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Anyone familiar with the Great War knows that this conflict, spanning the years 1914-18, was a global phenomenon that engulfed not only Europe but also large swaths of land in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The “transnational generation” of scholars—or the fourth generation of Great War specialists—has written about the war since the 1990s from more than the European perspective, giving the conflict a well-deserved global outlook. Therefore, we have been fortunate to read, in recent decades, works that provide a dynamic framework in which to situate the war as a transformative event. Because of studies such as these we currently have a deeper and more objective understanding of the war’s political, diplomatic, military, social, and cultural history.

In spite of considerable progress in Great War scholarship, the involvement of the Ottoman Empire in the war has been mostly examined, especially in the West, either from the perspective of Allied war experiences or based on assessments of Western scholars primarily interested in the political and diplomatic aspects of the war and the postwar breakup of the Ottoman Empire which resulted in the birth of the modern Middle East. In his book, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East,* Eugene Rogan, an Oxford scholar with a record of valuable contributions in both Ottoman and modern Middle Eastern history, provides a corrective to such views by depicting the war from a much-needed Ottoman perspective. Aiming “to restore the Ottoman front to its rightful place in the history of both the Great War and the modern Middle East” (p. xvii), Rogan produces a sweeping narrative of the war, punctuated by outstanding analyses of the context in which the major Ottoman campaigns in the Caucasus, the Dardanelles, Mesopotamia, and Palestine occurred, accompanied by discussions of their development and implications. Rogan’s examination of the Ottoman front reminds one of Hew Strachan’s 2001 book on the Great War, as both studies recount the story of the military front rather than the home front without sacrificing the social and, whenever possible, the cultural implications of the war. Meticulously researched
and engagingly written, Rogan’s history appeals to a broad audience due to its clear, compelling, and gripping narrative. Finally, it constitutes an essential contribution to the study of the Great War as a global phenomenon, which will likely have lasting effects on current and future generations wishing to enhance their understanding of this particular war.

Rogan begins his thirteen-chapter book with an analysis of the situation of the Ottoman Empire between 1908, when the Young Turk Revolution began, and 1914, when the empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. He then moves on to examine the Ottoman front between 1914 and 1918, focusing on the military campaigns fought on the territories of modern-day Turkey, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Egypt, and Yemen. The book concludes with an examination of the end of the war and its aftermath in the territories that once were integral parts of the Ottoman Empire. Although little attention is paid to the home front throughout the book, exquisite analyses of the impact of the war on the civilian population punctuate the narrative with delightful frequency. Rogan is particularly compelling in his examination of the Armenian genocide. In a twist of fate, the fact that his book has been published in the same year as Ronald Grigor Suny’s study of the Armenian genocide, entitled They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else: A History of the Armenian Genocide, can only enhance our understanding of the Armenian genocide in novel and intriguing ways. With this book, Rogan also enters into the excellent company of scholars like Mustafa Aksakal, Mehmed Beşikçi, Yücel Yanıkdağ, and Ryan Gingeras, whose works illuminate aspects of the Ottoman experience of the Great War as varied as the Ottoman Empire’s road to the war, Ottoman mobilization, prisoners of war, and the role of violence and ethnicity in the end of the empire. Rogan builds his narrative on a variety of archival and non-archival sources in English, Arabic, Turkish, and French. These include documents from archives in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, as well as diaries and memoirs published in Turkey and the Arab world. Ottoman archives are surprisingly absent, but the author has alerted the reader to scholars’ very limited or nearly impossible access to the largest collection of primary sources on the Great War in the Middle East, housed in the Turkish Military and Strategic Studies Archives in Ankara (Askeri Tarih ve Stratejic Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi). One never knows in what ways these Ottoman primary sources could have contributed to the examination of the topic at hand. Without a doubt, future research in these archives would add new information to what we’ve already learned from the present study. Despite the lack of Ottoman archival sources, Rogan has diligently read and skillfully interpreted both the archival material and the memoirs he had at his disposal.

According to Rogan, the Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of the Central Powers because the alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary appeared to be most politically and financially beneficial for the empire. Prior to the war, the Ottoman Empire had gone through a revolution, three wars, and internal problems that challenged it in both political and social ways. The empire changed leadership (from an autocratic sultan to a nationalistically obtuse Young Turk leadership), lost territories in North Africa and Europe, and feared Armenian plans of separatism. The failed alliance attempt with Russia in August 1914, as well as the British government’s requisitioning of two dreadnoughts commissioned by the Ottomans, rushed the Ottoman Empire’s entry into the war on the side of the Central Powers. After declaring holy war (jihād) against Allied forces on November 2, 1914, the Ottomans used religion once more, this time to mobilize imperial subjects for war. The Ottoman entry into the war, as well as the international configuration of troops active on the Middle Eastern front, turned Europe’s conflict
into a world war. The Allies (Kitchener and Churchill) miscalculated the capacity of the Ottomans to fight in the war effectively, believing they could inflict a quick and smashing victory on the Central Powers on this section of the front. The Ottomans indeed initially proved unable to defend all of their fronts. The winter campaign of 1914-15 was a disaster for them; only 13 percent of Ottoman soldiers survived the freezing cold. Furthermore, by the spring of 1915, Ottoman troops had been forced to retreat in the Caucasus, in Basra, in Yemen, in the Aegean, in the Suez Canal area, and even in Anatolia. Fear of Armenian separatism led Ottoman officials to launch a bloody persecution of Ottoman Armenians, resulting in the first genocide of the century in which about one million people perished. Convinced that one major campaign would give the much-desired deathblow to the Ottomans, the Allies turned their attention to the Dardanelles—the strait connecting the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara—due to its proximity to the Ottoman capital. They deployed British and French forces in Gallipoli on April 25, 1915, but had to retreat by the end of January 1916. The Allies failed to conquer Istanbul, to defeat the Central Powers, and to secure a route through the Black Sea connecting Russia with the rest of the Allied forces. Rogan finds it ironic that Churchill had been blamed all this time for the defeat of the Allies at Gallipoli, when in fact the British secretary of state for war, Lord Kitchener, coordinated the decision-making process during the campaign.

The campaign in the Dardanelles prolonged rather than shortened the war. Confident in their military prowess, the Ottomans made considerable gains in Mesopotamia. They conquered Kut al-Amara in December 1915, taking over key positions held there by Townshend’s British army. Anxious that recent Ottoman victories might cause Muslim British subjects to rebel against the Allies, British officials planned an alliance with the Hashemite Sharif of Mecca, Husayn bin Ali, the custodian of Islam’s holiest shrines and a subject of the Ottoman sultan. This alliance, Rogan argues, intended to undermine both the power of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East and the religious authority of the sultan over all Muslims. The Sharif, in his turn, thought that an alliance with the British would help accomplish his life’s dream project: the creation of an independent Arab state in the Middle East with him as its leader. The British supported the emergence of an Arab Revolt in the Peninsula and sent reliable officers to the conflict, including T. E. Laurence (known to Westerners as “Laurence of Arabia”), an intelligence officer and former Oxford archeologist. Laurence was supposed to coordinate efforts with Husayn’s sons, in particular with his eldest, Faysal, the future king of Syria and then Iraq. “So began the fateful link between the Hashemite revolt in Arabia and the British campaign in Palestine that, between them, would ultimately spell the downfall of the Ottoman Empire,” Rogan rightly notes (p. 309). The Ottomans lost Jerusalem on December 9, 1917, five months after Aqaba, where the Arabs recorded the greatest victory during the war and T. E. Laurence made his name. By this time, the Ottomans had surrendered three Muslim cities of great symbolic significance: the holy cities of Mecca and Jerusalem, as well as the former seat of the medieval Islamic caliphate, Baghdad. On top of that, several diplomatic Western designs of how to deal with the Middle Eastern territories of the Ottoman Empire, should the Allies win the war, had recorded considerable success. On May 16, 1916, the Sykes-Picot Agreement between the governments of the United Kingdom and France, which defined these states’ spheres of influence and control in the Middle East (provided that the Allies defeated Central Powers in the war), was signed in front of Russian officials. Rogan aptly points out that this agreement did not create the borders of the modern Middle East, as some would argue. In 1917, the Balfour Declaration expressing the British support for the establishment in Palestine of a na-
tional home for the Jewish people was made public. All these developments did not bode well for the Ottomans.

Once Ottoman lines in Mesopotamia and Palestine had been breached by the end of 1917, the Ottoman army had to retreat, its place being gradually taken by well-provisioned Allied forces. Palestine fell into the hands of Allenby's British army in September 1918, and Syria followed shortly within less than a month. The Allied advance in the Middle East dealt a major blow to the Central Powers. The entry of the United States into the war in 1917 had already weakened these powers on the western front, and their losses in the Middle East tilted the victory towards the Allies. The Central Powers' failure on all fronts caused serious internal problems in the Ottoman Empire. The Unionist government collapsed in October 1918, breaking up for good the ruling triumvirate comprised of Talat (grand vizier), Enver (minister of war), and Cemal (minister of marine) Pashas, the three chief decision-making Ottomans during the war. The Ottoman Empire surrendered officially when the new government of Izzet Pasha signed the Moudros armistice on the Greek island of Lemnos on October 30, 1918. Rogan concludes his book with a discussion of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the severe terms imposed on the Ottoman state at Sévres (August 1920), and the successful war led by Mustafa Kemal which resulted in the Allied powers' recognition of Turkey's independence and borders at Lausanne (July 1923). On October 29, 1923, the Turkish Republic was established, while the rest of the Ottoman Empire entered under the influence or direct control of the British and the French in the form of mandates.

Eugene Rogan has written an excellent study of the Ottoman experience in the Great War. This is a fresh, vivid, and interesting book that reads quickly, notwithstanding its voluminous size of nearly five hundred pages. It would have been highly beneficial for all those interested in this topic to learn more about the home front and the relationship between Ottoman officials and both the Allied and the Central Powers. Probably Ottoman archival sources could have supplied all this information. Nevertheless, this work makes a crucial contribution to our knowledge of the Ottoman Empire's participation in the Great War. It is an important piece of scholarship that appeals to both the specialist and the nonspecialist due to its accessible and compelling narrative. The book is essential reading for graduate students and ideal for discussion in advanced undergraduate seminars on the history of the First World War.
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