



THE LAST STRUGGLE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN NORTH AFRICA: THE TURKISH-ITALIAN WAR OF 1911-1912 AND THE ROLE OF MUSTAFA KEMAL

OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU'NUN KUZHEY AFRİKA'DAKİ SON MÜCADELESİ: 1911-1912 TÜRK-İTALYAN SAVAŞI VE MUSTAFA KEMAL'İN ROLÜ

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Öz

Osmanlı Devleti, 1877'de başlayan Türk-Rus Savaşı'ndan 1922 yılına kadar süren zaman aralığında Avrupa, Rusya cephesi ve Ortadoğu'da neredeyse kesintisiz savaşlar yaşamıştır. 19. yüzyılda İtalya, Avrupa'nın diğer büyük devletlerine kıyasla işgal mücadelesine geç başlamıştı. İngiltere Mısır'ı, Fransa ise Cezayir ve Tunus'u işgal ederken İtalya, Kuzey Afrika'daki son Osmanlı toprağı olan Trablusgarp'ı ele geçirmeyi hedefliyordu.

Bu çalışma, 1912'de Birinci Balkan Savaşı ile sonuçlanan Libya Savaşı'na dönüşen askerî ve diplomatik çıkmazları, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun daha tehlikeli bir düşmanla karşı karşıya kalmamak için İtalya ile barış yapmak zorunda kaldığı süreci ele almaktadır. İtalyan-Türk Savaşı, büyük güçler arasındaki ilk silahlı çatışmaydı ve Balkanlar ve Saraybosna'daki durumun giderek kötüleşmesine yol açmıştı. Bölgede sınırlı güce sahip Osmanlı Devleti hem kuvvet hem de silah bakımından kendisinden çok daha üstün olan düşmana karşı büyük bir kahramanlık sergilemişti.

Savaşın başından itibaren askerler ve mücahitlerin İtalyanlara karşı gösterdiği direniş başarılı olsa da bu, İtalyanları Trablusgarp'tan tamamen çıkarmaya yetmedi. Yüzbaşı Mustafa Kemal, 1911 yılında kendi isteğıyle Trablusgarp'a giden birkaç arkadaşıyla birlikte önce Mısır'a, ardından da zorluklarla Tobruk ve Derne'ye ulaşmış ve tüm olumsuz koşullara rağmen kendisine verilen görevleri en iyi şekilde yerine getirmişti.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Balkan, Binbaşı Mustafa Kemal, İtalyan-Türk Savaşı, Libya, Osmanlı Devleti.

Abstract

The Ottoman Empire experienced almost uninterrupted wars in Europe, the Russian front, and the Middle East from the 1877 Turkish-Russian War until 1922. Towards the end of the 19th century, Italy started the occupation struggle late compared to other major European powers. While England occupied Egypt and France occupied Algeria and Tunisia, Italy aimed to capture Tripoli, the last Ottoman territory in North Africa.

This study deals with the military and diplomatic deadlocks that turned into the Libyan War, which resulted in the First Balkan War in 1912, and the process in which the Ottoman Empire had to make peace with Italy in order to avoid facing a more dangerous enemy. The Italo-Turkish War was the first armed conflict between major powers and led to a gradual deterioration of the situation in the Balkans and Sarajevo. The Ottoman Empire, which had limited power in the region, displayed great heroism against the enemy, which was much superior to it in terms of both strength and weapons.

Although the resistance of the soldiers and mujahideen against the Italians from the beginning of the war was successful, this was not enough to completely remove the Italians from Tripoli. Captain Mustafa Kemal, together with a few of his friends who went to Tripoli voluntarily in 1911, first reached Egypt, then with difficulties, reached Tobruk and Derne, and despite all the adverse conditions, he fulfilled the duties assigned to him in the best possible way.

Keywords: Balkan, Major Mustafa Kemal, Italian-Turkish War, Libya, Ottoman Empire.

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Geniřletilmiř Özet

1911'de, İtalya Donanması'nın Eski Bakanı Giovanni Giolitti'nin savařa girme isteęi Avusturya ve Almanya'nın Libya'ya artan ilgisinden etkilenmiřti. Dolayısıyla da Francesco Guicciardini'nin Jön Türkler'e olumlu yaklařımı ve Fas'ta Fransız-Alman anlaşmazlıęının yeniden açılması, bölgede Alman etkisinin artmasına neden olmuřtu. Bunun yanı sıra İtalya'nın geliřimi ve Avrupa siyasetine katılmak istemesi 1878 Berlin Kongresi'nde gizlice önerilen Trablus gibi kolonilerin ele geçirilmesine dayanmaktaydı. Çünkü Trablus, Fransız Tunus'u ile İngiliz Mısır'ı arasında stratejik bir konuma sahip olması nedeniyle büyük önem kazanmıřtı. Hâl böyle olunca 1885'teki "etkili iřgal" ilkesi, İtalya'nın Trablusgarp'ı ele geçirme hazırlıklarını hızlandırdı. İlk bařlarda İtalya kan dökülmesini önlemek amacıyla ekonomik, dinî ve eęitimsel araçları kullanarak Trablus ile Babıali arasındaki baęları zayıflatmaya çalıřmış olsa bile Babıali'nin vali ve komutan seçiminde etkili olma mücadelesi savařa hüküm vermiřti. Nitekim Trablus, asayiři saęlayacak seviyeye indirilmiř ve İtalya, Babıali'den yanıt beklemeden 29 Eylül 1911'de savař ilan ettięini duyurmuřtu. Bu savařı, üç ařamalı olarak deęerlendirebiliriz: İlki, iřgal güçlerinin kurulması ve savařın Libya ve Ege Denizi'nde yoğunlařması; ikincisi, Babıali'nin politikası ve son ařama, Senusiye'nin yarı özerk hareket etmesine izin vererek bölgesel bir liderlik odaęı yaratılması.

Osmanlı Devleti ve İtalyanlar arasında Libya'da yařanan bu çatıřma, 1917'ye kadar sürmüř ve bu süreçte ulusal burjuvazi direniřte önemli bir rol oynamıřtır. Savař boyunca İtalyan ordusu, Türk komutasındaki yerel gönüllülerin direniři nedeniyle kıyıda iç bölgelere doęru ilerlemekte zorlandı. İtalya, çıkmazı ařmak için Libya'yı ilhak etti ve savařı Akdeniz, Ege ve Çanakkale Boęazı'na kadar geniřletti. Bu strateji; Babıali'yi barıřa zorlamak, savařın maliyetini azaltmak ve kamuoyundaki imajını korumak amacıyla uygulandı. İtalya, Ege Denizi üzerinden yapılan askeri nakliyatı kontrol etmek için Rodos ve Oniki Adalar'ı iřgal etti, Çanakkale Boęazı'na saldırdı ve Boęaz çıkıřında büyük bir filo yüzdürdü.

Bu makale, 20. yüzyılın bařlarında Akdeniz'in jeopolitik manzarasını yeniden řekillendiren İtalya ile Osmanlı Devleti arasındaki Trablusgarp Savařı'nı incelemektedir. İtalya'nın imparatorluęunu geniřletme arzusu ve Osmanlı İmparatorluęu'nun Kuzey Afrika topraklarını koruma isteksizlięiyle bařlayan bu savař, yıllardır süren emperyal rekabetlerin ve milliyetçi hırsların bir sonucuydu. İki yıl süren çatıřmada, İtalyan ordusu Osmanlı'nın kararlı direniřiyle karřılařtı ve iki ülke Trablus ve Bingazi'nin kontrolü için çatıřtı. Savař, Osmanlı İmparatorluęu'nun gerilemesi ve İtalyan emperyalizminin yükseliři açısından önemli bir dönüm noktası oldu, bölge ve dünya genelinde geniř kapsamlı sonuçlar doęurdu. Savařın nedenleri, gidiřati ve sonuçlarına dair yapılan bu analiz, modern çağda emperyal rekabetlerin karmařıklıęına ve güç mücadelesine yeni bir ışık tutmaktadır.

İtalya'nın Trablusgarp'ı iřgaliyle bařlayan 1911-1912 Türk-İtalyan Savařı, Osmanlı tarihinde önemli bir dönüm noktası olmuřtur. Sayıca ve silah bakımından üstün olmalarına raęmen Mustafa Kemal gibi genç subayların liderlięindeki Osmanlı kuvvetleri, gerilla savaři taktiklerini kullanarak ve yerel Arap ařiretlerini harekete geçirerek İtalyan iřgaline direnmiřti. Savař, İtalya'nın Trablusgarp'ı ele geçirmesi ile sonuçlansa da Osmanlı milliyetçilięini harekete geçirerek ülkenin modernleřme sürecini hızlandırdı. Çatıřma; hava gücünün ilk kullanımı, havadan keřiř ve uçaksavar operasyonları gibi önemli askeri yeniliklere tanık oldu. Nihayetinde, savař Osmanlı İmparatorluęu'nun parçalanmasını etkileyerek Birinci Dünya Savařı'na ve modern Türkiye'nin kuruluşuna zemin hazırladı. Karadaę'ın 1912'de Osmanlı İmparatorluęu'na savař ilan etmesiyle bařlayan Balkan Savařları, Akdeniz'in siyasi manzarasını yeniden řekillendiren geniř kapsamlı sonuçlar doęurdu. 1911-1912 yılları arasında yařanan İtalya-Osmanlı Savaři, Osmanlı İmparatorluęu'nun Trablus dâhil Kuzey Afrika'daki son topraklarını kaybetmesine neden oldu ve İtalya'nın bölgede hâkim bir güç olarak yükseliřini saęladı.

Bu savařın sonucu, Türk Kurtuluř Savaři üzerinde de derin etkiler bıraktı. Ortadoęu ve ötesindeki milliyetçi hareketlere ilham verdi. 1947'deki Paris Antlařması, Yunanistan'ın itilafı adalar üzerindeki iddiasını pekiřtirerek Türkiye ile Yunanistan arasında gelecekte yařanabilecek çatıřmalara zemin hazırladı. Bu süreçte, Almanya'nın Yakın Doęu'daki diplomatik ve ekonomik çıkarları büyük ölçüde etkilenmedi. Savařın ardından, İtalya'nın önemli bir aktör olarak ortaya çıkması ve Osmanlı İmparatorluęu'nun etkisinin azalmasıyla Akdeniz'deki güç dengesi deęiřti. Balkan Savařları ve İtalya-Osmanlı Savaři'nin sonuçları, bölgenin siyasetini, ekonomisini ve uluslararası iliřkilerini buęüne kadar etkilemeye devam ediyor.

INTRODUCTION

As different empires spread around the world towards the end of the 19th century, Italy started to show interest in Tripoli, which was a strategic region in the Mediterranean in terms of economy. This desire increased greatly, especially with the occupation of Egypt in 1881 and the annexation of Tunisia and Algeria by France in 1882. One of the developments made to balance the power issue in Europe was the political unity of Italy in 1870 (Macar, 2017). After this date, Italians gathered in a single state center and became a new power state. Italians thought that the union they established should have colonies in order to become a great state. Based on this thought and events, Italy chose Tripoli and Benghazi, the last Ottoman territory in North Africa, as the occupation zone. For this reason, Italy, which also made an agreement with the great powers of Europe, sent two notes to the Ottoman Empire on 23 September 1911 and 28 September 1911 (Beehler, 2014).

In the notes sent, it was stated that people who were allied with Ottoman officers and who were also members of the Progressive Society and who were not informed were provoking the Italian people. It was also announced that as a result, the life safety of Italians was not ensured in Tripoli and Benghazi (Kurtcephe, 1995). This conflict that started between Italy and Turkey was an example of how the oppressed demands of powerful countries entered the war. This conflict, which started in Tripoli and continued towards the Adriatic Sea, Aegean Sea, and Red Sea, is known as the Tripoli War in Turkey and Guerra di Libia in Italy. The former Tripoli province and Benghazi Sanjak of the Ottoman Empire, which is today called Libya and was conquered in 1551, remained under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire for 361 years until 1912 (Baykurt, 2009).

The provinces of the Ottoman Empire on the Mediterranean coast were as much of an interest to Italy as the Italian territory. Nearly 45 years after the last war, in 1911-1912, Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti saw Libya, the only Mediterranean region not claimed by any European country, as the only region they could dominate (Artuç, 2022). He also described the seizure of Libya from the Ottoman Empire for the purpose of national unity as a unique war that the Italians could enter. Although everyone knew that Italy's attention was focused on Libya, the Ottoman Governments preferred to make new concessions to Italy instead of taking precautions against this and increasing its defenses (Herrmann, 1989).

Giovanni Giolitti talks about the Libyan war in his memoirs as follows: "One of the biggest difficulties I had when making the decision for Italy to invade Tripoli in 1911 was how such an operation against the Ottoman Empire would resonate in the international arena (Giolitti, 1922). Our allies such as Austria-Hungary and Germany They were closely monitoring their interests in Libya and our activities in this region. It was not easy to decide; ultimately, we had to protect Italy's interests and take care of the delicate balances of the great powers, other than taking this step that would strengthen Italy's strategic position in the Mediterranean and serve our national interests. I saw that there was no option left (Pavlović, 2014).

The difficulties faced by the Italian army against the Ottoman resistance during the Tripoli War reminded us again and again how difficult and complex this decision was. Under the leadership of young Ottoman officers such as Mustafa Kemal, Ottoman forces put up a tougher resistance than expected. This resistance led to a prolongation of the war and higher costs than we expected (Smith, 2010). However, I did not lose faith in the necessity of continuing the war and eventually taking control of Tripoli in line with the aim of increasing Italy's influence in the Mediterranean. "This conflict was not just a military operation, but a turning point that would determine Italy's future strategic position (Brown, 2012)."

The Ottoman Empire received the first clear information that the Italians were going to launch an attack by sea on 17 April 1911 when the Ottoman Ambassador in Athens, Galip Bey, reported that an Italian fleet consisting of 12 warships was seen off the island of Skiros (Şıvgın, 2006). In the Tripoli War, maritime sovereignty was in the hands of Italy, and the Ottoman navy had no power to prevent this. However, in order to organize and reinforce the resistance against the occupation in the region, a secret transportation route was established between Egypt and Benghazi, and Captain Rauf (Orbay) was appointed to this task. This approach led Italian generals to describe the war as a "Military Tourist Expedition" when the war began on September 29, 1911 (Kurtcephe, 1990).

The causes of this war had nothing to do with the previous difficulties between Italy and Turkey and, in fact, very little to do with the two warring parties themselves. The aim of this war was to gain the right to rule the former Roman lands of Italy, the heir of the Roman Empire (Seymour, 1918). In 1911, Italy, which aspired to be a great power and was experiencing unemployment and immigration problems, saw this region as its "Fourth Coast" and aimed to solve the problem by settling poor Italians in this region. Italian diplomacy had planned this war in advance, but the Italian army was not prepared for this attack. Italy, which initially tried to achieve this through peaceful influence, was forced to take control of Libya by force when faced with Ottoman restrictions (Orazi, 2017).

Following this incident and developments, Italy signed agreements with the powerful countries of Europe that gave it freedom in Libya. The timing of the war was determined by Italy's fear that international developments might prevent the realization of this goal. On September 28, 1911, the Italian government sent an ultimatum to the Ottoman Empire with the condition that it be accepted within one day (Colucci, 2021).

This ultimatum and declaration of war was a sudden and unexpected blow to England, which had received no warning of Italy's intentions. The Ottoman Empire's response to the Italian ultimatum played a major role in gaining British sympathy by demonstrating its desire to resolve disputes between the two countries amicably (Heller, 2012). In response to Italy's decision to extend its jurisdiction over Libya and its threat if it did not accept this decision, the Ottoman Empire offered negotiations to the Italians on 29 September, but this was unacceptable to the Italians, who declared war.

The Tripoli War was the first place where Mustafa Kemal showed his superior quality in command and organization (Ungari, 2014). Mustafa Kemal, under the name of Journalist Mustafa Şerif, set out from Istanbul on 15 October 1911, together with Naci, Hakkı, and Yakup Cemil Bey, with fake documents and passports. When they ran out of money on the road, they continued their journey by taking two hundred English liras from Naci Bey and Ömer Fevzi Bey. Mustafa Kemal fell ill on the way, returned to Alexandria and stayed in the hospital for fifteen days. Meanwhile, Nuri and Fuat Bey joined them and set off together, reaching Tripoli via Egypt under very difficult conditions (Özlü, 2014).

Nuri Pasha said in his memoirs: "If the more than twenty thousand cannons, tens of thousands of rifles, and large amounts of ammunition and supplies left to the enemy in Tripoli had been removed from there in time, there would be no need for so many weapons. Due to the shortage of weapons and ammunition, the defense of Tripoli could have taken a completely different form. However This did not happen, we left the sufficient amount of modern weapons and ammunition we had to the enemy and then we had to fight the enemy" (Barclay and Ali, 1912).

1. THE WAR

In Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's military and political career, the struggle against occupation holds significant importance. In this context, the Battle of Tripoli is a major event, as it marks his first military experience and victory. Mustafa Kemal's interest in Tripoli dates back to the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era (Durgun, 2014a). Following the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era on July 24, 1908, unrest occurred in Tripoli, prompting the Young Turks to assign Mustafa Kemal the task of raising awareness among the Tripolitanian people and calming the unrest in the region. To achieve this goal, Mustafa Kemal engaged in various activities in Tripoli for two months starting from December 1908 (O'Neill, 1948).

The information Mustafa Kemal gathered during his time in Tripoli proved to be highly beneficial in his later endeavors. After the war began, Mustafa Kemal's return to Tripoli occurred with Italy's initiation of the conflict. Italy, compared to other European countries, was late in the scramble for occupation and targeted Tripoli, the last Ottoman territory in North Africa (Oishi, 1996).

To address this crisis and prevent further expansion, diplomatic efforts were made with England and Germany, allies of the Ottoman Empire, to mediate for peace. However, since no favorable response was received, Italy, claiming dissatisfaction, declared war on the Ottoman Empire on the same day, leading to the start of the Turkish-Italian War (Ürekli, 2018). Before the war began, the Ottoman Empire made military service mandatory throughout the empire. This decision was not well received among regional populations like the Kuloğulları. Since the Berber tribes in the coastal areas were more

autonomous and less subject to central authority, it was necessary to recruit volunteer Turkish officers to fight for Tripoli (Wrigley, 1980).

Just two hours before the declaration of war, the Italian fleet sank two Turkish torpedo boats off Preveza in the Adriatic Sea. The Italians planned to defeat the Ottoman Empire quickly. Given that Ottoman military strength in the region was weak and that the Ottomans could not send aid to Tripoli via land routes, it was anticipated that the war would end swiftly (Clancy-Smith, 2012). Realizing that the Ottomans could only send military forces to Tripoli by sea, the Italians took measures to prevent any aid from the Aegean islands. While the situation in Tripoli was chaotic, the Ottoman state tried to regain control of the city. Local residents were called to join volunteer battalions, but most preferred to stay at home and defend themselves. The shortage of weapons, ammunition, and equipment was a serious problem (Koloğlu, 2007).

At the beginning of the war, only the 42nd Division had its military headquarters in Tripoli. Ottoman forces, under the command of Acting Colonel Neşet Bey, attempted to resist by withdrawing from the coast to the interior as the Italians landed and joined forces with local irregulars. After the initial panic, it became clear that the Italians were struggling to advance in Tripoli, which hardened the Turks' stance.¹ An economic boycott was initiated, and strong resistance was organized against Italy. Two days later, three Italian warships arrived off the coast of Tripoli to prevent the Ottoman Empire from sending aid to the region and to control all ships. The Italians assumed that the local population would welcome them, thinking that this would make it easy to win the war (Rogari, 2013).

The government of Ibrahim Hakkı Paşa in Istanbul was against sending Turkish officers to Tripoli. However, after Ibrahim Hakkı Paşa's resignation and the government's withdrawal, the Said Paşa government, formed on September 30, 1911, approved the dispatch of volunteer Turkish officers to the region (Greer, 1919).

The Ottomans were caught unprepared both politically and militarily for the Italian attack. The declaration of war was met with significant backlash within the Ottoman country. Sadrazam Hakkı Paşa, who had previously served at the Roman embassy, resigned, and the Said Paşa government was established.² It seemed unlikely that the Ottomans could succeed in a war with Italy, as some military units had been sent to suppress the rebellion in Yemen. Additionally, in Egypt, which was on the route to Tripoli, the British declared their neutrality in the war, thereby eliminating the Ottoman Empire's ability to send aid via land routes (Ahmida, 1994).

War Minister Mahmud Şevket Paşa stated in a meeting with officers that sending aid by sea was not feasible. Under these circumstances, it was not possible for the Ottoman Empire to officially declare war on Italy. Despite these adversities, the Young Turks, who were eager to fight against imperialism and had significant influence on the government, discussed what could be done against the Italian attack.³ The Young Turks, unwilling to accept losing the country's territory without a fight, decided to voluntarily go to Tripoli and organize the local population against the Italian attack and start a resistance struggle. Thus, officers, including Mustafa Kemal, began to travel to Tripoli through various routes (Çelebi, 2015).

Among the officers fighting against the Italian occupation in Tripoli were figures such as Kuşçubaşı Eşref, Nuri (Conker), and Süleyman Askeri. Mustafa Kemal, who had been assigned to the First Department of the General Staff in Istanbul before the Battle of Tripoli, did not start this assignment and was appointed to the Tripoli Committee on the day the war was declared, September 29, 1911. His knowledge and skills about the region were influential in this appointment (Coppola, 1922). On October 15, Mustafa Kemal, along with his friends Ömer Naci and Yakup Cemil, set out from Istanbul to Tripoli via Egypt. Before departing, he asked his close friend Salih Bey to keep an eye on his mother. After spending some time in quarantine at Urla, he wrote a letter to his friend Fuat (Bulca) during this period. In the letter, he stated that their goal in Tripoli was to "open an area for endless struggle" and asked not to disclose his location. He continued, "To save the homeland requires more effort and sacrifice than

¹ Tanin Gazetesi, "Trablusgarp'ta Direniş", 15 Ekim 1911, Sayı: 123, s. 3.

² Corriere della Sera, "La Guerra di Libia", 20 Ekim 1911, Sayı: 456, s. 5.

³ Ministero degli Affari Esteri, I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani (DDI), Serie IV, Volume 5, 1911-1912, Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, s. 210-213.

ever... Don't forget me" (Şıvgın, 2006).

After the quarantine period was over, Mustafa Kemal and his friends continued their journey to Tripoli, using a pseudonym due to the British not allowing Ottoman officers to pass through Egypt in uniform or official dress. During the journey, he used the pseudonym Mustafa Şerif to give the impression of being a journalist. After a while, Mustafa Kemal reached Egypt but had to return to Alexandria due to illness during the journey. During his illness, he wrote letters to his friend inquiring about his mother's condition. Meanwhile, he was promoted to the rank of miralay on November 27, 1911 (Simon, 1980). After recovering from his illness, Mustafa Kemal and his friends resumed their journey, disembarked at the last station in Western Sahara, and explained their true situation to the Egyptian official to avoid capture. They loaded their belongings onto camels and, after approximately a week of desert travel, reached the border of Benghazi on December 8 (Berci, 2020).

On October 1, 1911, a force of approximately 44,500 troops arrived at the Libyan coast. Italy called on the Ottomans to surrender Tripoli on October 2, 1911 and bombarded Tripoli the next day (Figure 1). Due to the longer range of Italian naval guns compared to Ottoman land guns, the city's defenses were destroyed. The Ottoman military command, realizing the imbalance of power, decided to withdraw and resist, transitioning to a resistance in the interior regions (McCollum, 2015).

Figure 1. Italia-Turkish War: After Declaring War Against Turkey On 29 September 1911, Italy Blockaded the Coasts of Tripoli and Cyrene, Began Bombarding Benghazi, And Landed from Tripoli



Kaynak: (McCollum, 2015)

As a result, the Italians encountered no resistance when they landed in Tripoli on October 4, 1911. On October 16, 1911, a group from the Italian first fleet arrived in front of Derne, and the notables of the city sent a delegation and asked the admiral not to bombard the city. However, Admiral Presbitero stated that he would cease the bombardment on the condition that the Ottoman forces in the city surrendered (Bacanlı, 1984). After the Ottoman forces refused to surrender, the Italians set fire to the oasis on the coast and the garrison area, and at the same time, they started the landing operation. However, when they encountered very strong resistance, they postponed the landing operation, and on October 18, 1911, they entered Derne at the end of the second landing operation (Sürmeli, 2016). According to the instructions given by the Minister of War Mahmut Şevket Pasha, all activities of the volunteer officers who would go to Tripoli were to be carried out secretly.¹ Enver Bey set out from Istanbul, accompanied by Rauf and Ömer Fevzi Bey, and Kolağası Mustafa Kemal left Istanbul on October 19, 1911 to go to the region. Mustafa Kemal, identified as Tanin newspaper reporter Mustafa Şerif, reached Alexandria. Meanwhile, Nuri (Conker) and Fuat (Bulca) Beys also arrived in Alexandria, and after a short time, they all moved towards Tripoli together. After evading British border patrols numerous times, they reached the Turkish headquarters in Tobruk (Askew, 1938).

Following this event, Italy declared sovereignty over Libya on November 5, 1911, despite the

¹ Mebusan Meclisi Zabıt Cerideleri, 2. Dönem, Cilt 5, 1911, s. 45-47.

occupation of other coastal cities and insufficient territorial control. It was not perceived as the annexation of lost homeland lands but rather as a return to them (Illuzzi, 2018). The Ottoman government managed to reach Libya despite opposition to sending reinforcements due to urgent needs elsewhere and despite Italy's naval blockade. The Ottoman state reached Egypt, Tunisia, and, via small secret ports, Libya with the help of several dozen volunteers, equipment, and financing, as well as local Arab Muslim tribes, border patrols, and agents supporting the Libyan resistance (Schill, 2018).

When Mustafa Kemal and his friends reached the region, the Ottoman defense forces were organized such that the Tripoli region was under the control of Neşet Bey, Tobruk under the control of Ethem Pasha, and Benghazi under the control of Enver Bey. When the war started, the number of officers in the region was extremely inadequate, as the Ottoman Empire could not complete its human resources according to the campaign plan. On the other hand, the Sanusi troops, led by Sayyid Ahmed al-Sharif, supported the Ottoman defense forces, although they lacked military discipline and were disorganized (Vandewalle, 2012). The Ottoman defense strategy in Tripoli was based on inflicting losses through short-term attacks against the superior Italian forces in terms of weapons and ammunition and preventing them from advancing inland. Mustafa Kemal first fought against the Italians in Tobruk on December 22, 1911. Although they captured Tobruk on October 4, the Italians could only hold the coast and could not advance inland. Staff Major Mustafa Kemal, who attacked the Italians with the troops under his command and inflicted losses on the occupying forces, was later appointed as the Eastern Volunteer Commander in the Derne region. Thus, he managed to train local warriors and turn them into a significant force in the fight against Italy (Tittoni, 1914).

However, as exemplified by the battle that took place on January 16-17, 1912, the reluctant attitudes and undisciplined behavior of the tribal sheikhs disturbed the Ottoman officers serving in the region. Mustafa Kemal documented this situation in the report he wrote about the battle and informed his superiors of the outcome. Mustafa Kemal was injured in his left eye during the battle on January 16. He had to stay in Hilal i Ahmer Hospital for a while due to bloodshot eyes, and despite a month of treatment, he left the hospital before fully recovering. This eye disease recurred during the clashes in March, and he had to rest for fifteen days (Kara, 1976).

Under the influence of this illness, he wrote in a letter to a friend on May 22, 1912, "How will I be able to realize the need to say goodbye to military life and retire to a corner after the end of this war?" Mustafa Kemal, who was appointed to the Derne Command on March 5, 1912, thus assumed the task of commanding the Ottoman defense forces in a wide region (Öznel, 1993a). Under his command were eight Ottoman officers, 160 soldiers, some volunteers, an artillery company, two machine guns, and 8,000 Arabs. Mustafa Kemal, who served with Kuşçubaşı Eşref and Nuri (Conker) during his duty in Derne, did not neglect to check the discipline of his soldiers by going on inspection patrols from time to time. Since he wanted to strengthen the resolve of the local warriors, who especially lacked military discipline, he informed the tribal sheikhs that they would not be given money and food if the men disappeared (Öznel, 1993b).

While Mustafa Kemal was serving as Derne commander, personally dealing with the outposts and reconnaissance arms, in the orders he gave to the artillery commanders, he emphasized the need for training on artillery fire combat in a way that all classes of officers could understand. In addition, he ensured that harassment fires were conducted at different hours of the night to avoid disturbing the enemy forces, and he also took care to build roads that were extremely important for the artillery units. Mustafa Kemal's interest in the training of his soldiers, while continuing the war, demonstrated his knowledge and understanding of the "art of military service" (Hall, 2003). The Ottoman forces in Derne were successfully fighting against the Italian troops, who were greatly superior in terms of numbers and ammunition. Frequent ambushes and sudden raids against Italian troops caused losses to the occupying forces, while the Ottoman forces managed to gain the most benefit with limited resources. For example, in the battle on March 3, 1912, as a result of Mustafa Kemal's troops coming to their aid, the Italian forces had to retreat, and the lost positions were regained.

The Italians, who expected to easily capture Tripoli due to the conditions of the Ottoman Empire, resorted to different methods to break the Ottoman determination to fight when they saw strong resistance. Italy first announced the annexation of Tripoli and Benghazi in a declaration published on

November 5, 1911. In response to this decision, the Ottoman Government decided not to accept the annexation and to "continue with attempts to protect the law and self-sacrificing resistance and action." The Italians also attempted to attract the Sanusi troops and other sheikhs who supported the Ottoman defense forces in the region. On the other hand, the Ottoman Government took measures to strengthen the loyalty of "Sheikh Sanusi and other sheikhs whom the Italians wanted to acquire" to the state (Bosworth, 2005).

Resistance began before the arrival of Turkish officers and resulted in successful attacks against the Italians. However, these young officers initiated the training and organization of local forces, bringing a higher level of coordination to this resistance. The majority of the resistance consisted of 40,000 to 50,000 native Libyans; some of these had brief military training and were familiar with modern military tactics, but most were accustomed only to guerrilla warfare in small tribal units led by their chiefs (Harris, 1914). In this war, the Ottomans had senior commanders who built the resistance, trained it, and planned operations carried out by tribally populated companies commanded by professional officers and local chiefs. On October 23 and 26, 1911, the resistance on the outskirts of Tripoli attacked Italian troops, killing hundreds (Proglia, 2016).

This ended the illusion held by many Italians regarding the public's attitude towards them and the mistaken belief that invading Libya would be an easy endeavor. Simultaneously, it bolstered the resistance's determination to persist in the struggle (Anderson, 1984). The resistance successfully prevented the Italian advance but was unable to expel the Italians. Furthermore, the tribesmen, unaccustomed to long-term static battles, felt that their agricultural duties should take precedence. The Ottomans, likewise, felt their efforts might be more beneficial elsewhere, particularly given the rising opposition in the Balkans (Bosworth, 2005).

Over time, some volunteers began to leave Libya, and local fighters returned home. The Italians were frustrated by the stalemate, which became costly and necessitated a force of up to 100,000 troops. Despite Italian military superiority, including the pioneering use of air power for reconnaissance and bombardment, the introduction of armored vehicles, modern machine guns, and wireless telegraphy, the situation in Libya remained unchanged (Durgun, 2014b). Both sides recognized the need to explore alternative methods to end the war. The Ottoman government was acutely aware of the difficulties of continuing the conflict. However, with Libya being the last Ottoman stronghold in Africa and in light of emerging Arab nationalism, they felt it was untenable to cede Muslim Libya to a Christian nation that controlled only a small portion of the region (Bertellini, 2016).

Despite official statements against any capitulation in Libya, the Ottoman government realized the necessity of negotiating with Italy while retaining some authority over Libya. Italy was willing to negotiate terms with the Ottomans to conclude the war but was reluctant to risk losing Libya. Consequently, while negotiations were ongoing in Europe, Italy decided to exert pressure on the Ottomans by extending the war and bombing Ottoman targets, leading to the occupation of Rhodes and the Dodecanese in May 1912 (Proglia, 2016).

The Italian army's inability to make significant progress in Libya led the Ottoman Empire to continue the war. Italy failed to anticipate that the Arab population would resist and encountered serious military difficulties during the campaign. The Italians' lack of adequate political preparation among the public increased the hostility they faced later on (Metz, 2005). Another strategy employed by the Italians to break Ottoman resolve was to extend the conflict to the Mediterranean. Italian naval forces, which attacked Ottoman fortifications in Çanakkale on April 18, 1912, began occupying the islands later known as the Dodecanese. These actions aimed to compel the Ottoman Empire to accept the occupation of Tripoli, demonstrating that the Italians were unlikely to achieve results on the battlefield in the near future. Despite all their efforts, the Italians failed to break the Ottoman resistance in Tripoli (Bayur, 1991).

The resistance of Unionist officers such as Mustafa Kemal and Enver Bey against Italian imperialism in Tripoli had significant repercussions both within the Ottoman Empire and globally. Indian Muslims and some socialist groups in Europe expressed solidarity with the Ottoman Empire in response to the Italian attack. The struggle of the officers in Tripoli was also featured in news articles and reports in the Ottoman press, with Mustafa Kemal gaining recognition among the Ottoman public.

Notably, Şehbal magazine, published in Istanbul and aligned with the Unionists, frequently showcased photographs of officers like Mustafa Kemal and Enver Bey, introducing the names of those who fought for the Ottoman homeland to the public (Aydemir, 1972).

During his tenure as Derne Commander, Mustafa Kemal not only managed his troops but also took measures to ensure the historical significance of the struggle in Tripoli was documented for future generations. For instance, in his order dated August 4, 1912, he requested that soldiers under his command record their experiences and observations since joining the war, stating, "The information that will form the basis of the history of the Ottoman-Italian expedition will be the information and opinions of those who participated in this expedition." This directive required all officers and soldiers to keep a notebook detailing their experiences (Anderson, 1984).

Mustafa Kemal's statement in his order, "It is natural that the truth will be adhered to in this notebook and that humanity and truth-loving will not be deviated from," reflected his commitment to historical accuracy, a trait evident throughout his life. As Mustafa Kemal and other Ottoman officers battled the Italians in Tripoli, a greater crisis loomed for the Ottoman Empire. The Balkan states, seeing the Ottoman Empire preoccupied with Italy over Tripoli, took advantage of the situation and declared war on the Ottoman Empire in October 1912, aiming to divide the Balkan territories among themselves (Özdağ, 2020). Given this development and the need to shift focus, the Ottoman Government accepted the loss of Tripoli with the Treaty of Ouchy signed on October 15-18, 1912. News of the Balkan War and the acceptance of Tripoli's annexation by Italy quickly reached the Ottoman soldiers in Tripoli (Malkoç, 2020).

Like other Ottoman officers, Mustafa Kemal departed Tripoli promptly and focused on protecting the country's territory against the Balkan states. In a telegram sent to the Ministry of War on October 24, 1912, Enver Bey reported that Mustafa Kemal, having successfully fulfilled his duties as Derne Eastern Branch Commander and Derne Commander, had left Tripoli. Mustafa Kemal's success in fighting regular Italian forces with limited military resources in Tripoli highlighted his tactical brilliance, characterized by fighting according to the situation and conditions, a trait that would later be evident in the War of Independence. As noted by contemporary observers, Mustafa Kemal endeavored to execute every maneuver in Tripoli with minimal loss and aimed to maximize the utility of his forces through economical use (Koloğlu, 1981).

The outbreak of the First Balkan War on October 8, 1912, compelled both sides to reach a diplomatic resolution through the Peace Treaty of Ouchy on October 18, 1912. The treaty was interpreted differently by both sides, and Italy delayed some aspects of its implementation. The treaty granted the Ottoman Empire the right to grant autonomy to the Libyan population under Ottoman rule and appoint two Ottoman officials; however, Italy accepted only the Sultan's representative and not the religious appointee (Kodet, 2013). As most of the Ottoman army began withdrawing from Libya, with some remaining, Italy refused to evacuate the 12 Islands and Rhodes and return them to the Ottomans. Italy succeeded in capturing Western Libya until the outbreak of World War I but faced difficulties in the east due to strong local resistance led by the Sanusi Sufi sect (Aliberti, 1993).

With the onset of World War I, Italy shifted its focus to the European front, and the Ottomans, with local support and German assistance, renewed their intervention in Libya. Italy would only conclude the Libyan conflict, which would extend into the early 1930s, after a decade of continued warfare. Internal conflicts within the Ottoman Empire, exacerbated by the Italo-Turkish War and ongoing Balkan disputes, contributed to the outbreak of World War I (Lentini and Merlino, 2013). The Turkish-Italian War of 1911–12 marked the beginning of a series of conflicts that ultimately led to the end of the Ottoman Empire. The emergence of a new generation of young officers highlighted the Empire's weakness in large-scale warfare, and the navy's inability to play a decisive role further fueled subsequent conflicts. This period also marked the first instance of the Ottoman Empire losing territory inhabited by Muslims. The Turkish-Italian War had significant repercussions for both Turkish and Italian domestic politics (Kurtcephe, 1995).

The Turkish-Italian War saw numerous milestones in military history. In Tripoli, Italy mobilized the Italian Aviation Battalion under the command of renowned racing pilot Captain Carlo Piazza. On October 23, 1911, Piazza conducted the first reconnaissance flight in history near Benghazi using his

Blériot XI aircraft. On November 1, 1911, Lieutenant Giulio Gavotti executed the world's first aerial bombardment mission, dropping four bombs on two Turkish-held oases. In March 1912, Captain Piazza performed the first photo-reconnaissance flight in history. Concurrently, the Turks conducted the world's first anti-aircraft operation. The first aircraft shot down in the war was Lieutenant Piero Manzini's on August 25, 1912, and the first captured aircraft belonged to Captain Moizo, on September 10, 1912 (Şıvgın, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The Balkan Wars started when Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire on October 8, 1912. The Ottoman Empire agreed to make peace with Italy at any cost, and an agreement was signed in Ouchy, Switzerland, on 15 October 1912. According to the agreement, the Ottoman Empire withdrew its forces from Tripoli and left them to Italy; the Ottoman Empire protected the rights of Muslims in Tripoli, and Italy temporarily seized the 12 islands. At the end of this war, the Ottoman Empire lost its last lands in North Africa. In addition, the issue of the islands, which would cause frequent conflicts between Turkey and Greece in the following years, started, and the islands were connected to Greece with the Treaty of Paris in 1947.

The historical process in question and subsequent developments, as is known, revealed that Mustafa Kemal was a commander at a strategic level in terms of military operations, tactics and strategy, command, command and management. From the date he graduated from the Military Academy to the date he took command of the War of Independence, he personally fought at the head of his armies on the front and reached high positions with extensive knowledge, observation, and experience that can be closely followed and followed. It can easily be said that the result achieved with the Turkish War of Independence had a much greater impact than the impact Mustafa Kemal had on the Tripolitan lands during the war years. The Turkish War of Independence served as an example and source of inspiration for the people of many oppressed countries, such as Tripoli, in their struggle against imperialism. It would not be wrong to say that the foundations of the friendship between Turkey and Libya are hidden in Tripoli and the idea of independence and cooperation that many patriotic Turkish soldiers such as Mustafa Kemal, Enver and Nuri Pashas tried to develop in these lands.

Despite different Italian wishes, Austrian criticism, Russian conspiracies, and Ottoman reservations, Germany's diplomatic and economic interests in the Near East emerged essentially unaffected by the events of the Turkish-Italian War. Therefore, considering the years 1911 and 1912, these results can be considered an excellent success. As a result, there were many difficulties in the struggle against both Rome and Istanbul during these years. Of course, the origins of these difficulties can be traced back to Wilhelmstrasse; while Kiderlen-Wachter insisted on encouraging the Italians to capture Tripoli, Marschall insisted on encouraging the Ottoman Turks to resist.

The Italo-Ottoman War of 1911-12 had very important consequences: it led to a change in the Ottoman government, weakened the Ottoman resistance in Macedonia and thus contributed to the Balkan Wars and thus to the alliance of the First World War. It also caused the reshaping of the Middle East. If the Italians could have foreseen the consequences of their attack on Tripoli, they would have been terrified. It was once suggested that Italy had long sought to capture Tripoli, but it appears that Italy's long diplomatic preparation by the Great Powers, which secured recognition of its previous rights in Tripoli, was intended as a means rather than a prelude to annexation.

When Italy changed its policy towards annexation in 1911, it did not think that any action it took in North Africa would affect the Balkans and believed that the annexation of Tripoli was compatible with maintaining its traditional support for the integrity of the country. This was a move similar to the calculation made by France when it embarked on an Egyptian expedition in 1798, an equally unthought-out move. With the end of the Libyan War, Italy sent Camillo Garroni to Istanbul as ambassador. Camillo Garroni's aim was to protect Italy's economic interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. Foreign Minister Di Sangiuliano's view: "In the future crisis, Turkey will most likely lose its territory in Europe and Italy will retain its beneficiary status". The combination of Italian sovereignty and political expediency with Ottomanization may seem unexpected because, while the Italian state and nationalism continued on the one hand, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's Republic of Turkey had begun to destroy the last vestiges of the Ottoman state in the early 1920s. However, Ottoman and Italian imperial destinies

continued to be intertwined, and the simultaneous dissolution of the Ottoman Mediterranean Empire and the temporary rise of Italian hegemony provide a glimpse into the conflicting contingency of the two rival national imaginaries.

If the Ottoman attitude towards the east had continued in state policy, it would have been much more suitable for the Libyan people. The idealization of Libya by nationalist formations, whether Ottoman or Italian, was the same. Both empires sought to divide Libyan territory into a definable modern national area that would distinguish it from similar areas built around it. The Italo-Turkish War thus aimed to complete the nationalization of the Mediterranean. When it comes to Italy, its new international reputation allowed it not only to offer an alternative to mass migration to the Americas, but also to re-strengthen its economy and establish connections with China, initially with the East.

This process led to the establishment of more intense commercial connections with Russia and the Caucasus after the conquest of the 12 Islands. Italian exporters investing in this region will be able to compensate for the time and money they spend with significant profits in a short time. The people of Türkiye have always remembered with respect those who supported them in wars. Italians in Turkey and many people in Italy believed in the Turkish cause and acted accordingly. While Italians supported the Turks against the Greeks, they predicted that negative policies would create resistance in Türkiye.

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