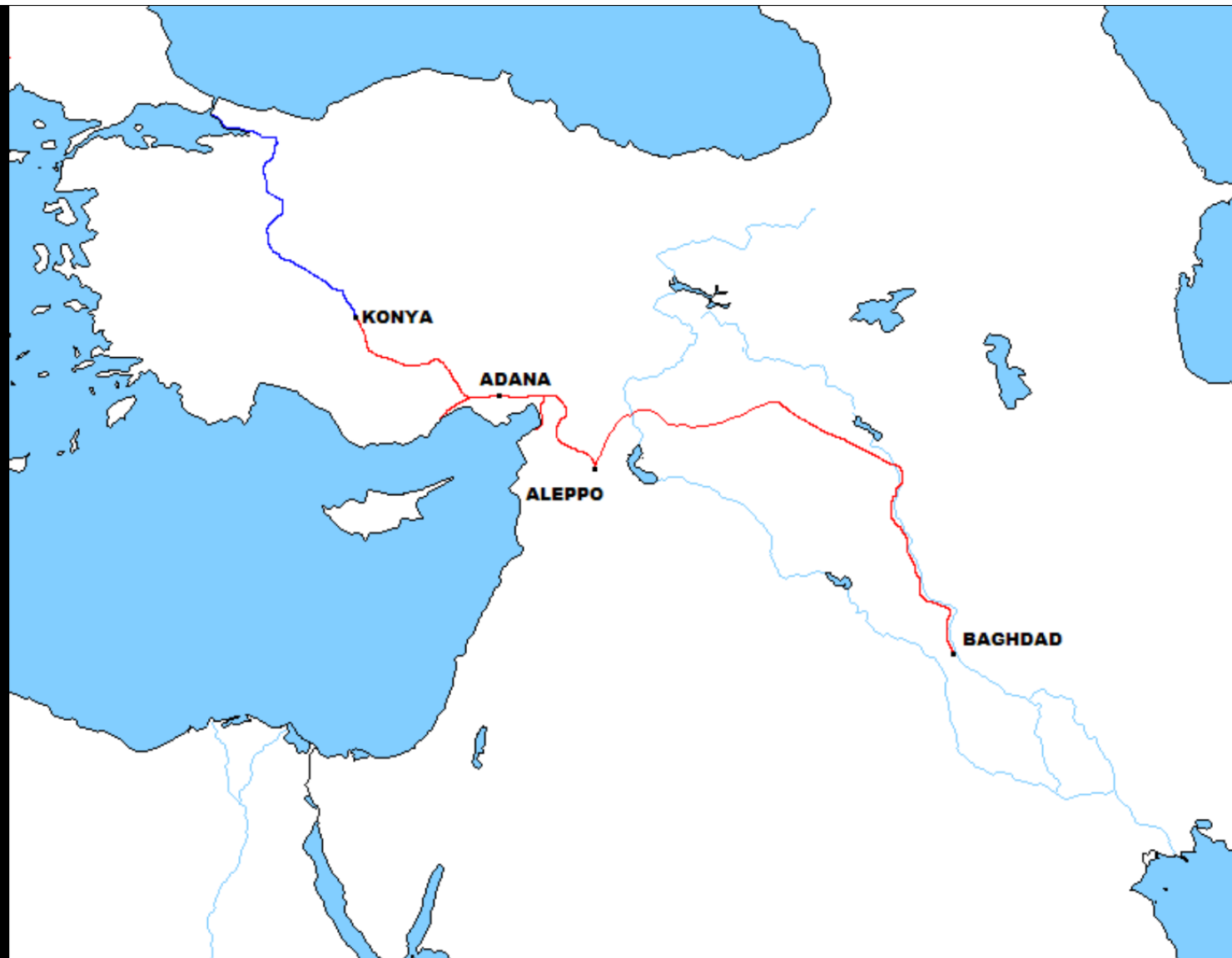
(Hamburg) Berlin to Baghdad
(Basra) Railway

at the beginning of the 20th century.
 It has been published in: Th. Leisten, *Excavation of Samarra I: Architecture.*
Final Report of the First Campaign 1910-1912. The book is available [here](#).



**Note: the route
 required passage
 through Serbia and
 Bulgaria – both Russian
 clients**

**Greatest extent
 of a Hamburg to
 Basra railway**



Building the Railway

- British and Fr had built railways in western Anatolia in the 1860's (Izmir to Kasaba on the Aegean coast , Mersin to Adana in Cilicia). Germans then build the Istanbul – Izmit Railway in 1872, the first stage of the BBR.
- OE and G sign an agreement 21 December 1899 for G to build the BBR from Konya to Basra within a max of 8 years (1908) with Siemens and Deutsche Bank
- 2000 mls from Berlin to Baghdad, 500 mls further to Basra
- Construction itself only started in 1903 to 1914, at the start of the war the BBR fell 300 miles short of Baghdad (BRB was only finished in the interwar period finally 1940)

Economic/military benefits of the BBR

- Germany industrialises from the 1870's
- Turkey produces metals lead, zinc, copper, and chrome, chemicals, lignite, liquid petroleum (Basar 1871) to feed the German economy
- Sultan to use railways (which included telegraphs) to increase control and deployments to all parts of the the Empire whether in peace or wartime
- BBR built by German engineering/construction skill and materials
- Clause negotiated reserving right fo OE to buy the BBR at any time; G to spy on dissidents in G. G given exploration rights for coal, timber and metals within 20 km corridor of the line
- OE agrees to erect telegraph poles at 65m intervals along the line, spend 4m francs on military installations along the route and in case of war, BBR to place entire rolling stock at OE's disposal for transporting men and materials

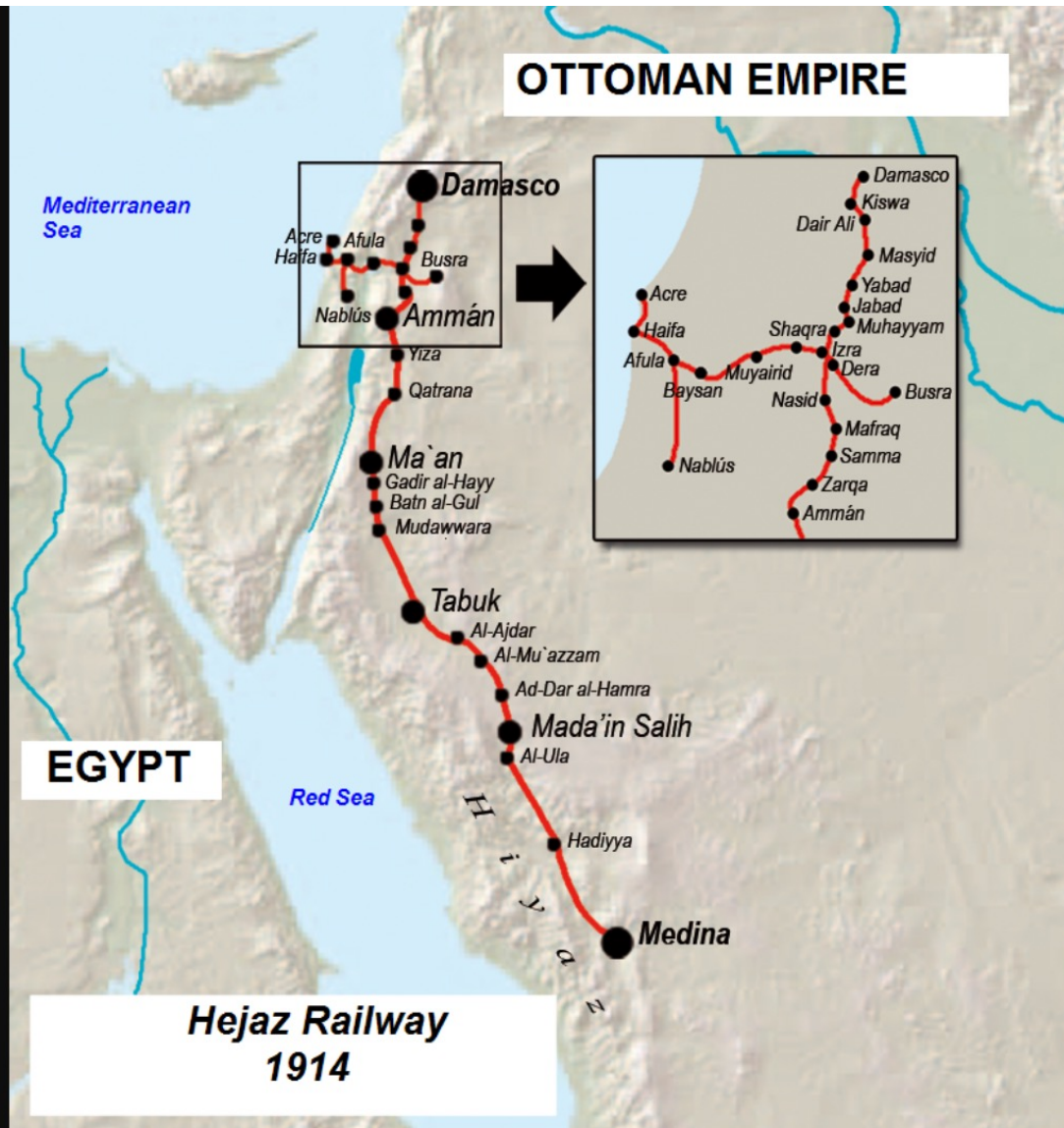
OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Mediterranean
Sea

EGYPT

Red Sea

Hejaz Railway
1914



Hejaz Railway branch line

- Ordered by Abdul Hamid 1900
- Connected the BBR at Damascus with the Hejaz Railway
- Opened 1908
- Funded entirely by public subscription
- Designed and built by German companies
- From Damascus to Medina, through the Hejaz region of modern day Saudi Arabia, with a branch line to Haifa on the Mediterranean Sea
- and it reached only to Medina, 400 kilometres (250 mi) short of Mecca. The completed Damascus to Medina section was 1,300 kilometres (810 mi).

Turkey Fights Back 1914 - 1923

- During the First World War, it took the Allies two years to cross Sinai, another year to take Jerusalem in December 1917, they took Damascus in October 1918 and Baghdad in March 1917
- The Allies suffered terrible losses at Gallipoli in 1915.
- The Allies tried to dismember the Turkish mainland at the Treaty of Sevres in 1920 but failed (as they did in Russia).
- The Greeks were defeated in their attempt to take western Anatolia in 1922-3
- At the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the Turkish Republic established the integrity of the Anatolian mainland including ethnic exchanges of populations expelling Greeks from Smyrna and receiving Muslims from the Balkans
- Of all the pre-war multinational empires, only Turkey successfully transformed and survived to today.

Breakthrough in 1918 on the Salonica Front

- In August 1918, Central Powers war effort imploded at both ends
- Amiens in France in August , and at Doiran in Bulgaria the Allies broke out on the Salonica Front
- After cutting the BBR in Bulgaria in September, Bulgaria and then Turkey October sued for peace.
- With fast Allied progress on both the Western and Salonica Front, and outbreak of revolution in Germany and Austro-Hungary, Germany government resigns to be replaced by the Weimar Colatition

First ever Jihad against the British
Empire (and France and Russian
Empire)

German support for Islamic Jihad

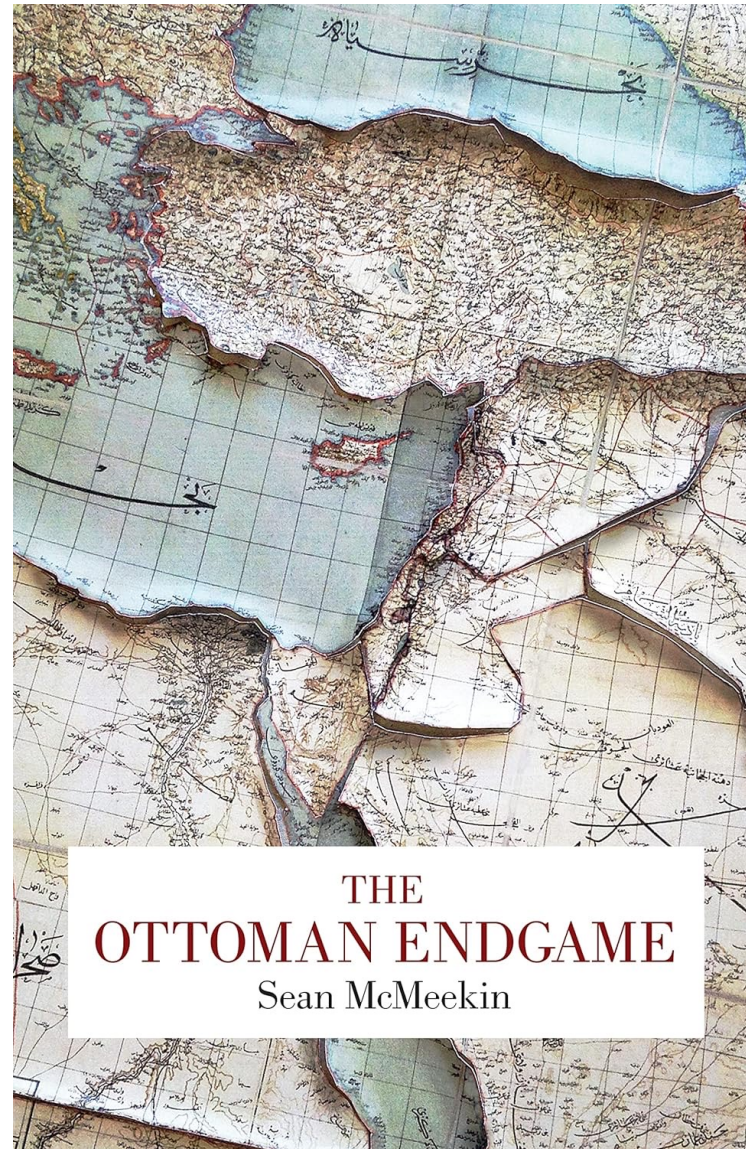
The killing of the infidals who rule over the Islamic lands has become a sacred duty, whether it be secretly or openly, as the great Koran declares in its word: “Take them and kill them whenever you come across them”. (Translation of German-produced Arabic jihad pamphlet, winter 1914-5, from US State Department archives.

The Intervention of Islam in the present war is,
particularly for England, a terrible blow. Let us do all we
can ...[to ensure] that this blow will be a lethal one!

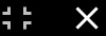
Baron Max von Oppenheim, “Expose Concerning the Revolutionising of the Islamic
Territories of our Enemies”, late October 1914

Acknowledgement and Recommended Reading

- Sean McMeekin's "The Berlin-Baghdad Railway" – The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power, 1898 – 1918 (2010)
- and his "Ottoman Endgame" (2015)
- Norman Stone, "Europe Transformed 1878 to 1919" (London, 1983)



THE
OTTOMAN ENDGAME
Sean McMeekin



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