

Naci Yorulmaz,

***Arming the Sultan: German Arms Trade and Personal Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire before World War I,***

London: I. B. Tauris, 2014, xvi + 349 pp. ISBN 978-1-78076-633-1.

Naci Yorulmaz's book, based on his Ph.D. dissertation completed at the University of Birmingham in 2011 under the title *Arming the Sultan: German Arms Trade and Personal Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire before World War I* begins with a quote from Friedrich Naumann, a German liberal politician and advocate of Germany's *Mitteuropa* Plan, which aimed the domination of Central Europe. In Naumann's words, "We need to make the country economically dependent on us in order to be able to control it politically later" sum up the aims of Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany before the World War I. The "country" was the Ottoman Empire, and Yorulmaz's work examines the relationship between German Empire and the Ottoman Empire in terms of the arms trade started and was carried on until the last battle of these two empires.

In the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 the Ottoman Empire had lost two-fifths of her territories and one-fifth of her populace. That treaty was orchestrated by the French, British and Russians, and thus Germany was the only European power, which had neither a colonial nor a political interest in the territories of the Ottoman Empire. Essentially, at first Bismarck and then Wilhelm II needed and wanted raw materials and markets for Germany's improving industry, on the other hand Sultan Abdülhamid II needed any kind of industrial products and artillery to modernize (in this context "to Germanize") his state and army. The author claimed that the trade between Germany and the Ottoman Empire depended on the personal diplomacy, cleverly arranged marketing, and manipulative methods instead of the quality or the price of the artillery and the ammunition.

Yorulmaz names the arms trade from the empire of the kaiser to the sultan's lands as the *German Style of War Business*, and the significant feature of this kind of business depended on collaboration between German banks, arms makers, and civil and military diplomats for the purpose of securing the Ottoman market for German-made armaments (p. 4). The author also emphasizes that, besides the considerable role of the arms manufacturers, the German military advisers, especially Colmar von der Goltz (Goltz "Paşa"), and the German embassy were involved directly in the negotiations during the armament purchasing process.

At this point, it must be stated that, Goltz Pasha played a significant role in the modernization of Ottoman military education during the reign of Abdülhamid II, and his book titled *Das Volk in Waffen* [*The Nation in Arms / Millet-i Müsellaha*], extensively influenced the Ottoman officers. However, starting from 1880s his role was much related with the supplement of the products of the German arms companies *Krupp* (for artillery) and *Mauser* (for rifles).

According to Yorulmaz, in addition to the personal diplomacy and trade relations, there were three successive waves, which shaped the German-Ottoman relationship until WWI. The first wave started in 1881, from Bismarck's meeting with the Ottoman delegation in Berlin until Kaiser Wilhelm II's second visit to the Ottoman Empire in 1898 (*Orientreise*). The second wave encompasses the years between 1898-1909, from the *Orientreise* to the dethronement of Abdülhamid II in 1909. The third and the last wave, according to the author, started in 1909 and lasted in 1914. The years date the enthronement of Mehmed Reşad V and the Ottoman participation in the WWI.

*Arming the Sultan*, besides *introduction* and *conclusion* has six chapters, and aims to discuss seven basic points. The first point is to explore the direct or indirect contribution of the non-commercial influences on the German Style of War Business in the Ottoman market, and the influence of the statesmen and German Military Advisers dispatched by Berlin to help reorganize the Ottoman army, particularly von der Goltz and his successors until the WWI. Secondly, the work aims to point out the correlation between the arms trade and foreign policy considering the German-Ottoman relations 1880s to 1914. The third point is to investigate how the personal relations and connections affected the arms trade. In the fourth place, the aim of the book is to show the impact of the German Military Advisers in terms of political and economic interests of Germany in the Ottoman Empire. The fifth aim of Yorulmaz's study is to reveal the importance of the arms trade in the shaping of Ottoman-German relations. In the sixth place, Yorulmaz looks for an answer on the impact of the changing foreign policies of the Ottoman Empire on the variety of trade partners. The last concern that *Arming the Sultan* considers is to assess the archival documents related to the focus of the work. At this juncture, it must be stated that with an exemplary use of the Ottoman, German, British, and American archival documents, and records, Yorulmaz contributes to the field of both diplomatic and economic relations between German and Ottoman empires, his work is must-read for the researchers, who are interested in German-Ottoman relations in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Yorulmaz's work was translated into Turkish by Yusuf Selman İnanç in 2018 by *Kronik Kitap*, with the title *Büyük Savaşın Kara Kutusu: II. Abdülhamid'den I. Dünya Savaşı'na Osmanlı Silah Pazarının Perde Arkası*.

**Cengiz Yolcu**

İstanbul 29 Mayıs University