

The Influence of the Young Turks Revolution on the Politics of the Balkans and the Middle East

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In spite of Sultan Abdul Hamid's attempt to suppress the uprising, the Young Turks created a revolution and won control of the Ottoman government in 1908. They embarked on a path that none of the great powers in Europe wanted, a reinvigorated Ottoman Empire that could deal with Europe politically as an equal. They forced the restoration of the constitution of 1876, re-established parliament and introduced many reforms, setting the stage for the eventual creation of the modern Turkish Republic. In his book *The Balkans: Nationalism, War, and the Great Powers, 1804-1999* Misha Glenny describes the effects of the revolution like this:

Later cataclysms of the twentieth century have obscured the contemporary impact of the Young Turk Revolution. Yet its importance is comparable with the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1989. The speed with which the Sultan's power crumbled astonished the great powers, and took the revolutionaries themselves unawares.

The revolution not only changed the Ottoman Empire, it played a significant role in the reshaping of the Middle East and the Balkans, helping to create the modern politics of the region. In order to understand the effects the revolution had on the region and to understand the broad lessons for the interpretation of world history, a brief examination of the revolution and the events that led to it is necessary.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the Middle East was still dominated by the Ottoman Empire, a world empire that had existed for some 400 years. Although its main strength derived from its provinces in Europe, it also controlled extensive territories in the Arab lands of the eastern end of the Mediterranean including what are now known as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, northern Yemen and Israel/Palestine. Furthermore, it maintained a foothold in North Africa around Tripoli and Benghazi in Libya, although it had lost control of the rest of its possessions along the African coast, either to the British (Egypt) or to the French (Algeria and Tunisia). Only the lands on the very frontiers of the region, Persia and the central Arabian peninsula in the east and Morocco in the west, had managed to resist the exercise of direct Ottoman power. Everywhere else in the Middle East, centuries of rule by governors who owed their ultimate allegiance to Istanbul had produced a legacy of Ottoman administrative practice and Ottoman culture which continued to affect political life in countless important ways.

For all its size and importance, the rulers of the empire had spent the last hundred years trying to confront the growing power of a Europe, driven on by the political revolution in France from 1789 onwards and the industrial revolution in Britain. The period between 1839 and ending with the First Constitutional Era in 1876 was known as the Tanzimat era. The period was characterized by various attempts to modernize the Ottoman Empire, to secure its territorial integrity against nationalist movements and aggressive powers. The reforms encouraged Ottomanism among the diverse ethnic groups of the Empire, attempting to stem the tide of nationalist movements within the Ottoman Empire. The reforms attempted to integrate non-Muslims and non-Turks more thoroughly into Ottoman society by enhancing their civil liberties and granting them equality throughout the Empire. One thing that happened to the empire during this time was the nibbling away of its frontiers in Africa and West Asia, marked by the establishment of European colonies and spheres of influence. Another was the repeated attempts to reform and to revive the

Ottoman imperial structure, to better to defend itself against foreign domination. By the beginning of the twentieth century these reforms had done much to transform the legal, military and administrative practices throughout the empire. The reforms were instituted at the expense of allowing Europe an increasing economic and cultural presence, and of stirring up incipient nationalist movements among many of its subject peoples, like the Armenians of Anatolia and the Maronite Christians of Lebanon. The effect of these developments intensified greatly in the years just before 1914.

A series of Balkan wars led to the loss of most of the empire's remaining possessions in Europe, while the Italians took advantage of Ottoman weakness to make a sustained attack on the region around Tripoli in North Africa. Meanwhile, the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 had brought to power a group of officers and officials dedicated not only to the accelerated reform of Ottoman institutions but also to a budding Turkish nationalism which threatened to drive a wedge between the Turks who controlled the empire and the Arabs who had previously been regarded as their main partners. This placed something of a strain on the loyalties of many Arab army officers and civil servants, although very few of them went so far as to argue the need for a state, or states, of their own. Roger Owen writes, "It was difficult for them [Arabs] to imagine a world without the Ottoman sultan as their political and (if they were Muslims) their religious leader. It was equally obvious that the Ottoman state – with its army, its flag and its embassies in Europe – was their only protector against further European encroachment." Nowhere was this better understood than in Palestine, where Arab concern that the Ottomans were not doing enough to contain Jewish immigration and Zionist colonization was tempered by the realization that turning away from the Ottomans to a great power like the British or the French for support would be like jumping from a familiar frying-pan into a still more dangerous fire.

After the Ottomans' humiliating defeats by western powers, self doubt and questioning became the order of the day. Since the loss of Hungary in 1699 the empire had entered on a long period of territorial disintegration. By the 1850s the empire was falling away at the edges. While the loss of territory was significant, Ottoman decline was more pronounced internally and economically, due largely to rapid population increase and the refusal of the government to modernize. The phrase "sick man of Europe" was a term, commonly attributed to Tsar Nicholas I of Russia, referring to the Ottoman Empire that was increasingly falling under the financial control of the European powers and had lost territory in a series of disastrous wars. In *The Turks in World History*, Carter Findley writes, "While the Turkic peoples of Inner Eurasia and the Caucasus faced incorporation into empires ruled by non-Muslims and formulated their responses to modernity in those contexts, the Turks of the Ottoman Empire responded to similar threats by trying to defend and modernize an Islamic state that ruled over non-Muslims."

Ottoman intellectuals initially promoted their conclusion that Ottomans had been overcome by infidels who had mastered the new technology of war. Later they praised the Russian example of westernize and insisted that the Ottomans imitate their eastern neighbors. Many felt that if Russia could westernization then it should be an easy mission for Ottomans to accomplish. Exploring new technology through European works, most of which dealt with military science, came to be regarded as an avenue to understanding the new world. Two prominent characteristics emerged from this new approach.

The first was that modernization was to be part of the Islamic fabric, and the second was that the only purpose of westernization was the attainment of superiority over the West. This was to be accomplished through the adoption of western technology. Interaction with Western Europe was initially undertaken solely as a means for gaining an understanding of superior technology. However, contacts with Europe and ventures into modernization in the

form of imitating the West produced unexpected results in the mid-nineteenth century. A consequence of the intellectual exposure to Europe was the emergence of a distinguished group of intellectuals who envisaged an ideal society much different than the one they had at home. For Ottoman statesmen this was a dreadful as well as unexpected outcome. In his book *The Young Turks in Opposition: Studies in Middle Eastern History* M. Sukru Hanioglu writes, "...the movement [Young Turk] was a link in the historical chain of Ottoman westernization and bureaucratic modernization and represented the modernist wing of the Ottoman intelligentsia and bureaucracy."

To acquire western knowledge, The Ottoman government sent students to Paris to study the latest scientific advances, renting mansions so as to house them outside the city. Students were required to speak only Turkish and Arabic among themselves. They were instructed by the most capable French professors so that they might not be unduly influenced by what the government felt were detrimental values of a foreign culture. Ottoman statesmen were deeply disturbed by the revolutions in Europe, starting with the French Revolution of 1789 and continuing with the revolutions in France in 1830. They warned against acquiring anything else other than superior technology from Europe. Even so, the mental transformation of Ottoman intellectuals exposed to western thinking was ensuring social change. As soon as Ottoman intellectuals became exposed to western life and culture, they perceived profound differences between these and their own civilization. They felt constricted by their own intellectual structure and, with a sense of inferiority, celebrated what they saw in the West. According to Hanioglu, in 1897 the Young Turks theorist Abdullah Cevdet wrote this:

Our sovereign and our government do not want the light to enter our country, they want all people to remain in ignorance, on the dunghill of misery and wretchedness; no touch of awakening may blaze in the hearts of our compatriots. What the government wants is for the people to remain like beasts, submissive as sheep, fawning and servile as dogs. Let them hear no word of any honest lofty idea. Instead let them languish under the whips of ignorant gendarmes, under the aggression of shameless, boorish, oppressive officials.

Originating from the secret societies of progressive university students and military cadets the Young Turk movement was driven underground after the Sultan annulled the constitution in 1878. The organization emerged as an intellectual opposition to the regime of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1898. Operating largely from Paris, and lead by Ahmed Riza and Sabahheddin Bey, they published journals that spread the word of reform. Until 1902 the only solution the Young Turks envisioned was to educate the masses about their goal of replacing the regime of Abdul Hamid II with a dictatorship of intellectuals. The emerging new group hesitated to adopt a revolutionary course at its first Congress in 1902. The importance of education was frequently underscored in journals proposing to members in small towns that they embark upon educational projects.

The Young Turks became a truly revolutionary movement with the creation of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) as an organizational umbrella in 1906. In that same year the Ottoman Freedom Society (OFS) was established in Thessalonica, a district of Macedonia, by Mehmed Talat. The organization actively recruited members from the Turkish Third Army base. In September 1907, OFS announced they would be working with other organizations under the umbrella of CUP. In reality, the leadership of the OFS would exert significant control over the CUP.

The Second congress of the Ottoman opposition took place in Paris, France in 1907. Opposition leaders including Ahmed Riza, Sabahheddin Bey, and Khachatur Maloumian of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) were in attendance. The goal was to unite all the parties, in order to bring about the revolution. Two of the most important revolutionary groups trying to overthrow Sultan Abdul Hamid II had been the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Committee of Union and Progress. Hoping that if the Young Turks came to power, autonomy would be granted to the Armenians, the ARF joined with the CUP.

The reorganization of the movement created an effective Young Turk committee in the CUP that adopted activist tactics and set their goals at revolution. They recruited individuals prepared to sacrifice themselves for the restoration of the constitution of 1878 and the re-establishment of parliament. The leaders set about creating a network of branches and correspondents that would enable them to spread extensive propaganda. Their success at this endeavor prompted them to take further steps in the preparation for a revolution. Although the old CUP organization had succeeded in establishing a branch in Salonica in 1896, neither this city nor Macedonia became a center of Young Turk activities during the early days of the Young Turk movement.

The Ilinden Revolt of 1903 and the subsequent application of reforms by the great powers made Macedonia one of the most troublesome issues of European diplomacy, and a hotbed of Ottoman dissidence. The application of the reform program and the establishment of foreign control over the region provoked great resentment among the Muslim elites and people in Macedonia. In order to take advantage of the local resentment, the Young Turks decided to expand their activities in Macedonia and aligned the Ottoman Freedom Society with the CUP. Both organizations continued to work as autonomous bodies directing branches of the movement then eventually merging. The Young Turk movement enjoyed a strong network concentrated in a particular region of the Ottoman Empire.

Branches of self-sacrificing volunteers were created who wished to carry out special actions. The Committee of Union and Progress was to be responsible for taking care of the family of any self-sacrificing volunteer killed in action, and also for publishing a pamphlet describing his self-sacrifice and for holding anniversary ceremonies at his tomb to pay tribute to his service. In order to encourage members to carry out assassinations, they changed the rules for enrollment. Two alternatives were proposed to the prospective candidates: either to serve for a year as a candidate and then become a real member, or to offer a sacrifice to the committee and thereby become a member immediately. Another innovation was a new oath-taking ceremony that was more emotional and awe-inspiring. One major concern of the leaders was to create a strike force for the revolutionary movement. Although they still believed that the organization should be open to all who wanted to join, they decided that it was absolutely necessary to limit membership in the strike force to young officers.

The CUP organization started recruiting both junior officers and civilians to serve in strike forces in the mountains and in large cities. They assigned most of these people to self-sacrificing volunteer branches. In 1907 Mustafa Kemal, who would go on to become the first President of Turkey, was promoted to the rank of captain and was assigned to the Turkish Third Army in Manastir. It was during this period he joined the Committee of Union and Progress. The volunteers were to act immediately when given assignments by their local branch. In the cities junior officers were recruited to help carry out assassinations.

The Committee of Union and Progress succeeded in establishing an extremely effective network for carrying out its program of revolution. Before the merger, the Ottoman Freedom Society had only a single branch, located in Manastir. As a result of the work of the CUP headquarters they established centers in numerous cities and towns throughout the

empire. Once it became clear that the revolutionary movement had taken root in Macedonia, the CUP decided to disseminate active propaganda in Izmir. Although the committee had already decided that it would commence the revolution in Macedonia, it continued its efforts to establish branches in the other parts of the empire. Each of these branches would assist the committee by performing various tasks once the time came.

Beginning in 1908, the CUP began to contemplate seriously the opening of the last phase of its campaign for revolution. Until this change, it was a political opposition movement that had no clear political aims other than replacing the sultan's regime with a parliamentary one. Parliamentary government was not in itself the most important aspect of the Young Turks' ideal regime. Hanioglu writes, "'Under the strong influence of European elitist theories of the late nineteenth century they tended to look down on a parliament as a crowd. Former Young Turk propaganda, which reflected a strong commitment to Social Darwinism, positivism, and elitism and promoted ideal society based on these ideas, fell short of convincing its sympathizers of the need for revolution.'" However, everything needed for revolution was in place.

By 1908, the Young Turks had an appropriate revolutionary program and a cadre of disciplined and zealous self-sacrificing volunteers. It had constructed a network of branches that covered the European provinces and enabled it to carry out propaganda campaigns with ease and effectiveness. Inside Macedonia the committees were engaged in ongoing negotiations with most of the important active organized groups while in Europe it had in place an external headquarters to inform, influence, and persuade European public opinion. In another important preparatory move, the CUP obtained a secret document from the heir apparent to the Ottoman throne Mehmed Resad Efendi, promising that he would remain loyal to the constitutional regime. This document would be used in the event of the dethronement of Abdul Hamid. All that remained was to spark the revolution.

On May 13, 1908 the leadership of the CUP, and scale of its organization had increased to the point where its members could say to the Sultan that the 'Dynasty will be in danger' if he did not bring the constitution back. With the intention of crushing the movement, the palace called some of the military leaders who supported the movement back to the capital and dispatched teams of investigators to Macedonia. While the CUP deliberated about carrying out assassinations as a response to the investigations and the arrest of its members, rumors were floated of an agreement to partition Macedonia reached by Edward VII of England and Nicholas II of Russia. These rumors prompted the Young Turks to accelerate its plan to mobilize political bands. Deploying bands was a way to save the military CUP members who were summoned to Istanbul for further investigation.

For twenty days, beginning on July 3, 1908, the revolutionary forces in various towns carried out a series of assassinations that sowed fear in government circles. The Monastir branch assumed control of the military aspects of the uprising. The CUP National Battalions continued to increase their numbers with fresh recruits. The Monastir branch succeeded in persuading local Muslim bands and army deserters in the mountains to join. All attempts of the palace to put down the rebellion proved futile, and on July 21, 1908 the CUP Internal Headquarters assumed command of the revolution's forces, instructing all branches to strike the final blow. When the rebels proclaimed the constitution in one town after another, the impotent sultan yielded, issuing an imperial decree reinstating the constitution of 1876 and inviting the parliament to convene.

In the first warning the CUP stated that it harbored no personal grudge and enmity toward the sultan, but warned Abdul Hamid that in the event of the postponement of the restoration of the constitution blood will shed and the dynasty will be in danger. The CUP

Resen National Battalion roamed the hills and visited villages to recruit more members. For the last time, the government decided to attempt to put down the rebellion in Macedonia. They ordered Semsi Pasha, an Albanian general, to command the government troops that were soon to arrive. Shortly reservist battalions had become members of the CUP.

The CUP won all battles of all fronts. It started the revolution by sending out armed bands and carrying out assassinations. The government's every effort to check the revolutionary activity was in vain. The Imperial government could not even mobilize a force to pursue the insurgents. The Young Turks paralyzed the civil administration in Macedonia and became a state within a state in the three provinces. By carrying out active propaganda, the committee reassured the Great Powers that their movement was liberal, that it was not against Christians or Europe, and that everybody would benefit from a change of regime in the Ottoman Empire. The events following Semsi Pasha's murder showed that the CUP had gained the upper hand in Macedonia and that nothing could be done to reverse that fact. The Palace was in panic, the government was powerless, and the local authorities were totally incapable of executing any instructions directed against the CUP.

Within days celebrations broke out all over the Empire like an enormous tidal wave. Halide Edib, a future feminist writer, described the event as, "radiating something extraordinary, laughing, weeping in such intense emotion that human deficiency and ugliness were for the time completely obliterated." Muslims joined their Armenian compatriots to attend services for victims of the 1896 massacres. On July 26, 36,000 people massed in front of the Yildiz palace in Istanbul carrying banners reading *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice*. In Salonika and in Macedonia even more spectacular events were unfolding. In Salonika, a military band struck up the *Marseillaise* (French National Anthem) while the squares filled with people from all quarters of the city. For several days the cafes, the gardens and the squares never emptied as scenes of partying between the different peoples intensified. After embracing the Greek bishop in Serres, Iane Sandanski, one of the leaders of the Macedonian National Revolutionary Movement led his followers into Sandanski, and in an act of momentous symbolism handed his weapons over to the CUP local leaders. Acknowledging the sacrifice, the revolutionary authorities returned the guns whereupon Sandanski and his men proceeded to destroy them.

The overwhelming victory of the CUP in the first elections held under the new regime in November-December 1908, and its consequent control over the parliament, gave the Young Turks a weapon with which to undermine further the government's role. With the parliament and the army under its control it left the court of the sultan with only a limited sphere of influence. The court of the sultan's role in politics came to an end altogether in June 1913, when the CUP finally assumed direct control over the government.

The Young Turks movement was not a movement of the masses. The ideas they promoted penetrated no deeper than the elite. Their ideas, however, played a very significant role in molding the Committee of Union and Progress's policies during their rule, thereby shaping the future of the Middle East and the Balkans. The destruction of the Hamidian regime in 1908 was so complete that no serious opposition group expressed a desire for reinstating it after the revolution. While a foreign correspondent for the newspaper *Kievskaya Mysl*, Leon Trotsky commented:

The power of the Turkish officers and the secret of their success does not lie in a brilliantly organized plan or conspiratorial talents of diabolical skill, but the active sympathy shown to them by the most advanced classes in society: merchants, craftsmen, workmen, sections of the administration and of the clergy and finally masses in the countryside exemplified by the peasantry. But all these classes bring

with them, not simply their "sympathy" but also their interests, their claims and their hopes. Their social aspirations, stifled for a long time, are now openly expressed while a Parliament provides them an arena to put them forward. Bitter disillusion awaits those who think that the Turkish revolution is already over. Among those who will be disappointed, will be not only Abdul Hamid but also it would seem the "Young Turk" Party.

After their rise to power, the Young Turks introduced programs that promoted the modernization of the Ottoman Empire and a new spirit of Turkish nationalism. The Young Turks carried out administrative reforms, especially of provincial administration, that led to more centralization. They were also the first Ottoman reformers to promote industrialization. In addition, the programs of the Young Turk regime effectuated greater secularization of the legal system and provided for the education of women and better state-operated primary schools. The Young Turk movement caused power shifts within various Ottoman religious and ethnic groups that had been active as political opposition organizations before the revolution. The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which had been outlawed, assumed a role of representation in the Armenian community as a political party with deputies. The Sultan's loyal Muslim Albanian elite was replaced by one seeking to unite Albanians of all faiths under one flag in order to obtain autonomy. The right and left wings of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization became active participants in Ottoman politics with their clubs and deputies. Although these power shifts within the Ottoman communities were a fresh development, all these organizations were part of an opposition movement in which the Young Turk organizations had played an important role.

The Young Turk revolution was a courageous effort against the dictatorship of Sultan Abdul Hamid. In its early stages, its leaders explicitly rejected the path of nationalism. Their goal was to be the end of discrimination and injustice. The revolution was to be the end of group struggles and bloodshed and the end of hatreds. They were tired of hating and wanted to live in peace. Declared that life was something else than constant feud between men speaking different tongues, they believed it was time to work hand in hand for the good of all. However, after over three years of counter-revolution and restoration, the Young Turk revolutionary idealism turned into a regime whose brutality surpassed that of Abdul Hamid. The old espionage had returned, the extortions never ceased, the oppression against non-Moslems had acquired a fresher and more sinister vigor. The measure of freedom that each nationality had once enjoyed was being ruthlessly crushed.

While the Young Turk revolution had temporarily spread harmony among the Empire's constituent peoples, it had no such effect on Macedonia's neighbors in the Balkans, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. Glenn described the view of the empire's neighbors as seeing the success of the revolution as a sign of the Empire's extreme weakness and it galvanized their expansionist ambitions. The most immediate blow to the revolutionary movement in the Ottoman Empire was delivered by Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary and Greece.

In October, Prince Ferdinand exploited the political chaos in the Ottoman Empire by declaring Bulgaria fully independent. Within days, Austria-Hungary announced the full annexation of the occupied territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina and before long Greece proclaimed union with Crete. These events, in particular Vienna's annexation of Bosnia, created extreme concern among Ottoman military leadership, the real power behind the CUP. From this time forth, any Christian demands which looked like secessionism were rejected. In response, the guerrillas in Macedonia took to the hills once more. The positive developments in domestic affairs created by the Young Turks were largely overshadowed by the movement of internal policy away from their revolutionary ideas and the disastrous

consequences of the regime's foreign policy decisions. Their decision to enter the war on the side of Germany proved to be their downfall.

From the revolution to the crisis that led to World War I, Turkey had close relation with the two continental powers. Turkey had the closest relationships with Britain, its chief protector against Russian expansion, and Germany, which had increasingly substantial economic interests in the Middle East, including a Berlin-to-Baghdad railway. Prussia had been given responsibility for training the Turkish Army as early as 1822 and new government continued this relationship. In 1913, when German General Otto Liman von Sanders arrived in Constantinople as head of his country's military mission, he found himself also named Chief of Staff of the Turkish army.

As a balancing measure, the Young Turks invited Britain to take charge of upgrading their navy. They placed an order for two new dreadnoughts to be built in England. The purchase was so popular with the people of Turkey that much of the money was raised through public fund-raising drives. The outbreak of World War I meant the end of Turkey's long isolation. What was not at all clear at the time was which side it would embrace, if any. When the summer crisis of 1914 rose to its climax, a crew of Turkish seaman was in Britain, ready to take possession of the first of the new dreadnoughts. First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill announced that his country was confiscating both ships. Churchill's announcement provoked outrage in Constantinople. Meyer offers an explanation for Turkey's eventual commitment: "In the end, it came down to a matter of ships, of British blundering, and of German bullying." At the beginning of August, with the start of the war only hours away, the Turkish government proposed a formal alliance with Germany.

Turkey, weak though it had become, remained the only great power in the eastern Mediterranean. Its revival under the Young Turks had awakened ancient south European fears, which its defeat in the Balkan Wars had not quelled. Its alliance with Germany and Austria and its entry into the war had reinforced them. The reputation of the Turk as a fighting man had never dulled. Ottoman forces, under the Young Turks, had undertaken a program of modernization that promised to make better use of the fighting characteristics of the Turkish soldier. The army put thirty-six divisions into the field. The Turkish soldier fought with endurance and tenacity, as was witnessed at Gallipoli where the Turkish forces, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, drove off the Australian and British forces.

Another disastrous decision for the regime came in 1915 when the Young Turks government resolved to deport the whole Armenian population of about 1,750,000 to Syria and Mesopotamia. It regarded the Turkish Armenians, despite pledges of loyalty by many, as a dangerous foreign element bent on conspiring with pro-Christian enemies to upset the Ottoman campaign in the east. In what would later be known as the first genocide of the 20th century, hundreds of thousands of Armenians were driven from their homes, massacred, or marched until they died. The death toll of Armenians in Turkey is estimated to have been between 600,000 and 1,500,000 in the years from 1915 to 1923. Tens of thousands emigrated to Russia, Lebanon, Syria, France, and the United States, and the western part of the historical homeland of the Armenian people was emptied of Armenians.

Though the Young Turks had disappointed many of their admirers, they had the future on their side. They represented the ideas which would one day remake the Ottoman heritage of nationalism and modernization. By losing most of the little that was left of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, in a sense, they released themselves from a burden. By 1914 the largest remaining block of the Ottoman territory was the largely Muslim provinces of Asia. Their territory covered a large and strategically very important area. From the Caucasus the frontiers ran down to the Gulf near Basra, at the mouth of the Tigris River. On the southern

shore of the Gulf Ottoman rule ran around Kuwait and then back to the coast as far south as Qatar. From here the coasts of Arabia right around to the entrance of the Red Sea were in one way or another under British influence, but the whole interior and Red Sea coast was Ottoman. The ancient lands of Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia were still all Turkish. This was the heartland of historical Islam, and the Sultan was still the caliph, its spiritual leader. This heritage was to crumble as the strategy and politics of world war played upon it along with European cultural influences. On the eve of the world war over a hundred Arabic newspapers were published in the Ottoman Empire outside Egypt.

An important crystallization had followed the triumphant Young Turks and their modernizing tendencies. Secret societies and open groups of dissidents were formed among Arab exiles, notably in Paris and Cairo. In the background was another uncertain factor: the rulers of the Arabian Peninsula, whose allegiance to the sultan was shaky. The latest converts to the culture of territorial nationalism were the Jews. In the long history of Jewry, assimilation, still barely achieved in many European countries after the liberating age of the French Revolution, was now replaced by nationalism. The desired location had not at once been clear as Argentina and Uganda were suggested. By the end of the century Zionist opinion had come to rest finally on Palestine. Jewish immigration there had begun, though still on a small scale.

At the end of the war, with defeat imminent, the Young Turk Cabinet resigned on Oct. 9, 1918, less than a month before the Ottomans signed the Armistice of Mudros. The disbanding process of the CUP was achieved through military trials. As the military position of the Central Powers disintegrated in October 1918, the government resigned. A new Grand Vizier, Damad Ferid Pasha, negotiated the Armistice of Mudros at the end of the month. The position of the CUP was untenable, and its top leaders fled three days later. The parliament in Istanbul could not function, and in the end the British closed the parliament. The initial peace agreement with the Ottoman Empire was the Armistice of Mudros, followed by the Treaty of Sevres. The Treaty of Sevres was signed by the Ottoman Empire but it was destined never to be ratified. Its terms were admittedly severe, and they were widely criticized as vindictive. The Treaty of Sevres was the end of the Ottoman Empire and the Young Turks' rule and led to the war of independence in 1920.

The Young Turk movement had its climax in the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, which marked a defining moment in Ottoman history and made a profound impact on the shaping of the modern Middle East and the Balkans. Because of the revolution, an area from Scutari in Albania to Basra (present day Iraq) became acquainted with political parties, nationalist clubs, elections, and the idea of constitutional rights. The revolution's success made it one of the more momentous events of the first years of the twentieth century, causing many other movements to imitate the Young Turks' Committees. Immediately after the revolution, for example, some Greek newspapers encouraged the Greek military to carry out a similar revolution. A Military League founded upon the model of the Turkish Committee of Union and Progress, carried out a coup in 1909.

Muslims were strongly impacted by the revolution and by the work of the CUP. The Persian community in Istanbul founded the Iranian Union and Progress Committee. More significantly, the Persian constitutionalist expatriates adopted for their own organization the CUP's regulations exactly as issued in 1909. Indian Muslims imitated the CUP oath for joining the organization. In Bukhara, the Judaists and the leaders of the Young Bukhara movement were deeply influenced by the Young Turk Revolution and saw it as an example to emulate.

The revolution and the Committee of Union and Progress's work remained for a long period a model for Muslims in many countries. The impact of the Young Turks on shaping the official ideology of early modern Turkey went far beyond the political changes they effected. Leon Trotsky was influenced by the tactics of the Young Turks as he wrote about revolution in Russia. The revolution had an influence on their desire for a homeland. Arab nationalism is directly traceable to the ideas propagated by the revolution. Even with the negatives aspects of their rule, the Young Turks were responsible for instituting the beginnings of modern politics in the Middle East, for expanding education and journalism, and for realizing economic, social, and administrative reforms. The effects of the Young Turks Revolution on the politics of the Balkans are still being felt as conflict persists in the region. The revolution was truly a defining movement and provides us broad lessons for the interpretation of world history.

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