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## THE STORY OF 100 YEARS: TURKISH INDEPENDENCE (NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY) AND THE PROCESS LEADING TO THE REPUBLIC


*100 Yıln Hikâyesi, Türk İstiklali (Milli Egemenlik) ve Cumhuriyete Giden Süreç*

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## THE STORY OF 100 YEARS: TURKISH INDEPENDENCE (NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY) AND THE PROCESS LEADING TO THE REPUBLIC

100 Yılın Hikâyesi, Türk İstiklali (Milli Egemenlik) ve Cumhuriyete Giden Süreç

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### Öz

Her millet, tarihi süreçte geçirmiş olduğu olayları, gelecek nesillere aktararak, onların bu olaylardan ders almalarını ister. Bu durum, milletlerin geleceğini güvence altına almak düşüncesiyle yakından ilgilidir. Çünkü böylelikle yeni nesiller, ileride benzer olaylarla karşılaştıkları zaman, bu olaylara bakarak yapmaları gereken işler hakkında fikir sahibi olabileceklerdir. Bu düşüncenin eseri olarak, emperyalizme karşı verilmiş kutsal bir savaş olan var olma mücadelesini gerçekleştirerek, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ni kuranlar da Millî Mücadelenin hangi şartlarda kazanıldığı ve cumhuriyetin hangi şartlarda kurulduğunu bütün millet ve yetişecek yeni nesiller tarafından bilinmesini ve ona göre sahip çıkılmasını istiyorlardı. Bu makale, Türk İstiklalinin ve Cumhuriyet'in oluşum sürecini ele almakta ve Türk İstiklalinin hangi şartlar altında hangi bedeller ödenerek elde edildiğini anlatmaktadır. 100 yıl boyunca Türkiye'nin geçirdiği dönüşümü ve milli egemenliğe dayanan cumhuriyetin kuruluşunu incelerken, bu sürecin nasıl geliştiğini ve Türk halkının bağımsızlık mücadelesindeki önemli adımları ortaya koyulacaktır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Cumhuriyet, Türk İstiklali, Egemenlik, Osmanlı, Atatürk

### Abstract

Every nation wants to pass on the events it has experienced during its historical process to future generations so that they can learn from them. This is closely related to the idea of securing the future of nations. By doing so, the new generations can have an idea about what to do when they face similar events in the future. As a result of this idea, the founders of the Republic of Turkey, who realized the struggle for existence against imperialism by waging a sacred war, wanted all the people and future generations to know how the National Struggle was won and how the Republic was founded, and to take ownership accordingly. This article discusses the formation process of Turkish Independence and the Republic, and explains under what conditions and at what cost the Turkish Independence was achieved. While examining the transformation Turkey has gone through over 100 years and the establishment of the republic based on national sovereignty, it will be revealed how this process has evolved and the important steps that the Turkish people have taken in their struggle for independence.

**Keywords:** Republic, Turkish Independence, Sovereignty, Independence, Ottoman, Atatürk

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## Introduction

Nation represents the highest social stage that humanity has achieved in today's civilization. It is undeniable that belonging to a nation has a strong connection with the past and the future. The shared history, which is lived together and passed down from generation to generation, shapes the perspective of the world, strengthening both individual self-confidence and the society's aspiration to live together and build a better future.<sup>1</sup>

The mentioned shared history is not always a perfect or ideal progression of values. Good and bad, right and wrong are intertwined, just like the natural flow of life. We must remember that the past, which we call history, does not always present a linear trajectory for us. In other words, everything does not always follow a positive change for all nations. The centers where the total values of humanity, referred to as civilization, develop have not always remained constant. These centers change over time. Leadership can be assumed by different cultures, and this has been the case. There is no indication yet that it will function differently in the future, but all creative cultures maintain an interesting belief in the immortality of the civilization they represent. It can be said that the primary trauma faced by societies arises from this sentiment.<sup>2</sup>

The Western part of the divided Roman Empire, in the late 5th century AD, found itself under siege by warrior groups from the steppes, yet it still defined itself as the representative of the "unsettling splendor." The fall of Rome plunged Europe into a deep darkness and shifted the center of civilization to the East. Turkish culture and civilization experienced a similar trauma in the 18th century. While the West was struggling to establish its own dynamics during the "Dark Ages" that followed the collapse of Rome, the leadership of civilization shifted from the Arabs to the Turks, starting from the 11th century. The shift in the centers of civilization turned back towards the West in the 17th century. However, the unsettling consequences of this shift were only felt by the Turks in the 18th century and continue to be felt to this day. Like the Romans, the Turks also sincerely believed in the "universal and eternal superiority" images of the civilization they represented and the culture they belonged to. In fact, traces of this belief can still be found today. However, as they learned through experience that these behaviors and problem-solving codes were no longer sufficient, they began to question the system, their own civilization's codes, and eventually their unique cultural codes. It is necessary to acknowledge that this questioning process continues in the present day.<sup>3</sup>

As emphasized in Prof. Dr. Suna Kili's work titled "Atatürk Devrimi Bir Çağdaşlaşma Modeli" (Atatürk's Revolution as a Modernization Model), the Turkish nation has fought for national liberation and independence throughout history. The Turkish nation has never been without a state and has never fallen into colonial status.

This nation, especially starting from the decline of the Ottoman Empire, has been exploited through capitulations in proportion to the weakening and decline of the state, but it has never come under the sovereignty of another state.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Yavuz Abadan, *Türk İnkılap Tarihine Giriş*, Ajans Türk Matbaası, Ankara 1960, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Sina Akşin, *İstanbul Hükümetleri ve Millî Mücadele Mutlakiyete Dönüş (1918-1919)*, Cem Yayınları, İstanbul 1992, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Akşin, *age*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Suna Kili, *The Atatürk Revolution A Paradigm of Modernization*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul 2011, p. 33.

## 1. Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire, also known as the “*Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmâniyye - Great Ottoman State*,” was a Turkish state that existed from 1299 to 1922. It was one of the longest-lasting empires in world history and expanded its territories until it reached its natural boundaries encompassing Eastern Europe, Southwest Asia, North Africa, and the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>5</sup>

The Ottoman Empire was founded in 1299 by Osman Gazi, a member of the Kayı tribe of the Oghuz Turks, in the region of Söğüt and Domaniç. The empire entered a period of interregnum (*Fetret Devri*) after the capture of the fourth sultan, Yıldırım Bayezid, by Timur. After 11 years of struggles for the throne, Mehmet Çelebi (*Mehmet I*) ended the interregnum. Fatih Sultan Mehmet (*Mehmet II*) conquered Constantinople in 1453, bringing an end to the Eastern Roman Empire. According to some historians, this victory marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Early Modern Age. With this conquest, the state ascended to an empire.<sup>6</sup>

Yavuz Sultan Selim conquered Egypt in 1517, ensuring the transfer of the caliphate to the Ottoman sultans. Kanuni Sultan Süleyman made significant progress in Central Europe and put an end to the Kingdom of Hungary. The superiority achieved against Europe came to an end with Sultan I. Ahmet (*Ahmet I*). The Treaty of Zsitvatorok, signed on November 11, 1606, between the Ottoman Empire and the Archduchy of Austria, indicated that the Ottoman State was no longer in its former power. With this treaty, the protocol and legal superiority obtained through the Istanbul Treaty of 1533 came to an end, and these two states and their rulers were considered equal in terms of law and protocol.<sup>7</sup>

After this treaty, the Ottoman Empire could no longer gain significant territory in Europe. In fact, it started experiencing territorial losses from the late 17th century onwards. Except for the Treaty of Prut, this treaty is the most profitable one signed during the stagnation period of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>8</sup>

I. Mustafa and Genç Osman, along with subsequent rulers, faced dethronements, and the governance of the state weakened until IV. Murad, who achieved the re-conquest of Baghdad. During the reign of II. Mustafa, the Ottoman Empire experienced significant territorial losses for the first time, marking the beginning of reformist and innovative movements. II. Mahmud abolished the Janissary Corps, which had been prone to uprisings. Abdülmecid declared the Tanzimat Decree in 1839 and the Islahat Decree in 1856, while II. Abdülhamit declared the First Constitutional Era in 1876.<sup>9</sup>

The Anatolian uprisings, known as Celali rebellions (1519), Baba Zünnun (1525), Kalender Çelebi (1528), Karayazıcı (1598), and briefly referred to as Celali revolts, significantly altered the land order of the Ottoman Empire. Due to heavy taxes or displacement during the “*Great Migrations*,” the lands of farmers were taken over by tax farmers (*mültezim*) or local administrators. Peasants burdened with debts eventually lost their cultivated lands to usurers, thus disrupting the backbone of the Ottoman land system, the timar system. This led to large-scale population movements and significant migration to cities. Agricultural production declined, leading to increased prices of agricultural products and scarcity. Thousands of people lost their lives, and many settlements were devastated. The decline of the religious establishment (*ilmiye*)

<sup>5</sup> Halil İnalçık - Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, *Tanzimat Değişim Sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul 2006, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup> İnalçık - Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, *age*, p. 22.

<sup>7</sup> Himmet Hülür - Gürsoy Akça, “İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete Toplum ve Ekonominin Dönüşümü ve Merkezleşmenin Dinamikleri”, *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, C.17, Bahar 2005, p. 313.

<sup>8</sup> İnalçık - Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, *age*, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, Timaş Yayınları, İstanbul 2017, p. 17.

also contributed to the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The failure to keep up with developments in Europe (*Reformation, Renaissance*) proved to be a disadvantage for the Ottoman Empire.<sup>10</sup>

## 2. The Decline of the Empire

The Process of National State Formation in Europe began in the 13th century and developed rapidly in the following period. The most important examples of national state formation are France and England. It was a transition process from a fragmented, traditional political structure consisting of feudal principalities to a strong centralized national state. The driving forces behind this process were the kings and their established national bureaucracies and armies.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.1. The Development of the West

In previous centuries, the political governance form in Europe was absolute monarchy. The English Revolution in the 17th century and the French Revolution in the 18th century aimed to democratize the governance form, ensure political freedoms, and move away from absolutism.<sup>12</sup>

With the transition from the traditional feudal social structure to the national state, a national economy also began to emerge. As a natural consequence, trade initially developed, and with the industrial revolution, the industrial bourgeoisie emerged and thrived<sup>13</sup>

Starting from the 19th century, the social aspect of democratic political life gained weight, and social and economic rights came to the forefront. Undoubtedly, the industrial revolution and the social and economic impact of the working class it created played a significant role in transforming the system into a more democratic, freer, and more egalitarian structure.<sup>14</sup>

One of the main economic sources of development and progress in the West was the practice of colonialism by countries such as England, France, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Belgium, and later Germany, as they opened up overseas territories. They utilized these colonies as markets, sources of natural resources, and labor for their own economies, exploiting both the countries and their people.<sup>15</sup>

### 2.2. External Factors

Indeed, the development in the West played a significant role in the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The weakening of the Ottoman economy, the loss of control over trade to foreigners, the transformation of the country into a market for the West, the gradual disappearance of local small-scale industry, and the impoverishment of the state were among the most important factors.<sup>16</sup>

Another significant factor that contributed to the fragmentation and shrinkage of the empire was the nationalist movement initiated by the French Revolution, which pushed ethnic communities within the empire towards nationalization. Imperialist, annexationist, capitalist, and colonialist Christian states assisted in the independence of Christian nations within the Ottoman Empire. While they hindered the independence of Muslim Arabs in the Middle East, they ultimately subjected these countries to semi-colonial status by incorporating them into the mandate systems.<sup>17</sup>

Another external factor is of a religious nature. Christian Europe, in addition to historical, cultural, and economic reasons, perceived a powerful state with a predominantly Muslim

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<sup>10</sup> Ortaylı, *age*, p. 21-22.

<sup>11</sup> Ortaylı, *age*, p. 24.

<sup>12</sup> İnalçık - Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, *age*, p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Oral Sander, *Siyasi Tarih*, İmge Kitabevi, Ankara 1989, p. 97.

<sup>14</sup> Sander, *age*, p. 99.

<sup>15</sup> Hülür - Akça, *age*, p. 315.

<sup>16</sup> Mümtaz'er Türköne, *Osmanlı Modernleşmesinin Kökleri*, İz Yayıncılık, İstanbul 1995, p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri*, Yapı Kredi Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 2012, p. 39.

population as detrimental to its interests. This understanding of the “*Crusades*” reflects a policy that has repercussions in the modern world. The weakening, fragmentation, and eventual disappearance of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the division of its territories, would be beneficial for the conquerors and capitalists (*capitalists*) of the West. The presence of a strong state along the route to the Far East, India, Indochina, and the colonies in those regions would be detrimental to the West in every aspect. The religious factor has been utilized as a supportive factor for the primary economic reason, as is the case with many wars in world history.<sup>18</sup>

These external factors, among others, accelerated the decline of the empire and led to the intensification of internal factors, ultimately resulting in the fragmentation of the empire in the face of a developing West and the exacerbation of its problems.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.3. Internal Factors

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire was caused by political, economic, ethnic (*ethnicity-based*), and religious reasons. However, among all these factors, the most significant one is the inability of the traditional Ottoman state to transform itself into a nation-state and reorganize society, governance, economy, and all institutions related to state and societal life within a secular framework.<sup>20</sup>

Among the internal factors that contributed to the preparation for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, in addition to political, ethnic, and religious reasons, there was the disruption of land order, the accumulation of external debt, the inability to accumulate capital and invest due to capitulations, the failure to transition to industrialization, and the opposition of Christian communities who were subjects of the empire due to the loss of land, which led to a contraction that made it difficult for the state to cover its expenses.<sup>21</sup>

The deterioration of Ottoman finances also exacerbated internal issues. The Ottoman taxes had to be increased, which created discontent among the population. Capitulations and commercial privileges granted to foreigners made the Ottoman economy entirely dependent on external forces, and the inability of state revenues to cover expenses necessitated borrowing from abroad.<sup>22</sup>

The uprisings of separate Christian communities of different ethnic origins within the country, their separatist movements and efforts to become independent states, the alignment of Muslim communities of different ethnic origins with other Christian states to separate from the empire, the complaints and rebellions of the Turkish population against the deteriorating order, and the rise of nationalism have brought the administration face to face with daunting problems.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, religious fanaticism is also cited as a factor that hindered adaptation and progress. The religious fanaticism that considered the establishment of a printing press as a “*sin*,” deemed quarantine measures for epidemic diseases such as the plague and cholera as against religion, and opposed the introduction of the “*hat*” initially and later the replacement of the fez with the hat, having religious fanaticism prevalent in state affairs and thus granting it a say, are the bitterest examples of the reasons for the collapse of the state.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ahmed Akgündüz - Said Öztürk, *Bilinmeyen Osmanlı*, Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, p. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Akgündüz - Öztürk, *age*, p. 47.

<sup>20</sup> Ali Akyıldız, *Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Merkez Teşkilatında Reform 1839-1856*, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul 1993, p. 57.

<sup>21</sup> Akyıldız, *age*, p. 61.

<sup>22</sup> Kâmiran Birand, *Aydınlanma Devri Devlet Felsefesinin Tanzimatta Tesirleri*, Son Havadis Matbaası, Ankara 1955, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> İnalçık - Mehmet Seyitdanlıoğlu, *age*, p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> Ersin Kalaycıoğlu - Ali Y. Sarıbay, *Tanzimat: Modernleşme Arayışı ve Siyasal Değişme*, Beta Yayıncılık, İstanbul 1986, p. 27.



The influential figures in the “*ulema*,” who dealt with Sharia (*religious laws*) and fiqh (*Islamic jurisprudence*), including the ranked individuals, scholars (*müderris*), judges (*kadı*), and chief judges (*kazasker*), unlike the enlightened and knowledgeable individuals before them, became the main cause of societal backwardness.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. The Accumulation of Efforts

The efforts and political ideologies in the late period of the Ottoman Empire have contributed to a certain accumulation. However, these efforts and ideas were unable to prevent the decline of the Ottoman Empire. It can be said that these efforts and ideas to some extent slowed down the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, but they did not ultimately prevent it.<sup>26</sup>

The last period political movements in the Ottoman Empire had some common characteristics. First, they all had the desire to save the Ottoman Empire. Second, they lacked a comprehensive and holistic approach to the problem, failing to see the larger picture. Third, they believed that they could sustain an outdated state structure with minor support. The final common characteristic was their lack of understanding of the West, or in broader terms, their lack of knowledge about “modernization” and “*modernization*” concepts and what they entailed.<sup>27</sup>

To answer the questions about how these efforts and ideas failed to save the Ottoman Empire and whether they slowed down or accelerated its collapse, a comprehensive critique of the ideological movements is necessary. This approach would reveal the consistent and inconsistent aspects of the political thought environment in Turkey prior to the War of Independence and shed light on the emergence of the Kemalist ideology.<sup>28</sup>

As for the contributions of the late-period political movements in the Ottoman Empire to Turkish state and societal life, they did have some impact, but it was limited. While these movements had the desire to save the empire, their fragmented and insufficient approaches, along with their inadequate understanding of modernization, hindered their effectiveness in preventing the collapse of the empire. The accumulation of ideas and experiences during this period, however, provided valuable lessons and insights that influenced the development of the Turkish Republic under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.<sup>29</sup>

Intellectual and ideological developments: The intellectual debates and the emergence of different political ideologies during the late Ottoman period contributed to a more diverse and dynamic intellectual landscape. These discussions and ideological debates laid the foundation for the formation of modern political thought in Turkey and influenced the subsequent nationalist movements.<sup>30</sup>

Legal and administrative reforms: The Tanzimat reforms aimed to modernize the legal and administrative systems of the Ottoman Empire. These efforts led to the establishment of new laws, institutions, and administrative structures that introduced elements of Western legal systems and governance principles.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Birand, *age*, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Siyasi Hatıralar*, Temel Yayınları, İstanbul 2002, p. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Osman S. Kocahanoğlu, *Felaket Günleri / Mütareke Devrinin Feci Tarihi*, Temel Yayınları, İstanbul 2000, p. 57.

<sup>28</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu*, Çev: Metin Kıratlı, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2003 p. 113.

<sup>29</sup> Sabahattin Selek, *Anadolu İhtilali, C. II*, Kastaş Yayınları, İstanbul 1987, p. 24.

<sup>30</sup> Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Gelişmeler 1876-1938, Cilt I, Kanun-ı Esasî ve Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2009, p. 43.

<sup>31</sup> Stanford J. Shaw, “Some Aspects of the Aims and Achievements of Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Reformers”, *Conference on the Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East in the Nineteenth Century*, Ed. William R. Folk - Richard L. Chambers, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1968, p. 425.

Rise of national consciousness: The decline of the empire and the increasing pressures from external powers sparked a sense of national consciousness among different ethnic and religious groups within the empire. This growing awareness of identity and shared interests played a significant role in the subsequent nationalist movements and the struggle for independence.

Educational advancements: Efforts were made to reform and modernize education in the empire. New schools and institutions were established, and Western educational models were introduced. This expansion of education contributed to the spread of literacy, the dissemination of new ideas, and the emergence of a more educated and informed society.<sup>32</sup>

Cultural and literary developments: The late Ottoman period witnessed a flourishing of literature, journalism, and cultural activities. Intellectuals and writers played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, disseminating new ideas, and raising awareness about the challenges facing the empire.<sup>33</sup>

The superiority of the West has been shaped and strengthened by establishing their own national structures. These countries have utilized the natural resources and human resources of their colonies, both above and below the ground, and have employed and exploited them during the pre and post-industrial revolution, thus achieving their technological advancements, wealth, and additionally organizing their societal and governmental structures in line with the requirements of progress and humanity's developmental process. The pioneers of Ottomanism were unable to recognize this development.<sup>34</sup>

In summary, the most significant factor in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was its failure to establish a national state and transition from a traditional society to a contemporary one. The benefit of the political movements proposed to halt the collapse lies in the recognition of the backwardness and ineffectiveness of the outdated ones. Following this realization, the Turkism movement's shift towards nationalism prompted intellectuals to think, research, and search for answers to "what can be done?" It led to the opening of schools that nurtured a new generation of critical thinkers, creating a political environment conducive to accelerating the process of development and change.<sup>35</sup>

Ottoman modernization was an autocratic modernization, and internal and external developments dragged the empire from this autocratic modernization to a constitutional monarchy in its last forty years. The Ottoman Empire left behind political institutions such as parliament, political party cadres, and the press to the young Republic. The doctors, scientists, lawyers, historians, and philologists of the Republic emerged from the intellectual cadres of the late Ottoman period. Initially, the Republic inherited the education system, universities, administrative organization, and financial system from the empire, and the revolutionaries of the Republic embarked on a journey not with a medieval society but with the remnants of an empire that had spent its last century in the pangs of modernization. One of the elements that fueled the radicalism of the Republic is the insufficiently radical Ottoman modernization.<sup>36</sup>

Understanding the history of late Ottoman modernization is essential to comprehend the solidity and weaknesses of the political and social institutions of present-day Turkey. The 19th century was the most dynamic, painful, exhausting, and long century for the entire Ottoman society. The most significant events and institutions that shaped the future constituted the history

<sup>32</sup> Shaw, *age*, p. 426.

<sup>33</sup> Türköne, *age*, p. 67.

<sup>34</sup> Tunaya, *age*, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> İlbeyi Özer, *Avrupa Yolunda Batılılaşma ve Batılılaşma (İstanbul'da Sosyal Değişimler)*, Truva Yayınları, İstanbul 2005, p. 73.

<sup>36</sup> Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı - Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri*, Yapı Kredi Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 2012, p. 81.



of this century. The generations that were influenced by these movements and learned from their experiences established the new Republic with the impact of these acquired experiences.

#### 4. The Turkish War of Independence

The Ottoman Empire entered the First World War with the intention of regaining lost territories and restoring its former power, but it suffered a major defeat by the end of the war.<sup>37</sup>

Germany had several reasons for wanting the Ottoman Empire to join the war on its side:

- ✓ Expanding its fronts: Germany sought to expand the war fronts and divert the enemy's attention and resources from other areas. By involving the Ottoman Empire, Germany aimed to open up new fronts in the Middle East, particularly against British and French forces.<sup>38</sup>
- ✓ Disrupting the colonial routes of England and France: Germany saw an opportunity to disrupt the colonial routes of its enemies, particularly the British and French, by gaining control over strategic territories in the Middle East, such as the Suez Canal and the oil-rich regions.
- ✓ Utilizing the power of the Caliphate: The Ottoman Empire, as the seat of the Caliphate, had significant religious influence over Muslims around the world. Germany hoped to leverage this influence to rally support from Muslims and Turks, portraying the war as a "holy war" against their colonial oppressors.<sup>39</sup>

It's important to note that while Germany had its own strategic interests in involving the Ottoman Empire in the war, the outcome was ultimately disastrous for the Ottoman Empire, leading to its disintegration and loss of territories.<sup>40</sup>

The fronts that the Ottoman Empire fought in during the First World War can be divided into three categories:<sup>41</sup>

- ✓ Offensive Fronts: The Caucasus and the Canal Fronts.
- ✓ Defensive Fronts: The Gallipoli, Iraq, Syria and Palestine, Hejaz, and Yemen Fronts.
- ✓ Auxiliary Fronts: The Galicia and Macedonia Fronts. The Balkan Front (1916-1918) saw the 10th and 20th Ottoman Corps fighting alongside German, Austrian, and Bulgarian forces against Great Britain, France, and Serbia.

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War was determined by the Armistice of Mudros (October 30, 1918), which left Anatolia and Thrace open to any form of occupation. The provisions of the Mudros Armistice granted the Allied powers the right to occupy any territories they deemed necessary.<sup>42</sup>

Following the Mudros Armistice, the occupations began. According to Article 7 of this treaty, the Allied powers were entitled to occupy any regions they saw as a threat to their security. Thus, the Straits came under British control. The British occupied Çanakkale, Mosul, Batumi, Antep, Konya, Maraş, Samsun, Bilecik, Merzifon, Urla, and Kars. The French, on the other hand, occupied important railway stations in Thrace, as well as Dörtyol, Mersin, Adana, and Afyon.

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<sup>37</sup> İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Adamı ve Tanzimat Toplumunu*, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul 2006, p. 67.

<sup>38</sup> Cemal Kemal, "Mustafa Kemal'in Mondros Mütarekesi'ne Tepkileri", *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, C.46, Bahar 2005, p. 369.

<sup>39</sup> Cebesoy, *age*, p. 73.

<sup>40</sup> Fahir Armaoğlu, *19. Yüzyıl Siyasi Tarihi, 1789-1914*, Alkım Yayınevi, İstanbul 2016, p. 98.

<sup>41</sup> Geoffrey Parker - Jay Winter - Mary R. Habeck, *I. Dünya Savaşı ve 20. Yüzyıl*, Çev: Tansel Demirel, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, İstanbul 2018, p. 173.

<sup>42</sup> Justin McCarthy, *Osmanlı'ya Veda / İmparatorluk Çökerken Osmanlı Halkları*, Nesil Yayınları, İstanbul 2006, p. 67.

Some provinces in Southeast Anatolia that were initially occupied by the British were later handed over to the French. The Italians occupied Antalya, Kuşadası, Bodrum, Fethiye, and Marmaris, and they also sent troops to Konya and Akşehir. The provision in the Mudros Armistice stating that six provinces in Eastern Anatolia would be handed over to the Armenians prompted them to take action. The Armenians, with their regiments, spread across Eastern Anatolia and began to oppress and persecute the local Turks. Armenian irregulars also arrived in Kozan, Osmaniye, Mersin, and Adana along with the French.<sup>43</sup>

The Greeks, under the protection of British, American, and French warships, began their occupation of İzmir on May 15, 1919, in order to seize the promised Aegean region for themselves. Thus, the Greeks became the first state to initiate occupation in Anatolia. The first shot fired against the enemy during the occupation of İzmir by journalist Hasan Tahsin marked the beginning of our War of Independence. Despite the start of the occupations following the Mudros Armistice, the Sultan and the Ottoman Government remained silent and took no action to save the country from its situation.<sup>44</sup>

The Occupation of Izmir (May 15, 1919) marks the beginning of a period that started with the Armistice of Mudanya and concluded with the Treaty of Lausanne, encompassing the story of destruction and the establishment of a nation. Faced with these developments, the Turkish nation proclaimed “Independence or Death” and initiated the Turkish War of Independence. This war was an unprecedented and sacred struggle of a nation that was targeted for destruction against imperialism.<sup>45</sup>

The Turkish War of Independence, also known as the War of Independence or the National Struggle, was a multi-front political and military struggle undertaken to protect the territorial integrity within the boundaries defined by the National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*), after the occupation of the Ottoman Empire by the Allied Powers following World War I. It took place between 1919 and 1922, and effectively ended with the Armistice of Mudanya signed on October 11, 1922, and officially concluded with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923.<sup>46</sup> The Turkish War of Independence holds a special significance as it demonstrated to all oppressed nations that they could break free from the grip of imperialism.

## 5. The Proclamation of the Turkish Republic

Mustafa Kemal Pasha had already stated during the Erzurum Congress that the form of government after victory would be a republic. The Government of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, which had been governing Turkey since April 23, 1920, was based on the principle of national sovereignty. It was an unnamed republican administration. The constitution of January 20, 1921, stated, “*Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the nation,*” which indicated that the new regime was an undeclared republic.<sup>47</sup>

The first term members of the Grand National Assembly, who played a historic role in the victorious National Struggle, decided to dissolve the assembly and called for new elections on April 1923. After the new elections, the second term of the Grand National Assembly began its work. The newly established assembly ratified the Treaty of Lausanne, thereby achieving complete national independence.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> McCarthy, *age*, p. 69.

<sup>44</sup> McCarthy, *age*, p. 70-71.

<sup>45</sup> Lord Kinross, *Atatürk, Bir milletin Yeniden Doğuşu*, Çev: Necdet Sander, Sander Kitabevi, İstanbul 1996, p. 87.

<sup>46</sup> Akşin, *age*, p. 63.

<sup>47</sup> Abadan, *age*, p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> Mustafa Albayrak, *Atatürk ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Tarihsel Gelişimi*, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, Ankara 2010, p. 52.

When the Grand National Assembly of Turkey was inaugurated on April 23, 1920, the name of the new Turkish state had not yet been determined. The government was referred to as the Government of the Grand National Assembly, and the Speaker of the Assembly also served as the head of government. In this system, the position of the head of state appeared vacant. It had become necessary to determine a state form that was compatible with the current political regime. The parliamentary government system that emerged during the National Struggle had become non-functional. In this system, separate votes were cast for each member of the Council of Ministers, making it difficult to form a government.<sup>49</sup>

On October 25, 1923, a crisis emerged with the resignation of the government. This event provided Mustafa Kemal Pasha with the opportunity he had been waiting for to declare the republic. As the government could not be formed until the evening of October 28, 1923, Mustafa Kemal Pasha announced to his colleagues at the Çankaya Palace, “*Tomorrow we will declare the republic.*” That night, together with İsmet Pasha, he prepared a draft law amending certain articles of the 1921 Constitution. After speeches in the Grand National Assembly, the proclamation of the republic was accepted, which included the provision, “*The form of government of the Turkish State is a republic.*” Amidst the cheers and applause of “*Long live the republic!*” the republic was declared on October 29, 1923.<sup>50</sup> To uphold and preserve the republican regime, which is the most suitable form of government for the structure of the Turkish nation, is the primary duty of all of us as citizens.

## 6. The Importance of the Turkish Revolution in Atatürk’s Words

Atatürk’s miraculous Turkish Revolution, led by him, is the proof of the rebirth of a nation on the verge of collapse and destined for extinction. I would like to convey the importance of the Turkish Revolution through Atatürk’s own words. This revolution and War of Independence were not only fought against enemies determined to annihilate themselves but also a rebellion against backwardness, darkness, and ignorance. In this aspect, it served as a precedent and example for all oppressed peoples, as it achieved both a beginning and a result.<sup>51</sup>

*“The purpose of the revolutions we have carried out and continue to carry out is to transform the people of the Republic of Turkey into a completely modern and civilized society in every sense and form. This is the fundamental principle of our revolutions. It is necessary to shatter ways of thinking that cannot accept this reality. There have been those who have rusted and numbed the nation’s mind with such thinking. Surely, the existing superstitions in their way of thinking will be completely eliminated. Unless they are removed, it is impossible to instill the brilliance of truth into the mind” 1925.*<sup>52</sup>

*“A country in ruins on the edge of a cliff... Bloody struggles with various enemies... Years of war... And then, a new homeland, a new society, a new state that is respected both domestically and internationally, achieved through relentless revolutions. This is a brief expression of the Turkish General Revolution” 1935.*<sup>53</sup>

*“Friends, time has never deceived us in the course of events we have witnessed. On this path, we will continue to progress towards our goals, becoming enlightened with each passing day. We cannot say anything to those who do not wish to walk with us. They are free to act as they please. Our confidence in the accuracy of our direction as we march towards our goals, and ultimately achieve success, is so strong that the disappointment of this or that person never affects us. It may serve as a warning, prompting us to be more cautious. However, we will never conform to the path that would lead us backwards! If our laws are not suitable, we will*

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<sup>49</sup> Abadan, *age*, p. 97.

<sup>50</sup> Albayrak, *age*, p. 54.

<sup>51</sup> Falih R. Atay, *Çankaya*, Pozitif Yayınevi, İstanbul 2010, p. 71.

<sup>52</sup> Mustafa K. Atatürk, *Nutuk C III / Vesikalar*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 1991, p. 77.

<sup>53</sup> Atatürk, *age*, p. 97.

*change them, we will create new laws. And if necessary and essential, we will surpass everything in our way, without any hesitation, in order to reach our goal” 1931.<sup>54</sup>*

*“Throughout every corner of Turkey, revolution and reform have been a struggle to achieve genuine Turkishness” 1937.<sup>55</sup>*

*“The War of Independence and the Turkish Revolution have succeeded in every move and phase, based on the conscious unity of our nation’s high political and cultural character in the affairs of the country” 1938.<sup>56</sup>*

## Conclusion

History has clearly shown that the only form through which the Turkish nation can secure its existence and attain the rightful place among the community of nations is the republic. Thanks to the Republic that we established with blood and knowledge from the ashes of a fallen empire, today, in every corner of Turkey, the squares resound with the proud declaration, “*We are one nation.*”<sup>57</sup>

During the period of the Ottoman Empire, Turks had spread from the heart of Europe to North Africa, Mesopotamia, the Middle East, and even the northern shores of the Black Sea. However, in the last two centuries of the empire, they gradually retreated and suffered defeat. Eventually, after the First World War, the remaining part of their homeland, Anatolia, was occupied by enemy forces and there were attempts to divide the country and deprive the Turkish nation of its right to live.<sup>58</sup>

However, in this dark period, the Turkish nation, under the leadership of its leaders, showed great resistance and embarked on the Turkish War of Independence, initiating a struggle for independence. As a result of this struggle, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Turkish Republic was founded and a new era of reforms and progress began. The establishment of the republic not only secured the survival of the Turkish nation but also paved the way for its rightful place among the nations of the World.<sup>59</sup>

Today, the Turkish Republic stands as a testament to the determination and resilience of the Turkish people. It represents a modern, progressive, and proud nation that has overcome the challenges of the past and strives for a brighter future. The principles of the republic, including democracy, secularism, and social justice, guide Turkey’s path towards prosperity and ensure the welfare of its citizens.<sup>60</sup>

During the period of the First World War, Imperial Western Powers and Russia had accumulated religious, political, and historical motives and intentions against the Turks. They aimed to divide and share the remaining territories of the “sick man” empire, eradicate the Turks as a state from the stage of history, and dismantle the unity of Anatolian Turks.<sup>61</sup>

For this purpose, secret agreements such as Sykes-Picot and MacMahon were signed during the First World War, and later the Treaty of Sevres was imposed after the war, aiming to eliminate the Turks. However, true to their traditions, the Turks refused to remain stateless and embarked on a struggle for survival, even in their weakened state. This struggle is known as the Turkish War of Independence. Mustafa Kemal, recognized worldwide as a genius, took on the banner and

<sup>54</sup> Atatürk, *age*, p. 112.

<sup>55</sup> Atatürk, *age*, p. 115.

<sup>56</sup> Atatürk, *age*, p. 118.

<sup>57</sup> Ortaylı, *age*, 2017, p. 179.

<sup>58</sup> Yavuz Özdemir, *Türk Modernleşmesi'nin İnkılap Evresi*, Kültür Eğitim Vakfı Yayınevi, Erzurum 2010, p. 93.

<sup>59</sup> Ortaylı, *age*, 2017, p. 188.

<sup>60</sup> Özer, *age*, p. 57.

<sup>61</sup> Özdemir, *age*, 112.

leadership of this sacred war. Through his unwavering determination and indomitable personality, the traumatized and demoralized Turkish society regained its essence, formed a strong unity, and taught an unforgettable lesson to the enemy who sought its destruction.<sup>62</sup>

The Turkish War of Independence, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, was a testament to the resilience and strength of the Turkish people. Despite all odds, they fought relentlessly and refused to surrender. This struggle not only secured the independence and sovereignty of Turkey but also revitalized the nation's spirit, restored its self-confidence, and laid the foundation for the establishment of the Republic of Turkey.<sup>63</sup>

The Turkish people, inspired by Mustafa Kemal's visionary leadership, emerged from this challenging period with a renewed sense of purpose and determination. They were able to shape their own destiny and build a modern, progressive, and sovereign nation. The lessons learned from the Turkish War of Independence continue to inspire and guide the Turkish people in their pursuit of a prosperous and independent future.

The Turkish War of Independence, ending in victory and defying the expectations of imperialist powers, reminded the Turkish nation of its capabilities and, with this newfound confidence, the Turkish Revolution was realized under the leadership and guidance of Atatürk.<sup>64</sup>

Atatürk's leadership was instrumental in transforming the Turkish nation into a modern and progressive society. His vision, determination, and ability to unite the people played a pivotal role in the success of the Turkish Revolution. By drawing on the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and incorporating modern principles, Atatürk and his companions laid the foundation for a new era in Turkish history.<sup>65</sup>

It is important to recognize the historical context and challenges faced by the Turkish nation during the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent establishment of the Republic. By understanding this background, we can appreciate the significance of the Turkish Revolution and the enduring legacy of Atatürk's leadership.<sup>66</sup>

As a result, the new Republic was established by the generations who were influenced by these movements, learned from the past, and under the leadership and guidance of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, taking into account the acquired experiences.

The Republic was proclaimed by the Grand National Assembly under the presidency of Atatürk on October 29, 1923. Although many states emerged in the territories once covered by the Ottoman Empire, according to some historians like Arnold Joseph Toynbee, the only successor state of the Ottoman Empire is the Republic of Turkey.<sup>67</sup>

We need the knowledge, documents, and experiences of the past. If we want to live together in freedom, happiness, and peace on these lands today, we are in need of the reality of the past, the hope of the future, and the sense of responsibility of today.

Meanwhile, we need to emphasize the Treaty of Lausanne, which was signed between Turkey and the Allied Powers a century ago in 1923 and is the founding agreement of the Republic of

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<sup>62</sup> Selek, *age*, p. 93.

<sup>63</sup> Serpil Sürmeli, "General Charles Harington'un 1920-1923 dönemi Türkiye Raporu ve Döneme Dair Raporla İlgili Değerlendirmeler", *Atatürk Dergisi*, C.5, S.4, Bahar 2015, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> Hasan R. Soyak, *Atatürk'ten Hatıralar*, Yapı Kredi Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul 2004, p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Shaw, *age*, p. 77.

<sup>66</sup> Bilal Şimşir, *İngiliz Belgelerinde Atatürk*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 1974, p. 117.

<sup>67</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee - Kenneth P. Kirkwood, *Türkiye İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete Geçiş Serüveni*, Çev: Hülya Karaca, Birey Yayınevi, İstanbul 2003, p. 128.



Turkey. Below is a detailed explanation of the achievements and significance of the Treaty of Lausanne:

- ✓ Recognition of Borders: The Treaty of Lausanne recognized Turkey's independence and established its borders on an international level. This was a significant step in acknowledging Turkey as a modern nation.
- ✓ Abolition of Capitulations: Capitulations, privileges granted to foreign states during the Ottoman Empire, were abolished through the Treaty of Lausanne. This was a crucial step in consolidating Turkey's sovereignty and independence.
- ✓ Minority Rights: The treaty regulated the rights of minorities in Turkey and ensured their protection. It included important provisions aimed at safeguarding the rights of ethnic and religious minorities.
- ✓ Status of the Straits: The Treaty of Lausanne recognized Turkey's sovereignty over the Straits (Bosphorus and Dardanelles) while ensuring their international passage rights. This was intended to contribute to the international peace and security of a strategically vital region.
- ✓ Existence and Stability: The Treaty of Lausanne declared Turkey's independence and sovereignty to the world. This treaty enhanced Turkey's political stability and its standing in the international arena.
- ✓ International Recognition: The Treaty of Lausanne acknowledged Turkey as a member of the international community and granted it the right to establish equal relations with other nations.

The Treaty of Lausanne laid the foundation for Turkey's modern state structure and secured its recognition on the global stage. Consequently, it holds great historical and political significance for the Republic of Turkey and continues to command respect."

Furthermore, the Republic of Turkey holds a separate significance for being the only independent Turkish Republic until the dissolution of the USSR. History is merciless to those who fail to learn from it. It is important in showing a nation what it can achieve and what it is capable of. When the Turkish nation was strong, the Western world experienced a dark age. It revived with the Renaissance movement. From the 17th century onwards, it began to regain strength. Its empowerment led to the weakening of the Turks. We must acknowledge the fact that as long as this consciousness exists in the Western world, they will not desire the re-empowerment of the Turks and will resort to all means and obstacles to prevent it.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, it should be known that various games will always be staged in Turkey until it becomes truly strong, and attempts will be made to divide brother against brother. Our duty is not to fall for these games but to spend our energy not against each other, but towards developing and strengthening this beloved homeland. We should set an example for the founding ancestors who established the Republic, be worthy of them, and as Great Leader Atatürk said, "*Our national unity and solidarity will overcome any difficulty except that which is destined by divine fate.*" We must comprehend this truth.

This beloved homeland is not only a refuge for the Islamic world, the Turkish world, but also for all oppressed people. Therefore, we must join hands to strengthen and elevate our country, our flag, and our nation.

In 1924, Atatürk addressed the youth as follows: "*You, young people, are the ones who reinforce and continue our courage. With the education and culture you receive, you will become the most precious symbol of human virtues, love of the homeland, and freedom of thought. O*

<sup>68</sup> Ortaylı, *age*, 2017, p. 187.

*rising new generation! The future belongs to you. We established the Republic; it is you who will elevate and sustain it!"*

Happy 100th anniversary of the Republic, which is the most ideal form of governance for this nation.

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