The Impact of Ethnic Cleansing and the Eurocentric International System on the Entrance of the Ottoman Empire into the Great War, 1878-1914

Parker Lake
CUNY Hunter College

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!
Follow this and additional works at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds
Part of the Diplomatic History Commons, European History Commons, and the Islamic World and Near East History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds/251
The Impact of Ethnic Cleansing and the Eurocentric International System on the Entrance of the Ottoman Empire into the Great War, 1878-1914

by

Parker J. Lake

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts History, Hunter College
The City University of New York

January 5, 2018

Thesis Sponsor:

Date
January 5, 2018
Signature
Professor Karen M Kern

Date
January 5, 2018
Signature of Second Reader
Professor Jonathan Rosenberg
**Table of Contents**

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................. 1

2. Chapter 1 ...................................................................................................................... 14

3. Chapter 2 ...................................................................................................................... 37

4. Chapter 3 ...................................................................................................................... 57

5. Chapter 4 ...................................................................................................................... 71

6. Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 85

Appendix A ...................................................................................................................... 89

Appendix B ...................................................................................................................... 90

Appendix C ...................................................................................................................... 91

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 92
Introduction

The Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the November 1, 1914, after three months of continuous appeals to both camps of the belligerent powers. The actions of the Great Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, France, and Great Britain) over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had placed the Ottoman Empire in a precarious position. Despite the Great Powers’ multiple guarantees to maintain the Empire’s territorial integrity, over the previous half century the Ottomans had lost some of their most productive and populous territories in the Balkans. By 1914, Ottoman statesman feared the possibility of partition and no longer viewed diplomacy as a viable option to save the Empire. This concern informed Ottoman diplomacy during the crisis that developed after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in July of 1914. The July Crisis intensified Ottoman concerns about partition because a major war threatened to destroy the European balance of power and therefore leave Russia with no enemies to restrain its designs on Ottoman territory. Ottoman fears escalated when they intercepted Russian telegrams that ignored Ottoman neutrality and called for the Empire’s partition. Russian calls for partition could have been enough cause for Ottoman belligerency, but the Empire was in no condition to fight a major war. The Empire had been severely crippled financially and militarily after the First and Second Balkan Wars (1912-13). In addition, after the start of the First World War the Entente had issued assurances that they would maintain Ottoman

1. Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire on 1 November 1914. Great Britain and France declared war on 5 November 1914. The Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed V (1909-18), declared war on the Entente on 11 November 1914.
2. Mustafa Aksakal, The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4. These telegrams were from the Russian ambassador to the foreign office.
territorial integrity and independence, but the Ottomans knew the Great Powers would quickly back out of their agreements if it suited their needs.

The loss of Ottoman territory almost always preceded a massive humanitarian crisis. Between 1878 and 1913, the Muslim population in the Balkans had been subjected to extermination and exile. On both occasions a humanitarian crisis had put immense strain on the Ottoman economy. When the Great Powers went to war in 1914, Ottoman statesmen believed that the war would end quickly and, if they could not rapidly rebuild their economy and military, they would not be able to defend themselves and thereby would risk partition. Partition would mean the end of the Empire and the security of Ottoman-Muslim citizens. In order to preserve its territorial integrity and protect its citizens, Ottoman statesmen took a calculated risk and allied with Germany. The deeper catalyst, however, for Ottoman entrance into the First World War was a lack of faith in European imperial assurances whose failure had resulted in the earlier territorial loses and humanitarian crises in the Balkans.

**Historiography**

The question of why the Ottomans entered the First World War in 1914 on the side of Germany has never had a definitive answer. From the beginning of the war and well into the early years of the Turkish Republic, Entente propagandists and Turkish nationalists obscured the true motives and goals of the Ottoman government. Their narrative, that the Ottomans were incompetent or misguided opportunists, remained the dominant explanation until the middle of the century when scholars began to challenge these accounts. This early scholarship proposed various causes, for example, that the Empire entered the war because of Enver Paşa’s support for Germany, or because Turkish nationalist sentiment expected that the war would save Turks
living in hostile states, or that Great Britain pushed the Ottomans away from the Entente by ignoring Ottoman fears of Russian aggression and threats of partition. These theories, however, failed to consider the previous four decades of European diplomatic betrayals, the breakdown of the security apparatus of the Concert of Europe, and the impact of ethnic cleansing on Ottoman decision-making.

In 1914, the British government worried that the large Muslim population in their Empire would become a subversive element if Britain opened hostilities against the Ottomans. In order to remove British responsibility for the Empire’s entrance into the war, they needed to discredit the CUP and portray the Ottomans as the aggressors. H.H. Asquith, the British Prime Minister (1908-16), expressed this sentiment immediately after the Ottomans entered the war: “it is the Ottoman government and not we who have rung the death knell of Ottoman dominion not only in Europe, but in Asia.” British propagandists presented Ottoman leaders as gamblers who recklessly and irresponsibly bet their Empire on pan-Turanist idealism and German victory. The French Empire also contained a large Muslim population and agreed on the December 31, 1914, to pool their anti-Ottoman propaganda with the British. The world’s two largest propaganda machines pushed the narrative that the Ottomans only entered the war for opportunistic reasons. This is the narrative that would influence historians well into the twentieth century.

6. Ibid., 101.
The history of the Ottoman Empire’s entrance into the First World War was further obscured by Turkish intellectuals who sought to distance the Republic from the Ottoman state. They claimed that Enver Paşa was a foolish, delusional, pan-Turanist hawk who rashly hitched the Empire’s fate to Germany in hopes of attaining new territory and uniting the world’s Turkic peoples. In contrast, Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938), the founder of the Turkish Republic, was portrayed as a genius who saved the Turkish nation from the failing Ottoman Empire. These works emphasized the superior nature of the Turkish state in comparison to the Ottomans and as a result attempted to discredit the CUP leadership.

AJP Taylor and Ulrich Trumpener expanded on the scholarship of Turkish historians and Entente propagandists who had argued that the Ottoman Empire entered the war due to the incompetence or opportunism of the leading members of the CUP. Taylor departed from these claims by arguing that the Germans had forced the Ottomans into the war. The Ottomans would have, in fact, preferred to remain neutral, but were forced to enter the war when German cruisers that had been given refuge in Istanbul departed without permission and shelled Odessa. Taylor accounted for earlier historiography of Ottoman concerns that a British-Russian alliance could lead to partition, but his argument that the Germans forced them into war did not account for Ottoman agency in the decision.
Ulrich Trumpener did not agree that Germany forced the Ottomans into war. He found that Ottoman leadership was aware of German plans to attack Odessa and, in fact, Enver Paşa was the ring leader who conspired to enter the war on the German side by promoting anti-Entente propaganda and pressuring the Cabinet for a declaration of war. Taylor and Trumpener’s scholarship did not overcome the persistence of the “opportunistic” narrative. As late as 1964, scholars such as SLA Marshall were continuing to endorse the position that the CUP entered the war for reasons of callous opportunism and territorial gain. He described them as armature gamblers, more vicious than the worst members of the Chicago Outfit, who were incapable of understanding the odds against them. Marshall summarized Enver Paşa’s decision to enter the war as “cold, cruel, and careless.”

The question of who brought the Ottomans into the war is less important than why the Ottomans found entry necessary. Authors such as Taylor, Trumpener, and Marshall approached the subject from the perspective of the end result, from the perspective that that the Ottoman entrance into the war was a mistake. In their analysis, it was a question of blame rather than an attempt to understand why the leadership felt that entrance was necessary. Current scholarship emphasizes that the Empire’s dire need for a Great Power alliance was due to military and

---

14. Ibid., 121.
economic weakness following the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.\(^\text{15}\) They also investigate the ramifications of early Germany victories against Russia, the impact of the refusal of Entente Powers to consider Ottoman concerns, and the influence of the intellectual climate within the CUP in 1914.

Alan Palmer, AL Macfie, and David Fromkin argue that Enver Paşa pushed for war against the Entente when German victory seemed likely after the Battle of Tannenberg (26 August 1914). These scholars claim that the Ottomans feared partition if they remained neutral or aligned with the losing powers. They also maintain that the Ottomans approached both the Entente and Central Powers for an alliance, but both camps refused because an alliance with the Ottomans was seen as a liability.\(^\text{16}\)

The British seizure of the Ottoman dreadnaughts features in each of these analyses. In 1914, the British held two dreadnaughts that were under construction in Britain for the Ottoman Navy. The Ottomans had paid for these ships through public conscription and loans, and the public was outraged by Britain’s actions. Palmer and Macfie contend that Churchill’s seizure of these prized ships empowered Enver Paşa’s pro-German faction and discredited the pro-Entente side of the CUP.\(^\text{17}\) Fromkin adds that the Ottomans offered the seized ships to the Germans in

---

17. Palmer, *The Decline and Fall*, 249; and Macfie, "The Straits Question in the First World War," 44.
order to secure a Great Power alliance. At the time of the offer, Germany was unaware that the British had taken the ships but, after they found out, they did not suspect Ottoman duplicity so the alliance remained intact.

Macfie’s study stands apart from Palmer’s and Fromkin’s as he places greater emphasis on the British seizure of the dreadnaughts. Although Palmer and Fromkin account for the British seizure of the ships being part of the Ottoman’s decision to secure and alliance with Germany, they believe the main factors were Enver Paşa’s pro-German sympathies and Russia’s military collapse at Tannenberg. Macfie agrees that Enver Paşa was pro-Germany and had insisted on an alliance. But he also argues that Enver Paşa was not able to convince the cabinet because of dissenting opinion in the CUP. Britain’s seizure of the dreadnaughts, however, gave Enver Paşa’s faction greater credibility, which was further cemented with the arrival and sale of two German cruisers, the Breslau and Goeben. From this point forward, Enver Paşa and his supporters successfully pressured his political opponents into a course of action against the Entente. Palmer and Fromkin insist that Ottoman neutrality ended with Tannenberg. The battle convinced the CUP that Russia could no longer mount any offensive actions against the Central Powers and thus the Ottomans were free to attack Russian territory without severe consequences. At this point, Enver Paşa believed that if the Ottomans did not join the war soon, and the Germans won an unaided victory, they would forfeit any right to territorial concessions against Russia. Before this battle most members of the CUP had been unwilling to stake the future of the Empire on

18. Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace, 61.
19. Ibid., 61.
21. Ibid., 44.
22. Palmer, The Decline and Fall, 251.
23. Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace, 70; and Palmer, The Decline and Fall, 251.
German victory. Afterwards, most of the cabinet joined Enver Paşa, and the government began to draft plans for intervention.24

Feroz Ahmad and Altay Cengizer deemphasize Enver Paşa’s influence and place more importance on the motivations of the CUP leadership, which was more concerned with geopolitical exigencies. Like Palmer, MacFie, and Fromkin, they agree that the Ottomans feared the possibility of partition should the Empire fail to secure an ally.25 This scholarship also focuses on the unpopular capitulatory regime, which had for centuries given European countries special legal and economic privileges and had long denied the Ottomans full control over their economy. The Entente Powers had continued to refuse any attempt by the Ottomans to end these concessions.26 At the core of Ahmad and Cengizer’s argument is the assertion that the Entente conducted an antagonistic foreign policy towards the Ottomans because they believed that the Empire was neither a threat nor a worthwhile ally, and that therefore there was no gain in granting its demands.27 Cengizer agrees that Tannenberg played a major role in bringing the Ottomans into the war, but he claims that the German-Ottoman alliance was the direct result of Entente politics and British ambivalence.28 The Ottomans were particularly concerned that a Russian-German peace treaty after Tannenberg might lead to the Germans offering the Bosphorus Straits to Russia as a prize for making peace.29 In fact, the Ottomans knew that Russian ambassadors were threatening to sign a peace treaty with Germany in order to leverage

26. Ahmad, “The Dilemmas of Young Turk Policy, 1914-1918,” 67-69. The Great Powers wanted the Ottomans to wait until after the war to ask for any adjustments to Ottomans sovereignty, such as the capitulations.
29. Ibid., 104.
Great Britain and France to concede to their control over the Bosphorus. The Ottoman-German alliance was intended to prevent the loss of the straits and future partition.\(^{30}\) Ahmad takes a different approach from Cengizer and maintains that the Ottomans joined the war because they were near financial collapse.\(^{31}\) As late as August 1914, the CUP leadership felt that armed neutrality was the best policy because the Empire’s financial crisis made sustained mobilization untenable. In fact, the treasury could not meet such a financial burden. The Ottomans were nevertheless forced to mobilize out of fear of territorial loses. The Entente subsequently refused financial aid but the Germans agreed to support the Ottoman war effort, thereby pushing the Ottomans into an alliance with Germany.\(^{32}\)

Ryan Gingeras, Mustafa Aksakal, and Sean McMeekin agree on the general weakened state of the Empire’s military and finances, but they place deeper emphasis on the Balkan Wars and the intellectual climate within the CUP in 1914. Their analysis of the decision to enter the First World War reaches back into the late nineteenth century when Ottoman bureaucrats realized that diplomacy was no longer going to ensure their security.\(^{33}\) The Ottoman Empire’s entry into the Concert of Europe in 1856 had come with assurances from the Great Powers that their territorial integrity would be maintained. Contrary to these diplomatic agreements, the Empire had steadily lost a significant amount of territory.\(^{34}\)

By the First Balkan War of 1912, the Great Powers were no longer offering any assistance as the Ottomans were being expelled from their European territories. When they managed to

---

30. Ibid., 104.
32. Ibid., 68.
33. Aksakal, The Ottoman Road to War, 9.
34. Ibid., 4-5.
regain territory in Thrace at the start of the Second Balkan War in 1913, the Ottomans realized that only military power could preserve the Empire.\textsuperscript{35} Gingeras, Aksakal, and McMeekin claim that this victory imbued the CUP with a revanchist Turkish nationalism that sought to regain territory in order to defend the Empire and assist Ottoman Muslims and ethnic Turks who were suffering under foreign rule.\textsuperscript{36} During the period following the Second Balkan War, Ottoman statesmen and other intellectuals began to call for increased military spending and military action to protect Muslims and ethnic Turks across Ottoman borders.

Gingeras and Aksakal have also reasoned that Ottoman military weakness necessitated a secure alliance and the July Crisis in 1914 provided this opportunity.\textsuperscript{37} The CUP believed that an alliance would allow time to stabilize their economy and rebuild their military.\textsuperscript{38} Both Gingeras and Aksakal agree that the German ultimatum in October forced the Ottoman Empire into the Great War.\textsuperscript{39} Germany had informed the Ottomans that they should immediately join the Central Powers on the battlefield or Germany would stop all military aid and remove its cruisers from Istanbul, which would have crushed Ottoman plans to quickly rebuild the military.\textsuperscript{40} Gingeras further claims that the ultimatum gave Enver Paşa and his supporters the reason to apply more

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 4-5, 9, 19, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Gingeras, \textit{The Fall of the Sultanate}, 104-6; Aksakal, \textit{The Ottoman Road to War}, 20-27; and McMeekin, \textit{The Ottoman Endgame}, 84.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Aksakal, \textit{The Ottoman Road to War}, 193-94. After 1850 the Ottomans began to lose their military production capabilities. This fostered a dependency on foreign arms leading the Ottomans to decline below a third-tier military power by 1914. For most of the Empire’s history it was a third-tier producer. The first-tier innovates new weaponry. The second tier adapts and exports arms to other countries. The third-tier imports new technology and builds an indigenous arms industry. Historically the Empire’s primary rivals were third-tier powers or lower. See Jonathan Grant, "Rethinking the Ottoman 'Decline': Military Technology Diffusion in the Ottoman Empire, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," \textit{Journal of World History} 10, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 181-83, 200-201, accessed March 17, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078753.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Aksakal, \textit{The Ottoman Road to War}, 13; McMeekin, \textit{The Ottoman Endgame}, 86; and Gingeras, \textit{Fall of the Sultanate}, 106-7.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Aksakal, \textit{The Ottoman Road to War}, 186; and Gingeras, \textit{Fall of the Sultanate}, 108.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Aksakal, \textit{The Ottoman Road to War}, 186; and Gingeras, \textit{Fall of the Sultanate}, 108.
\end{itemize}
pressure on CUP factions who wanted to remain neutral.\textsuperscript{41} After a final round of internal meetings, the neutralists realized they could not abandon the Empire’s only alliance and they caved, giving the leadership the break they needed to declare war.\textsuperscript{42}

Gingeras and Aksakal advance earlier scholarship by examining how the Ottoman experience over the previous half century influenced the worldview of the CUP. They focus on Ottoman bitterness and distrust towards the European international system. Although the catalyst forcing the Ottomans to drop their position of neutrality was the potential loss of their alliance with Germany, the Ottomans also knew that diplomacy was now futile and war was necessary.

This study builds on the scholarship of Gingeras and Aksakal and will assert that Turkish nationalism was not a significant factor in the CUP’s decision to enter the war. Their decision was based primarily on the desire to protect Ottoman Muslims, and on the belief that Entente guarantees were meaningless and partition was almost certain in the event of a German defeat. Recent events had convinced the Ottomans that they faced not only partition but also the threat of ethnic cleansing should the Empire collapse. Defeats had led to territorial losses and forcible conversions, murder, and exile of Ottoman Muslims in newly formed Balkan states. Many of these refugees had died in Ottoman domains because the government was unprepared to take on such a massive influx of people. By 1914 the leaders of the CUP understood that partition was very likely and with that realization came the fear of the possibility of an even greater ethnic cleansing of Muslims from partitioned Ottoman territory.

\textsuperscript{41} Gingeras, \textit{Fall of the Sultanate}, 108.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 108. Bulgaria also declared her intentions to respect Ottoman sovereignty. Bulgarian support played a role in shifting Ottoman support over to active participation in the war.
Chapter Outline

The first chapter argues that the ideological principles of Europe’s international system (The Concert of Europe) essentially barred the Ottomans from participating as full members. Research will show that from the beginning, the Ottomans trusted European guarantees of security and territorial integrity and intended to utilize the codes and precedents of international law to provide lasting security for the state. By the late nineteenth century, however, the Europeans had developed an exclusionary meaning of citizenship that affected their application of international law. This shift would shake Ottoman faith in the system.

The second chapter examines the lack of Great Power support for the Ottomans during the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78, and the Ottoman’s understanding that this was a major failure of European diplomatic guarantees. The Ottoman’s loss of confidence in the reliability of the Concert of Europe led to an important change in their foreign policy that pushed them away from reliance on diplomacy and from trust in international agreements.

The third chapter analyzes the period between the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. It examines the refugee crises that resulted from these wars as well as the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Russia and the Balkan states. Two major refugee crises influenced Ottoman domestic policy and shifted the Empire’s identity from the ideology of civic Ottomanism, or Ottoman “official nationalism,” to one centered on Islam as a pan-national identity. Ethnic cleansing also imbued the Ottomans with a siege mentality, a belief that the whole Islamic world was under attack and that only Ottoman military strength could save it.

The final chapter will claim that the Ottomans entered the First World War because of an unreliable international system that had caused instability in the Balkans and created the
conditions for ethnic cleansing. This part of the study will examine events from July through November 1914, contextualized within the previous four decades, to demonstrate that the Concert of Europe’s broken guarantees, and the Ottoman’s experiences with ethnic cleansing and humanitarian crises, left them with no alternative but to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers.
Chapter I: The Ottoman Empire in the Eurocentric International System

A long process of European-Ottoman diplomatic failures informed the Ottoman government’s decision to enter the First World War as an ally of Germany. This process began with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1856 that ended the Crimean War and ushered the Ottoman Empire into the Concert of Europe. It provided the Ottoman Empire with guarantees that foreign states would not impinge upon the Empire's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Despite this, revolts in the Balkans during 1875 and 1876 tested the guarantees of the Treaty’s signatory states who refused to uphold their pledges. The unwillingness of Great Britain, France, Austria, and Prussia to maintain their agreements proved to be disastrous for the Empire and ushered in a period when the Ottomans recognized that they could not rely on the signatory powers for international support.

This chapter examines the intellectual foundations of the European international system, the admittance of the Ottoman Empire into the Concert of Europe in 1856, and the justification of Great Britain for abandoning the Empire in the 1870s. Early in the nineteenth century, European statesmen believed international law applied only to civilized states. They conceptualized civilization as universal and attainable by all peoples, regardless of cultural difference, after they had reached a level of material and intellectual progress. The entry of the Ottoman Empire into the Concert of Europe in 1856 was based on the acknowledgement of the Great Powers that the Tanzimat reform program had ushered the Ottomans into the rank of civilized nations. By the 1870s, however, the Great Powers’ definition of civilization had evolved and was now based on cultural difference, which meant that the Ottoman Empire was to be excluded from the international system. Because civilization was no long universal and
attainable there was now an impassable border between the “civilized” and “non-civilized” worlds. The Ottomans, however, were initially unaware of this change. They believed they were a member of the Concert, considered the guarantees binding, and factored the rights accorded by the Treaty of Paris into their foreign policy. The Ottomans only became aware of their exclusion from the system during the disastrous Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78. The decision of the Great Powers to deny the Empire full integration into the international system would lead Ottoman leadership to reformulate their foreign policy.

**The Crimean War, the Treaty of Paris, and the Concert of Europe**

The origin of the Crimean War is obscure but historians generally agree that Great Britain and France joined the Ottoman Empire to defend against Russian expansionist policies.¹ The initial dispute was over Russian (Orthodox) or French (Catholic) pre-eminence over the holy sites of Jerusalem and Bethlehem.² Hoping to expand Russian influence in the Balkans, Tsar Nicholas I took advantage of the crisis and attempted to convince Great Britain that the time was right for the partition of the Ottoman Empire. The Tsar, however, misjudged British and French

---


intentions to maintain the status quo and the current balance of power. In February of 1853 he sent an ultimatum to the Sultan demanding that his Orthodox subjects be placed under Russian protection. When the Ottomans rejected the ultimatum, Russia invaded the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, which compelled Britain and France to send warships to Constantinople. Constantinople erupted in joy early in the war when news reached the city of several victories against Russia in Wallachia and the Caucasus. Although these early successes would lead to later defeats, the Empire appeared revitalized after nearly a century of military losses.

On February 18, 1853, Sultan Abdülmecid I issued the *Hatt-i Hümayun*, an imperial order that would exert considerable influence on future events. This decree reaffirmed the rights given in the *Hatt-i Şerif-i Gülhane* (1839) that all subjects were guaranteed security of life, property, and honor regardless of class or religion. Abdülmecid I stated that this reaffirmation of minority rights was to "submit to my Sublime Porte the reforms required by the progress of civilization and of the age." Geopolitically, however, the intent was to weaken Russian claims of protection over the Empire's Orthodox subjects. One month before the Sultan’s decree, the British ambassador at Constantinople had sent a memorandum to the Ottomans, which stated,

---

8. Ibid., I:149-51.
9. Ibid., 149-50.
The question of privileges accorded... to the Christian communities is so bound up with that of administrative reforms that both seem...within the same compass. To bring them closer together in such a way as to cause all differences to disappear that separate the Moslems from the Rayahs would be a giant step...toward the regeneration of the empire [sic].”

The Sultan’s decision to reaffirm the equality of his subjects was also a strategic move intended to convince Great Britain that the Empire was a civilized state deserving admittance into the Concert of Europe. Britain and France were the strongest advocates for bringing the Ottomans into the international system, but in return they also demanded concessions to the Christian populations. The declaration of the Hatt-ı Hümayun succeeded in convincing the Great Powers that the Empire was a civilized state that should be admitted into the international system. This decision was evident in Article IX of the Treaty of Paris which stated that due to the decree’s "generous intentions” towards the Christian populations of the Empire, the Powers of Europe had no right to interfere in Ottoman internal affairs.

Article VII of the Treaty also declared that the Empire was to be “admitted to participate in the advantages of the Public Law and System (concert) of Europe.” Austria, Sardinia, France, Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain agreed “to respect the Independence and Territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.” In recent years, scholars have portrayed the Crimean War as a pyrrhic

12. "The Treaty of Peace (Paris) Terminating the Crimean War, with Pertinent Annexed Conventions 1856," in Diplomacy in the Middle East, I:154; "Sultan Abdülmecid's Hatti Hümayun," in Diplomacy in the Middle East, I:150-51; and "The Hatt-I-Serif Decree Initiates the Tanzimat, or Reform, Period of the Ottoman Empire, November 3, 1839," in Sources in the History of the Modern Middle East, ed. Akram Fouad Khater, 2nd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2011), 11-14. Throughout the early nineteenth century, and continuing after the Crimean War, the European powers would utilize the lack of rights towards Christians as justification for intervention. The Hatt-i Şerif-i Gūlhanе (1839) and Hatt-i Hümayun (1856) were partially issued in response to European arguments justifying intervention into Ottoman sovereignty. See Aksan, Ottoman Wars, 400.
victory for the Ottomans since it limited the Russian threat only to the European Powers and thus made the Ottomans a buffer in the Balkans.\footnote{Hanoğlu, \textit{A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire}, 82; Hanoğlu stated "But the very success of Ottoman diplomacy in the Crimean War undermined its long-term viability, for the victory over Russia brought about a reduction in the British perception of Russia as a threat."} At the time, however, the Ottoman government viewed the Treaty as an unqualified victory and saw its guarantees as binding. Ottoman diplomats operated on the assumption that the signatory powers would uphold its provisions and support the maintenance of the Empire's territorial integrity and independence.\footnote{Yavuz, "The Transformation of 'Empire,'" 51, note 23.}

The Treaty of Paris provided the framework upon which the Ottoman Empire was to base its foreign policy. As shown above, Article VII admitted the Empire into the Concert of Europe and stated that the contracting parties agreed in common to respect the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Article VIII created mechanisms for mediation to avoid conflict should a dispute arise between parties. Article IX confirmed that the Hatt-ı Hümayun removed any cause that would justify European intervention.\footnote{"The Treaty of Peace (Paris)," in \textit{Diplomacy in the Middle}, I:154.} Great Britain, Austria, and France also signed a separate treaty with the Ottoman Empire that further guaranteed its integrity and provided swift action and cooperation if any Power breached the conditions of the Treaty.\footnote{"Treaty Guaranteeing the Independence and Integrity of the Ottoman Empire: Austria, France, and Britain, 1856," in \textit{Diplomacy in the Middle East}, I:156.}

The Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78 occurred after a series of foreign interventions in Ottoman affairs. After the Crimean War in 1856, engagements in Syria (1860-61) and Crete (1866-68) were undertaken with legal justification based on Treaty of Paris guarantees and with the cooperation, if not complete support, of Ottoman authorities.\footnote{Rodogno, \textit{Against Massacre}, 19.} The first intervention occurred when Britain and France embarked on a humanitarian mission after the start of a civil
war between Maronites and Druze. The Conference of Paris (1860) justified intervention by referencing Article IX of the Treaty of Paris which guaranteed the rights of Ottoman Christians. European involvement gained further legal legitimacy through British and French claims that the unrest in the region threatened Ottoman territorial integrity. The Ottoman government consented to, and assisted with, the humanitarian intervention. The second intervention occurred in 1866 when Cretan Christians revolted against Ottoman attempts to enforce the Tanzimat reforms. The British and French joined forces to support the Ottoman Empire out of fear of Russian expansion. They obtained Ottoman permission for the intervention and did not infringe upon the Empire’s sovereignty. Unlike these two interventions, however, the Russian-Ottoman War was not justifiable according to the Treaty of Paris, did not involve the consent or cooperation of the Ottoman government, and was a direct threat to the Empire’s vital interests.

One has to consider the context in which European international law and the intellectual foundations of the Concert of Europe were created in order to understand why Ottoman reliance on the system was to lead to the failure of their foreign policy. As mentioned above, in the early nineteenth century the international system was based on the concept of a universal civilization that could include all cultures. By the late nineteenth century, however, a form of relativism

20. Ibid., 105.
21. Ibid., 105.
22. Ibid., 118.
23. Ibid., 105-6, 118-19, 133.
based on religion and culture placed restrictions on admittance into the international system.

These changes were prompted by jurists attempting to justify colonialism by claiming that only the spread of European culture could create the conditions for the development of civilization. The Ottomans, however, believed in the earlier European universalist understanding of civilization and were unaware that their religion and culture had become a barrier towards full membership in the international system.

The Great Powers created the Concert of Europe in 1815 as a reaction against the French Revolution and Napoleon's attempt to create a unified Europe. The Concert sought to maintain the independence of European states and preserve their individual legal and social systems. European diplomats and statesmen created this framework in an effort to preserve the status quo and existing power structures. The system operated by convening the major Powers (Great Britain, France, Russia, Prussia, and Austria) at times of international crises with the goal of upholding peace and generating solutions to conflicts. The Concert was "a conceptual norm among the Great Powers of the proper and permissible aims and methods of international behavior, one that transcended ideological division..." This was a semi-formal body that operated according to accepted international norms and laws that were not explicitly codified and were, therefore, subject to being influenced by the prevailing ideologies of the time.

The primary assumption behind the Concert of Europe was the complete domination by the Great Powers who had the sole right to decide European affairs. Non-great power states had few rights, and the Great Powers were not required to consult with them prior to intervention. The founding states established several rules to maintain the status quo and prevent open hostilities. These included a ban on waging war solely for territorial gain, a prohibition against promoting unrest and revolution in another state, and an injunction against humiliating or challenging a Great Power in a matter of its vital interest. This last prohibition was of particular importance because European statesmen believed that humiliating or challenging a Great Power in a matter of its vital interest was a certain way to generate open hostilities. If a major problem arose between parties, all states were required to attend the conference and none could be excluded.

European statesmen believed in a hierarchy of states. The Great Powers were a group apart from other non-member states, and no Great Power had preeminence or supremacy over another member. They justified this hierarchy through the conviction that the leading members of the Concert worked in the collective interests of the Continent. This hierarchy was also supported by the principle of civilization, an idea that became fundamental for maintaining and regulating the international order. According to the intellectuals who conceptualized this system in the mid-nineteenth century, international laws only applied to sovereign civilized states that

32. Rodogno, Against Massacre, 19; and Elrod, "The Concert of Europe," 165.
were exempt from Great Power meddling or intervention into their internal affairs. Jurists utilized this framework to define which states were considered “civilized” and which were designated “uncivilized,” and to legitimize intervention into the affairs of those states that remained non-civilized. The international system thereby codified a hierarchy of states where the Great Powers dominated non-great power European states. The latter were still considered civilized and under the protection of international law, unlike “uncivilized” non-European states that fell outside of the system and its legal guarantees.

In 1828 Francois Guizot, a French historian and statesman, defined the concept of civilization as intrinsically tied to progress:

> It appears to me that the first fact comprised in the word civilization...is the fact of progress, of development; it presents at once the idea of a people marching onwards, not to change its place, but to change its condition; of a people whose culture is conditioning itself, and ameliorating itself.

Guizot defined progress as the perfecting of civil life, society, and man himself. He emphasized that throughout history there had been great crises that changed man, his creed, his external condition, and his relation to fellow man. Christianity was one of these great crises of civilization because it "changed the internal man, creeds, sentiments; because it regenerated the moral man, the intellectual man."

36. Ibid., 1-80.
38. Ibid., 17-18.
39. Ibid., 19.
40. Ibid., 19-20.
Guizot portrayed European civilization as the pinnacle "of a linearly developing world history." He maintained that it was a distinct form of civilization that was hierarchal and at the forefront of progress.

I have used the term European civilization, because it is evident that there is an [sic] European civilization; that a certain unity pervades the civilization of the various European states; that, notwithstanding infinite diversities of time, place, and circumstance, this civilization takes its first rise in facts almost wholly similar, proceeds everywhere upon the same principles, and tends to produce well nigh everywhere analogous results.

He continued,

For my own part, I am convinced that there is, in reality, a general destiny of humanity, a transmission of the aggregate of civilization; and consequently, an [sic] universal history of civilization to be written. But without raising questions so great, so difficult to solve, if we restrict ourselves to a definite limit of time and space, if we confine ourselves to the history of a certain number of centuries, of a certain people, it is evident that within these bounds, civilization is a fact that can be described, related— which is history.

Guizot limited his analysis to Europe where he believed there was a unified level of progress in civilization. John Stuart Mill was more assertive in stressing the link between European culture and civilization, stating that "all [the elements of civilization] exist in modern Europe, and especially in Great Britain, in a more eminent degree...than at any other place or time." For both John Stuart Mill and Francois Guizot, it was evident that the highest form of civilization lay within Europe.

---

43. Ibid., 13.
Although Guizot did not assert that civilization was exclusive to Europe, he was a dedicated Calvinist and believed that Christianity created the conditions for the continent’s civilizational superiority, particularly over the Islamic world. He stated, 

In the Christian world, the spiritual and the temporal powers were distinct...The Germans...they became Christians but not missionaries. The Arabs, on the contrary, were both conquerors and missionaries... At a later period, this character determined the unfortunate turn taken by Mussulman civilization; it is in the combination of the spiritual and the temporal powers... that the tyranny which seems inherent in this civilization originated. This I conceive to be the cause of the stationary condition into which that civilization is everywhere fallen.46

Christianity and European civilization were inseparable but, unlike other civilizations, religion did not dominate the state. The superiority of western civilization was, in fact, the result of the separation of church and state.

In 1845, Henry Wheaton, a specialist in international law, linked the concept of civilization to Christianity and to European culture, and contrasted it with the condition of the Ottoman Empire.47 He argued that the Europeans only respected Ottoman territorial integrity to maintain the balance of power.48 He further explained that although they had brought the Ottomans into the international system, public law was "founded on that community of manners, institutions and religion, which distinguishes the nations of Christendom from those of the Mohammedan world."49 Public law only applied to European states because of their superior level of civilization. Wheaton asked, "Is there a uniform law of nations?" He answered, “There

47. Anghie, *Finding the Peripheries*, 1-80, Note 17; and Henry Wheaton, *Elements of International Law: Revised Throughout, Considerably Enlarged and Re-Written*, ed. Coleman Phillipson, fifth English ed. (New York: Stevens and Sons, 1916), iii. Wheaton’s work achieved international recognition and was well respected during the nineteenth century. His book went through many editions and was translated into French as well as Mandarin by order of the Qing Dynasty's government in China. Wheaton was the United States' Minister to Prussia between 1835 and 1846.
48. Ibid., 105.
certainly is not the same one for all the nations and states of the world. The public law, with slight exceptions, has been, and still is, limited to the civilized and Christian people of Europe or to those of European origin." Wheaton argued that the Ottomans belonged to a group of states that were not bound by the "general international law of Christendom.” Thus, they did not have the privilege of sovereignty and had no right to complain about the interventions of Christian states into their affairs. Wheaton repeatedly referred to the Ottomans as a barbaric people who fought against Christian Greeks, the exemplar of civilization, in the Greek War of Independence (1821-29). In 1916, a revised and expanded edition of Wheaton's work echoed this sentiment in harsher terms that adopted the imperial rhetoric of the age: "The Turks are not a civilizing people. They are a nation of soldiers, who care little for the peaceful pursuits of trade, literature, and science; while many of their subjects [the Christian ra'aya] are capable of attaining the highest forms of civilization." Wheaton’s contrast between Ottoman Muslim and Christian subjects highlighted his belief that civilization was dependent upon one’s culture.

In an article published on April 3, 1858, the British newspaper Leader demonstrated the connection between civilization and Christianity as it was developing in European public thought. The writer stated that it was only a matter of time before the Ottoman Empire splintered.

---

49. Wheaton, *Elements of International Law*, fifth English ed., 116-17. Wheaton did not explain why Islamic law was inferior to Christian law. Instead he opted only to describe Islam as oppressive towards Christians.
52. Ibid., 113-16.
53. Wheaton, *Elements of International Law*, fifth English ed., 107. Coleman Phillipson expanded this edition from Wheaton's original. Much of the original content remains as well as the intent and overall argument. The primary changes consist of an update of specific cases in Wheaton’s original work and an explanation of their relevance to recent events.
into Christian states." He presaged language that was to be used over the course of the next eighty years when he wrote that the "Turk" was a soldier and incapable of becoming an agriculturalist or merchant. For more than a century the Ottomans had attempted to adopt European styles and methods in a bid to become civilized, but "a bad Asiatic does not make a good European. To wear Paris boots, to eat pork, to wallow in wine-bibbing...to ape Western fashions and trample upon Mohammedanism without embracing Christianity, is not to progress but to recede, and this has been the policy of the Turks in Europe." The most recent Ottoman reforms of the Hatt-ı Hümâyun and the earlier "Magna Charta of Gullhané" were Christian charters and "monuments of Turkish humiliation." Even when the Ottomans instituted reforms, the writer did not give them agency but, instead, presented the reforms as a poor attempt at emulating European and Christian laws. The term "Magna Charta of Gullhané" is indicative of the European unwillingness to credit the Ottomans with civilizational progress. The Hatt-ı Şerif-i Gülhane bore little resemblance to the Magna Carta, which involved primarily medieval property rights and guaranteed a fair trial only to free men. In contrast, the Hatt-ı Şerif-i Gülhane secured all Ottoman subjects security of life, honor, and property. The author of the article compared them as though Ottoman reforms were merely an imitation of European law. Additionally, because of its Islamic character, the Empire could not successfully imitate Christian Powers. This depiction of the Ottomans bears similarities to both the original (1836) and revised edition (1916) of Wheaton's *Elements of International Law*, which used almost identical language. The continuity of ideas between these works spanned eighty years and demonstrates the endurance of

55. Ibid.
the image of Ottoman cultural inferiority in relation to Europe.

In a report presented before the Congress of the United States in 1881, Edward A. Van Dyck, the consular clerk of the United States at Cairo, wrote about the connection between Christianity, international law, and civilization. He maintained that relations between the Christian and Islamic world were not based on the "principles of the law of nations. International law, as professed by the civilized nations of Christendom, is the offspring of the communion of ideas subsisting between them." Van Dyke argued that Christian states advanced through a shared culture and they developed a uniform international law. Although the Ottoman Empire had adopted some Western reforms and was gradually approaching the level of civilization in Europe, the international law of Christendom did not apply because the only principle of international law for Muslim jurists concerned holy war.

Halil Halid, an Ottoman statesman who lived in exile in England, wrote in 1907 about the connections between the European understanding of civilization and Christianity. He argued that many Europeans believed that the term "civilized world" applied exclusively to Christian countries while they relegated the entirety of the Orient to "semi-civilized" or "barbaric." Halid reasoned that "...no people which does not belong to the community of Christendom seems to be regarded as civilized." According to him European states utilized the presumed uncivilized

---

56. Ibid.
57. Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire: Report of Edward A. Van Dyck, Consular Clerk of the United States, Upon the Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire Since the Year 1150, S. Exec. Doc. No. 3, Special Sess., at 7-134 (1881), in Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire, by United States Department of State (Nabu Public Domain Reprints, n.d.), 8. Van Dyck's report was not original but a translation of several European works. It claimed to be a translation and reproduction of Dr. D. Gatteschi's Manual on Ottoman Public and Private Law, and a collection by Demétrius Nicolaïdes entitled Législation Ottomane, among others.
58. Ibid., 8.
60. Ibid., 4.
nature of the Orient as a justification for territorial gains and the systematic domination of the east.\textsuperscript{61} Halid concluded that Europeans saw the destruction of Islamic countries as a victory for civilization and progress.\textsuperscript{62} He recognized that the Great Powers were using the idea of civilization as a tool to prevent Ottoman participation in the international system.

Two decades earlier James Lorimer, an influential Scottish professor of public law, had articulated the framework through which Europeans could dismiss Ottoman reforms. He devised a three-tiered system that categorized civilizations as civilized, barbaric, and savage.\textsuperscript{63} Lorimer believed that only some states were able to assume a role of leadership on the international stage and the Ottoman Empire could not be included among them because it was a "barbaric" power.\textsuperscript{64} Ottoman sovereignty, accordingly, could be completely ignored due to the ineffectiveness of their system of governance and their rank among the "barbaric" states.\textsuperscript{65}

The Ottomans and the Europeans had different definitions of the meaning of civilization. After the Crimean War in 1856, Ottoman elites considered themselves European with no cultural or religious obstacles to being included in the ranks of civilized countries.\textsuperscript{66} Writing shortly after the Crimean War, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, a long-serving Ottoman bureaucrat and intellectual, argued that at any given time civilization was universal and existed in the most advanced cultures. Civilization had moved from Egypt, China, and Muslim Mesopotamia to Europe, with each culture leaving its imprint.\textsuperscript{67} Ottoman intellectuals believed in a teleological view of history.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 1-2, 5.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{63} Mazower, \textit{An International Civilization}, 554-56.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{66} Aydin, \textit{The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia}, 22-23.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 23.
whereby civilization would reach a height and all cultures and peoples would share in this final stage.
The Failure of Ottoman Integration into the Continental System

By the middle of the 1870s, Ottoman statesmen had concluded that their membership in the Concert of Europe and its associated guarantees would not secure the Empire’s territorial integrity. European imperial chauvinism had ignored Ottoman sovereignty during the Russian-Ottoman War. The Great Powers had refused to grant the Ottomans the same military, economic, and diplomatic privileges afforded other member states, and denied them the right to participate in conferences that concerned their vital interests.

A revolt in the Balkans during the 1870s started the process of European abandonment of the Ottoman Empire. In July 1875, just prior to the outbreak of war with Russia, Slav peasants in Bosnia-Herzegovina revolted against their Muslim landowners. Under pressure from the Great Powers, the Ottoman proposed reforms intended to quell the revolt, but they were not satisfactory to an emboldened Russia gripped by pan-Slavic fervor. Austria-Hungary's Foreign Minister, Count Gyula Andrassy, in accordance with the Concert's mission, made every attempt to devise a compromise that would preserve the status quo and, by extension, the European balance of power. Events rapidly escalated and by April 1876, Bulgaria erupted in a rebellion for national independence. By June, Serbia and Montenegro had declared war on the Empire in an attempt to liberate Bosnian Christians from "Mussulman fanaticism." The Ottomans immediately accused

1. Hanioğlu, A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire, 111.
2. Ibid., 110-11.
3. Hanioğlu, A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire, 111; Milan M. Obrenovicitch IV, "Proclamation of the Prince of Servia of War against Turkey, 18th June, 1876. No. 463," in The Map of Europe by Treaty; Showing Various Political and Territorial Changes Which Have Taken Place since the General Peace of 1814 with Numerous Maps and Notes, comp. Edward Hertslet (London: Harrison and Sons, 1891), IV:2471.
the Serbian government of supporting the insurgents and acting as an aggressor state.\textsuperscript{4} They issued a memorandum, stating, "but the day came when Servia, in despair of exhausting the patience of the Sublime Porte, at last throwing aside the mask...openly declared war, which practically she had more or less carried on in disguise for several months past."\textsuperscript{5} Documents found on the leaders of the Bulgarian insurrection confirmed the Ottoman government's accusations. A list of orders instructed the insurgents to cross the Sava River, murder any Muslims and guards, and open communications with the nearest village.\textsuperscript{6} The insurgents were to announce to the villagers that they had come in support of Serbia and were giving the villagers arms to aid the rebellion. Their mission was to harass and weaken Ottoman defenses in preparation for the Serbian invasion of Bosnia.\textsuperscript{7} Ottoman armies initially achieved significant military victories against Serbia and Montenegro, but their efforts to suppress the rebellions and mounting civilian casualties turned public opinion in Europe against them.\textsuperscript{8} Only two decades earlier, Great Britain had viewed the Ottomans as a liberal empire. Now the Empire's closest ally considered them Muslim tyrants who were the oppressors of Christians.\textsuperscript{9}

The Ottomans were unable to capitalize on their victories against Serbia due to a Russian ultimatum issued on October 19, 1876, which proclaimed the bloodshed unacceptable and

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., IV:2482-83.
\textsuperscript{6} Tacho Dernoghordjanvich, "No. 2. Organic Statute," \textit{The Diplomatic Review} XXIV, no. 4 (October 1876): 249. Tacho Dernoghordjanvich was the President of the Revolutionary Committee in Ottoman Serbia.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 249.
\textsuperscript{8} Hanioğlu, \textit{A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire}, 117.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 111.
demanded an end to the war. The Ottomans agreed to the demands shortly thereafter, but Tsar Alexander II was not satisfied and threatened that if the Great Powers could not agree to peace on Russian terms, he would act alone to protect the Christian populations of the Balkans. Great Britain called for a conference that under international law should have included the Ottomans. Their exclusion led the Ottomans to believe that the Great Powers were trying to isolate them in the international arena. The Conference began on December 23, 1876, but did not last long because the Ottoman government rejected several of its proposals. From the outset, Ottoman leadership insisted that the European Powers adhere to the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris and not, in any way, infringe upon the independence of the Empire's Balkan administration. When European delegates adopted a program that essentially disbanded Ottoman authority in Bosnia and Bulgaria, the government saw a clear violation of the Empire’s territorial integrity.

According to Safvet Paşa, the Ottoman Foreign Minister (1876-77), this proposal gave executive and judicial powers, as well as control of the army, to foreign powers in Bosnia and Bulgaria. The Great Powers also assumed the right to participate in the election of Ottoman governors and to establish an international commission to oversee and execute the regulations of the provincial administration. Safvet Paşa was acutely aware that these demands would effectively remove

---

13. Ibid., IV:2545-46.
Ottoman sovereignty and formally sanction the separation of Bosnia and Bulgaria from the Empire.\textsuperscript{15} The Ottoman government ultimately had no opportunity to negotiate a different outcome because they were not invited to the conference. They ultimately agreed to demands for a new provincial administration that would govern without distinction to religion, language, and creed because these rights were already guaranteed by the Ottoman Constitution of 1876.\textsuperscript{16} But they were unwilling to accept others that violated the egalitarian spirit of the Constitution by according special rights to Christians only.

On the February 20, 1877, the Ottoman Empire and Serbia signed an armistice. The Sultan's Imperial Decree on the "Re-Establishment of Peace with Servia" reaffirmed the \textit{status quo ante} with no change in borders and mutual recognition of only nominal Ottoman sovereignty over the semi-autonomous Serbia.\textsuperscript{17} While the potential for war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire still loomed, the Great Powers met in London to resolve the humanitarian crisis in Bulgaria. The Powers declared that their agents in the Empire would watch carefully to ensure that the Ottoman government was keeping its guarantees to protect the Christian subjects.\textsuperscript{18}

This series of events is illuminating for several reasons. The Great Powers excluded the Ottoman government from a conference pertaining to matters of the Empire’s vital interests, which was in direct contravention to the rules of the Concert of Europe and the Treaty of Paris. The Ottoman government rejected proposals that breached the terms of the Treaty of Paris. They

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., IV:2547.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., IV:2571-73.
\textsuperscript{17} "Firman of the Sultan, on the Re-Establishment of Peace with Servia, 20th February/ 4th March, 1877. No. 481," in \textit{The Map of Europe by Treaty}, IV:2559-60.
\textsuperscript{18} Protocol between Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia, Relative to the Condition of the Christian Populations of Turkey; the Introduction of Reforms in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria; the Affairs of Servia, Montenegro, the Principalities, &c. London, 31st March, 1877. No. 483," in \textit{The Map of Europe by Treaty}, IV:2563-65.
did agree, however, to measures for the protection of their population that did not contravene Ottoman authority or the spirit of their Constitution. At the end of the Conference, European Powers issued the London Protocol that authorized its members to ensure that improvement was forthcoming for Ottoman Christians. If not, then they would consider more severe action. Both the Ottoman and British governments understood that if the Ottoman Constitution produced positive results for the Christian communities then no further action would be needed. The Great Powers’ decision to disregard the Treaty of Paris and interfere in Ottoman domestic administration proved to the Ottomans that they would not receive the same treatment as other European states, they would not be consulted on matters of vital interests, and, ultimately, they were considered non-civilized and in need of tutelage.

The Russians were not willing to wait for the Ottoman Constitution to improve conditions for the Christian community. Under the pretext that the Ottomans refused to abide by the demands of the London Protocol, Russia declared war in April of 1877. The Ottomans countered on April 24 that, in fact, they had agreed to all the essential parts of the reforms and that Russia’s declaration of war was without justification or the sanction of the Concert. The

---

Ottomans repeatedly demanded mediation. They were not alone in viewing the Russian declaration of war as a breach of the Treaty of Paris. The British government found Ottoman assurances sufficient and disapproved of Russia's war initiative. They condemned the Russians, stating,

the course on which the Russian government has entered involves graver and more serious considerations. It is in contravention of the stipulation of the Treaty of Paris..., by which Russia and the other signatory Powers engaged, each on its own part, to respect the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire...In taking action against Turkey on his own part, and having recourse to arms without further consultation with his allies, the Emperor of Russia has separated himself from the European concert hitherto maintained... British support was meaningless, however, because in the end they were more concerned with their own strategic interests. On May 6, 1877, the British assured the Russians that they would not offer assistance to the Ottomans as long as the Russians did not invade the Persian Gulf, Constantinople, and Egypt. They kept this promise because their aid to the Ottomans never materialized throughout the war.

The Ottomans suffered greatly due to the Russian attack and Britain’s failure to supply assistance. The Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78 was a disaster for the Ottoman Empire. They lost eight percent of their richest and most productive territory and twenty percent of their

---

26. McCarthy, The Ottoman Turks, 354; and Finkel, Osman's Dream, 485; and Palmer, The Decline and Fall, 169-70.
population to foreign control. The new borders, which were now limited to a small buffer zone around Constantinople with a narrow corridor leading to Macedonia and Albania, were difficult to defend against invasion.

The Concert of Europe had admitted the Ottoman Empire into its ranks, but had refused to accept its full integration. This was in large part due to the European perception that as an Islamic state the Ottomans could not achieve the highest levels of civilization reserved for Christian powers. As a non-civilized state, the Ottomans could not be truly sovereign and were thus excluded from the protection of international law. The Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78 also demonstrated that the European Powers were unwilling to accept the Ottomans as a full member despite their reform program. The Great Powers refused the Ottomans the same privileges allotted other member states and did not protect their territorial integrity and independence. When Russia justified war by claiming to be protecting Ottoman Christians, the Great Powers quickly abandoned their guarantees and, instead, demanded reforms that were already in place and other concessions that limited Ottoman sovereignty. The inability of the Europeans to accept the Ottoman Empire as a state of equal status was to lead to disastrous results. As will be shown in the following chapter, the Ottomans now understood that the Great Powers, and Great Britain in particular, were no longer allies and their membership in the Concert of Europe would not guarantee territorial integrity and sovereignty. This realization was the genesis of the fatal decision made in 1914 to align with Germany in the First World War.

---

28. Yavuz, "The Transformation of 'Empire,'" in *War and Diplomacy*, 27. See Appendix A for map.
Chapter II: The Diplomatic Implications of the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78

Revolution and war plagued the Ottoman Empire's European territories in the 1870s. There was an ongoing revolt in Bosnia, and war was developing in the western Balkans between the Ottomans and a Serbian-Montenegrin alliance. Bulgarian nationalists took advantage of this instability and began an insurrection in central Bulgaria that was met with violence by Ottoman irregulars. Europeans would name these revolts across Ottoman Rumelia the "Bulgarian Horrors."

This chapter will begin with an examination of the reasons why the British did not uphold their obligations under the Treaty of Paris to support the Ottomans against these insurgencies. It will show that British assistance became impossible due to growing anti-Ottoman public opinion; that the British were unwilling to uphold its guarantees to protect the Empire’s territorial integrity and independence; and that these decisions were based on an evolution of the meaning of citizenship that excluded the Ottomans.

It moves to a study of the Ottoman explanation of the reasons for the Bulgarian revolts and the failure of the Concert of Europe to prevent Russia from unilaterally acting to end the rebellion by declaring war on the Empire. This research will show that the Ottomans believed the insurgencies were propelled by foreign agitators who sought to undermine the social stability of the region in order to sever the Balkans from the Empire. Against growing separatist nationalisms, however, Ottoman statesmen believed that they could restore order if they adhered to the principles of civic Ottomanism and appealed to their subjects’ sense of shared community in one homeland.
The final section of this chapter will look at Ottoman decision-making after the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78, which led to a new foreign policy that recognized the costs to the Empire’s territorial integrity from lack of British support and the failure of the international system. Well before 1914, Ottoman statesmen understood that Great Power politics and diplomacy alone were insufficient to guarantee the Empire’s security.

The Bulgarian Horrors I: The Horrors and British Perceptions

The horrors of events in Bulgaria in 1877 were intentionally exaggerated by writers and journalists who ignored Muslim suffering and obscured the true nature of the revolt from the British public. British and Ottoman sources, however, reveal a more complicated picture of a region beset by the fear of religious violence and inter-ethnic reprisals that were provoked by revolutionary and foreign agitation. Also emerging from these sources is the continued dedication of Ottoman statesmen to the ideology of civic Ottomanism and the sentiments of the Hatt-ı Şerif-i Gülhane and Hatt-ı Hümayun in the face of the collapse of their imperial system in Bulgaria.

Richard Millman has noted that most of the scholarship in the twentieth century accepted accounts of large-scale massacres of Bulgarians that were estimated between 10,000 and 15,000 deaths.¹ In his groundbreaking 1980 article, Millman proved that this depiction was a myth formulated from unconfirmed reports by British agents and missionaries who openly spoke of their hatred of the Ottomans and made little effort to obtain accurate data.² They were primarily concerned with the impact of the revolt on the Ottoman Christian population and did not look at

---

² Ibid., 218-20, 222, 228, 230.
violence against Muslims. Importantly, Millman found that although the Pomaks (Bulgarian Muslims) and Başı Bazouks (Ottoman irregulars) were responsible for some atrocities, it was impossible to gauge from the available sources the extent and severity of these attacks. As a result, scholars could not know the full extent of the massacres.

Justin McCarthy studied the insurrection from the perspective of Ottoman Muslims and found that in the beginning the Bulgarian revolution was a slaughter of Muslims. During the Serbian-Ottoman War of 1876, Bulgarian fighters perpetrated extreme acts of violence against Crimean-Circassian refugees who had been recently settled in Serbia and Bosnia. Bulgarian insurgents expected that burning Circassian villages would bring violent reprisals that would lead to a breakdown of order and potentially cause foreign intervention. At the start of the revolt, only a small contingent of the Ottoman regular army aided by armed Circassian irregulars were

3. Ibid., 218-20. Joseph H. Dupris, the British Vice-Consul at Adrianople, sent many unconfirmed reports to London through the British Ambassador at Constantinople, H. Elliot. Sir Edwin Pears, a British barrister and historian who lived in Constantinople between 1873 and 1909, wrote many articles for the Daily News starting in June 1876. Pears drew from the accounts of the former American missionaries Dr. George Washburn and Dr. Albert Long. These men never went to the scenes of the atrocities but drew from the reports of Bulgarian friends and students.
4. Ibid., 230.
5. Ibid., 231.
7. Ibid., 60. In the 1850s and 1860s the Circassians fled to Ottoman Rumelia as a result of Russian attempts to control the Caucasus through the forced removal and extermination of its people. During the Bulgarian revolt the Ottoman government armed their Circassian subjects to put down the revolt and prevent it from spreading.
8. McCarthy, Death and Exile, 32-42, 60; and Oliver Bullough, Let Our Fame Be Great: Journey's among the Defiant People of the Caucasus (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 101-13. In 1829 the Russians captured the northern shores of the Black Sea and the Circassian homeland from the Ottomans. After the war, the Russians spent the next 35 years attempting to control Circassia through force of arms. The Crimean War created a brief respite for the Circassian people. After the Crimean War, the Russians resumed their conquest of the region. The Russians believed that it was impossible to "civilize" the Circassians and this led to internal discussions on the necessity of waging a war of extermination. In 1864 the Russian government gave the Circassians a choice, they could either become peasants and move to the plains or leave the country. Many Circassians fled to the Ottoman Empire while some attempted to defend their homeland. The refugees were often attacked by the Russian military and suffered from severe hunger and disease. The Ottoman refugee camps were unable to handle the volume of refugees, which exacerbated the plight of the Circassians. The Circassians who survived quickly assimilated into Ottoman society and remained loyal until the Empire's dissolution.
stationed in Bulgaria. The Circassian irregulars were quick to oblige the revolutionaries; they perpetrated atrocities against Bulgarian Christian communities in revenge for Bulgarian attacks on Circassian villages. Despite this, the Ottoman regular army sought to limit the damage done to the civilian population by arresting and punishing the offending irregulars. McCarthy has concluded that the Bulgarian horrors were indeed a terrible and real Muslim reaction against insurrection, but the news that reached Europe was either inaccurate or highly exaggerated and sensationalized.10

Just two decades earlier, British public opinion had generally viewed the Ottomans in a positive light. News reports during the early 1850s noted that Ottoman reforms benefitted all Ottoman subjects. The new reforms limited the power of the religious establishment, granted its subjects equality, and ended the abuses perpetrated by Ottoman irregulars against the Empire’s Christian population.11 Throughout the Crimean War the British media presented the Ottoman Empire as a rising power.12 In 1854, the Ottoman ambassador in London thanked the British people for publicly expressing their goodwill in the face of Russian aggression during the war.13 Not all reports were positive, however. In 1858 the Leader published an article stating that the Ottoman Empire could never become civilized and was destined to fall. The author bemoaned the fact that British public opinion believed the Empire could successfully reform itself, and that

---

10. Ibid., 62.
only a few recognized the cultural limitations that would prevent successful regeneration. By the mid-1870s, negative views of this sort predominated in the media. Even former supporters such as William Gladstone shifted his position. In 1875, Gladstone was arguing that the Ottoman system of checks and balances made them the least despotically governed state in the world. One year later, he wrote a book asserting that Ottoman barbarism stemmed not only from Islam but also from the characteristics of the Turkish race:

It is not a question of Mahometanism simply, but Mahometanism compounded with the peculiar character of a race...They were, upon the whole, from the black day when they first entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity. Wherever they went, a broad line of blood marked the track behind them; and as far as their dominion reached, civilization disappeared from view. They represented everywhere government by force, as opposed to government by law...But although the Turk represented force as opposed to law, yet not even a government, of force can be maintained without the aid of an intellectual element, such as he did not possess.

Gladstone’s views changed significantly that year because of reports of Ottoman atrocities against the Bulgarians. In his view, racial and religious factors prevented the Ottomans from becoming “civilized” and successfully administering the Empire. He believed reform was not an option as the Ottomans lacked the intellectual capacity to understand the rule of law.

In subsequent years, strong anti-Ottoman opinion dominated newspaper reports about Ottoman atrocities in Bulgaria. One journalist stated that the Bulgarian atrocities had opened the public's eyes to the tyranny of the "Turk," and the people would never again consent to fight for...
the Ottomans who would "place again their intolerable yoke on the necks of their slave."\(^{17}\) A writer for the same paper claimed that Ottoman actions against civilians were atrocities beyond question.\(^{18}\) Circassians and Ottoman irregulars, the main perpetrators of the crimes, did not spare Christian women and children, unlike Bosnian insurgents who did no harm to Muslims families.\(^{19}\) Reports graphically alleged that the Ottomans tossed around Christian heads in the marketplace, or sold the jaws and teeth of massacred Christians.\(^{20}\) Bandits then delivered them in cases of five hundred to Paris where there was great demand for dentures.\(^{21}\) One writer concluded that "it is a disgusting reflection that persons on both sides of the channel are unconsciously wearing the teeth of the massacred and violated."\(^{22}\) In another article the British government was accused of inaction due to its prejudice against Orthodox Christians.\(^{23}\) It went even further to condemn the government’s material and moral support for the Ottomans during the Crimean War, which had led to two decades of suffering for millions of Orthodox Christians. The author concluded, "God forbid that we shall repeat that blunder and crime [The Crimean War]."\(^{24}\) In their criticism of British policy, journalists alleged that the dispatch of several British ironclads to the Bosphorus showed a pro-Ottoman foreign policy that was enraging the British public.\(^{25}\)

---

19. Ibid.
21. "Motive Is at Last Supplied"
22. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
Special interest groups also started issuing statements and publishing articles that condemned the Ottomans and British policy. A resolution by the Women’s Peace and Arbitration Auxiliary of the South-Eastern District of London declared,

That this meeting regards with deepest indignation and horror the atrocities committed by agents of the Turkish Government on the defenseless Christian population of Bulgaria and other parts of the Ottoman Empire, and desires to express its opinion that all self-interested policy on the part of the professedly Christian Powers of Europe should be abandoned for a prompt concerted action in order at once to put a stop to any further outrages, and to bring about a suspension of hostilities and an amicable settlement of the question, as also an improved condition of things socially throughout the nationalities comprising the Turkish Empire.26

The message of the group's resolution was clear. Regardless of national self-interest, the nations of Europe should not support the Ottoman Empire because of its treatment of Christians.

Changes in British travel literature also reflected the shifts taking place in British public opinion. In 1850, Edmund Spencer accused the Ottoman government of being "a pure despotism" but argued Ottoman governance was "mild and paternal when equitably administered."27 Irregular taxation, religious fanaticism, and prejudice among “castes” plagued Ottoman territory.26 Reforms could mitigate the ills of the Ottoman Empire through the creation of an independent aristocracy.29 Spencer stated,

28. Ibid., I:268-69.
29. Ibid., I:270.
However, in those days, nothing could withstand Osmanali enterprise and preserving energy; they were not then the indolent, degenerate, tchibouque-smoking, coffee-bibbing race we find them; nor were their chiefs the effeminate inmates of the harem, better fitted for weaving a web of intrigue on the velvet cushion of a divan, than taking a bold active part in the regeneration of a country.30

The Empire's ability to govern effectively had declined over time but Spencer argued that there were still no cultural barriers toward reform.31 Rather, the Ottomans just needed to place the Office of the Sultan on a firmer foundation while removing him as the sole lord of the land.32 Ottoman inferiority was not a permanent condition. In the past, the Empire had been properly administered and it could be again through reform programs such as the Tanzimat.

James Craegh traveled to Eastern Europe and the Balkans in 1875 where he observed that Ottoman Muslims were blindly religious and were poorly educated. They hated Christians and viewed any liberties granted to them as “a plot against the religion of Mahommed.”33 After the Ottomans had been pushed out of the Balkans, the large Muslim populations would face insurmountable difficulties because of their Islamic culture.34 He claimed, “owing to its large Mussulman population, Home Rule in Bosnia would be attended by insurmountable difficulties, compared to which a similar form in Ireland would be harmonious and edifying.”35 Creagh, unlike Spencer, did not see the possibility for change. In his view, not only poor administration but also Ottoman-Muslim culture prevented the Empire from achieving lasting order and stability. Reform was not a viable option to salvage the Empire.

30. Ibid., II:370.
31. Ibid., I:270.
32. Ibid., I:270.
34. Ibid., II:137.
British agents in the Ottoman Empire examined the incoming reports from Eastern Rumelia through the lens of their own assumed cultural superiority. During the Bulgarian revolt Edward Stanley, the Foreign Secretary (1874-80) sent a communication to Sir H Elliot, the British Ambassador in Constantinople (1867-77), stating, "it is my duty to inform you that any sympathy which was previously felt here towards that country has been completely destroyed by the recent lamentable occurrences in Bulgaria."36 The Foreign Secretary stated that, although failure to aid the Ottoman Empire would be a humiliating breach in Britain's treaty arrangements, public opinion made such a humiliation likely.37 In his response, Ambassador Elliot wrote that "an insurrection or civil war is everywhere accompanied by cruelties and abominable excesses, and this being tenfold the case in Oriental countries, where people are divided into antagonistic creeds and races."38 Elliot continued that he did not have any sentimental affection for the "Turks" but he still felt it best for Great Britain to continue to support the Ottoman Empire as British interests aligned with its preservation.39 He concluded,

We have been upholding what we know to be a semi-civilized nation, liable under certain circumstances to be carried into fearful excesses: but the fact of this having just now been strikingly brought home to us all cannot be a sufficient reason for abandoning a policy which is the only one that can be followed with a due regard to our own interests.40

35. Ibid., II:137.
37. Ibid., 105.
39. Ibid., 197.
40. Ibid., 197.
Elliot accepted accounts of Ottoman atrocities as a predictable outcome of Ottoman “barbarism.” The British should expect “barbaric” acts from states lying outside the pale of civilization and these atrocities should have no bearing on British strategic interests.

Even those in Britain who supported the Ottoman Empire viewed them through the lens of a world divided between civilized and non-civilized states. Sir Edward Sullivan, a liberal member of Parliament (1865-70) and Lord Chancellor of Ireland (1883-85), protested against British indignation over the Bulgarian Horrors, demonstrating how ingrained the concept of civilization was to the British worldview. He criticized Gladstone for not waiting for accurate reports and instead blindly reproducing the most exaggerated accounts. Sullivan’s imperial worldview was evident when he admitted that Gladstone had not taken into account the "semi-barbarous nature of the combatants." Nevertheless, he defended the Ottomans who were forced to suppress a revolt created by Russian agitation, and to quash the violence perpetrated by Christians who with Russian encouragement were roasting Turkish officials alive and burning down villages. His defense of the Ottomans noted improvements in governance over the past twenty years, but it was tempered by the need for further progress and the fact that they remained a semi-barbarous people.

In the 1850s, British media had by and large portrayed the Ottoman Empire as possessing the ability to reform and become a rising power. By the 1870s, however, highly exaggerated and outrageous reports coupled with the changing conceptualization of civilization in Europe

42. Ibid., 276-78.
43. Ibid., 277.
44. Ibid., 276-78.
convincing many in Great Britain that reform was impossible. As far as the British were concerned, the Ottoman Empire was destined to fall.

The Bulgarian Horrors II: The Ottoman Interpretation

Public outrage in Great Britain made a British-Ottoman defensive alliance impossible. Despite this, the British sent Walter Baring, the second secretary at the British embassy in Constantinople, to investigate the accuracy of the alleged atrocities. Baring found many of the allegations against the Ottomans presented in earlier reports to be pure fabrication. He also discovered that the Bulgarian revolutionaries had intended to destroy Muslim villages, exterminate all Muslims within the region, and burn the Christian villages that did not join their cause. Overall, Baring estimated that the Ottoman irregulars massacred twelve thousand Christians, but he noted that these estimates were unreliable and, as a result, his numbers were open to correction.

The Ottoman account of the rebellion differs significantly. Their reports portrayed Ottoman subjects as the victims of a malicious revolutionary movement that was spreading fear and inter-communal conflict, and perpetrating massacres throughout the region. One important event illustrates Bulgarian atrocities. When the local council in Philippopolis (Plovdiv) became aware of an insurrection, they sent a Lieutenant of the Ottoman Gendarme, Nedjib Agha, to arrest

---

45. Millman, "The Bulgarian Massacres Reconsidered," 220, note 3. Evelyn Baring was the 1st Earl of Cromer who served as the 1st Controller-General in Egypt between 1878 and 1879 and the 1st Consul-General of Egypt between 1883 and 1907.
46. Walter Baring, "Inclosure 1 in No. 220: Report of Mr. Baring on the Bulgarian Insurrection of 1876," 1876, in Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey, 42:144, 146. Walter Baring was the brother of Evelyn Baring, the 1st Earl of Cromer. He spoke about the alleged atrocities of the Bashi-Bazouks. These atrocities consisted of Ottoman irregulars parading around towns with severed Christian heads, selling women and children into slavery, as well as forcibly confining Christian women within harems.
47. Ibid., 144, 146.
48. Ibid., 150.
leading members of the revolutionary committee who were based in the central Bulgarian town of Avrat-Alan. On May 2, 1876, Nedjib Agha arrested two prominent revolutionaries, Doctressal Teodor and Thosson Yorghi, which prompted the revolutionary committee to lay siege to the governor’s house in order to free the prisoners. Nedjib Agha released the prisoners, but he would not surrender. The siege lasted ten hours, until Nedjib Agha was able to escape and flee. The insurgents massacred several Muslims in the town, as well as the remaining Ottoman gendarmes, and seized control of the region. A detachment of insurgents linked up with rebels in the district of Yeni-Keui, where they massacred and tortured twenty-eight Muslims and transported fifteen gypsy families to Avrat-Alan, ordering them to join local gypsies in forced labor. According to Ottoman accounts, insurgents tortured and massacred about one hundred Muslims and gypsies in the area of Avrat-Alan.


50. Extraordinary Tribunal instituted at Philippopolis, "Inclosure No. 4," in Correspondence Respecting the Affairs, 42:188.

51. The Ottoman state established the asakir-i zabtiye, or gendarmes, in the 1840s to exert state control over the countryside. During the Tanzimat the first duty of an Ottoman governor was to establish a zabtieh regiment before any other administrative reforms. The asakir-i zabtiye were used to keep order in the provinces, ensure military conscription, arbitrate disputes, register lands, and collect taxes. In the 1860s the Ottoman government replaced the use of irregular forces, such as the Başi-Bazouks, with asakir-i zabtiye. The Bulgarian insurrection in 1876 forced the Ottoman government to utilize irregulars again. Bulgarian peasants complained throughout the Bulgarian Horrors of abuses committed by the irregulars and asakir-i zabtiye. See Nadir Ozbek, "Policing the Countryside: Gendarmes of the Late 19th-Century Ottoman Empire (1876-1908)," International Journal of Middle East Studies 40, no. 1 (February 2008): 47-49, accessed March 18, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30069651; and Extraordinary Tribunal instituted at Philippopolis, "Inclosure No. 4," in Correspondence Respecting the Affairs, 42:187.

52. Extraordinary Tribunal instituted at Philippopolis, "Inclosure No. 4," in Correspondence Respecting the Affairs, 42:188; and Suavi, "The Bulgarian Insurrection. The New Report," in The Diplomatic Review, VI:245. Avrat-Alan was located within rebel held territory in the safety of the Balkan Mountains.

53. Extraordinary Tribunal instituted at Philippopolis, "Inclosure No. 4 Report Presented to the Sublime Porte by the Extraordinary Tribunal Instituted at Philippopolis to Judge Persons Implicated in the Late Events in Bulgaria," 1876,
Following these events, bands of Bulgarian insurgents spread throughout the region telling the inhabitants that the Muslims were planning to exterminate all Christians. They compelled the Bulgarian Christians to have their families flee into the safety of the Balkan Mountains. Every able-bodied man was to remain behind, take up arms, and join the rebels. Ottoman reports stated that the leadership of the rebellion instructed the insurgents to strike fear into the population by massacring Muslims and burning their villages. The revolutionaries assured the Christians that Russia would send chests of gold to indemnify them should their houses and villages be destroyed. The Ottomans claimed that false reports that exaggerated the violence had spread among the population and exacerbated the situation. Chakir Bey, an imperial commissioner traveling in the Danube province, discovered that Bulgarian Muslims were now arming themselves after receiving news that bands of Christian insurgents were massacring Muslims. He stated that the Muslims had "lost all confidence, even towards the Christians with whom they were on good terms." Muslim reprisals quickly followed. Bulgarians who had not taken part in the revolt suffered as a result. Ali Suavi, an activist and reformer who held administrative positions in Ottoman Rumelia, believed that the insurrections

in *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey*, 42:189. The report claimed that people were shot, repeatedly stabbed, mutilated, impaled, and roasted.
55. Ibid., VI:245.
57. Ibid., 187.
58. Ibid., 191.
59. Chakir Bey, "Inclosure No. 3 in No. 220: Report Presented to the Sublime Porte by Chakir Bey, Imperial Commissioner. Sent to the Vilayet of the Danube to Make Inquiry into the Troubles of Which that Province has Been the Scene," 1876, in *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey*, 174.
60. Ibid., 174.
61. Ibid., 174-75.
had been caused by foreign agitators and not by local discontent.\textsuperscript{62} Ottoman officials had tried to convince local Christian leaders that the reports were fabrications, that they had all lived together as brothers for centuries, and that they had no intention of exterminating the Christian population.\textsuperscript{63}

The prominent position of civic Ottomanism can be seen when Ali Suavi dismissed French statements that Orthodox Christians in the Balkans naturally identified more strongly with Slavic and Russian nationalisms.\textsuperscript{64} Suavi believed that it was inappropriate to equate religion with nationalism.\textsuperscript{65} The Christians of the Balkans belonged to one nation, the Ottoman nation.\textsuperscript{66} As far as Suavi was concerned, the principle of civic Ottomanism, which did not differentiate on the basis of religion, had the power to guarantee security and save the Empire.\textsuperscript{67} Ottoman statesmen adhered to this principle throughout the Bulgarian crisis and used it to legitimize Ottoman rule of the Balkans. The people of the Balkans were Ottoman nationals and regardless of religion this was the core of their identity.

The Extraordinary Tribunal, an official Ottoman commission set up in Philippopolis to monitor and suppress the Bulgarian revolt, also stressed the importance and effectiveness of civic

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 245-46.
\textsuperscript{64} Ali Suavi, \textit{A Propos De L'Herzégovine} (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1875), 19-20; Ottomanism was a program of official nationalism in the Ottoman Empire designed to imbue the Empire's populations with loyalty to the dynasty. Official nationalism was common among nineteenth century dynastic empires and was an attempt to reconcile multiethnic dynastic states with nationalism. Karen M. Kern, \textit{Imperial Citizen: Marriage and Citizenship in the Ottoman Frontier Provinces of Iraq}, Gender and Globalization (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 6-7.
\textsuperscript{65} Suavi, \textit{A Propos De L'Herzégovine}, 18-19. In 1867 the Legislative Assembly of France largely agreed that the peoples of the Balkans yearned for Russian aid and authority. Suavi also argued that in general the French had misunderstood Orthodox Christianity as the Russian Tsar was not the head of Bulgarian and Greek Orthodoxy.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 20-21, 34.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 20-21. The European powers aided insurrections and interfered into Ottoman politics to avoid reawaking the “Eastern Question” or the dispute over what empires would claim which Ottoman lands in the event of partition.
Ottomanism. The Tribunal’s report stated that before the insurrection Ottoman Christians and Muslims had lived together in good fellowship under the protection of the government. Chakir Bey’s belief in civic Ottomanism was evident when he spoke to the Christian and Muslim communities in the villages that had experienced agitation but had not been sites of full rebellion. He told the Muslims that it was the sincerest wish of the imperial government for the Christians and Muslims to work together to achieve communal happiness. Speaking to the Christians, Chakir Bey emphasized that foreign instigations were responsible for endangering the country and, by extension, their community. They were "all children of the same country, and that they themselves constituted one of its chief elements of grandeur and prosperity." Every Ottoman would benefit from abandoning the mistrust that had taken hold in their communities and living in harmony with their fellow countrymen.

Ottoman reports also demonstrated how officials used loyalty to the dynasty, the basis of civic Ottomanism, in order to create inter-religious alliances of Ottoman citizens for mutual defense and the restoration of order in the Balkans. They were able to relieve besieged towns and assist the local population by providing security. From the Ottoman perspective, loyalty to the dynasty was being threatened by outside agitators, but civic Ottomanism could still be an effective policy in providing inter-religious dialogue and security to the villages.

If Ottoman territory went to new, weak nation-states, the balance of power could be preserved with limited Great Power involvement.

68. Extraordinary Tribunal instituted at Philippopolis, "Inclosure No. 4 Report," in Correspondence respecting the Affairs, 42:192.
69. Chakir Bey, "Inclosure No. 3 in No. 220," in Correspondence respecting the Affairs, 42:173-74.
70. Ibid., 42:174.
71. Ibid., 42:174.
72. Ibid., 246. The report mentioned the districts of Ouzun-Kara, Kara-Nasohlar, Tchardakly, Demerjiler, and Deguirmen-Déré.
The Ottomans perceived the revolt as the product of revolutionary leaders encouraged by foreigners who spread fear throughout the region and caused the breakdown of Ottoman society. Holding true to the ideals of civic Ottomanism, Ottoman accounts portrayed these communities as having been united in brotherhood in the past, and this sense of community could calm the fears that had taken hold of the region. Reports highlighted successes in areas where imperial officials arrived before insurgents burnt down the villages. Against this backdrop, Ottoman statesmen would constantly appeal to Great Power assurances of support for their territorial integrity as stipulated in the Treaty of Paris and request assistance for their war against Russia. The refusal of the Great Powers, and Britain in particular, to uphold their obligations would lead to Ottoman protests and ultimately a rethinking of their foreign alignments.

Ottoman Reflection and a New Foreign Policy

The Ottoman state risked war with Russia in 1877 because they expected British support and doubted that the Russians could mount a successful campaign. They firmly believed Great Britain would uphold the guarantees of the Treaty of Paris and at the very least provide financial support. They also operated under the assumption that Russia was unprepared for a military operation against the Empire. For these reasons, Ottoman leadership rejected all Russian demands for reforms that they viewed as impinging on their sovereignty. Mehmet Safvet Paşa, the Foreign Minister (1876-77), wrote a report after the Russian-Ottoman War that explained the events that had led to this conflict. Safvet Paşa assessed the causes and concluded that the

74. Ibid., 24.
Ottoman leadership was too fatalistic in accepting the inevitability of war. The Ottomans were over confident in both their military strength and in the guarantees of foreign powers.\textsuperscript{76} Before the war, the Ottomans had expected that Russophobia in Great Britain would resurface.\textsuperscript{77} Indeed, as the Russian armies crossed the Danube in 1877 Abdülhamid II counted on British support, and the Sultan held this expectation throughout the war.\textsuperscript{78} When the Ottomans pressured the British for assistance they relented a little by agreeing to send two ironclads into the Sea of Marmara, but still refused any direct military or financial involvement.\textsuperscript{79} Safvet's report suggested that the Empire should not tie itself into an exclusive alliance.\textsuperscript{80}

After the war, Abdülhamid II commissioned several reports in anticipation of drafting a new foreign policy. Hayreddin Paşa, the Grand Vizier in 1878 who was well respected by the Sultan, wrote several recommendations.\textsuperscript{81} He suggested an alliance with a newly unified Germany, which was naturally the strongest power in Europe. In his opinion, the internal affairs of other powers were in disorder and they no longer saw the Ottomans as a buffer to Russia.\textsuperscript{82} Hayreddin Paşa also recommended internal reform but, unlike Safvet Paşa, he believed that the Empire needed to secure an alliance with a Great Power.

Hayreddin Paşa and Safvet Paşa were products of the early Tanzimat era's assertion that security rested with internal reform and acceptance into the European international system. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 67.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Sean McMeekin, \textit{The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908-1923} (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 16; and Palmer, \textit{The Decline and Fall}, 168.
\item \textsuperscript{78} McMeekin, \textit{The Ottoman Endgame}, 16; and Palmer, \textit{The Decline and Fall}, 168.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Palmer, \textit{The Decline and Fall}, 168.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Yasamee, "European Equilibrium," 63.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 62-63, 67.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 63. The reports never mention Great Britain by name although this is most likely the state Hayreddin Paşa was referencing.
\end{itemize}
perspective of the younger generation of officials differed significantly. Küçük Mehmet Said Paşa, head of the Sultan's palace secretariat from 1876 through 1878 and Grand Vizier in 1879, presented Abdülhamid II with a report in which he argued that as long as the Empire was weak no Great Power, including Germany, could be trusted. In his opinion, the Empire should combine good government at home with skillful diplomacy abroad, thus giving no justification for intervention. After Britain occupied Egypt in 1882, Küçük Mehmet Said Paşa realized that no amount of internal reform would secure the Empire; this could only be achieved with a Great Power alliance. Kıbrıslı Mehmet Kamil Paşa, who would eventually serve three times as Grand Vizier, countered that territorial guarantees from the European powers offered no real security. The Great Powers acted exclusively out of self-interest and as a result, the Ottoman Empire must rely only on its own diplomatic skill and military power.

Abdülhamid II did not fully adopt these recommendations in his new foreign policy. He believed that maintaining European peace was vital to Ottoman security and making an exclusive alliance with any European power could potentially provoke a European war. The Sultan also dismissed a Russian-Ottoman or British-Ottoman alliance. He understood that in order to remain entirely independent from the European powers he could not make an alliance with a power who held Christian clients within the Empire. A country with religious attachments to Ottoman

83. Ibid., 67-71.
84. Ibid., 67-71.
85. The Ottoman government was forced into an unwelcome alliance with Great Britain through the Cyprus Convention (1878). This alliance provided the Ottomans with protection exclusively for their Asiatic territory, excluding both North Africa and Europe, and was conditional upon the implementation of British-approved administrative reforms in Asia. Abdülhamid II and his ministers saw this as an attempt by Great Britain to establish a protectorate over the Ottoman Empire. In late 1879, when Russian forces departed the Balkans, Abdülhamid II left the British alliance and reasserted Ottoman independence. This is why in 1880 the Ottomans were looking to establish a new foreign policy, because up until that point they had been limited exclusively to the British alliance. See Yasamee, "European Equilibrium," 57-60.
subjects might attempt to force internal reforms on the Empire, thereby turning the Ottomans into a *de facto* protectorate. Abdülhamid II resolved to cultivate a close relationship only with Germany because it had no designs on Ottoman territory and had no Christian clients within the Empire. Germany was also strong enough to restrain Ottoman rivals (Great Britain, Russia, and Austria-Hungary).86

As the century progressed, some Ottomans began to perceive the European powers as actively working together against Ottoman interests.87 Halil Halid, who had lived in London and was an expert on the shifting political climate in Europe, later reflected on Ottoman disillusionment with the European imperial powers who justified their territorial expansion through their "civilizing mission" and portrayed imperialism as humanitarian in aim and scope.88 Halid pointed out that this civilizing mission only enriched the imperial powers while destroying the indigenous population who were not considered a part of the civilized Christian world.89 Ottoman territories faced continuous assaults from European powers that made it "the perpetual victim of the diplomatic tomfoolery of the European Concert."90 Halid knew that the Ottoman Empire would never be accepted as a full member of the international system because Europeans did not consider them “civilized,” so the Empire must be the stalwart defender against

---

86. Ibid., 76.
89. Ibid., 2, 192-93.
90. Ibid., 197.
imperialism. As such, diplomatic agreements were meaningless because they served only European imperial ambitions. These agreements could not be trusted. Halid’s analysis reflected the transition in Ottoman statescraft from belief in the international system at the time of the Russian-Ottoman War to disillusionment in European guarantees by the early twentieth century. The events leading up to the Russian-Ottoman War, the injustices in the Russian invasion, and the failure of Great Britain to uphold its agreements were instrumental in pushing the Ottomans away from a reliance on the international system. The Ottomans understood that the Bulgarian revolt and the accompanying Russian intervention were intended to destroy their authority in the Balkans. They were justified in resisting Russian demands and insisting that Britain uphold her security commitments under the Treaty of Paris. Ottoman faith in the international system dissipated as a result of the pressures from Russian imperialism and the failures of European guarantees. The Russian-Ottoman war was a pivotal event that demonstrated the futility of trying to work within the international system. The consequences of having no international support would prove catastrophic.

91. Ibid., 1-2, 192-94, 197.
Chapter III: Refugees and Ethnic Cleansing, 1877 to 1914

The Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78 ended Ottoman hopes of sustained security through diplomacy. The war and ensuing refugee crisis also prompted the Ottoman elite to gradually abandon the principle of civic Ottomanism in favor of Islamic Ottomanism. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 reversed this trend but the brutality of the Balkan Wars (1912-13) prompted the CUP to rethink the viability of a multicultural and multireligious state. Refugee crises, ethnic cleansing, the fate of the Empire and Ottoman Muslim lives, coupled with a changing ideology of the ruling elite, pushed the Ottomans into the First World War.

Ethnic Cleansing and Refugee Crisis, 1877 to 1881

In addition to convincing Ottoman statesmen that diplomacy could offer no lasting security, the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78 led to the first major instance of ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Balkans. Bulgaria and Russia perpetrated attacks against Ottoman Muslims during and after the war, which caused their mass exodus from the occupied territories. Following the refugee crisis, Abdülhamid II’s government adopted a new form of Ottomanism centered on Islamic symbolism in response to the influx of Muslim refugees, in order to emphasize the state’s legitimacy in the wake of competing nationalisms.

The mass migrations prompted by the Russian-Ottoman War were not the first mass population movements of the nineteenth century. During the Crimean War (1853-56) and in the following decade, hundreds of thousands of Crimean Tartars with historic links to the Ottoman Empire were branded as traitors and forced to flee Russia in search of Ottoman protection.¹

Between 1859 and 1861, Russia embarked on a campaign to exert full imperial authority over the Caucasus that led to extermination and a migration of around 1.5 million Circassians. This migration was an unprecedented humanitarian disaster that led to death from disease, starvation, and exposure. In an attempt to mitigate this human tragedy, the Ottomans established the Refugee Commission (*Muhacirin Komisyonu*) in 1860 to regulate their resettlement. The Refugee Commission acquired land for settlement in areas designated for economic development. This policy continued throughout the remaining years of the Empire and bore positive results. Refugee settlements benefited from the construction of railroads and were quickly transformed from camps into villages, and villages into towns.

The refugees who entered the Empire in the 1850s and 1860s did so from territories outside of Ottoman borders. They were Muslims fleeing persecution within Russia. In contrast, the refugee crises following the Russian-Ottoman War and the Balkan Wars took place within recently conquered Ottoman territories and followed the collapse of Ottoman imperial authority in the Balkans. After 1878, the Ottomans lost most of their Balkan territories (Bosnia, Bulgaria, and parts of Serbia and Montenegro) to Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Austria-Hungary, and

---

3. Ibid., 93-94. Circassians were not the only group to flee the Caucasus during the 1850s and 1860s. Chechens and Ubykhs fled as well, but in smaller numbers.
7. Ibid., 28.
Russia. As Ottoman imperial order collapsed, Russian and Bulgarian insurgents undertook campaigns of ethnic cleansing in the conquered territories. These events repeated themselves during 1913 when the Ottomans lost most of their remaining European territories (Albania, Macedonia, and Novi Pazar).

During the Russian-Ottoman War, Muslim Turks and Bulgarians (Pomaks) were subjected to intentional, systematic slaughter, rape, and destruction of their villages. Russian Cossacks were tasked by the Russian central command to coordinate with local Bulgarian revolutionaries and drive the Muslims from their homes. The goal was to form a larger, independent Bulgarian state through ethnic and religious cleansing. The Cossacks first surrounded Muslim villages, disarmed the population, and then sent in the Bulgarians to slaughter the population or to force them to flee in order to encumber the advancing Ottoman army.

The new Bulgarian state that was created by the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878 was controlled by the Bulgarian revolutionaries who had been responsible for the massacres of Ottoman Muslims. British Consuls in the region reported on various attempts by the new administration to eradicate their Muslim populations. Charles Brophy, the Vice-Council at Burgas, said they were prohibiting Muslims who had returned after the war from owning

---

8. See appendix A for a map of territories ceded by the Treaty of Berlin (1878).
10. Ibid., 68. Turkish refugees blocked roads, crowded railcars needed for supplies and troop movement, and blocked Ottoman reinforcements.
11. Ibid., 68-74.
12. Ibid., 82.
property and were confiscating their goods and crops.\textsuperscript{13} R. Reade, the Consul at Varna, reported that many of the refugees who had initially survived the Bulgarian and Russian attacks had since died, but a group of 200,000 had managed to return to Shuma.\textsuperscript{14} The Russians refused to allow others to return home under the pretense that the Ottomans were not honoring the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano. The refugees in Shuma were in dire circumstances, having been subjected to starvation and famine. In desperation, some of them had tried to leave, but under Russian pressure Bulgarian insurgents attacked them, forcing their return to Shurma. Reade ended his account by stating that similar occurrences took place throughout Bulgaria and that the Russian army almost never attempted to prevent the maltreatment of Muslims.\textsuperscript{15}

British Consuls heard refugee reports of their harrowing plight. F.R.J. Calvert, Consul in Philippopolis, heard from Nazik, a 23 year-old Ottoman woman from central Bulgaria, whose story was representative of many refugees in 1878. Nazik, her family, and a group of around one hundred refugees arrived at Philippopolis in May of 1878 carrying safe-conduct documents from the Russian government.\textsuperscript{16} The Bulgarian authorities ignored the documents and forced the refugees to leave the town. Russian soldiers escorted the group as far as Yünkioi where the Bulgarian villagers locked them in a barn. Later that day a priest led a mob into the barn, robbed and beat the refugees, tied up the men, and seized and raped the women. Nazik stated, “each man seized the first woman in his way, and dragged her into the fields and gardens around; they

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} Charles A. Brophy, "Inclosure 1 in No. 4. Vice-Consul Brophy to Sir A.H. Layard. Bourgas," July 10, 1878. In \textit{Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey}, 45:44.
\textsuperscript{14} R. Reade, "No. 6. Consul Reade to the Marquis of Salisbury," Varna, July 8, 1878. In \textit{Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey}, 45:46.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 45:46-48. The Russian noble, Prince Dondoukoff-Korsakoff, ordered that the refugees not be permitted to leave.
\end{flushleft}
ravaged every female of our party, down to girls of eight years.”17 Nazik was bedridden from
disease and remained in the barn with her children. A woman near her had resisted the attack and
during that struggle Nazik’s children were caught in the assault. Her oldest son was stabbed and
died shortly thereafter and her other son was trampled and succumbed to his wounds a day later.
The morning after the attack the Russian authorities forced Nazik’s group to walk to Beykioi
where they would apparently be given residency. Some of the refugees who fell behind were
murdered by the Bulgarians. Every week at Beykioi the Bulgarians inflicted the “worst
indignities” upon the women and resistance only led to beatings. Nazik stated that “we have
become like animals, and have forgotten what it is to feel shame.”18 Calvert added that the
Bulgarian police at Philippopolis had arrested three Muslims who complained about the atrocities
committed in Yünkioi.

Nazik’s testament reflected many of the horrors faced by Ottoman Muslims in Bulgaria,
most of whom were widows and children.19 Authorities rarely punished the perpetrators and
those who were taken into custody received only light punishment.20 The Bulgarian government,
in an effort to expel all Muslims, instituted a system of discrimination, degradation, and terror.21
This intentional program of ethnic cleansing prompted the mass exodus of over 500,000 Muslims
who subsequently sought refuge in the Ottoman Empire.22 In total, over seventeen percent, about
261,937 Bulgarian Muslims, died as a result.23 In contrast to the Circassian refugees who had
entered the Ottoman Empire in the 1860s, the Bulgarian Muslims were smaller in number, but

17. Ibid., 45:54-55.
18. Ibid., 45:55.
19. McCarthy, Death and Exile, 80.
20. Ibid., 83. Criminals often received only a few days imprisonment.
21. Ibid., 85.
22. Ibid., 90.
they were Ottoman subjects who suffered because of massive territorial losses and the breakdown of imperial order.

For the Ottoman state, the refugee crisis did not end with the war. The process of resettlement was difficult and slow, causing many to die of disease and starvation.\textsuperscript{24} The refugees had suffered from an extreme culture of violence during the Russian and Bulgarian occupation. Even after they found permanent settlement, they contributed disproportionately to violent crimes in Istanbul and other areas, creating significant security problems for the Empire.\textsuperscript{25} The refugee crisis not only crippled the Empire’s economy but also invited a host of social problems that further strained the state.

Ethnic cleansing and the ensuing refugee crisis drastically changed the demographic composition of the Empire. As a result of the influx of Bulgarian refugees and the erosion of state legitimacy in the face of rival nationalisms in the Balkans, Ottoman statesmen began to reflect on their policy of civic Ottomanism and rethink the identity of the Ottoman nation. Before the war, the Empire consisted of 21 million Muslims and 14 million Christians.\textsuperscript{26} After the war, the population declined as a result of territorial losses, and the ratios changed to 17.1 million

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 90-91.
\textsuperscript{24} Justin McCarthy, \textit{The Ottoman Empire: An Introductory History to 1923} (New York: Longman, 1997), 344.
\textsuperscript{25} Violence is culturally conditioned and societies define what is acceptable. When a society accepts violence as a daily part of life, violent acts become more prevalent. By controlling and regulating violence states can limit its everyday occurrence, but in instances such as the total breakdown of the Ottoman state in Bulgaria extreme forms of violence became regular and the constraints on violence were non-existent. As a result, refugees entering the Ottoman Empire were more prone to commit violent crimes. This contributed to the rise of violence within the Ottoman Empire in the interwar years of 1878 and 1912. See Roger A. Deal, "War Refugees and Violence in Hamidian Istanbul," \textit{Middle Eastern Studies} 49, no. 2 (March 2013): 181-82,184-86, 188-89, accessed March 17, 2015, doi:10.1080/00263206.2012.759105.
Muslims and 4.5 million Christians. The increase in the percentage of Muslims to Christians was one of the reasons that Ottoman officials began to emphasize the Islamic character of the Empire. Ottoman defeat in 1878 also weakened its legitimacy on the periphery of the Empire and forced the elites to seek a new basis for legitimacy. Military and political weakness following the war gave various nationalists across the Empire the opportunity to assert claims for independence along the lines of ethnic and religious sovereignty. Immediately after the war, for example, Armenians and Albanians demanded political autonomy and, when the Ottomans refused, they formed nationalist organizations with the goal of complete independence. Defeat not only shifted the Empire’s demographics but threatened imperial control and legitimacy.

To combat the contested legitimacy of the state the Ottomans incorporated Islamic identity into the framework of Ottomanism. Statesmen now presented the Empire as the savior of the worldwide Muslim community because it was the last independent Islamic state. Rather than focusing on citizenship and the legal principles of nationhood that had been enshrined in the Tanzimat Reforms, Ottoman elites emphasized Islam as the cultural glue of society. Islam also provided a common bond to unite and better integrate the multicultural and multilingual refugees flooding into the Empire. Islamic symbols gave the Ottoman state a way to compete with the symbols presented by opposing Ottoman Greek and Serbia nationalisms. Abdülhamid II pursued policies throughout his reign that were intended to strengthen this newly envisioned Islamist Ottoman nationalism. He built the Hejaz railway, invested in the holy sites of Mecca and

27. Ibid., 33-35.
28. Ibid., 31-32.
29. Ibid., 31-34. During this period Circassians and peoples from the Caucasus were still migrating to the Ottoman Empire.
Medina, constructed schools that emphasized Islamic nationalism, and provided financial support to Islamic cultural institutions.\textsuperscript{31} The Empire’s link to Islam was also strengthened by the Sultan who emphasized his role as the Sunni Caliph.\textsuperscript{32} The refugee crisis and Ottoman defeat in 1878 prompted significant changes in the reconceptualization of the Ottoman state.

\textbf{Reform and Revolution, 1881-1911}

Abdülhamid II’s incorporation of Islamic Ottomanism into official policy did not erase civic Ottomanism. Both ideologies existed in tandem throughout the reign of Abdülhamid II as the Empire tried to come to terms with the changing demographics and tried to preserve imperial institutions. Either nationalism was used when it best suited the Empire’s needs and neither ideology was exclusivist. Islamic Ottomanism did not entirely exclude non-Muslims from the Ottoman polity, and universalist articulations of Ottomanism remained a way to reconcile the multicultural, multireligious nature of the Empire. In 1909, however, when the CUP overthrew Abdülhamid II, civic Ottomanism achieved new vitality, albeit briefly. The CUP stressed imperial laws and citizenship to advance a universalist conception where all Ottoman subjects were equal regardless of religion, language, or culture.\textsuperscript{33}

The period between 1878 and 1908 was, with a few exceptions, one of relative peace for the Ottoman Empire. In the 1890s, the Ottomans fought a war with Greece that lasted only thirty days and ended in Ottoman victory.\textsuperscript{34} The war prompted almost no changes to the borders

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Yavuz, “The Transformation of 'Empire' through Wars and Reforms”, 34.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Alan Palmer, \textit{The Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire}, 2009 ed., Barnes and Noble Rediscover (1992; repr., New York: Barnes & Noble, 2009), 207.
\end{itemize}
because the British and Russian governments refused to allow the Ottomans to gain any territory at the expense of a Christian state.\textsuperscript{35} The Ottomans did force the Greeks to pay a war indemnity and to allow Muslims living in the Greek state to migrate to Anatolia.\textsuperscript{36} The European response to Ottoman victory demonstrates the impossible situation of the Empire in the last half-century of its existence. The European powers were unwilling to interfere to protect Ottoman territory but were quick to intervene to prevent Ottoman territorial gains. Even in victory, the Ottomans accepted more Muslim refugees who would otherwise be forced to live in hostile states.

Dissatisfied with the rule of Abdülhamid II, students from the imperial colleges and young officers led a revolution that brought the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to power.\textsuperscript{37} These revolutionaries proclaimed “liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice” for all citizens.\textsuperscript{38} At the beginning, they emphasized civic Ottomanism as a remedy to the earlier ethnic and religious conflicts, which they blamed on the tyranny of the old regime and on outside agitators who supported separatism.\textsuperscript{39} The return to civic Ottomanism was seen as a way to strengthen loyalty and inject new vitality into imperial life.

Two wars threw the Empire into chaos shortly after the Young Turk Revolution. In 1911, Italy declared war with the goal of conquering Tripoli in North Africa. The Balkan states of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece put aside their differences and took advantage of Ottoman weakness during the Tripoli War by entering into an alliance (The Balkan League).\textsuperscript{40}

---

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 206-7.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 207.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 150.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 168-71. See Appendix C for a map of the Ottoman Empire after the Balkan Wars.
The Balkan League then declared war in October 1912 and quickly defeated the Empire’s armies, reducing Ottoman territory in Europe to a tiny strip of land surrounding Istanbul. These two conflicts showed the weakness of civic Ottomanism as a unifying ideology and began a gradual movement towards Turkish nationalism among Ottoman elites.

**Ethnic Cleansing and Refugee Crisis, 1912-13**

The Balkan Wars robbed the Ottomans of almost all European territory and prompted a new cycle of mass population movements and ethnic cleansing. At the start of the First Balkan War, the Ottomans controlled Macedonia, Albania, Novi Pazar, and Thrace. They lost most of these territories in the war, which led to new refugee movements into Ottoman Anatolia. Bulgarian, Greek, and Serbian nationalist guerrilla bands (*Komitajis*) who were supported by their respective states exterminated Ottoman Muslims throughout 1912 and 1913. The mortality rates were enormous. Prior to the war, 2,315,293 Muslims lived in the Ottoman Balkans. By the end of 1913, 632,408 Muslims had perished and 413,922 refugees had fled into the Ottoman state.

The invading armies and Christian population viewed the Balkan Wars as a social revolution in which the Christians would become masters over their Muslim overlords. Armies and guerillas systematically burned Muslim villages leaving thousands of homeless and starving refugees on the streets of Monastir, Salonica, and Uskub. A Carnegie Commission report concerning an incident in Strumnitsa, a town in northwest Macedonia with a mixed occupation

41. Ibid., 168-71.
42. McCarthy., *Death and Exile*, 140.
43. Ibid., 164.
45. Ibid., 72-74.
force of Bulgarians and Serbians, is indicative of the atrocities perpetrated during the wars. Major Grbits, a Serbian commander, Nicholas Voultchev, a Bulgarian lieutenant, Tchekov, the leader of the Bulgarian insurgents, and notable inhabitants of the town formed a temporary governing commission that disarmed all Muslims and summoned them to stand trial. The Muslims had no right to counsel nor to mount a defense, and judges who were locals and hardly impartial could condemn them to death. Nine out of ten defendants were found guilty, tortured and executed. Because of the Serbian involvement in Strumnitsa, the Bulgarian government could deny culpability. Their involvement in other atrocities was clearer, however. In Serres, a city in southern Macedonia, Bulgarian armed forces and irregulars slaughtered and raped over two-hundred Greek Christians and Turkish Muslims. This event was representative of Balkan League techniques that used mass rape to shame Muslim women and force families to flee. In the case of Serras, although the Komitajis perpetrated most of the atrocities, the Bulgarian administration and army were complicit because they chose not to stop them. The Bulgarian Holy Synod, the highest religious authority, was also implicated in these crimes because they urged the government to forcibly convert the Pomaks remaining in Bulgarian territory.

Muslim neighborhoods in towns throughout Thrace suffered greatly under Bulgarian occupation. In the town of Havsa, for example, the Bulgarian army burnt down their quarter, and

49. Ibid., 77.
desecrated their mosques and graves.\textsuperscript{50} Pierre Loti, a member of the Carnegie Commission, visited the town and found that either the Bulgarians or local population destroyed Qur’ans, defecated in the mosque, broke headstones, and dug up at least one grave.\textsuperscript{51} Similar fates befell other villages in Thrace such as Has-Keuï, Souyoutli-dere, and Iskander-Keuï.\textsuperscript{52} When the Bulgarians retreated in the Second Balkan War, Ottoman Muslim civilians and Kurdish and Arab mounted irregular forces exacted revenge on Bulgarian villages.\textsuperscript{53} They had seen the horrors of Bulgarian occupation and in return indiscriminately punished the population by burning down the Christian quarters and murdering much of the population.\textsuperscript{54}

The costs of the Balkan Wars, the loss of territory, the mass influx of refugees, and the crippled economy forced Ottoman officials to reconsider the value of civic Ottomanism, which they held responsible for the quick Ottoman defeat in the First Balkan War.\textsuperscript{55} Civic Ottomanism, which had established equality for all subjects, had led to the conscription of non-Muslims into the army.\textsuperscript{56} Their loyalty was tested for the first time in the Balkan Wars when they were forced to fight against Christian armies. Many had failed the test when they defected. Ottoman leaders concluded that they could not rely on non-Muslims and that civic Ottomanism was a failed policy.\textsuperscript{57} Ahmad Abuk Paşa, Field Marshal of the Ottoman Eastern Army, noted that the armies failed because the Empire had strayed from its Islamic character and lost the inherent virtues of

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 124. The Commission could not confirm if the Bulgarian regulars or local population desecrated the mosque and graves.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 126.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 124-27.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 124-27.
\textsuperscript{55} Yavuz, "Warfare and Nationalism", 56.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 54-55.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 55.
Some statesmen began to view Christians as the enemy and believed that the Empire’s Islamic identity should be emphasized in order to preserve the Empire and prevent collapse.

The Ottoman Empire entered the First World War with a fractured national identity. Intellectuals began to discuss a new type of national identity based on Turkish ethnicity. Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), the foundational thinker behind Turkism, argued that Turkish identity should become the primary character of the Ottoman Empire. These seeds of Turkish nationalism were sown by the Balkan Wars, which left a sense of victimhood among high-ranking CUP members such as Enver and Talaat Paşa. They had a severely weakened Empire surrounded by enemies in desire of retribution. The CUP did not fully abandon civic Ottomanism as there was no alternative in 1913. Nascent Turkish nationalism, pan-Islamic identities, and the imperial ideology of Ottomanism coexisted in the remaining few years of the Ottoman Empire’s existence.

The two major wars in 1877-78 and in 1912-13 had demonstrated to Ottoman statesmen that the loss of territory meant the extermination of Ottoman Muslims. These tragedies also revealed the failures of civic Ottomanism. Although civic Ottomanism and Islamic Ottomanism co-existed uncomfortably side by side, these cataclysmic events led Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals to begin to doubt the relevance of Ottomanism since Ottoman-Christians had...
perpetrated many of the crimes. They now started to examine the possibilities of ethnic Turkish nationalism; however, by 1914 it was not a fully articulated and developed ideology.

Statesmen crafting foreign policy in the year after the Balkan Wars were forced to ignore the principles of Ottomanism and address the more pressing concerns of the survival of the Empire and protection of its Muslim citizens. As the next chapter will show, the actions and words of the leadership reflect the total and inescapable fear of partition and extermination. The CUP concluded that the stakes of the next war were Ottoman survival. Regardless of Ottoman desires for peace, the Great Powers had already raised the ante through years of interference in the Balkans.

Chapter IV: 1914

During the July Crisis the Ottoman leadership formulated policies based on the experiences of the past half century. An analysis of their statements and diplomatic maneuverings reveals that ethnic cleansing in the Balkans coupled with the nature of the European diplomatic system prompted Ottoman statesmen to lead the Empire on a path toward war. The leading members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) saw war as the only course to ensure the Empire’s survival.

Refugees and Islam

The Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 left a lasting impact on the leaders of the CUP. Ethnic cleansing in the Balkans between 1878 and 1914 framed the Empire’s enemies as crusaders seeking to drive Muslims out of Europe. The symbols used by the armies of the Balkan League cemented this perception among Ottoman leaders. The CUP saw the next war as a defensive struggle to ensure the survival of those who depended on it for security.

After witnessing the horrors of ethnic conflict in the Balkan Wars, Enver Paşa, the Minister of War from 1914 to 1918, described the actions of the Balkan League (Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece) as the “latest crusade” and called upon the Ottomans to take revenge for the murder of innocent Muslims.¹ Throughout the wars, Enver Paşa consistently tried to help Muslim relief efforts and showed his deepest appreciation and gratitude to aid coming from abroad, especially from India. Indian aid organizations came to the assistance of the

Ottomans because they feared that the last Islamic empire might collapse in the war. Bitter over British occupation, Indian Muslims felt the “humiliation and shame of every Muslim” as the wars unfolded. When Bulgarian armies approached within twenty-five miles of Constantinople, Maulana Mohamad Ali, the director of an Indian medical mission, considered suicide. Ghulam Ahmad, a doctor in the mission, described a meeting with Enver Paşa:

The whole Islamic world looked to him [Enver Paşa] to retrieve its lost honor and save the sinking ship of Turkey from utter destruction. We expressed a desire to kiss his hands for all Muslims of India and Hafizji had a regular tussle with him before he succeeded in kissing the tips of his fingers, which he returned by kissing him on the cheek.

At this point, the Ottoman armies had managed to retake some territory and Ahmad was reminding Enver Paşa of his importance to the world’s Muslims.

Both the Russians and British reported on Muslim feelings of humiliation in 1914. Mikhail Nikolayevich von Giers, the Russian ambassador (1912-14), noted Ottoman feelings of humiliation after the Balkan Wars. He stated that Sultan Mehmed V (1909-18) and the army had released a manifesto that sought to rally the troops and wash away the shame and humiliation. Henry Arnold Cumberbatch, the British Consul-General in Beirut, observed that when the First

---

2. M. A. Ansari, "20 January 1913" Originally Published in Comrade. Appendix to People's Mission to the Ottoman Empire: M.A. Ansari and the Indian Medical Mission, 1912-13, by Burak Ançapar (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 257-58; and Ghulam Ahmad, "Comrade, 3 May 1913" Originally Published in Comrade. Appendix to People's Mission to the Ottoman Empire, by Burak Ançapar, 280-81; and Ansari, "11th to 20th February 1913" Originally Published in Comrade. Appendix to People's Mission to the Ottoman Empire, by Burak Ançapar, 270-71. Non-Muslims funded a medical mission to the Ottoman Empire between 1912 and 1913 to lessen the suffering created by the wars. One of the doctors Enver Paşa thanked was Dr. M.A. Ansari. Dr. Ansari while in the Ottoman Empire was also shown the caps of Bulgarian soldiers that were adorned with a rampant lion with a cross on its head who was trampling the crescent, which supported the Ottoman belief that attacks against Muslims were a Christian crusade. Prince Abdul Halim, the nephew of the Sultan, showed these caps to Dr. Ansari.
4. Ibid., 53.
5. Ahmad, "Comrade, 3 May 1913" Originally Published in Comrade. Appendix to People's Mission to the Ottoman Empire, by Burak Ançapar, 280-81.
World War broke out, Muslims in Beirut rejoiced at the prospect that they could regain lost territory and secure the Empire’s future. In the Arab provinces there was fear that partition would lead to occupation by European powers, and in order to protect Muslim lives, preservation of the Ottoman Empire was the preferred outcome.

The Ottoman purchase of two British battleships demonstrates the siege mentality that overtook both statesmen and the masses. Scholars such as David Fromkin and Sean McMeekin have pointed to the connection between their purchase and public outrage toward the Entente. The Ottoman government had promised that the ships would lead to naval dominance in the Black and Aegean Seas, thus safeguarding the Empire from Greece and Russia. Millions of Muslims had paid for the ships by public subscription, and the British seizure caused tremendous public anger. This siege mentality led Ottoman policy makers to the realization that the Empire needed to immediately modernize its institutions. Said Halim Paşa, the Grand Vizier (1913-17), defined modernity as a state attainable by any culture that was tied to military, industrial, and political advances on a level comparable to the most developed countries in the world.

9. McMeekin, the Ottoman Endgame, 115. The British Ambassador, H. Beaumont, specifically stated millions of Ottoman Muslims paid for the Resadiye and felt personally invested in her fate. The Ottoman government paid for the Sultan Osman through loans.
10. Ibid., 115.
believed that the Tanzimat Reforms with its emphasis on westernization had crippled the Empire. Modernity should be based on Islamic values, which would place the Muslim world on an equal footing with all civilizations and enable Muslims to contribute to global development. The racial and ethnic conflicts of the previous decades convinced Said Halim Paşa that western nationalism was a threat, and an emphasis on Islamic identity and values was the only viable alternative. Due to his worldview, Said Halim Paşa encouraged and approved of the pro-Islamic policies of high-ranking members of the CUP such as Enver Paşa. The Balkan Wars and concurrent ethnic cleansing spurred on Islamist and anti-national discourses within the Ottoman Empire.

Mustafa Aksakal and Sean McMeekin have argued that the Ottomans entered the war due to a developing revanchist Turkish nationalism. This position is only partially correct. It fails to appropriately contend with the impact of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, while overstating the importance of Turkish nationalism. Their argument holds that after the Balkan Wars, the leadership and the public believed Great Power diplomacy could not offer security. When the army under Enver Paşa retook Edirne in 1913, this demonstrated to Ottoman statesmen that only military strength could preserve the Empire. Sean McMeekin adds that statesmen believed another war was inevitable and the Empire needed to regain strategic territories and protect Turks who were suffering under foreign control. They recognized that their military was weakened by the Balkan Wars and in 1914 began to seek an alliance with a great power. Germany proved to be the only power receptive to an alliance. The Ottomans could not afford to let the alliance

12. Ibid., 108.
13. Aksakal, the Ottoman Road to War, 9.
15. McMeekin, The Ottoman Endgame, 84.
16. Aksakal, The Ottoman Road to War, 193-94.
break apart, so when Germany issued an ultimatum demanding their participation in the war, they were forced to join the Central Powers.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, a developing Turkish nationalism informed Ottoman policy during the critical months between July and November 1914.\textsuperscript{18} McMeekin mentions Halil Bey, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, to demonstrate that Turkish nationalism had overtaken the government. In May of 1914, Halil Bey admonished his fellow members of Parliament not to forget beautiful Rumelia and their “brothers and sisters who have remained on the other side of the borders and who must be saved.”\textsuperscript{19} Contrary to McMeekin’s assertion, Halil Bey does not mention Turks in the quote. The brothers and sisters he referenced were not only Turks but Pomaks, Circassians, and Albanians. He was expressing the sentiments of most of the leadership who desired to save Ottoman Muslims, more generally, from ethnic cleansing and to defend the Empire’s borders. Aksakal and McMeekin’s arguments, therefore, fail to account for the fact that in 1914 Ottoman statesmen were more likely civic or Islamic Ottomanists and did not strictly adhere to any form of Turkish nationalism. As shown above, the Grand Vizier Said Halim Paşa considered nationalism a western concept that was a threat to the integrity of the Empire. McMeekin suggests that in May of 1914 Halil Bey’s speech demonstrated the climate of Turkish nationalism, but Turkism was only beginning to emerge at the end of the Balkan Wars and the ideology did not become policy until 1917.\textsuperscript{20}

Between 1913 and 1914, high-ranking members of the Ottoman government were concerned with Muslim suffering and attaining lasting security for the Empire. The mass slaughter of Ottoman Muslims not only profoundly affected Enver Paşa and Said Halim Paşa but

\textsuperscript{17} Aksakal, \textit{The Ottoman Road to War}, 186; and Gingeras, \textit{Fall of the Sultanate}, 108.
\textsuperscript{18} McMeekin, \textit{The Ottoman Endgame}, 84.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 84.
also altered the political position of Talaat Paşa, the Minister of the Interior (1914-17). Talaat Paşa came to view the international system in terms of social Darwinism and believed that the Ottomans needed to fight for survival in a hostile international system or face extermination at the hands of their enemies. Ottoman leaders knew that a future war was inevitable and a great power alliance was necessary.

Entente Diplomacy

An analysis of Entente-Ottoman diplomacy in 1914 reveals that the Entente Powers were not concerned with addressing Ottoman demands, but were cognizant of the Empire’s strategic position and desired to keep them neutral. First, the Ottomans controlled the Bosphorus Straits and its closure would deny the Entente Powers year-round access to Russia. Second, the Empire’s entrance into the war would require the Entente to move troops from Europe’s eastern and western fronts to protect Egypt and the Caucasus. Altay Cengizer and Feroz Ahmad have both argued that the British refused to give financial assistance to the Ottomans because they desired sturdier bonds with Russia, which they considered a stronger ally. In reality, communications between the Entente Powers reflect genuine concern over Ottoman neutrality and show that they did attempt to meet certain Ottoman demands.

German and Ottoman actions in the fall of 1914 further convinced the Entente that Ottoman neutrality was unlikely. In early August 1914, the Russians suspected that the Ottomans

20. Ibid., 84.
22. Ibid., 59.
23. Aksakal, the Ottoman Road to War, 13.
intended to use the war to advance their own strategic interests at the expense of the Entente.25 By the middle of the month, the British also began to suspect Ottoman duplicity when the German cruisers arrived in Constantinople.26 The Ottomans had not concealed their intentions to benefit from the war and, in fact, German ambassadors confirmed British suspicions by openly discussing German-Ottoman deceptions. The Germans had told the Greek ambassador in Berlin that the cruisers sold to the Ottomans were a false sale and were still owned by the Germans and staffed with a German crew.27 Greece was neutral and this revelation was intended to assuage their concerns over potential Ottoman naval superiority in the Aegean Sea. The Greeks reported this information to the Entente, which showed that the Ottomans had breached their neutrality by harboring German warships.28 The Ottoman government further exacerbated Entente suspicions by openly telling Great Britain and France that they could not trust the Russian guarantees.29 British and French diplomats immediately passed this information to von Giers in Constantinople. The Ottomans then used the Great Powers’ preoccupation with the war to abolish the capitulations on August 27. This unilateral action drew condemnation from both the

1914-1918," in War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad, Utah Series in Middle East Studies (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2016), 67-68.
27. Elim Pavlovich Demidoff, "No. 27. Russian Ambassador at Athens to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Athens, August 6 (August 19), 1914," in Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War, 1396.
28. Ibid., 1396.
29. Mikhail Nikolayevich von Giers, "No. 31. Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople, August 7 (August 20), 1914," in Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War, 1398.
Entente and Central Powers.\textsuperscript{30}

British-Ottoman relations further deteriorated when Talaat Paşa told Louis du Pan Mallet, the British Ambassador in Constantinople (1913-14), that the Empire would declare war if Greece did not surrender several Aegean islands.\textsuperscript{31} Mallet made the British position clear that a Greek-Ottoman war would not remain localized and would inevitably bring the Ottomans into conflict with the Entente, but he could not dissuade Talaat Paşa.\textsuperscript{32} By September 10, the Entente had discovered that the Germans were pressuring the Ottomans to fulfill their obligations under their alliance and join the war.\textsuperscript{33} From this point forward, the Entente knew that Ottoman leadership desired to end the capitulations and protect the Empire at any cost, including entering the war on the side of Germany. The Entente’s decision to distance itself from the Empire in 1914 is not particularly surprising given Ottoman actions and deceits.

Great Britain, France, and Russia still tried to keep the Ottomans neutral, despite their knowledge of Germans demands and Ottoman plans to use the war to negatively impact Entente interests. They knew from recent experience that Ottoman belligerency would adversely affect Russia’s war effort. During the Italian-Ottoman War (1911-12) they closed the Bosphorus Straits, which halted shipping that was essential to Russian industry, thereby causing a near collapse of

\textsuperscript{30} Mikhail Nikolayevich von Giers, "No. 43. Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople, August 28 (September 10), 1914," in Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War, 1405.
\textsuperscript{31} Louis du Pan Mallet, "Doc. 155. [46944] Sir L. Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, September 6, 1914 (Received September 7)," in The Allied and Neutral Powers: Diplomacy and War Aims, I:71.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., I:71.
\textsuperscript{33} Mikhail Nikolayevich von Giers, "No. 47. Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople, August 28 (September 10), 1914," in Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War, 1410.
their economy. Although the Entente Powers knew that Ottoman interests conflicted with their own, they still sought to keep them neutral by offering concessions, such as the possibility of adjustments to the capitulations after the war, and guarantees of territorial integrity if they remained neutral.

By early September 1914, the Entente Powers knew that the Ottomans did not trust their guarantees and had already signed a secret treaty with Germany. Ahmad and Cengizer’s examination of the Entente’s role in pushing the Ottomans into the German camp is an attempt to correct older scholarship that depicted Ottoman leaders as opportunists who only desired territorial gain. They did not consider that the Entente did not trust the Ottomans, and that German and Ottoman actions provoked an antagonistic response. At the same time, the actions of Great Britain and Russia over the past few decades had already created an antagonistic relationship between the Ottomans and the Entente and, as such, Ottoman diplomacy in 1914 was almost certain to be skewed toward Germany.

34. McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame*, 65; and Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire*, 129. During the First World War the Entente was so committed in keeping supply routes open to Russia that they launched a plan early on to force the Ottomans to reopen the straits by invading the Gallipoli Peninsula. The Gallipoli Campaign to seize the Dardanelles began in February of 1915.

35. Beaumont, "Doc. 58 [39783]. No.545, Mr. Beaumont to Sir Edward Grey, Constantinople, August 15, 1914 (received August 16)," in *The Allied and Neutral Powers: Diplomacy and War Aims, I: August 1914- July 1915*, in British Document on Foreign Affairs, 26; and Edward Grey, "Doc. 92. [41470] Sir Edward Grey to Sir L. Mallet, Foreign Office, August 22, 1914," in *The Allied and Neutral Powers: Diplomacy and War Aims, I:43*. The British ambassador, H. Beaumont, advised the British and French that guarantees to protect the Ottomans from Russia after the war would go a long way in maintaining Ottoman neutrality if German intrigue had not already compromised the Empire. See McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame*, 113-33. Scholars such as McMeekin who depict Ottoman statesmen as master diplomats who used the war to successfully broker deals with both allied camps, give the CUP too much credit. McMeekin portrayed Ottoman diplomatic efforts as successfully balancing both armed camps and acquiring important concessions from each. He stated hyperbolically that “Said Halim Pasha, for his part, was a master of the diplomatic arts, who, given another week to put the squeeze on Wangenheim, might have succeeded in getting the Germans to promise to restore the empire’s [sic] borders under Suleyman the Magnificent.” While there is certainly some truth to the assertion that Ottoman diplomats were very skilled at balancing multiple parties and
Ottoman Diplomacy

The Entente Powers assumed correctly that the Ottomans intended to use the war for their own profit. The Ottomans had two choices: they could maintain neutrality or enter the war in alliance with Germany. Realistically, however, they had to form an alliance with Germany, which held the monopoly on armaments sales and was, almost certainly, going to ally with Bulgaria.\(^{36}\) For this reason, neutrality or an alliance with the Entente was out of the question. If the Bulgarians entered the war on the German side, this would place the Central Powers within one hundred miles of Constantinople, exacerbating the logistical nightmare of abandoning German armament firms.\(^{37}\)

The Ottomans believed that the Entente intended to partition the Empire and they needed an alliance with Germany in order to guarantee their territorial integrity. Their concerns were confirmed when they intercepted Russian communications that discussed the Empire’s partition in the event of a German collapse. Even though the Entente continued to send guarantees to uphold the Empire’s territorial integrity and independence, the Russian communications and the past four decades of European double-dealing justified Ottoman distrust. An alliance with Germany and a victory, on the other hand, would strike a blow at Russia while securing them a much-needed period of peace.

By mid-summer 1914, at least two and a half months before entering the war, the CUP articulated its distrust when they told the British and French that they knew the Russians were attaining concessions for the Empire, their successes benefited more from their strategic position between Russia and the Mediterranean.

planning to partition the Empire. They demanded separate written pledges from each member of the Entente as an added assurance of their intentions to maintain Ottoman territorial integrity. On August 19, Cemal Paşa, the Minister of the Navy (1913-18), pressed the British to also make additional written guarantees that the Russians would not encroach on Ottoman territory. After the Ottomans abolished the capitulations they became even more concerned about Entente guarantees because they believed that the Powers were planning to reinstate them after the war. Talaat Paşa and Said Halim Paşa both expressed to von Giers on September 2 that they feared abolition of the capitulations would prompt military action from the Entente at the end of the war. A few days later, they also informed Sir Louis du Pan Mallet that they did not trust Entente guarantees. Mallet revealed British double-dealing when he expressed relief over Ottoman skepticism because “to guarantee [the] integrity and independence of Turkey was like guaranteeing [the] life of a man who was determined to commit suicide.” The historical record supports Ottoman assumptions that the British had no intention of maintaining its guarantees after the war. On September 23, Mallet wrote to the Foreign Office stating that they should accept Ottoman demands for the end of capitulations because it would “do much to calm [the]

37. Not only would the Ottomans have difficulty refitting the army with Entente rifles but the ammunition used by the service rifles of the Great Powers were incompatible. The Ottomans would need to acquire new weapons as well as ammunition.
38. Mikhail Nikolayevich von Giers, "No. 31. Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople, August 7 (August 20), 1914," in Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War, 1398.
39. Ibid., 1398.
41. Mikhail Nikolayevich von Giers, "No. 54. Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Constantinople, September 2 (15), 1914," in Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War, 1413.
Turks and keep them quiet during [this] critical period.”\textsuperscript{43} After the war there would be “so many means of putting pressure on [the] Turks” that the concessions would be meaningless anyway.\textsuperscript{44}

Irrespective of Entente double-dealing, the Russians would prove to be the greater threat. They knew that Russian guarantees were meaningless because their intelligence services had intercepted a telegram from von Giers advising that Russia should press for Ottoman neutrality until circumstances were favorable to annex the Bosphorus Straits.\textsuperscript{45} The Ottomans realized that neutrality was quickly becoming more risky than actual participation in the war.

Grand Vizier Said Halim Paşa would later explain why his government had rejected all Entente assurances and decided to enter the war. Great Britain, France, and Russia had proven that they had no intention of honoring their guarantees:

Had the past actions of these powers been different the page of history now being written might have read differently. We were tired of the hypocrisy actuating the powers of the Triple Entente when dealing with Turkey, so we did what provocation forced us to do—went to war.\textsuperscript{46}

He then defended the Empire’s right to be included as a full member in the international system, stating, “we are not a barbaric people, not savage, not black, not brown, not yellow, but white, with every right of the other white races…Heretofore we were the pawn in Europe’s politics and our interests were wholly unconsidered.”\textsuperscript{47} Said Halim Paşa was clearly criticizing the Europeans for their failure to integrate the Ottomans into the Concert of Europe. He used this failure as

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., I:95.
\textsuperscript{45} Aksakal, The Ottoman Road to War, 4.
proof that they could not trust international laws and agreements to protect the Empire and, as a result, the Ottomans had no option but to go to war in order to survive.

The Ottomans trusted the Germans more than the Entente Powers. Since the late 1870s, the German government had been fostering a relationship with the Empire, and their insistence on non-intervention in Ottoman affairs endeared them to the ruling elite.\textsuperscript{48} When European powers were scrutinizing the condition of Christians in the Empire, Kaiser Wilhelm II, for example, repeatedly declared German neutrality.\textsuperscript{49} Germany’s friendship had also prevented total Ottoman isolation in a generally hostile international community.\textsuperscript{50} After the CUP overthrew Abdülhamid II in 1909, the new government retained its friendly relationship with Germany.\textsuperscript{51} Leadership appreciated that Germany had never desired its territory and, in fact, had preferred a strong and stable Empire.\textsuperscript{52} Germany’s victory in the war would, therefore, not present an existential threat to the Empire.

The Ottoman’s option for neutrality ended on September 10, when Germany threatened to withdraw all support, personnel, and warships if they did not enter the war immediately.\textsuperscript{53} The Entente’s partition plans were now well-known and the Ottomans recognized that if they remained neutral they would have to hope for a German victory or suffer the consequences of German defeat. Instead, when they received the ultimatum they chose to fight for their survival and started preparing for an offensive by drafting military plans and securing Bulgarian

\begin{itemize}
\item 47. Ibid.
\item 48. Yorulmaz, \textit{Arming the Sultan}, 21-24.
\item 49. Ibid., 6. After the Armenian and Cretan revolts in the 1890s and the government’s harsh response, Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, and Austria pressured the Ottoman Empire for reform.
\item 50. Ibid., 6.
\item 51. Ibid., 232.
\item 52. Ibid., 181, 232.
\item 53. Aksakal, \textit{The Ottoman Road to War}, 186.
\end{itemize}
assurances of neutrality.\textsuperscript{54} The Ottomans declared war on October 29 by bombarding the Russian port of Sebastopol.\textsuperscript{55}

The Ottomans entered the First World War because, in the end, they had no other option. From as early as the 1870s, they had become mistrustful of international guarantees, and by 1914 they were certain that British and French assurances for territorial integrity and independence were meaningless. They were also well aware of Russian plans for partition and believed that Russian acquisition of Ottoman lands would likely lead to the extermination of the Ottoman Muslim population. The Ottomans allied with the Central Powers in hopes of weakening their enemies and ensuring several years of peace and stability. Ottoman leaders did not enter the war for personal gain or out of an opportunistic sense of the inevitability of German victory. Instead they chose to take a proactive role in the Empire’s fate rather than wait for an uncertain future.

\textsuperscript{54} Gingeras, \textit{Fall of the Sultanate: The Great War and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1922}, 108.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 108.
The Ottomans entered the First World War as a direct result of European imperialism and double-dealing. They could not trust European guarantees in 1914 because history had taught them that the Great Powers were unreliable. The European powers were convinced that the Tanzimat reforms had made the Empire a civilized state, and inducted them into the Concert of Europe at the end of the Crimean War in 1856. In the Treaty of Paris, the Ottomans gained guarantees that their territorial integrity and independence would be respected and supported, as well as the right to mediation in all conflicts related to their vital interests. The Ottomans trusted these guarantees and factored them into their foreign policy, expecting European aid against foreign aggression as long as the Empire faithfully adhered to the Tanzimat reforms. In a matter of twenty years, however, the Ottomans were to lose confidence in the international system. Prior to the Russian-Ottoman War, Ottoman reformers had worked within the system in an effort to guarantee the Empire’s security. Unbeknownst to them, Europeans no longer ranked the Empire as a civilized state. This rendered European guarantees moot because only civilized states fell under the jurisdiction of international law. By 1877, the Ottomans were aware that the Great Powers no longer accepted them as equals or as a civilized state. Russia and Great Britain were failing to uphold their agreements under the Treaty of Paris. They had abandoned their guarantees to maintain the Empire’s territorial integrity and independence, and ignored the principles of the Congress of Europe as it applied to the Ottoman state. The danger of the Great Powers’ failure to uphold their obligations was immediately obvious to the Ottomans. During and immediately after the Russian-Ottoman War, Russia interfered in the Ottoman Balkans, aiding in the creation of an independent Bulgaria and the annexation of Ottoman territory to
Serbia and Montenegro.

The Russians and Bulgarians used the war and occupation to exterminate and exile Ottoman Muslims in order to create homogenous nation-states in what had been a multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious Balkans. As a result of the Russian-Ottoman War, thousands of Muslims were forced to flee to Ottoman Anatolia, which drastically altered the demographic composition of the Empire. With Muslims now comprising more than three quarters of the population, Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals began to reframe civic Ottomanism by emphasizing the Islamic character of the Empire. The process of ethnic cleansing picked up dramatically when the Balkan League declared war in 1912 in order to gain what remained of Ottoman territory. These atrocities, and the religious nature of the conflict, led Ottoman statesmen to view the Empire as the last bastion of Islam in a world of predatory European states. By 1914, they were the only Muslim power who could protect their brothers and sisters still living in hostile Balkan states.

The Ottoman entrance into the First World War was a product of the unreliable international system and Great Power interference in the Balkans that resulted in the rise of violent and chauvinistic Slavic nationalisms. The system did not secure the Empire’s territorial integrity and instead led to tremendous losses and the murder, exile, or forced conversion of Ottoman Muslims. By 1914, Ottoman statesmen knew that the only way to save the Empire and the lives of Ottoman Muslims was through strategic alliances and military strength. They had been left severely weakened, financially and militarily, by the Balkan Wars, and the leadership recognized that an alliance with Germany was their only chance to survive the war and prevent partition.
Many scholars have pointed to the advent of Turkish nationalism and the desire to protect Turks living within the Empire and across the borders to explain the deeper motives of Ottoman statesmen in entering the war. This, however, was not the case in 1914. Ottoman leadership was not exclusively concerned with the well-being of ethnic Turks but with the survival of all Muslims and the ramifications of the Empire’s collapse on their lives. Ottoman intellectuals had yet to fully develop and articulate a distinct Turkish nationalism. Their imperial identity in the period before their entrance into the war was still based on a combination of civil and Islamic Ottomanism. The CUP’s actions before the war also indicate that the protection of all Muslims, irrespective of ethnicity, was the primary driving force behind their policies.

Entente actions during 1914 also helped convince the Ottomans that war on the side of Germany was the only option. The Powers were not willing to give in to Ottoman demands for financial assistance and the end of capitulations, but they did promise to maintain Ottoman neutrality by guaranteeing the Empire’s territorial integrity and independence, as well as adjusting capitulatory treaties after the war. Ottoman statesmen knew these promises were empty and chose to ally with Germany in order to save the Empire and, by extension, the lives of millions of Muslims for whom they felt responsible. The Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-78 isolated the Ottoman Empire from the international system, while the Balkan Wars finalized their exclusion by forcing the Ottomans into a fatal alliance.
Appendix A

Territorial Changes in the Balkans in the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin

Edward Hertslet, comp., *The Map of Europe by Treaty; Showing Various Political and Territorial Changes Which Have Taken Place since the General Peace of 1814 with Numerous Maps and Notes* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1891), IV:2798-99.
Appendix B
Europe in 1891

Edward Hertslet, comp., *The Map of Europe by Treaty; Showing Various Political and Territorial Changes Which Have Taken Place since the General Peace of 1814 with Numerous Maps and Notes* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1891), IV:3290.
Bibliography

Primary Sources


———. Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Turkey. Vol. 45. London: Harrison and Sons, 1878.


Hertslet, Edward, comp. *The Map of Europe by Treaty; Showing Various Political and Territorial Changes Which Have Taken Place since the General Peace of 1814 with Numerous Maps and Notes.* Vol. IV. London: Harrison and Sons, 1891.


Van Dyck, Edward A. "Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire: Report of Edward A. Van Dyck, Consular Clerk of the United States, Upon the Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire Since the Year 1150." In Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire, by United States Department of State. N.p.: Nabu, n.d. Previously published in Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire: Report of Edward A. Van Dyck, Consular Clerk of the United States, Upon the Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire Since the Year 1150.


Secondary Sources


———. The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008.


———. "Warfare and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars as a Catalyst for Homogenization." In *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications,*