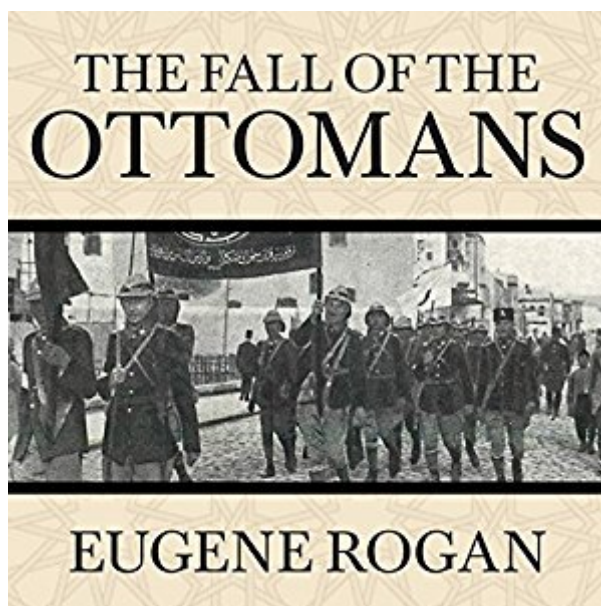


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# The Fall Of The Ottomans: The Great War In The Middle East



## Synopsis

In *The Fall of the Ottomans*, award-winning historian Eugene Rogan brings the First World War and its immediate aftermath in the Middle East to vivid life, uncovering the often ignored story of the region's crucial role in the conflict. Bolstered by German money, arms, and military advisors, the Ottomans took on the Russian, British, and French forces and tried to provoke jihad against the Allies in their Muslim colonies. Unlike the static killing fields of the Western Front, the war in the Middle East was fast moving and unpredictable, with the Turks inflicting decisive defeats before the tide of battle turned in the Allies' favor. The great cities of Baghdad, Jerusalem, and finally Damascus fell to invading armies before the Ottomans agreed to an armistice in 1918. The postwar settlement led to the partition of Ottoman lands between the victorious powers and laid the groundwork for the ongoing conflicts that continue to plague the modern Arab world. A sweeping narrative of battles and political intrigue from Gallipoli to Arabia, *The Fall of the Ottomans* is essential listening for anyone seeking to understand the Great War and the making of the modern Middle East.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a very well written and good book on the topic. However, it is primarily a political study of the fall of the Ottoman Empire in World War I. It is not so much a military study. The author, who teaches at Oxford, has looked at the Ottoman Empire and how it handled World War One. He works in Turkish and Arabic. There are many individual vignettes from individuals at ALL levels of society, from political policy carried on at the highest levels, to the various campaigns and the fighting that resulted. It is well-illustrated volume but includes only a handful of strategic maps of the

Empire's battlefields. The political history is excellent. The author has a firm grasp of the Young Turk movement, the JIHAD aspect of the Turkish war effort and the impact of the Arab on the Turk (and vice-versa). His discussion of the Armenian genocide is balanced and accurate and unlike many studies, does NOT ignore the brutal killing of thousands of Assyrians. An entire chapter is devoted to this and will inhibit sales in Turkey! But it is not so much a military study. The German battlecruiser GOEBEN & British battlecruiser INFLEXIBLE become battleships. The small old French battleship REQUIN becomes a cruiser, HMS AMETHYST becomes French (p137) and Ottoman losses are often based on old Allied accounts. German Admiral Souchon is mentioned once in the book, ignoring his large impact in the Black Sea. Edward Erickson's *ORDER YOU TO DIE* is in the bibliography but seemingly not consulted in some of the areas covered in the book. The Turkish Official military studies appear to be completely missing as well. The author does NOT note that after the Allied naval assault at the Dardanelles, in which they suffered major losses, the Turks were virtually out of artillery ammunition. One of the major postwar hindsight laments was that a second naval assault was not quickly made. The Allied losses could easily be made up while the resupply of vital ammunition was difficult in the extreme. This is a very good book, worth the read, much from the Turkish and Arab point of view. Definitive? No. Would a definitive study be longer? Yes (and hence probably not published . . .)

Having read quite a few books this past year on World War I and Scott Anderson's excellent book on Lawrence of Arabia, this book offered a chance to read through many events, but from the Ottoman perspective. As the author mentions, he visited Gallipoli and realized that the Turkish losses at that epic battle are not widely known. Thus, the roots of the author's efforts to address this neglected area of history. The book is very well-written and gives a wide lens to the beginning of the end of the Ottoman Empire through the War itself. Some of the events described herein are pretty well-known, but otherwise I was blown away by how much I had no clue had really taken place. Examples include the Balkan Wars and the Ottoman effort against Italy in 1912-1913. These events influenced later decisions from both the Ottoman and Allied perspective and are well integrated. This is a well-written and easily read history. I found myself many times considering events from an alternate view of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and reading about battles only heard of from the perspective of the victor. This is not just about Turkish losses, but of Arabs, Armenians, Greeks and others. Even though I am pretty knowledgeable about World War I history, there were many events I had really never heard of before. Even seeing many pictures of Ottoman soldiers in battle

was revelatory and unexpected. The First World War was in many ways more cataclysmic than WWII in terms of the changes in the world and this book is a great expository on how that happened. This is an important book and well worthwhile to read for the general reader interested in the subject as well as the academic or policy specialist looking for more information to add to the body of knowledge of even present day Eastern Europe and the Near East. This book is recommended. An excellent companion book is by David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, to read after this book.

<http://daysofourtrailers.blogspot.com/2015/06/book-review-fall-of-ottomans-great-war.html> Eugene Rogan's 'Fall of the Ottomans' covers from roughly the last years of the 19th century to the early 1920's. Primarily a political history, it examines the causes of the various Balkan wars, the rise of the 'Young Turks', the 'Armenian Genocide', and the decision by the Ottoman Empire to join the war on the side of the Central powers. From 1914 to their surrender in 1918, it details all of the major conflicts not only militarily but the difficulties all sides had in logistics, the Arab Revolt, the results of the Russian withdrawal from the war, and the various 'Great Powers' deciding from the beginning on how the Empire would be divided up between them. An excellently written and researched book, it is also well balanced when it comes to politically charged topics, specifically the Armenians. It discusses not only the Western view but also the controversy in the numbers of claimed dead by both sides. This was especially interesting to me as the 100th anniversary of this event took place while I was reading it and I had several discussions with a Turkish co-worker of mine. A map is very helpful while reading. Most of the lower ratings on are due to the Kindle edition map not being very reader friendly. What one can take away from learning about this aspect of WWI is that there were no 'Good Guys' and that everyone was treacherous, especially the British and French. One really doesn't blame the Ottomans for joining the Central powers. Also that as far as military action went, most of the battles were won by the side that screwed up the least, and that only by marginal amounts. Up until the very end, incompetence seemed to be the primary factor in choosing leaders and battle plans. For those interested in WWI and/or military history, this is a definite read.

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