



Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire

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According to the Ottoman chronicles, the first sultan, Osman, had a dream in which a tree emerged fully formed from his navel "and its shade compassed the world"-symbolizing the vast empire he and his descendants were destined to forge. His vision was soon realized: At its height, the Ottoman realm extended from Hungary to the Persian Gulf, from North Africa to the Caucasus. The Ottoman Empire was one of the largest and most influential empires in world history. For centuries, Europe watched with fear as the Ottomans steadily advanced their rule across the Balkans. Yet travelers and merchants were irresistibly drawn toward Ottoman lands by their fascination with the Orient and the lure of profit. Although it survived for over six centuries, the history of the Ottoman Empire is too often colored by the memory of its bloody final throes. In this magisterial work Caroline Finkel lucidly recounts the epic story of the Ottoman Empire from its origins in the thirteenth century through its destruction on the battlefields of World War I.

Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire Details

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Avery says

The Ottoman Empire was a chiefly agrarian state that for the majority of its lifespan was grounded in a respect for tradition and suspicion of innovation shared between its peasantry and elites. For over 150 years after Gutenberg the printing press was illegal in Ottoman realms in order to preserve the traditional craft and art of calligraphic books. (The law was overlooked to allow Christians to print books but they had a hard time of it too.) Their polity resembled the Roman empire and they had similar political instability and popular uprisings. Like the Russians, the Ottomans were surprised by Western Europe's development of usury, colonialism, and racism in the eighteenth century, and its increasing tendency to break treaties when convenient. In the nineteenth century some sultans tried to adopt European style order, specifically in the army and Navy, but all of this was rolled back by Sultan Abdülhamid's preference for returning to Islam as a source of national unity. Even as the Young Turks tried to push the sultan out of power in 1908, ordinary peasants were rioting on the street calling for bans on photography and movie theaters.

The author includes discussions of the Ottoman approach to minority populations throughout. Rather than uniting all ethnic groups within their nationalism the Ottomans saw the maintenance of non-Muslim populations as key to the upkeep of their empire. Non-Muslims could be taxed, forcibly moved across the empire, expelled, or targeted for conversion depending on what the political situation called for. Even Muslim minorities were seen as possible targets by the Turk majority. This had long-standing implications still visible in Turkey today.

This is a fairly difficult and encyclopedic overview of Ottoman history. It focuses on military history and palace intrigue. Don't expect the author to hold your hand through the many ornate twists and turns. It's generally a good book, but I noticed that the references to Arabic manuscripts and other difficult Ottoman primary sources generally lack contextual value and are offered simply because it's cool to have a primary source witness. If you see something that seems extraneous to the narrative check the footnote and you'll almost certainly see a Turkish manuscript there.

Kartik says

Who could have imagined that an errant Central Asian tribe would go on to change the course of history?

Osman's Dream follows the course of the Ottoman Dynasty, as it grew from a local landowning tribe in Anatolia to the leaders of a state that went on to conquer what reminded of the Byzantine Empire and push into the Balkans. The dynasty ruled over a base of highly diverse subjects, from Protestant Hungarians, to Armenians, to Anatolian Turks, to Bedouins, and Sephardic Jews.

The various changes in the fortunes of both the dynasty and the empire (the two were not always in sync) and the various factors that shaped these changes are examined at length in this book, and its overall scope is rather large.

It begins with the origins of the dynasty, which ultimately lie in Central Asian migration to Anatolia and in local power struggles between competing Turkic tribes, and goes on to chronicle Ottoman expansion in

Anatolia and the Balkans, the fall of Constantinople, the defeat of the Mamluks, and ends with Mustafa Kemal's establishment of the modern Turkish republic and the banishing of the dynasty.

This book wasn't too dry to read, and maintained a balanced tone (except in the final chapter). It made for an interesting read and was able to impress on me the scope and variety of the factors, events, and actions of people that made the Ottoman state what it was.

Andrew says

Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire, is a blow-by-blow account of the rise and fall of one of the world's most interesting Empires. The Ottoman's started as a tribal group under the leadership of Osman, carving out a space for themselves on the Western coast of Anatolia under the shadow of the waning Roman Empire (in Constantinople). The state grew rapidly, taking territory from fellow Turkic tribes in Anatolia, Greek city states along the coast of Turkey and the Balkans, and Slavic states like Serbia and Bulgaria. These early years saw the Ottoman's shift from a regional player to a world power, and put the fear of God, literally, in most European powers. The Ottoman's also began to take on the auspices of a religious Empire. They promoted Sunni Islam, and went on to conquer the main route to Mecca for pilgrims from Asia and India. They invaded the powerful Mamluk Sultanate centered in Egypt, taking their territory in Syria, Palestine, Arabia and Egypt. They moved into the rest of North Africa, creating autonomous states in Algeria and Tunisia which they used as springboards for naval competition with other sea powers, including Spain, France, Venice and The Knights of St. John in Malta. The holy sites of Mecca and Medina soon fell under Ottoman control, as well as Yemen and much of Arabia. The Ottoman's competed with Portugal in India and Africa, and tried to maintain secure shipping routes and tariff controls over the spice, slave and pilgrim trades in the region. They also clashed with the Hapsburgs in Hungary, at times controlling most of the nation, made subjects of the Crimean Tartars in modern Ukraine, and fought with Poland-Lithuania and Muscovy/Russia in the Steppes. Their biggest grudge match was with the Safavids in Iran, who espoused a Shia Islam, and competed with the Ottoman's over control of modern Iraq, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Iran, and dashed Ottoman dreams of conquering Iran.

Even so, the Ottoman's were a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state. They treated Christians more leniently than most Islamic states at the time (and indeed, most Christian states as well, as Europe became embroiled in Inquisitions, schisms, and violence). The Ottoman Empire became home to many of Europe's Jews, expelled from Spain, England, France, Germany and so on, they found a place to settle in the hinterlands of the Empire, and became key money lenders, bankers and treasurers for the Ottoman government. They faced internal strife from a variety of sources. First, an instituted system of fratricide on succession of a new Sultan meant that the first few months/years of a succession meant strife, civil war, and usually ended with a number of dead brothers and faction leaders. The Janissary corps, groups of soldiers taken from Christian areas as boy-levees, and raised as Ottoman's in law, military tactics and soldiery, had the Empire by the noose for a long time. Wars often ended in defeat because the Janissaries would commit desertion, go back to Istanbul, and riot, execute Ministers, and generally cause trouble. This usually ended with the execution of mob violence against the officers of the corps by wild mobs, or regime change.

Finkel's book is a fantastic look at the Ottoman Empire, from beginning to end. The chapters generally follow the reign of a Sultan (if he was great, such as Suleyman the Magnificent), or a multitude of Sultans if they were not (the captive Sultans, either by Harem, or controlled by factions such as the Grandees). Ottoman history is a dizzying account of massive growth, sustained existence, and slow crumbling as foreign powers chipped away at the Empire using nationalism, religious fanaticism, or outright Imperialism to take

territory. Finkel does a fabulous job looking at history that can be outright confusing to some western readers. There are a half dozen Mehmet's, Murad's, a few Bayezid's, a couple of Mustafa's, and so on. There are umpteenth Pasha's of various origins, who rebel, fall in and out of favour, control provinces, lead armies and fight for greater power and control. On each succession (at least, during the beginning of the Empire), brothers fight for the right to rule, and many are strangled (the customary execution tactic) and buried in bulging family graveyards.

The Ottoman Empire is a fascinating topic. This is a state that rose to prominence by destroying the last outposts of the Roman Empire, defeated (or in some cases just barely survived) the Mongol hordes of Tamerlane, Jalyarid, and so on. It fought grudge matches in Iran, on the steppes of Russia, and in the hinterlands of Hungary. It ruled territory that was fractious, riven with religious, ethnic and political tensions, and it did so for centuries. This was a state that owned Bosnia and Serbia, Palestine and the Arab lands, Syria, the Armenian heartlands and so on, all at the same time. It was a multi-ethnic, multi-religious entity that is unseen of today, and very unique in terms of European history for its longevity. The multi-ethnic Hapsburgs eclipsed the Ottomans in the Balkans, only to see that powder-keg blow up in their face, and bring down their dynasty after WWI. The British Empire barely held on to Pakistan for 50 years. Turkey itself was never balkanized, and remains a state to this day.

Finkel has done a wonderful job with this history. Although as some readers have mentioned, this book can be a bit of a slog due to names unfamiliar to Western readers, and the rapid, blow-by-blow pace it takes, it is nonetheless a rewarding experience. The Ottoman's are an Empire who, in most readers minds, will be synonymous with sickness and decline. The story of their history, however, is one of perseverance, adaptability, and for many centuries, complete and total success. Even the rump state of Turkey beat back army after army in the 1920's under Attaturk, and kept the Italians, Greeks and Brits from divvying it up into colonies. Truly, this is a fascinating, all encompassing history, and not to be missed for those looking for a comprehensive history of the Ottoman Empire.

Cathal Kenneally says

It took longer than I expected; suffice to say, it covers a lot of detail in 550 odd pages of text for an empire that lasted longer than the Russian empire. How do you cover 6 centuries of history, even if it's one country or empire? Still for anyone who wishes to study the Ottoman Empire this is a valuable resource. Comes with a list of ruling sultans through the ages and a significant timeline. Definitely one to keep

theokaraman says

A massive narrative history of the Ottoman Empire. From the legendary founder of the Osmanli dynasty, an insignificant Turk warlord from Bursa, Anatolia, to a mighty Empire that stretched from Algeria to Iraq and from Yemen to the gates of Vienna. The initial advantages of the Ottomans that made them invincible were their relative tolerance to different cultures and religions, embrace of technological advancements (the first armies in Europe that made extensive use of firearms and cannons) and a great enthusiasm, a young vigor mixed with a religious fervor. These were also the main reasons behind the Empires downfall; technological stagnation, greater oppression of the non-muslim population and a general indifference and a hedonistic attitude at courts. The author loves the Ottoman Empire and it shows, while she doesnt like Mustafa Kemal much, who denounced the Ottoman heritage, embraced nationalism and founded the Turkish Republic.

However, the narrative style is the main problem of this book. Literally, the whole book is a gigantic story full of endless names of various pashas, grand vezirs, sultan wives etc, that in the end you feel overwhelmed. There are no separate parts about society, art, army, bureaucracy in the different time periods of the Ottoman Empire, parallel to the historical events. One huge story, that as pages go by becomes difficult to keep up.

I think that the book would be easier to read, if better organized. Now it's a good reference book about the events that shaped the Ottoman history, but I feel that I missed a lot of stuff about how exactly the Ottoman society and state was structured.

Daniil says

I love Turkey, its history fascinates me. This book is one of the best works on Ottoman empire ever written in English, so I'm going to read it to the very end. Inside there's many interesting details and illustrations.

Marijan says

Opsežna i zanimljiva povijest osmanskog carstva, od začetka do pada. napisana za promjenu iz unutarnje perspektive. 2/3 knjige je povijest, ostalo su natuknice, koje se slobodno mogu preskočiti. ali kad kažem opsežna, mislim OPSEŽNA. zavrtilo mi se u glavi od paša, aga i vezira.

Kerveros says

A really good introduction to the Ottoman Empire.
I recommend it to everybody interested.

If I had to mention the main advantage and the main disadvantage of the book I would summarize as follows:

Disadvantage: Finkel fell into the trap of underestimating the consequences of some acts of the late ottoman period. She did not do so by putting them into the context of that period but instead she did it in a way that indirectly reveals her attachment to modern Turkey. This is not obvious to a new reader but only to serious researchers of the ottoman era.

Advantages: With a very very clever way she manages to escape from the traps of orientalism. She is not managing it by exposing its problematic rhetoric but on the contrary she formulates the chapters and the text in such a way that she avoids the orientalist narrative.

Jonathan says

As dry as the sands of Arabia...

As long as the Silk Road...

As heavy as the walls of Constantinople...

This is....Osman's Dream.

I knew Turkey was supposed to be sleep-inducing, but I thought that was because of the triptophan, not the history (oh he's clever!). Okay, that's being unfair for comedic (?) effect. This book has every single name and date you could want in a comprehensive history of the Ottoman Empire, which is good, particularly since there aren't many modern, detailed studies like this one.

But for this book, excelling at thoroughness means failing at narrative. The question of why and how is answered very infrequently in contrast to the whos whens and wheres which are covered in extreme detail. Not that there isn't value in the whos whens and wheres, obviously those are large components of any historical study, but their worth is diminished without explaining the why and the how. A list of names, dates and places is nothing but an annal; an explanation of why those names, dates and places is important and how they influenced the other names, dates and places is a history.

To summarize, this is not a great book, but it will most likely appear in the bibliography of great books not yet written.

Desertblues says

(not yet finished with the book)

I am trying to understand the part of the Ottoman empire which this day I know best. I have the impression that the Turkish people are torn between the East and the West. Their sense of history is different than the history as we know in the West. I personally heard a Turk recounting the fate of the Armenians; the genocide (Armenians, but also the general point of view) in the early 20th century. While hearing this and standing among the ruins of the medieval Ani, the important Armenian city of those days, I saw and sensed the gap (literal while I was standing at the chasm which seperate Armenia from Turkey today). I am getting a better understanding of the events that led to this tragedy.

Alia Salleh says

It took me some time to reach the end of this rather dry narrative of Ottoman history. Then again, it is the story of 600 years in 554 pages; one difficult, perhaps ambitious feat. And the fact that I understood most of it is a cause to thank her - it is readable without prior knowledge of Ottoman history.

Starting at the very beginning, from Osman I of when the Turcomen are gaining power in the region to the fall of the empire, and thus the Caliphate, the book tells of the rise and fall of Sultans and vezirs as the empire progresses, with the peak seemingly during the rule of Suleyman the Magnificent. Yet other than the exchange of powers; the expansion and rebellion suppression efforts; and the many treaties which often follow wars, I don't really leave the book knowing much about the 6 centuries. There were a few peeks of the empire's policy and administration undertakings but they do not give a proper glimpse of how the Ottoman ruled - how the society was. The earlier sultans were also described vaguely in terms of their character, perhaps due to lack of documentation. Tax indeed got some major mentions, which confused me at times by

how the concept of jizya imposed on the non-Muslim subjects was not explained properly in balance to the exemption from military conscript and zakat paid by the Muslims - jizya was not mentioned in its proper term, referred instead as poll-tax and zakat was not mentioned at all.

The author's insistence of using English terms for Ottoman jargons was also evident in the youth-levy system, easier understood by me as dev?irme. Resulting in the same confusion in my part as the system faced evolving changes, with the line blurred as the term becomes interchangeable with other recruitment efforts. It can be argued as a matter of familiarity, and of calling rose by a different name.

I kinda love how my vocabulary was immensely increased with some cool words - constantly needing the dictionary by my side. And I so need to mention this.

There were of course matters which, looking from the Muslim perspective, peeves me (I restrained from being biased and thus this very short list): one would be the analysis of Mehmed II's motives in conquering Costantinople as firstly economic, then spiritual in relation to the Prophet Muhammad's tradition. That is just too shallow an analysis to digest. Jumping to the end, the next being the changes brought by Mustafa Kemal, where he introduces Swiss-based civil code which supposedly elevated women's position in society, praised by the authoras such:

"It is for this that the women of today's Turkey express their lasting gratitude to Mustafa Kemal." Taking their right for education and work and politics due to their choice of donning the headscarf is hardly elevating. Littered among those two examples were other instances where administration policies are viewed with an undertone of western cynicism, giving the impression that everything is centred around enriching the state above anything else.

Yet such perceived cynicism is fairly moderate - I have read snippets of more suspiciously distorted narratives of the time. The author provided a relatively fair presentation of the Ottoman history, despite the lack of insight into the Muslim psychology, which I find understandable. I do think the supposed self-professed Caliph title is something the subjects and vassals do want, and not merely to justify the empire's legitimacy - the Muslims at that time do want a leader (which does not rob the locals of their autonomy). All in all the Ottomans times were far from ideal and it is important to illustrate that exact fact - she did a good job in this matter.

In the end the fall seems inevitable with enemies from all sides, and a crisis of leadership at the centre of the empire: a string of well-intending yet weak Caliph, internal betrayal flamed by external interests that can hardly be sustainable with all the ever-changing policy forged to solve the complex disintegration of the empire. It is sad.

Caitlin says

Finkel gives a monumental account of the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire. I will never again feel that they were an obscure or exotic group. Before I read this book the Ottomans seemed so mysterious and distant. I had the pleasure of visiting Bulgaria in December 2014 and I was struck by the notion that for 500 years the Ottomans ruled Bulgaria and the Balkan peninsula. There are still Muslims in the Balkans and their influence is felt in the architecture, art, food and other cultural and political realms. The Ottoman influence

inevitably has left lasting influences because it ruled for so long and was so involved in the region (as opposed to the Arabs who had more autonomy in their regions while still being under the umbrella of the Empire, as Finkel describes).

Unfortunately, just like with English history, the majority of the Ottoman Sultans have the same names so while I read the book I understood what was happening in the moment but I do not have the retention skills to remember which Mehmed did what. Finkel jumps right in with Osman I, the founder of the Empire and his legendary dream that led him to militantly make a name and a place in history for his followers. From the start the Ottomans were making a bid for Constantinople with the hopes of recreating a Muslim and Ottoman version of Byzantium. It reached for its realms and ultimately succeeded. At its height the Ottoman Empire stretched from the doors of Iran to the doors of Vienna, going through North Africa, Asia Minor, the Caucasus range and up through South Eastern Europe. Finkel demonstrates how this huge amount of land and the many many different cultures and ethnic groups that comprise it ultimately led to the Ottoman downfall. Just like with the Romans, that many people with geographic and cultural, language and religious differences is too much to maintain. The book is exhausting because it is almost constant battle in several fronts for 700 years worth of time. Fighting the Persians was very different from fighting the Hapsburgs which was different than fighting the Russians, and so on.

Finkel discusses all of this war and the politics and religious aspects in minute detail and it is very interesting. However, I would have loved to hear more about what life under the Ottomans was like. She does touch on clothing, but in light of how some of the Sultans made sumptuary laws for non-Muslims. She mentions the harems and the Chief Black Eunuch but does not elaborate on what life was really like for the women or how the Black Eunuch came about, rather than some other slave eunuch. I felt like Finkel tickled my mind with cultural aspects of the Empire while dousing me in details of the expanding and shrinking of the Empire. Because of this parts of the book seemed to drag and feel repetitive even though it was new wars, new Sultans, etc.

Finkel loses some perspective toward the end of the narrative when she discusses the tragedy of the Armenians and the formation of the Republic of Turkey and its leader Mustafa Kemal Attaturk. It felt like she was in a love affair defending the Ottomans against modern Turkey. I think she lacked empathy in her discussion of the Armenians, that she was trying to be too distant or nuanced. She also is heavily critical against Kemel while begrudgingly admitting good things he did. I do not know much about Turkey or the "Armenian Question" as she calls it, so maybe they are accurate depictions, but I feel that when dealing with things that are still an issue today some empathy is called for.

All in all "Osman's Dream" is filled with drama and information and I am really glad I read it. I recommend it to anyone interested in the Ottomans, it is written for lay people and thankfully there is a Sultan list and a chronology in the appendices.

Catherine says

This is the driest book in the world. There's no life behind the words. It was a slog but I got there in the end. I learned a lot about the Ottoman Empire, which was interesting, but it was SO DULL.

Omar Taufik says

Reading this book was a journey I really enjoyed for 5 weeks.

With a very interesting preface the author prepares us for the long and exciting journey starting before 13th century Anatolia with the Turkmen tribe settlement then witnessing the birth of the Ottoman state and the long six century reign of the 36 Ottoman sultans ending 1922 with the abolishment of the sultanate and establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

The author even takes us further to end the journey in the year 1927 with the famous Mustafa Kemal speech " NUTUK " as a document ending the Ottoman empire history as a memory of the past.

This brilliant book is very rich in interesting details where the author discusses various related subjects from time to time which I really enjoyed with it's great insight.

I do not hesitate here to give the book a straight 5/5 rating as a high recommendation reading to interested readers in the Ottoman empire.

For beginners in the subject, I suggest they read a more brief overview book on the subject before reading this book in order to gain a general idea and avoid easily getting lost in the great amount of historical details and information.

As for myself, I will definatly need to revisit this great book and collect the numerous useful details and information included in its approximate 700 pages.

I would like to really thank the author Caroline Finkel for her passionate objective work.

Jackson Cyril says

Finkel's thesis, as I read it, is that the 'decline' of the empire began in the 16th century, with internal strife--rebellious governors, unorthodox religious beliefs and the like. This strife was aggravated by the decentralization of power after Suleyman I, with power being held primarily by the Jannisary corps who deposed and named sultans at will (not unlike Rome's praetorian guards and the Romanovs' palace guards)--and also because of a string of weak and under-aged Sultans in the 16th and 17th centuries(the parallels to the Carolingian monarchs after Charlemagne is striking). To this we should add also that that the Empire never truly industrialized, rendering it incapable of competing with industrial powers; Finkel notes that even in Modern Turkey something like 40% of the populace is dependent on agriculture (the book was published in 2005, and the numbers may have changed a bit). She also notes, and here the parallels with modern America become clearer, that as the Empire's power declined, intolerance and an emphasis on religious orthodoxy grew; there were efforts to "insult and humiliate the infidels" (p.213) through dress codes, and also there was a greater emphasis on the empire's status as the representative of Islam, with later sultans making a very big deal out of their status as "caliph". In the main, the argument here is to overturn Euro-centric historiography which perceived the empire to be intolerant and cruel for much of its history; there is also an effort by the author to overturn the idea of the empire as "the sick man of Europe"-- a striking example of this being the Ottomans's robust performance in WW1, which took the Allied powers entirely by surprise. I am not sure that there is much to critique here; Finkel has mastered the material and has conveyed the 'high drama' of Ottoman history with great ease and written it in a style which is enjoyable to read. The book would have benefited from a discussion on the developments in Ottoman literature and music (although she does a good job discussing developments in Ottoman architecture, especially as it pertains to mosques); but on the whole, a very good book.

Lynn Dolan says

I actually started the book much earlier in the summer - and I should add in fairness, read it only in fits and starts whenever I needed a break from other material. The title was intriguing. Yet, I should have realized as soon as I picked up this hefty book and glanced at the tight font on its pages, that it would be a rigorous account of the Ottoman Empire - no lyrical descriptions to be had. It's like a big bowl of nutritious porridge. You rather "know" than "feel" that it is good for you and it's chock full of facts (if a bit 'Ottocentric'). It left me feeling full after a few chapters. It wasn't a good choice for summer reading where I would opt for something a bit more "fun" with some interesting analysis or speculation thrown in. Not for "lazy" readers of history like myself - but for the enthusiast of Turkish/Ottoman history, there is plenty of cud to chew.

Edward says

I recently started obsessing over the Byzantines and became curious about the empire that eventually defeated and replaced them. Like the Byzantines themselves, the Ottomans don't get a lot of love when it comes to popular, accessible history texts for the layman. It's a shame since they were every bit as impressive and cultured as their contemporaries, and the repercussions of their rule continue to be felt today in the Middle East. This book is a good overview for anyone who wants to fill in the gap between the fall of Constantinople and Lawrence of Arabia.

Finkel's exploration of the remarkable ethnic and religious diversity present in Ottoman territory made a deep impression as I read. While the level of toleration varied depending on the sultan and the century, non-Muslims in Ottoman territory often fared better than non-Christians in western kingdoms. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, many of them chose to live under the protection of Bayezid II, who warmly received them (and condemned Ferdinand's persecution). The empire wasn't some utopia of modern religious freedom of course--non-Muslims could not hold any political office of influence, and were subject to a special tax--but it illustrates just how complex history, and judging it, can be.

Mehmed the Conqueror. Suleyman the Magnificent. The battles at Kosovo Polje, Vienna, Lepanto, or Belgrade. The bravery, and treachery, of the Janissary corps. The massive 27 foot-long Basilica gun that hammered the Theodosian land walls of Constantinople, or the sumptuous tulip gardens of the 18th century palace grounds. These are the characters and adventures you'll find here, as rich and exciting as those of any other civilization from humanity's past.

stillme says

This was a little too ambitious for me right now.

Luke says

Waste of time. far too much is spent on court intrigue and the boring lives of sultans at the expense of broader developments in the Ottoman Empire.

Eadweard says

I read this mostly for the first 150 years, the wars with the russians during the 18th century, and the dismembering of the empire.

Overall, it's a good book, all the different regions of the empire are given attention, I also enjoyed reading about the Ottoman-Safavid relations and later on, the arabs. Warning: it's really, really dry, even for a history book.
