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Helpless Imperialists

Imperial Failure, Fear and Radicalization

Edited by
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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht

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Maurus Reinkowski

Hapless Imperialists and Resentful Nationalists: Trajectories of Radicalization in the Late Ottoman Empire

L'Yémen qu'il pacifia, il y a trente ans, et incorpora dans l'Empire est aujourd'hui plus secoué que jamais. L'Herzégovine, qu'il défendit contre l'ambition des Monténégrins, a fini par passer sous la domination autrichienne. Le coin d'Anatolie qu'il disputa si glorieusement aux Russes, est aujourd'hui une province moscovite. La Crète dont le Ghazi avait assuré le maintien et la sécurité, n'appartient plus à la Turquie. La Macédoine, qu'il gouverna jadis et pour laquelle il avait préconisé de sérieuses réformes, s'est trouvée soumise à la surveillance de l'étranger. L'armée, dont la réorganisation lui était confiée, en a aujourd'hui plus besoin que jamais. Enfin l'Egypte, qu'il tâcha de défendre de tout son patriotisme, est restée aux Anglais.

– Mahmud Muhtar, 1908[1]

Without understanding the great Ottoman-Turkish transformation in the early twentieth century, the history of modern Turkey is incomprehensible. A new generation of Young Turks usurped power and implemented politics aimed at creating a nation-state for the Turks in Anatolia. The Young Turk movement, which had its start in 1908 when it forced Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1878–1909) to reintroduce constitutional rule, in 1913 turned into a tyrannical oligarchy, headed by the triumvirate of Cemal, Enver, and Talat Pashas. Late Ottoman and early Turkish history culminates in the period between 1912 and 1922, which witnessed the two Balkan wars, World War I, and the subsequent struggle to establish an independent Turkish nation-state. It was a pivotal period of dramatic historical events, marked by violence that reached unprecedented levels. Indeed, the Ottoman Empire tells a story of radicalization and violence from the late nineteenth century onward such as it had never known before. Or, to put it more bluntly (and even cynically): Never was the late Ottoman Empire more "modern" than during the 1915–16 Armenian genocide, when it followed the path of extermination and ethnic cleansing that was laid out in the nineteenth century, but went yet

1 Mahmud Muhtar, *Evénements d'Orient* (Paris, 1908), 203–204, resuming the life record of his father, Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha (1839–1919). More information on Ahmed Muhtar will be given in the later part of this article.

a far step further to take its place in the twentieth century's history of "extremely violent societies."[2]

1. 1912–22: The Pivotal Ottoman-Turkish Period

Given the paramount importance of the years 1912–22, it is critical to raise the question at what stage did Young Turkish radicalization begin to have its full impact on the non-Muslim populations, and, in particular, on the Armenians? Taner Akçam has argued that the patterns of Young Turk exterminationist policy were laid out with the expulsion of and massacres among the Greeks in 1914.[3] Donald Bloxham maintains, on the other hand, that before 1915 "there was no a priori blueprint for genocide, and ... it emerged from a series of more limited regional measures in a process of cumulative policy radicalization."[4] Arguments that a disposition for violence developed over a much longer period of time have been abused for political motivations; it has been alleged, for example, that a long course of Muslim-Turkish traumatizations – beginning with the expulsion of Muslims from the Caucasus and other regions by the Russian Empire in the first half of the nineteenth century, followed by the Ottoman-Russian war of 1877–8 and the Balkan wars of 1912 – led to a build-up of frustrations that culminated, unavoidably, in the violence that erupted during World War I.[5]

This essay endorses the view that there was a trajectory of radicalization in the late Ottoman Empire that reached its apex in the extremely violent years between 1912 and 1922, but strives to avoid an overly teleological interpretation or a too narrow focus on the years 1914–15. A plea for extending the temporal and spatial focus is made: On the one hand, it is necessary to look for inherent processes of internal Ottoman radicalization in the periods preceding the Young Turks, but, on the other hand, one must also take heed of the Ottoman Empire's diverse and often contradictory experiences in dealing with issues of ethnicity, confessionalism, and nationalism. Historians

2 See Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies. Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge, 2010), 92–102, with a chapter on the Armenian case, although with a focus on state and individual profiteering from genocidal campaigns.

3 Taner Akçam, *Armenien und der Völkermord. Die Istanbuler Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung* (Hamburg, 1996), 43.

4 Donald Bloxham, The Armenian Genocide of 1915–1916: Cumulative Radicalization and the Development of a Destruction Policy, *Past & Present* 181 (2003), 141–91, here 143.

5 Besides its other merits this is the problematic basic line of argumentation by Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile. The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821–1922* (Princeton, NJ, 1995).

striving to describe the great trek of Ottoman history leading up to World War I, the destruction of a large multiethnic society, and the foundation of modern Turkey should never lose their willingness "to understand the variation in the Ottoman world."[6]

In order to come to grips with the Ottoman experience of imperial ambitions and semi-colonial status from the nineteenth century onward, we must first take a step back. We must outline the fundamental characteristics of the Ottoman state as an empire and consider how the state managed to retain its imperial pretensions under the onslaught of European imperialism.

2. The Ottoman Empire: From Imperial to Semi-colonized

The Ottoman Empire (1300–1923) can be grouped, together with the Mughals (1526–1858, effectively until 1739) and the Safavids (1501–1722), among the post-Mongol patrimonial-bureaucratic-military states in which "a conquering nomadic elite acquires dominion over an ethnically different, agrarian populace and rules by force, but also protects the agrarian base from which state revenue derives."[7] All three were land empires that expanded by means of conquests. An ethnically diverse, but culturally homogeneous elite ruled over a highly heterogeneous population. Based on the large body of late medieval Islamic and pre-Islamic Persian thought on rule and legitimacy, it was thought that "a government although founded on force merited obedience because it was an obstacle to anarchy," and that the divine right of kings "fixed an impassable gulf between the ruler and the ruled."[8] The problems that post-Mongol Islamic empires confronted, such as technological and financial limitations, were common to all premodern empires. Given the limits of state power, compulsion was employed reluctantly: "No state in the seventeenth century was yet capable of enforcing its unilaterally-determined will, and this deficiency of power applied as much to the Ottoman sultan as it did to the emperors and other heads of contemporary European states."[9]

6 Cem Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East. Modernity, Imperial Bureaucracy, and the Islamic State* (London, 2012), 2.

7 Carter Vaughn Findley, *The Turks in World History* (Oxford, 2005), 57; see also Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 5–6.

8 Ann K. S. Lambton, Quis Custodiet Custodes: Some Reflections on the Persian Theory of Government, *Studia Islamica* 5 (1956), 125–48, here 128.

9 Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500–1700* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1999), 178.

The Ottoman Empire was an exception among the post-Mongol Islamic empires as far as its longevity is concerned,[10] existing until the end of World War I. The Ottomans were also the first, by far, to be faced with expansionist Europe from the eighteenth century onwards. Ottoman history must therefore be studied in the context of the wider European power system. For the last one hundred and fifty years of its existence, the Empire cannot be understood without taking into account both its manifold attempts to emulate Europe, and, at the same time, its struggle against the West.

With the introduction of modern weaponry (such as the machine gun) and new means of communication and transport (such as the telegraph and the railway), the imperial states of the dawning modern age attained unprecedented levels of power. From the eighteenth century onward Central Asia's nomads were no longer a match for Russia's and China's armies and were gradually integrated into their empires.[11] By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the European imperial states had no serious competitors whatsoever within their imperial domains. For the first time in history, an empire could enjoy a secure sense of its own unbounded power, a confidence founded on hard empirical evidence.

The Ottoman Empire participated, in principle, in this seminal change. Following the example of the successful "imperial nation-states," such as Great Britain, in the late nineteenth century the Ottomans nurtured their own imperial and, to some extent, also imperialist ambitions. When Yemen, the empire's most remote and mutiny-prone province, which had been lost in the seventeenth century, was brought back under Ottoman control in the 1870s, Ottoman bureaucrats debated whether it should be governed according to British or French colonial practices. The traditional Ottoman imperial repertoire was thus enriched by new imperialist role models and by new objectives, such as a mission to civilize the empire's subject peoples.[12]

On the other hand, the late Ottoman Empire itself became the object of expansionist European imperialism. Its territorial losses were substantial and became dramatic from 1908 onward: "Since 1878 alone, these territorial

10 In the later centuries the Ottomans based their legitimacy on, amongst other things, the astonishing longevity of the empire. For an overview of Ottoman strategies for fostering the dynasty's legitimacy, see Hakan Karateke, Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis, in: Hakan Karateke et al. (eds.): *Legitimizing the Order. The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power* (Leiden, 2005), 13–52.

11 Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier. The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington, IN, 2002), 21.

12 Thomas Kuehn, *Empire, Islam and Politics of Difference. Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849–1919* (Leiden, 2011), 2, 13 uses the apt term "colonial Ottomanism" to characterize the hybrid policy of colonial domination and of a centralizing cum nationalizing empire.

losses included Cyprus (British administration under Ottoman sovereignty, 1878); Ardahan, Batum, and Kars (to Russia, 1878); Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia (all gaining independence, 1878); Bosnia-Herzegovina (Austro-Hungarian occupation, 1878; Austro-Hungarian annexation, 1908); Tunisia (French protectorate, 1881); Egypt (British occupation, 1882); Crete (Great Powers impose autonomy, 1898); Tripoli (Italian annexation, 1912); Dodecanese Islands (Italian occupation, 1912); western Thrace (to Bulgaria and Greece, 1912); Aegean islands, including Chios and Mitylene (to Greece, 1912); Albania (independence, 1912); Macedonia (partitioned among Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia 1912–13)."[13]

After the Russian conquest of the Caucasus, completed in the first half of the nineteenth century, more than one million Caucasians left the region, and 800,000 of them settled in the Ottoman Empire. In its 1877–78 war against Russia, the Empire lost approximately 200,000 square kilometers of its territory, in which 5.5 million people, mainly non-Muslims, lived.[14] Hundreds of thousands of the Muslims who had been living in these lost territories fled to the Ottoman core lands of Anatolia. The cumulative effect of these shifts was a gigantic loss of population and a reversal of the Empire's Christian-Muslim demographics, with Muslim subjects now becoming the large majority.

As contentious as the term of the "sick man of Europe" may be,[15] the "Eastern Question" *was* the result of a stalemate between the major European powers concerning the question what to do with the Ottoman Empire, which, from the early nineteenth century on, could have been militarily defeated by any major European power. Once the Empire had been integrated in the international power balance, it became possible for neighboring powers to usurp its peripheral areas and to penetrate its internal economic structures. By the late nineteenth century, large parts of the Empire had

13 Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914. The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008), 5.

14 Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building. From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London, 2010), 64. The populations of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire were roughly equal around 1850 (around 30 million); in 1901 the numbers varied substantially: Austria-Hungary with 45.2 and the Ottoman Empire with 26 million inhabitants.

15 For an example of the classical European interpretation, see Gregor Schöllgen, *Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht. Deutschland, England und die orientalische Frage 1871–1914* (Munich, 1984), who argues that the inherent problems of the Ottoman Empire had destabilizing effects on the European balance of power. See on the other hand M.E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792–1923* (London, 1987), who characterizes the Ottoman Empire as a kind of European bank where every major European power had "special drawing rights" and could thus – by externalizing their conflicts – help the Inter-European power system swing back into balance.

already been lost through an informal process of colonization.[16] There is ample justification, therefore, in describing the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire as "clearly belonging to the world of victims."[17] The "helpless imperialist" may be a controversial concept generally speaking, but in an Ottoman context, it describes the situation quite accurately and has become an implicit theme in twentieth-century Turkish historiography.

Interpreting the Imperial Breakdown

Apologetically minded Turkish historians have characterized modern Turkey as a nation compelled to bear the burden of the Ottoman Empire,[18] then pestered and almost brought to its knees by hostile nationalisms and European imperialism, but in the end rising to take its place in the front ranks of those nation-states that have successfully resisted imperialism. These same historians, however, defend the historical achievements of the Ottoman Empire: Under the Ottoman hegemony, diverse peoples found protection. Despite the Empire's highly heterogeneous ethnic and religious mix, it afforded a life of peace and tolerance.[19] It was European policies of penetration and usurpation, so the story goes, that destroyed this harmonious and stable power structure and brought about the shattered and conflict-laden conditions of today's Middle East and Southeastern Europe. It is only by contrast with the present-day intercommunal conflicts that we can appreciate Ottoman achievements in establishing mutual understanding and harmony.[20]

16 Feroz Ahmad, The Late Ottoman Empire, in: Marian Kent (ed.), *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (London, 1984), 5–30, here 22; Rashid Ismail Khalidi, The Economic Partition of the Arab Provinces of the Ottoman Empire before the First World War, Review: *A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center* 11 (1998) 2, 251–64.

17 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914* (London 1987), 23.

18 See for example Falih Rıfkı Atay (1894–1971), a political publicist and a confidant of Atatürk, in his autobiographical Zeytindağı [The Mount of Olives], (Istanbul, 1957, first published in 1932), 41, arguing that the Turks should have concentrated all their energies on Anatolia instead of acting as overly-lenient, self-sacrificing guardians of an empire.

19 For example, Kemal Karpat, Remarks on MESA and Nation and Nationality in the Middle East, *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 20 (1986), 1–12, here 9: "The Ottoman state was probably the most perfect Islamic state ever to come into existence"; see also Bilal Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Gayrımüslim Teb'anın Yönetimi [The Administration of Non-Muslim Subjects in the Ottoman State]* (Istanbul, 1990), 12, arguing that the Ottoman state disposed of a social structure that can almost be called a "federation of nations".

20 For only one example among many other potential ones, see Mim Kemal Öke, *Ermeni Meselesi 1914–1923 [The Armenian Question, 1914–1923]* (Istanbul, 1986), 283.

In order to understand these Turkish representations of the Ottoman past, one must be aware that the major issue of Turkish historiography has been and still is explaining the transformation from empire to nation-state, from a large supranational empire in which Turks were only one of the major ethnic groups to a nation-state composed mostly of Turks. The great difficulty for the Turkish public and political elite in coming to accept responsibility for the Armenian genocide stems not only from their fear that this might lead to restitution claims by Armenian organizations or besmirch the national honor, but rather, and more importantly, from the fact that the Armenian massacres date to the crucial formation period of the Turkish national state. The implicit danger, as it presents itself in the Turkish imagination, is that any concessions might endanger the very foundations of the Turkish nation and state.

The question of the Armenian genocide and the specific modes of Turkish historical interpretations aside, the task of historiography is the same here as in other comparable cases: to explain how (the Ottoman) Empire became the (Turkish) nation-state and to ascertain to what extent the politics of the nation-state were anticipated in the policies of the late imperial state.[21] However, in order to contextualize late imperial Ottoman history we will have to look for early trajectories of radicalization as well as for the forgotten and marginalized pathways that lead to the eclipse of the Ottoman Empire. This essay endeavors therefore to qualify the argument for an abrupt Ottoman-Turkish radicalization from 1912–15 onward in two respects:

(1) The basic contention of this volume is that there is a nexus between imperial exposure, fear, radicalization, and violence, and that in a moment of peripety imperialist grandeur is brought to the point of collapse. This paper corroborates such a nexus in the Ottoman context and confirms that the moment of peripety came with the Balkan wars of 1912–13, when under the stress of losing all the empire's European domains, Ottoman-Turkish politics radicalized. But I would also plead for the need to recognize the phenomenon of radicalization as it developed from the early second half of the nineteenth century onward. I argue that the Ottoman reform policy *(Tanzimat)* in the middle of the nineteenth century, though indeed meant to be a rational policy, was heavily ambiguous – in both its measures and its results. We thus examine first the nature and intentions of Tanzimat policy, before turning in a short case study to the fundamental change of Ottoman policy toward the Mirdites in Northern Albania in the period of

21 It is of lesser interest and importance is to understand the survival and reemergence of imperial(ist) characteristics in the Turkish Republic. See Ömer Taspinar, Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism, *Carnegie Papers* 10 (2008), for a positive assessment of the paradigm of "Neo-Ottomanism", on the rise since the 1990s.

the 1860–70s. It will be shown that Ottoman authorities increasingly turned away from the well-established repertoire of imperial routine and became preoccupied by the vision of a new and final order. Going far to the speculative side, one may even ask whether the rigidity of many Tanzimat measures and actions is an indicator of a specifically Ottoman brand of modernity, marked by aspects of the irrational.

(2) European imperialists acquired new patterns and mentalities of violence in their respective colonies outside Europe. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, however, the principal experience of escalating violence happened not in far-away peripheries such as Yemen, but in the imperial core regions, in particular in the secession wars of the Balkan states that began with the Serbian uprising in the 1810s and ending with the Balkan Wars of 1912–13. I recognize that the manner in which the national states of Southeastern Europe were founded in the nineteenth century was for the Ottoman-Turkish elite of the early twentieth century both a source of trauma and, at the same time, a guideline[22] – and that this "learning process" was applied in the case of the Armenians.[23] However, I will argue that it would be reckless were we to adopt uncritically the argument that the demographic catastrophes and atrocities in World War I were unavoidable. Furthermore, one would fail to understand late Ottoman history in its complexities and ramifications if it were seen exclusively in the context of exacerbated ethnic and national conflicts. Not only does the temporal focus need to be widened, but so does also the spatial perspective in order to take into account Ottoman imperial experiences in other realms. For this reason, we first discuss, in the section titled "Between Adaptation and Assertiveness: Late Ottoman Imperialism," the resources of imperial self-representation the Ottomans had developed up to the nineteenth century. We then turn in a second case study to look at the Ottomans in nineteenth-century Egypt and in particular at the person of Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, representative of the Ottoman state in Cairo from the 1880s to the 1900s. Egypt, which had been always viewed as a jewel in the Ottoman sultans' turban, was (de facto) independent from the late

22 See Tanıl Bora, Turkish National Identity, Turkish Nationalism and the Balkan Problem, in: Günay Göksü Özdoğan/Kemâli Saybaşılı, (eds.), *Balkans. A Mirror of the New International Order* (Istanbul, 1995), 101–20, here 104, for a lucid analysis of Turkish feelings of having been victims of a Western conspiracy and betrayed by former Ottoman subjects in Southeastern Europe and the Arab provinces.

23 Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing, in: Donald Bloxham/Robert Gerwarth (eds.): *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, 2011), 87–139, here 93) characterize the massacres of 1894–96 against the Armenians as the early result of an Ottoman "learning process"; i.e., "that Istanbul had learned the lesson of the ethnic majoritarianism that had won the Balkan nations their independence."

eighteenth century onward and is thus a particularly illuminating example of the many nineteenth-century cases of hollow Ottoman sovereignty. It will become quite obvious that the art of being an Ottoman imperialist in the nineteenth century in part depended upon an ability to pretend convincingly to be an imperialist. We may assume that Ottoman bureaucrats and officers confronted with the empire's accelerating decline may have fallen victim to imperial frustration and to the perils of that ever-widening chasm between semi-colonized reality and imperial pretensions that could give rise to severe psychological stress.

3. Toward a 'New Order' in the Tanzimat Period

The Ottoman Empire had its own tradition of "tranquil rule on the cheap,"[24] which we may label "ethnic containment." The Ottoman state strived to control or at the least to contain tribal groups (which in many cases might be more accurately labeled "ethnic-confessional groups" organized along tribal lines) that were found mainly on the peripheries of the empire. The Ottoman practice of ethnic containment employed a wide spectrum of tactics, ranging from cooptation to brute military force. The exertion of power was based on the idea of an eternal cycle of justice and the perception that internal eruptions of violence were perennial events, so that security and order would have to be restored again and again. The Ottoman imperial mind thus conceived of an incessant alternation between order and disorder, the ideal of security cum prosperity being always endangered by negative events and evildoers. The population, dwelling in a perpetual state of "not knowing better," was given to sporadic eruptions of violence, which were unavoidable and must to some extent be accepted. They would be dealt with by admonition and, as a last resort, by physical violence. Culprits would be chastened and the equilibrium regained. Thus, Ottoman imperial culture rested on a concept of imperial rule that combined harshness in principle with leniency in the individual case. This did not, however, prevent Ottoman authorities from exerting violence on a large scale in cases of expediency.

This cyclical conception of rule underwent a fundamental change from the 1860s onward. A new notion of order emerged that partially complemented and partially superseded the old. Instead of resignation to the need to constantly restore an always precarious order, the Ottoman state and its authorities were now firmly resolved to establishing a new and final order.

24 See for example Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States. State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 121, on British rule in South Asia at the end of the nineteenth century.

People had to be brought to their senses; the eternal cycle of order-disorder-order had to be broken once and for all.

The script for this fundamental transformation was written during the Tanzimat, a period of reforms that began with a sultanic proclamation in 1839 and ended officially in 1876. Its intent was to modernize and centralize Ottoman government and society.[25] The Ottomans' attempt to regain control of their peripheral regions was motivated by the enormous financial needs of a modern state with its steadily growing bureaucracy and its array of self-imposed obligations. But it was also in part the consequence of a changing self-perception: The Ottoman Empire had to become a modern imperial nation-state.

In a move toward realizing this vision, the empire's people were offered a "reform package" that promised to raise them to a higher level of civilization and to a common Ottoman identity. The price they were expected to pay was conformity to the new order and discipline, which included paying taxes and recruitment into the Ottoman army. Such a project of rigid order together with a civilizing mission was to a large extent unrealistic and destined to end in disappointment.[26]

The Mirdites: From "Good Services" to "Barbarity"

One case study may help to illustrate what a substantial change Tanzimat political strategies and rhetoric underwent from the 1860s onwards. The Mirdites, who lived in the region of northern Albania situated roughly between Shkodra and Tirana, were one of the numerous Catholic mountain tribal units bound to the Ottoman province of Shkodra. They were known for their "great intensity of feeling of patriotic solidarity."[27] Hyacinthe Hecquard, French consul in Shkodra in the 1850s, called the Mirdita (i.e., the region where the Mirdites lived) a "kind of aristocratic republic" and the "most remarkable" of all the tribal entities in Northern Albania.[28] Strategi-

25 See Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey. A Modern History* (London, 1993), arguing that the Kemalist reforms of the 1920s and 1930s form a continuum with the Tanzimat reforms of the 1840s onward.

26 See Jörg Baberowski, Auf der Suche nach Eindeutigkeit: Kolonialismus und zivilisatorische Mission im Zarenreich und in der Sowjetunion, *Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas* 47 (1999), 482–503, for the striking similarities of the Russian policy in the Caucasus.

27 Ludwig von Thallóczy, Türkischer Gesetzesentwurf betreff Kodifizierung des albanischen Gewohnheitsrechtes, in: Ludwig von Thallóczy (ed.), *Illyrisch-albanische Forschungen* 1 (Munich, 1916), 463–86, here 484.

28 Hyacinthe Hecquard, *Histoire et description de la Haute Albanie ou Guégarie* (Paris, 1858), 10, 228.

cally situated, as they were, the Mirdites could easily block the roads from Middle Albania and Kosovo to Shkodra.[29]

The traditional Ottoman attitude toward the Mirdites was based on the principle of cooptation. In compensation for rendering military services and taking part in military campaigns in the European parts of the Ottoman Empire, the Mirdites were exempted to a large extent from tax payments and were granted a high degree of autonomy. Their loyalty toward the state was not defined as *mutavaat* (obedience) as the case would be with regular subjects, but was designated *hüsn-i khizmet ve sadaqat* (good services and loyalty) – very often supplemented with "from olden times" *(öteden beri)*.[30] In recompense for their services, the state granted the Mirdites privileges *(imtiyazat)*, particularly in the form of tax exemptions. In the 1850s unruly behavior by the Mirdites was still accepted to a certain extent, with only major transgressions deemed worthy of punishment.[31]

From the late 1860s onward, however, the autonomous status of the Mirdita was no longer tolerated, and the old privileges that Ottoman documents had confirmed in the 1850s without reservation and even proudly were now refuted as self-aggrandizing and unfounded Mirdite claims.[32] It is particularly noteworthy that the phrase *öteden beri*, which had been always used to denote the Mirdites' good services and loyalty, was now identified with an ingrown tradition of Mirdite rebelliousness and brigandage.[33] The Mirdites were further denounced because of their alleged barbarism *(vahshi)* and

29 Even at the beginning of the twentieth century the Mirdites were well known for their habit of sabotaging the telegraph line to Shkodra when their salaries as "street guardians" were not regularly paid; see Edith Durham, *High Albania* (London, 1985 [1909]), 323.

30 For one example among many, see Irade Meclis-Vala 4407, leff (enclosure) 2, notice of the Minister of War (serasker) from June 23, 1849, and, identically, in arz tezkiresi (writ of the Grand Vizier addressed to the Sultan) on November 17, 1849: "with regard to having experienced from olden times the good services and the loyalty of the mentioned tribe" [qabile-i merqümenin öteden beri hüsn-i khidmet ve sadaqatlari meshhüd olmasina nazaran]. All references in the following to Ottoman bureaucratic correspondence are based on archival material drawn from Basbakanlik Arsivi, Istanbul, Turkey.

31 Examples of impatience with the Mirdites can be found already in the 1850s. See for example Irade Meclis-i Mahsus 405, leff 4, memorandum of the Sublime Porte from May 22, 1857. But these rebukes did not yet lead to a basic change of the Ottoman attitude toward the Mirdites.

32 See for example Irade Dahiliye 40955, leff 1, Ahmed Asad, vali of Shkodra, to the Sublime Porte on February 24, 1869; almost identically reiterated in the concluding arz tezkiresi of March 14, 1869: "It will be necessary to do away with the talk of privilege and exception which is circulating among the Mirdites" [Merditalularin beyninde lisaninda devran etmekde olan imtiyaz ve istithna sözü dakhi ortadan qalqmaq olacaghi].

33 See for example Irade Sura-yi Devlet 1218, arz tezkiresi from March 8, 1873.

complete ignorance *(jahiliyyet)*, which were put forward as major reasons for their habitual disobedience.[34]

The need to punish the unruly and corrupt Mirdites was expressed by the terms *te'dib* and *terbiye*, which both carried the simultaneous meanings of "punishment" and "education." The correction would involve more than simply bringing force to bear to make the Mirdites obey. The aim was now to make them submit completely to the new reforms, which were designated by the terms *islah* (amelioration, betterment, correction, improvement, reformation) and *inzibat* (discipline).[35]

The old concept of the sovereign enabling prosperity and granting security had been superseded by a more ambitious project to civilize the Mirdites and procure for them a higher standard of education. Ismail Haqqi, *vali* (governor) of Shkodra, argued in 1870 that the Mirdites had turned to robbery because of their dire poverty. Therefore they would have to be inculcated with the principles of civilization through newly established schools and then be made to adapt themselves slowly to agricultural work.[36] The relationship between disciplining and civilizing was more than once made clear. In 1873, a memorandum of the Ottoman state council argued that the installation of local councils and the introduction of the Ottoman administrative system would help to civilize the Mirdites.[37]

In the 1870s Ottoman authorities strove to break the resistance of the Mirdites once and for all. Shevket Pasha, *vali* in 1872 and again 1873, forced upon the Mirdita the installation of the administrative unit of the *qaymaqamliq* and officially abrogated the use of Albanian customary law. During his second term of office, from June to November 1873, his attitude towards the Mirdites stiffened even more, and he had several officers and forty privates of the Mirdite gendarmerie arrested during a visit to Shkodra. When the Mirdites rose in a revolt against the Ottoman authorities, a military expedition was organized and headed off to the Mirdita. En route, Shevket Pasha drowned in the Buna, the first of the many rivers that had to be crossed on

34 See for example Irade Dahiliye 43198, mutasarrif (governor) of Shkodra, Ismail Haqqi on September 20, 1870: "These people's addiction to ignorance that produces savageness and coarseness" [ehalisinin mübtela olduqlari cehaletden tahsil eden vahshet ve khushünet].

35 See for example Irade Dahiliye 44244, Ismail Haqqi, vali of Shkodra, on July 8, 1871: in the Mirdita "one has started to lay ground step by step for some procedures of reform and discipline" [bazi muamalat-i islahiyye ve inzibatiyye bi't-tedric te'sis etdirilmege bashlayup].

36 See for example Irade Dahiliye 43198, arz tezkiresi of October 15, 1870: "with inculcating the principles of civilization" [qavaid-i medeniyyeti telqin ile].

37 Irade Sura-yi Devlet 1218, Sura-yi Devlet on February 26, 1873: "the Mirdites being brought into the range of obedience and civilization" [Merditalilarin da'ire-i itaat ve medeniyyete alinmasi].

the way from Shkodra to the Mirdita, and the campaign was called off.[38] This abortive expedition is symbolic of the Ottomans' failure to establish their institutions and control solidly not only in the Mirdita, but in many other mountain areas of Northern Albania until Ottoman rule over Albania finally came to its end in 1912.

4. Between Adaptation and Assertiveness: Late Ottoman Imperialism

The failed second siege of Vienna in 1683, the loss of Buda (1686), and the disastrous Ottoman defeats in the battles of Mohács (1687), Slankamen (1691), and Zenta (1697) brought the last great war of the seventeenth century to an end. The results of this crushing Ottoman defeat were negotiated in the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, which documented the definitive end of an Ottoman superiority in ground warfare that was now surpassed by its competitors, the Habsburg Empire, Poland, and Russia.[39] Until Karlowitz the Ottoman Empire had not accepted its European counterparts on an equal footing. The official Ottoman position on the Karlowitz treaty was once more to regard it as an Ottoman *diktat*. The head of the Ottoman delegation, Rami Mehmed Efendi, expressed his bewilderment as to why the European delegations would no longer be willing to accept the established procedure as it had been imposed upon the contracting parties by the Ottomans. Besides "a religiously based teleological theory of history," the reason for their denial of evident defeat must be related to the Ottomans' "psychological impossibility of acceptance of the radical alteration in their own self-definition," and to their thus resorting "in effect to make-believe where symbols are valued over and supersede the reality of historical facts."[40] There is some good reason to conclude that Ottoman imperial self-representation from the eighteenth century onward was grounded in the ambivalent attitude of insisting on imperial prerogatives while simultaneously accepting the reality of an empire becoming weaker and weaker in comparison to its European competitors. By the nineteenth century it is evident that the Ottomans had honed this ambiguity to perfection, or to put it somewhat more prudently: The Ottoman

38 Gert Robel, Bemerkungen zur Geschichte Nordalbaniens 1853–1875, in: Peter Bartl et al. (eds.), *Dissertationes Albanicae. In honorem Josephi Valentini et Ernesti Koliqi septuagenariorum* [Festschrift] (Munich, 1971), 29–45, here 41.

39 Klaus Kreiser/Christoph K. Neumann, *Kleine Geschichte der Türkei* (Stuttgart, 2003), 188–89.

40 Rifaat Abou-el-Haj, Ottoman Attitudes toward Peace Making: The Karlowitz Case, Der Islam. *Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients* 51 (1974), 131–37, here 135–36.

state had perfected its attempts "to convince itself of its own legitimate right to existence."[41]

The Ottoman nineteenth century was a laboratory in which various political, economic, and social recipes (most of them of European origin, but substantially transformed by skillful Ottoman tailoring) were tested in order to find ways to strengthen the Empire. One among the many Ottoman strategies, the "repertoires of power,"[42] was that of imperial self-representation. The Ottomans developed the skill not only of adaptation,[43] but also of "productive misunderstanding"; i.e., intentionally misunderstanding European concepts in order to use them in furtherance of their own political agenda. For example, by translating the French term *egalité* as *tesavi* or *müsavat* the Ottomans reinterpreted *egalité* as the impartial equidistance of the Ottoman state from all of its various subject populations.[44]

The Ottoman art of maintaining its imperial status is poorly captured by the term "imperialism." More apt would be a neologism such as "empire-ism," conveying the stresses on the empire's internal self-representation and the only secondary role of expansionist imperialism on its agenda. For the sake of convenience, the term "simulating imperialism" will be used in the following discussion and applied in particular to the case of Egypt – a place in the Ottoman Empire where conflicting imperial ambitions met and collided in a particularly intricate way.

Simulating Imperialism in Egypt

Egypt emerges prominently in nineteenth-century Middle Eastern history in two short periods, the decade from 1831 to 1841 and then again from 1876 to 1882. In the first decades of the nineteenth century it was dominated by Mehmed Ali (1769–1849), its Ottoman governor in the years 1805–48, and his son Ibrahim (1789–1848). From the 1820s onward both attempted to transform Egypt into a centralized and powerful state, based on a state-controlled economy and a strong army trained and armed according to Euro-

41 Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains. Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1909* (London, 1998), 42.

42 Jane Burbank/Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2010), 3, 16.

43 See Benjamin Fortna, *The Imperial Classroom. Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, 2002), 9, urging the use of the term "adaptation" in place of simple "adoption".

44 See for more detail on this, Maurus Reinkowski, *Die Dinge der Ordnung. Eine vergleichende Untersuchung über die osmanische Reformpolitik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2005), 275.

pean standards. In the 1830s their imperial venture culminated in both father and son setting out to conquer the Ottoman Empire *from within*. Only Russia's and Great Britain's coming to the Ottomans' succor prevented the Egyptian army from entering Istanbul. The European powers, striving to eliminate this unwelcome competitor for hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean, reduced Egypt to a minor regional player. As trade-off, Egypt, although officially still a part of the Ottoman Empire, attained the status of an effectively independent state.

The second period that has garnered wide attention are the years 1876–82. Under Mehmed Ali's successors, in particular under Ismail (r. 1863–79), Egypt again strove for the status of an outstanding "modern" state in the Middle East, and one with its own imperial ambitions (but these were now directed exclusively against her southern neighbors). Having over-reached its financial capacity, the Egyptian state had to declare bankruptcy in 1876, bringing all imperial ventures to a definitive halt. Instead, an Egyptian national movement came into being and clashed with European imperialist interests, leading to the British occupation of Egypt in 1882.

Egypt's history in the nineteenth century is a tale of dramatic reversals. From an attempt at independent "modernization" and imperial expansion in the 1830s and 1840s to becoming an object of European imperialism from the 1850s onward; from imperial ventures in Africa in the early 1870s to state ruin in 1876 and foreign occupation in 1882. Nowhere else in the Middle East did rival imperial and imperialist ventures (Egyptian, Ottoman, and the various European ones) of the nineteenth century meet so intimately as in Egypt.[45] Moreover, Egypt in the nineteenth century presents us with a particularly instructive display of European imperialism, in particular of its passage through the stages of free trade to financial to "high" imperialism.[46] It represents, in fact, one of the most successful and effective instances of British imperialism.

Egypt came under British rule as the result of two "fits of present-mindedness." The first was the purchase of Egypt's Suez Canal shares by Disraeli in 1875, which made Britain immediately the canal's largest shareholder; and the second the military intervention in 1882, which brought Egypt directly under British imperial rule. British policy and military might turned the intervention of 1882 into an uncontested internal rule, and British diplomacy saw to it

45 On the phenomenon of layered imperialism in Sudan, see Eve M. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism. Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley, CA, 2003).

46 Alexander Schölch, Der arabische Osten im neunzehnten Jahrhundert (1800–1914), in: Ulrich Haarmann (ed.): *Geschichte der arabischen Welt* (Munich, 1987), 365–431, here 420.

that the other European powers, France in particular, grudgingly accepted British domination over Egypt. Against such a backdrop, the simultaneous claims of the Ottomans and Egyptians to the status of imperial powers appear clearly without merit. Both were practicing a kind of imperial "mimicry."

The Ottomans, until 1914 officially sovereign over Egypt, had to accept the country's de facto independence and confined their claims, dating from the 1840s, to the exercise of mere suzerainty. An intricate pattern of competing claims for rule and legitimacy developed, made even more complicated by the British occupation from 1882 onward. Sultan Abdülhamid II was well aware that the Ottomans had no real power in Egypt. He contented himself with insisting upon respect for the legal status quo, strove to suppress Egypt's imperial ambitions, and avoided any step that might further undermine the Ottoman dynasty's legitimacy.[47]

British semi-colonial rule in Egypt is embodied in the figure of Sir Evelyn Baring (Lord Cromer after 1892), who resided in Egypt from 1882 to 1907 as British General Consul. Cromer was the undeclared proconsul of Egypt and the country's de facto ruler, despite certain limits imposed on his authority by what he "sometimes referred to as 'internationalism', sometimes simply as the obstruction of certain European powers, notably the French."[48]

The forgotten Ottoman counterpart to this major British imperialist was Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha (1839–1919). Ahmed Muhtar, a high-ranking Ottoman officer, was sent in to Cairo in 1885 and, to his own surprise, stayed until the year 1908 as representative of the Ottoman state in Egypt.[49] In the 1860s and 1870s, he had held an almost dizzying variety of military, civil, diplomatic, and administrative positions. He was only thirty-three in 1872 when, in acknowledgement of his merits in reincorporating Yemen into the Ottoman Empire, he was appointed Field Marshall and Commander of the Seventh Army in Yemen. In the Russian-Ottoman war of 1877–78 he was supreme military commander at the East Anatolian front and was awarded for his outstanding military achievements the extremely rare honorary title *ghazi*. Ahmed Muhtar could only have assumed that his mission in Egypt would be yet a further stage in a highly successful and most honorable career.[50] During

47 F. A. K. *Yasamee, Ottoman Diplomacy. Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers 1878–1888* (Istanbul, 1996), 88–9.

48 Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer. Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford, 2004), 233.

49 Ahmed Muhtar was only one in a long series of Ottoman envoys to Egypt in the first half of the 1880s; see Yasamee, Ottoman Diplomacy, 90–92.

50 Feroz Ahmad, Mukhtar Pasha, Ghazi Ahmed, in: P. Bearman et al. (eds.): *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 7, (Leiden, 1992), 525–26; see also the comprehensive (although in detail unreliable) account by Emine Foat Tugay, *Three Centuries: Family Chronicles of Turkey and Egypt* (London, 1963), 9–26.

the next twenty years, however, he was entrusted with no further missions or positions. Sultan Abdülhamid evidently hoped to maintain some minimal influence in Egypt via Ahmed Muhtar, and at the same time to keep him in a kind of honorary exile.[51] With the Young Turk revolution of 1908, Ahmed Muhtar was allowed to return to Istanbul after almost twenty-five years of uninterrupted service in Egypt.[52]

Upon his return to Istanbul, Ahmed Muhtar's career reached its peak with his appointment as Grand Vizier in July 1912. It was however but a few months later, in October of that year, that he was compelled to resign in the wake of the disastrous Ottoman defeats during the First Balkan War. Ahmed Muhtar retreated to private life and died in 1917. His connection to Egypt survived his return to Istanbul. In 1896, his son Mahmud Muhtar (1867–1935) married Princess Nimet, the youngest daughter of Khedive Ismail. He would spend the later part of his life in Egypt.[53]

Although the careers of both Cromer and Ahmed Muhtar are impressive, in the context of Egyptian history we may see a giant, Cromer, and a dwarf, Ahmed Muhtar.[54] Ahmed Muhtar was a nuisance to the British, but not more.[55] If Cromer was a person "somewhere between a long-serving viceroy, a provincial governor, an international banker, and an ambassador,"[56] then Ahmed Muhtar was a person somewhere between an envoy, an exile, an idle bureaucrat, and a phantom. During his years in Egypt he was indeed a *hapless imperialist.*

But does the impression of imperial decline not hold true for the whole of Ahmed Muhtar's military-bureaucratic-diplomatic career? Was it not only the period of his forlorn semi-exile in Egypt, but rather his whole life that

51 Mahmud Muhtar, Evénements, 192–93. The reasons why Ahmed Muhtar had fallen into disgrace with Abdhülhamid II are not known to the author of this article.

52 Obviously at the beginning of 1909 his resignation was officially accepted; see Peri Oded, Ottoman Symbolism in British-Occupied Egypt 1882–1909, *Middle Eastern Studies* 41 (2005) 1, 104–20, here 119, endnote 59.

53 Emine Tugay, daughter of Mahmud Muhtar and Nimet, in her memoirs describes in detail the close marital links among the Egyptian-Ottoman high nobility; see Tugay, Three Centuries. For a further account from the ruling dynasty's perspective, see Hassan Hassan, *In the House of Muhammad Ali. A Family Album 1805–1952* (Cairo, 2000).

54 In the biography of Cromer, written by Roger Owen, a specialist on the economic history of the Middle East, Ahmed Muhtar is mentioned only once, in connection with Drummond Wolff's mission in 1885. Owen, Lord Cromer, 217–28.

55 In April 1899 Cromer wrote to Prime Minister Salisbury: "Moukhtar Pasha possesses too little influence here to do much harm, but his attitude is persistently hostile to Her Majesty's Government and to the present Egyptian Ministry"; PRO FO 78/5023, Cromer to Salisbury, April 17, 1899, cited in Oded, Ottoman Symbolism, 117, endnote 11.

56 Owen, Lord Cromer, 393.

told the story of the erosion of an empire? The long citation at the beginning of this essay would certainly seem to suggest so. And what effects did the frustration of imperial failure and decline bring about?

5. From Frustration to Violence?

It has been a principal contention of this essay that the radicalization of Ottoman reform politics from the early second half of the nineteenth century onward deeply affected Ottoman imperial routine and reduced the Ottoman bureaucratic and military elite's level of toleration toward subject populations. It has further been argued that the growing chasm between a reality of semi-colonization and the pretension of imperial grandeur put heavy psychological pressure on Ottoman representatives, and that the recurrent experience of decline may have contributed to a greater proneness to "imperial frustration."

To give only one further example: The Ottoman province of Montenegro (at that time considerably smaller than today's state of Montenegro) had achieved the status of a de facto independent entity within the Ottoman Empire over the course of the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century it consolidated into a state, but gained international recognition of its independence only with the treaty of Berlin in 1878. Obviously there was an ever-widening gap between, on the one hand, the formal sovereignty that the Ottoman Empire exerted over the mountain principality, and Montenegro's progress toward centralized and viable statehood on the other. Ottoman authorities (located both in Istanbul and Shkodra in Northern Albania) were thus obliged to act on two levels: They had to maintain the internationally upheld fiction of Ottoman sovereignty over Montenegro and carry on with traditional Ottoman cooptation policy, while at the same time dealing with periodic, but protracted low-scale warfare. The prominent Ottoman religious scholar, court historian, and state bureaucrat Ahmed Cevdet Efendi, later Pasha (1823–95),[57] who had been sent as a special commissioner to Shkodra in 1861, gave after his return to Istanbul a detailed report on the problems in the region, which were caused (in the Ottomans' perception) by Montenegrin aggressiveness and an Ottoman Empire sabotaged by European partisanship and leniency towards this Balkan upstart statelet. Montegrin forces could strike wherever they wanted and then retreat behind their

57 See for biographical details Harold Bowen, Ahmad Djewdet Pasha, in: P. Bearman et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 1, (Leiden, 1956), 284–86; Yusuf Halaçoğlu/Mehmet Akif Aydın, Cevdet Paşa, in: *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı I'slam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 7, (Istanbul, 1993), 443–50.

frontiers (guaranteed by the European powers) if an Ottoman counterforce threatened them. Ahmed Cevdet concluded that "if one would give me Bosnia and the same privileges that Montenegro enjoys I could conquer the whole of Europe."[58]

Was it thus the frustration not only of partially successful reform policies but also of hampered imperial officers and bureaucrats that finally radicalized late Ottoman politics? It would be difficult to prove a direct causal link and simply preposterous to attempt to draw a line from Ahmed Cevdet's frustrated statement or from Mahmud Muhtar's fatalistic comments directly to Young Turk policy from 1912 onward. But both Ahmed Cevdet and Ahmed Muhtar were already part of the generation raised in the spirit of the Tanzimat – a period that knew its own dynamics of radicalized political thought and praxis.

The ambivalent venture of insisting on imperial prerogatives while simultaneously dealing with the reality of a semi-colonized empire must have been a heavy psychological burden for any member of the late Ottoman elite. Given that tension, one might assume that in the moment of peripety all pretensions of Ottoman imperiality were instantly abandoned. Further research would have to show whether with the Ottoman entry into World War I, which saw the instant abolition of semi-colonial institutions such as the capitulations,[59] also did away quickly with the insignia of Ottoman "empire-ism."

Also highly speculative, but more down to earth, is the first argument brought forward in this essay, namely that the Tanzimat reforms – in addition to the many material changes they brought about – were a process of internal self-ideologization that culminated in the Young Turks' positivistic and Darwinistic radicalism. The vision of a final and complete order that the Ottoman elite propagated (and had begun to believe in it itself) reduced the state elite's capability to bear disappointment and frustration. When the empire's population turned down the "generous" offer, the state elite felt betrayed. Thus was set on its course the process of radicalization that would discharge so violently in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

The lives of Ahmed Muhtar and his son Mahmud Muhtar show that the Ottoman Empire also knew the trajectory of gradual eclipse. Ahmed Muhtar did not belong to the inner circle of the Young Turks. After resigning from his position as Grand Vizier, he retreated into private life. Mahmud

58 Ahmed Cevdet, Tezâkir, ed. by Cavid Baysun, vol. 2, (Ankara, 1986–1991), 190.

59 Once granted by the Ottoman Empire to European states as a kind of "most favored partners" status, the capitulations had been converted in the course of the nineteenth century into a European instrument of economic penetration and patronizing political interference.

Muhtar who had served under his father's Grand Vizierate as minister of naval affairs was sent off to Berlin in 1913 as Ottoman ambassador and emigrated to Egypt four years later. We see an empire that simply fades away.

What we can learn by further extending our temporal and spatial scope is that the Ottoman imperial elite was aware of contradictory trajectories: Mahmud Muhtar merged into the established Egyptian-Turkish elite, while Mehmed Said Halim Pasha (1864–1921), scion of Muhammad Ali's Egyptian dynasty, became a militant advocate of radical Young Turk politics, served as Grand Vizier during the most ruthless period of Young Turk rule (1913–17), and was killed in Rome in 1921 (as was Talaat in Berlin (1921) and Cemal in Tiflis (1922)) by an Armenian assassin.[60]

Ottoman insistence on legitimate sovereignty over Egypt in the nineteenth and early twentieth century may be regarded as a curious side phenomenon and even a dead-end, dwarfed in its historical importance by other developments, such as the process of self-ideologization of the late Ottoman elite and the major demographic transformations. Nevertheless, the province of Egypt had always been one of the empire's cornerstones. Despite its increasing disentanglement from the Ottoman imperial context in the nineteenth century, Egypt was still an important theater of Ottoman imperial representation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Concentrating our focus only on the area that today constitutes the Turkish Republic risks obstructing our understanding of late Ottoman history by masking the full complexity of the factors that brought about the radicalization of late Ottoman politics and, finally, the extremely violent period of 1912–22.

There is a second point, one that reaches beyond the period treated here. One can – in fact, one must – read the history of the Middle East in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a history of violence. Much of Europe's violent potential before World War I was externalized onto the Middle East as the so-called Oriental Question."[61] Western policy in the Middle East, in particular under US supremacy has continued in this same vein.[62] It is also

60 See as one example Ahmet Şeyhun, *Said Halim Pasha: Ottoman Statesman – Islamist Thinker, 1865–1912* (Istanbul, 2003); one entry in the rather voluminous literature on this important member of the Young Turks.

61 Lothar Gall, Die europäischen Mächte und der Balkan im 19. Jahrhundert, in: Ralph Melville/Hans-Jürgen Schröder (eds.): *Der Berliner Kongreß von 1878. Die Politik der Großmächte und die Probleme der Modernisierung in Südosteuropa in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1982), 1–16, here 4: The Ottoman Empire was "one of the decisive regulating factors" in the European balance of power.

62 See for example Ussama Samir Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced. The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations: 1820–2003* (New York, 2010), 307, for parallels between British and US imperialism in the Middle East as reflected in the pairs Faisal vs. Lawrence of Arabia and Sadat vs. Kissinger: "The difference was that Sadat was far more cynical than Faisal, and Kissinger far less romantic than Lawrence."

curious how closely the leaden years of Cromer's (and Ahmed Muhtar's) time in Egypt prefigure much of Middle Eastern history after World War I – a period of rarely declared wars (such as the Arab-Israeli or Gulf wars), but with a deep strain of structural violence.