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Western Interventions and Formation of the Young Turks’ Siege Mentality

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ABSTRACT  This study is a preliminary attempt at understanding the correlation between the formation of the Young Turk mindset and the European interventions toward the Ottoman Empire in light of the documents written by the Young Turk generation. The Young Turk movement emerged in the period when the European powers were penetrating into Ottoman geography more strongly than ever. The Young Turks witnessed numerous territorial losses, the rise of nationalist sentiments among the imperial subjects and more importantly, the increasing political dependency of the Ottoman Empire. This article argues that modern Turkey’s nationalism is deeply rooted in ‘siege mentality’ that evolved during the late nineteenth to early twentieth century Ottoman experiences. This ‘siege mentality’ is understood as a conviction among Young Turks that the state was on the eve of an enemy siege and thus engaged in a struggle for its very survival. Consequently, anti-Western reactions and survival anxieties among the Young Turk generation shaped and affected the nascent Turkish nationalistic discourse and identity, both as an organic process through the experiences of the Young Turks as well as a social construction.

KEY WORDS: Anti-Imperialism; Anti-Western; Balkan Wars; Capitulations; Eastern Question; Great Powers; Imperialism; Mustafa Kemal; Ottoman Empire; Russo-Japanese War; Siege Mentality; Young Turks

They [the Turks] are not the mild Mohometans of India, not the chivalrous Saladins of Syria, nor the cultured Moors of Spain. They are upon the whole, since the black day when they first entered Europe, the one great anti-human species of humanity. Wherever they went a broad line of blood marked the track behind them, and, as far as their dominion reached, civilization vanished from view.

William Ewart Gladstone, 1876

Social scientists predominantly portray the nineteenth century as the century of the industrial revolution, science, modernism, imperialism, and colonialism, most frequently...
characterized by the concept of development. Throughout that century, the Western imperial powers of Britain, France, Germany and the Russian Empire increased their economic and political influence vis-à-vis other countries, and by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the great majority of the world was economically, militarily and politically dominated by these imperial powers. The Ottoman Empire, which was one of the last Muslim world powers to survive into the age of modernity and imperialism, was not an exception to this rule. After 1878, it no longer was counted among the imperial powers that made and shaped the rules of the world. The principal objective of Ottoman elites, who were keenly aware of the changing position of the empire in the international arena as well as of Western military and technological superiority, undoubtedly was to protect the territorial and political integrity of the empire rather than to enlarge it. In fact, since the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire had experienced successive setbacks and military defeats against the European powers: Loss of the first Muslim land, Crimea, to Russia in 1774; Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt in 1798; and throughout the nineteenth century, various separatist insurrections in the Balkans, resulting either in the independence or autonomy of former Ottoman subjects. These developments left Ottoman elites with a sense that their empire was falling behind European states in terms of military, technological and economic prowess.

In addition to the territorial losses, military defeats and separatist revolts against the central government, another problem that seriously threatened the Ottoman Empire’s sovereignty was Western economic penetration. The main phenomenon that made this a destabilizing factor was the increasing exploitation of capitulations by the Western powers. Originally, Ottoman sultans had granted capitulations solely to merchants of friendly states, but during the course of the nineteenth century even minor powers demanded and received capitulatory rights. Thanks to foreign consuls who abused these rights by selling such appointments (berat) to native Ottoman merchants, numerous Ottoman subjects, a great majority of whom were non-Muslims, also acquired these economic privileges. Thus, these capitulatory rights became a source of permanent irritation for Ottoman governments by the end of the nineteenth century. Resentment derived primarily from the fact those Ottoman citizens who enjoyed capitulary rights

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2 At the end of the nineteenth century, European dominance over the world extended over more than 85% of the globe; see U. Makdisi (2002) Rethinking Ottoman Imperialism: Modernity, Violence and the Cultural Logic of Ottoman Reform, in: J. Hanssen, T. Philipp & S. Weber (eds) The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire (Würzburg: Ergon), p. 32.
4 Capitulations, in a broad sense, were judicial, commercial, fiscal and economic privileges and concessions given by the Ottoman Sultans to the foreign residents in the Ottoman Empire. According to these privileges, the foreign residents who enjoyed capitulary rights not only were subject to the laws of their respective countries, but they also enjoyed full exemption from certain Ottoman taxes and reduced custom duties.
5 During the nineteenth century Bavaria, Belgium, Brazil, Greece, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Prussia, Portugal, Sardinia, Sicily, Spain, Sweden, and other states signed similar treaties with the Ottoman Empire. F. Ahmad (2000) Ottoman Perception of the Capitulations, 1800–1914, Journal of Islamic Studies, 11(1), p. 6.
6 Ibid, p. 3.
7 The number of native Ottoman subjects who came under the protection of Great Powers steadily increased during the nineteenth century. In 1808, Russia had enrolled about 120,000 Greeks as protected persons, ibid, p. 5. By 1856, the number of British protected Ottomans reached approximately one million, according to R. H. Davison (1963) Reform in the Ottoman Empire (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 73, n. 75.
actually were under the protection of one of the Great Powers, and this created a ‘protégé system’ that undermined Ottoman sovereignty and legitimacy. As protégés of Western merchants, furthermore, the non-Muslim native merchants, along with the foreign ones, dominated Ottoman commerce and trade, in particular in the port cities, thanks to the tax and legal exemptions they enjoyed with the capitulations and foreign protection. As a result, as noted by Feroz Ahmad, Ottoman elites perceived capitulations—the basic means of Western intervention—as the symbol of their country’s inferiority vis-à-vis the Western powers. Accordingly, they made multiple but unsuccessful attempts to abrogate the capitulations in order to be treated as equals in the international arena.

The first reaction of Ottoman elites against Western territorial and economic expansion was to modernize the army. The Ottoman military reforms gained a much broader dimension over the course of the nineteenth century, and the Ottoman central government also introduced drastic reforms in other areas ranging from tax collection, military recruitment, education and judicial procedures to provincial administration. As a result of these reforms, ‘the central Ottoman state structure became more powerful, more rational, more specialized and more capable of imposing its will on society.’ The reforms, however, could not prevent further internal and external threats from challenging Ottoman sovereignty on multiple fronts: its territories such as Cyprus, Tunisia, and Egypt were occupied by the European Powers in 1878, 1881 and 1882, respectively; separatist national movements among Ottoman subjects continued uninterrupted; financial bankruptcy in 1881 resulted in the formation of the Public Debt Administration (PDA), which began to control the Ottoman annual revenues to offset its earlier loan debt; and economic and juridical capitulations continued to function as instruments for further European economic and political interference.

In the late nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was on the one hand formally an independent and sovereign state. On the other hand, it rapidly was slipping into economic and political dependence. Consequently, just before the emergence of the Young Turk movement, the Ottoman Empire had gained, to some extent, a kind of semi-colonial status.

10 Ahmad, Ottoman Perception, p. 6.
11 The capitulations seem to have had significant effects on the formation of Turkish national identity, as an anecdote that Yakup Kadri (1889–1974), a famous writer and deputy of the republican period, reveals in one of his books. As an 11-year old, Kadri saw some European travelers ruthlessly beating some Turkish children, and wanted to report this to police. His father’s bitter answer, ‘Son, what can the police do against foreigners?’, had a chilling effect on him: ‘Upon hearing these remarks, I suddenly aged ten years. A melancholic earnestness seized me and, I believe, since that moment my national pride began to bleed. Starting from that moment, during a period of 25 years, the blood of this wound dropped on my heart.’ Y. K. Karaosmanoğlu (1961), *Atatürk* (Ankara: Remzi), p. 10.
in comparison with the Great Powers of Europe,\textsuperscript{13} and this Ottoman dependency would influence the Young Turk movement and the Young Turk mindset.

**The Anti-West Young Turks**

Whenever the Great Powers intervened in our domestic affairs they concluded their intervention by separating an element [of the empire] from us, or obtained new privileges for profiteers and missionaries; to sum up, they always diminished the strength of the Turk.

\textit{Şûra-yı Ümmet}, Young Turk newspaper, 1902.\textsuperscript{14}

‘Young Turk’ is a political expression coined in Europe in order to define the Ottoman constitutionalist opposition to Sultan Abdülhamid II. The first nucleus of the Young Turk movement emerged as a secret society founded by a group of students under the name \textit{Itihad-i Osmani Cemiyeti} [the Society of Ottoman Union] in 1889 at the Medical Military Academy in Istanbul. None of these founding fathers were ethnically Turkish. They included İshak Sukutî (1868–1902), a Kurd; İbrahim Temo (1865–1939), the founder of the group and an Albanian; Mehmet Reşit (1873–1919), a Circassian; and Abdullah Cевdet (1869–1932), a Kurd.\textsuperscript{15} In other words, the society was a clear reflection of the multi-ethnic composition of the empire. The principal aims of the society were to end the Hamidian regime and to reinstate the Constitution of 1876 as well as the parliament, objectives they regarded as a panacea for the empire. During the next few years, the society gradually gained adherents in other high schools in Istanbul in general and among the students in the military schools in particular, leading to the emergence of new branches.\textsuperscript{16}

The society also established contacts with Ottoman political émigrés in Europe, who had constituted a small diaspora in Paris ever since the prorogation of the constitution in 1878. Ahmet Rıza (1859–1930) was one of its more notable contacts. He was one of the most prominent Ottoman intellectuals, well-known for his positivist ideas. The Society of Ottoman Union was renamed \textit{Osmanlı Itihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti} (the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress) in 1894, and gradually became an umbrella

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organization for the opponents of the Hamidian regime. Since the Young Turks were not a homogeneous group in terms of ethnicity, social and geographical background or profession, the society did not have a monolithic ideological or ethnic inclination. Illustrative of this point is that membership ranged from Ahmet Rıza and Dr. Nazım of Turkish descent to Albanians such as İsmail Kemal, Christian Arabs such as Khalil Ghanem and Jews like İbrahim Fuat who were among the leading supporters of the society at its beginning.

It is true that the diverse membership of the society disagreed on multiple issues but the great majority of Young Turks opposed foreign intervention into Ottoman domestic policies and the economic penetration of the Great Powers. They generally saw Western imperialism, which portrayed non-Westerners as racially inferior, using pseudo-scientific race theories of the time, as a threat to the territorial and political sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. Anti-Western thoughts, therefore, constituted one of the main ideological discourses of the Young Turk movement in opposition and the various publications of the Young Turks frequently featured pieces that criticized Western imperialism and the Great Powers’ policies toward the Ottoman Empire. As the writings of Young Turks in these journals reveal, the Young Turks viewed the privileges given by the Ottomans to European states as the basic political tool used to destroy Ottoman sovereignty:

As we observe, Europe, in every field, cares for her own interest. If she did not foresee a prodigious outcome for her own interest she would never help us... Can we not see the fact that the smallest permission and privilege extended to foreign governments, even kindness and respect shown in a spirit of hospitality, later appeared as a prerogative in the treaties and capitulations? It is impossible to recall a privilege which was once granted even on a temporary basis. If Europe came to rescue us by accepting our invitation, she would at first try to separate the Armenians and Macedonians from us.

The Young Turks were also remarkably sensitive to Western claims based on the racial superiority of Western races, since they thought that those claims could be used as a pretext to drive the Turks back to Asia.

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18 Zürcher has identified some common characteristics of the Young Turks: primarily male Muslims educated in modern Western-style schools; young, urban, literate; children of state employees; and many from the former Balkan provinces; see E. J. Zürcher (2003) *The Young Turks: Children of the Borderlands?*, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 9, pp. 275–285; and idem (2010) *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey* (London, New York: I. B. Tauris), pp. 95–109.
20 Hanoğlu, *Preparation*, p. 34.
21 For the European race theories humiliating non-Westerners see, Woringer, *Sick Man of Europe or Japan of the Near East?*, pp. 216, 228.
22 In contrast, Prince Sabahaddin (1878–1948) and his group did not see Western imperialism as a serious issue, and his journal, *Terakki*, therefore, published no criticism of Western imperialism; see Hanoğlu, *Preparation*, pp. 304–305.
23 Müdahale-i Ecnebiye (1902) *Şura-yı Ümmet*, 1; quoted in Hanoğlu, *Preparation*, p. 34.
The humiliating treatment ... of the dark-complexioned and black races by the people of Western Europe and especially by the English and the Americans is a well-known fact. Although most of the Turks are racially European, it suits the desire of many powers to claim that the Turks do not belong to the white race and they are totally Asian, because in the future this claim would be employed as an argument to drive us totally out of Europe and to preclude our rule of Christian nations there.  

In fact, the Young Turks believed that European policies directed against the Ottoman Empire were part of general European imperialism lacking moral values. Ahmet Riza reflected best the dominant mood among the Young Turks when he argued, 'the European polices threatening the Ottoman Empire were a modern crusade.' When European states could not find a logical cause to occupy a country and to seize the property of the natives there, they assert that they only want to bring the blessings of civilization to that country since the natives are from an inferior race. This notion of European imperialism made the Young Turks emphasize the importance of Islamic unity among the Muslim subjects of the empire against the European powers. Ishak Sukuti argued that ‘Albanians and Kurds, together with the other Muslims in the empire, must unite with the Turks against the West in order to defeat European schemes aiming at detaching their lands from the common fatherland in the interest of Balkan and Anatolian Christians.' In another article published in Şüra-yı Ümmet, the Young Turks condemned European imperialism for having led to the massacre of the American Indians, plundering the entire African continent, and now targeting the Ottoman Empire. For the Young Turks, the main factor that prevented the Great Powers from the partitioning the Ottoman Empire was the balance of power in Europe:

As the Great Powers had made up the principle of ‘the territorial integrity of Sublime State’ because they could not agree upon the partition of our country, now in order to prevent a single power from gaining dominance in the Orient, they have invented the formula of ‘the maintenance of the independence of [the Sublime State].

The peak of the Young Turks’ anti-Western discourse doubtlessly is illustrated in their journal, Türk, published in Egypt. According to its editors, all the Western Great Powers, without exception, were imperialistic and the enemies of the Turkish nation. The Japanese victory over Russia in 1905, which gave a great impetus to the anti-colonial movement across Asia, similarly reinforced the convictions of the Young Turks

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24 Londra’dan (1904) Şüra-yı Ümmet, 50 (April 1); quoted in Hanoğlu, Preparation, p. 36.
27 Ibid, p. 27.
29 Ş. Bundan (1904) Şüra-yı Ümmet, 61 (October 10); quoted in Hanoğlu, Preparation, p. 302.
30 Boğazlar (1902) Şüra-yı Ümmet, 13 (October 3); quoted in Hanoğlu, Preparation, p. 35.
31 M. Almanlar (1906) Türk, 119 (February 22); and Türkiye’dde Almanlar, Türk, 124 (March 29, 1906), both quoted in Hanoğlu, Preparation, p. 72.
The Japanese victory, in the eyes of many Young Turks, was clear evidence that confirmed the invalidity of Western race theories describing Asians, including Turks, as being in the lower part of the racial hierarchy and destroyed the idea of invincibility of the Western powers by the non-Western states. After the initial Japanese victory in 1905 against Russia, which was the arch-enemy of the Ottoman Empire for centuries, the fascination among the Young Turks increased so much that some Young Turks applied to serve in the Japanese army. Halide Edip (1884–1964), a famous author of the period, named her newborn son, ‘Hasan Hikmetullah Togo,’ referring to the great Japanese naval hero of the Russo-Japanese War, Admiral Togo Heihachir. Another prominent Young Turk, Kazım Karabekir (1882–1948), a military academy student at the time, described in his memoirs the sympathy toward the Japanese among the young students at the academy:

The whole school was in enjoyment. For a long time, our attention directed towards the Far East. Everyone was making predictions. We had no doubt that the Japanese would become victorious. We were seeing the achievements of the Japanese as our own. We were hooraying ‘Long live Admiral Togo,’ the man who destroyed the Baltic fleet. We were also cheering for commanders such as Nojioyama, Kroki, Oku.

The Young Turks truly started perceiving Japan as a perfect role model for the decaying Ottoman Empire. Abdullah Cevdet aptly defined the Young Turks’ growing identification with Japan:

Japan has become more and more conscious of its high civilization mission in Asia ... We read in The Times newspaper an excerpt from the speech Japanese Parliament’s ex-president Okuma. We are pleased to reproduce the following passage from it: ‘It is incumbent upon us that we who hold the banner of Asian

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32 An anecdote by the Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925) may shed light on how the masses in western Asia regarded the Japanese victory over Russia: Returning by ship from London to China in late 1905, Sun Yat-sen was congratulated by Arab port workers, who thought that he was Japanese; cited in P. Mishra (2012) From the Ruins of the Empire: The Intellectuals who Remade Asia (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux), p. 2.


34 Haniog˘lu, Preparation, p. 304.


civilization have the sacred duty of tendering a helping hand to China, to India, to Korea, to all the nations of Asian civilization. They wish us, as their powerful friends, to free them of the yoke that Europe imposed upon them, and show the world that the Orient can have a confrontation with the West on the battlefield’ […] One can hardly say it better and it is far from being a ‘yellow peril’ […] Japan is therefore the carrier of the sword and the torch: the sword, for the oppressors, for the insolent invaders: the torch for the oppressed, for those that shine unto themselves and die for lack of light and liberty. An admirable example to follow! 38

The Young Turks’ fascination with Japan originated principally from Japan’s military and economic success and its acquisition of respect from the Great Powers. Due to the success of Japan against Tsarist Russia, they easily could identify with Japan and hope for similar successes. For many Young Turks, Japan was a fellow Asian empire long victimized by Western interventions but now standing proud and victorious over Western aggression. Furthermore, the Young Turks were remarkably sensitive to the issue of foreign intervention in the Ottoman Empire and had begun to form an anti-Western rhetoric. Their use of this rhetoric, however, should not be seen as a result of a clear-cut doctrinal commitment to anti-Westernism. Their discourse was a reflection of unequal power relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Western powers. In the last analysis, their anti-Western discourse never reached a dimension that totally rejected or excluded Western civilization. For instance, in the words of Abdullah Cevdet: ‘There is no second civilization. Civilization means European civilization. We must borrow it with both its roses and thorns.’ 39

Many Young Turks considered Westernization not only as synonymous with modernization but also to be the only solution that could save the Ottoman Empire from the yoke of Western imperialism. Indeed, the great majority of Young Turks had been educated in Western-style institutions and envied the European lifestyle. At the same time, however, they politically opposed Western imperial and colonial policies. Thus, they had an ambivalent relationship with the West. On the one hand, they regarded the West as a model for their own state in terms of social, economic, technological and scientific developments and considered themselves as a part of Western civilization. On the other hand, they condemned the same West as an imperialist power that constantly undermined the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire. Ziya Gökalp, the principal mentor of the Young Turks, is illustrative of this ambivalent attitude. He argued that:

There is only one road to salvation: To advance in order to reach—that is, in order to be equal to—Europeans in the sciences and industry as well as in military and judicial institutions. And there is only one means to achieve this: to adapt ourselves to Western civilization completely! 40

At the same time Gökalp did not hesitate to call and to frame the same Western civilization as the ‘enemy’ in one of his poems:

We were defeated because we were backward
To take revenge, we shall adopt the enemy’s science
We shall learn his skill, still his methods.
On progress we set our heart.41

**Young Turks and Balkan Trauma**

My heart is bleeding ... The traces of this misery created by this last Crusade [The Balkan Wars] are visible everywhere. If I could tell you all the atrocities which the enemy has committed right here at the gates of Istanbul, you would understand the sufferings of the poor Muslim farther away. But our hatred is intensifying: revenge, revenge, revenge, there is no word else!

Enver Pasha, May 8, 191342

Although the Young Turks considerably increased their members within and outside the empire, they had to limit their activities to writing pamphlets, holding meetings and distributing illegal newspapers due to the Hamidian regime’s rigid control and pressure that kept them away from more formal channels of politics. The Young Turk movement, therefore, remained solely an intellectual movement in opposition to the Hamidian regime. However, with the integration of a new secret underground society, namely Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti (Ottoman Freedom Society), into the movement, the Young Turks gained a new revolutionary impetus. Talat Bey (1874–1921), later Pasha, had founded the Ottoman Freedom Society in Salonika in 1906. Thanks to his organizational capability, the society spread in a short time, in particular among junior and mid-level army officers in the European provinces of the empire. The core of the society was based on junior and mid-level members of the officer corps in the European provinces of the empire, and who were almost entirely Muslim and predominantly Turkish.43 It was the officers in the Ottoman Freedom Society who carried out the July 1908 coup, and forced the sultan to reinstate the parliament and the constitution after a 30-year interval.44 After coming to power, the Young Turks sought to protect the territorial integrity of the empire by emphasizing the common Ottoman identity and through modernization.45 They hoped the establishment of

45 At this juncture, it should be emphasized that in the period between 1908 and 1913, although the Young Turks overwhelmingly dominated the political arena, the cabinet was still largely recruited from among the traditional Ottoman bureaucracy. See further D. Ergil (1975) A Reassessment: the Young Turks, Their Politics and Anti-Colonial Struggle, *Balkan Studies*, 16(2), pp. 26–72.
constitutional rule and a representative parliamentary system would eliminate the separatist demands and tendencies in the empire and curb the interventions of the Great Powers.  

Ahmet Rıza’s announcement on September 28, 1908, was a clear reflection of the Young Turk’s goals. According to the announcement, the intervention of the Great Powers originated from the maladministration of the absolutist regime and, since the Young Turks provided justice and freedom, no intervention ever would occur again.

Events, however, would not develop as the Young Turks had hoped. Just after the announcement of the constitution, they confronted several crises that threatened deeply the newly established regime. First, Bulgaria declared itself independent on October 5, 1908. Second, only 24 hours later, the Austro-Hungarian Empire announced the official annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and third, on the same day Crete declared its decision to unite with Greece. These acts were in clear violation of the Berlin Treaty of 1878, and the Young Turks harshly protested to the Great Powers, the signatories of the treaty, asking them to take actions against these violations. The Great Powers, however, informed the Ottoman government that they would not interfere on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. In addition to these kinds of humiliations, which undermined the confidence of the Young Turks in international law and decreased the prestige of the Young Turks in Ottoman public opinion, the Young Turks had to confront local rebellions in Yemen, Macedonia and Albania in the following years.

Many prominent Young Turks, including Mustafa Kemal (1881–1938), İsmet (İnönü) (1884–1973), Ali Fethi (Okyar) (1880–1943), Ali Fuat (Cebesoy) (1882–1968) and Kazım Karabekir, the founding fathers of modern Turkey, actively participated as Ottoman officers defending the fatherland in these rebellions. While the Young Turks concentrated on Libya, which was occupied by Italy in September 1911 with no casus belli, the Balkan states, namely Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro, attacked the Ottoman Empire in October 1912, starting the Balkan War. This war would be the last nail in the coffin of the Sick Man of Europe before the outbreak of the First World War. Given its demographic and political outcomes and profound impact on the Ottoman-Turkish intelligentsia and society, it would not be wrong to claim that the Balkan War was a watershed for the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the rising of nascent Turkish nationalism, which was not a clear-cut political ideology at the time. First of all, the defeat in the Balkan War radically changed the demographic structure of the empire. By the end of the war seven months later, the Ottoman Empire had lost 83 percent of its territory in Europe (from 169,845 sq. km down to 28,842 sq. km). The empire also lost 4.2 million
people, the great majority being non-Muslims. In addition, more than 400,000 Muslim refugees fleeing from repression had resettled in the empire by mid-1913, making it ethnically and religiously more homogenous in favor of the Turks. As for the psychological impact, the loss of the Balkan provinces, which were commercially and economically the most developed lands of the empire and the birthplaces of many Young Turks, created a great shock among the Ottoman-Turkish intelligentsia in general and for the Young Turks in particular. The words of Mustafa Kemal shed light on the extent of the shock:

One day when I was rushing from the field of operations in Cyrenaica to the fire of the Balkan Wars, I observed that all the routes connecting ... the shores of Africa to my fatherland were blocked. One day I heard that Salonika, the land of my father had been ceded to the enemy together with my mother, sister, and all my relatives ... One day I heard that a bell had been installed in the minaret of Hortacı Süleyman Mosque and that the remains of my father there had been trampled upon by the filthy boots of the Greeks.

Parallel to this political and psychological trauma, nationalist ideas among the Young Turks started to become more apparent. For instance, while some intellectuals such as Fuat Köprülü (1890–1966) demonstrated ‘the weakness of the Turkish core in the empire’ as the principal reason for the defeat in the Balkan War, Young Turks such as İsmail Naci (Pelister) warned the Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals and political elite to act on the formation of a Turkish nation in Anatolia. The Balkan War created a deep sense of victimization, which became fertile ground for the rise of nationalist sentiments among the Young Turks and the intelligentsia and also became an integral part of this rising nationalist discourse. Halide Edip depicts in her memoirs the growing sympathy toward Turkish nationalism among the Ottoman-Turkish intelligentsia at the time:

The vast numbers of the Balkan Turks, refugees who poured into Constantinople and Anatolia with their lurid and sinister tales of martyrdom and suffering at the hands of the Balkan Christians, the indifference and even the apparent joy of the so-called civilized outside world at their sorry state, aroused a curious sympathy for everything that was Turkish in those days.

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55 The families of prominent Young Turks such as Talat Pasha, Rahmi Bey (1874–1847), the governor of Izmir, and Mustafa Kemal were among the Balkan refugees. See Zürcher, ‘Demographic Engineering,’ p. 536.
58 Aksakal, The Ottoman Road to War in 1914, p. 25.
The Great Powers’ policy toward the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan War and in its aftermath deeply reinforced the anti-Western ideas and sentiments among the Young Turks. First, the Great Powers remained silent about the massacres and atrocities committed against the Muslims in the Balkan states during the war.60 Second, although at the outbreak of hostilities in 1912 the Great Powers officially proclaimed that they would preserve the pre-war status quo regardless of land gains at the end of the war, that declaration was based on the assumption that the Ottoman Empire would be victorious.61 When the Ottoman Empire was defeated, however, they immediately recognized the expansion of the Balkan states at its expense, ratifying the seizure of the empire’s Balkan territories at the London Peace Conference of 1913. Faced with such double standards, Cemal Pasha in his memoirs aptly expressed the feelings of bitterness and victimization that characterized the Young Turks’ perceptions:

The European powers, which are in the habit of manifesting their humane sentiments when it is a question of intervention against Turkey, had not a word to say against the abominations of the Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians who had slaughtered in the most bestial manner more than five hundred thousand Turks, most of them women, old people and children. When the Carnegie’s Commission of Enquiry published its special report upon these horrors, there was not a single newspaper in the whole of Europe or America, with the exception of a few socialist journals, which had a word to say in favor of the poor Mohammedans who had been killed off like flies.62

In a speech she made at an assembly of women at Darülfünun (The University of Istanbul) in February 1913, Fehime Nüzhet (1877–1925), a leading female author of the time, strongly condemned Europe:

All of Europe has united into a single force and turned into an ominous monster, whipping with its dirty and wretched tail the pure and innocent existence of the East. I am not sure what you are going to name those creatures who, with a cross in one hand and sword and whip in the other, vandalize all of Rumelia, stain the purity there, strangle the women, hurt the kids, burn down the country, and steal the money. Civilized Europe refers to them [the Balkan states] as ‘Christian brethren’ . . . And with every victorious step these enemies take, the heart of the West that is the enemy of the Turk, Islam, and the East beats with joy . . . Everywhere, across all the Christian world, there is a joyful clamor, an occasion for public entertainment and joy.63

In this ideological atmosphere, even Celal Nuri (1877–1939), an intellectual known for his pro-West attitude at the time, explicitly expressed his hatred:

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60 For the atrocities of the Balkan states during the Balkan War, see Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1914) International Commission to inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars (Washington: Carnegie Endowment).
61 Ahmad, The Late Ottoman Empire, p. 14.
I am incapable of explaining our plight further. The whole world is our enemy . . .
The whole word of infidels! Friendship for the West is the vilest of all crimes I can imagine. A nation incapable of hating the West is doomed to extinction.64

Ahmet İhsan (1868–1947), a prominent journalist and publisher harshly criticized the hypocritical attitude of the Western powers toward the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan Wars:

Turkish intellectuals were deeply grieving. Amazing images in front of our eyes were making all of us shed tears of blood. Across my publishing house, the Imperial College was turned into a hospital. The day on which we went there to deliver tea in gas canisters to the moaning wounded Turkish heroes, a terrific fire of sedition blazed up in my heart against European policies, European imperialists and imperialism. I could not put out this fire since then. It is still burning.65

In the aftermath of the Balkan War, another significant contribution that fed the anti-Western rhetoric of the Young Turks came from Alexander Helphand-Parvus (1867–1924), a leading Marxist theoretician.66 Helphand, who developed a close relationship with the Young Turks while residing in Istanbul between 1910 and 1914, became an expert and mentor on financial and economic matters for the Young Turks. According to Helphand, the basic reason for the Ottoman decline was the deterioration of the Ottoman economy rather than culture, religion or politics, and that it was European economic strength that controlled the destiny of the empire in reality, not the Ottoman state which simply had become a puppet of European finance capital.67 Helphand, who also regarded the Ottoman Empire as the victim of European imperialism as well as of capitalism, warned the Young Turks in power in an April 1913 article:

The Balkan states and great powers want to annihilate you like the native Indians who perished in America . . . They have closed all your roads and besieged you. If you cannot hold your positions and establish an economic force that meets modern demands, your death is certain.68

The solution Helphand proposed was to create a ‘National Economy’ by abolishing the capitulations, nationalizing the railroads, taxing the foreign residents and raising custom duties.69 As Zafer Toprak has shown, the Young Turks would put the proposals of Helphand, without exception, into practice between 1914 and 1918, and nationalize the Ottoman economy.70

67 Ibid, pp. 151–152.
70 Z. Toprak (2009) II. Meşruiyet Döneminde Uluslararası İlişkiler, Milliyetçilik ve Emperyalizm [International relations, nationalism and imperialism in the Second Constitutional Period] in: M. Dursun & T. Vardaglı (eds),
The Balkan War not only played a significant role in the formation of a great sense of victimization and violation among Young Turks, but also it left the Ottoman Empire in a highly insecure international position, since it became evident that international law and the status quo could not protect its territorial integrity from unlawful invasions. These developments in the immediate aftermath of the Balkan War further strengthened the Young Turks’ already existing skepticism toward the Western powers and created what one may call a ‘siege mentality’ among the Young Turks. With respect to this siege mentality, Filibeli Ahmed Hilmi’s book, Türk Ruhu Nasıl Yapılıyor? Her Vatanperverden, Bu Eseriği Türklerle Okumasını Ve Anlatmasını Niye Ederiz [How is the Turkish spirit formed? We ask each patriot to read and to relate this booklet to the Turks] reflects best this siege mentality among the Young Turk generation. Published just after the Balkan War, Hilmi argued:

The Crimea, Rumania, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Serbia, Bulgaria, the Caucasus all went one by one ... Finally Tripoli [Libya] and three-fourths of the Balkans also were lost. These areas were all rich and valuable places; we gained them at the cost of our blood. But those territories, however rich they may be, were not the heart and soul of our homeland. O Turk! Anatolia is the heart and soul of our homeland [yurdumuzun yüreği] ... O Turk! If we continue in our old ways, if we face the enemy again in slumber, unprotected, then this time the enemy’s sword will come to our [homeland’s] heart and soul and kill each one of us.

In addition to the disloyalty of some non-Muslim soldiers in the Balkan War, the rising nationalist tendencies among various subjects in the empire were also a factor that fostered this siege mentality. For instance, having seen the rising national consciousness of the non-Turkish Ottoman subjects in Macedonia, Kazım Karabekir wrote: ‘There is no need to deceive ourselves by calling these people Ottoman. They are Bulgarian, Serb, Greek and Vlah.’ Rather similar to the position of Karabekir vis-à-vis the non-Turkish subjects in the empire, Hüseyin Cahit (1875–1957), a famous Young Turk journalist and deputy of Istanbul at the time, argued:

The unique ethnic element that had identified itself with the fatherland in the country and sincerely sacrificed itself for the fatherland was the Turks ... For a Bulgarian, the fatherland was to unify with Sofia by annexing Macedonia ... For a Greek

Footnote 70 continued
72 Ş. F. Ahmed Hilmi (1913–1914) Türk Ruhu Nasıl Yapılıyor? Her Vatanperverden, Bu Eseriği Türklerle Okumasını Ve Anlatmasını Niye Ederiz [How is the Turkish spirit formed? We ask each patriot to read and to relate this booklet to the Turks] (Istanbul: Hikmet Matbaa-i İslamiyesi), pp. 6–7. Quoted in Aksakal, Ottoman Road, pp. 30–31.
[Rum], it was Istanbul together with some parts of Anatolia. Armenians were planning to found a homeland for themselves by dismembering Anatolia.\textsuperscript{75}

This siege mentality, which increasingly heightened anxieties and fears among the Young Turks regarding the future of their own state, would deeply affect not only the Young Turks’ mindset and collective memory but also Turkish national identity which was in the process of formation after the Balkan War and during the First World War.

**Conclusion**

Every time we raised our heads, we received a blow; every time we tried to stand erect, we received a kick. Such was the lot of the Turks ... While in their countries king and coachman are equal before the law, here an Ottoman vizier was inferior to a foreigners’ servant.\textsuperscript{76}

Hüseyin Cahit, September 10, 1914

The Young Turk movement emerged in a period when the European powers had penetrated into the Ottoman geography more strongly than ever. The Young Turks were members of a generation that witnessed numerous territorial losses, the rise of nationalist sentiments among the various subjects of the empire, the prevalence of Orientalist racist discourses against the Turks and Asiatic peoples, the misuse of capitulatory rights, the growing success of the non-Muslim bourgeoisie in Ottoman trade—deemed by the Young Turks as the main profiteers of European economic penetration into the empire—and the rising bondage of the Ottoman governments under the tutelage of the PDA, and more importantly, the increasing political dependency of the empire on the major European powers. The Young Turk movement that developed under these socio-political conditions, therefore, was not only a response to the authoritarian Hamidian regime but also to the Ottoman dependency on the European Great Powers and to their intervention.

However, the Young Turks formed neither a monolithic nor a homogenous group. The main motive that united them, with their diverse identities, ethnic origins and ideological inclinations, was the preservation of the political and territorial integrity of the empire rather than a strong commitment to a specific or a well-integrated ideology.\textsuperscript{77} The Young Turk movement was undoubtedly a central link in the chain of Ottoman Westernization that started roughly in the late eighteenth century. In other words, the Young Turks were also a product of Ottoman Westernization. As we have seen in their documents and works, they perceived European policies toward the Ottoman Empire as imperialistic ones that threatened Ottoman sovereignty and territorial integrity. Accordingly, the Young Turks cultivated and developed a strong anti-West discourse on the basis of anti-imperialism. The basic reason for this ambivalent attitude toward the West lies in the political aims of


\textsuperscript{76} H. Cahit (1914) *Tanın*, (September 10). Quoted in Ahmad, Ottoman Perception, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{77} For instance, Ş. Mardin defines the ideological world of the Young Turks as an eclectic amalgamation of fragments of different ideologies in Ş. Mardin (1996) *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri (1895–1908)* [Political thoughts of the Young Turks (1895–1908)] (Istanbul: İletişim), pp. 7–19.
the Young Turks. Indeed, given the political and socio-economic conditions of the Ottoman Empire at the time and the political goals of the Young Turks, it is not surprising to see that the Young Turks took positions vis-à-vis the European powers that ultimately undermined the judicial, political and territorial sovereignty of the empire. To be more precise, the Young Turk’s objective of protecting the territorial integrity of the empire and of transforming the ‘sick man of Europe’ into a politically and economically independent, modern state required first and foremost the removal of Western control and intervention in the Ottoman Empire. These political goals, along with a desire to be considered equals by the European Great Powers, were among the main driving forces that oriented the Young Turks toward being anti-West. The bitter experience of how European intervention led to the constant loss of Ottoman territory was also a crucial factor that pushed these children of Ottoman Westernization toward embracing an anti-Western discourse.

The interaction between the Young Turks’ mindset and European intervention should not be ignored, since the latter was one of the most important factors that shaped their mindset by creating a siege mentality and by feeding into their anxieties about the territorial security and political independence of the empire. While the siege mentality among the Young Turks constantly galvanized and fueled their skepticism about the West and its protégées in the empire, the policies that grew out of this security perception often favored centralization and militarism in the Young Turk era, since their leaders had lost confidence in the sincerity of diplomacy and international law. The words of Ahmet Rıza demonstrate the significance that the Young Turks attributed to the army:

The rights of the Ottomans are under constant assault. The future of our state is in great danger. Therefore, our need for a regular land force and a mobile and strong navy that would extend protection is greater than any other state.

In the final analysis, since this siege mentality and security perception, together with a strong skepticism and anxiety toward the West among the Young Turk generation, were intertwined with the emergence of Turkish nationalism, they would evolve into one of the main pillars of Turkish collective memory and remain one of the ever-lasting features of Turkish nationalism and Turkish nationalist discourse.

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