EXCERPTS FROM TWO RECENT BOOKS

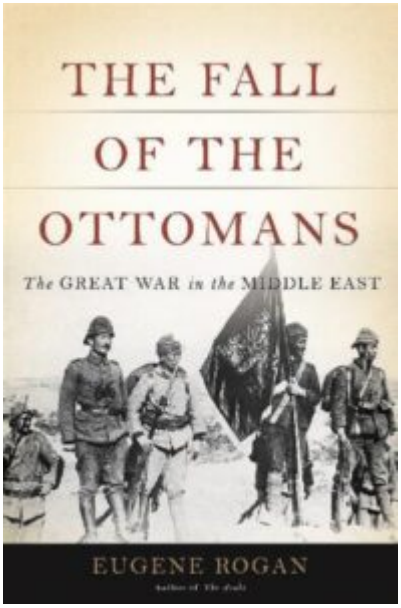
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Category: Opinions

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People familiar with Turkey's denialist strategy know a favorite Ankara tale is that the leaders of the Ottoman Empire deported the Armenians in 1915 because the latter were conspiring with the Russian Empire to dismantle the country and establish an independent Armenia. In the last two paragraphs of the chapter devoted to the Armenian Genocide, Eugene Rogan ("The Fall of the Ottomans", Basic Books, 2015) looks at another aspect of the Young Turks' plot.



"The bitter irony is that the annihilation of the Armenians and other Christian communities in no way improved the security of the Ottoman Empire. The Allies never mounted an attack on the Cilician coast to justify the deportation of Armenians there. The deportations actually undermined the Ottoman war effort in Mesopotamia when Armenians working on the Berlin-Baghdad railway were condemned to a death march.

"The extermination of Armenian communities in eastern Anatolia did nothing to protect the Caucasus from Russian invasion. Tsarist forces met little resistance in conquering the fortress town of Erzurum in February 1916. The Russian army swept through the Black Sea port of Trabzon and the market town of Erzincan later that year—defeats that could not be blamed on Armenian collaborators after the deportations.

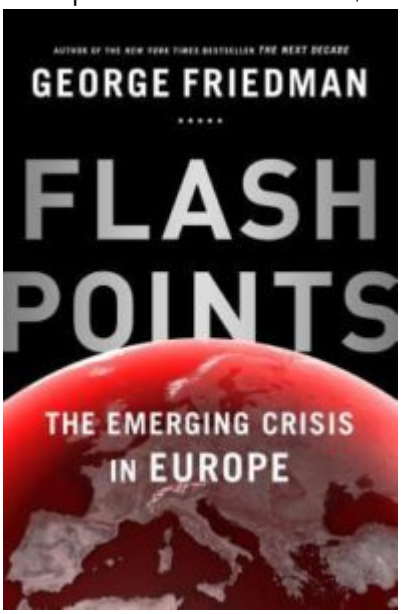
"It was in the Dardanelles that, against the odds, the Ottomans succeeded in defending their territory against the combined armies of France, Britain, and the dominions through the courage and determination of the soldiers—not through the annihilation of minority communities."

Rogan fails to mention that a significant portion of the Ottoman army at Gallipoli and elsewhere was composed of Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians. When Ankara boasts about the rare Ottoman victory, the Ottoman army suddenly transforms into a Turkish army and the minorities are shunted into oblivion. Turkey and Turkish historians also minimize the key role played by German

generals (particularly Otto Liman von Sanders) and numerous officers in the rare Ottoman army victory.

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George Friedman, founder and chairman of Stratfor think tank which specializes in political, military and economic intelligence, has a new book titled "Flashpoints" where he focuses on the dangers Europe faces. Friedman, a neo-con who left Hungary in late '40s with his parents, is a long-time Turcophile. The Austin, Texas-based Cold Warrior promotes Stratfor as "the world's leading private intelligence company." Below are typical paragraphs from the chapter titled "Turkey on the Edge". Upper case by Keghart.com.



"Kurdistan is not Turkey's only flashpoint in the east. The other is Armenia. We visited a PLACE called Ani on the Turkish side of the border. It was the medieval capital of Armenia, the first Christian country in the world, and one that occupied eastern Turkey in the MIDDLE AGES. Ani sits on a flat, dry, and windy plateau across a river from Armenia. Turks are excavating the site, much to the anger of the Armenians. When the Ottoman Empire fell AND THE TURKS HAD TO DEFINE DEFENSIBLE BOUNDARIES, there was INEVITABLY ETHNIC CLEANSING, in which vast numbers Armenians were killed. The Armenians have not forgotten it. The Turks will not admit it, and THEY MAKE CLAIMS OF THEIR OWN ABOUT ARMENIAN BEHAVIOR. As in Europe, memories are long and a hundred years hardly counts. The ancient capital is in Turkish hands and Armenia can't do much about it."

A paragraph later, Friedman says: "A cousin of a friend in Istanbul met us in the town of Gole (pronounced Gole-ee), about an hour's drive from Kars..."

Throughout the chapter, Friedman tries to convince the reader that Turkey is a European country and has shaped European history as much as any European power did. "Its history was as much European as anyone else's".

In recent years Friedman has visited Azerbaijan but not Armenia.