

ERDOGAN'S NEO-OTTOMAN BOMBAST

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✘ Editorial, 16 November 2014

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The late and unlamented Ottoman Empire's Sublime Porte was a Petri dish of oppression, absolute one-man rule, racism, extreme cruelty, venality, flagrant corruption, avarice, unimaginable perversion, indolence, extravagance, self-indulgence, caprice, plunder, regicide, fratricide, vanity, assassination...the sultans had such nicknames as "Selim the Sot" (Drunk), "Ibrahim the Mad", "Mustafa the Mad", "Abdulhamid the Damned"... Most of the sultans were mentally unstable because of in-breeding and the atrocious conditions in which they were raised. The Sick Man of Europe lasted for four-hundred years only because Europe's attention was focused west to the Americas, and in the last century of its life the empire was buttressed by Britain and Germany.

Let's start with the most luminous figure of the Ottoman Empire: Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Suleiman (1520-1566) executed his eldest son Ibrahim and had his younger sons Bayazid and Mustafa strangled with bow string. Suleiman's youngest son, Jehangir the Hunchback, died of grief. Suleiman also had his three-year-old son killed by one of his eunuchs.

Suleiman was succeeded by his son Selim II (1566–1574). The new sultan was a degenerate nonentity who was absorbed in pleasure rather than in governing. He died after he slipped and cracked his skull, following a drinking binge.

Selim's son Murad III (1574-1595) had five of his five brothers strangled because he was worried they might grab the throne. He was the Ottoman Nero. A voluptuary, he had countless concubines. Every night a new pair of slave girls had to warm his bed. By some estimates, he sired more than 100 sons and an unaccounted number of daughters.

In 1595, when Mehmet III took the throne, he ordered his mute slaves to kill his 19 brothers. For good measure, he also had his sisters killed. None of the early sultans had any living relatives, other than their own sons: the fratricidal tradition guaranteed that they had no uncles, no cousins, and no nephews to challenge their authority. When on the rare occasion they didn't kill their brothers and sisters, the sultans imprisoned them for life. Thus Osman III spent 50 years under house arrest called Kafess ("Cage") before rising to the throne. Suleiman II was under house arrest for 39 years. His reign lasted a mere 20 months. Murad IV ordered the death of his brother Ibrahim while he himself lay dying in 1640. A psychotic, he had 20,000 people killed...some with his own hands.

Reflecting the mayhem that was the Sublime Porte of the 36 sultans who wore Osman's ornate sword, 17 were deposed.

When the sultans could nonchalantly kill scores of their siblings, naturally they had no compunction about capriciously killing anyone they wished. The citizens were chattel to be mistreated. Citizens who were not Turks or Muslim—the Gavoor infidels--were naturally at the bottom of the totem pole and their life wasn't worth a "kurush".

Ottoman history had three acts: A quick bloody rise; a brief period of "glory"; long decline. The "glory" days were short-lived because they were the result of pillage, massacre, and conquest. Once the sultans ran out of countries to loot and raze or met stiff resistance from potential preys, they didn't know what to do. They had no idea about wealth creation through peaceful or legal means. When pillaging other lands became militarily impossible, the sultans and their elite turned on their own people to finance their lavish life style. Taxes kept soaring as the empire began to loot its own people and the inhabitants of the conquered lands. Of course, citizens who were not Turkish or Muslim bore the brunt of Ottoman style of brutal misadministration. Once their horizon closed and they could no longer pillage, the Ottomans were hit by inflation and a scarcity of money. To save on silver, the mint began producing coins which were 50% thinner than previous coins of the realm.

But despite the drying up of the revenue stream, the sultans kept enlarging their armies. Between 1650 and 1656 the number of salaried officers jumped from 60,000 to 100,000. This squeezed Ottoman coffers further resulting in harsher taxes. Hungry for easy money, Sultan Mehmet IV (in 1683) sent his army to loot Vienna. The army got a bloody nose. The head of the army (Kara Mustafa) was beheaded for failing to bring back riches to the sultan. It was the last time the Ottomans would

dare take on a major Western European power.

The financial crunch had no impact on the sultans' lavish lifestyle. Mehmet IV's harem housed 4,000 women—slaves bought for 4,000 to 5,000 thalers each. The women had to be provided for with expensive clothes and jewelry, in addition to their basic upkeep and expenses. Sultans had 40 men attending to them as they prepared to go to bed.

An intellectually bankrupt empire (its only technical innovation the yataghan sword), Ottoman technology never advanced beyond the water clock (invented by the Egyptians in 1600 B.C.). Its culture was borrowed from Iran and that of conquered peoples...Arabs, Armenians and Greeks. Even the title of the sultan was Iranian: "Padishah" means Lord Shah in Iranian. The Iznik blue tiles the Ottomans boasted about were of Iranian origin. Tile makers from Tabriz were brought by Mahmud the Conqueror to establish the industry outside Constantinople. More than 400 "Ottoman" outstanding buildings, dotting the Middle East, are the works of architect Sinan, the Armenian genius. The sole professional portrait of a sultan (Mehmed II) was done by Venetian Gentile Bellini because the art of portrait painting was unknown to people who had conquered most of the Mediterranean litoral. The Ottomans borrowed the Arabic alphabet, in addition to adopting countless Arabic, Persian, and Armenian words. It wasn't until 1729 that a Turkish printing press was introduced. Armenians had printed their first book more than two centuries earlier (1512). An Armenian wrote the first Turkish novel. Another Armenian wrote the first Turkish play. As well, it was the Armenian Balian family which built the lavish palaces the sultans couldn't afford but insisted on having in a misguided attempt to enhance their image.

The madness of the sultans continued until the dying days of the empire. Fearful for his life, satanic Sultan Abdul Hamid II forbade the introduction of electric lights because he didn't know the difference between dynamo and dynamite. Paranoid about being killed, he forbade newspapers from using the word assassination. Thus, according to Ottoman newspapers, US President McKinley died of anthrax, President Carnot of France died of apoplexy, and Empress Elizabeth of Austria died of pneumonia. The King and Queen of Serbia died simultaneously of indigestion. Chemistry classes could not use the symbol for water—H₂O—because the despot believed it stood for "Hamid II is dead". This crazed monster killed some 300,000 Armenians in the mid-1890s. And a few years before the demise of the empire, the Ottomans killed another 1.5 million Armenians, in addition to thousands of Greeks and Assyrians.

This is the glory Erdogan/Davutoglu wants to revive... from Bosnia to Xinjiang.

This is the moronic empire the Dynamic Duo wants to bring back.

This is the corrupt, oppressive, racist, venal, unlamented... empire the rulers of Turkey want to exhume.

Any day now the two Ottomaniacs might wake up from their sordid dream and say it was all a misunderstanding: they only want to be good neighbors...to Armenians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Iraqis,

