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Revolution and War: International Entanglements in the Ottoman Transition¹

Devrim ve Savaş: Osmanlı Geçiş Döneminin Uluslararası Bağlantıları²

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ÖZ

20. yüzyılın başlangıcında Orta doğu bölgesinde devrimler, savaşlar ve dış müdahalelerle geçen bir dönüşüm yaşandı. Bölge bugün de, yeni kalkışmalar, savaşlar ve dış müdahalelerle karşı karşıyayken, küresel siyasetin iç siyaset üzerindeki etkisini değerlendirmek önemlidir. Bu çalışma, Uluslararası Tarihsel Sosyoloji yaklaşımından aldığı ilhamla, 1908 Jön Türk Devrimi ve 1920 Ankara'da yeni Meclis'in açılması olaylarında siyasi öznelerin ortaya çıkışını incelemektedir. Ulus-ötesi öğrenme süreçleri, yeni bir uluslararası düzen, küresel düzeydeki entelektüel ilişkiler ve daha birçok ulus-ötesi bağlantıların Anadolu'da devrimci bir öznenin oluşmasına katkıda bulunmuştur. Bu dönemin eyleme geçen aktörleri, uluslararası, imparatorluk ve yerel düzeylerin oluşturduğu bir konjunktürün ürünüdür.

ABSTRACT

Beginning of the 20th century witnessed revolutions and wars. As the region faces such episodes again, assessing the influence of global politics on domestic context remains crucial. Inspired the International Historical Sociology approach, this work contributes to the discussion of global-domestic interaction in the emergence of agency in 1908 Young Turk Revolution and in 1920 opening of new Parliament in Ankara, Ottoman Empire. The argument is that transnational learning, a new international order, global intellectual entanglements and various other transnational connections conditioned the rise of revolutionary agency. These actors were constituted by a conjuncture of international, imperial and local factors.

¹ This article is based on the author's PhD thesis, submitted to London School of Economics, Department of International Relations, written under the supervision of Prof. Fred Halliday.

² I am grateful to my late supervisor Fred Halliday for supervising my PhD thesis. My work on revolutions in the Middle East is inspired by his work on revolutions and international relations.

Introduction

The 1908 Constitutional Revolution and the opening of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) in 1920 are two important moments in the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic. The former is sometimes considered to be the starting point of this transition and certainly is the turning point in the last Ottoman century (Toprak, 2009, p.74), while the latter is one of the founding moments of the Turkish public. The study of these moments of revolution constitutes the debate on continuity and change between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. Notably, these two moments also fall into the larger debates of revolution, modernization and state building in the Middle East.

This study will approach the debate on continuities and changes between these two periods from the perspective of the interaction between international and domestic politics in engendering political change, specifically in the emergency of the actors that brought about that change. It will attempt to answer the following question: what were the international and regional entanglements that these actors found themselves in and how did they affect their agency? This attempt is mainly inspired by the discussions of historical sociology in International Relations (HS in IR)³ and partially by the efforts to rethink the boundaries between history, politics and international relations (Elman and Elman, 2001). Here the aim is to provide an alternative reading of the continuity and change debate with the purpose ‘internationalizing’ the debate and contributing to a research agenda on studying revolt in the Middle East as an international affair.

The article will begin by a theoretical discussion of HS in IR. It will continue by tracing the international in the coming of the 1908 Revolution which is still a relatively neglected issue in the literature despite the handful of excellent works published in the last decades and the renewed interest in it following its centennial.⁴ Instead of focusing on the earlier modernization of the Empire and on the tensions between the Young Ottomans and Tanzimat mentality, we will explore the tensions abroad, as well as in Ottoman provinces, particularly in Macedonia, a locality that exerted a marked influence on these imperial actors. For the second part, this study will focus on the opening of TGNA in April 1920 - rather than the declaration of the Republic in October 1923- in an attempt to reveal the constitutive role of the international in the ‘emergence’ of the agency behind this moment. The international here will be taken not only as the Allied invasion – as it is the obvious and undeniable factor in these events – but also the general tensions and tendencies in international politics including resistance movements elsewhere. An effort will be made to link the ruptures in the international arena with the transition in Anatolia.

This study steps back from discussion of continuity with regard to cadres (Zürcher, 2008 and 2010; Akal, 2006; Gümüş, 2003) as well as the influence of ideologies and hence makes an effort to expand the boundaries of research from the soon to emerge Turkish Republic to the regional and world politics. As such, the issue of continuity will be tackled within the wider period of 1908-20 by looking at the international-domestic interaction that fed into these moments of crucial change. This wider lens results in a less compact narrative but one that avoids as much as possible the issues of retrospective analysis and methodological nationalism

³The literature on Historical Sociology in IR is expanding. For recent discussions see S. Hobden and J. Hobson, 2002; D. Dannreuther. and J. Kennedy, 2007; Lawson and Shilliam, 2010, Go and Lawson, 2017; Lawson 2021; Epple, 2020.

⁴The key works on this topic are Mardin, 1983; Kansu, 1997; Hanioglu, 1995 and 2001, Kayali, 1997. The most recent works include Gingeras, 2015; Kaya, 2014; Zürcher 2019a; 2019b.

(Chernilo, 2010) which unfortunately still haunt the study of radical politics in the Middle East.

HS in IR and Study of Revolutions

In a work that gathered together the discussion on the HS in IR, Hobden argued that for a sound future of HS in IR first and foremost the following question should be investigated: “A starting point might be to argue that phenomena that are considered to be ‘domestic’ or ‘international’ are co-constitutive. However, it is the character of these processes of co-constitution that should be the focus of study (Hobden, p. 43-44). One of the fundamental ways to study the character of these processes of constitution is the study of specific moments of social, political, economic and ideological changes and revolutions are indeed rapid transformations when the crisis are crystallized within a turmoil and these crisis always occur in an international context. As such, the study of revolutions has a lot to offer to the study of the international-domestic distinction within an HS tradition in IR. Halliday sums up this relation between the international and revolutions as follows:

Revolutions are themselves necessarily international events—in cause, ideology, consequence and outcome. The very recurrence of international dimension not just in the policies and beliefs of revolutionaries, but also as cause, is often understated in studies of particular revolutions” (Halliday, 2001, p. 693).

Hence, both the study of revolutions and the study of international change in IR neglect the constitutive link between the two. Those who study revolutions within this bigger problematic of IR and social science in general, namely trying to explore how the international plays a constitutive role in the emergence, development and outcomes of revolutionary situations and how revolutionary situations shape back the world within which they emerged have this two-fold challenge. The challenge is to demonstrate these actual processes in a causally explanatory and theoretically consistent – yet not rigid – way. The demonstration is intended to reveal the fact that the international is not only a structural determinant that operates in an ‘either/or’ fashion – namely it is not the international structure versus state autonomy (states taken here as the primary actor in the international realm). When one makes the transition to the view that these are constitutive, then one can see Hobson’s point in proposing to use a ‘both/and’ logic: “By applying this ‘both/and’ logic, we can (re)view the nature of structures (both domestic as well as international and global) as double-edged, such that they ‘enable’ as well as ‘constrain’ states” (Hobson, 2002, p. 75).

Not only the international structures but also ideas, actors and the contingencies that arise in the international field have this ‘enabling’/‘constraining’ relation with the domestic actors. So ‘both/and logic’ does not only apply between international structures and states as actors but also to non-state actors and the meanings they attach to their actions. Issues of ideologies, that arise in world-historical moments and then go into the constitution of domestic social, intellectual and political development, such as nationalism and constitutionalism is a crucial example in this regard. Through structures and actors; material and ideational factors, “the relation of the state to society is constantly affected by the international function” (Halliday, 1987, p. 223). And when this is the case, the need to study this international function in the emergence of revolutionary actors and situations becomes inevitable and indeed, necessary.

Historically and sociologically minded scholars of IR has been debating and empirically investigating these theoretical insights for at least two decades now. Richard Little had warned IR scholars in 1994 that the structure and agency debate is intrinsically linked to the development of a historical approach in IR (Little, 1994). The issue remains one of the vital issues in the discipline. The central question of this article, namely how to study the international dimensions of revolutions (in our case the 1908 and 1920 events in Ottoman

Empire) is indeed a question that crosscuts the imaginations of both HS and HS in IR. The appropriate theoretical framework requires a guideline as to how to discuss the nature of the international, how to historicise it, how to link it to the major processes of change and how to locate it vis-à-vis the domestic processes. IR scholars with HS reflexes seem to agree on these needs, some more from a historical materialist reading of HS and some more from the Weberian tradition. Still, they had a direction, and a shift occurred: “what may previously have been seen as discrete, isolated, national histories, now appear (...) as the result of international processes, of imitation, competition, defensive modernization and influence” (Halliday, 1994, p. 120). Fred Halliday specifically produced accounts of revolutions, of agency, ideas as well as socio-economic processes from this angle, while Lawson emphasized the role of institutions in these processes. Hobson summarizes the logic of Halliday in this multi-layered analysis as follows: “Halliday employs a feedback loop, invoking an *international–national–international* chain of causality. (...) This trinitarian conception offers an organizing principle around which WHS can reconfigure IR” (Hobson, 1998, p. 298).

That trinitarian pattern will be followed across this article as it traces the Ottoman actors in their interactions with the international and transnational events, ideas and conflicts and as they influence the Ottoman dynamics. Since the article deals with two cases from the Ottoman domain, it will have a chance of comparing the temporal element, as the structure of international order changes through impactful events such as the WW1, how does that change the way Ottoman actors relate to the world and to their imperial and increasingly national setting? How does HS in IR insights into state, local actors and the international inform our reading of the emerging and evolving Ottoman agency? So the article will make an effort to locate the actors in a wider setting; to locate the actors both within a material and ideational setting and to trace the actors’ impact on the very structures that inform them, such as the structure of the world order; the structure of the imperial state or the army; the ideational structures of imperialism, nationalism and so on.

The 1908 Constitutional Revolution: An international affair

Most accounts of the 1908 Constitutional Revolution evaluate the agency behind the revolution within the familiar confined narrative of Ottoman modernization. When a connection to world political circumstances surfaces, as in the evaluation of the Reval meeting (1908) between Britain and Russia, it is usually assumed to constrain that agency or at most to trigger what was bound to come. This study suggests that the revolutionary situation that led to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 grew out of a combination of factors: the culmination of changing balances in European politics; developments in Japan and Russia; the reaction of different regions in the empire to these developments and to the palace’s response to these reactions, coupled with revolts and demands from the provinces regarding the modernizing choices made under Abdülhamid II. It was this combination that produced the revolutionary agency. *The Young Turks were more the product of the world of 1876-1908 than the natural result of the Ottoman modernization that had already commenced.* In some respects, they brought the transformation of the 19th century to its conclusion, namely centralized state rule based on new principles. In other respects, they deviated from this path by introducing party politics, a new political vocabulary and by making the sultanate largely obsolete. Below, we trace the role of the international in the emergence of this moment of change and in the unfolding of the outcome.

The emergence of revolutionary agency

The politicization of the Young Turks occurred in an environment in which European and Ottoman diplomacy over crucial issues bulked large: Armenian question (1894-96); the emergence of a European public opinion that mainly viewed the empire as uncivilized and

barbaric; Crete and the Greco-Ottoman war; and, last but not least, Macedonia. The similarities and differences in the international setting at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century are important to the following discussion on continuities between the two periods. One common element stands out: just like the Nationalist movement that emerged after the First World War, and similar to the contemporary activists in the Middle East, the Young Turks were not simply observers of these international moments. Instead, they were actively engaged if not with major actors in these episodes, then at least with the growing European political network (media, secret and overt organizations, ministries of foreign affairs, etc.).⁵ In addition, they still communicated, with Ottoman statesmen and sometimes even the sultan. They were also part of the wider world of the Ottoman Empire, with branches in the Balkans, Cairo, Syria and Beirut, and part of a more extended political network through their appeals to the Anglophone, Francophone and Arabic press. Yet, they were symbiotically tied to Ottoman politics and to an Ottoman agenda and were players in a game mostly shaped by the policies of the Great Powers and of Abdülhamid II.

Their main rationale for rebelling against the sultan was the foreign encroachment on the Ottoman Empire. The military and diplomatic conflicts that were spreading to other parts of the world had gained a new layer of importance with the rise of ‘new imperialism’. Indeed, acquiring legal or commercial rights to any piece of land in the globe had become a matter of prestige, a *sine qua non* for the definition of ‘Great Power’ (Hobsbawm, 1989, p.67). It was also a period of armament. The armed forces of the Great Powers were doubling and trebling, paralleling the development and enhancement of war technologies (Bartlett, 1994, 7). ‘Public opinion’ was part of the period’s political calculations and the ‘public image’ of governments and dynasties was a concern shared by many empires, including the Ottoman Empire (Deringil, 2002). The ‘press’ became a political tool, open to manipulation by rival governments and agendas and effective in shaping ‘public opinion’ worldwide (Koloğlu, 2005, p.9). In terms of public opinion and of outright opposition to government, domestic politics and international politics were now intertwined to an unprecedented degree. “To an increasing extent, international affairs became the concern of ordinary people” (Joll, 1990, p.25).

In parallel with these developments, the republican and constitutionalist spirit was also on the rise. Constitutionalist movements in the Balkan states, including Romania, Serbia and Greece, were of interest and inspiration to the Ottoman reformists (Tanör, 2008, p.128).⁶ The first constitutional regime in the Ottoman Empire also served as a unifying aim to all Ottoman opposition groups. Although this regime lasted only two years, the sultan never officially annulled the constitution.⁷

European-Ottoman relations after the Berlin Congress were changing: foreign missionaries were involved in the Ottoman education system and the financial administration passed from the Ottomans into the hands of the Great Powers. The Europeans and Ottomans were more intertwined than ever in the wake of the reform plans for the Ottoman territories. European influence was sometimes resented and caused frustration over time but was also internalized surprisingly quickly by Ottoman actors with different agendas. This intertwining

⁵ For the attempts by the Nationalist movement to influence the London-based media, see Boyar, 2009.

⁶ Also Mount Lebanon had formed an assembly in 1864 and Tunis already had its constitution in 1861 (Hanoğlu, 2008, p.113).

⁷ The Constitution provided a clear objective for the Ottoman opposition to come. Also it had an influence on “the Young Iranians who came into contact with Ottoman political thinkers in Istanbul and played a major role in the constitutional revolution in Iran” (Zarinebaf, 2008, p.167).

was to leave a deep mark on Ottoman politics.⁸ It was no coincidence that Young Turk leaders would send letters explaining themselves to European diplomats or that Armenian militants would mount political protests to attract the attention of the Europeans. The incessant need by various actors to explain themselves to Europe did not end with the victory in 1908,⁹ but continued into the postwar period.¹⁰ This is one of those continuities that have less to do with the specific political factionalism of the post war years and more to do with the general characteristics of international-domestic interaction in the first decades of the century. As we will see below even amidst the Balkan wars and later Independence wars different political and military leaders, Enver and Kemal alike had done their best to explain themselves to what was broadly conceived as the ‘West’ and in that regard the opposition in late Ottoman/Turkish history, despite the presence of anti-imperialism in varying degrees never had a total and deliberate rupture from the European politics.

Following the Berlin Congress of 1878 and the perceived international humiliation of the empire in the eyes of its young professionals, the earliest opposition was sparked at the Royal Medical Academy in the Ottoman Empire. This movement exploited the crises arising from the Armenian issue and the Greco-Ottoman war to recruit members from varying backgrounds in the empire. Erik Zürcher has in various articles pointed out that little is known about the founders of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) or its subsequently increasing membership. The traits that he identified reveal that neither group was necessarily bourgeois in origin or outlook (Zürcher, 1992, 241-2). They hailed mostly from the western regions of the empire, and were urban and educated, belonging to a young professional group. Again, it is important to note that the small founding group expanded particularly by manipulating the political mood during the Armenian crisis (1894-96), which was at once international and imperial in character.

After the sultan managed to prevent further wholesale European intervention in the empire’s politics, mostly due to his success in the Greco-Ottoman war, the timing was perfect for him to launch a wholesale attack on the opposition just as it was beginning to gain ground. The 1897 arrests resulted in a further wave of flight by opposition members, mostly to Europe, with the result that the Young Turk movement became even more closely intertwined with that continent. For the opposition, aided now by the sultan’s brother-in-law Damad Mahmud Pasha and by two princes (Sabahaddin and Lütfullah), the years up to 1902 were dominated by conspiracy, plotting and negotiations with the sultan, all of them conducted in a European diplomatic setting and in interaction with various European political activists, ranging from Italian anarchists to Armenian revolutionaries. Again, this interaction with members of varying political organizations is a common element in the Young Turk and Nationalist movements. This style of building alliances with broadly ranging political groups is a common trait in political movements from this era and demonstrates how the Middle Eastern actors were part of this world politics not as simple observers but as engaged actors.

The opposition in exile debated the issues of foreign intervention, decentralization and minorities and international politics in general. The congress of Ottoman opposition in 1902 crystallized the different factions and resulted in a split in the organization between the majority group under the leadership of Prince Sabahaddin, which favored intervention by foreign powers

⁸ On this regard see the discussion generated by Hans-Lukas Kieser’s work (2005) and a critical review by Emiroğlu, 2008.

⁹ For example, see Enver’s letters (Hanioglu, 1989).

¹⁰ Communications continued during the resistance period. Also for the importance of the British press for the Nationalists see Boyar, 2009.

and decentralization coupled with attempts to collaborate with minorities, notably the Armenians, and the minority group under Ahmed Rıza, which had an anti-imperialist and a strongly positivist outlook. It was the latter that would actually dominate the opposition and merge with the revolutionaries in the military, also known as the Ottoman Freedom Society and based in the western territories of the empire.

Important tax revolts occurred in eastern Anatolia in 1906-07, doing some damage to the state's coercive capabilities. Nonetheless, the Hamidian regime was successful in suppressing the revolts. Even so, these revolts emboldened the emerging revolutionary agency in the Macedonian region (Kars, 1997, 13). However, the failure to transform these revolts into organized and coordinated revolutionary activity meant they remained detached from the hotbed of Young Turk propaganda, the European provinces. Unlike the locally distinct tax revolts in a vast region, Macedonia, with its segregation, intense conflicts and sense of being a distinctly European province in the Ottoman Empire, provided the catalyst necessary for the politicization of grievances and the resultant political organization (Hacısalıhoğlu, 2008). Young officers in the Ottoman army, witnessing the pressure exerted by Russia and Great Britain over the Macedonian issue and feeling the pressure from Macedonia's inner struggles, were convinced they had to respond. Thus, the emergence of revolutionary agency in Macedonia was partly the crystallization of several conflicts and demonstration effects at one historical moment, such as constitutional revolutions in Russia (1905) and Iran (1906). The Japanese victory over Russia in 1904 also figured in the Young Turks' worldview. Indeed, even the British officers in Istanbul thought this victory still exerted an important influence on the postwar nationalist struggles.¹¹

There is no doubt that the establishment of the Ottoman Freedom Society was a response to the Macedonian question and its intersection with international and Ottoman politics. Specifically, the failure of the reform programs and their adverse effect on the various peoples of Macedonia inspired these young officers to respond. In this regard, they were reacting to the immediate situation rather than acting in terms of a plan or an ideologically distinct point of view. They opted to contact the CUP abroad. One could argue that the increasing anti-Europeanism evident in CUP publications attracted these officers. Thanks to the organizational efforts of Bahaeddin Şakir and Dr. Nâzım, more propaganda material than ever was being smuggled into the empire (Zürcher 2002, p. 2).

The Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* of 1907 was a key event at this juncture. The politicized and partly radicalized Young Turks of Macedonia and Europe witnessed the toppling of the international system as they knew it. The tensions within Europe that Ottoman statesmen had been so skillful in manipulating were changing radically. Young Turks responded to these international changes as much if not more than they responded to the manipulations of the Hamidian regime. The Anglo-Russian entente added to their fears and pushed them further towards anti-imperialism. It gave their propaganda added impetus, especially because in Macedonia the impact of this entente and the centralization of revolutionary activities coincided. Moreover, the failure of the reform programs since the Berlin Treaty created space for discontent within which the Young Turks could contact other Macedonian organizations to seek alliances or to secure at least their neutrality. (Hanioglu, 2001, p.238).

Young Turks' temporary alliances in Macedonia is additionally intriguing given CUP's nationalist tendencies and reactions to non-Muslim political activity. In a multi-ethnic and

¹¹ "Another fundamental matter is the great change which has been influencing the nature of popular movements in Asia during the last 15 years, owing to the success of Japan" 15 March 1920: National Archives, Kew, London[hereafter TNA], CAB/24/101/2.

multi-religious regions, in order to ally with Christians and non-Turks they must have developed political flexibility and pragmatism and their revolutionary will. Hanioglu documents in rich detail the different styles that the Young Turks used when addressing Christians or Muslims, Turks or Albanians, the military circles or the civilians (Hanioglu, 2001, p. 175-177). It also demonstrates how actors can use changes in international politics to their advantage, a skillful example of which will be observed in the international negotiations by the emerging new regime in Ankara in the postwar years.

Another factor in the revolutionary process was the local political environment. Despite the failure of reform programs in the past, the foreign interventions in Macedonia made the region a relatively free environment in which politics could be discussed, propagandizing could take place and new members could be recruited. This relative lack of censorship and decrease in suppression of social movements led to rapid politicization of the people of Macedonia. Accordingly, the sultan's authority and powers were weakened in the region in parallel with the rise in the number of new recruits to the CUP.

Another accelerator along the way was the concession that the Sultan granted to Austria-Hungary. "In February 1908, the Sultan gave a concession to Austrians to build a railway that would pass through the Sanjak of Novibazaar; this railway would open them the road to Salonica and the Aegean Sea. This decision altered the balances in the Balkans" (Georgeon, 2006, p. 455). The Sultan was making an effort towards managing this complex situation. However, his response further damaged the little manoeuvring space he had. This concession caused the breakdown of the Austro-Russian coalition on Macedonian affairs, alarmed the British and further provoked the Young Turks. This concession gave clear indication of the continuance in the foreign encroachment through Balkans and of the Austrian expansionism that was later to open the stage for the First World War.

Other reform programs initiated by Britain and Russia further intensified Young Turk activity in the region and prompted the statement on the Macedonian issue they sent in May 1908 to the consulates of the Great Powers. "This document demonstrates that the Committee of Progress and Union had decided to solve the Macedonian Question on its own and informed the Great Powers two months before the revolution." (Hacısalihoglu, 2008, p.170). The statement was essentially a warning to the powers, explaining the damage their intervention had inflicted on the region and informing them that the CUP viewed the Macedonian question as an Ottoman affair

The timing of the revolution in July 1908 is generally explained by reference to the Reval meeting of June 1908. The Reval meeting between the monarchs of Britain and Russia confirmed the fears of both the Ottoman state and the Ottoman opposition and hastened the preparations for the revolution (Hanioglu, 2001, p.237). It also diminished the Sultan's room of maneuver. "If the Sultan accepted the Reval plan, the revolutionaries would gain a powerful weapon against him; if he rejected it, the European Powers would no doubt intervene" (Kansu, 1997, p.87). The sultan's sovereignty over the European provinces of the empire was rapidly diminishing, in practice and perception.

In sum, the general structure of world politics, the revolutions elsewhere, the years spent by the Ottoman officers with and/or against the paramilitaries in Macedonia and the general politicization of the Young Turks in an increasingly imperialist world dominated by Europe made up the specific milieu in which the 1908 Constitutional Revolution occurred. This article argues that the success, timing and outcome of the revolution depended on this international setting as much as on the previous history of Ottoman modernization and specific dynamics of the empire that are generally emphasized in the literature. The radicalization of the revolutionaries, the impetus for them to collaborate to the extent they did with the public and the motivation to produce mass propaganda stemmed not from any special change in Ottoman

modernization between 1906 and 1908 but rather from the specific combination of international, imperial and local politics.

War and change in the aftermath of revolution

The months immediately following the summer of 1908 witnessed a wide range of mass mobilization, protest and cheering. The strikes, the civil disobedience, as well as demonstrations introduced tools of modern politics in a massive scale. However, as Özbek (2007) has argued, the expansion of political space and even the inclusion of mass politics do not necessarily give rise to the sustainment of such an environment. On the other hand, despite the authoritarianism that followed the initial period of reform, especially as part of the war efforts against the Balkan states, the Young Turks encouraged grass-roots organization that was to prove invaluable in the post-armistice period.

The changes in the Ottoman Empire were accompanied by an accelerated shift in international politics towards war and conflict. The following six years witnessed the emergence of a new alliance system (Schroeder, 2004). Self-defense and the conviction that without entering the future war the Ottoman Empire would simply be partitioned has been advanced in recent studies on Ottoman entry into the First World War (Aksakal, 2010; also Akmeşe, 2005 and Erikson, 2003). The Unionists “were rebelling against the ‘civilizing mission of Europe, [...] against the Great Powers” (Toprak, 2009, p.77).

The Balkan Wars (1912-13) and the Italian occupation of Tripoli (1911) were a milestone in terms of the ideological change among the Ottoman ruling elite as well as of bringing about definite change in the ruling cadres with the 1913 Unionist coup d'état. The way they were fought was different and a warning of the brutalities to come in the Great War: “The Balkan wars (1912–13) can, together, be regarded as the first ‘total war’ of the Ottoman state” (Ginio, 2005, p.156). The Unionists, apart from assuming the political power and instituting a one-party regime, also resorted to mass politics and propaganda activities. Despite these efforts, the loss of a huge and historically and politically important part of the empire was traumatic (Findley, 2010, p.202) and one of the formative experience of the Unionist and later Kemalist cadres alike. As Zürcher points out, the lost territories were also the homeland of many of the officers who were to fight in the First World War and in the resistance (Zürcher, 2010, p.118).

This period is generally seen as accelerating the transformation of the Unionists into Turkish nationalists. Yet, Gingeras paints a different picture at the popular level in his detailed analysis of South Marmara, where violence had more to do with ethnicity, religion and class in juxtaposition with state centralization than with nationalism (Gingeras, 2009, p.5). This is important because a full-fledged nationalist politics, neither at the level of the ruling cadres nor at the popular level was not yet to be observed. This further supports the contention of this study that the emergence of nationalist resistance cannot be explained by domestic politics alone and any alternative explanation must be situated in international politics of the period as well. In this regard, when looked from the international perspective, the legacy of the Balkan Wars themselves did not necessarily lead to a mass politics on nationalist principles. It was the War of Independence that caused a more straightforward leap towards such politics.

Militarism and the idea of a centralized state on the other hand were popular ideas in the Empire and beyond. Decades of European depiction of the Ottoman as the barbarian, coupled with real sense of danger generated by the Balkan Wars, strengthened the Unionists in their conviction that the only way out was war yet did not end their desire to explain themselves to Europe in the meantime. As Enver wrote: “I hope my dear friend that we will show civilized Europe that we are not “rechtlose Barbaren” and that we deserve to be respected. The nub of the present study, to which we return below, is that this commitment emerged out of a specific interaction between international and domestic politics during the post-war years of struggle

and conflict and not necessarily from a transformation of domestic politics or from military loss alone. In short, any substantial change in the commitments of the Ottoman political elite had its roots in international change and its specific interaction with the existing fissures in the Ottoman political scene.

Again, this does not explain the fundamental differences between 1908 and 1923. Approximately the same cadres with approximately the same aims instituted a different political structure. This study suggests that the difference can only be accounted for if the international context is viewed as an integral part of the explanation – rather in the vein of the discussion of the causes of 1908 above and not as mere triggers or constraints. Indeed, the actors involved in the nationalist resistance movement “took advantage of the opportunities offered by the changes in the regional and international context and they also tapped the energies of the already mobilized groups and communities in the area” (Kasaba, 2006, p.221). As in many other revolutions and revolutionary periods, it is the opportunities in favor or suppression of the revolutionary moment that is crucial in the transition from popular and/or elite discontent to action (Tilly, 1978). Below we will have a look at the opportunities and obstacles that the international-domestic interaction provided to the agency indeed that factored in the emergence of the agency that was to break politically, militarily and institutionally from the Ottoman Empire.

Upheavals, negotiations and unification in 1918-20

The world had changed by 1918. It is true that in many respects the Great War actually lasted 31 years rather than four (Hobsbawm, 2007, p.22). It is also true that there was much continuity with the pre-1914 world, since “war was as much a product of modernity, conceived of in both its political and socio-economic forms, as a factor independently shaping the political systems of modern time” (Halliday, 1999, p.69). The debate on the continuity between the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic must include a perspective on the extent of change brought about by this ‘total’ war. The official historiography to a large extent downplays the war as a force for change and focuses on the invasion of Anatolia and the resistance movement.¹² Indeed, that is an immediate consequence of methodological nationalism. However, when we look beyond the emergent Turkish Republic, we clearly see that the Great War changed domestic political structures as can be seen in the Bolshevik Revolution and in the collapse of the Habsburg Empire as well as the international system. It also brought about important social changes, such as the status of women in societies, including the Ottoman Empire (Çakır, 1996; Criss, 1999) and the loss of an important part of the male population, as well as changes in perceptions of violence.

For the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus, the war produced very distinct ruptures in terms of the imperialist project in these regions. Two of them were especially crucial in the emergence of a unified political and military agency in the postwar Anatolia: the changes to territorial borders and the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and subsequent changes in the attitudes of the Great Powers. The repercussions of these two ruptures were clearly visible throughout the region in 1918-20. The following pages incorporate the familiar story of the national resistance to the changes in international politics and vice versa. The aim is to assess the international factors that gave rise to a unified movement that succeeded in inaugurating the National Assembly in Ankara in 1920.

The war was decided in 1918 but the peace remained to be settled (Marks, 2003). Just

¹² “The day 19 May 1919 is the ‘stunde null’ or zero hour of contemporary Turkish historiography” (Gingeras, 2009, p.68). For a different reading see Tanör, 1998 and Tekeli, 1998.

like the war itself, the peace settlements were going to take much longer than envisioned, and this was especially true of the Turkish settlement. Apart from the matter of honoring the several treaties concluded among the allied powers, there was the emergence of Bolshevism in Russia. Indeed, countering Bolshevism largely set the tone of postwar European diplomacy and was a major impetus in establishing nation states in Europe and elsewhere as solid buffers against Bolshevism.¹³

In addition, there was the issue of war costs, firstly in terms of reparations from Germany, but also in terms of the social and economic burden of having large armies mobilized for a long period. These considerations created further frustrations for the allied powers as well as within their respective countries. The disputes within the British government were of critical importance to the settlement in Anatolia and the ending of the war exacerbated existing tensions within that government (Gökay, 1997, p.41).

The widespread social frustrations were accentuated by the rise of the left in Europe between 1918 and 1920. The labor movement was on the rise throughout Europe, in addition to which there were concrete revolutionary activities in major cities, notably Berlin and Vienna (Geary, 1993; Hautmann, 1993). These events, of course, predisposed conservative forces in Europe towards nation states. These nation states, built upon the trifecta of state, the market and the family, would be willing participants of the international order that these forces wished to establish. They feared that unless such states were instituted, soviets would be established in Central and Eastern Europe. Blockades and propaganda were two of the tools to counter potential revolutions. An example of such counter-revolutionary initiatives is Hungary in the aftermath of the 1919 revolution led by Béla Kun. After a few months, the pro-Soviet revolution was crushed with the indirect support of the allied powers.

For the British and French, a territorial settlement [states based on the principle of national self-determination] in central-eastern Europe created a tier of states which would act as a buffer against both Germany and Russia, allowing them to govern their far-flung colonies while simultaneously dominating the continent (Mazower, 2000, p.43).

The idea of a friendly nation state in Turkey, especially after the British withdrawal from the Caucasus was considered amidst discussions in Great Britain over the post WWI strategy and over what to do with Bolshevik Russia (Gökay, 1996, p. 49). Thus, the nation state as a political form, and mostly in authoritarian guise, was as much a result of the rupture caused by the Bolshevik Revolution and the end of war (and its impact on Europe) as it was a culmination of *longue durée* developments such as the integration of capitalism and industrialization. That the Unionists in Anatolia had already turned to direction of a centralized, unified state also set the tone in combination with this international influence. Again, the choice of nation-state and nationalist politics that emerged from the post-war period in Anatolia was forced not by a linear political and ideological progress on the parts of vanguards but by a complex interplay of world politics, regional politics and local politics.

In this regard, national resistance movements were hallmarks of the postwar era and as such support the statement above. The Egyptian, Indian and Irish struggles against British rule were a powerful source of inspiration, although they produced different results. “Instability was sparked by the fact that the rise of print and broadcast media and the development of increasing literacy meant that reports of unrest or even imperial retreat in one part of the European empires could inspire disturbances elsewhere” (Best et al., 2004, p.87). Zaghul Pasha in Egypt, leader

¹³It was also an important part of British policy in Iran and an important reason for their encouragement of Reza Khan to assume control by military means. For an examination of the transition in Iran, see Keddie (1999).

of the Wafd opposition party, was arrested and exiled to Malta just a few months before the landing of Mustafa Kemal at Samsun in the spring of 1919. In the same year, the Irish started a guerrilla war and the Indian “Congress [...] under the leadership of the British-trained lawyer Mohandas Gandhi, launched the first of its non-co-operation campaigns calling for an end to British rule” (Best et al. 2004, p.95).

Last but not least, there was the addition of the United States, which had entered the war rather late but made a decisive contribution in the final year. In addition to the military presence, the US diplomatic presence in the allied meetings over the region, the Wilsonian principles and the possibility that the US would take over mandates were among the international factors impacting the resistance movement in Anatolia.

This brief overview of postwar European international politics explains many of the subsequent interplays between international and domestic politics in Anatolia. Of these, we highlight the ones that led to the emergence of the nationalist actors and their decision to unite in the TGNA in Ankara in the spring of 1920. Here the occupation of Istanbul by the allied powers, the invasion of Izmir by the Greek army and the collaboration between the actors in the resistance and the Bolshevik regime in Russia will be examined. The first two events are counted among the triggers of the resistance movement, while the collaborations both constrained and supported the nationalist movement.

The *de facto* occupation of Istanbul in late 1918 was reinforced by what was presented as a more official occupation in 16 March 1920. What to do with the newly acquired city would only be one of many policy issues the British government would have to face. These policy dilemmas in the region facing the British combined with disagreements among the allied powers and the eagerness of the Bolsheviks to keep the British at bay created opportunities for the resistance movement in these years, very similar in this respect to the late century foreign power involvement and rivalry over the Balkans creating opportunities for the Ottoman opposition.

Britain also had internal disagreements over countering the rise of Bolsheviks and the fact that they might not be dislodged after all. There was also the slight possibility that the Ottomans might remobilize in the Caucasus following the Brest-Litovsk agreement. However, the armistice ensured that the Ottoman advances made after the Bolshevik revolution were not permanent. As Gökay (1997) notes, the Caucasus embodied many tensions that would persist for several years: the controversy among British statesmen about how to deal with the newly occupied Ottoman territories, especially Istanbul; whether to allow the presence of the Ottomans/Turks in postwar Europe; and how to address the Ottoman Empire in light of the rise of Bolshevism.

These tensions were temporarily resolved first by the delay in the Ottoman settlement (partly thanks to the US) (Marks, 2003, p.7-29) and secondly by the use of Greece as a British proxy with the unswerving support of Lloyd George (and, of course, by the withdrawal of British troops from the Caucasus). However, it was the repercussions of these tensions in international and British politics that contributed to the transformation of political actors in the armistice period in Anatolia rather than the armistice itself. Not the terms of armistices but the violation of these term by the allies, primarily the British” angered Mustafa Kemal (Zürcher, 2010, p.137).

Unlike the pre-1908 period, it was not the threat of further foreign intervention and occupation but actual invasion that triggered the various forms of nationalist resistance. This is a very important point of divergence between the constitutionalist political trajectory pre-1908 and the nationalist course of action post-1918, as it gave the latter the opportunity to seek maximum autonomy in the name of ‘saving the state’, whereas the former was aiming to ‘take over the state’ for the same purpose. While the Young Turks tried to march towards Istanbul

from Europe, the nationalists moved to Anatolia with the hope of breaking away from the Ottoman government that was cooperating with the Allied Powers.

However, the nationalist resistance to this invasion did not start on the invasion day (Findley, 2010, p.221). A series of congresses were held in different regions of Anatolia and underground activity was initiated in Istanbul in reaction to the initial landings of foreign troops. Also, the Unionist leaders in exile resumed their political activities in Europe, starting with negotiations with the Germans and Russians. The first congress in Anatolia was held in Kars in 5 November 1918 (Tanör, 1998, p.97), while the remnants of the Unionists in Istanbul initiated the Karakol society (an underground organization that was to be effective in Istanbul and Western Anatolia until the mass arrests by the allied powers in March 1920) and a new party (The Renewal Party-Teceddüt Fırkası) was founded. After the initial reorganization period, the Unionists had to reconstitute the tactics and alliances that led them to power in 1906-08. (Gingeras, 2009, p.56).

There is still a vast gap in the study of the transition period with regard to the different localities that contributed to the nationalist resistance movement. Indeed, compared to the 1908 revolution and how it is examined in the light of the events in Macedonia, this study urges for more studies similar to Gingeras (2009) and Tekeli (1998): a multiplicity of narratives of different regions which can then be combined instead of a narrative based solely on national congresses.

Apart from the role of the congresses¹⁴, the role of the Unionists is also an integral part of the historiography of the transition. The exact nature of relations between the Unionists and those who remained loyal to Mustafa Kemal during the resistance period has been much discussed, especially by revisionist scholars, most notably Zürcher. Others have joined the debate (Akal, 2006).¹⁵ The debate on continuity and rupture from the Unionist era to the Kemalist era seems to be partly based on the continuity of the cadres and their attitudes in the years of resistance. However, this is only one dimension of a multi-layered episode. The participation of the Unionists in the movement does not in itself explain the rise of the nationalist movement, but only contributes to an explanation. Below are some international factors singled out to emphasize that the role of the international in the rise of the movement was not just a trigger.

As the Unionists gathered multiple forces and as spontaneous congresses mushroomed in Anatolia, the direction the nationalists took was greatly influenced by general attitudes towards the allied invasion and other international factors. For example, “in the spirit of Wilsonian Principles, the congresses at Balıkesir and Alaşehir repeatedly asserted that the province of Aydın (as well as the rest of Anatolia) had been from time immemorial ‘Turkish and Muslim’ and therefore should be guaranteed the rights and protection of the Great Powers” (Gingeras, 2009, p.75). The emerging Bolshevik regime in Moscow, also supportive of the principle of self-determination, proved to be a trustworthy ally not only in the Caucasus region but for the general resistance movement. For example a representative of the Karakol Society visited Moscow independently of the cadres loyal to Mustafa Kemal. As the British government further committed itself to the region by openly supporting the Greek army in its assault on Western Anatolia, the nationalist army officers in Anatolia were further drawn to the Bolsheviks, who provided material and moral support, the latter being indeed necessary in the war-weary land. Moreover, once the northeastern borders ceased to be a concern, the

¹⁴For a detailed analysis see Tanör, 1998.

¹⁵ For a summary of the debate and a critique see Gümüş, 2003.

nationalists could concentrate on mobilization and the war efforts in Western Anatolia (Gökay, 1997, p.168).

Collaboration with the Bolshevik regime put the nationalist movement on the international political map and certainly had an impact on its relations with the allied powers as well as the population of Anatolia, to which it was now turning its full attention in its quest for support. In this regard, the nationalist struggle was both against foreign invasion and involved the handling of internal divisions. The official historiography has been going under a revisionist change and the familiar narrative has been amended to take account of these power struggles instead of the insisting on a narrative that depicts a unified and thoroughly nationalist resistance movement from May 1919 onwards. (Demirel, 2003; Akın, 2008; Zürcher, 2008 Akal, 2006; Gümüş, 2003; and Tekeli, 1998). However, this element can be overlaid in the general account without really enriching the explanatory narrative.¹⁶ This study, inspired by HS in IR, suggests instead reorienting the research towards international factors and the interplay between imperial and local elements in understanding how the power struggles interacted with these factors.

Two of the international factors in 1919 and early 1920 stand out for their influence on the heterogeneous nationalist movement: the occupation of Izmir and the following advances towards the interior by the Greek army and the reinforcement of the occupation of Istanbul and the ensuing arrests and closure of the last Ottoman parliament (March 1920). Behind both events lay the British decision to remain in Istanbul and Anatolia to prevent a Bolshevik advance there and to show the British people the war had not been in vain, which is clearly spelled out in the correspondence in British archives.¹⁷ Both episodes proved harmful to allied interests in the short and long term and were the immediate cause of the emergence of a unified nationalist agency, in combination with the efforts of Unionist and non-Unionist officers and bureaucrats. Moreover, these foreign encroachments proved decisive in the struggle of the nationalists against the palace. These events prompted the palace to reinsert itself into Ottoman politics after a long period of rule by a civil and military bureaucracy. They also opened the way for the palace and the palace-friendly government to display their ineffectiveness in the face of proposals such as handing over the capital to international administration or transforming it into a Vatican-like entity. The allied invasion thus exacerbated the internal divisions in postwar Ottoman politics and, far from constraining the emerging nationalist movement, provided it with ample opportunity for propagandizing and for garnering external and internal support. The external support was not only Bolshevik support but also French and Italian support, mostly owing to the British backing of the Greeks in lands that were preliminarily offered to Italy (Criss, 1999, p.75). The advance of the Greeks in Western Anatolia greatly raised the internal support for the nationalists and this included the local forces which were irregular but 'formidable'. The impact of the Allied invasion is very similar to the raising of pressure on Macedonia especially by the British-Russian alliance just before the revolution of 1908 and its impact in giving cohesion to the opposition. To call it merely a reaction against foreign powers would be doing injustice to the creativities involved in agency

¹⁶ For the power struggle between Karakol and Kemalists, also see Demirel, 2003.

¹⁷The option of befriending the nationalist movement to create a buffer was advocated by the War Office. "In short, the change in the Government of Greece, though it alters the situation of the British and Allied troops temporarily for the worse at Constantinople, gives the opportunity to make gracious concessions to the Turks, and so wean them from their alliance with the Russian Bolsheviks, by this means recreating Turkey as a buffer State between the Entente Powers and Russia, and removing some of the principal underlying causes of unrest throughout the British dominions in Egypt, Mesopotamia and India." 19 February 1921: TNA, CAB/24/120/6

formation. The framework that is formed by these drastic events is then manipulated by the local actors who actually attain their political attitudes and choices within the same environment. This is true of Macedonia in the summer 1908 as well as of Anatolia in the spring 1920.

The British occupation of Istanbul was also among the primary reasons of the Unionists' support for the nationalist movement. The literature generally agrees that the CUP triumvirate had ordered their followers to organize a resistance but it also mostly agrees on the fact that starting a resistance was the only personal and political option for the Unionists since they were pursued and persecuted both by the Allied Powers and by the Ottoman Palace that enjoyed the newly found space of maneuver with the Allied invasion (Demirel, 2003, p.56) The success and timing of the opening of a new parliament in April 1920 was also very closely related to the Allied decisions listed above and mostly involved the British decision to suppress the Ottoman parliament that had approved the National Pact of the nationalist movement. With their arrest of deputies and entrance to the Parliament building they played a big role in the decision to move from Istanbul and Ankara and accelerated the unification of the movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. So, the Society for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumeli merged with Ottoman deputies under a new institutional roof that proved the most resilient in the following years of turmoil.¹⁸

With this merger, the resistance movement was unified and greatly centralized and could begin to concentrate on the next phase in the resistance, repelling the Greeks and countering any element in Anatolia that could threaten the movement. With the move to Ankara and the unification under the TGNA, the movement demonstrated its ability to hold elections and meetings, to field an army and to conduct foreign relations. Thus the basis of the incipient republic as well as the basis of the party that was to found the government for the next decades was laid¹⁹. This basis, a new nationalist politics, emerged out of the contradictions and opportunities associated with the intermixing of international, imperial and local politics and not necessarily from the internal evolution of the Unionists into Kemalist or from a conscious rupture by fully-fledged Kemalism. As with the 1908 Constitutional Revolution, agency grew out of the world within which the nationalists interacted and which the nationalists themselves constituted at the same time. Their interactions with this world had an impact on their internal relations, their relations with the Palace and Istanbul Government, and their political and military tactics. Of course the brief account of their unification under the Parliament in Ankara is far from doing justice to this very complex unfolding of events but the intention was not to re-read the whole post-war process. Rather the intention was to emphasize how neglected the role of the international-domestic interaction is within this narrative, despite the recent attempts for a revision in the official historiography.

Conclusion

This study, inspired by HS in IR has attempted to uncover the benefits of reorienting research into the transition period towards an integrated analysis of international, imperial and local levels. The debate on continuities within this transition takes a different turn when approached from this angle. There were clear ruptures in international politics. Although their depth and significance can be debated, these ruptures made their mark on the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the nationalist movement in Anatolia. None of these

¹⁸For a detailed account of the years of national resistance see Akşin, 2010a; 2010b, and 2010c; Goloğlu, 2008 and 2010.

¹⁹For a detailed account of the founding period of Republican People's Party (RPP) see Tunçay, 2005.

international factors is news to the official and revisionist historiography on the issue. However, they reveal a slightly different picture when situated within the debate on continuity and rupture. The 1908 Revolution emerges not as an unproblematic continuity within long-term Ottoman modernization that was bound to transmute into the Turkish Republic but as the actions of engaged political actors on the international scene, shaped by their experiences in Europe, Istanbul and Macedonia. This perspective on the revolution reminds us that it did not occur in the modern Republic of Turkey to come but in the Ottoman Empire, which had a different set of relations with Europe and the wider world.

Similarly, the rising nationalist movement, when situated in international politics, is not an inevitable result of the postwar settlements that left the empire with only Anatolia and thereby imposed the direction of nationalist resistance. On the contrary, the resistance movement emerges both as a product of the world setting that fostered the nation-state model against Bolshevism and of European diplomacy's vacillations over how to 'win the peace' but also in defiance to the postwar settlements and of British politics in particular. The continuities and ruptures between the Unionists (1908) and Nationalists (1920) lie not just in Anatolia but also in the changes at the international and regional levels.

The world at the turn of the century was indeed different in the challenges it presented to the actors. It was a world that narrowed for the Young Turks: the sultan had managed to confine them to Europe until 1906 and to prevent any new organizational activities within the empire. Great Power rivalry fostered an atmosphere of confusion and frustration, along with a certain disillusionment with European practices as against European ideals. Inspired and to a certain degree constituted by other constitutional revolutions, the Young Turks manipulated many tensions in the empire to overcome the challenges and succeeded against a very powerful palace.

The world in 1918, on the other hand, provided many more resources to the emerging actors: a common enemy (the allied invaders and the Greek army); an ally (in the Bolshevik regime); a palace devoid of prestige and real power; the remnants of the Ottoman army as well as a network of local armed groups; the past experiences of 1908, the Balkan Wars and Great War; a changed population composition as well as a different and more compact territory to defend. Their main political reflexes were formed gradually within this struggle, which, for reasons noted above, encouraged dreams of nations. The transition was clearly violent most of the time and occasionally very abrupt.

To conclude, this study draws attention to the benefits of research into the interplay between the international and local politics that conditioned the transition. There were continuities at many levels, but the unification of the nationalist movement was a product of ruptures as well, most notably in international politics. While revising official national historiography, one should not neglect the world-historical setting within which the transition occurred. Periods of great transformation in single countries usually occur in world-historical moments of change. This study also urges for actual single-case studies and comparative studies investigating the international's role in these transformations.

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