**Anglo-Turkish Society online lecture, 27 January 2026, 6.00 pm** (UK time)

Speaker: Murat Özyüksel

Title: 'Sultan Abdülhamid II, "Pan"-Islamism and the Hejaz Railway'

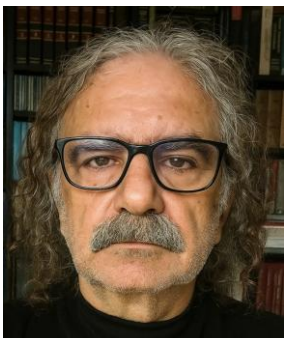
After the loss of the Balkan territories in the 1877–78 War, the Ottoman Empire emerged as a predominantly Muslim state. Influenced by this new demographic reality, Sultan Abdülhamid II adopted an absolutist and Islam-oriented policy to prevent nationalist ideas from spreading among his Muslim subjects. His Islam-centred approach was therefore inward-looking and defensive, and the Hejaz Railway became its most tangible expression. Conceived as "the work of Muslims," the project inspired great enthusiasm across the Islamic world while simultaneously heightening European anxieties about Pan-Islamism. Yet resistance from Bedouins and the Emirs of Mecca, along with British and French interference, brought construction to a halt at Medina. Ultimately, the Hejaz Railway became a symbolic showcase of Pan-Islamism - an ambitious vision undone by internal resistance and external rivalry, and, in a striking irony, by the very Arab forces who later attacked the "sacred line" under T. E. Lawrence during World War I.

Booking essential: https://murat-ozyuksel-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk

Contact: contact@angloturkishsociety.org.uk







**Murat Özyüksel (b. 1957)** graduated from Istanbul Erkek Lisesi and the Faculty of Economics at Istanbul University, where he also earned his PhD. He later served as a faculty member and department chair at both the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Political Sciences of Istanbul University. Over the years, he has also taught Ottoman and European history at Uludağ University, Bilgi University, Yıldız Technical University, the University of Michigan, and the University of British Columbia.

His research focuses on Ottoman railways, Ottoman modernization, and Ottoman–European relations. Among his major works are *The Hejaz Railway and the Ottoman Empire* (2014) and *The Berlin–Baghdad Railway and the Ottoman Empire* (2016), both published by I.B. Tauris.

He was also the scriptwriter, presenter, and composer of the ten-part documentary series *Demiryolları* (*Railways*), aired on TRT in 2000.

The Anglo-Turkish Society relies solely on membership dues and donations to continue its work. If you wish to become a member, sponsor one of our charities or wish to leave a legacy small or large, we would be happy to hear from you.

https://www.angloturkishsociety.org.uk/