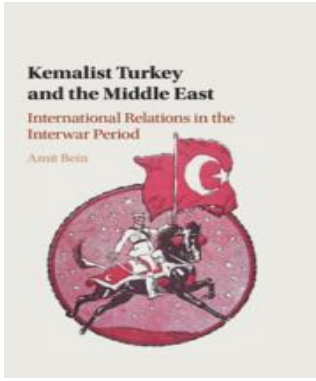




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Bein, Amit. *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East: International Relations in the Interwar Period*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020). 295pp. ISBN-13: 978-1316647981.

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Almost every student of the history of the Middle East has read David Fromkin's 1989 book *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*. Fromkin's view about the new Republic of Turkey at the end of WWI reflects the common thinking among many historians and political scientists: with the declaration of the Republic (1923) and the drawing of the new borders, Turkey distanced itself from the Middle East and moved to a Western-oriented and passive foreign policy stand. Amit Bein sets out to prove that on the contrary the new Republic was very much involved in Middle East politics and in the reshaping of the post-Ottoman borders. Using primary sources, including archives and newspapers in Turkish, Arabic, English and other languages, with maps and photographs, Bein gives the readers an almost day-to-day account of the Turkish foreign policy between two wars. However, the book is not only about post-Ottoman Turkey and its efforts to survive, to gain respect and independence, but it is also about the policies of the colonial powers and how deeply they were always involved in the Middle East even after WWII, and the fate of the minorities-the Kurds, the Armenians and the Assyrians.

The book has seven chapters. Chapter 1 ("Not-So-Distant Neighbor") gives the book's main argument that the interactions between Turkey and its Middle Eastern neighbours throughout the interwar period were interest-driven. They were carefully planned and structured. In Chapter 2 ("Degrees of Separation") Bein illustrates that an active revisionist interest in northern Syrian and Mesopotamian territories was inherent in the founding charter of the Turkish state - the National Pact, and it was the motivation behind the Republic's seeking of territorial gains in northern Syria and Iraq. Throughout the interwar period Turkey tried to modify its borders and this was a part of a well-thought out plan. The new Republic did make its Arab neighbours and the colonial powers anxious especially after it was able to manipulate the Alexandretta (Hatay) crisis in the late 1930s to its advantage and annexed the province. In Chapter 3 ("Ties That Bind"), Bein gives a detailed account of Turkey's diplomatic contacts with its Middle Eastern neighbours in the interwar period. Among these are the visits to Turkey of the Hashemite brothers (King Faysal of Iraq (1931) and Amir

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Abdullah of Transjordan (1937), both of whom sought the blessings of Atatürk in pursuing their conflicting political ambitions), and of Reza Shah of Iran in 1934. There are stories tied to each one of these visits but the one about the route of Reza Shah's journey is especially interesting, and illustrates how planned the movements of Turkish leaders were. Atatürk insisted that the Shah enter Turkey in a motorcade on a bumpy road across the common border, rather than the usual route of traveling via Iraq. In later chapters we learn that Atatürk's insistence on this route was in preparation for a trade route to Trabzon that he had in mind. In the same chapter, after much negotiating with the Middle Eastern neighbours and the colonising powers (France and Britain), in 1937, a multilateral treaty between Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan is signed. Bein also explains why Egypt opted out of the treaty. Chapter 4 ("Great Expectations") is about the promotion of economic relations between the Middle Eastern neighbours, which include transportation projects like the Tabriz-Trabzon road and railway links to Iraq and Iran to facilitate the movement of merchants and goods as well as tourists. Chapter 5 ("The Turkish Model") is devoted to how in a planned and deliberate fashion; the Turkish leaders presented their country as a model to the rest of the Middle East. For example Miss Turkey (later Miss Universe Keriman Halis) was sent as an emissary to Egypt, as a symbol of Turkish modernity, and was hailed by Egyptian feminists as embodying the emancipation of Muslim women. The chapter contains interesting details about the Kemalist reforms including education, women's rights and legal reforms, but more importantly about how these were promoted internationally in a planned, structured and step by step fashion using the media among other means. Chapter 6 ("Strolling Through Istanbul") describes the efforts to establish Turkey as a major transit route between Asia and Europe, visits by friendship delegations and tourists. Unfortunately all take place under the shadow of the beginnings of WWII and are cut short with its start. The last chapter ("A Distant Neighbour") examines the regional and global conjuncture Turkey found itself in after World War II. This was a time when Turkey was worried about its existing borders and had to struggle to keep out of the War.

Bein concludes that Turkey's recent moves in the Middle East are not "neo-Ottomanist" as sold to the masses in a populist move, but the continuation of a century-long foreign policy, with the difference that the former was self-restrained and cautious, and not ideologically driven. Bein's extensive and insightful research, written in a vivid and enticing style is a 'must read' for everyone interested in the Middle East, Turkey and the role of the colonial powers, especially Britain, in the area.