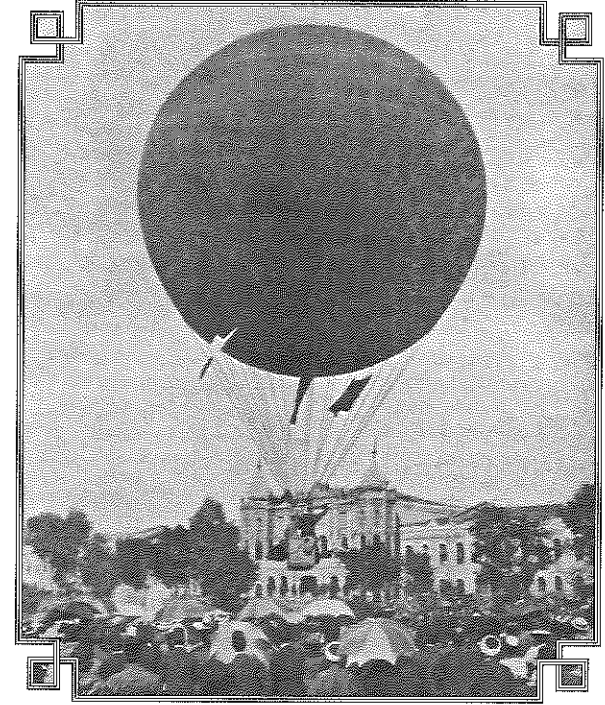


A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE  
Late Ottoman Empire



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## Introduction

THIS BRIEF HISTORY aspires to cover a period of almost one-and-a-half centuries, during which enormous changes took place over a vast geographic area. As if this were not ambitious enough, the need to place the events of 1798–1918 in context requires a description of Ottoman reality in the late eighteenth century by way of background, as well as some discussion of the legacy bequeathed by the late Ottoman Empire to the new nation-states that emerged on its ruins. The compression of so much history into a concise book naturally necessitates certain choices and omissions, as well as the privileging of trends and analyses over facts and figures. The general nature of this work thus precludes a thorough discussion of any particular issue or field. Specialists—whether of cultural, diplomatic, intellectual, literary, military, political, social, or economic history—may thus be somewhat disappointed with the result. But they may find some compensation in the attempt to integrate the advances made in multiple subfields into a general framework that offers a new approach to the study of late Ottoman history.

There is also a more ideological problem. The usual human failure to take account of historical contingency has been reinforced by prevalent nationalist narratives in the Ottoman successor states, producing a conception of late Ottoman history that is exceedingly teleological. It is often assumed that the emergence of the Republic of Turkey in Anatolia, and of the neighboring nation-states in the surrounding territories of the disintegrated Ottoman polity, was the inevitable and predictable result of the decline of a sprawling multinational empire. This retrospective approach to late Ottoman history has become, it seems to me, a major obstacle to viewing the period as it really was. In particular, it distorts key historical processes by pulling them out of their historical context and placing them in a contrived chain of events leading up to the familiar post-imperial world. The point is not to deny the significance of the link between the successor nation-states—especially Turkey—and their Ottoman past; on the contrary, retrieving the historical roots of modern phenomena is a vital and worthy undertaking. But the attempt to frame late Ottoman history in a narrative of imperial collapse to the relentless drumbeat of the march of progress—usually

associated with Westernization, nationalism, and secularization—prevents a clear understanding of the developments in question. Rectifying this error is a major goal of this book.

An illustration may help clarify this point. Any deep, evocative understanding of Turkish Republican ideology necessarily entails retrieving its intellectual progenitors of the late Ottoman period. But a nuanced, contextualized examination of the ideological debates of late Ottoman times should avoid projecting this later historical reality of a struggle between revolutionary secularists and religious conservatives onto an earlier, altogether different one. Nor will it do to simplify historical reality by depicting two imaginary camps upholding the contending banners of scientific progress and religious obscurantism—as is too often the case with modern commentators blinded by the modern Republican reality. The importance of a work like *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*,<sup>1</sup> in this context, is the corrective insight that the Young Ottomans were not secularist opponents of religious obscurantism, forming a link in the chain leading to secular republicanism; rather, they were the proponents of a uniquely Islamic critique of the new Ottoman order of the 1860s.

Thus, in order to locate the origins of modern Turkish official ideology in late Ottoman history, I have first tried to provide an account of late Ottoman history that does not assign it a teleological mission. More generally, I have avoided the fashionable but misleading tendency to see late Ottoman history primarily in terms of a struggle between competing ideologies. Although one of the tasks I have set myself has been to fill one of the more glaring lacunæ in the study of the late Ottoman period—intellectual history—I conclude that the ideas debated did not, in the final analysis, serve as the engines of historical change. A contextual analysis of the most important historical developments of the period places a premium not on ideologies as the driving force of history, but on the oppressive weight of circumstances, which inhibited the freedom of realistic policy makers who sought to innovate. For example, if we are to explain the Islamist policies adopted by the staunch secularists of the Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter CUP), we must first recognize that such contradictions exist (which is impossible from the Republican perspective), and then look to structural realities—like the increasing proportion of Muslim citizens in the empire that the CUP leadership inherited from its pious predecessor—to help us explain them. Likewise, if we are to make sense of the modernizing policies of Abdülhamid II, we must first avoid the trap of associating his rule with backward religiosity, and then look to imperial parallels in Europe, inter alia, to understand his reaction to the challenges of the day.

<sup>1</sup>Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

My narrative emphasizes historical trends and processes more than single events, placing them within an analytical framework with four principal dimensions: the persistent imperial ambition to centralize, the shifting socioeconomic context, the key challenge of forging an Ottoman response to modernity, and the need to integrate Ottoman history into world history. Let me take each of these in turn.

First, where the nationalist narrative portrays the struggle of an oppressed people to liberate themselves from the Turkish yoke, I introduce a paradigm of struggle between the imperial drive to centralize and a variety of centrifugal forces. As the imperial center took advantage of the possibilities afforded by modern technology to launch an ambitious attempt to centralize and modernize the mechanisms of control over the loosely held periphery, nationalist movements, the aspirations of local rulers, and international encroachments exerted an ever-stronger pull in the other direction. Seen in this light, nationalism provided a powerful new ideological framework for the mobilization of the masses in the perpetuation of an older and more fundamental struggle between center and periphery.

Second, the struggle between center and periphery involved a wholesale transformation of the old order of the empire. Administrative reform entailed radical changes to economic relations, to Ottoman culture, and to the fabric of society. Thus, I have found it necessary to treat social, cultural, and economic developments within this larger context, and not as phenomena occurring in a vacuum. As with the question of ideas, here, too, I have avoided the tendency to ascribe historical developments to a single social or economic cause. Just as, for example, it is unhelpful to seek the origins of the Young Turk Revolution in the rise in inflation, it is equally misleading to ascribe opposition to the printing press to “religious fanaticism” alone, while ignoring the socioeconomic basis of this opposition among thousands of individuals who made a living from manuscript production. Historical developments in the late Ottoman period did not stem from simple economic, social, or cultural reasons, but were affected by all three.

Third, instead of the worn-out paradigms of modernization and Westernization, I have tried to write in terms of the Ottoman response to challenges brought on by the onset of modernity. The Ottoman state was not unique in adapting to modernity, though its task was perhaps more arduous than that of European states, if only because modernity was initially a European phenomenon (although a uniquely Ottoman version of modernity had emerged, arguably, by the late nineteenth century). Similar challenges confronted European contemporaries and provoked similar responses, of which the Ottoman establishment was not unaware. More important, analyzing societal transformation as the response of state and society to external challenge once again helps us avoid seeing change as driven by an ideology of modernization. This is not to deny that over time the concepts of

modernization and Westernization became slogans in their own right. But it is to assert that the simplistic picture of an uncompromising hostility to modernity confronting enthusiastic support for its wholesale adoption across an unbridgeable divide is to a large extent a fiction. The similarities between Young Ottoman constitutionalism, rooted as it was in Islamic principles, and later Young Turk constitutionalism, grounded in an intensely secular outlook, are greater than many would care to admit. Similarly, the “pious Caliph” Abdülhamid II’s responses to the challenge of modernity did not differ significantly from those of his grandfather Mahmud II, nicknamed the “infidel sultan” by devout Muslims ever since. Westernization, too, was not just a matter of importation. Rather, it was a complex process of acculturation, in which Western ideas, manners, and institutions were selectively adopted, and evolved into different forms set in a different context.

Fourth, I have attempted to portray Ottoman history as an integral part of the larger histories of Europe and the world. Integrating Ottoman history into world history does not mean situating it in grandiose theoretical frameworks, such as the “World Systems theory,” or reducing it to a matter of trade statistics. It does, however, involve the reintroduction of a long-neglected, now out-of-fashion area of study: diplomatic history. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Ottoman Empire became fully integrated into the struggle for power in Europe. This makes late Ottoman history incomprehensible in isolation from European history. The story of European colonialism, of Anglo-Russian strategic rivalry, of the Austrian quest for stability—all hold vital keys to understanding Ottoman policy in the nineteenth century. Viewing Ottoman foreign policy through the lens of the centralization paradigm outlined above restores relations between the Ottoman government and the Great Powers of Europe to the proportions they held in the perspective of contemporary statesmen. It highlights the tension between the European wish to see a weak Ottoman entity subdivided into autonomous zones open to European commerce and influence on the one hand, and the Ottoman center’s wish to extend the area under its direct control on the other. Moreover, to understand the final collapse of the empire in the twentieth century, one must also look abroad. After all, it was not the internal dynamics of the empire but the new international order brought about by the Great War that sounded the death knell of the “Sick Man of Europe.” Although the Ottoman state lacked the innate power to transform itself into a new kind of empire, more suited to the modern age—as was the case for a while in the neighboring Soviet Union—its leaders might have prolonged the life of the empire considerably had they opted for armed neutrality in 1914.

Finally, a word on sources. The dearth of local sources that might aid in the reconstruction of late Ottoman history from the vantage point of the

periphery compels the student to accept the well-preserved records of the central bureaucracy. The best one can do to avoid the obvious pitfalls of reliance on such evidence is to treat imperial documents not as reliable mirrors of events on the ground but as filtered interpretations of them. The general nature of this study has necessarily reinforced this emphasis on the state, its agencies, and its communities—rather than on the individual. Still, I have tried where possible to present the average person’s view of the sweeping changes under way around him or her, however briefly.

Despite the general nature of the study, I have found it valuable to incorporate material from original archival sources in conjunction with histories and treatises produced during the late Ottoman period. Although the book in no way pretends to revolutionize the field with new archival discoveries, this approach, it is hoped, will enrich the reader’s perspective on late Ottoman history. I have also drawn on major monographs devoted to various aspects of late Ottoman history, while staying away from extensive consultation of general studies of the period, so as to avoid producing a mere summary of these secondary works. Finally, while refraining from turning the text into a series of statistics and tables, I have tried to provide a measure of quantitative information to amplify the central themes of this narrative.

# 6

## From Revolution to Imperial Collapse: The Longest Decade of the Late Ottoman Empire

THE YOUNG TURK Revolution overthrew the Hamidian regime under the banner of “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice.” In its place, the revolutionaries promised a constitutional monarchy founded on the rule of law. They envisioned a parliamentary democracy headed by a responsible government and administered by a meritocratic bureaucracy. They expected political parties to replace age-old institutions, such as notable houses and religious orders, as the principal medium of political participation. They stood for a new fraternal Ottoman identity, united against European intervention in the affairs of the empire. They spoke of a free press, and of virtually unlimited individual liberties. Very little of this came to pass.

It was not that the revolution manqué produced no change—it set in motion radical transformations in many fields—but rather that the changes it brought about, like those of most revolutions, differed markedly from the expectations of its true believers. The 1908 Revolution was unprecedented in three respects. For one, its heroes were conservatives, who viewed their essential task as conservation and survival. Somewhat hastily labeled “liberals” by sanguine Europeans, the CUP leaders viewed themselves primarily as saviors of the empire. Second, its aim was accordingly not destruction but restoration. Unlike the French revolutionaries of 1789, the CUP leaders did not destroy an ancien régime in order to build a new one in its stead; unlike the Iranian revolutionaries of 1905–1906, they did not replace an absolutist monarch with a novel constitutional regime; nor could they even take credit for inaugurating a brand new consultative body, such as the Russian Gosudarstvennaia Duma that emerged from the 1905 Revolution. Formally, the conservative leaders of the CUP brought about a *restoration* of the constitutional sultanate established in 1876 and subsequently

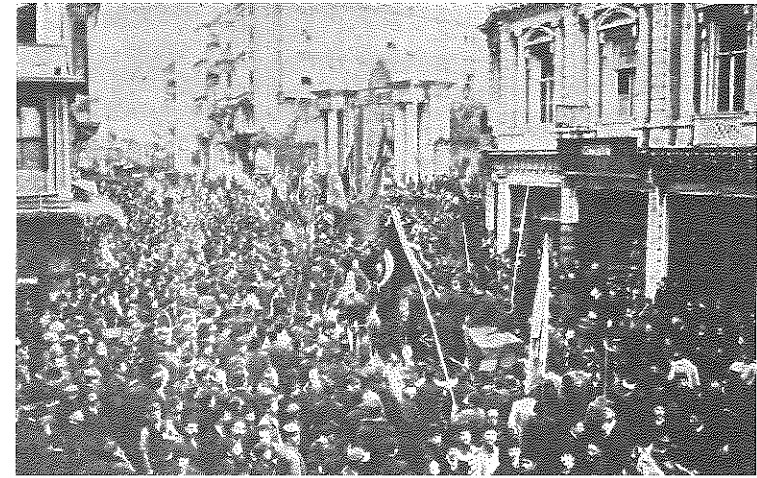


FIGURE 16. Elections of 1908. Crowds carrying ballot boxes to counting centers. *Resimli Kitap* 1/4 (December 1908), p. 384.

suspended in practice. Third, the Young Turk Revolution resulted in the gradual emergence of a radically new type of regime that was to become frighteningly familiar in the twentieth century: one-party rule. The CUP retained the sultan, but reduced his stature. It reintroduced the parliament, but kept it under tight control. In the palace, in the bureaucracy, and within the military, it was the Committee that, working from behind the scenes through the existing institutions of government, came to pull the levers of imperial power.

To fulfill the revolutionary pledge to “restore” parliamentary rule, the CUP instructed the transitional government to schedule the elections promised by the sultan in his capitulatory decree. These elections, held in November–December 1908, were remarkably fair; indeed, they may be considered the first and last true elections of this period. In principle, all tax-paying males over the age of twenty-five were eligible to vote. A minimum age of thirty and knowledge of the Turkish language were required of deputies. Every 500 voters in a given district elected a representative to an electoral college, selecting him from a list of candidates drawn up by municipal administrators. Each 50,000 electors selected one of their own to be sent to the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>1</sup> The number of deputies in the chamber fluctuated according to changes in the size of the population; the parliament

<sup>1</sup> *Düstür*, II/1 (Istanbul, 1329 [1911]), pp. 18ff.



FIGURE 17. Ottoman deputies 1908 (province/electoral district). a. Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Mehmed Talāt Bey (later pasha, grand vizier) (Edirne/Edirne). b. Nesim Mazliyah (Aydın/İzmir). c. Sulaymān al-Bustānī (later senator) (Beirut/Beirut). d. Es'ad Pasha Toptani (Scutari in Albania/Durazzo). e. Muḥammad Makḥafi (Yemen/Şan'ā'). f. Grigor Zōhrab (Istanbul). *Resimli Kitap* 2/1 (July 23, 1909), pp. 984, 986–7, 992, 1002, 1007.

of 1908 had 275 deputies, that of 1912, 278, and the one following the 1914 elections, only 255.

The major bone of contention between the CUP and the various ethno-national communities was the method of representation. Many nationalist organizations, with the Greeks in the forefront, vigorously protested the system of universal representation, maintaining that it would work to the disadvantage of minorities and give Muslims, and especially Turks, disproportionate representation. They demanded quotas for ethno-religious groups,<sup>2</sup> and even threatened to boycott the elections. In the event, deputies of Turkish origin obtained half of the seats in the parliament, while other Ottoman communities received fair proportional representation despite the absence of quotas.

<sup>2</sup>"Rumların Programı," *Sabah*, September 2, 1908.

Election day itself was celebrated in a carnival atmosphere; huge crowds escorted ballot boxes to the counting centers bearing flags and placards. The CUP's immense popularity in the wake of the revolution, and its untouchable position as a *comité de salut public*, virtually guaranteed a landslide victory. Still, the free nature of the elections introduced into the chamber many independent-minded deputies, who later formed the core of the opposition to the CUP. This was a lesson the CUP never forgot.

Whatever liberal affinities the CUP leaders harbored prior to and immediately following the revolution quickly gave way to authoritarian tendencies. Ensuring the survival of the empire in the face of internal and external predators, they felt, necessitated and therefore justified strong measures, including the restriction of fundamental liberties. In any case, it was perhaps inevitable that a conspiratorial committee that had carried out a revolution through the exercise of raw power should seek to dominate the post-revolutionary political playing field, as Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir's Free Officers showed almost half a century later in Egypt. If the anarchic aftermath of the revolution was one development that diminished the CUP's appetite for liberalism, concern over the outcome of the elections was another.

Although the CUP enjoyed a majority in the first Chamber of Deputies and successfully kept the government on a short leash, its hold on power was far from absolute. As the novelty of the revolution began to wear off, opposition emerged. There were liberals who complained of the CUP's heavy-handed rule; bureaucrats, led by Mehmed Kâmil Pasha, who still dreamed of restoring the supremacy of the Sublime Porte; nationalist and proto-nationalist societies that took issue with the CUP's narrow definition of Ottomanism; local groups frustrated at the increasing centralization of power and the revocation of privileges granted under the old regime; Islamists critical of the secular attributes of the new regime; and socialists who took issue with its socioeconomic policies. From very early on, the CUP faced repeated demands by political opponents that it relinquish its elusive and untouchable status at the pinnacle of power. The insistence of the Central Committee on wielding power from the shadows provoked outcries both from opportunist opponents and from genuine proponents of liberalism. Specific complaints centered on the claims of the Committee to special status as savior of the fatherland and the numerous prerogatives it exercised, ranging from the right to send telegrams free of charge to its habit of bypassing official channels to offer guidance to central and local governments.

The emergence of opposition confronted the CUP with a dilemma, for they could not squash it without betraying the ideals of the revolution. But to accept opposition as a fact of life threatened to undermine their hold on power. As a solution to this conundrum, the CUP, soon after the revolution, attempted to absorb or co-opt rival organizations. Some, like Sabahaddin Bey's League of Private Initiative and Decentralization, were falsely declared

to have voluntarily merged with the CUP;<sup>3</sup> professional associations, like the merchants' unions, were subsumed under the CUP organizational framework;<sup>4</sup> CUP sections were created to cater to key interest groups like women<sup>5</sup> or the ulema,<sup>6</sup> and various nationalist organizations were targeted for co-option.<sup>7</sup>

But such measures could not completely stifle dissent. Many organizations, especially those representing various nationalist groups, refused to play along with the CUP. They sought to maintain their independence and contested CUP hegemony. Faced with the impossibility of eliminating opposition through persuasion, the CUP leaders resigned themselves—much like the sultan, whose efforts to dissolve the CUP and all political organizations in the aftermath of the revolution met with rejection<sup>8</sup>—to the existence of independent organizations, including rival political parties. New parties began to emerge soon after the revolution, covering the entire range of the political spectrum. Among these were the religious-conservative Mohammedan Union Party, the center-left Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, and the Moderate Freedom-Lovers' Party. However, none of these parties was strong enough to mount an independent challenge to the CUP, and they accordingly tended to coalesce in heterogeneous opposition blocs. The inescapable fact of one-party rule within an ostensibly multiparty system produced tensions that tore apart the fragile fabric of parliamentary democracy. Relations between the CUP and the opposition began to follow a pattern of oppression and conspiracy. In fact, during the entire Second Constitutional Period, not once was power transferred peaceably. And for much of it, power was not really transferred at all.

In April 1909, an improbable combination of old regime supporters, Islamists, liberals, and non-Turkish nationalists, exploiting tensions in the armed forces provoked by CUP-led purges of the sultan's army, came together in support of a military uprising in the capital. The CUP reacted swiftly and decisively, organizing an "Action Army" composed of military units and volunteers to march on the capital from Macedonia and restore order.

The challenges mounted against the CUP between the Revolution and April 1909 prompted its leaders to crack down on political opposition as such. Prevailing upon a reluctant parliament, they pushed through a series of controversial measures designed to curtail fundamental liberties that posed

<sup>3</sup>"Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Merkezi'nden," *Sabah*, August 23, 1908.

<sup>4</sup>"İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin İtimadnâmesi," *Sabah*, September 4, 1908.

<sup>5</sup>Emine Semiye, "İsmet Hakkı Hanımefendi'yle Bir Hasbihâl," *İkdam*, August 29, 1908.

<sup>6</sup>*Takvim-i Vekayi'*, no. 3571 (June 10, 1335 [1919]), p. 133.

<sup>7</sup>[Ahmed Cemal], *Cemal Paşa Hâtıratı, 1913-1922* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı, 1339 [1922]), pp. 246-7.

<sup>8</sup>Grand vizier's office to the inspector general in Salonica, [July 24, 1908]/no. 1012, BOA-BEO/Şifre Telgrafnâme, 981-61/15.



FIGURE 18. The Action Army in Istanbul, April 24, 1909. *Resimli Kitab 2/9* (June 1909), p. 939.

a threat to CUP domination. To restore order and put a stop to political demonstrations, they imposed martial law, a tool used with increasing regularity in later years. To halt labor disobedience, they drafted the heavy-handed Law of Strikes, which banned strikes in all public services and dissolved the labor unions in this sector.<sup>9</sup> To stifle dissent, they issued the Press Law, which restricted freedom of the press.

But opposition continued. In November 1911, elements as diverse as ulema and non-Muslim liberals came together to form a new umbrella party, the Liberal Entente. Its formation was a watershed. Not only did the party pose the first serious democratic challenge to CUP rule; from this point on politics became a bipolar struggle, as even parties and nationalist clubs that did not join the Liberal Entente backed it as the major political vehicle for opposition to the CUP. Within twenty days of its formation, to everyone's amazement, the Liberal Entente won a significant victory in a by-election held in the capital. Many provincial representatives elected on the CUP ticket saw which way the wind was blowing and submitted their resignations to the Committee. To stem the tide, the CUP engineered snap general elections, held between February and April 1912. Determined to avoid a repetition of the experience of 1908-1912, it adopted new

<sup>9</sup>The ban on strikes began with a temporary law on September 8, 1908 and, after minor adaptations, became regular law on August 9, 1909. See *Düstür*, II/1, pp. 88-90; and 433-6.

measures to control these elections (nicknamed, for this reason, "The Elections with the Stick"). These included direct intervention in the campaign process, arrest of political opponents, banning of opposition meetings, shutdown of opposition newspapers, use of government resources to support CUP candidates, and finally, corruption of the ballot-counting process. CUP intervention was almost certainly responsible for the crushing defeat of the opposition, which managed to retain a mere six seats in the 278-seat Chamber of Deputies.

Frustrated yet again by CUP control of the democratic process, the dissidents, supported by a clandestine organization of army officers opposed to the CUP, resorted once more to force. In an echo of 1908, they capitalized on a nationalist uprising in Albania to induce various Albanian commanders in the Ottoman military to mutiny in July 1912. This provoked a major cabinet crisis, in the course of which first the recalcitrant minister of war and then the entire CUP-backed government resigned only one day after receiving their inaugural vote of confidence. The opposition then formed a new government under the leadership of the decorated war hero Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, and proceeded to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies, thereby nullifying the election's results.

In effect, the putsch of July 1912 marked the end of the Ottoman parliamentary experiment. Significantly, the CUP was not the organization responsible for its termination. The Chamber of Deputies would not meet again until after the elections of 1914, but by then the CUP had established a virtual one-party regime. Thereafter, as the dominant political organization shifted power from the legislative to the executive, the parliament lost much of its potency and met with decreasing frequency. This process was exacerbated following the Ottoman entry into the Great War. During the decade-long Second Constitutional Period, the chamber was in session for only four-and-a-half years, with several interruptions. Between December 1908 and July 1912, it held 473 sittings, whereas from May 1914 to December 1918, it held only 253 sittings.<sup>10</sup>

Shorn of its most efficacious political weapon (an obedient legislature) and faced with opposition from within its main power base (the army), the CUP had no choice but to capitulate in 1912. The force of the opposition revealed the fragility of CUP control, both civilian and military, four years after the revolution. For a brief period, from August 1912 to January 1913, the CUP, defeated and humiliated, rejoined the ranks of the opposition. The government of Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, and its successor under Mehmed Kâmil Pasha, worked hard to crush the Committee. But the panic and state of emergency surrounding the Balkan crisis of late 1912 provided an

<sup>10</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, 3: *İttihat ve Terakki, Bir Çağın, Bir Kuşağın, Bir Partinin Tarihi* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), p. 170.

opportunity for the CUP to launch a comeback. As the crisis reached a fever pitch, the Committee organized mass rallies in support of war and launched a massive propaganda campaign designed to underscore the government's lack of determination in the face of the threat. Although it failed to realize its main ambition and topple the government, its vocal campaign contributed to the outbreak of the disastrous Balkan Wars, in the course of which enemy forces penetrated far enough to threaten Istanbul.

It was the threat of imminent defeat in war that provided the occasion for the recovery of power by the CUP. On January 23, 1913, a CUP strike force raided the grand vizier's office, forced him to resign, and compelled the sultan to rubber-stamp the appointment of a new cabinet. The opposition struck back six months later, on July 11, 1913, when a group of hired assassins murdered the Grand Vizier Mahmud Şevket Pasha. This action, however, proved insufficient to dislodge the CUP, which launched a harsh campaign of repression in the course of which a large number of dissidents, ranging from ulema to socialists, were rounded up and sent into exile. A thorough purge of the armed forces followed, justified by the poor performance of the CUP's opponents in the First Balkan War. The CUP generals Enver and Cemal Pashas became minister of war and minister of the navy, respectively, symbolizing the final assertion of Committee control over the military. One-party rule was solidified and CUP control remained effectively unchallenged until the empire surrendered.

#### POLITICAL LIFE UNDER THE CUP

The Committee chose to rule initially from behind the scenes. The conspiratorial mind-set of the CUP leaders, their conservative predilections and reluctance to confront tradition, the protection afforded by the continuity of time-honored institutions, and a disinclination to expose their young, unknown, and inexperienced cadre to the risks of public scrutiny—all these considerations may have played a role in their decision to stay in the shadows. Whatever the reasoning behind it, the decision not to publicize the names of the central committee members shrouded the CUP in mystery, laying the foundations for an institutional cult that would replace the personality cult that had surrounded Sultan Abdülhamid II. The Committee regarded itself—and wanted to be seen by others—as the sacred agent of imperial redemption and the guarantor of the empire's future security. The veil was lifted somewhat during the first open congress of the CUP in 1909, but the aura of secrecy remained till the end of the empire. In any event, the decision meant that the very fact of CUP power—its physical hold on the reins of government—was hidden from the public view at the outset. At first the Committee did not visibly take over the traditional institutions



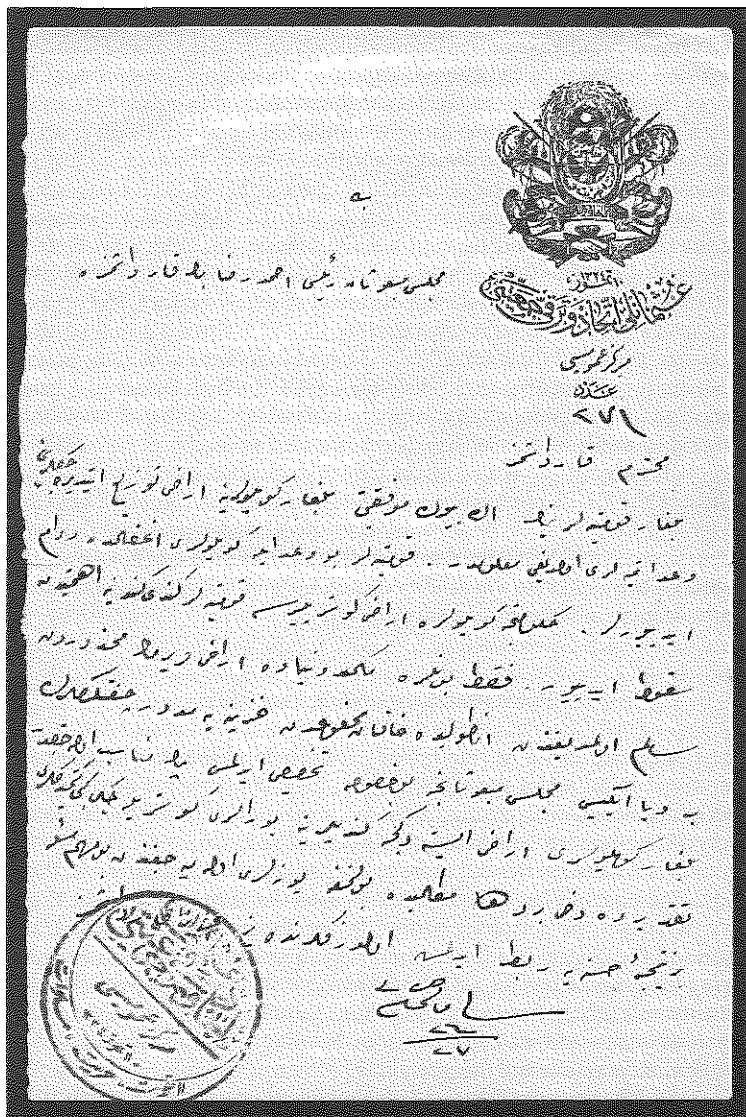


FIGURE 19. A CUP central committee note dated June 8/9, 1909 and sent to the Speaker of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, Ahmed Rıza. The author's private collection.

of power—the court and the Porte. But it did control their actions. Thus, if a governor seemed unreliable, the CUP would order the grand vizier to fire him. If a military unit was suspected of disloyalty, the Committee had the minister of war carry out a purge. The capricious edicts of the sultan were thus replaced by equally whimsical decrees issued by the anonymous members of the Central Committee. In addition, starting with the appointment of Talât Bey (Pasha) as minister of the interior and of Mehmed Cavid Bey as minister of finance in 1909, the CUP gradually began to exercise direct control over important offices, a process which ended in its total domination of the bureaucracy in 1913.

Despite the secrecy, some details about key individuals within the CUP leadership have come to be known. The crucial reshaping of the CUP on the road to revolution was carried out by Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, a representative of the activist faction, in 1905–1906. The shift to an activist platform marginalized the hitherto predominant intellectuals within the Committee. Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, frequently described as the Stalin of the CUP, and Dr. Nâzım, another of the architects of the reshaping, became the *éménances grises* of the organization. Although they distanced themselves from intellectual debate, they represented the Turkist ideological strand within the Committee. The hand of the men of action was strengthened by the merger with the Ottoman Freedom Society in 1907, following which Talât Bey, organizer of dissident activity in Salonica, rose to prominence. The revolution itself naturally strengthened the position of military men within the Committee. Two officers in particular, Enver and Cemal Beys (later Pashas), stood out and became the military leaders of the CUP. Though scholarship has spoken of a triumvirate of Enver, Cemal, and Talât Beys (Pashas), the situation in reality was more complex. First, Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir and Dr. Nâzım continued to be very influential in decision-making in the early years following the revolution. Second, as the CUP came to control more areas of government and society, new leaders appeared. The need to deal with such fields of specialized policy making as economics and social mobilization pushed to the fore men like Mehmed Cavid Bey, a financial expert, and Kara Kemal Bey, an organizer of societies, guilds, and cooperatives. Finally, the renewed need for an ideological framework for action brought Ziya Gökalp to the fore. A self-taught sociologist and devout follower of Durkheim, he was awarded a seat on the Central Committee in 1912. There were few men of charisma among the senior leadership. The military hero Enver Bey was an exception, but he gained disproportionate power as an individual only during the Great War. As a rule, decisions were taken collectively and there was no deviation from the discipline required for the projection of the institutional cult. The shared interest in thwarting the rise of any one individual to a position of prominence ensured that this did not change.

The very nature of the Committee of Union and Progress as an organization remained rather murky in the aftermath of the revolution. On the one hand, it grew into something approaching a mass party. At the same time, it retained its conspiratorial qualities and avoided the full institutionalization of one-party rule. The CUP never formally abolished or outlawed rival parties or nonparty organizations in the empire. Ostensibly, all Ottoman political organizations were equal before the law throughout the Second Constitutional Period. To maintain the pretence of a free, multiparty system, the CUP in 1909 resorted to a fictitious distinction between the "committee" (*cemiyet*) and the parliamentary group supporting it, which was the "party" (*fırka*). There was little substance to this distinction, as the committee nominated all deputies and senators in its parliamentary faction. In 1913, the CUP expanded its definition of "the party" to include the committee itself as well as the organization's press organs.<sup>11</sup> But by then, its control of the political system was assured.

Incredibly, the seat of the central committee of the CUP remained in Salonica until 1912, and the annual congresses were also held there. This fact helps to explain the tenuousness of the CUP's position in the early post-revolutionary years and emphasizes the extent to which the organization was a Macedonian phenomenon. After the revolution, as the CUP transformed itself from a highly compartmentalized and conspiratorial organization into something approaching a mass party, the composition of its membership changed and its center of gravity shifted eastward. As the doors of access to the lower levels of the organization were thrown open to mass membership, notables and merchants flocked to join the proliferating local branches of the CUP across the empire. Overwhelmed by a flood of applications for membership, the CUP center tended to approve petitions for the establishment of local branches on the basis of superficial information concerning their members.<sup>12</sup> By late 1909, the number of CUP branches across the empire had multiplied from 83 on the eve of the revolution (several of them minor cells) to 360, while membership had grown roughly from 2,250 to 850,000.<sup>13</sup> Although the CUP had clearly become a mass organization, the extent of central control over this unwieldy structure was debatable. In any case, the provincial appendages of the CUP were largely cut off from the process of policy formulation at the center. They were also

<sup>11</sup> *Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Program ve Nizamnamesidir: 1329 Senesi Umumi Kongresi'nde Tanzim ve Kabul Olunmuştur* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Hayriye ve Şürekâsı, 1329 [1913]), p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> "Osmanlı İnkılab-ı Kebîri Nasıl Oldu?" *Musavver Sâlnâme-i Servet-i Fünûn*, 1 [1910], pp. 102–3.

<sup>13</sup> "Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti," *Haftalık Şûra-yı Ümmet*, no. 203 [January 23, 1909].

institutionally detached from its implementation, which was still in the hands of the traditional bureaucracy.

Although the CUP grew and became increasingly institutionalized, it never became a true mass party within which power could be rendered legitimate and participatory in the Bolshevik or Nazi sense. On the surface, this was due to the lack of charismatic leadership; the CUP never produced a Lenin or a Hitler. But just as significantly, this failure may be traced to the same combination of ideological deficiencies and structural barriers that had thwarted earlier attempts of predecessors to establish a sound political basis for a modern Ottoman state. The main task that the CUP leaders took upon themselves was the preservation of the multinational empire. There were two problems with this objective. For one, it was essentially a conservative platform that held little potential for galvanizing the masses into undertaking a vast effort of destruction and reconstruction. Second, the status quo held little appeal for large segments of the population. There was a fundamental incompatibility between the aims of the Turkist core of the CUP and those of the non-Turkish populations of the empire. Indeed, the main threat to the survival of the empire came from separatism on the periphery. To win over the separatists, the CUP adopted a prudent policy of inclusiveness. But the inclusion of diverse population groups with little in common within the ranks of a single party inevitably led to ideological incoherence. There was no class or ethnic basis for membership. There was only a vague and varying interpretation of Ottomanism. Not surprisingly, the political platforms of the various branches contradicted each other and that of the central committee, which controlled them only weakly. In this sense—as well as in the conservative agenda buried under the revolutionary rhetoric—the CUP resembled the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, which dominated Mexican politics for much of the twentieth century. Ultimately, the CUP's power depended on its control over the army and on the perception that it was the only force capable of defending the empire. Under the near constant threat of war from abroad and rebellion at home, this was a strong case.

The tugging and pulling between political parties masked a more fundamental set of changes in the traditional balance of forces brought about by the CUP within the Ottoman political system. These affected the court, the Porte, the legislature, and the military. Abdülhamid II, who had barely escaped deposition by belatedly making himself the father of the constitutional regime, prudently assumed a low profile immediately after the revolution. But this did not mean that he accepted its results. On the contrary, he resented his diminished stature in the new regime and his role as a legitimizing figurehead charged with rubber-stamping Central Committee decisions. A showdown was therefore inevitable, and it was not long in coming. In early August 1908, the sultan provoked an open confrontation

with the Committee by claiming the constitutional authority to nominate the ministers of the navy and of war, in addition to the grand vizier and Şeyhülislâm. The CUP, overruling him, forced the cabinet to resign. To make sure the message was understood, the Central Committee dispatched a delegation with detailed policy instructions to the new government,<sup>14</sup> and provided the minister of war with a list of key military appointments he was to make.<sup>15</sup> But the obstructionism of the sultan convinced the CUP leaders that Abdülhamid II had to go. The “counter-revolution” of 1909 provided them with an ideal pretext to depose Abdülhamid II, which they did on April 27, 1909. The final reduction of the court to insignificance was completed with the accession of Abdülhamid II’s weak successor, Mehmed V (Reşad, r. 1909–18), who displayed little inclination to intervene in affairs of state. Although the CUP leaders initially sought to limit the power of the sultan through constitutional amendments in 1909, they came to realize that a subservient sultan, empowered to act on their behalf, could be of great use in maintaining the façade of a constitutional monarchy. Further amendments, proposed in 1912 and approved in 1914, restored several of the sultan’s more convenient executive powers, such as the authority to prorogue a recalcitrant chamber of deputies. Mehmed V’s successor, Mehmed VI (Vahideddin, r. 1918–22), exploited the humiliation of the Mudros armistice in 1918 to try to reinstate the power of the court, but to no avail. The institution of the sultanate, for centuries at the heart of Ottoman might and identity, was effectively dead.

Similarly, the Sublime Porte, already cut down to size by Abdülhamid II, lost all hope of restoring the bureaucracy’s former stature in the aftermath of the revolution. At first, the CUP manipulated the traditional rivalry between the court and the Porte by taking away powers from the former, in accordance with its overall strategy of weakening the sultan, and giving them to the latter. But these were minor concessions, such as the restoration of official control over provincial governors, whom Abdülhamid II had required to report directly to the palace.<sup>16</sup> The key to the weakening of the bureaucracy lay in the new restraining effects of representational politics. First, the CUP balanced its wariness of a robust legislature with a willingness to use it, within limits, to control the bureaucracy. Second, the very conditions brought about by the restoration of a Chamber of Deputies, turned the bureaucracy’s dreams of a return to unfettered rule into fantasy as Russia was discovering at about the same time. As bureaucrats soon found out, simply ignoring the deputies was not an option. When Mehmed Kâmil Pasha (who had led the last effort of officialdom to restore responsible

<sup>14</sup> See the undated, twenty-article instructions given to Rahmi Bey, who led the CUP delegation, Private Papers of Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir.

<sup>15</sup> BOA-A.AMD.MV 90/1 [August 9, 1908].

<sup>16</sup> BOA/BEO, file 265634 [May 6, 1909].

government in 1895)<sup>17</sup> attempted to place the Sublime Porte above the parliament and the CUP, he received the first vote of no confidence in Ottoman history, on February 13, 1909. A third factor that weakened the bureaucracy was its increasing subservience to the CUP. Although actual membership of the CUP—unlike membership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—never became a condition for service, loyalty to the Committee was now a key criterion for advancement. And while the CUP did not carry out any significant purge of officialdom during the Second Constitutional Period, it did finally assert its direct control in 1913, when leading Committee members took over virtually all important posts in the bureaucracy.

Likewise, the parliament, the prime institutional product of the constitution, soon withered away. Although it was the harbinger of constitutional revolution, the CUP, once in power, developed a distaste for strong legislatures. As adherents of Gustave Le Bon’s *Psychologie des foules*, CUP leaders looked down on the motley crowd that filled the chamber of deputies.<sup>18</sup> More important, they came to share Abdülhamid II’s concern over the ability of a strong parliament to undermine the regime and aggravate ethno-religious conflict. Yet the CUP could not afford to betray their revolution by abolishing the parliament; nor were they prepared to sacrifice the parliament’s legitimizing benefits, as the supposed voice of the people, by openly confronting it. Instead, the CUP managed to bypass the legislature by means of the cabinet. Enver Pasha is once said to have remarked: “If there is no law, make one.”<sup>19</sup> The cabinet began to issue so-called temporary laws confirmed by imperial decrees at times when the parliament was not in session. Over time, temporary laws overtook legislation in the parliament as the principal lawmaking mechanism of the state. Many important decisions were confirmed as temporary laws, without any discussion in the Chamber. Examples include the grant of autonomous fiefdoms to local Arabian leaders,<sup>20</sup> passage of the controversial Family Law of 1917 (discussed in the next section), and above all the farcical dismissal of parliament on the very day that the fateful German-Ottoman alliance was signed, August 2, 1914. As these examples demonstrate, the CUP was not prepared to tolerate any

<sup>17</sup> [Mehmed Kâmil], *Hâtrât-ı Sadr-ı Esbak Kâmil Paşa* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1329 [1911]), pp. 190–96.

<sup>18</sup> Enver Bey (Pasha) to a German woman with whom he frequently corresponded, ‘Ayn al-Mansûr, September 2, 1912, Ernst Jäckh Papers, Yale University, MSS 466, Box 1, Folder 40.

<sup>19</sup> Tunaya, *İttihat ve Terakki*, p. 386.

<sup>20</sup> See the temporary law of January 22, 1912, which ratified the Da‘ân contract granted to İmâm Yahyâ on October 20, 1911. BOA-DVN 37/1. See also the temporary law of September 10, 1914, which ratified the contract granted to ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Sa‘ûd on May 28, 1914. BOA-DH.SYS 25/103.

consequential role for the legislature in a debate on policy, let alone in its formulation.

But if the CUP outmaneuvered its new competitors and reduced the old nineteenth-century contenders for state power to subservience, it also restored to prominence a power broker not heard of in Ottoman politics for more than eighty years: the army. The role played by the armed forces in Ottoman politics, often in alliance with the ulema, had traditionally been a decisive one. It was to become so once again. Indeed, the very success of the CUP, first in mounting a revolutionary challenge to the ancien régime, and then in the struggle to remain in power, rested on its ability to penetrate the armed forces and stage the return of the military to politics for the first time since the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826. The CUP was a militarized political organization even before the revolution. The overwhelming majority of its members prior to July 1908 were army officers. When the sultan gave in to the CUP's ultimatum in July 1908, he surrendered not to a group of starry-eyed idealists in exile, but to the effective commanders of a substantial portion of the Ottoman officer corps. Militarization of the organization, in both structure and spirit, continued after the CUP seized power. Shortly after the revolution, the CUP converted the units of self-sacrificing volunteers into a paramilitary force that coexisted uneasily with the military and the constitutional regime. It also established a network of military clubs, through which thousands of new officers swelled the ranks of the organization's membership.

To the CUP, the army was above all an indispensable tool against domestic and foreign opponents. The opposition's attempts to sunder the strong ideological ties that bound the military to the CUP ultimately failed. Despite legislative measures sponsored by the opposition which prohibited the involvement of military personnel in politics, the CUP managed to maintain its dual political-military character up until the collapse of the empire. But the CUP leadership regarded the military as far more than just an instrument of power. For them, it embodied the institutional core of Baron Colmar von der Goltz's idea of "A Nation in Arms." The Committee assigned to the military a significant role in shaping a new, militarized Ottoman society.<sup>21</sup> This was made explicit very early on. As one of the Committee leaders put it in 1908: "The two powers, the CUP and the Ottoman Armed Forces, which have been formed by the great majority of the Ottoman nation, can annihilate the supporters of tyranny at any time."<sup>22</sup> The outbreak

<sup>21</sup> See Ali Fu'ad, "Ordu ve Millet," *Asker* 1/1 [September 3, 1908], p. 16, and Ahmed Refik, "Von der Goltz: Hayat ve Âsârı," *Servet-i Fünûn* [July 15, 1909], pp. 138-9.

<sup>22</sup> "Osmanlı İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Osmanlı Ordusu," *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, October 18, 1908.

of the Great War provided the CUP with an opportunity to realize its vision of a nation in arms. One example of this policy was the mobilization of youth within a paramilitary framework;<sup>23</sup> another was the establishment of a paramilitary Special Organization composed of CUP leaders and self-sacrificing volunteers directly attached to the Ministry of War.

Having displaced the traditional loci of power within the Ottoman political system, the CUP employed new legitimizing devices to buttress its rule. The military ethic was the first. The second was the concept of "the people." The claim to rule on behalf of the people was no innovation, although the term employed, *hakimiyet-i milliye* (national sovereignty), was a new one coined by the CUP. But the Committee proved more skillful at giving substance to this fiction than the old regime had ever been, especially through the adroit manipulation of an elected legislative body. The need to bolster authoritarian rule with the appearance of popular sovereignty was the single most important factor behind the CUP's persistence down the constitutional path, even though the parliament caused the CUP nearly as much grief as it had caused Abdülhamid II. The following anecdote is telling. When Lieutenant-Colonel Enver Bey stormed the Sublime Porte at the head of CUP volunteers in the coup d'état of 1913, he forced the grand vizier to draft a letter of resignation at gunpoint. The grand vizier accordingly wrote that he had been compelled to resign "at the demand of the armed forces." But Enver Bey insisted that he amend the letter to read: "at the demand of *the people* and the armed forces [emphasis added]."<sup>24</sup> Elitism in the political thought of the CUP thus coexisted with an acute awareness of the symbolic power of the notion of the people.

The third device that the CUP leaders used in consolidating power was the press. Here again, they were not creating something unknown under the old regime. But as members of a conspiratorial organization in exile, dependent on the clandestine dissemination of smuggled journals and propaganda pamphlets to communicate their political message, the CUP leaders were especially aware of the capacity of the press to form public opinion, and exceedingly skilled at its manipulation. Upon coming to power, they launched a host of official and semi-official organs, and a series of other publications, to help them broadcast their message, monopolize public space, and consolidate their hold on power. Following the precedent set by Abdülhamid II, they also maintained a strict regime of censorship, beginning in 1913. The combination of a skillful propaganda machine, a loyal press, and effective restrictions on freedom of speech ensured that CUP

<sup>23</sup> Zafer Toprak, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Para-Militer Gençlik Örgütleri," *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi* 7 (1979), pp. 93-113.

<sup>24</sup> BOA-A.AMD 1345/41 (1331.S.14) [January, 23, 1913].



FIGURE 20. Demonstrations before the Sublime Porte immediately after the CUP raid on January 23, 1913. *Resimli Kitab* 8/46 (December 1912–January 1913), p. 719.

policy gained a favorable reception among considerable parts of the literate population, while the opposition, which initially posed a fierce challenge to the CUP-sponsored press, was effectively silenced, particularly after 1913.

The post-revolutionary era also witnessed important changes in the way the central government interacted with the empire's various religious and ethnic communities. The relative freedom of the first few years after 1908 did not resolve existing tensions; on the contrary, it aggravated them. CUP policies only made things worse. The cancellation of all privileges of non-Turkish Muslim groups, the launching of an aggressive centralization campaign, and the demand that all citizens place their Ottoman identity above any other—all these were bound to provoke a strong reaction. As the CUP itself became increasingly penetrated by Turkist ideas, the difference between "Ottoman" and "Turkish" became increasingly blurred. And as the dominant culture emerged from the convenient ambiguity of Ottomanism, non-Turks began to feel less and less comfortable. Attitudes in the periphery hardened, and the appeal of the alternatives offered by various Christian and Muslim ethno-nationalist organizations grew accordingly. Greek, Bulgarian, and Armenian nationalisms were already strong at the time of the revolution. Under the CUP, Albanian and Arab nationalisms became significant movements, while Kurdish and Circassian proto-nationalist

sentiments gained momentum. Between a center predisposed to view all demands for the recognition of difference as evidence of separatism, and a periphery decreasingly inclined to compromise, all-out war was inevitable. A strongly Turkist version of Ottomanism faced off against increasingly intransigent nationalisms that at best sought to reduce Ottoman identity to an unimportant, secondary symbol. To be sure, this was primarily a struggle among overrepresented intelligentsias; it did not yet infect the more established classes within many of the non-Turkish communities. Even those who had opposed the Hamidian régime—like the Armenian Amira class of rich artisans and bankers—continued to reject the nationalist calls for independence outside the Ottoman framework up until 1915. Nevertheless, the consequences are evident in the political map of the post-Ottoman Balkans and Near East.

#### THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE CUP

The CUP leaders inherited Abdülhamid II's expensive policy of armed neutrality. They moved swiftly to replace it with an alliance with a major European power. Such a pact would not only better secure the territorial integrity of the empire; it would also make possible the diversion of scarce resources into economic development. As early as August 18, 1908, the CUP made its first overtures to the German and British monarchs.<sup>25</sup> The very initiation of such contacts with the Germans, loathed for their support of the Hamidian regime, and with the British, abhorred as a major imperialist supporter of Ottoman separatists, showed how swiftly pragmatic considerations of power trumped the ideological proclivities of these revolutionaries. But the CUP underestimated the weakness of its hand. Neither Britain nor Germany saw the value of extending guarantees to an economically unstable, militarily weak empire riven by Christian separatist forces. Moreover, the Ottoman offer of support for Germany in a future European war, in exchange for a guarantee of territorial integrity,<sup>26</sup> could scarcely be reconciled with the long-standing ambitions of the two key German allies, Italy and Austria-Hungary, to annex Ottoman territories in the Balkans and North Africa. As for Great Britain, its strategic decision to base the defense of the Near East on Egypt made the Ottoman Empire a nuisance at best. At the same time, the British aim of preserving and, if possible, expanding its foothold on the Arabian Peninsula did not sit well with recognition of Ottoman territorial inviolability. The inevitable rejection, particularly by the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, surprised and

<sup>25</sup> See Ahmed Rıza's letters to Edward VII and Wilhelm II in PRO/FO. 371/545, file 28993 and Abschrift zu A. 13323, Nachlaß Fürsten von Bülow, Bundesarchiv (Berlin), nr. 82.

<sup>26</sup> Lancken to Bülow, Paris, August 18, 1908 (A.13323), *ibid.*

humiliated the proud leaders of the CUP, who had imagined themselves rulers of the “Japan of the Near East.”<sup>27</sup>

The attempts to reach out to these European powers did not mean that Ottoman anti-imperialism, one of the key ideological tenets of the revolution, was dead. Indeed, following the revolution, ideology joined fresh perceptions of the national interest to reinforce the CUP's resolve to resist the accelerating fragmentation of the empire. In particular, the CUP consistently opposed European settlements based on carving out autonomous regions from the narrowing fringes of the empire. When the Bulgarian Principality declared its independence and Austria-Hungary announced the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina only seventy-four days after the revolution, frustration in the ranks of the CUP knew no bounds. However, the anti-imperialist outlook of the CUP was swiftly tempered by recognition of the constraints imposed on the conduct of Ottoman policy by the reality of European supremacy. Like Abdülhamid II, the CUP leaders typically stood up to foreign pressure until further resistance became futile; they then strove to reach the best possible accommodation.

Yet at the outset, the CUP had exhibited a predilection for fighting against insuperable odds rather than accepting a European diktat that left a region only nominally under Ottoman sovereignty. Such was the case in Tripoli. In 1911, the Ottoman government turned a deaf ear to Italian offers of minor privileges in Tripoli of Barbary in return for recognition of the Italian administration.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, between September 1911 and October 1912, the Ottomans fought a forlorn war against the Italians in Tripoli and Cyrenaica.

Tripoli of Barbary and Cyrenaica, which formed the Ottoman Province of Tripoli, were among the most underdeveloped regions of the empire. But as the last African territories still ruled from Istanbul, they possessed a sentimental value that far outweighed their strategic significance. Italy's long-standing designs on Tripoli stemmed from two motives: the wish to compete in Africa with France, which had established a protectorate over Tunis in 1881, and the need to compensate for the ignominious defeat at the hands of Menilek II of Ethiopia in 1896. Over the course of almost two decades, the Italians managed to persuade one after another of the Great Powers of Europe to acquiesce in this disturbance of the balance of power. Once they had obtained agreement from all their Great Power partners by 1909, the issue was reduced to one of timing. The CUP's acerbic anti-imperialist rhetoric and resolute defensive measures—for example, a ban on land purchases by

<sup>27</sup> Grey to Lowther, November 13, 1908 (private), PRO/F.O. 800/79.

<sup>28</sup> Mahmud Muhtar, *Maziye Bir Nazar: Berlin Mü'ahedesi'nden Harb-i Umumi'ye Kadar Avrupa ve Türkiye Münasebâtı* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsi, 1341 [1925]), pp. 118ff.

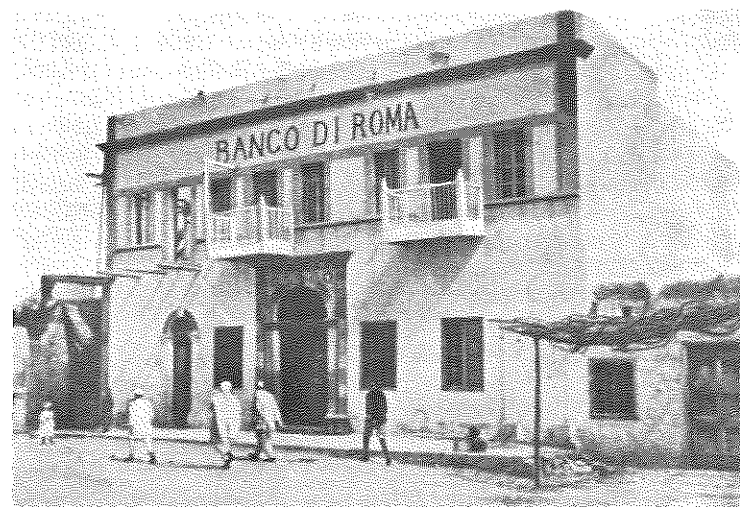


FIGURE 21. The Banco di Roma branch in Tripoli of Barbary (ca. 1909). *Resimli Kitap* 7/42 (July 1912), p. 433.

Banco di Roma in the province of Tripoli—provided ample excuses for the Italian government. On September 28, 1911, it issued a twenty-four-hour ultimatum to the Ottoman government. Announcing imminent invasion of the province and demanding Ottoman nonintervention, the ultimatum was clearly meant to be rejected.<sup>29</sup> The surprisingly conciliatory response from the Ottomans, which provided assurances for Italian “economic expansion of interests in Tripoli and Cyrenaica,” was to no avail, as the decision to invade had already been made.<sup>30</sup>

The defense of distant Tripoli proved no easy matter for the Ottomans, whose performance was closely monitored by the restless new powers of the Balkans. Their principal problem was one of supply and reinforcement. North Africa could be reached by sea across the Mediterranean or by land via Syria and Egypt; the superior Italian navy blocked the first route, while the British in Egypt impeded the second. Incredibly, the small local garrison and an Ottoman-trained militia led by Ottoman officers smuggled into the region (including the military hero of the 1908 Revolution, Enver Bey) managed to put up an effective resistance, compelling the Italians to confine their operations to the coastal strip under naval cover. To break the military

<sup>29</sup> “Ultimatum from Italy to Turkey Regarding Tripoli,” *American Journal of International Law* 6/1 (January 1912), pp. 11–12.

<sup>30</sup> “The Turkish Reply to Italian Ultimatum Regarding Tripoli,” *ibid.*, pp. 12–14.

stalemate, the Italians opted to expand the war and put military pressure on Ottoman possessions elsewhere, occupying Rhodes and other islands of the Dodecanese, bombarding Ottoman towns on the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts (such as Beirut and al-Qunfudha), and increasing military aid to Muḥammad 'Alī al-Idrīsī, a local challenger to Ottoman authority who had established a small Sūfī state in parts of the subprovince of 'Asīr. But the Ottomans held firm, yielding little ground in the Ottoman-Italian talks at Ouchy in Switzerland in August and September 1912.

The sudden emergence of a new threat in the Balkans dramatically altered Ottoman calculations. The danger of a two-front war compelled Ottoman negotiators to liquidate the lesser conflict and come to terms with the Italians. A final agreement was concluded on October 18, the very day major hostilities began in the Balkans. The settlement squeezed out of the Italians allowed the Ottoman side to save face and maintain the pretense of continued sovereignty. The Ottoman sultan appointed a viceroy and a qāḍī to enforce the sharī'a and announced the grant of extensive autonomy to Tripoli of Barbary and Cyrenaica.<sup>31</sup> But in reality, Tripoli became an Italian colony. The last of the Ottoman lands in Africa was lost.

The Italo-Ottoman war exposed the difficulty of defending the empire's long coastlines. That even a second-tier European power could occupy Ottoman islands, bombard coastal towns, and dispatch troops all around the Mediterranean and Red Sea at will pointed to a mortal weakness. One possible remedy was to build a modern navy; but to construct a fleet almost from scratch was a time-consuming and vastly expensive undertaking. Thus, Ottoman ruling circles concluded once again that it was absolutely vital to secure the protection of a Great Power, preferably one with a strong navy. The lessons learned in North Africa were reinforced by the course of events in the Balkans.

A Balkan alliance against the Ottoman Empire was one of the least expected developments of the early twentieth century. The mutual hostility of Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks and the irreconcilability of their aspirations in Ottoman Macedonia made a tripartite alliance all but inconceivable. Abdülhamid II had attempted to form a Balkan League with Greece, Serbia, and Rumania to check the rise of Bulgaria, which, thanks to extensive military reform, was on the road to becoming a major regional power. Serbian leaders, sensing the turning of the tide, frustrated Abdülhamid II's early plans and formed an alliance with Bulgaria in 1904. The CUP leaders continued the sultan's efforts when, in 1908, they attempted to exploit the crisis over the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina to entice Serbia back into an alliance with Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire against Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary, but without success.

<sup>31</sup> See *Düstūr*, II/4 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1331 [1913]), pp. 690–91.

Meanwhile, Russia's growing involvement in the Balkans, stoked by rising fear of Germany, almost produced a broad Balkan alliance with Ottoman participation. But Balkan hostility toward the Ottoman Empire was such that this was not possible. Moreover, with the Ottomans embroiled in a hopeless attempt to ward off the Italians in North Africa, the Balkan states sensed weakness and decided to make the most of it. The negotiations sponsored by the Russians produced the worst possible result from the Ottoman perspective: a Serbo-Bulgarian accord, reached in March–April 1912. Then, in May 1912, Greece and Bulgaria, the two archrivals in the struggle for Macedonia, concluded an alliance, and the circle of hostility was complete. Subsequent Serbo-Montenegrin, Greco-Montenegrin, and Bulgarian-Montenegrin understandings rounded off the preparations for an assault on the remaining European domains of the Ottoman Empire with a view to their final partition.<sup>32</sup>

It was clear from the start that this alliance of rivals would not last. Accordingly, pressure mounted for an immediate opening of hostilities. Seizing on the pretext of the Ottoman failure to comply with the 23rd article of the Berlin Congress of 1878, which called for Macedonian reform, the Balkan allies rushed toward war. The Ottoman government, caught unprepared and fearful of another military disaster, adopted a conciliatory attitude and promised reforms. But this merely worsened its position at home—where it was already under pressure from the CUP in opposition—and did nothing to propitiate its Balkan predators. Great Power warnings against modifications to the status quo failed to prevent the allies from launching hostilities. Montenegro took the lead on October 8, followed by the three larger Balkan states on October 18, 1912.

In the ensuing war, the Balkan allies inflicted the most humiliating defeats on the Ottoman armies. Within weeks, all of European Turkey was lost, with the exception of three besieged fortress cities, Scutari in Albania, Janina, and Edirne; and the victorious Bulgarians were on the march against the final Ottoman defense line at Çatalca, a mere thirty-seven miles from Istanbul. Ottoman appeals for Great Power intervention proved unavailing. From the European perspective, the situation had the dangerous potential for a Russo-Austrian conflagration, which could easily set the entire continent ablaze. The Great Powers, accordingly, focused on forcing a cease-fire and convening a conference to discuss the future of the Balkans.

The armistice of December 3 paved the way for two parallel conferences in London. At the first, Ottoman and Balkan delegates met to discuss the future of European Turkey and the Northern Aegean islands. At the second,

<sup>32</sup> E[rnst] Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912–1913* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp. 87–9.



FIGURE 22. Partition of the European provinces of the empire after the Balkan Wars of 1912–13.

the ambassadors of the Great Powers debated a general settlement in the Balkans. The first set of negotiations broke down on January 6, 1913. The second resulted in a note to the Ottoman government, warning it to sign a peace treaty or face the consequences alone. All the while, Edirne, a city that had served as the capital of the empire before the conquest of Constantinople, remained under siege. The CUP took advantage of the situation to carry out its coup and return to power under the banner "Free Edirne!" In February, hostilities resumed but Ottoman efforts to relieve the siege of Edirne failed, and the city fell on March 26, 1913. Defeated on the battlefield, the CUP-led government had no choice but to sue for peace. The Treaty of London of May 30, 1913 heralded the end of the Ottoman presence in Europe. It also signaled the beginning of a major conflict between the Balkan allies over the division of the spoils.

The Bulgarian surprise attack on its erstwhile allies on June 29/30 backfired, as Greece, Rumania, and Serbia declared war on Bulgaria and scored decisive victories in the battles that ensued. It also provided the Ottomans with the opportunity to recover some of their losses. Defying the warnings of the Great Powers, the Ottoman army marched on Edirne, recapturing the city on July 22. The Ottoman government signed peace treaties with Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia in September 1913, November 1913, and March 1914, respectively. No peace treaty was concluded with Montenegro.

Many historians consider the Balkan Wars an essential link in the causal chain leading to the Great War. They were certainly a major disaster for the Ottomans. A defeat of this magnitude at the hands of former subjects was a very difficult pill to swallow. Reducing an empire of three continents to an Asiatic state, it shattered Ottoman pride and self-confidence. In addition to the humiliation, the Ottoman government had to deal with an immense financial drain resulting from the losses of territory and materiel, and the difficulty of resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring in from the lost regions. The renunciation of territories with large non-Turkish populations, and the ensuing atrocities against Muslims in those lands, dealt the Ottomanist ideal a shattering blow, giving the upper hand to the Turkists in the internal debate over the basis of loyalty in the empire. Inevitably, the loss of the European lands prompted an innovative view of the geographical character of the empire among the Ottoman ruling elite. For centuries, the empire had rested on two central pillars, Rumelia and Anatolia, between which nested the imperial capital. Suddenly, the Arab periphery became the only significant extension of the empire outside its new Anatolian heartland. Some influential thinkers went so far as to propose the removal of the capital from Istanbul to a major town in central Anatolia or northern Syria.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Tunaya, *İttihat ve Terakki*, pp. 480–83.





FIGURE 23. Muslim refugees from the Balkans in the capital (December 1912).  
*Resimli Kitab* 8/46 (December 1912–January 1913), p. 764.

Ottoman statesmen learned three principal lessons from the Balkan Wars. First, the wars underscored the fact that without a Great Power protector, the empire's days were numbered. The Ottoman-German alliance of the following year must be seen in this context. Second, the wars proved the futility of written assurances from the Great Powers as a group. Events made a mockery of the prewar European diplomatic note stating that the Great Powers would not tolerate any change in the status quo in the event of war.<sup>34</sup> Only a formal alliance based on mutual interest would do. Third, the wars demonstrated to the Ottomans that they had to do everything in their power to eliminate major sources of confrontation with the Great Powers of Europe, and come to terms with their foremost domestic rivals on the periphery, if they were to avoid further war and foreign intervention.

In 1911,<sup>35</sup> and again in 1913,<sup>36</sup> the Ottomans knocked on the door of the British Foreign Office, only to be rebuffed time and again by Sir Edward Grey.

<sup>34</sup> Poincaré à MM. les Ministres de France à Sofia, Belgrade, Athènes, Cettigné, October 7, 1912, *Documents diplomatiques: Les affaires balkaniques, 1912–1914*, 1 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1922), p. 99.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Heller, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> PRO/EO. 371/1263, file 48554 (October 31, 1911).

Thereafter, up until the outbreak of the Great War, they approached all possible powers begging for an alliance. Austria-Hungary rejected Ottoman appeals in February 1914; Russia in May 1914; and France in July 1914. The crisis brought on by the Sarajevo incident gave impetus to Ottoman efforts to secure an alliance that would both protect Ottoman territorial integrity and enable the empire to recover a portion of the territories recently lost to Greece and Bulgaria. The universal expectation of a short war combined with the perception of Ottoman military weakness to preclude a positive response in London, Paris, or St. Petersburg. Although the Germans maintained a military mission in Istanbul, they, too, proved lukewarm regarding the prospect of an alliance with the Ottoman Empire. Having refused similar Ottoman *démarches* in late 1912 and early 1913, Germany began to reassess its traditional response to Ottoman overtures only after the onset of the crisis of July 1914.<sup>37</sup> In the end, the kaiser, under pressure from his Austrian allies, prevailed on the German government to accept the Ottoman offer. After negotiations hastened by the approaching war, the Ottoman government finally concluded a treaty with Germany on August 2, 1914. The German-Ottoman alliance, which is often erroneously portrayed as the result of German pressure on the Ottoman Empire, must be regarded in this larger context. Ottoman entreaties, not German designs, formed the essential background to the German-Ottoman partnership in the Great War.

The second major diplomatic initiative undertaken by the Ottomans in the aftermath of the Tripolitan and Balkan debacles was a proactive attempt to reduce tensions in trouble spots that might prompt fresh rounds of armed conflict. One such area was eastern Anatolia. In February 1914, after protracted diplomatic negotiations, and under intense Russian pressure, the Ottoman government accepted a settlement providing for a pro-Armenian reform program, to be implemented by two European inspector-generals (Dutch East Indies administrator Louis Constant Westenenk and Norwegian officer Nicolas Hoff) in the six Eastern provinces.<sup>38</sup> Another area in which the CUP sought to preempt conflict was Arabia. The Anglo-Turkish conventions of 1913 and 1914 formalized the division of the Arabian Peninsula between the British and the Ottomans.<sup>39</sup> In return for Ottoman recognition of agreements signed between the British and local tribal leaders, whereby British protectorates were created *de jure* in southern and eastern Arabia,

<sup>37</sup> Mustafa Aksakal, "Defending the Nation: The German-Ottoman Alliance of 1914 and the Ottoman Decision for War," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University (2003), pp. 63ff.

<sup>38</sup> *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 38: Neue Gefahrenzonen im Orient, 1913–1914* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1926), pp. 1–189; and BOA-DH. KMS 2/2-5 [April 28, 1914].

<sup>39</sup> BOA-Muahedenname, 242/11; 242/14; 376/2; and 369/2.

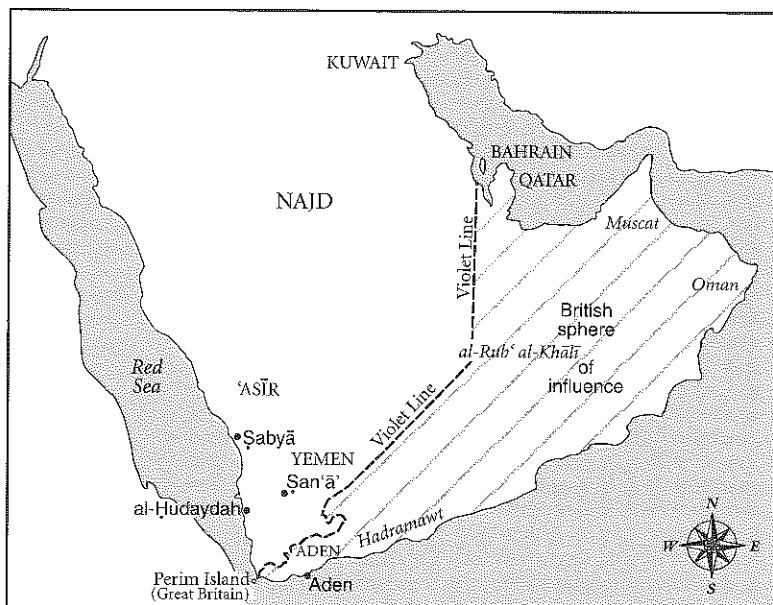


FIGURE 24. The violet line dividing the British and Ottoman spheres of influence according to the 1914 Anglo-Ottoman Convention.

the British recognized Najd, a vast area under the rule of 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, as Ottoman territory. The violet line separating the Ottoman and British spheres of influence represented a settlement beneficial to both parties. The British obtained international legitimacy for their holdings in the Peninsula, something they had sought for decades, while the Ottoman government forced a strong and rebellious leader to accept Ottoman sovereignty. The demarcation of a border in Arabia was part of a larger Ottoman-British effort to liquidate all outstanding disputes between the two governments, including rights of navigation on the Tigris and the Euphrates, and Ottoman customs duties.<sup>40</sup>

Caught between the Ottomans and the British, local rulers in Arabia were forced to come to terms with one or other dominant power. 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, for example, was left high and dry by the British accommodation with the Ottomans, and signed a contract with the Ottoman government in May 1914 making him the hereditary governor of Najd.<sup>41</sup> Imām Yahyā had already benefited from a similar arrangement, offered by

<sup>40</sup> BOA-A.AMD. MV 103/53.

<sup>41</sup> BOA-DH.SYS 25/103.

the Ottoman administration in 1911, which made him autonomous ruler of the mountainous, Zaydi-populated parts of the province of Yemen.<sup>42</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Iḍrisī of 'Asīr, who received aid from the Italians, rejected a similar Ottoman offer;<sup>43</sup> but, surrounded as he was by the then pro-Ottoman Sharif Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī in the Ḥijāz on the one hand, and by Imām Yahyā in the highlands of Yemen on the other, he did not pose a serious threat to Ottoman sovereignty.

#### THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE GREAT WAR

By June 1914, when the sultan ratified the Anglo-Turkish convention,<sup>44</sup> it seemed that the Ottoman Empire had at last secured a breathing space—with no major domestic or international conflict on the horizon—in which to heal the wounds of the Tripolitan and Balkan wars, reorganize the military, and prepare for another round against the Balkan powers who had seized so much of the empire's territory. It was not to be.

The outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 did not automatically entail Ottoman participation, for the carefully worded treaty with Germany did not make Ottoman entry into the war a definite obligation. Accordingly, on August 3, the Ottoman government merely declared armed neutrality and initiated a full military mobilization. The Ottomans aimed to mobilize within the thirty-nine days scheduled for the execution of the first phase of the Schlieffen plan against France, so that the Ottoman army would be ready to lend a helping hand to the Germans when they turned eastward against Russia. But as soon as the Germans ran into difficulties on the Western front, they began to apply heavy pressure on the Ottomans to enter the war, open up new fronts against Russia and Great Britain, and declare a global *jihād* against the Allies. The Ottomans, however, were disinclined to move until the mobilization process was complete, German success in the West was certain, and an overland route of communication with the Central Powers (through Rumania and Bulgaria) was open.

Ottoman neutrality became more precarious with time, particularly after the cabinet authorized the passage of two German men-of-war, the Panzerkreuzer *Goeben* and the Kleiner Kreuzer *Breslau*, into Ottoman territorial waters on August 5. The cruisers, originally requested by Enver Pasha, Ottoman minister of war and leader of the pro-German faction within the CUP, had been pursued by the entire British Mediterranean fleet to the mouth of the Dardanelles. But now the Ottomans threatened either to take

<sup>42</sup> BOA-A.DVN.NMH 371/1.

<sup>43</sup> BOA-MV 174/no. 928 [1913]; BOA-BEO/ file 309254 [December 15, 1913]; 333431 [December 23, 1916].

<sup>44</sup> BOA-Muahede ve Mukavelenâme, 369/2 (1914).

over the ships by force or to leave them to British mercy. The Germans, caught between Scylla and Charybdis, chose the lesser evil. To preserve the two cruisers, they granted the Ottoman government six valuable concessions, including incorporation of the ships into the Ottoman navy, support for the abrogation of the capitulations, a commitment not to conclude peace until all Ottoman territory that might be occupied in the current war had been liberated, and the guarantee of any territorial gains achieved by the Ottomans in the course of the war.<sup>45</sup> On August 10, the two cruisers entered the Sea of Marmara. The next day, their fictitious purchase by the Ottoman government was announced. The German crews, donning fezzes and flying Ottoman colors, surrendered the newly named Yavuz Sultan Selim and Midilli to nominal Ottoman control. The Entente Powers opted to accept this bold *fait accompli* rather than declare war.

The *Goeben* and *Breslau* episode brought the Ottoman Empire tangible political benefits, and added to its obsolete navy two powerful men-of-war (worth 50 million German Marks, an amount twice the entire annual budget of the Ottoman Ministry of the Navy). But it also lost the empire any semblance of freedom of action. The acquisition of the cruisers considerably strengthened the German military mission in the capital and the hand of the pro-German faction within the government and CUP. The two men-of-war were the very vessels that spearheaded the surprise attack on Russia carried out by the German Admiral Wilhelm Souchon on October 29, 1914 despite the opposition of several key figures in the CUP. There was no turning back.

The expectations of the Ottoman leaders from the war were fourfold. First, they hoped to secure a more advantageous treaty of alliance from Germany, one that would provide them with protection against both European and Balkan powers. The renewable, five-year German-Ottoman defensive alliance of January 11, 1915 addressed this need, providing for German protection against an attack by Russia, France, or Great Britain, as well as “a coalition composed of at least two Balkan states.”<sup>46</sup> At the time, this seemed like a major diplomatic success for the Ottomans, though of course the eventual defeat of Germany was to expose it as a major strategic blunder.

The second expectation from the war was that full Ottoman control would be reestablished over the various autonomous regions of the empire. The Ottoman abolition of the self-governing status of Mount Lebanon in July 1915 provided a hint as to what lay in store for many such regions in the event of victory. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry conducted extensive

<sup>45</sup> Aksakal, “Defending the Nation,” pp. 117–18.

<sup>46</sup> *Recueil des traités, conventions, protocoles, arrangements et déclarations signés entre l'Empire ottoman et les Puissances étrangères, 1903–1922, 1 (1903–1916)*, ed. Sinan Kuncerlap (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), p. 314.

preparatory work on the history and legal circumstances of autonomous regions such as Kuwait, Qatar, Najd, Bahrein, and even Hadramawt and Oman, in anticipation of the extension of Ottoman central control over these areas. The disappearance of the British from the Arabian Peninsula, it was assumed, would make possible the fulfillment of the age-old Ottoman aspiration for full sovereignty while at the same time satisfying German strategic interests. The reestablishment of central control over Egypt and the Sudan was deemed unrealistic (the ambassadors who were commissioned to prepare a memorandum on this subject commented that Egypt and the Sudan could legally be restored to the empire, but that in the light of “almost one century of autonomous rule,” it would be preferable to maintain their current status);<sup>47</sup> but their attachment to the empire might be strengthened. Algeria and Tunis could also be drawn closer to the center. As for the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, either they would return to full Ottoman control, or the status quo that had existed between 1856 and 1871—providing for the neutralization of the Black Sea—would be restored.<sup>48</sup> Of course, none of this came to pass.

The third set of Ottoman expectations in 1914 related to the opportunity for territorial gains in the war. If Greece entered the war on the Allied side, the Ottomans hoped that the northern Aegean islands occupied during the First Balkan War could be recovered for the empire. They had similar designs on Cyprus, which had been administered by the British since 1878. The Italian entry into the war in 1915 raised additional hopes for the restoration of Tripoly of Barbary, Cyrenaica, and the Dodecanese, which had been either acquired or occupied by Italy in 1912. On the eastern front, the Ottomans sought the restoration of three Anatolian provinces lost to Russia in 1878, as well as expansion into the Caucasus. Tellingly, one of the Ottoman conditions for allowing the German cruisers into the Dardanelles was that “Germany must secure a small border change in Eastern Anatolia that would allow for direct contact with the Muslims of Russia.”<sup>49</sup> It seems plausible that the CUP leaders were thinking in terms of laying the groundwork for a “Great Turanian Empire” linking the Caucasus to Central Asia by means of direct Ottoman control or a chain of dependent states (like the Northern Caucasus Republic, declared upon the Ottoman conquest of Derbent in October 1918).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Rauf Ahmed and Ragıp Raif, *Mısır Mes'alesi* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1918]), pp. 177–9.

<sup>48</sup> Rauf Ahmed and Ragıp Raif, *Boğazlar Mes'alesi* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1334 [1918]), pp. 42–4.

<sup>49</sup> Aksakal, “Defending the Nation,” p. 118.

<sup>50</sup> Nâsır Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusu'nun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekâtı: Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması, 1918* (Ankara: Genelkurmay ATASE Yayınları, 1996), pp. 127–8 and 147.

The final hope harbored by the Ottoman leadership at the outset of the war was that it would provide the opportunity to break the humiliating shackles of the foreign capitulations once and for all. They assumed that the removal of economic and legal constraints would free the empire to establish state monopolies on materials such as petroleum and sugar and fix customs tariffs at will, thereby marshalling the resources required to launch an ambitious program of economic development that would foster the growth of an Ottoman industrial sector capable of holding its own against European competition.<sup>51</sup> Of all their hopes and expectations, this was the only one that was to be fulfilled to any appreciable degree, although economic ruin and imperial collapse removed many of the potential benefits associated with the end of the capitulations.

In the war that ensued, Ottoman military performance wholly surpassed the expectations of European experts. Ottoman armies fought effectively on multiple fronts—in the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, and Palestine—in addition to fending off a major onslaught on their capital through the Dardanelles. At the request of the German High Command, the Ottoman IVth Army also launched two somewhat quixotic offensives against the Suez Canal in 1915 and 1916; both ended in utter failure.<sup>52</sup> Minor operations were carried out in 'Asir, the Yemen, Tripoli of Barbary and Cyrenaica, and Iran. The Ottomans also provided valuable help to the war effort in the European theater, with Ottoman units serving on fronts in Galicia, Rumania, and Macedonia. By contrast, the Ottoman declaration of jihād on November 14, 1914 did not result in any significant rebellions by the millions of Muslim subjects under Allied rule. Although the steady attrition of British power seemed the most crucial contribution of the Ottoman war effort at the time, its most radical impact on world history was in Russia. The unexpected Ottoman victory at the Dardanelles paved the way for the success of the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent collapse of the Eastern Front in 1917, as Russia bled to death for lack of the material support that its allies could have supplied through the Straits and the Black Sea. Over the course of the war, Great Britain deployed 2,550,000 troops on the Ottoman fronts, constituting 32 percent of the total number of British troops in the field; at one point, the British had 880,300 men fighting the Ottomans, or 24 percent of the British armed forces. The Russians initially mobilized 160,000 troops on the Caucasian front. By September 1916, they had 702,000 troops facing the Ottomans in Anatolia and Iran, out of a total force of 3.7 million. Additionally, 50,000 French troops fought the Ottomans, mainly at the Dardanelles. The Italians dispatched an expeditionary force of 70,000 soldiers

<sup>51</sup> Mehmed Nâbi and Rumbeyoğlu Fahreddin, *Gümriük Resmî'nin Yüzde On Beşe İblâğı, Ecnebi Postaları ve Kapitülasyon* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1917]), p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> [Friedrich] Krefß von Kressenstein, *Mit den Türken zum Suezkanal* (Berlin: Otto Schlegel, 1938), pp. 85ff.

to quell a rebellion of the local militia in Tripoli and Cyrenaica aided by the Ottoman government. Total Allied casualties on the Ottoman fronts amounted to a massive 650,000.<sup>53</sup> In short, the Ottoman war effort imposed on the Allied powers a substantial diversion of troops that could otherwise have been used on the major European fronts.

The cost of this achievement was nonetheless immense. Ottoman losses on all fronts wreaked havoc throughout the empire. During the Great War, the empire put 2,608,000 men in uniform.<sup>54</sup> Approximately 15 percent of the entire population, or almost one out of two adult males outside the civil service, was called to arms. By 1918, Ottoman casualties had reached the appalling figure of 725,000 (325,000 dead and 400,000 wounded). In addition, the Allies (mainly Great Britain and Russia) took 202,000 Ottoman prisoners of war on various fronts. More than a million deserters, constituting almost half of the total number of draftees, wreaked social havoc throughout the empire, especially in rural areas. On the day the Mudros armistice was signed, out of 2,608,000 men put into uniform, only 323,000 were still at their posts.<sup>55</sup> Of those who remained, a majority were noncombatants or fresh recruits not ready for combat. As early as 1916, draft regulations were stretched to the extent that the age of soldiers in the infantry regiments varied between sixteen and fifty. By 1918, almost all Ottoman divisions existed on paper only.<sup>56</sup>

The war was also devastating from an economic perspective. The government spent an estimated total of Lt 389.5 million (equivalent to 9.09 billion gold French francs)<sup>57</sup> on expenses related to the war effort—or an average of Lt 97 million (2.3 billion gold French francs) per year. Given that the Ottoman budget for the fiscal year 1914 was Lt 34 million (or 1.5 billion gold French francs), out of which 44 percent went to the Public Debt Administration,<sup>58</sup> the total additional burden of expenditure imposed by the war amounted to ten times the net annual budget after debt repayments.

<sup>53</sup> M[aurice] Larcher, *La guerre turque dans la guerre mondiale* (Paris: E. Chiron, 1926), pp. 617–34.

<sup>54</sup> This figure does not include 32,000 commissioned officers of different ranks, the Shammar Bedouin of Hâ'il, the Zaydi militia in the Yemeni Highlands and 'Asir, the Kurdish tribal regiments, the irregular units set up by the Special Organization, 1,400 German naval personnel, 7,500 German soldiers including those in the Deutsche Asien-Korps and in the Sonderkommando detachment, and 650 German officers, medical personnel, and officials of the Military Mission.

<sup>55</sup> Cemalettin Taşkıran, *Ana Ben Ömedim: Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türk Esirleri* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001), pp. 47–8.

<sup>56</sup> [Otto] Liman von Sanders, *Fünf Jahre Türkei* (Berlin: August Scherl, 1920), pp. 155–6.

<sup>57</sup> By comparison, Great Britain spent 235.7 billion gold French francs, Germany 243.1 billion, Belgium 5.9 billion, Bulgaria 3.6 billion, and Serbia 3.2 billion. See Larcher, *La guerre turque*, p. 636.

<sup>58</sup> *Düstûr*, II/6 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1916]), p. 1081.

To this extraordinary level of expenditure, once must add catastrophic losses in revenues. The strain of wartime finances was clearly staggering.

The Russian collapse on the eastern Anatolian front in the upheaval brought about by the Bolshevik Revolution prolonged Ottoman hopes of ultimate victory. But the ambitious Ottoman thrust into the Caucasus in the summer and fall of 1918, following the formal withdrawal of Russia from the war under the terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of March 1918, proved unsustainable. As the Anatolian heartland came under threat from British advances in the Near East, as the German offensives in Western Europe failed, and as a major Allied attack resulted in the collapse of the entire Bulgarian front, it became clear that the empire could no longer depend on its Great Power ally. The combined impact of these developments resulted in the Ottoman capitulation to the Allies at Mudros on October 30, 1918. The surrender of the Ottoman government and the subsequent flight of the leading members of the CUP meant the end of the Second Constitutional Period and, more broadly, the Ottoman period as a whole.

One of the most tragic events of the war was the deportation of much of the Armenian population of Anatolia. Faced with the prospect of total collapse on the Ottoman eastern front early in the war the government apparently decided to deport all Armenians of the Armenian Apostolic Church living in and around the Ottoman-Russian war zone, on the grounds that the Armenian revolutionary committees were rebelling against the Ottoman Empire and providing crucial assistance to the advancing Russian armies.<sup>59</sup> However, the finer details of this decision were abandoned in practice with the result that almost all Armenian populations affiliated with the Apostolic Church were deported, with the exception of those residing in Istanbul, İzmir, certain smaller cities such as Kütahya, and some Arab provinces. In addition, the government deported scores of leading members of the Armenian elite of the capital and other major cities, including numerous intellectuals and professionals, on the grounds that they were clandestinely serving the rebellious Armenian committees.<sup>60</sup> Many prominent politicians, including various Armenian members of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, later shared the same fate. The deportation of the Armenians (mainly to Dayr al-Zawr in Syria) was carried out with large-scale violence and under conditions of extreme weather and hunger, leading to massive loss of life. It effectively ended Armenian existence in much of Anatolia.

<sup>59</sup>See the temporary law "Vakt-i Seferde İcraat-ı Hükûmete Karşı Gelenler İçün Cihet-i Askeriyece İttihaz Olunacak Tedâbir Hakkında Kanun-i Muvakkat," *Takvim-i Vekayi*, May 19, 1331 [June 1, 1915]. Deportations in fact began before this temporary law was issued.

<sup>60</sup>Minister of the Interior Talât Bey's coded telegram dated April 11, 1331 [April 24, 1915], BOA-DH.EUM, 52/96-98.

#### INTELLECTUAL LIFE UNDER THE CUP

The post-revolutionary period witnessed the most far-ranging intellectual debate in late Ottoman history. During the early days of relative freedom under the CUP, pundits of all ideological hues—ranging from Islamic modernism to socialism—vied for attention in the public sphere. Intellectual life in the Ottoman capital, which under the old regime had lost its preeminence to Cairo and Beirut, once again flourished after the revolution. Other cities, such as Salonica, Damascus, and Baghdad, also witnessed a revitalization of intellectual life.

Nationalist literary movements dominated Turkish, Albanian, Arab, Armenian, and Greek intellectual circles. One such group, the Young Pens (Genc Kalemler), advocated literature that reflected social realities, focused on national problems, and employed simple language; this became the most popular approach to literature during this period. Similar approaches predominated in the nationalist literary journals of other Ottoman communities, such as the Armenian journals *Mehean* and *Nawasard* (Istanbul), the Albanian journal *Koha* (Korçë), the clandestinely circulated Arab journal *Lisân al-'Arab/al-Muntadâ al-'Arabi* (Istanbul), and the literary sections of the Kurdish journals *Rôj-i Kurd* and *Hetav-i Kurd* (Istanbul).

Publications devoted to the concerns of women also proliferated throughout the empire during this period. During the Tanzimat, women's publications, such as the supplement to the journal *Terakki*, launched in 1869, centered on the narrow concerns of the Westernized elite. During the Hamidian era, the palace-sponsored *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (Ladies' Gazette), in accordance with the innovative emphases of Ottomanism, promoted a new idealized image of a Muslim mother and wife, who shopped at Muslim stores and raised obedient, pious children. The new post-revolutionary women's press, by contrast, gave vent to more liberal voices, and discussed a much broader range of issues, including sensitive ones like feminism, universal suffrage, and gender discrimination.<sup>61</sup>

Women's organizations multiplied as well. Principal among them was the Society for the Defense of Women's Rights. In 1913, its leader, Belkıs Şevket, a staunch defender of gender equality in all aspects of life, flew aboard a chartered military plane on behalf of Ottoman and Muslim women to demonstrate to her female compatriots that they need not be excluded from any human activity. Belkıs Şevket struck a defiant pose, insisting that "Oriental women will not accept a position that falls behind that of their Western sisters."<sup>62</sup> Although participation in women's movements was significantly

<sup>61</sup>Serpil Çakar, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994), pp. 120ff.

<sup>62</sup>Belkıs Şevket, "Tayarân Ederken," *Nevsâl-ı Millî: 1330*, ed. T. Z. (Istanbul: Artin Asadoryan, 1330 [1914]), pp. 438-40.



FIGURE 25. Belkıs Şevket, a leading Ottoman feminist, aboard an Ottoman Bleriot XI/B with Captain Fethi Bey, before embarking on the first flight of a Muslim and Ottoman female (December 1, 1913). *Nevsâl-i Milli*, ed. T. Z. (Istanbul: Artin Asadoryan, 1330 [1914]), p. 450.

greater than in previous periods, it was still strictly an elite activity. As such, it cannot be compared to the scale of suffragette activity in the Western world. Though gender-based, the movement supported the larger Ottomanist cause, inviting women of different ethnic backgrounds and religious affiliations to participate; at the same time, it also benefited nationalist organizations, which came to dominate national women's clubs and organizations under the CUP.

Socialism never achieved the status of a mainstream movement in the Ottoman Empire. The socialist movement, popular among the Christian population of the empire, relied mainly on the support of a handful of intellectuals of Armenian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, or Serbian background. The Ottoman Socialist Party, established in 1910 to create a mainstream movement with the participation of Muslims, fell far short of making any impact on politics. Unique at the time in its attempt to reconcile Islam with socialism, the Ottoman Socialist Party did, however, set a precedent for modern Islamic socialist movements.<sup>63</sup>

The one ideological component of socialist dogma that did make its way into mainstream Ottoman thought was materialism. The Ottoman materialist movement, which had begun under the Tanzimat and gained momentum during the Hamidian regime, came into its own under the CUP. Full translations of Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff* now appeared<sup>64</sup> as well as many works on Darwinism.<sup>65</sup> The first major Ottoman philosophical journal, *Felsefe Mecmuası*, promoted German *Vulgärmaterialismus* with a strong bias toward Ernst Haeckel's Monism. Various journals linked materialism to Westernization (*Garbçılık*), portraying it as the driving force behind the material progress of the West. The most prominent of these, *İctihad*, also waged a war of ideas against Islam and ridiculed many Muslim practices.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Sharif Hüseyin of Mecca listed the attacks on Islam published in the pages of *İctihad* among the factors that prompted his revolt against the Ottomans in 1916.<sup>67</sup> More important, the Westernization agenda vigorously advocated by this journal provided a blueprint for the radical reforms later implemented by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the first president of the Turkish Republic.<sup>68</sup> Following the Balkan Wars, a major schism took place within the Ottoman Westernization movement. One faction combined support for cultural Westernization with vigorous opposition to Western imperialism,<sup>69</sup> while another advocated wholesale acceptance of Western civilization, "with its roses and its thorns."<sup>70</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar, 1908-1925*, 1 (Istanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1991), p. 33.

<sup>64</sup> Louis [Ludwig] Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 1-3, tr. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil (Istanbul: Teceddüd-i İlmî ve Felsefî Kütüphanesi, [1911]).

<sup>65</sup> Subhî Edhem, *Darwinizm* (Monastir: Beynel-mîlel Ticaret Matbaası, 1327 [1911]).

<sup>66</sup> Abdullah Cevdet, "Softalığa Dair," *İctihad*, no. 60 [April 17 1913], p. 1304.

<sup>67</sup> Sulaymân Musâ, *al-Hüseyin ibn 'Alî wa'l-thawra al-'Arabîya al-kubrâ* (Amman: Lajnat Târîkh al-Urdunn, 1992), p. 134.

<sup>68</sup> [Kılıçzâde Hakkı], "Pek Uyanık Bir Uyku," *İctihad*, no. 55 [March 6, 1913], pp. 1226-8; no. 57 [March 20, 1913], pp. 1261-4.

<sup>69</sup> Celâl Nuri, "Şime-i Husumet," *İctihad*, no. 88 [January 22, 1914], pp. 1949-51.

<sup>70</sup> Abdullah Cevdet, "Şime-i Muhabbet," *İctihad*, no. 89 [January 29, 1914], pp. 1979-84.

Islamist movements, which had suffered persecution at the hands of Abdülhamid II, enjoyed a period of relative growth and tranquility under the CUP. The most important of these was the one inspired by Muḥammad 'Abduh's ideas on the reconciliation of Islam with science and modernity. Supporters of 'Abduh strongly defended constitutionalism, but criticized Turkism on the grounds that "Islam does not allow nationalism."<sup>71</sup> They denounced the Westernizers (*Garbcılar*) for seeking to dupe Muslims into accepting a "new religion."<sup>72</sup> The ulema as a whole strove (without much success) to reclaim their former position in political and intellectual life. Initially, the religious establishment maintained cordial relations with the CUP, which for its part set up an ulema party branch to keep the mainstream religious figures under its control. But the relationship deteriorated over time, especially after the attempted counterrevolution of 1909, which the CUP abused to consolidate its hold on power and marginalize the ulema. As a substitute for public religion sanctioned by the ulema, the CUP pushed for the transformation of religion into a private affair; in 1909, for example, the government banned the hearing of private law cases by sharī'a courts in instances where a prior judgment from a civil court existed.<sup>73</sup> In 1917, it issued the "Temporary Family Law," a cautious but significant step toward the adoption of a civil law code. The statute granted a limited right of divorce to Muslim women by means of a liberal interpretation of Ḥanbalī law; and it limited the practice of polygamy by allowing women to stipulate monogamy as a condition in their marriage contracts.<sup>74</sup> This legislation was the product of proposals put forth by a group of intellectuals, labeled the Turkist-Islamists, who published the journal *İslâm Mecmuası* (Islamic Review). These thinkers advocated the construction of a modern Islam that limited itself to matters of private faith and rituals. They believed it could be construed by entrusting the *ulu'l-amr* (those vested with authority) with extensive legislative authority, broadening the basis and applicability of *'urf* (custom), and liberally interpreting traditional Islamic sources.<sup>75</sup> In this manner, Islamic practices that could not be reconciled with modernity, such as polygamy, would be eliminated.<sup>76</sup> Especially during the Great War, such theses found an attentive ear in the corridors of power, as the CUP supported the use of a modernist Islam to rally religion to the national cause and project

<sup>71</sup> Ahmed Na'im, *İslâm'da Da'va-yı Kavmiyyet* (Istanbul: Tevsi-i 'İbba'at Matbaası, 1332 [1914]), pp. 5ff.

<sup>72</sup> Ferid, "Tarih-i İstikbâl," *Sebil'ür-Reşad*, 11/283 [February 12, 1914], p. 358.

<sup>73</sup> *Düstür*, II/1 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1329 [1911]), pp. 192-4.

<sup>74</sup> *Düstür*, II/9 (Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası, 1928), pp. 762-81.

<sup>75</sup> Ziya Gökalp, "Dinin İctima'î Hizmetleri," *İslâm Mecmuası* 2/34 [August 26, 1915], pp. 741-3; no. 36 [September 23, 1915], pp. 772-6; no. 37 [October 7, 1915], pp. 791-6.

<sup>76</sup> See, for instance, Mansurizâde Sa'id, "İslâm Kadını: Ta'addü-i Zevcât İslâmiyyetde Men' Olunabilir," *İslâm Mecmuası* 1/8 [1914], pp. 233-8.

a "Religion for a Turk."<sup>77</sup> However, the mainstream ulema, as well as the more radical Islamists, rejected such views as unwelcome innovations.<sup>78</sup>

Despite these tensions, the regime's legitimacy deficit repeatedly forced the CUP to seek compromises with the liberal wing of the ulema whenever it felt challenged by conservatives, and, more generally, to fall back on the traditional legitimizing power of Islam. One example is the Islamization of the Ottoman Constitution following the counterrevolution.<sup>79</sup> An amendment to article 10 added "sharī'a" to a clause that originally read: "Except for the reasons and under the conditions prescribed by the law [*qānūn*], no one shall be arrested or punished on any pretext whatsoever." A similar alteration in article 118 of the constitution made fiqh a major source for new legislation. Analogous political calculations led the State Council in 1909 to recommend a wholesale ban on the import of alcoholic beverages to the province of Yemen (so as to avoid a backlash from "the local population, which is inclined toward conspiracy," ran the proposal).<sup>80</sup> Ironically, the implementation of this recommendation prompted an unforeseen backlash from Yemen's non-Muslims, whose right to drink alcohol—recognized by the "reactionary" Abdülhamid II—was thus inadvertently annulled. In general, the CUP tended to appeal to Islam when it was convenient to do so, as when bureaucrats explained the shutdown of socialist organizations on the grounds that their regulations violated the sharī'a (in addition to "fundamental principles").<sup>81</sup>

The Turkism that had flourished among Ottoman expatriates in Cairo, the capital cities of Europe, and other parts of the empire during the later years of Abdülhamid II went from strength to strength after the revolution. Once in power, the CUP everywhere backed Turkist organizations, such as the Turkish Hearths; and leading CUP members wrote for Turkist organs, such as *Genc Kalemler* and *Türk Yurdu*, thereby broadening their appeal. The Turkist attitude to Islam and Islamic reform was radically new. Epitomized by Ziya Gökalp's motto, "to become Turkish, Muslim, and modern," Turkism advocated reconciliation with both Islam and secularism.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Ziya Gökalp, "Türke Göre: Din," *İslâm Mecmuası* 2/22 [March 10, 1915], p. 552.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, "Fıkh ü Fetâvâ: Örfün Nazar-ı Şer'deki Mevki'i," *Sebil'ür-Reşad* 12/293 [April 23, 1914], pp. 129-32; and Ahmed Na'im, "Müdafa'at-ı Diniye," *Sebil'ür-Reşad* 11[12]/ 298 [May 28, 1914], pp. 216-21 and 12/300 [June 11, 1914], pp. 248-50.

<sup>79</sup> *Mu'addel Kanun-i Esasî ve İntihab-ı Meb'usan Kanunu*, ed. Tevfik Tarık (Istanbul: İkbâl Kütübhanesi, 1327 [1912]), pp. 3-11.

<sup>80</sup> BOA-ŞD, 2267/12 (1905-1909).

<sup>81</sup> See the draft memorandum to be sent by the ministry of the interior to the acting governor of Istanbul, [January 29, 1913]/no. 624, BOA-DH.İD., 126/44.

<sup>82</sup> Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslâmlaşmak, Mu'asırlaşmak* (Istanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1918), pp. 3ff.

But perhaps the most important effect of the surge in Turkist thought was the reconstruction of the official ideology of Ottomanism. Much as Abdülhamid II's reinterpretation of Ottomanism had stressed the solidarity of the empire's Muslim subjects, the CUP's new Ottomanism now allocated a dominant role to its Turks. And just as Abdülhamid II's emphasis on Islam transcended the boundaries of the empire, so too did the new emphasis on the Turkish race. Thus Ottomanism, which originally envisioned an egalitarian supranational identity that would supersede other religious or ethnic affiliations and bind the empire together, ended up as the ideological foundation for a society dominated by Turks—not unlike Arkadii Prigozhin's vision of a *narod-patron*, in which a multinational Soviet community was in fact to be run by Russians. "Turks who had lived an unconscious life under the Ottoman flag" were called upon to acquire a "national awareness" and, as the dominant nation of the state, to reinvigorate the empire. At the same time, they were asked to extend a helping hand both to Turks living under foreign rule and to Muslims in other parts of the world.<sup>83</sup>

Some Turkists took these notions one step further, advocating a Pan-Turkist union of Turkic peoples, most of whom were held to be chafing under Russian domination. The ideal future homeland of all Turks, "Turan," was, however, for the most part a fantasy entertained by a handful of intellectuals. In a poem on this theme composed in 1911, Ziya Gökalp wrote: "Neither Turkey nor Turkistan is a fatherland for the Turks / The fatherland is an enormous and eternal country: Turan."<sup>84</sup> Only during the war did it become fashionable to discuss the union of all Turks as a practical possibility to be realized on the ruins of the Russian Empire.

The intellectual ferment of the period found new modes of expression. Political demonstrations, workers' strikes, and economic boycotts directed at Western powers dotted the political landscape of this era. Debates such as that on Westernization raged on into the early months of the First World War, when the government finally put an end to freedom of speech, suspending *İctihad* and other controversial journals. As the war progressed, the administration placed increasing restrictions on political activities of all kinds, limiting demonstrations, outlawing political organizations, and manipulating anti-Western sentiments for its own purposes.

### THE ECONOMY

The militant prerevolutionary rhetoric of the Turkist faction of the CUP gave no indication what economic policy could be expected after the revolution.

<sup>83</sup> Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fu'ad, "Türklük, İslâmlık, Osmanlılık," *Türk Yurdu* 4 (1329 [1913]), p. 695.

<sup>84</sup> Tefvik Sedad [Ziya Gökalp], "Turan," *Genc Kalemler*, no. 6 [March 1911], p. 167.

Talk of declaring an economic boycott against the treacherous Armenians,<sup>85</sup> of shunning the Public Debt Administration as an *imperium in imperio*,<sup>86</sup> of resisting aggressive European capitalists and exploiters who "go wild when they see money"<sup>87</sup> died down quickly as revolutionary extremism gave way to more realistic attitudes following the assumption of power by the CUP. Although early CUP decisions revealed a certain tendency to support domestic production, such as viticulture on the Aegean coast, against foreign companies,<sup>88</sup> fears of an immediate shift to extreme étatism favoring Muslims and Turks proved unfounded. Instead, the CUP surprised everyone by adopting a liberal policy conceived by one of its leading members, Mehmed Cavid, a scholarly champion of liberalism.<sup>89</sup> Between 1908 and 1913, the number of Ottoman joint stock companies established with foreign capital (and usually in partnership with European or non-Muslim Ottoman entrepreneurs) actually increased.<sup>90</sup> Still, economic liberalism clearly contradicted the Weltanschauung of the CUP; as such, it represented merely a temporary compromise with reality.

The surge of anti-Western sentiments under the impact of the Balkan Wars helped the CUP leaders readjust their economic policy and shift to a new agenda more in line with their beliefs. The new policy, labeled "National Economics," was a blend of corporatism, protectionism, and strict state control over the economy. It had its intellectual roots in the thinking of Friedrich List and the German Historical School. The coming of war facilitated the adoption of such measures, and the 1916 General Congress of the CUP heralded the full adoption of this platform as official policy. It was significant that Mehmed Cavid, who abhorred the German Historical School, stayed on to preside over the implementation of these new policies as the CUP's minister of finance or in other key positions within the financial establishment. Clearly, the Turkist and étatist party line overrode individual intellectual preferences.

The Ottoman government unilaterally abrogated the capitulations on September 11, 1914,<sup>91</sup> much to the dismay of its German ally. This act,

<sup>85</sup> Uluğ, "Ermeniler," *Türk*, no. 110 (December 21, 1905), p. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Ali Muzaffer, "Dünyân-i Umumiye-i Osmaniye Varidat-ı Muhassasa İdaresi yahud Hükümet İçinde Hükümet," *Kanun-i Esasî*, no. 39 [May 30, 1899], pp. 4ff.

<sup>87</sup> "Dinleyiniz!" *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, no. 119 (July 30, 1907), p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> See the CUP İzmir branch's memorandum to the Central Committee, June 15, 1325 [June 28, 1909]/no. 379, and the CUP special commission's report dated July 3, 1325 [July 16, 1909], Private Papers of Ahmed Rıza.

<sup>89</sup> Mehmed Cavid, *İlm-i İktisad*, 1 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1326 [1910]), p. 53.

<sup>90</sup> Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de "Millî İktisat" 1908-1918* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982), p. 86.

<sup>91</sup> The imperial decree issued on September 8, 1914 was set to go into effect on October 1, 1914. *Düstür*, II/6, p. 1273.



coupled with the virtually total economic isolation imposed by the war, produced a protectionist environment that favored domestic producers. The government further strengthened protectionism by increasing customs tariffs from 8 percent to 11 percent in October 1914,<sup>92</sup> and then raising them again to 30 percent in May 1915.<sup>93</sup> Despite these measures, however, conscription of almost half of the adult male population prompted a drastic decrease in domestic production in both the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors; because of the military monopoly over the use of the railways, the main means of transportation, only a small portion of production could be brought to major markets. At the same time, wartime conditions sharply limited the available export market. Moreover, severe shortages of everything imaginable emerged, leading to rampant black-marketeering and the formation of a new class of war profiteers. But these circumstances did permit the CUP to alter the balance of economic forces within the empire in favor of Muslims, and especially Turks. As the war wore on, the goal of creating of a national Muslim/Turkish bourgeoisie, at the expense of foreign capital, non-Muslims, and non-Turks, became official policy. The CUP helped Turkish entrepreneurs establish companies and banks with the word "national" in their titles. It supported the launching of a grander project to replace the Ottoman Bank with a national central bank. The new institution, named "Ottoman National Honor," was established in 1917,<sup>94</sup> but the collapse of the Ottoman war effort shattered hopes for its future. The CUP also created an array of other economic institutions in support of their policies, such as cooperatives for Muslim and Turkish manufacturers and societies of artisans. Such organizations supported the goal of "nationalizing the economy," while at the same time deepening organized political support for the CUP. The Temporary Law for the Encouragement of Industry, issued in 1913, sought to provide advantages to local entrepreneurs through the selective award of customs, tax, and land privileges, with the unstated aim of fostering the emergence of a Muslim bourgeoisie.<sup>95</sup> Until the full switch to "National Economics," the results of this legislation were meager; in 1915, Muslim entrepreneurs owned only 42 companies in the empire, as compared with 172 firms listed under non-Muslim ownership. In March 1915, the government amended the law to reinforce its unwritten agenda, restricting privileges to "Ottomans," which in practice meant Muslims, and to Ottoman joint stock companies.<sup>96</sup> As a consequence, by 1918 the picture had changed dramatically. A host of new

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1276–77.

<sup>93</sup> *Düstür*, II/7 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1336 [1918]), p. 610.

<sup>94</sup> *Düstür*, II/9 (Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası, 1928), pp. 42–3; 184–5.

<sup>95</sup> *Düstür*, II/6, pp. 108–14.

<sup>96</sup> *Düstür*, II/7, pp. 535–6.

companies and factories established by Muslims gave them the upper hand in the economy, though the defeat nullified this development.<sup>97</sup>

It is not easy to put together an accurate economic picture of the CUP era because of the unstable conditions arising from successive wars. The upheaval caused by the First World War was particularly disruptive. For example, price indices of basic consumption in the wartime economy rose a record 1,953 percent.<sup>98</sup> To meet the extraordinary expenses of war, the government first obtained German credits and sold domestic bonds. But eventually, to resolve the shortage of cash, the government had no choice but to print money. In order to do so, it had to reintroduce banknotes for the third time in Ottoman history. From 1915 to the end of the war, the Ottoman Bank issued seven series of notes, amounting to Lt 161 million (more than three times the value of the metal currency circulating in the Ottoman economy), underwritten for the most part by German treasury bonds. In 1916, in an attempt to stabilize the Ottoman currency, the government issued the Temporary Law of Standardization of Metal Coins, which established a full gold standard and sought to put an end to the varying exchange rates of coins in the different regions of the empire.<sup>99</sup> To underscore the serious intent behind these reforms, the government made failure to accept paper notes a crime.<sup>100</sup> However, on the street nobody took them at face value or respected the stipulated 1:1 ratio against gold. As a result, two parallel money markets emerged. Resistance to giving change in coins for payments in notes compelled the government to authorize the practice of cutting Lt 1 and Lt 5 bills into two and using them as Lt 0.50 and Lt 2.5 notes, respectively.<sup>101</sup> Eventually, it was forced to issue banknotes worth as little as 5 gurushes. For still smaller amounts, the government allowed the use of revenue stamps.<sup>102</sup> In some towns, governors took matters into their own hands, issuing paper notes in small denominations.<sup>103</sup> The failure of the attempt to control the exchange rate between paper and metal is evidenced in the following statistic: in May 1917, a paper bill worth Lt 1 circulated at the rates of 0.35, 0.30, 0.25, 0.10, and 0.08 metal gurushes in Istanbul, Konya, Aleppo, Mosul, and Baghdad, respectively.<sup>104</sup> The farther one got from the capital, the less paper money was worth; by 1918, it was almost worthless in many areas. Despite the dire economic conditions, the

<sup>97</sup> Toprak, *Millî İktisat*, pp. 191ff.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 333.

<sup>99</sup> *Düstür*, II/8 (Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası, 1928), pp. 892–4.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 674.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 677.

<sup>102</sup> *Düstür*, II/9, p. 183.

<sup>103</sup> Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Ekonomi ve Toplum, 1908–1950: İttihat-Terakki ve Devletçilik* (Istanbul: Yurt Yayınları, 1995), p. 24.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

sale of Ottoman treasury bonds, purchase of which was declared a patriotic duty, turned out to be a success, as the government sold Lt 18 million worth of bonds in the last year of the war.

#### THE COLLAPSE OF THE EMPIRE

Ottoman defeat entailed the final dissolution of the empire. But the process of dismemberment had begun several years before. On November 3, 1914, Great Britain recognized Kuwait as an independent state under British protection. Two days later, it officially annexed Cyprus. In December, it declared Egypt a protectorate. Although these acts signified no more than the formal termination of Ottoman suzerainties over territories that had long before slipped away from central control, they were a signal of more serious things to come. From 1914 onward, the Allies coordinated a series of plans for the partition of the Ottoman Empire, each of which was rapidly overtaken by wartime developments. The Constantinople agreements of 1915 between Great Britain, France, and Russia, which awarded the Ottoman Straits to Russia (on the condition that Istanbul remain a free port), became a dead letter following the Bolshevik Revolution. Other wartime sketches of the possible fault lines of partition were the Treaty of London (1915), the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916), and the Agreement of St. Jean de Maurienne (1917). Woodrow Wilson's famous Fourteen Points of 1918 set three principles of partition: sovereignty for the Turkish portion of the empire; security of life and an unmolested opportunity for autonomous development for the non-Turkish nationalities; and the permanent opening of the Dardanelles under international guarantees as a free passageway for the ships and commerce of all nations.<sup>105</sup> Such lofty principles appeared easily applicable on paper; in practice, however, their implementation was no simple matter. Anglo-French conflict over some of the grey areas in these various plans, compounded by the subsequent American disengagement from the area, constituted the primary external obstacles to the smooth partition of the empire. Among the other factors that complicated its division were British commitments to Arab leaders in the Hijāz, Najd, and 'Asir in 1915-16, separate reassurances given to Sharif Ḥusayn of Mecca in January 1918, promises made to seven other Arab leaders domiciled in Egypt in June 1918, the undertaking toward world Jewry embodied in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and the territorial demands of Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds, not to mention fierce Turkish nationalist resistance.

<sup>105</sup> [Woodrow Wilson], *Woodrow Wilson: The Essential Political Writings*, ed. Ronald J. Pestritto (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 259-64.

After the conclusion of the war, a new Near East arose from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, shaped and dominated by British and French power, but seething with underlying tensions of local origin. Recognizing the irretrievable loss of empire brought about by defeat in the Great War, Turkey's pragmatic leaders renounced all formal rights of empire outside of Anatolia, including all claims to Egypt, the Sudan, Libya, and Cyprus. Syria, the hotbed of Arab nationalist intellectual activity during the last years of the empire, came under French mandate in July 1920. Contrary to nationalist aspirations, some districts hitherto ruled from Damascus, as well as the northern parts of the Ottoman province of Beirut, were annexed to Mount Lebanon to form "Grand Liban," also under French mandate, in 1920. In 1921, over Turkey's strong objections, the British fused the province of Mosul with two other former Ottoman provinces, Baghdad and Basra, to form the mandate, and then state, of Iraq.<sup>106</sup> The British also controlled both banks of the Jordan River, the Holy Land destined to pose one of the most acute partition challenges in former Ottoman lands. In 1922, the British divided the Palestine Mandate into two artificial entities: on the East Bank, they created the Kingdom of Transjordan, which became the enduring refuge of the Hashemite family, driven out of Arabia by their rivals, the Saudis; and on the West Bank, they continued to administer the reduced mandate of Palestine, bitterly contested between Jews and Arabs ever since.

In the Arabian Peninsula, Imām Yahyā, who during the conflict had remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire, secured for himself an independent state in Yemen following the war. Another pro-Ottoman semi-independent leader, Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, amir of the House of Rashid in Ḥā'il, was assassinated in 1920, following which the Rashidī dominion was overrun by the Saudi ruler 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ūd. The latter then embarked on a bitter struggle for the domination of northern Arabia against his archrival, Sharif Ḥusayn; this ended in Saudi domination of the Hijāz by 1925, and the ouster of the Hashemite line from the Arabian Peninsula. The Idrīsī Ṣūfī state in 'Asir suffered a similar fate at Saudi hands in 1930. Other beneficiaries of British protection under the 1914 Anglo-Ottoman convention shed their remaining ties to the Ottoman state at various stages of the war.

In Anatolia, the Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha ferociously resisted partition of the Anatolian core of the empire. Their success in overturning the peace settlement breezily imposed by the Allies at the end of the Great War is an astonishing episode in world history, and one which has received far less attention than it deserves. The defiance of the Turkish nationalists signified the first major challenge to the new world order and served as a harbinger of things to come.

<sup>106</sup> Mosul was officially awarded to Iraq by the League of Nations in December 1925.

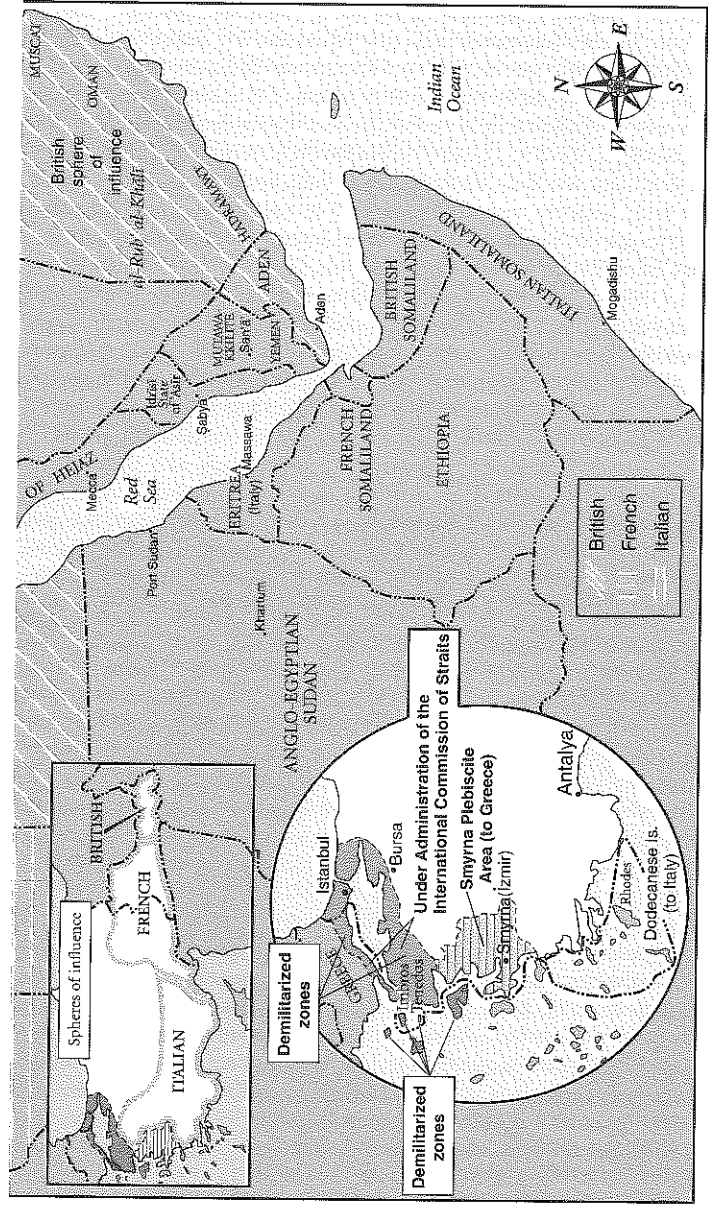
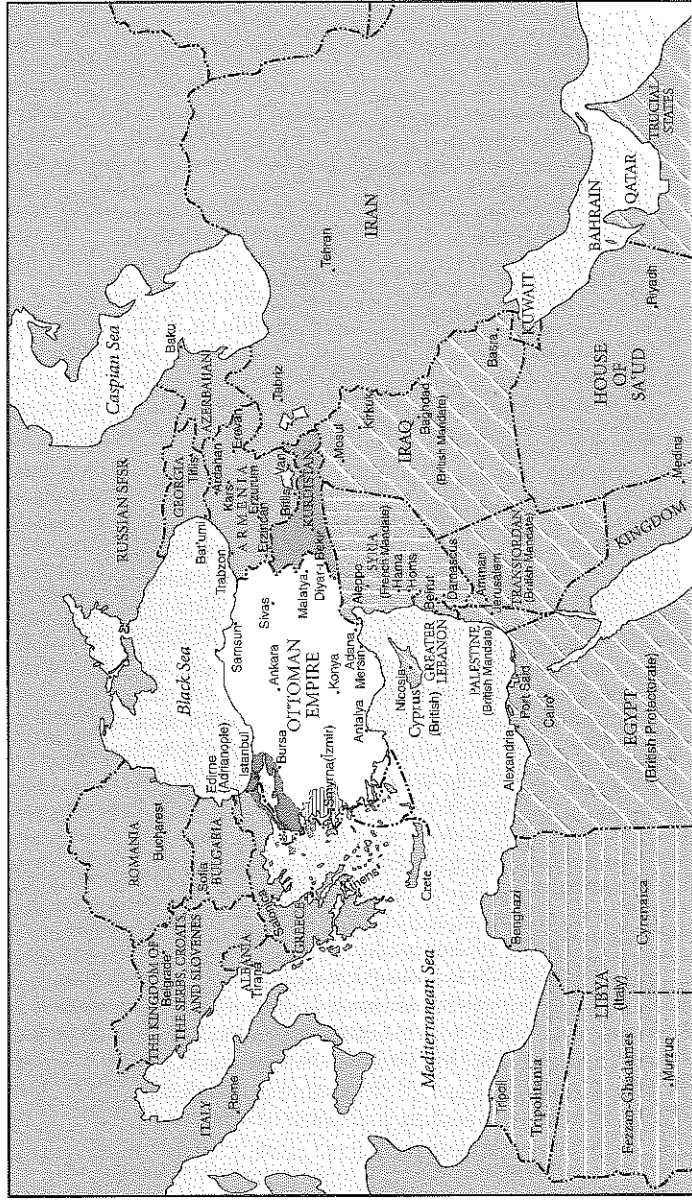


FIGURE 26. The partition of the Ottoman Empire according to the Sèvres Treaty of 1920

The harsh Treaty of Sèvres (August 1920), imposed upon the sultan's government by the victors, included provisions for the partition of Anatolia. The treaty foresaw the formation of French and Italian zones of occupation in the southeast and southwest, the cession of much of western Anatolia to Greece, and the establishment of two independent states, Armenia and Kurdistan, in the east and southeast. The residue of the territory was to remain Ottoman. Istanbul, while remaining the seat of the Ottoman government and Caliphate, was to become an international city, with free navigation through the Straits controlled by an international commission. The Ottoman state was to have a token army and navy without tanks, heavy artillery, airplanes, or battleships. The Ottoman budget was to be placed under the supervision of an Allied financial commission. Not surprisingly, Turkish nationalists, headed by the new Turkish Grand National Assembly and the nationalist government in Ankara, rejected these humiliating terms and resolved to fight to the bitter end to preclude their implementation.

In the ensuing Turkish War of Independence, the nationalist army defeated the Greeks and came to terms with the French and the Italians, thereby securing an independent Turkish state in Anatolia, and frustrating Armenian, Greek, and Kurdish aspirations. At the conclusion of the war, the Greek Orthodox population of Turkey was exchanged for the Muslim population of Greece (excluding the Greek Orthodox population of Istanbul and the Muslims of Western Thrace), thereby effectively ending Greek settlement in Anatolia. The borders set by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and the subsequent cession of Mosul to Iraq (1925) divided the Kurdish population of the empire between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, thereby overturning the 62nd article of the Sèvres Treaty and shattering Kurdish aspirations for self-determination. Under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, the Armenians lost all hope of reestablishing a significant presence in Eastern Anatolia (as stipulated in the 89th article of the Sèvres Treaty); their sole consolation was a small homeland in Soviet Armenia which was established in 1920 and became part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic in 1922.

Along with the myriad social problems bequeathed by the empire, the Ottoman successor states also inherited decades of imperial debt. The Treaty of Lausanne released Turkey from any obligations concerning Ottoman loans guaranteed on the basis of the Egyptian tribute, that is, the loans of 1855, 1891, and 1894. But the rest of the Ottoman debt was divided proportionally among the empire's heirs. An international referee later determined that, out of the debt of Lt 130 million (not including unpaid installments totaling Lt 30 million), Turkey would pay Lt 35 million, Greece, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and Syria-Lebanon would each pay Lt 11 million, and the other heirs would incur relatively smaller

amounts. 'Asîr inherited the smallest amount, namely Lt 26,000.<sup>107</sup> Turkey made the last payment on the Ottoman debt in August 1948.

The abolition of the Ottoman sultanate on November 1/2, 1922 by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara dealt the *coup de grâce* to an empire that had long ceased to be one. The final institutional remnant of empire, the Caliphate, was abolished on March 3, 1924. To prevent any return to the Ottoman era, the government expelled all members of the royal family from Turkey.

The birth of numerous nation-states out of an old and vast empire, far from being a smooth natural evolution, was a messy, often painful process, which left many problems still unsolved in areas stretching from Sarajevo, Skopje, and Kosovo to Kirkuk, Nicosia, and Jerusalem. The emergence of new national boundaries left ethnic minorities stranded on either side; former communities of a multinational empire became majorities or minorities in ethnically defined nation-states with an unflinching desire for homogeneity. Social turmoil was often the result. The Bulgarian-Greek (1919–20) and the Turkish-Greek (1923–26) population exchanges, for example, involved the forced uprooting of more than two million individuals from their traditional homes and their transfer to so-called fatherlands. New borders also entailed radical changes to the socioeconomic structures of the new nation-states. For instance, the Armenian deportations and the Greek-Turkish population exchange produced an extreme scarcity in craftsmen and skilled industrial labor in Anatolia. Many important cities, such as Aleppo and Salonica, which lost their traditional hinterlands upon being detached from the empire, faced inevitable decline, and ultimately lost much of their significance. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire marked a sharp break with the past, producing an array of new structures that belong wholly to the post-Ottoman period. The problems underlying these new structures are nevertheless firmly rooted in the Ottoman legacy.

#### THE CUP ERA IN RETROSPECT

Although it is commonly assumed that the Young Turk Revolution produced drastic changes in Ottoman domestic and foreign policy, there was far more continuity with Hamidian patterns than is generally recognized. The 1908 Revolution marked a watershed not because of the introduction of new policies in its wake, but because it made possible a sea-change in the structure of the ruling elite. Although the CUP began in stark opposition to

<sup>107</sup> İ. Hakko Yeniay, *Yeni Osmanlı Borçları Tarihi* (Istanbul: İktisat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1964), pp. 130–33.

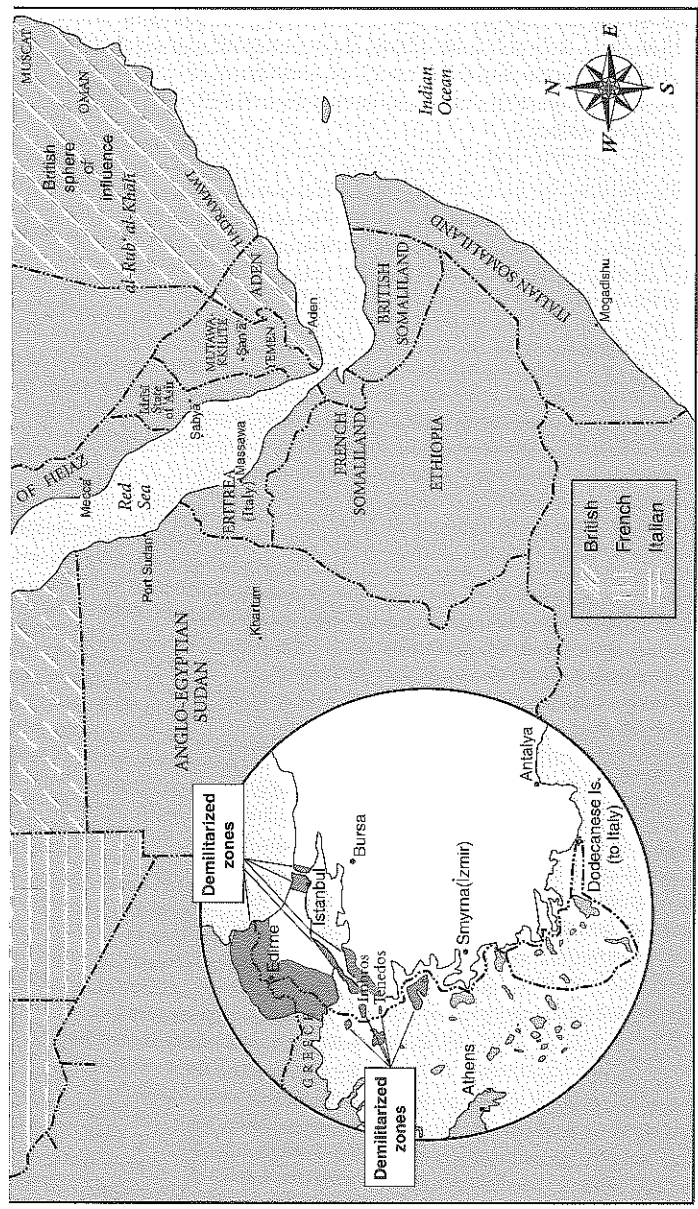
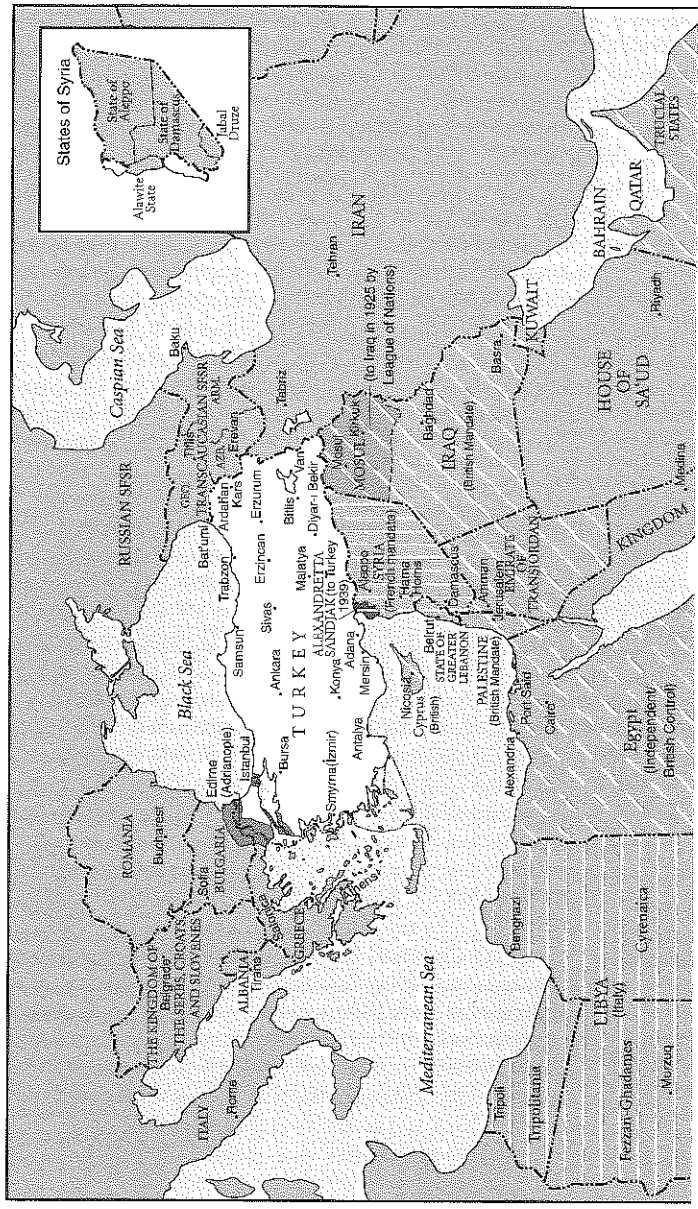


FIGURE 27. Turkey and the other successor states according to the Lausanne Treaty of 1923.

Abdülhamid II, the realities of power compelled it to follow his policies far more often than it would have liked. There is something symbolic in the famous picture taken at the state funeral of Abdülhamid II in 1918, in which the entire CUP leadership is seen following their deadly opponent's casket in solemn procession.

Politically, the most significant change that took place in this period was the introduction, however incomplete, of representation through party politics. For the first time in the history of the empire, politics was the business of political parties sponsoring competing policies and visions of the future. Although this political pluralism was not long-lasting, it caused a far more enduring change in the nature and composition of the Ottoman ruling elite. The revolution marked a changing of the guard, as new elites were swept up into politics both in the machinery of central government and in communal organization. The old elites that worked within the framework of Hamidian Ottomanism, such as the Armenian Amira class of bankers and rich artisans allied to the clergy, or the Albanian, Arab, and Kurdish notables who traded their loyalty for imperial privileges and a free hand in communal administration, lost power under the new regime. So did the religious establishments. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish religious leaders lost so much ground to the nationalist elites in the Ottoman heartlands that only in the most distant and loosely held regions of the empire in Arabia did successor states defining themselves in religious terms emerge. Even Sharif Husayn of Mecca bowed to the slogans of the age, announcing his revolt on behalf of an imagined "Arab Nation." Members of the traditional elites who jumped on the nationalist bandwagon did so largely because they had no alternative.

The new elites empowered by the installation of a parliamentary system in a multinational empire were, for the most part, secular nationalists. It was mostly Turkish members of the CUP who rose to positions of prominence in the army and bureaucracy, while non-Turkish nationalists came to the fore as parliamentary deputies or regional leaders of separatist movements. Lacking the economic power and social status enjoyed by the traditional elites, the nationalist leaders exploited the new liberties of the post-revolutionary period to consolidate their power using newspapers, journals, and the ballot box. Through elections, they came to enjoy legitimacy as "the representatives of the people"—although they might disagree among themselves as to who "the people" really were—and they sought to assert the power conferred by this legitimacy in the struggle over the future of the empire.

Wars acted as a catalyst for the disintegration of the empire and the redrawing of the political map of the Balkans and Near East, giving birth to a host of successor states dominated by the elites formed during the Second Constitutional Period. In Turkey, the overwhelming majority of the Republican leaders were former CUP members; in the other successor states,

nationalist elites speaking the anticolonial rhetoric pioneered by the CUP held a disproportionate share of power for many decades following the Ottoman collapse. Thus, the emergence of an intellectual, nationalist vanguard at the expense of the traditional religious and propertied elites stands out as the most significant sociopolitical legacy bequeathed by the Second Constitutional Period.

The revolution and its aftermath also saw the rise of the military in Ottoman society. Although defeat in war thwarted the late Ottoman project for building a nation in arms, the militarization of society and politics became a common feature of many of the Ottoman successor states, including Turkey. Along with the militarization of politics, the Second Constitutional Period left another lasting imprint on post-Ottoman politics: the creation of a hollow institutional façade legitimizing the ruling party. Once promoted and accepted, such fundamental tenets of a free society as elections, the right to representation, freedom of the press, and the right to assemble could not simply be suspended. But they could be largely emptied of content. In fact, the constitutional travesty that emerged during the Second Constitutional Period became the model for nearly all the nation-states that established themselves upon the ruins of the empire. One sees this pattern even in the most oppressive dictatorial regimes, such as Enver Hoxha's Albania, or the Ba'th leaderships in Syria and Iraq, which still felt it necessary to hold sham elections, maintain the illusion of an elected parliament, and sponsor a robust press tightly controlled by the state.

Ironically, the CUP's triumph in 1908 in the end proved as much of a victory for its political opponents. For four critical years, the leaders of the Committee struggled to maintain their grip on power, in part because they could not resolve their dilemma in choosing between the lofty principles of the revolution and the urge to dominate. The CUP's entire revolutionary platform rested on the case for a constitution. Immediate retreat from this goal would have been tantamount to betrayal of the people, and might have resulted in the loss of power. The "people" turned out to be at once a considerable force of legitimacy and a serious threat to CUP control. The restoration of the constitution and the institution of freely contested elections soon proved a boon to the CUP's challengers. The parliament was at once a legitimizing asset and an independent-minded body that hindered the CUP's freedom to implement their empire-saving program. Eventually, the constitutional regime was stripped of substance, even though it retained its form.

The conflict between the CUP's Turkist agenda and the multinational reality of the empire was another of many dilemmas that were resolved in an unsatisfactorily pragmatic fashion, resulting in the attenuation of revolutionary principle and the formulation of ambiguous policy. Just as the CUP's "Ottomanism" was supposed to appeal to non-Turkish communities

while preserving the Turkist agenda, so too a secular interpretation of Islam was meant to pacify the ulema while maintaining the essentials of the scientific platform. Perhaps a more uncompromising ideological attitude and the adoption of a supranational platform like that of the Bolsheviks in Russia might have saved the empire from these contradictions. But the sort of social upheaval openly espoused by the Bolsheviks was alien to the CUP worldview. In this respect, the CUP leaders resembled the Tanzimat statesmen who, by promoting the new while preserving the old, fostered an ambiguous dualism. They kept the sultan, but introduced the Committee; maintained the Islamic identity of the regime, yet endorsed secularism; espoused Turkism, yet professed Ottomanism; advocated democracy, but practiced repression; attacked imperialism, but courted empires; and proclaimed étatism while promoting liberal economics.

An uncharitable estimation of the CUP in power would attribute the ambivalence of their policies to a failure of imagination. A more generous evaluation would recognize that the CUP, like the leaders of the Tanzimat before them, and unlike the leaders of the Ottoman successor states that followed in their wake, had to come to terms with the fact that they ruled a multinational empire. They were not free to build a new state and society from scratch, primarily because they were not prepared to relinquish the empire. Ultimately, the revolutionaries of 1908 could not transcend the framework of the late Ottoman order bequeathed to them by the very Abdülhamid II they had come together to overthrow. It was up to a younger generation of revolutionaries, no longer burdened by the responsibilities of empire and the fissiparous challenge of nationalism, to abandon the Ottoman past and build something radically new.

## Conclusion

THE HISTORY of the late Ottoman Empire exhibits several major dynamics that overlap and, at times, contradict each other. First among these is the struggle between center and periphery. Perhaps the principal theme of late Ottoman history is the attempt of the central government in the imperial capital to assert its control over a loosely held periphery which had gradually accumulated administrative, economic, and even diplomatic independence of the center. The seepage of power to the periphery peaked in 1808, when the center accorded brief legal recognition to this new balance of power. In its attempt to eradicate the old order, the center inevitably clashed with power brokers in the periphery who sought to preserve their autonomy and privileges. The crux of the center's problem with the outlying territories was not, as has often been suggested, ideological, but practical. The old order, under new circumstances, no longer afforded a cost-effective solution to the problem of ruling over a vast empire; it reduced the center to penury and powerlessness. Defense of the empire in the age of modern warfare demanded a large and professional army and navy equipped with advanced weaponry; the maintenance of such military focus depended on effective taxation; and effective taxation was not commensurate with the rule of local notables. Instead it required an effective, centralized bureaucracy. Hence the centralizing, bureaucratizing impulse that runs as a common thread through late Ottoman history.

This common-sense reaction had little to do with any struggle between "modernizers" (or "Westernizers") at the center and "reactionaries" in the periphery. In fact, in 1808 it was representatives of the periphery who attempted to impose modernization on the center. In 1839, the roles were reversed. Despite their varying ideological attitudes, *all* Ottoman administrations—from Selim III down to the CUP—strove to centralize the administration of the empire, while leaders in the periphery did their best to resist it. As the autonomous governors of Egypt and Baghdad in the early nineteenth century demonstrated, the periphery was quite capable of surpassing the center in applying European methods and technologies. For them, too, Westernization—the imitation of Europe—was not primarily an aim in and of itself, but rather an instrument for the improvement of government

and society. Mehmed Ali's successful drive for European-style modernization did not automatically make him an ally of the center, despite the fact that it strove to achieve similar goals. The Ottoman central government supported Egyptian modernization as long as it enjoyed its fruits—the crushing of the rebels in the Morea, the overthrow of the Saudi state in the Arabian Peninsula, or increasing imperial tax revenues. But once Egyptian troops moved against the imperial army, and Egyptian wealth was channeled into local growth, the rulers of the empire lost any stake in Mehmed Ali's modernization policies. Similarly, the nationalist movements that later redrew the struggle along ethnic lines were led by Westernized elites fighting against a Westernized center.

Nor was the struggle between center and periphery primarily related to the rise of nationalism, although nationalism certainly intensified it. For one thing non-nationalist groups, like Zaydī insurgents in the highlands of Yemen or Šūfī rebels in 'Asīr, made similar demands of the center on behalf of their regions. Images of captive nations engaged in a heroic struggle for freedom from Turkish domination only acquired relevance later. Clearly, nationalism served as a perfect ideological vehicle for mobilizing resistance in the periphery and articulating demands directed at the center and foreign powers. Adroit leaders mastered the new rhetoric to voice old, deep-rooted demands with greater vehemence and increasing success. It was tempting for historians of a nationalist orientation to recast an ambitious local ruler like Mehmed Ali as the founding hero who had forged a nation, with their very histories, in turn, contributing the foundation myths of nationhood. In reality, nationalism proved most effectual when other factors—particularly distance from the center—made its triumph feasible. Nationalist ideology enabled those seeking independence in the non-Turkish territories of the periphery to persevere in their struggle to the bitter end, while their counterparts in the Ottoman heartland—so thoroughly dominated by the hegemonic Turkish culture that they were unable to conceive of a viable entity independent of the revitalized center—quickly succumbed to force or the offer of minor concessions.

The second major feature of the late Ottoman period was the attempt to respond to the awe-inspiring challenges brought about by modernity. The Ottoman Empire was not unique in this respect. It began its journey later than most of its European counterparts, and hence initially had to rely more heavily on imitation and importation. But most of its problems were not peculiar to it; dealing with secularization, reconciling religion with scientific progress, confronting the traditional bases of society, coping with urbanization, responding to public opinion, digesting massive cultural transformation, incorporating technology into administration, adjusting to complex patterns of division of labor, defusing new tensions between center and periphery, staving off challenges to a supranational identity in the age

of nationalism—all these were issues with which European counterparts of the empire also had to grapple, not to mention other Asian states.

The initial Ottoman responses to modernity can be broadly categorized under the heading of "Europeanization" (often termed "Westernization"). However, by the late nineteenth century the forging of an Ottoman modernity through a process of acculturation was almost complete. Even Islamist movements of the post-1908 period had long shed the categorical rejection of any imitation of Europe which characterized the Islamist response in earlier times. They had shifted their focus from practical questions to such abstract issues as the reconcilability of Islam with modern science and philosophy. Not unlike their counterparts the so-called Westernizers, who openly based their philosophical positions on the theses of Le Bon or Büchner, the Islamists drew on an arsenal that included not only Muḥammad 'Abduh, but also Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles. Thus, for all the importance of the rise of a militant materialism among the Ottoman elite, the picture of a perennial struggle between modernizers and reactionaries in the late Ottoman period is misleading.<sup>1</sup>

The third fundamental dynamic of late Ottoman history was the evolving relationship between the empire and the Great Powers of Europe. Writing in the wake of the tremendous growth in the power of the state in the twentieth century, it is difficult to overstate the extraordinary role played by old-fashioned diplomacy in mitigating foreign influence over domestic developments in a state as weak as the Ottoman Empire was in the nineteenth century. Still, Ottoman statesmen were able to deflect foreign demands only to a limited degree. Beyond that, they absorbed them as best they could. As a result, domestic policy in the late Ottoman Empire was related to foreign policy to an extent unparalleled before or since. In fact, it was the state's relations with European powers that provided the initial and sustaining impetus for the reforms aiming at centralization and modernization of the Ottoman administration. The primary weakness of the old order, in the eyes of the reformers, was its inability to respond effectively to external challenges. The old local armies, once summoned to arms only in times of crisis, were no longer of much use against European powers with modern military forces. Instead they served mainly as weapons in the hands of local leaders with which to defy the center. And central control over the tax base and resources of the provinces was precisely what was needed to finance military reform.

While the Ottoman government was busy trying to adapt to meet the new threats from abroad, the Great Powers were seeking to alter the empire from within. They had a host of moral and political reasons for doing so.

<sup>1</sup> Ottoman scientism was not only modern like other contemporary ideologies, but sought to monopolize modernity. This product of the late nineteenth century was not foreseen by the reformist statesmen. See my "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi 'Garbcılığı'nın Kavramsallaştırılmasındaki Üç Temel Sorun Üzerine Not," *Doğu-Batı* 31 (February 2005), pp. 55–64.



The so-called Eastern Question was like a chameleon changing its colors with the environment. The moral argument for the liberation of oppressed Christians was not without links to domestic political considerations in the various European states that espoused it. It could also serve as a pretext for advancing expansionist ambitions, as was the case with Russia in the Balkans and the Caucasus, and with France and Italy in North Africa; or as a pretext for their deflection, as was most often the case with Austria in the Balkans. The British continually wavered between a moral perspective and a focus on the strategic need to block Russian expansion into the Near East by means of a strong Ottoman buffer. Every new crisis provided inspiration for the elaboration of new variations on these themes.

Much of the high-flown rhetoric in favor of reform emanating from the Great Powers was not genuine. By and large, European leaders opposed the wholesale transformation of the Ottoman Empire into an efficient, centralized state; they even feared the creation of a *Homo Ottomanicus*, equal to his fellow citizens and bound to them by a common identity that transcended religion, ethnicity, or tribe. Instead, they preferred a return to the administrative arrangements of the old order, in which a loose confederation—perhaps upheld by new humanistic principles and shorn of the traditional privileges accorded to Muslims—would guarantee them a continuation of the status quo. Preservation of the status quo was vital, in the eyes of European statesmen, because its collapse, whether through revolutionary change or otherwise, could trigger a serious European conflict. Moreover, the existing situation, in which favorable trade treaties guaranteed European industrial producers unrestricted access to the Ottoman market, was economically advantageous. The contradiction between strategic aims and moral rhetoric reflected the familiar tension between the demands of realpolitik and the pressure of public opinion. The artificial prolongation of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, for instance, was more the product of a desire for balance between Austria and Russia than the result of any Ottoman capabilities. Similarly, the preservation of the relative administrative unity of the Balkans under Ottoman rule owed much to the economic advantages it offered to European railroad companies eager to build extensive railroads, and to other corporations that sought the convenience of a single market with guaranteed low customs tariffs. At the same time, the fact that Ottoman rule in the Balkans allowed for an increasing measure of autonomy reflected European sensitivities to the issues of self-government and equal rights for non-Muslims.

Thus, the domestic opponents of Ottoman reform in the periphery shared their unease with powerful potential allies across the border. They looked upon every new measure of reform—including Ottoman constitutionalism—with the suspicion, if not the conviction, that it was insincere; in other

words, that it represented a carefully disguised step toward Turkification. So, for instance, in 1876, both the representatives of the Great Powers and those of the Ottoman Slavs agreed that the appointment of Christian governors to administer the European provinces was preferable to the Ottoman solution of a constitution that made everybody equal before the law.

Ottoman statesmen, for their part, struggled to capitalize on the contradictions between the various European protagonists and to manipulate the rules of the European balance of power to their advantage. But the prize of second-class membership in the European club—the ultimate dividend of which was the guarantee of survival—came with a price attached, in the form of ceaseless demands for pro-Christian reform. The attempt to minimize the impact of these demands, to stave off the pressure for such reform, to stall and twist, deflect and renege, is the story of late Ottoman diplomacy.

In 1789, the Ottoman Empire, however weakened, was still in control of much of southeastern Europe; as such it was very much a European power. Yet it remained the quintessential “Other” in the eyes of the average European, and the perennial outsider vis-à-vis the major players of the great game of continental diplomacy. Several factors combined to alter this situation fundamentally. First and foremost was the reaction to the rise and fall of the Napoleonic threat to the peace of Europe. The new rules of European diplomacy after 1815 placed a premium on stability and equilibrium. To be sure, the preservation of the status quo was not meant to apply in principle to the Ottoman Empire, which was neither a signatory of any of the major treaties concluded at the end of the Napoleonic era, nor a member of the coalition that defeated Napoleon. However, in practice there was no getting around the fact that the Ottoman Empire was *European*—at least insofar as what happened in or to the Ottoman domains mattered to the European powers. In terms of the balance of power in Europe, the Ottoman Empire had only negative significance: although the empire itself could no longer threaten any of the major European powers, the prospect of its capitulation to any one Great Power posed a dreadful menace to all the others. The most serious and persistent threat came from neighboring Russia. As Russia made inroads into Ottoman sovereignty and territory in the first half of the nineteenth century, the resulting danger to British, Austrian and, to a certain degree, French strategic interests gained the Ottomans significant allies in the defense of the empire. It also highlighted the importance of the Ottoman role in the European balance against Russia. The common fear of a destabilization of the European balance of power as a result of Ottoman collapse was the empire’s strongest diplomatic card in the last century of its existence. It provided Ottoman statesmen with an entry ticket into the European diplomatic arena, and gave them crucial leverage over foreign powers seeking territorial, strategic, or economic advantages at Ottoman expense.

At the same time, the French Revolution and the resultant sociopolitical changes in Europe, including the emergence of public opinion as an active force in the shaping of foreign policy, rendered obsolete the traditional view that Ottoman relations with the empire's Christian subjects were an internal Ottoman problem. Thus, a reformist interventionism crept into the dealings of many of the European powers with the empire. Additionally, European colonial powers inevitably developed an interest in the crumbling Ottoman periphery, especially in North Africa and at the strategic corners of the Arabian Peninsula. Like the Church of the pre-Reformation era, the Ottoman Empire was at once too rich (in strategic and economic terms) and too weak (in military terms) for its predators to leave it in peace. Moreover, the changes in production and transportation resulting from the industrial revolution dramatically increased the economic importance of the Ottoman market.

Thus, if the story of late Ottoman history is one of contraction in Europe and exposure to European encroachments in Asia and Africa, it is at the same time a tale of greater and more active Ottoman participation in the European concert, both politically and economically. That process continued into the twentieth century and proceeds even today.

These three major dynamics drove an astonishing transformation of the Ottoman state and society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: from a loose confederation to a relatively centralized state; from disparate administrative structures founded on ancient traditions and local arrangements to a reasonably standardized bureaucracy with a modern code of law; from a predominantly rural barter economy operating with pre-modern financial and fiscal arrangements to a monetary economy with modern budgets; from a formal organization of society along religious lines to exclusive recognition of a common Ottoman citizenship; from rule by the sultan and his court to constitutional government and ministerial responsibility; from a pre-modern army dependent on Janissaries and timariot cavalry to a professional military based on conscription; from a pre-modern system of land tenure to private ownership of property; and from a state that played the role of an aloof outsider in international affairs to one that actively participated in the European balance of power. At the end of the eighteenth century the Ottoman Empire was well on its way to becoming an anachronism; by the turn of the twentieth it was weak, militarily and financially, but by most standards modern.

If the absolute achievements of the Ottoman reforms appear impressive, it is the *relative* accomplishment of the Ottoman transformation effort that seems truly remarkable. The greatest difference between the Ottoman Empire in 1789 and its European contemporaries lay not in the nature of the challenge they faced, which was roughly equivalent, but in the enormous contrast in the existing structures that had to be revamped if the challenge

were to be met. A heavy institutional inheritance stretching back to medieval times placed the Ottoman starting point perhaps several centuries behind Europe. Seen in this light, a comparison of late Ottoman history with the Japanese experience might be expected to yield more insight.<sup>2</sup> Yet there was a crucial difference: while Japan was free to develop its response to modernity in relatively insular security, the Ottoman state was in the middle of a predatory struggle for power on three continents.

No less daunting than the institutional deficit was the enormous gulf that separated the elite from the masses—a fissure that was far wider in the Ottoman case than in European societies, as literacy rates, for instance, suggest. This was especially true when it came to popular hostility toward many of the attributes of modernity, which in the Ottoman case was particularly closely linked to powerful aversions rooted in religion.

At the same time, a comparison of the Ottoman and European experiences in the modern age highlights the limits of the Ottoman transformation. Like the Austrians, the Ottomans ultimately failed to address the contradictions of a polyethnic empire in the age of nationalism. Clearly, a major failure of the Ottoman reform movement was the negligible progress it made toward the creation of a new political identity that could transcend traditional divisions by region, religion, or community, and thwart the rise of new ones founded on the idea of nationhood. Although Ottomanism made more headway than is commonly assumed, it failed to penetrate deeply into society and so proved ineffective in comparison with its rising competitor, nationalism. Additionally, while the administrative and economic aspects of the Ottoman transformation brought about substantial changes in Ottoman society, not least of which was a major reshuffling of the traditional social strata, the fact remains that the comparison with Europe underscores the weakness of industry, the consequent lack of an industrial working class, and the failure of a vital bourgeois class to emerge in the late Ottoman Empire. The haphazard, short-term, and often contradictory nature of Ottoman economic policy was partly to blame for this. Yet it should be remembered that Ottoman economic policies were implemented under conditions of near-constant turmoil caused by war, territorial loss, social upheaval, and heavy economic and political pressure from foreign powers. Moreover, the challenge of transforming the Ottoman economy was far greater than the equivalent challenges faced by the various Western European powers. Whereas the emergence of a bourgeoisie and industry in such European countries as Great Britain and Belgium was a

<sup>2</sup>This comparison was the subject of a major conference and a book published as its product. See *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, eds. Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

result of unplanned economic, social, legal, and intellectual developments, Ottoman administrations set out to create them—a breathtaking challenge.

Finally, a few words on the role of ideas in history. The triumph in modern Turkey of a hybrid ideology made up of eighteenth-century French materialism and its vulgarized nineteenth-century German derivative should not mislead us into viewing late Ottoman history as a train with state-sponsored scientism as its final destination. Late Ottoman history, in other words, is not reducible to a prelude to the history of modern Turkey.<sup>3</sup> To be sure, the emergence of Republican ideology in the 1920s as a vehicle for mass-mobilization and state-building was not just an accident; but neither was it inevitable. The historical roots of the ideology of the republic may be traced back to the rise of Ottoman materialism—and its by-product, Westernist (*Garbci*) ideology—among the elites of the Second Constitutional Period; but its victory over the alternatives available at the time was surprising. Just as the prospect of Bolshevik victory would have struck contemporaries as improbable as late as 1917, so too the rise of Ottoman materialism from a fetish of the elites to the cornerstone of the state did not seem likely as late as 1922. And just as no historian could convincingly portray the last decades of Russian imperial history as a struggle between Bolsheviks and Tsarists, so too it is impossible to describe late Ottoman history as a simple battle between secularists and their religious opponents. As it happened, the collapse of the empire gave rise to a score of successor states;<sup>4</sup> only in one of them, the Republic of Turkey, did this particular ideology take root.

Scarcely less significant is the distinction between the enormous importance of this ideology, indeed of ideology in general, in the process of transformation initiated by the leaders of the Turkish Republic, and its far less salient role as an engine of historical change during the late Ottoman period. As this study has tried to demonstrate, the key processes of late Ottoman history can be explained above all, not by the logic of ideas, but by the structural constraints imposed on the leadership of the empire by geography, demography, institutions, and the examples set by European countries. This does not mean that one should approach late Ottoman history in a simple-mindedly historicist manner, seeing that the path of Ottoman history as predetermined. Rather, it means that one must begin with the recognition that the set of realistic choices that lay before the Ottoman leaders was not unlimited. One need not be a passionate Social

<sup>3</sup>Two edited volumes that appeared in the last decade of the twentieth century attempted to underscore this fact. See *Modernization in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire and Its Afro-Asian Successors*, eds. Cyril E. Black and L. Carl Brown (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992) and *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. L. Carl Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup>There were, in fact, 27 successor states, if one begins the count in 1789.

Darwinist to recognize that modification of the old order became inescapable in the late eighteenth century, if the empire was to survive; or that the most logical source of inspiration for any new order was Europe. The vastness of the Ottoman state, the heterogeneous nature of its population, the magnitude and multiplicity of external threats, the relative weakness of its military institutions, and the patent inability of the old bureaucracy to marshal the financial means needed to wage modern war—all these made change imperative. At the same time, the gargantuan struggle that took place in Europe between 1789 and 1815 demonstrated the rising power of European ideas and institutions, and already hinted at the extent to which Europe would come to dominate the world economically, militarily, and politically. By and large, when Ottoman policy makers and intellectuals turned toward Europe, they did so not out of a clear, articulate ideological preference, as is often suggested by later scholars. Rather, they looked to Europe for answers because a return to the old order was thoroughly unattractive and because there was nowhere else to turn. Extreme reactionaries existed in late Ottoman society as elsewhere. But the sharp debate between them and the radical Westernizers distorts the historical reality of a consensus on the need for European-inspired change that was shared by a solid majority of the Ottoman elite from the nineteenth century onward.

A fundamental assumption underpinning this book has been that an enhanced understanding of late Ottoman history is indispensable not only to comprehend modern Turkey, or even the vast geographic area that was once ruled from Istanbul. It is also essential for the study of European and world history. The Ottoman experience provides a superb opportunity to examine the impact of modernity in a non-European setting. This brief account of this impact will have accomplished its goal if it succeeds in inspiring a new generation of scholars to take this endeavor further.