

## THE SHAPING OF THE YOUNG TURK IDEOLOGY IN THE BALKAN TRAUMA AND ITS REFLECTION ON THE CUP POLICY TOWARDS THE OTTOMAN MIDDLE EAST

### BALKAN TRAVMASI İLE ŞEKİLLENEN JÖN TÜRK İDEOLOJİSİ VE İTTİHAT VE TERAKKİ CEMİYETİ'NİN ORTA DOĞU POLİTİKALARINA YANSIMALARI

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#### Abstract

*There is a causal link between the incidents that occurred in the late 19th, early 20th century Ottoman Balkans, and the policies of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Middle East. The members of the Committee who would become the Ottoman ruling elite from the Second Constitutional period onwards had gone through a tragic and traumatizing experience in the era of Balkan nationalisms. Serving as young officers and the bureaucrats of the Sultan they lived through one of the worst episodes of their lives and careers which caused them to look at the Ottoman subjects in the remaining Ottoman territories. The political outcome of the era of Balkan nationalisms was a distrust towards the non-Muslim and in particular non-Turkish Ottoman subjects in the Middle East and the consequential introduction of centralism and an identity politics which evolved gradually from Ottomanism to Islamism and finally to Turkish nationalism. The aim of this study is to analyze the main factors shaping the emergence of the early CUP ideology in the era of Balkan nationalisms and to discuss the outcome of the Balkan trauma on policies of the Committee of Union on the Arab subjects of the empires remaining territories in the Middle East.*

#### Keywords

*Young Turks, Committee of Union and Progress, Balkans, Arab nationalism, centralization.*

#### Öz

*Geç 19. yüzyıl ve erken 20. yüzyılda Balkanlar'da tezahür eden olaylar ve İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin Orta Doğu'daki politikaları arasında bir nedensellik ilişkisi mevcuttur. İkinci Meşrutiyet ve takip eden yıllarda Osmanlı yönetici sınıfını teşkil edecek olan Cemiyet üyeleri Balkan milliyetçilikleri döneminde trajik ve travmatik bir dizi deneyim yaşamışlardır. Padişahın genç subay ve bürokratları olarak hizmet ettikleri bölgede hayatlarının ve kariyerlerinin en zor dönemlerinden birini yaşamış olan Cemiyet üyeleri, bu deneyim neticesinde İmparatorluğun geriye kalan topraklarındaki tebaaya kuşkuyla yaklaşmışlardır. Balkan milliyetçilikleri döneminin etkileri, Orta Doğu'daki Arap tebaaya karşı da bir güvensizlik şeklinde tezahür etmiş, merkezîleştirici ve ilerleyen zamanda Osmanlıcılıktan, İslamcılığa ve en son da Türk milliyetçiliğine evirilen bir kimlik siyasetinin*

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*uygulanmasına yol açmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Balkan milliyetçilikleri döneminde şekillenen İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti ideolojisini ortaya çıkaran faktörleri analiz etmek ve Balkanlarda yaşanan travmanın Cemiyet'in Orta Doğu'daki Arap tebaaya yönelik uyguladığı siyasetin sonuçlarını tartışmaktır.*

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#### **Anahtar Kelimeler**

*Jön Türkler, İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, Balkanlar, Arap milliyetçiliği, merkezîleşme.*



## INTRODUCTION

Major traumas like war, conquest, exile, enslavement or forced migration often play an important role in the shaping of political preferences of society's future ruling elites. The members of the Young Turks/Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) who would leave their mark on the Second Constitutional period and aftermath had undergone such tragic and traumatizing events in their early life and career in the Ottoman Balkans. The region was in a state of chaos in the years that they served as young and idealist bureaucrats and officers of the Sublime Port. The gradual withdrawal of the Empire from Europe that started almost two centuries ago with the unsuccessful siege attempt of the Grand Vizier Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha was coming to an end. Ottomans were now facing with the threat of a total withdrawal from the European continent. The downfall of the Empire was being rehearsed by the European Powers and their Balkan protégées. The once loyal subjects of the Sultan, were now working for carving out their own nation states from the remaining European territories of the Empire in Macedonia, Albania and Epir. The local revolutionaries working under the auspices of the European representatives were conducting guerilla warfare. The Ottoman schools were by no means modern and universal on the other hand the newly opening foreign and minority schools were training modern individuals who now speak the nationalized vernaculars of the Greeks, Serbs and the Bulgarians.

The CUP which emerged as an underground network of civilians and military officers in the Ottoman Balkans in the final years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed in flesh the weak and disabled Ottoman State apparatus and realized this as one of the main reasons of the territorial withdrawal. This had a substantial impact on the political views of its members who in the later years leaned towards centralist policies in the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire particularly in the Arab provinces. These traumatic events played a major role in their distrust towards and tendency to organize in a centralized manner the Non-Muslim and in particular non-Turkish Ottoman subject in the Middle East.

There is a vast literature on the Young Turks/CUP. Some of the scholarship focuses mainly on their ideological background in the formation years as well as their activities as the exilées of the Hamidian regime in the intellectual capitals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe (see Ahmad 1986, Mardin 1983, Hanioglu 2001, Zürcher 2002 etc.). Some others also discuss their association and merger with the underground groups in the Ottoman military and civilian bureaucrats, which transformed them into a revolutionary organization (see Akşin 1980, Ramsaur 2007, Kandemir 1975 etc.). On the other hand a variety of literature sees the decentralized state apparatus as a key point for the weaknesses of the Ottoman administration and the resulting vulnerability of the Ottoman Balkans to foreign intervention (see Ortaylı 2009, Zürcher 1994 Kansu 1995). The literature also emphasize that the CUP elite has thought that centralization was a remedy to the problems of the state. A perception which developed in the Balkans long before the second constitutional period. The same literature also see a relation between centralization and Turkification policies of the CUP in the former Middle Eastern territories of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of Arab nationalism (see Kayalı 1997, Göçek 2002).

This study argues that the CUP policies in the Arabian Peninsula following the Balkan Wars could not be fully understood without the examination of the Young Turks' Balkan experience. Therefore it aims to explore and analyze the link between the centralist and

nationalist tendencies of the CUP members in their Middle East policies and their earlier experience as young bureaucrats and officers of the Sultan in the Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire. Within this perspective, this study will be divided up into four main parts. In the first part of the study origins of the Young Turk Movement will be examined. Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism as the driving ideologies of the Young Turks will be the main theme of the second part. The third part will explore the Balkan Trauma that affected and shaped the Unionist ideology. In the last part of the study the policies of centralization and Turkification and their impacts on the Arab lands of the Empire will be examined.

### **Origins of the Young Turk Movement**

The Young Turk era has been perceived as a crucial period in modern Balkan and the Middle Eastern history. It started in the Hamidian Era among the new generation of Ottoman intelligentsia that studied in the modern Ottoman schools designed to train military and civilian recruits for the new state apparatus. The Young Turks were attracted by the revolutionary ideals of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century Europe and combined them with the Ottoman Patriotism of their predecessor 'the Young Ottomans' (Hanioglu 1995: 17). They incorporated people from different socio-economic backgrounds, and with various ideological orientations, driven by the common goal of reinstating the constitution and the parliament. They believed that the salvation of the Empire would only be possible with the introduction of a constitutional regime based on the equality of the people.

The CUP was one of the major factions within the Young Turk movement. It was founded as a secret committee in 1889 by a group of medical students under the name "Ottoman Unity Society". The secret community in Istanbul would later on merge with the small circle of Ottoman Constitutionalist émigrés in Paris led by a former director of education in Bursa Ahmed Rıza and adopt its name and became the CUP (Zürcher 1994: 90-91).

The Young Turks, living in exile in the intellectual centers of Europe had an undeniable influence on the 1908 revolution. Despite possessing revolutionary ideas, the Young Turks in exile lacked the most important factor for a revolution: a deterrent military capacity to carry out a revolution. They were aware of the fact that without the support of the military, their ideas would never be viable. The catalyst that transformed the reformist brainstorming in European intellectual centers into a revolutionary movement was the unification of the Ottoman Émigrés in Europe with the revolutionary cadres in Selanik and the recruitment of young military officers in great numbers (Berkes 1964: 337-346). Thanks to the Westernized education system of the Ottoman military schools, the new generation of military officers were pro-western individuals and sincere adherers of modernity. Establishing a constitutional system and a parliament was also the focal point among these young generation soldiers. The Young Turks approached the army officers who were known to be against the authoritarian rule of Abdülhamid II. The actual driving force for a revolution came from the third army corps in Macedonia. The young officers in the garrison at Selanik were restless as Macedonia was slipping away from their hands. With the aim of preventing the loss of Macedonia, these officers formed the Ottoman Liberty Society in 1906. As a very crucial development, in 1907 this society merged with the CUP and their Paris branch (Zürcher 2014: 963). With the establishment of revolutionist cells in the second and third Ottoman armies, officers and bureaucrats in Macedonia became the most important element of the revolutionary movement.

The large-scale reactionary movement arose in the Ottoman Empire against the absolute rule of Abdülhamid II resulted in the Young Turk revolution of 1908. The Unionists and the liberals with the backing of the army together managed to restore the constitution in July 1908

(Shaw-Shaw 1977: 274). Despite success of the revolutionists, Abdülhamid II remained on the throne. The revolution created an enthusiasm among the people who desired a constitutional regime. The kind of system that Young Turks introduced was the introduction of a constitutional Ottoman citizenship to all subject of the Empire on equal basis.

Looking at the memoirs and statements of the prominent Young Turks one can easily observe the fact that they had the naïve idea of restoring the constitution and putting an end to the autocratic rule of Abdülhamid, the Empire would be on the right track again. However the developments demonstrated sadly that reality is not what it seems to be. In an interview given to 'Le Temps' in 1909 by the prominent unionist leader Rahmi Bey, was saying "You ask about our political program! We do not have such a thing." (Hasan 1989) The unresolved internal disputes in the Balkans that the Young Turks inherited from the old regime made things extremely difficult for the Young Turks especially the full scale implementation of the liberal ideas became a dream.

The Young Turks were far from fulfilling the demands of the most groups such as the Arabs and the Albanians who were expecting a degree of decentralization (Jelavich 2009: 83). Soon after the revolution, their euphoria turned into a disappointment due to the sharp change in the liberal attitudes of the Young Turks towards authoritarianism. The rosy picture that was painted by the Young Turks before and during the 1908 revolution ended in 1909 and a harsh centralization and suppression of the ethnic groups started taking the place of the political rights and decentralization of the Ottoman administration. Disappointed with the fact that the promises were not hold, various ethnic groups-Albanians and Arabs being at the first place-turned against the Young Turks (Göçek 2008).

The Young Turks leaders were perceived by the old and more experienced Pashas as inexperienced rulers. According to a pro-British Grand Vizier Kamil Paşa, the Young Turks who introduced more political rights and freedoms to the people were far from understanding the real dynamics of the Empire were. The two Young Turk leaders Cavid Bey and Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir during their visit to Kamil Paşa explained their plans to actualize the "İttihad-ı Anasır" project. Kamil Paşa replied them by emphasizing the distinctive structure of the Empire and the people living on it. He then accused the Young Turk leaders of living in a dream world and being fascinated with it (Kutay 1966: 143-144). The most prominent Young Turk leader Ahmed Rıza was confessing his imperceptions of the Ottoman Society: "As I had been living abroad for twenty years, I did not know the mental state of the populace. It turns out my friends did not either; we thought the populace was delicate like a respectable woman and tried not to hurt and sadden her. We decided to execute the reforms slowly [since] we were afraid to offend her. Yet these caused the reforms to get delayed." (Rıza Bey 1988: 41-43)

The champions of the constitution abandoned their liberal ideas which they were not fully attached and from 1909 onwards followed an authoritarian, centralist<sup>1</sup> path. After the failed counter-revolutionary attempt in 1909, Unionists silenced the liberal opposition. From that time onwards, they started a reform process with the aim of extending the authority of Istanbul government to the every corner of the Empire and the standardization of administrative and financial practices. Unionists argued that the people from various regions of the Empire should be represented equally in a parliament within the framework of a unified government for a

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars argue that Young Turks had centralist tendencies much earlier than the counter revolution. Their major aim was to prevent the success of the Müritzsteg reform movement in Macedonia, which would mean more outside intervention to the Empire. Therefore they followed centralist policies right from the very beginning of their rule in 1908 in contrast to their propaganda for further decentralization and reform to acquire support of everybody.

United Ottoman State. After 1909, the Unionists wanted to put an end to the impotence of the Ottoman state apparatus through centralizing it.

The post 1909 centralization of the Ottoman administration was a multi-level project. On the parliament level it was realized by making the elected deputies dependent on the Central Committee in Selanik. As a result of this, the deputies voted along unionist lines. On the local level, pro-Unionist bureaucrats were appointed to several posts replacing the opponents. Unionist clubs were established in the entire Empire through which the centralization was conducted in the periphery. These clubs were supervising the Ottoman local administrators and giving them orders. Same degree of setting up of Unionist Cadres was visible in the military. Despite the early attempts to depoliticize the military officers, such as the attempt to promulgate a law about the resignation of the Unionist soldiers from the army, many of them continued joining the Unionists and went into a struggle with the decentralist officers. The lessons taken by the Unionists during the counter revolution of 1909 has played a crucial role in the further politicization of the military as they intended to get rid of the officers loyal to sultan Abdülhamid (Göçek 2008: 197). On the other hand centralization in education was the pivotal of all reforms. The government established new schools all around the Empire (Kayalı 1997). The CUP placed emphasis on universal public education which was believed to be the main tool to achieve the goal of strengthening the power of central administration and spreading its ideology and reforms to the Empire (Mardin 1983).

One of the leading figures in the centralization project was Talat Paşa, an ordinary bureaucrat of the Abdülhamid regime and also a leading figure in the Young Turk revolution, became the champion of centralization as the minister of interior and later as the grand vizier. Despite his leading role to restore the constitution, he turned to an authoritative figure speaking of the constitutional regime said 'the nation is not ready'. He was also famous for dealing with the separatists all around the Empire with their own methods which he became familiar during his encounter with the Balkan separatist movements, he appealed to these methods not only for dealing with the separatists but also with the daily conducting of the internal affairs like murdering man through Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Hayat 1992: 285-286). Through the methods used by the Unionists to establish control, such as assassination and other violent methods, which soon after the revolution turned the positive atmosphere into a reactionist one.

CUP leaders who came to power after the revolution, were not only centralists but also committed Turkish nationalists. What is called the 'Young Turk Tradition' consisted of three characteristics. Besides secularist and positivist characters of the Young Turks, Turkish nationalism was the third and major component of their tradition. They were practical men, although ideology played an important role in their activities, they were primarily concerned with the empowerment of the State. Despite turning into Turkish nationalists at an early age, most of them favored Ottomanism as they still thought it was useful to halt the Empire's disintegration (Luke 1936: 163). Ottomanism was in the center of all the debates in the earlier days of the revolution with the basic principles such as loyalty to the dynasty, a territorial basis of identity, a commitment to the fatherland, and the unity of all Ottoman peoples, despite their mixed ethnic character. In the initial days of the second constitutional period, CUP crystallized their ideas about the future of the Ottoman Empire and devoted to centralization. Their strong emphasis on the role of the State and on the role of education was in contrast with the liberals and their supporters among the Arab, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, and Albanian nationalists.

CUP's policy of Ottomanization and centralization was under constant criticism by the non-Turkish elements in the Empire. The overall centralization policies of the Unionist governments led to the emergence of reactionary movements, which led to the crystallization of ethnic,



lingual and cultural differences. Later on these reactionary movements turned into nationalist movements. The most criticized of all the Unionist policies was the introduction of Turkish as the universal language in schools all around the Empire. The Unionists, as part of their centralization policy, projected Turkish - the language of the upper class Ottomans- as a common language of the new Ottoman identity. But it was realized by the non-Turkish subjects as a policy of "Turkification" (Ahmad 1986: 111).

The Unionists also attempted to create a new kind of homogeneity and solidarity through the use of Islam as a binding political ideology. As an alternative to Ottomanism, Islamism of the Unionists was based on the earlier pan-Islamist policies of Abdulhamid II. It was used as an integrating ideology to protect the unity and continuity of the Empire until the beginning of World War I. Despite being welcomed by many Muslims, it was discriminatory against non-Muslim minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

The attempts to reach a synthesis between Ottomanism and Islamism failed within years following the counter revolution of 1909 and politics based on ethnic identity soon overwhelmed all the others and speeded up the disintegration process of the Empire. The protests that started as reactions to the centralist policies of the Unionists galvanized the nationalist revivals. In the last resort, the Unionists hold on to the Turkish nationalism which originated from the 19th century writings of Western scholars such as Arminius Wambery, Arthur Lumley Davids, Joseph de Guignes and later on developed by the contribution of Turkish intellectuals Yusuf Akçura, Ziya Gökalp and Hüseyinzade Ali Turan gained a momentum with the pressure of the Balkan Wars (Yetim 2008).

Nationalist propaganda of the Unionists spread among the Turkish speaking subjects through several organizations and their publications. These organizations and their journals worked for legitimizing the Turkish nationalist movement. Türk Derneği (Turkish Society) was the most important of its kind. Established in 1909, this society transformed into Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti (Turkish Homeland Society) in 1911 and published Türk Yurdu Journal (Turkish Homeland). Similarly, Genç Kalemler (Young Pens) was established in 1911 in Selanik with the aim of the simplification of Turkish. Likewise, Türk Ocağı (Turkish Hearth) was founded in 1912 to raise the awareness of Turkishness among the Turkish speaking Ottoman subjects (Heyd 1950: 13-15).

### **Searching for the Roots of the Centralist Tradition of the Unionists: The Balkan Trauma and Its Effects on the Young Turk Movement**

The long nineteenth century started with a slow but decisive withdraw from the Balkans and the set back of the Empire from the region culminated in the last quarter of the century with the Russia-Turkish war of 1877-78 (Ortaylı 2009). The developments in the following three decades did not alter this trend and just before the Balkan wars, Macedonia, Epir and Albania remained as the last territories of the Empire in the Balkans.

The domestic and international incidents following the second constitutional period were a real catalytic force that gave rise to the development of the centralization policies of the Unionists. The capital was shocked with a series of sad news from the Balkans, the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austria Hungary, the unification of Crete with Greece and the Bulgarian announcement of the cutting of relations with the Ottoman state. The attempt for restoring the old order by the counter revolutionaries was prevented by the revolutionaries was used as an excuse for the implementation of the oppressive methods. The suppression of the counter reformers was followed by a power shift, one, as a result of which all the elite loyal to

the Sultan were replaced with reformists who were on the one opponents of the old regime but secessionist on the other. A lot more traumatic was the demand of Italy in 1911 from the Ottomans to cede Libya to them and the final retreat of the Ottomans from there (Demirci 2006: 471).

The Ottomans experienced a big trauma with the defeats both in the Balkan Wars. The empire was losing not an ordinary piece of land but the heartland of the Empire. For the majority of the army officers who played a major role in the 1908 revolution and also took the lead in the post revolution politics, the Balkan lands of the Ottoman Empire were of prime importance. These officers were either born in the Ottoman Balkans or served as young officers in the region in the beginning of their professional life. According to Zürcher, the Unionists on the eve of the revolution had two thousand members. Based on his research on the most prominent twenty five members (majority of which were later involved in the Central Committee of the Unionists which was a party based in Selanik), ten were born in the region (Zürcher 2010: 84) and almost half of the twenty five members of the Committee had served in the region as bureaucrats or officers in the early years of their career (Zürcher 2010: 100).

The years that the Unionists spent in the Balkans as part of the Ottoman administration were very tragic for them. Most of them served in the important centers of the Selanik region (the area from Manastir to Ohrid and the area around Pristina). Coming from an etatist tradition, they believed in and represented the authority of the Sultan to whom they devoted themselves sincerely. Their firsthand experience in the region made them aware of the vanishing Ottoman power, and the widespread lack of loyalty to the regime among the Balkan people. The territory was ethnically mixed and no single ethnic group dominated the population of the Ottoman Macedonia in which at least eight different people group lived. The officers who served in the Second and the Third armies in the Ottoman Balkans were conducting a low level warfare with Serbs, Bulgars and the Albanians who were attracted with the nationalist ideas and totally alienated to the idea of Ottoman unity.

In the region, there was an increasing difference between the Muslim and Christian subjects of the Empire particularly the changing standards of life between the middle class men in the cities. This difference was most visible in the education sector. Children of the non-Muslim subjects were going to schools which were superior compared to those of the Muslims. They were established by the European missionary organizations (Zürcher 2002: 75). The Young Turks were also aware of the increasing gap in the economy. Minorities who were supported by the foreign investors established railways, tobacco factories, breweries and export-oriented farms, with its banks, insurance companies, hotels and department stores. The non-Muslims were employed by these companies from the administrative positions down to the level of skilled workers. The Muslims on the other hand were still working as small artisans or employed by the bureaucracy. Although the Muslims were predominantly representing the ruling class, their salaries were paradoxically much lower than the non-Muslims; some lived in relative poverty which obviously meant the diminishing of the state authority and prestige. One other trauma for the Muslim representatives of the state in the Balkans was the helplessness of the state authorities before the representatives of the foreign powers and the Ottoman Christians who had judicial and diplomatic immunity provided by them (Zürcher 2002).

Unionists were also fascinated with the success of the Balkan societies in educating their ethnic fellows in Macedonia as patriotic individuals. Groups like Serbs, Bulgarians and the Greeks established a very effective school network and taught the simplified and concretized version of their national language. The outcome of the Unionist encounter with the superior Balkan education philosophy led to an awareness of the Ottoman education system. Outcome



of this in the later years was a tendency in the Unionist mindset to create a centralized education system and train nationalist individuals believing in the 'supreme nation' of the Turks and also teach Turkish in the schools.

The dissident young officers and bureaucrats of the time were also stuck in the middle of an international crisis in Macedonia which was the major international issue of the late nineteenth century international relations. Macedonia, being at important crossroads was a geographically important region. Controlling the region would mean having the predominant strategic position in the entire peninsula. The political situation and impotence of the Ottoman administration at that time was so tragic and the problems were so serious that it could anytime lead to a big scale war in the region. There had been a constant struggle to weaken the Ottoman rule, there were various rival organizations such as IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization). In order to achieve their goal these organizations were conducting terrorist activities and rebellions against the Ottoman rule. Due to the activities of such rival organizations the Ottoman subjects were living under severe conditions in Macedonia. It was beyond the capacity of the Ottoman administration to restore the order (Zürcher 2002).

As a result of the weak and erratic rule of the Ottoman government, the Macedonian territories were open to foreign interference. The European powers were putting pressure upon the Ottoman government to agree upon the introduction of reforms. The attempts of the Ottoman government to reform gendarmerie in the rural areas of the Vilayet-i Selase (Selanik, Kosovo and Manastır), under the supervision of Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa was of no use for them. Finally, with the Ilinden revolt of 1903, the Ottoman Empire agreed to put into effect the terms of the Müritzsteg agreement signed between Austria and Russia in 1903. With the agreement, the Ottoman gendarmerie was placed under an Italian commander which was assisted by representatives from the great powers. The establishment of a gendarmerie force under an Italian general was a humiliation for the Ottoman officers (Zürcher 2014).

With the Müritzsteg reform, Macedonia began to dominate the European diplomacy. The enforcement of the Müritzsteg program and the establishment of an international administration was a serious trauma for the young officers who devoted themselves to the Ottoman state. The constant humiliations in relations with the Great Powers combined with their intervention in the Macedonian problem, created dissatisfaction among the officer corps (Jelavich 2009: 83). They were uncomfortable with the way the Europeans were dealing with the Muslims and the non-Muslims. They were trying to perform their duty in an environment in which the non-Muslims were in a very privileged situation due to the extended rights given to them by the Ottoman government.

The privileged position of the non-Muslims accumulated anger among the officer corps and their main concern was the urgency of radical reforms in the Ottoman administration without further delay. The severity of the situation in Macedonia made them to consider the possibility of working with the Young Turks. The revolutionary Army officers in Macedonia were aware of the fact that the Macedonian problem was not due to the maladministration of the Ottoman government and more to the weakness of the Ottoman administration. They believed that the weakness of the central government was at the core of the problems and Ottomans should make a breakthrough to prevent the inevitable loss of the Balkans. (Zürcher 2014: 970)

The Young Turk revolution of 1908 temporarily spread harmony among the people; however it had no such effect in the Balkans. According to Hanioglu, the 1908 revolution was an attempt of the CUP to avoid the Great Power intervention in Macedonia, this policy attracted limited support from ethnic groups. It had only secured the cooperation of Armenians and

certain Macedonian groups but failed to attract the Greeks and the Serbs, who opted to stay neutral as they saw the revolution as a sign of the Empire's extreme weakness which was a real blow for the empire (Hanioğlu 2001).

In the period between 1908 and 1913 just before the effective control of the government by the CUP, the Empire witnessed a gradual withdrawal from its territories in Europe. Territorial losses started with the Bulgarian declaration of independence on 22 September 1908, continued with the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire on 5 October 1908. Finally, the Balkan Wars started in 18 October 1912 resulting with extensive territorial gains of Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece and the final nail in the coffin was the Albanian declaration of independence in the same year.

The second Balkan War was just a small opportunity for the defeated Ottomans to console itself by getting back only a little portion of its lost territories. The new frontier of the Empire was now passing from the Maritza River (Lewis 1997: 337). In the Balkan Wars all of the Balkan Origin Young Turks and the Unionists lost their ancestral homes. Anatolia was the new mother land for them and their families. The defeats in the Balkans were bitter experiences for the ruling elite. The ending of Balkan Wars in disaster had major political repercussions in the Ottoman Sublime Porte. The then Grand Vizier Kamil Paşa who was supported by a liberal government asked for truce which led to the assembly of a conference in London and the surrendering of the former Ottoman capital Edirne to the Bulgarians was a matter of time. The Unionists who already decided to stage a coup against the government of the liberals made use of this occasion and organized a coup often called 'Bab-ı Ali Ambush' by which Grand Vizier was driven from power and the Unionists took control in the Ottoman Capital. As a result of the coup the Unionists took back the government that they turned over to the liberals in 1912 and remained in power in the last five years of the Ottoman Empire (Ahmad 1993: 37).

These tragic developments until the end of the Second Balkan War, heavily influenced the world view of the Unionists in the following years and played an important role in the shaping of their ideas about the administrative issues. Most importantly, the establishment of foreign tutelage over the Macedonian provinces of the Empire through the establishment of a gendarmerie force commanded by officers from six European countries under an Italian general influenced their worldview and their policies (Zürcher 1992). The tragic experience which the Ottoman ruling elite gained in their twenties made them to realize that decentralization was a real threat to the Ottoman state. Believing that any devolution of power away from İstanbul would pave the way for the country's future dissolution. They became ardent supporters of a centralized state structure as well as an integrationist policy (Zürcher 2002: 35).

### **From Centralization to Turkification: Reforms and Reactions in the Arab Land**

The Young Turk revolution which began as an attempt to bring justice and freedom to the people of the Empire, entered into a path of nationalism following the traumas in the Balkans. The policies implemented in the second constitutional period alienated the Muslim Arabs of the Empire and drove a wedge between them and the Turks. From 1913 onwards, the Young Turk revolutionary idealism was over and the Unionists established an extremely authoritarian rule, giving an end to the freedoms enjoyed by each ethnic group in the Empire since 1908.

As it was argued above, after the revolution there had been a significant change in the policy of the Empire towards its people in the Middle East particularly the Arabs who were still under the control of the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite the fact that the constitutional revolution created a positive atmosphere among the Arabs who demanded the new reform programs, their initial disappointment with the Young Turks

occurred after the first elections that created a representation problem against the Arab population. According to the results, 147 Turks and 60 Arabs were elected out of a total of 245 deputies, whereas 7.500.000 Turks and 10.000.000 Arabs living in the Empire (Ahmed-Rustow 1976: 247; Zeine 1958: 140-143).

In the beginning of the twentieth century Arab nationalism was not yet a widely accepted ideology and the Arab speaking people of the Ottoman Empire were still showing a sense of loyalty to the Caliphate. There had been some developments in the field of literature in the second half of the nineteenth century contributed to the development of Arab enlightenment. Among those who contributed to the awakening of Arab identity were Christian Arabs from Lebanon like Nasif Al Yaziji whose writings in Arabic pioneered a style, manner and vocabulary paved the way for an Arabic renaissance. On the other hand Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) published a dictionary, encyclopedia and periodicals that helped to create a modern Arabic language. Other than these, there were some intellectual movements in Cairo and other Arab cities but the strongest center of Arab intellectual movement was Syria. Despite all these developments only a few Arabs coming from the urban-upper class Ottoman families and in contact with the European intellectual centers were influenced from the idea of an Arab nation state. Larger segments of the society like peasants, artisans and nomads were still not influenced from the waves of nationalism (Ochesenwald-Fisher 2003: 326).

Despite the existence of a cultural awakening among the Christian Arabs, in the second half of the nineteenth century, their nationalist tendencies were not distinct from the Ottomans. Following the 1908 revolution Arab subjects of the Empire were neither disillusioned with the Ottoman Empire nor alienated from the idea of Ottomanism. However, in the aftermath of the 1909 counter revolution, the three objectives of the Unionists, -centralization, Turkish nationalism and secularism- led to the suppression of the Arabs and their political societies as a result of which they fled to Europe or went underground like the Turks a decade earlier (Khoury 1983: 71). Among those who resisted the centralization attempts of the Young Turks were the Arab Princes, who enjoyed a great autonomy under the Ottoman rule as the rulers of the territories which were very distant from the center in İstanbul. However with the completing of the Hijaz Railway in 1908 which connected Damascus with Medine, the local Arab Princes and their territories became easily accessible for the tax collectors from İstanbul which was not something desired therefore rebellions in the Arab provinces were supported by the local chiefs due to the fear of the spread of the Ottoman central authority (Ochesenwald-Fisher 2003: 330).

There were several ideological and political factors for the rise of Arab nationalism as a separatist movement in the Ottoman Empire. Unionists' language policies that imposed Turkish as the official language of the Empire were perceived as Turkification of the Empire especially by the Arab population who gave a sacred meaning to the Arabic language. These Turkification policies of the CUP and the growth of Turkism as an intellectual movement were the most important ideological factors that contributed to the emergence of Arab nationalism especially after 1913. According to Zeine "As far as Arab political nationalism is concerned, it can safely be asserted that it was the national and racial policies of the Young Turks which fanned its flames" (Zeine 1958: 93). As a consequence to explicit expression of Turkism, Arab intellectuals started to think that they were alienated in the discussions concerning the future of the Empire. Failure of the Ottomanism as a unifying ideology of the Unionists especially after the Albanian Revolt and the Balkan Wars can be accepted as another ideological factor that led to the rise of Arab nationalism (Dawn 1991: 23).

Reform and centralization policies of the Unionists were the most significant political factors for the Arab nationalist reactions. Political, social and economic reforms led to the dominance of the Turkish language, identity and culture over the other non-Turkish peoples of the Empire were introduced with a strict centralization policy and hence created disappointment among the Arab subjects of the Empire. According to them these policies that excluded Arabs in the public sphere were the initial signs of Turkification of the Empire (Kayalı 1998: 126). Two incidents that occurred in the post 1908 period, the Trablus War in 1911-1912 which resulted with the loss of Libya to Italy and the increasing Jewish settlements in Palestine, also triggered a reactionary movement in the region. Under these circumstances, Arab nationalism was expressed more explicitly among the Arab intellectuals (Sorby 2005: 16, Dawn 1991: 17).

As a consequence of these reactions the number of Arabic newspapers and Arab societies increased significantly in the post-1908 period. The political societies that were found after the establishment of the second constitutional period went one by one underground as a result of the harsh measures taken by the government after the counter revolution. Among many societies founded in Istanbul in this period, the most important ones were Al-Muntada al-Adabi (The Literary Club) and Al-Jam'iyya al-'Ahd (Covenant Society). On September 2, 1908, the Arab societies in Istanbul established an umbrella organization under the name of El-Ikha El-Arabi El-Uthmani (The Ottoman Arab Fraternity) which defended Ottomanism with the support of the Arab members of CUP (Göçek 2002: 51). The nationalistic sentiments were not on the agenda of the Fraternity, the only national points in the program were the demands for national equality, for the spread of education in the Arabic language and the observance of Arab customs (Yeşilyurt 2005: 14).

Two other societies that were founded outside the Empire were Al-Jam'iyya al-'Arabiyya al-Fatat (The Young Arab Society) founded in Paris on 14 November 1909 as a secret society by a group of Arab students and Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya al-Idariyya al-'Uthmani (The Ottoman Administrative Decentralization Party) established in 1912 by Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian émigrés in Cairo and subscribed to the idea of decentralization while supporting the unity of the Ottoman Empire (Yeşilyurt 2005: 15).

These initiatives right before the Balkan Wars did not give results and the major military defeats during the War left the Arabs with disappointment for the overall capability of the Ottomans to hold the Empire together or even survive the enemy powers approaching to İstanbul the center of the Caliphate. In the best case scenario even if the Empire come out of the war without losing İstanbul, the territorial losses in the Balkan territories would mean heavier tax burden for the Arab provinces which were justified by the increase in tax from 110.000 to 430.000 lira in 1913 and the Ottoman government became extremely unpopular in the eyes of the Arab people. Influence of Britain and France increased in Syria and Lebanon and their anti-Ottoman propaganda further inflamed the concerns and enthusiasm for foreign intervention. Some prominent Arab leaders like Khediv İzzet Paşa, Şerif Hüseyin, Şeyh Sanussi and İbn Reşid had plans to overthrow the İstanbul government and establish an Arab Caliphate (Kayalı 1997: 126).

By 1913, Ottoman Empire lost almost all of its territories in the Balkans. Now the territory of the Empire covered the lands in Asia which was predominantly Muslim. Its rule over the Arab populated lands extended from the territories of modern day Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, northern Yemen and Israel to Tripoli, Benghazi. For more than four hundred years Arabs remained as the loyal subjects of the Empire and the Ottomans were regarded as the protector of the Muslim world against the infidel Europeans. Looking on the brighter side, the land was

the heartland of historical Islam and the Sultan was still the Caliph of them. However these territories were also under the threat of occupation and more importantly, the centralist policies and the attempts for the Turkification led to a reactive nationalism in a very short time among the Arabs and certain Ottoman territories like Syria and Lebanon became the center of Arab nationalism.

There were also multiple voices of reform coming from the Arab region. Various societies were formed in the Arab provinces of the Empire with the consent of the Kamil Paşa government and the supervision of the local governors of the Arab Provinces before the start of the Balkan Wars and while the war was still going on. The most important of these were the Beirut Committee of Reform (El-Jamiya El-Islahiya), the Lebanese Awakening Society (An-Nagda El-Lubnaniya), the Baghdad National Scientific Club (An Nadi El-Watani El-Ilmi), the Basra Reform Society (El Jamiya El-Islahiya) and the Basra branch of the Beirut Committee of Reform. Among them Beirut Committee of Reform established on 12 January 1913 by the Muslim and Christian notables of Beirut was the most popular. These developments were welcomed by the Kamil Paşa government as they were realized as signs of willingness to live together and an end of the call for foreign intervention (Zeine 1958: 87).

The Bab-ı Ali coup took place right before the reform committees in Beirut and Damascus submitted their final draft to the capital. The new government of the Unionists headed by grand vizier Mahmut Şevket Paşa had its own reform agenda for the Arab provinces not strictly in line with the former head government and its head Kamil Paşa. In principle Mahmut Şevket Paşa government and the Unionists were against the decentralization of the Empire and they were willing to yield neither to the demands of the committees formed during the Kamil Paşa government nor to the reform proposals from different parts of the Empire. However they faced with the reality of the need for decentralization to some extent especially as a result of the lessons taken by the failure of the policy of centralization to pacify the secessionist attempts in the Balkans. The then grand vizier Mahmud Şevket Paşa gave orders to form a committee to listen to the demands of the Arabs and then to generate a self-made reform package. The Unionist İstanbul government was very cautious in the beginning in their policies towards the Arabs as the Second Balkan War was approaching and the army was desperately in need of recruits from Arab provinces. As a reconciliatory act, an Arab 'Arif Al Mardini' was appointed as the governor of Damascus, one of the important Arab cities. However in Beirut, a unionist called Hazım Paşa replaced the liberal Ethem Paşa as governor and imposed strict regulations and censorship to press and also closed the reformist clubs which led to the estrangement of the Arabs in this city. Next the government promulgated the Provincial Law in March 1913 which included a reform package with some decentralization measures, strongly criticized and denounced by the reformists in Beirut and other Arab provinces and closed the Beirut Committee of Reform on 16 April 1913 (Tauber 1993: 146).

The first Arab Congress also known as the Arab-Syrian Congress met in Paris in 18-23 June 1913 to discuss reforms which would grant more autonomy to the Arabs under the Ottoman Empire. The reformist groups from Syria, Palestine and İstanbul were present in the Congress. The Beirut Reform Society dominated the Congress which demanded specifically the autonomy of the Arab provinces, the recognition of the Arabs' national rights and the greater participation in the administrative bodies of the Empire (Zeine 1958: 104). The CUP was also represented by a delegation under the leadership of Mithat Şükrü. Although the government and the Arab representatives such as 'Abd al-Karim al-Khalil and 'Abd al-Hamid Zahrawi tried to reach an agreement to realize an Arab-Turkish rapprochement, these positive attempts failed in the



summer of 1913 (Antonius 1938: 116).

By 1914, just before the beginning of the World War I, the Arab nationalists lost their hopes because of the Young Turks' decision to close all the Arab political organizations and consequently they began preparing for an armed uprising. During the World War I, with the support of the British intelligence service, the Emir of Mecca, Sharif Hussein initiated the Arab Revolt which resulted in the separation of the Arab regions from the Empire (Dawn 1991: 23).

## CONCLUSIONS

The last hundred years of the Ottoman Empire was a struggle of the Ottoman administrators to handle the growing power of nationalist ideology among its subjects and the growing military dominance of the European powers over the Ottoman Empire. The formula of the reformers for dealing with the estrangement of the non-Muslims and the non-Turks was to integrate them to the Ottoman society through bestowing civil liberties and equality meanwhile the imperial structure was also reformed and revived to make the state being able to defend itself against the European expansionism. All these attempts stopped neither the territorial losses nor the increasing national movements which intensified in the 1908-1914 period. However, the Albanian revolt and their declaration of independence was the end of a dream. Despite being a Muslim community, Albanians were not willing to live in the Empire anymore. On the other hand with the Balkan Wars the empire lost its Christian population and became predominantly a Muslim empire. The idea of "İttihad-ı Anasır" -the union of all elements- which envisaged the strengthening of all the ethnic groups in the Empire therefore leading to a feeling of loyalty to the Empire proved to be non-effective right after (Yetim 2008: 74). These tragic experiences of the Young Turk leaders motivated them to redefine their nationalism which was now a Turkish and Muslim one (Bozbora 2012: 629).

The Young Turk movement influenced from the Western liberal ideas was predominantly organized around the dissident Ottomans who escaped to Europe and criticized the authoritative rule of Abdülhamid II from there. The chance of the movement to overthrow the Sultan was very little until 1907 as they were only a group of idealist intellectuals without the necessary means to conduct a revolution. With the unification of the Paris with the Selanik branch, which was mainly composed of army members, the movement now had the necessary preconditions for conducting a revolution and bringing back the constitution. Despite the fact that they could not get the full control of the government, in the second constitutional period the Unionists in general and the Selanik branch in particular was the most organized of all the groups represented in the general assembly such as the decentralist 'liberals' and the 'pan-Islamist' Muslim Association.

Meanwhile, ethnic nationalism started in the Balkans in the early nineteenth century with the uprisings in Serbia and Greece resulted in the autonomy of the former and the independence of the latter. Loss of Balkan territories had been a big trauma for the Unionists along with Balkan Wars. Especially after the counter revolution of 1909 the Unionists favored a more authoritarian interpretation of the constitution, economic nationalism, anti-imperialism and general reforms. Some of the Unionist even saw themselves as the saviors of the Empire and argued for the necessity of the taking of extraordinary measures to protect the Empire. They concentrated on administrative reforms, among which the reforms regarding the provincial administration was very important. The reforms in general were attempts to achieve one major goal, which was the centralization of the Ottoman state. Unionist reforms had secularist features and have given priority to a central education system supervised by the state. After the Babiali Coup, the domination of the scene by the Unionists and Turkish nationalism



led to the emergence of a reaction from the Arabs taking the form of an Arab nationalism. The reaction of the unionists to the Arab nationalism was to suppress them on the eve of the approaching world war. This study underlined the impact of the Balkan trauma on the policies of the CUP which followed more centralist and Turkish nationalist path after the Balkan Wars in the Arab lands of the Empire. Hence, it is argued that there is a causal link between the rise of Arab nationalism and the post Balkan War policies of the CUP which were radicalized with the coming to power of the Committee of Union and Progress in 1913, the anti-imperialistic and self-defensive nationalism of Abdülhamid II which found an expression in his Pan-Islamist policy was replaced by a more aggressive nationalist policy.

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