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The Ottoman Empire in World War I: A Rational Disaster

by

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Thesis

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History

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Ypsilanti, Michigan

To my dear wife, Kristin

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Abstract

The Ottoman Empire's entry into the First World War in October 1914 represents a break in over a century of diplomacy in the Middle East. Previous study of late Ottoman politics has focused more upon the European states with imperial interests in the Middle East and has not adequately explained why the weak Ottoman state decided to enter the war. This study utilizes both British and German diplomatic documents, along with published secondary works, to reframe the Ottoman entry into the war in a way that highlights Ottoman agency and illuminates the internal and external constraints faced by Ottoman statesmen. The study concludes that the Ottoman Empire entered the war on terms dictated by Istanbul and did so only because Britain, France, and Russia pursued a policy of active hostility to Ottoman interests.

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Chapter 1: Introduction-The Ottoman Empire and the First World War

In 1914, the Ottoman Empire turned its back upon its longstanding relationship with London. On the outbreak of the greatest war the world had yet seen, the Ottomans sided instead with Britain's enemy, Germany. This decision, which would result in a crushing Ottoman defeat within four years and the end of the centuries-long rule of the House of Osman within nine, is largely responsible for the shape of the modern Middle East and has therefore received a great deal of scrutiny in the decades since.

Historiographical debate regarding the Ottoman Empire's fateful decision has largely revolved around agency. Restrictions on access to Ottoman archives and the paucity of memoirs from the leading statesmen of Istanbul have hampered closer inquiry. Early accounts were extremely superficial and often colored by prejudice. Western authors who studied the diplomatic causes of the war, like Luigi Albertini, spent little time on events in Istanbul, which they viewed as peripheral.¹ Albertini's classic diplomatic study of the war's origins devoted only half the space to the two months of negotiations between Berlin and Istanbul over Ottoman intervention that he gives to the two days between Germany's declaration of war on Russia on August 1 and the rupture with France on August 3, 1914.² When the Ottomans are dealt with, emphasis is placed upon the machinations of German agents in Istanbul and pro-German Turks like Enver Pasha.³ Winston Churchill, in his three-volume memoir and history of the Great War, believed that the Ottomans were piqued by the Royal Navy's seizure of two warships just completed for Istanbul in British yards before the July Crisis. This provided an excuse for a turn away from Istanbul's venerable British connection, a decision inspired in large part by “treachery and duplicity,” and the struggle of

¹ A note on place names: excepting direct quotations, all place names will given in their current form. Hence, Istanbul not Constantinople.

² Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952-7), vol. III, pp. 166ff and 605ff.

³ Albertini, *Origins*, vol. III pp. 617-18.

self-interested factions among the Ottoman leaders.⁴ More modern studies have restored some Ottoman agency to Churchill's tale, noting that the Ottomans allied with Germany before the supposedly vital seizure of the warships, but maintaining the focus on that trivial affair.⁵

The great reevaluation of German policy in the 1960s, following the work of the Hamburg historian Fritz Fischer and his disciples, continued to emphasize *German* decisions, not Ottoman ones.⁶ A less conspiratorial bent was evident, with the place of such subtle influences being taken by the impersonal German grab for *Weltmacht* (world power). Fischer concerned himself mostly with the alleged continuity of German policy from the late 19th century through the Nazi period. In Fischer's view, German investment in the Ottoman Empire was merely a way of undermining the British enemy, by threatening the British position in the Middle East, or by “revolutionizing the Islamic world,” a goal the Germans allegedly followed from the 1890s on.⁷ The idea that the Ottomans might have had their own reasons to invite German capital and German technicians to their country was alien to Fischer. The German-built rails and mines in Asia Minor were “positions [that] must be kept” for Germany to be a world power, as if Anatolia were a German protectorate and not the core of a still sovereign state.⁸

The reaction to Fischer kept the focus on the Germans. Ulrich Trumpener, in a series of articles and a monograph, rebutted Fischer's teleological notions about German imperial policy.⁹

⁴ Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis: 1911-1914* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923), vol. I, pp. 208-9, 539-40.

⁵ See David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914-1922* (New York: H. Holt, 1989).

⁶ Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1961) and *War of Illusions: German Policy from 1911-1914* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975). Ulrich Trumpener, in “Turkey's Entry Into World War I: An Assessment of Responsibilities,” *Journal of Modern History* vol. 32 no. 4.

⁷ Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, pp. 132-8.

⁸ Fischer, *War of Illusions*, pp. 234-5.

⁹ Ulrich Trumpener, in “Turkey's Entry Into World War I: An Assessment of Responsibilities,” *Journal of Modern History* vol. 32 no. 4 (1962), pp. 369-80 lays out the basic thesis. Trumpener did not add much to it over the subsequent decades. See also “Liman von Sanders and the Ottoman-German Alliance” in *Journal of Contemporary History* vol. 1 no. 4 (1966), pp. 179-92; *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914-18* (Princeton: Princeton University

The alliance with the Ottoman Empire, Trumpener said, was not “the culmination of carefully laid German plans but instead a diplomatic improvisation.”¹⁰ Though very thorough, Trumpener's goal of declaring the German state innocent of premeditated imperialism colors every issue. Trumpener dismisses the Ottoman-Russian crisis over the German military mission in 1914 by saying that the Germans gained “far less of an advantage” than was imagined in St. Petersburg.¹¹ This is the opposite of Fischer's conclusion, but it shares Fischer's preoccupation with the outcome of the affair for Germany.¹²

A much-needed revision, led by Turkish authors, is placing Ottoman decisions in their domestic political context. Mustafa Aksakal, in both his PhD dissertation and the subsequent monograph based upon it, argues convincingly for Ottoman agency in the negotiations with Germany in August-October 1914.¹³ However, Aksakal remains too credulous of Fischer, agreeing with him that German plans in the (remote) event of Ottoman partition indicated some master German plan for Middle Eastern expansion.¹⁴ Aksakal does, however, reject both Trumpener and Fischer regarding the core issue of agency. The initiative for the alliance came from Istanbul.¹⁵ Using an even greater number of Ottoman government documents, Stanford Shaw's posthumously

Press, 1968); and Trumpener's chapter “Germany and the End of the Ottoman Empire” in Marion Kent, ed. *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Hoboken, NJ: Frank Cass, 1996), pp. 107ff. See also Kurat, Y.T. “How Turkey Drifted into World War 1.” In *Studies in International History: Essays Presented to W. Norton Medlicott*, 291–315 (London: Longmans, 1967). A virtually identical view is found in Frank G. Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent: Germany, Austria, and the Diplomacy of the Turkish Alliance, 1914-1918* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970).

¹⁰ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, p. 366.

¹¹ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 368-9. See also Trumpener, “Liman von Sanders and the Ottoman-German Alliance,” 179-192; and “German Military Aid to Turkey in 1914: An Historical Reassessment,” in *The Journal of Modern History* vol. 32, no. 2 (1960): 145-149.

¹² Fischer, *War of Illusions*, pp. 330-355.

¹³ Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), based upon “Defending the Nation: The German-Ottoman Alliance of 1914 and the Ottoman Decision for War,” unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2003. For similar conclusions, see also F.A.K. Yasamee, “Ottoman Empire,” in Keith Wilson, ed. *Decisions for War, 1914* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 83-5.

¹⁵ Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, p. 80. An earlier glimpse of this idea can be found in Feroz Ahmad, “Great Britain's Relations with the Young Turks, 1908-1914,” *Middle Eastern Studies* vol. 2 no. 4 (1966).

published *The Ottoman Empire in World War I* extends this analysis backward several years and is unmatched in its detail, though it still does not incorporate material relating to Ottoman Arabia.¹⁶ Other modern studies remain overly attached to a false dichotomy between pro-Entente “liberals” and pro-German centralists, when no such distinction was apparent in the final crisis.¹⁷

If the disastrous Ottoman decision-making of 1914 was not motivated by German intrigue, then what did compel the statesmen of Istanbul to enter the war? To discover this, it is necessary to examine what the Sublime Porte considered to be its aims in the war. There has been much confusion about this. Just as there was much disagreement among the Ottoman ruling classes about whether the Empire should adopt a pan-Ottoman or pan-Muslim identity or cultivate Turkish nationalism at the expense of the remaining minorities, so there was disagreement about foreign policy goals.¹⁸ The disastrous offensive actions against the Russian Caucasus and the Suez Canal after the war began have long colored Western historians' opinions of Ottoman war aims. It will suffice to say here, briefly, that Enver Pasha's desire to conquer Russian Azerbaijan and Turkestan in the name of pan-Turkish nationalism, and to carve out a new empire in Central Asia to replace the Balkan and Arabian possessions of the Porte, has been exaggerated. The attacks on Russia and Egypt were demanded by the Germans as the price of alliance in August 1914.¹⁹ At no time before that is there any evidence that the Ottomans planned more than to reclaim the Anatolian territories lost to Russia in 1878. This was the one territorial demand they made of the Germans during the

¹⁶ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, 2 vol. (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2006).

¹⁷ See Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), especially pp. 222ff. Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (3rd ed., London, I.B. Tauris, 2006) recapitulates this very resilient paradigm, p. 122. See also M. Sükrü Hanioglu, “The Second Constitutional Period, 1908-1918,” in Resat Kasaba, ed. *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Volume 4: Turkey in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 62-111.

¹⁸ See Hasan Kayal, *Arabs and Young Turks Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2006), pp. 197-8 shows how the confusion between Ottomanism and other forms of nationalism extended even to petty administrative detail.

¹⁹ This point is made in Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2010), pp. 326, 349-51.

long negotiations for their entry into the war. Every other thing they asked of the Germans, from loans to modifications of the Porte's terms of trade, had to do with Ottoman development.²⁰

The Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) had as its overriding goal the development of the Ottoman Empire into a modern state. By this they meant a land with a centralized government, a military capable of defending that government, an economy robust enough to provide financial independence, and an organizing ideology that could replace the outdated loyalty to the Sultan, which had proven unable to prevent rebellion and secession in a nationalist age. To achieve these long-term goals, their short-term plan was to place the Ottoman state under the protection of one of the European Great Powers, to gain the breathing space needed to modernize. Germany was chosen for this role because it was available, having need of the Ottomans after the outbreak of the Great War, and because Germany was the power least culpable in blocking Ottoman modernization.²¹ Surveying the Ottoman domestic and international situation in 1914, it is clear that the Porte was frustrated in its goals mostly by the states of the Triple Entente: Britain, France, and Russia. In every theater and every area of policy, these three powers stymied the Porte's goal of modernization to ensure Ottoman survival.

Germany, by contrast, offered the Ottomans their best chance for survival. This was not because German and Ottoman goals were always compatible, but because Germany's designs consisted mostly of using the Ottomans against Berlin's Entente foes. Even when Germany had designs on Ottoman territory in the event of a partition of the Near East, it was far less capable of staking claims than the Entente powers, whose territories and client states bordered the Ottomans on nearly every side, from the Black Sea to Yemen and from Kuwait to the Aegean. The Germans also

²⁰ The Ottoman demands of Germany are laid out in Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 713. See the very similar discussions with Britain, in Mallet to Grey, 5 October 1914, *Correspondence Relating to Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey* (London: HMSO, 1914), p. 36.

²¹ Shaw, *Ottoman Empire*, pp. 51-2 and 57-8.

needed a Middle Eastern ally that could threaten Russian and British interests far more than the Entente required continued Ottoman goodwill. Time and again in the years before the war, when faced with a choice between Greece and the Ottomans, the British and French showed their partiality to Athens, not Istanbul. The men who made the revolution of 1908-9 found themselves spurned by the Entente powers, all three of whom were contemplating major territorial expansions at Ottoman expense when the war came.

During the final crisis of July 1914, the Porte was able to have its way with a suddenly attentive Germany. The hard bargain the Ottomans drove, coupled with the long delay in joining hostilities, shows the relative balance of power between Istanbul and Berlin. Concessions were demanded, delays multiplied, and German frustration with its new ally grew. At no point were Ottoman interests subordinated to Germany, nor was Ottoman independence seriously compromised despite the influx of German soldiers and money to Istanbul. Indeed, it will be seen that the Porte had fulfilled most of its goals before entering the war, despite German protests against the economic measures taken and German demands for immediate attacks on Entente possessions.

The goal of this paper is to revise the history of the Ottoman entry into the First World War by using both long-available diplomatic archival material published by the British and German governments and the plethora of recent secondary works referencing newly open Ottoman records. The first section details the Ottoman domestic and international situation in 1914 with respect to the European Great Powers. The purpose will be to show the ways in which the powers ranged against the Ottoman Empire combined to frustrate that state's modernization of its government, economy, and infrastructure. The second section will follow the rushed negotiation of the German-Ottoman Treaty of August 2, 1914, and the months-long gap between alliance and war. The Ottoman government's relations with Germany will be shown to be not that of a subordinate or client state,

but of a divided government unsure how to proceed once most of its goals had been met before hostilities were even opened against the Entente. Both chapters will demonstrate that the Ottoman government, both before and after the revolution of 1908-9, followed a consistent policy of seeking alliance with a Great Power patron, ending the economic and social threats to its integrity, and finding a way to survive even at the cost of old institutions and identities.

Many of the primary sources used here have been well-mined by historians. The inaccessibility or nonexistence of Ottoman sources puts a premium on British and German diplomatic documents, many of which were published after the war.²² Diplomatic studies have limited themselves to the dispatches of the ambassadors and foreign offices, while historians of British and German imperialism used the papers, diaries, and letters of the “men on the spot” in Arabia. Most useful are the papers contained in the British National Archives' *Confidential Print-Middle East* series, which were accessed for this study in digital form.²³ Until now, the latter have not been used along with the former to draw a complete picture of the Ottoman situation before the war. While it is obviously difficult to infer the motives of Ottoman statesmen from the correspondence of European observers, it is possible to get a sense of the context of Ottoman actions, and therefore a possible explanation for the decisions of 1914.

Put in their context, the choices that led to the disaster that overtook the Ottoman state give an impression of the agency that remains even to weak states in dangerous geopolitical situations. Far from being the dupes of German militarists or the hapless victims of the *Kaiserreich's* imperialist

²² The major collections are G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, 11 volumes (London: HMSO, 1921-6); *Correspondence Respecting Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations With Turkey* (London: HMSO, 1914); Karl Kautsky, *Outbreak of the World War: German Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1924); and Sergei Sazonov, *Diplomatic Documents: Negotiations Covering the Period from July 19/August 1 to October 19/November 1, 1914, Preceding the War with Turkey* (Unknown: Unknown, 1915).

²³ Penelope Tuson, ed. *Records of Saudi Arabia: Primary Documents, 1902-1960* (Slough: Archive Editions, 1992). These papers have been digitized by Archives Direct, and were available for this study through the University of Michigan Library, at <http://www.lib.umich.edu/database/link/11419>. All files were accessed October 15, 2012, and for brevity will be cited in the body of the work by their PRO box and file numbers.

grab for power, the Ottoman statesmen of 1914 committed themselves to war with a clear-eyed view of the alternatives facing them. The alliance with Germany promised the fulfillment of Ottoman goals only if the Central Powers won the war, true, but neutrality would have only put off for the moment further partition at the hands of the Entente.

Chapter 2: The Ottoman Political and Diplomatic Situation Before the War

When the twentieth century began, Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II still ruled an empire that stretched from the Adriatic to the lower Persian Gulf. In a series of wars and diplomatic defeats, large areas containing millions of Ottoman subjects had been lost by 1914. The Committee of Union and Progress, which shared power with like-minded reformers between 1909 and 1913, and seized undisputed control of the empire after January 1913, had as its goal the revitalization of the empire and independence from foreign domination. By the time of the July Crisis of 1914, they had failed in nearly every area of policy and in nearly every theater of dispute with the European powers. As this chapter will demonstrate, the Ottoman Empire's rivals were predominantly the Russians, French, and British. These three powers coveted Ottoman territory and deplored attempts at modernization that might have made Ottoman resistance to their encroachments more successful. Moreover, because these powers came together in the Triple Entente between 1904 and 1907, the Ottoman government found itself unable to rely on former rivalries to restrain Entente aggression.

This was especially true in the Balkans. Former rivalries between the British and Russians had ensured that British statesmen had proven willing as late as 1878 to go to war with St. Petersburg over the latter's Balkan aggrandizement. Once British opposition became out of the question, Ottoman rule in the Balkans was endangered from both within and without. The war of 1912-13 with the Balkan League of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria had left the Ottomans with only the area immediately before Istanbul's defenses. That war was largely fomented by the principal Russian ministers in the Balkans, Nicholas Hartwig in Belgrade, and Alexander Nekludov at Sofia²⁴. These two men were not responsible for the *idea* behind the war, but they were

²⁴ Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-13* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), contains outdated conclusions but is the best general study.

instrumental in bringing Serbia and Bulgaria together. Those two nations had been on the point of concluding an agreement at Ottoman expense for some time before 1912 but had always been stymied by overlapping territorial demands.

Hartwig and Nekludov broke the impasse by getting the Serbs and Bulgars to agree to disagree and to leave their remaining disputes to the future arbitration of the Russian Tsar.²⁵ That no one in St. Petersburg with any official standing ordered the Balkan ministers to conclude this agreement has led to unnecessary confusion regarding its origins. Much of the Balkan states' contact with Russia was through unofficial channels, with journalists and capitalists "interpreting" the wishes of St. Petersburg to their Balkan clients. Whatever the Tsar's Council of Ministers might say seemed to Belgrade and Sofia to be for public consumption only. Their real contacts were unequivocal about the need for agreement between the Slavs, and war to push the Ottomans out of Europe.²⁶

As for Russia's Entente partners, Britain is more implicated in the formation of the Balkan League than France. While official British policy deplored the opening of hostilities between the Balkan League and the Ottomans, in private the British Foreign Minister, Sir Edward Grey, had encouraged the formation of an anti-Ottoman alliance. Anything that might have strengthened the Ottoman position in the Balkans was blocked, as when Britain exercised its influence to stop a potential Ottoman-Serbian alliance in 1908. Similarly, Austrian attempts to pressure the Montenegrins over their interference in Ottoman Albania in 1910 and 1911 were strongly deprecated by London.²⁷ The Montenegrins later used these disputes as a *casus belli*, under the rubric of a secret agreement with Bulgaria which would have the Montenegrins begin hostilities in

²⁵ Helmreich, pp. 36ff.

²⁶ Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, pp. 107-112. See also Sergei Sazonov, *Fateful Years, 1909-1916: The Reminiscences of Sergei Sazonov* (New York: F.A. Stokes, 1928), p. 63. Sazonov believed that the existence of Ottoman lands in Europe "had long ago become a monstrous anachronism."

²⁷ Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, pp. 17-18.

1912, so that its Balkan allies could be said to be “rescuing” the tiny principality from Ottoman vengeance. It is also clear that Britain was well aware of the offensive nature of the Serbo-Bulgar alliance and of the provisional agreement on partitioning Ottoman territory contained within it. When the Balkan League moved to partition Turkey-in-Europe, London was well-warned and in apparent agreement with League aims.²⁸

Despite the evidence here presented, monographs written decades after the final partition of the Ottoman realm can still refer to Britain and France as having a “benevolent attitude toward the Ottoman state.”²⁹ As already discussed, the hostility of British diplomacy to Ottoman interests in the Balkans severely compromised Ottoman rule there. But even before war threatened Ottoman Macedonia, the British and French took part in an intervention that dramatically weakened the Ottoman administration of that area. When Bulgaria had sponsored a rebellion in Macedonia in 1903 and allowed the insurgents sanctuary within its territory during the Ottoman military crackdown that followed, the response of the Powers was to impose upon the Ottomans the Mürzsteg Program.³⁰ This plan, which was championed by the Austrians to forestall Russian intervention, placed foreign “advisors” in the government departments in that province and replaced the Ottoman police forces with gendarmes to be drawn from the Christian European states. These gendarmes proved ineffectual after 1903, when the Bulgarian-sponsored Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) continued its campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Muslim population of Macedonia.³¹

Thus the Balkans were lost, in large part thanks to the machinations of the Entente powers,

²⁸ Montenegro's role is in Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, pp. 88ff. Britain's knowledge is established in Grey to Nicolson, December 28, 1908, in *BDOW*, vol. 5, no. 493, p. 543.

²⁹ Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, p. 25, says this despite citing evidence that admits of the opposite interpretation.

³⁰ See Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, pp. 5ff.

³¹ Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1995), pp. 148ff.

chiefly Russia with the support and connivance of Britain. But the problems of the Balkan territories did not leave with the lands lost in 1912-13. As with every loss of territory to a Christian power for over a century, the Balkan Wars were at least as much an internal struggle between sects as a foreign invasion of Ottoman territory. From the late 19th century, the growth of Bulgarian power and independence had involved, at every step, the massacre and forced expulsion of Ottoman Muslims.

This pattern was continued in the early 20th century struggle for Macedonia. The Bulgarian-sponsored IMRO attacked Muslim villages, deliberately provoking local Muslims and Ottoman garrisons into reprisals, which could then be used to influence public opinion in the Christian powers. Before 1912, Muslims constituted 51% of the population of Ottoman Rumelia and were at least a plurality in every Sandjak save that of Yanina. After the war, “practically all” of the Muslim villages of Thrace were destroyed by the Bulgars. By the time the massacres and expulsions had been repeated across the newly conquered territories, 27% of the Muslim population was dead, and another 62% had been expelled.³² Though the European-officered Macedonian gendarmerie set up at Mürzsteg in 1903 had done nothing whatever to protect the Muslims of Macedonia and Thrace, they did bear witness to the atrocities being committed, in a report by a French officer that was sent to the capitals of the Mürzsteg signatories.³³ It was ignored.

The Muslims driven from Ottoman Europe went to Anatolia, to what remained of the Empire. There, these “*muhajirs Balkan*” (Balkan refugees) constituted an important, and heretofore ignored, factor in Ottoman domestic politics. By claiming a large share of what little money the central government had to finance their resettling, they weakened Ottoman finances, which were already straightjacketed by international control. They also exacerbated sectarian disputes wherever

³² McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, pp. 151, 164. Shaw, *Ottoman Empire*, pp. 156-167.

³³ McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, p. 147 note 50.

they went, being understandably averse to Christian nationalist forces among the Greeks and Armenians in the sections of Anatolia to which they were relocated. Finally, they constituted a large constituency among the Ottoman public that was, based on harsh experience, anti-foreign, anti-Christian, and in favor of Ottoman strength, even at the cost of war with the Entente powers. These refugees knew that the only thing keeping them from being expelled from their homes again was the government of the Sultan in Istanbul.³⁴

These refugees must be kept in mind when discussing the next area in which Ottoman rule was being undermined by the Entente in the months before the outbreak of war, the “six vilayets” of Ottoman Armenia. Since the 1890s, the Armenian guerrilla fighters of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (*Dashnaktsutian*) had adopted the successful model used by the Bulgars in their independence struggle. Nowhere a majority of the population, the Armenian fighters attacked the local majority Muslims of Anatolia. When Armenians were killed and their villages sacked, this was used as propaganda to undermine the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The Christian powers of Europe were entreated to intervene to save the Armenians from the hostility of the locals and the supposed inability of the Ottoman government to “protect” their citizens.³⁵ Despite theoretical adherence to a radical socialist ideology, the Armenians looked first to Russia as their foreign protector. New Armenian disturbances in Anatolia broke out during the last phases of the Balkan Wars, and the Russians quickly moved the issue to the forefront of international politics.

The idea was very much like the Mürzsteg reforms in Macedonia. The Russians proposed to create a specially autonomous Armenian entity from the “six vilayets” of Van, Erzurum, Sivas,

³⁴ Some of the *muhajirs Balkan* had been expelled twice, first from the lands that became Bulgaria in the 1870s and 80s, later from Macedonia. See, generally, McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, pp. 333ff. The political effects of the refugee crisis are seen in Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 165ff. And 300-1. See also, Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 32-3.

³⁵ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 575 gives an example. McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, pp. 301, 118.

Mamuretülaziz, Diyarbakir, and Bitlis, despite only Van having an Armenian majority.³⁶ This entity would be under Russian protection and would have the Ottoman organs of local government removed from Istanbul's control. While the Ottomans objected to this imposition, supported by the German-led Central Powers, the British moved quickly to see to it that Russian wishes were carried out, quibbling only over whether a British appointee would take over policing or financial duties in the new autonomous area.³⁷ What London passed over so lightly, though, cut to the heart of the CUP program in Istanbul.

Ottoman legitimacy was closely bound up with the state's ability to protect its citizens and Islam itself. Whatever the long-term goals of the CUP in building up an Ottoman nationalism, and what this may have meant for the Armenians, granting a minority of the Anatolian population autonomy under foreign tutelage was impossible for Istanbul simply because such a move would have forfeited the remaining Muslim population's loyalty as well. Many of the Eastern Anatolian vilayets were host to large numbers of refugees, not only from the Balkan catastrophes of the past two generations but from the Russian Viceroyalty of the Caucasus, which had for the last century been expelling Muslim populations whenever the borders changed or hostilities with the Ottomans threatened. These Slav Muslims and Circassians had memories of being driven from their home villages by local Christians backed by a Christian Great Power. They were under few illusions that their safety would be long guaranteed under the new regime, any more than it had been under the eye of the foreign gendarmes in Macedonia.³⁸ During the war, when the Russians pushed into the Six Vilayets that they had proposed to make autonomous, these fears would be part of the process

³⁶ See, from the Russian side, Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, pp. 136-41. Demographics from McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, pp. 208ff.

³⁷ The British side of the Armenian reform crisis can be followed in Whitehead to Grey, November 10, 1908; Grey to Lowther, November 14, 1908; Grey to Carnegie, December 7, 1908, in *BDOW* vol. V, nos. 440, 446, and 480. Grey to Bertie, January 28, 1909, *ibid.*, document no. 540 shows the Germans opposed to "any special status" for the Armenians.

³⁸ McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, pp. 179ff.

that led to the deliberate destruction of the Anatolian Armenian population by the Ottomans.³⁹

While the consolidation of control over fractious minorities was a priority of the CUP government, economic demands were also key to the CUP's goal of revitalizing the Ottoman state. The Porte demanded an end to the economic controls imposed by the major creditor states on its finances, as well as economic aid, the transfer of technicians, and the training of Ottoman engineers in modern industrial arts. As all of these things were necessary to the CUP's prewar goal of modernization to ensure the future of the Empire, it is safe to assume that these, and not fanciful projects of pan-Turanic empire, constituted its true policy aims.⁴⁰

The foremost Ottoman goal was the abolition of the Capitulations. This issue bridged the divide between the domestic modernization strategy of the Committee for Union and Progress and the foreign policy goal of reducing the influence of the imperialist powers over the Empire. These treaties, originally conceived of as an extension to foreign traders of the *millet* system, whereby religious communities within the Ottoman domains were self-governing in areas of civil jurisprudence, became in time the chief tool of the European powers to influence Ottoman politics. Originally regarded by the Ottoman sultans as a powerful tool of patronage that outsourced much of the expense of adjudicating trade disputes, over the centuries the Capitulations had become increasingly onerous as the empire's terms of trade shifted in favor of the European powers.⁴¹ By simple declaration at a consulate of a foreign power, even Ottoman subjects could gain the

³⁹ See Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 17ff. The Armenian Genocide is an extremely controversial subject, and mostly lies outside the scope of this study. For an introduction to the issues involved, see Ronald Suny, Fatma Muge Gocek, and Norman M. Naimark *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). The international dimensions to the Armenian issue are explored in Manoug Joseph Soumakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers, 1895-1920* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1995).

⁴⁰ Shaw is the first non-Turkish scholar to note this, in *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 76-7. See also Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 109ff.

⁴¹ For history of the Capitulations, see Kemal H. Karput, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1798-1908" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* vol. 3, no. 3 (1972): 243-281;

protection of another nation, making them exempt from not only Ottoman law but also Ottoman taxes. By this means, many of the Christian communities of the empire managed to gain a very significant advantage over Ottoman subjects in most areas of business, especially in export-import concerns, while depriving the Ottoman treasury of funds.⁴²

What funds the treasury had were not its to spend as it pleased. Since 1881, the Ottoman Public Debt Administration had possessed the power to determine the Ottoman state budget. This body, imposed by the creditor powers after the Ottoman state went bankrupt, restored Ottoman credit at the cost of foreign veto power over fiscal matters. While in theory the board of the ODPDA consisted of British, French, and Ottoman representatives, in practice many of the “Ottoman” members were traders and other businessmen under foreign protection and acted in the interests of the creditor powers. France was the key player, with its enormous share of the Ottoman debt and its control over the body that functioned as an Ottoman Central Bank. The officials of the Public Debt Administration ensured that taxes collected were first used to service the debt, with only the remainder available for Ottoman use, thus starving the government of funds and giving the chief imperial predators of Ottoman territory a stranglehold on the state's spending.⁴³ When the refugee crises of the Balkan Wars outstripped the ability of private charitable organizations to handle, the Ottomans had to come hat in hand to the ODPDA for special funds to resettle displaced Muslims from Rumelia.⁴⁴

The ODPDA also exercised control of the Ottoman tariff, the chief source of government revenue. This was set as low as possible, to the advantage of French and British exporters, while Ottoman industry languished. Even key infrastructure projects, like the Baghdad Railway, could be

⁴² See generally, Halil Inalcik, ed. *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, pp. 48-50 and 192-5. Examples in Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, 154-5, 188-9.

⁴³ Incirlik, *Economic and Social History*, pp. 837ff.

⁴⁴ See Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 300-1.

vetoed by the British and French members of the ODPB board, as when they refused to allow the Ottoman government to make kilometeric profit guarantees to Deutsche Bank, thereby holding up further investment in the Berlin to Baghdad route for years.⁴⁵

No policy of modernization could avoid dealing with these imposed restrictions on Ottoman economic freedom. The CUP began its campaign for the abrogation of the Capitulations and the raising of the state tariff as soon as it took power and only redoubled their efforts when the July Crisis of 1914 gave them the opportunity.⁴⁶ When negotiating with both the Entente and the Central Powers, the Ottoman government demanded at least the modification of the Capitulations, if not their end. The British, especially, refused to countenance any but the most superficial changes to the extraterritorial legal regime, and London was especially loathe to allow Ottoman Muslims to sit in judgment over protected Christians. While the Germans were more forthcoming than the Entente, Berlin did not welcome the end of the special legal privileges either, though they had no difficulty agreeing to changes in tariff rates. In the end, the Ottomans unilaterally abrogated the Capitulations as soon as they had the German alliance in hand.⁴⁷

The Entente's barriers to Ottoman modernization were not only economic in nature. In 1914, the Central Powers and the Entente had numerous military missions abroad, charged with spreading their governments' influence, training potential satellite forces in case of war and ensuring military hardware contracts for home industries. While the Entente powers obstructed Ottoman military reform, the Germans supplied very valuable military assistance.

⁴⁵ British interference can be seen in Marion Kent, "Great Britain and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1900-1923," in Kent, *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Hoboken: Frank Cass, 1996). Kent's focus on economics is helpful, but by divorcing it from political events, he ultimately obscures the nature of British policy. Kent also fails to pay enough attention to British economic penetration in the Empire beyond the core areas, though Mesopotamia is at least mentioned.

⁴⁶ Shaw, pp. 280-1. British negotiations preceding this are in *Correspondence*, p. 53. Russian responses to Ottoman demands were more moderate. See *Diplomatic Documents: Negotiations Covering the Period from July 19/August 1 to October 19/November 1, 1914 Preceding the War with Turkey*, (Unknown: Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Date Unknown), pp. 42-3.

⁴⁷ Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 132-3.

The Ottoman military formed a key part of the CUP's modernization plans. To protect the Empire's borders, and to create a cohesive force that could enforce government writ on the many areas in which Istanbul's control was merely nominal, the army had to be reformed and modernized. This entailed two related programs: enlisting foreign advisors to train the officer corps of both the army and navy, and the acquisition of foreign equipment and industrial expertise to enable the Ottomans to equal the qualitative superiority of their potential enemies' forces. As we have seen elsewhere, the Entente powers stymied these goals repeatedly.

The training of the officers entailed, first of all, choosing a sponsor. Since the 1830s, the Ottoman Army had had a relationship with the Prussian Army which had seen a number of famous German officers working in Ottoman military academies, most famously the elder Helmuth von Moltke and Colmar von der Goltz "Pasha."⁴⁸ Politically, the German Empire was friendly and less implicated in the resented restrictions on the Ottoman economy than the Entente powers. Therefore, it was natural that, in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, the Germans should again be enlisted to train the Ottoman officer corps.

The previous training had served the Ottomans well. Contrary to military opinion at the time, the planning process for war against Bulgaria before 1912 had been prescient. The Bulgarian deployments had been anticipated, and the Ottomans had war-gamed scenarios that very closely matched the actual operations of October-November 1912 before the war. The failures during actual operations were caused by poor morale, the incomplete mobilization of Ottoman forces, and the poor quality of the lower ranking officers, those not trained by the von der Goltz missions.⁴⁹

The announcement in January 1913 that Germany was sending General Otto Liman von

⁴⁸ The history of the German military missions is recounted in Glen W. Swanson, "War, Technology, and Society in the Ottoman Empire from the Reign of Abdulhamid II to 1913: Mahmud Sevket and the German Military Mission." In *War, Technology, and Society in the Middle East*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975). 367-385.

⁴⁹ The effectiveness of Ottoman staff work is a major theme in Edward Erickson, *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

Sanders to Istanbul as chief of a new military training mission, with direct command of the Ottoman I Corps, the formation responsible for protection of the capital and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles defenses, caused an uproar in St. Petersburg. In the subsequent crisis, Britain backed its Entente partner fully, though Foreign Office memos make it clear that Sir Edward Grey and his staff were well aware of Russian intentions.⁵⁰ Only a month after the Liman von Sanders affair began, a cabinet level meeting in St. Petersburg saw the formulation of definite plans to seize the Straits, with Istanbul, as soon as the moment was right. The German military mission was seen as a threat to this planned offensive, scheduled to take place when the Russian Black Sea Fleet was up to full strength. Ottoman protests that the German military mission was not any greater threat to Ottoman independence than the British naval mission of Admiral Arthur Limpus, which was present in Istanbul at this time, therefore failed to address Russia's real concern, which was that their eventual Black Sea offensive might find the more efficient Germans manning the Bosphorus guns were Liman von Sanders allowed to stay.⁵¹

Britain and France competed to sell the most modern available naval vessels to Greece, which was on the brink of war with Istanbul through the winter and spring of 1914 over certain of the Aegean Islands seized during the First Balkan War. The Entente powers moved to prevent modernization of the Ottoman Army and the strengthening of the Straits defenses, even though one of their number was merely biding its time until it was strong enough to seize the Ottoman capital. Even in the naval sphere, Britain was less than helpful. When Ottoman naval officers were sent to Britain in 1914 to train in modern gunnery techniques, the Royal Navy refused to allow them, out of all the foreign students present, to participate in live-fire exercises on British ships. Admiral Limpus attempted to get this restriction lifted on the grounds that the Ottomans were not an enemy of

⁵⁰ Grey to Mallet, no. 399, December 4, 1913; Mallet to Grey, no. 400, same date, in *BDOW*, vol. X, part I, p. 355. Also O'Beirne to Grey, no. 379, November 25, 1913, in *BDOW*, vol. X, part II, p. 340.

⁵¹ See Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, pp. 117-23; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 15; McMeekin, *Russian Origins*, pp. 33ff.

Britain, but the Royal Navy disagreed and cited the danger of espionage in turning down his requests. Ironically, Limpus himself was spying for Britain, and his naval mission collected much intelligence on the state of the Dardenelles defenses, a fact apparently known to the Ottomans. The First Sea Lord, Prince Louis of Battenberg, wanted to go even further than this and advocated the strongest possible connection to Greece in the Aegean Islands quarrel. His initiative saw the British naval mission in Athens greatly strengthened, and by the height of the Aegean crisis in the late spring of 1914, a British officer, Sir Mark Kerr, was in command of the Royal Hellenic Navy, a position he maintained until the outbreak of hostilities.⁵²

Thus British and Russian intrigues combined to keep the Ottoman armies weak while bolstering rivals such as Greece and preparing the way for future Russian and British attacks on the Turkish Straits. In the remaining Asiatic lands of the Ottoman Empire, the situation was somewhat different. Whereas modernization in the Turkish core provinces was considered by the CUP to be impossible without the military strength to ward off European aggrandizement, in Arabia the CUP found that it could not even control the land and its people, let alone mold both into a cohesive framework that ensured the survival of the state. For this, Britain was chiefly to blame, and the secessionist sheikhs sponsored by that power had already put the CUP's goals out of reach in much of the area south of Baghdad.

Though differences with Britain occasionally strained relations across the border between still-nominally Ottoman Egypt and the Empire proper, the Persian Gulf was the major arena of competition between the Porte and the British superpower.⁵³ British power in the Gulf, like that of

⁵² Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 17-18, 582ff. See also Paul G. Halpern, *The Mediterranean Naval Situation, 1908-14* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 335-6.

⁵³ For this section generally, see Frederick Anscombe, *The Ottoman Gulf: The Creation of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), and the older but more useful Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). These studies, like most other secondary works on the subject, utilize the British Foreign Office *Confidential Print: Middle East* files. These are numbered by subject and file, and will hereafter be cited by those numbers only. The standard treaty, or "truce,"

the Russians in Eastern Anatolia, was based in its relationship with local clients, but there was also an economic dimension to the British-Ottoman confrontation in the Gulf. The “trucial system,” a series of protectorates among the littoral sheikhdoms of the Ottoman side of the Gulf, developed by the British from the 1850s, was intended all along as an aid to British commerce. Ending piracy was an obvious economic boon for Britain's Gulf trade, but less obvious was the way in which it allowed the British to monopolize the steamer trade into the Gulf by excluding European rivals and even the Ottomans, in the name of “preserving the truce.”⁵⁴ This was usually interpreted to mean that Britain could exercise a veto over any other naval presence in the Gulf, simply by saying that such a presence was a threat to one of the protected sheikhdoms.⁵⁵ The ways in which this proved of use in countering French, Russian, and, later, German penetration into the Gulf economy lies outside the scope of this study. The way in which the trucial system prevented Ottoman development of Gulf resources and control of the Gulf littoral is key to showing British hostility to Ottoman development and modernization.

Starting in 1870, under the energetic leadership of the future Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha, then *vali* of Baghdad, the Ottomans made numerous attempts to counter British encroachment in the Gulf region, attempts that continued until the outbreak of war in 1914.⁵⁶ These attempts were not merely directed at reducing the Royal Navy's military control of Gulf waters but at developing the resources of the Gulf littoral and enhancing the Sultan's political control of the fractious sheikhs

often referred to in British documents was an agreement for protection and exclusion of foreign influence. The original, from 1853, can be found in FO 406/9.

⁵⁴ An example of British use of the piracy issue to justify establishing relations with the Kuwaitis, without reference to Istanbul, can be found in telegrams from the India Office to the Foreign Office, both of October 27, 1897, in FO 406/14, nos. 20 and 21, which call attention to the use of Kuwait as a pirate base and advocate the sending of a gunboat. Lt. Col. Meade to Foreign Office, March 28, 1898 (received date not given), no. 33 in the same folio explicitly ties this incident to fears of Russian interest in the port of Kuwait.

⁵⁵ See the many examples in Penelope Tuson, ed. *Records of Saudi Arabia: Primary Documents, 1902-1960* (Slough: Archive Editions, 1992), vol. I-II, which despite the title contains a great many documents from before 1902, comprising, indeed, nearly the entire first volume.

⁵⁶ Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, pp. 23ff.

who were the real power in that area.⁵⁷ Whenever this program met with any success, the British had countered it. In 1870-71, the British Indian government had seriously contemplated using force to block an Ottoman expedition against the rebellious Saudi family, and even the attempted introduction of Ottoman merchant vessels to the Gulf, to supply the garrisons in the Hasa, were seen by Britain as a dangerous erosion of British paramountcy there.⁵⁸ Between 1899, when the British had extended their protection to the al-Sabah family of Kuwait, until 1913, when the Saudis expelled the Ottoman government from the Hasa coast with what they thought was British permission, the Ottomans lost control of the entire Gulf south of Basra.⁵⁹ But what concerned Istanbul in 1914 most of all were signs that Britain was now prepared to extend its influence inland and deprive the Ottomans of their control of Arabia.

Besides the British-protected sheikhdoms on the Gulf coast, Britain also had a hand in the long-running tribal feud between the Saudis of Nejd and their Ottoman-sponsored rivals, the Rashidis of Ha'il. British contacts with the Saudis went back to the 1840s, and though the British constantly refused to acknowledge any obligations on their part, the Saud family seems to have considered itself under British protection from at least the 1860s.⁶⁰ The Saud had long been armed by the Sabah, since 1899 definitely under British tutelage. While Ottoman complaints were met

⁵⁷ Ibid. Anscombe is very critical of Ottoman efforts, even though his monograph is largely the tale of how Britain made those efforts unworkable. For examples, see P. D. Henderson, "Precis of the Nejd Expedition," Government of India, 1871, in *Records of Saudi Arabia*, vol. I, pp. 476ff.

⁵⁸ These worries chiefly came from the Indian Government, which ceaselessly advocated a forward policy against occasional resistance in London. See India Office to Foreign Office, November 23, 1898; Foreign Office to India Office, December 5, 1898; Sir N. O'Connor to Salisbury, December 22, 1898; and India Office to Foreign Office, December 27, 1898, in FO 406/14 nos. 35-38; and O'Connor to Salisbury, July 5, 1899; India Office to Foreign Office, July 6, 1899; Foreign Office to India Office, with enclosures, same date; and Salisbury to M. Durand, July 8, 1899, in FO 416/1, nos. 5-8.

⁵⁹ According to Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, p. 93, the British slowly moved the limit of what they recognized as Ottoman northward along the Gulf coast, from Udayd before 1870, to Doha, and by the time of the protectorate over Kuwait to Uqayr, depending upon what British wished to claim. A slightly different account, with maps, can be found in Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, pp. 94ff.

⁶⁰ Sir Lewis Pelly, "Report on a Journey to the Wahabee Capital of Riyadh," Bombay, 1866, in *Records of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 444-7. An overview of British obligations is given in an official survey of policy in the Gulf, L.G. Laithwaite, India Office, "Memorandum on British Relations with the Wahhabi Emirs, 1800-1934" on pp. 696ff.

with British denial of responsibility for Nejd, the Government of India began to discuss the possibility of extending their protection to the Saudis as early as 1906.⁶¹ The Saudi seizure of Hasa in 1913 was quickly acknowledged by the British, and rumors that the Ottomans were mobilizing for a counter-stroke brought British warnings that this would “break the maritime truce.”⁶² A secret mission by the flamboyant Captain William H. I. Shakespear to Nejd, in 1911, had resulted in an agreement whereby the Saudis would enter into no relations with any other power but Britain and would inform Britain even of their talks with Istanbul, nominal sovereign of all Arabia. This bargain was kept, and attempts by the Ottomans to reconcile with the Saud came to nothing before the war, as the British played on fears that the centralizing and modernizing tendencies of the CUP would make even the establishment of postal communications between Nejd and Istanbul dangerous to Saudi authority.⁶³

Similar British rhetoric was used to keep Mubarak as-Sabah, sheikh of Kuwait, from accepting Ottoman overtures in the years before the war. When the Ottomans offered the Kuwaiti ruler the restoration of certain lands near Basra once owned by the sheikhly family, in return for the establishment of lighthouses to aid navigation and commerce in Kuwaiti waters, the British warned that this was merely the first step to establishing a customs house at Kuwait City, threatening the vast illegal revenue stream the Sabah realized from smuggling. Keeping open the smuggling routes operated as a complement to the British steamship monopoly in the Gulf, ensuring that Gulf markets were well-supplied with British goods, carried in British bottoms, and giving indigenous Ottoman industry no chance to compete effectively.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Laithwaite, “Memorandum”, *Records of Saudi Arabia*, p. 699.

⁶² Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, pp. 340-1. Lt. Shakespear, the man on the spot, begged for a protectorate over the Saudis, and died fighting alongside Ibn Saud in 1915.

⁶³ Laithwaite, “Memorandum,” in *Records of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 704-7.

⁶⁴ The British relations with Mubarak as-Sabah are covered in Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, pp. 101ff. See also “Lorimer’s Account of the the Struggle for the Possession of the Southern Najd,” from “Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman, and Central Arabia, vol. I,” Calcutta, 1915, reprinted in *Records of Saudi Arabia*, p. 553ff.

The carrying trade also served to introduce British influence to Mesopotamia. A British company had been given a monopoly on the Tigris and Euphrates steamer trade by the Sultan in the 1860s, and like the de facto monopoly on Gulf trade, this came to be seen by 1914 as a key British interest in the Middle East.⁶⁵ The protracted negotiations over the terminus of the Baghdad Railway, which Britain wanted kept as far from Lower Mesopotamia and Kuwait as possible, often evoked anguished telegrams between India, the Gulf, and London concerning the effects of a rail link to Anatolia on the British riverine trade. On the eve of the war, a British survey of Gulf interests noted that nearly three-quarters of the trade of Basra was controlled by Britain and that the steamship monopoly on the rivers made most of Mesopotamia dependent on British goodwill.⁶⁶ It is, therefore, not surprising that a chief Ottoman concern in the last months before war with the Entente was that the British flag was once again following British trade. Britain was known to have made contacts with the Muntafiq, a tribe that controlled much of the desert south of the Euphrates, through their Kuwaiti clients. British rifles were flowing through Kuwait to both the Muntafiq and the sheikh of Muhammerah, theoretically a Persian subject, whose lands were situated just across the border from Basra. When war came, British relations with these and other local notables came into the open, greatly facilitating the military advance into Mesopotamia.⁶⁷

Yemen, in southern Arabia, was another area where British and Ottoman interests collided. Though Istanbul had long claimed all of the Arabian peninsula, the Yemen had slipped from its control by the early 19th century, along with the Arabian interior and much of the Hejaz. When Egyptian forces sent by Muhammad Ali, officially reclaiming rebellious areas in the name of the Sultan-Caliph in Istanbul, took the highland Yemeni city of Taizz, the British East India Company

⁶⁵ See Kent, *The Great Powers*, p. 179-180, especially in connection with the superior German steamer services and British efforts to counter them.

⁶⁶ Laithwaite, "Memorandum," in *Records of Saudi Arabia*, pp. 696ff.

⁶⁷ Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, pp. 67, 135. Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf*, pp. 198-9.

acted to forestall the return of Ottoman sovereignty in this distant region by occupying the port of Aden. The nature of the Yemeni political situation forestalled for some time any further friction between the two empires. As elsewhere, however, British policy began to change in the 1870s. To secure the water supply of Aden, British agents engaged the Sultan of Lahej, just inland of the city, in a protection agreement. Soon, the British were making similar agreements throughout the Hadramawt coast of south Arabia, to secure the port of Mukalla, and also with local rulers on the islands that commanded the strategically important Strait of Bab el Mandab, between the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, through which all trade passing through the Suez Canal traveled. So serious was the situation seen in Istanbul that a large military expedition was sent to overawe the rulers of the entire Red Sea littoral, to prevent any further major British advances, especially in the Hejaz, whose possession was important to the Osmanli dynasty's religious legitimacy.⁶⁸ That all these areas, however loosely, were under the authority of the Ottomans seems to have made no impression. Five years before Britain acted to prop up the Ottomans at the Congress of Berlin, in 1873, a crisis between London and Istanbul over the dependencies of Lahej saw the British threaten war against the Porte if they were to encroach upon the territory of any of nine minor Yemeni rulers whom the British now proclaimed as being “protected” by their garrison in Aden.⁶⁹

The hinterland of Aden continued to creep outwards from that port, as British agents signed protectorate treaties with local tribal leaders whenever possible. Increasing Ottoman protests

⁶⁸ British interests in coming to an arrangement with the Sherif of Mecca date from at least 1860, see Buchanan to Grey, enclosure, July 11, 1914, in *BDOW*, vol. X, Part II, p. 824. By the 1880s British rifles were carried by the Sherif's personal military forces, according to Joshua Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall of the Hashemite Kingdom of Arabia* (London: Hurst and Co., 2001), p. 19 and note 22. See p. 12 for the importance of the Haramayn, or Holy Places, at Mecca and Medina to Ottoman legitimacy. The British wish to use the Haramayn for their own ends would lead them to discuss a Meccan Arab caliphate, again as early as the 1860s, and the last Sherif of Mecca under the Ottomans, Hussein, was appointed in part because of British intervention, according to Teitelbaum, pp. 40-1.

⁶⁹ Incidents on the border between the British and Ottoman areas of Yemen occasionally resulted in casualties, Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1967), p. 218 n. 112. See India Office to Foreign Office, May 25, 1906, with enclosures, in PRO 406/28, no. 32, for a typical incident of 1906. The British sent an officer with a small armed group on a show of force against the victorious Ottoman soldiers who had put down the Yemeni rebellion of 1905-6.

eventually led to an end to the signing of treaties with whichever of the local sheikhs could be persuaded to abandon allegiance to Istanbul by the end of the 1880s. From 1902-05, an Anglo-Ottoman Agreement was negotiated defining the boundary between Aden and the South Arabian protectorates on the one hand, and the Ottoman zone of Yemen on the other, from Bab al Mandab to Harib, deep in the arid interior of the Hadramawt. As in the Ottoman Gulf, however, ambitious local rulers and British rapacity combined to quickly make this arrangement a dead letter.⁷⁰

The Ottoman regime in Yemen was only one half of a strange dual system that saw the Ottoman *vali*, or governor, of the Yemen share authority with the Imam Yahya of Zaydi sect. The two clashed where the religious authority of Yahya and the secular power of the *vali* met, such as over control of the lucrative *waqfs*, or religious endowments. Religious differences between the Sunni Ottoman authorities and the Shia Zaydis only compounded these political differences. A rebellion of the Zaydis in 1905 was put down by the Ottoman Army, and though Istanbul seems to have suspected British influence controlling Yahya, there is no evidence their suspicions were correct.⁷¹ This did not hold true the next time. Yahya rebelled in early 1911, partly from fear of the new regime of the Young Turks in Istanbul, partly to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the chaos of coup and counter-coup in the distant capital. Yahya sought British help this time, and emissaries from the Imam reached Aden. All this was cut short, however, by the Italian declaration of war later in 1911, which saw the Red Sea become a theater of combat as soon as the Italians had secured their initial landings in Ottoman Tripolitania. Imam Yahya immediately reached a truce with the Ottoman government, in solidarity against the foreign foe, and when the equally rebellious Idrisi sheikhs of the Asir, north of Yemen, sided with the Italians, Yahya assisted the Ottomans in

⁷⁰ Paul Dresch, *A History of Modern Yemen* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 10ff. By 1906 local *sheikhs* had begun to petition for British intervention again, according to India Office to Foreign Office, May 25, 1906, in PRO 406/28 no. 32 and enclosure.

⁷¹ The British were aware of the happenings, and made an indirect connection between the Porte's centralizing policies and the rebellion. See O'Connor to Grey, June 28, 1906, in PRO 406/29, no. 1. Sir Edward Grey denied all involvement in *ibid.* no. 14, of July 19, 1906.

keeping order on his northern borders. The end of the 1911 rebellion was secured by a renegotiation of the condominium agreement between Istanbul and the imam. Yahya secured control of the *waqfs* and powers of taxation from the Ottomans and then began to expand his rule over non-Zaydis in the province, with British encouragement.⁷²

Though Yahya did not join the rulers of Asir and Hejaz in revolting against the Ottomans after 1914, the British role in the Yemen was a destructive one as far as Ottoman authority was concerned⁷³. The steady expansion of the Aden lodgement began by the early 1870s, long before most commentators see a change British policy toward the Ottomans. By the early 20th century, the Ottomans were, with some justice, ready to blame any problems with Yemen on British machinations, and the very presence of the Aden colony caused diplomatic collisions over borders and encouraged rebellious Ottoman subjects to think British help would solve their problems. After 1908, the centralizing tendencies of the CUP could find no purchase in south Arabia, where the local rulers had now carved out a substantial sphere of autonomy between Britain and the Porte⁷⁴. Britain's alliance with the Yemeni *sheikhdoms* continued after the Great War.

Similarly, postwar French rule in Syria was founded upon intrigues and interests established before the fighting began. While the other powers of the Entente had, after 1908, stalled any partition of the Ottoman Empire, Russia on the grounds that it was not yet ready to seize the Straits and Britain because many of its territorial and political goals were fulfilled through protectorates,

⁷² Britain's role in the agreement on separation of powers is harder to pin down, but it seems certain that Britain was involved in the expansion of Yahya's domain, which is the pattern seen earlier when carving out a hinterland for Aden through supporting the maximal claims of local rulers. Dresch, *Modern Yemen*, pp. 7-8. Dresch's first chapter is invaluable for this era of Yemeni history, but he seems to treat political history as merely a backdrop against which to tell colorful anecdotes and Yemeni legends. This is unfortunate, as few other recent sources in English are available.

⁷³ See "Mr. Lloyd's Memorandum Regarding German Influence in the Hedjaz Railway" PRO 406/29, no. 18, enclosure, July 24, 1906. While denying German interest in the Hejaz Railway, the author of the enclosure details the importance of the railway, and of the Yemen, to Ottoman legitimacy in the religious sphere. Holding on to power in South Arabia was key to "the welfare of and the continuance of Ottoman rule."

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* for Ottoman concerns. Some of the consequences in the long term can be followed in Teitelbaum, *Hashemite Kingdom*, ch. 4; there is a mention of the Yemen's consequences for other fronts in Hall, *Balkan Wars*, ch. 2 n. 12.

without formal partition of Ottoman Arabia, France did not view partition with such disquiet.⁷⁵ Guaranteeing that Syria and Cilicia fell to French influence in the event of a partition was one of the major goals of French policy in the two years before the war. Critical loans were withheld from the Istanbul government until the Germans and Ottomans agreed to divert the Baghdad Railway from Cilicia. France demanded all railroad building its preferred sphere be built with French capital and materials only. Only once France was “definite master of Syria” did the Quai d'Orsay agree to the loans.⁷⁶ France even attempted to influence the Papal conclave of 1914, hoping that a French or pro-French papacy might enhance French influence with the Catholics of Ottoman Syria.⁷⁷ Despite extensive coverage in the French press over Ottoman modernization and revival, France followed a consistent policy of delaying railroad building and port modernization in Syria and Cilicia right up until the war, in order to ensure that such improvements as the CUP planned would be used by France once those territories were transferred to Paris's control.

Based upon its geopolitical situation in 1914, the Ottoman turn to Germany that August was not a sudden and shocking reorientation of Istanbul's foreign relations.⁷⁸ The Committee of Union and Progress, only in total control of the Ottoman state apparatus from January 1913, saw its goal as the revivification of the Sultan's remaining domain, through a program of modernization and centralization that would enhance Ottoman revenue and independence of action and see the molding of a new Ottoman consciousness to replace the failed *millet* system, which had been exploited by external powers and internal religious minorities to weaken Istanbul's authority. Germany's support for this program was pragmatic and rested upon the formulation “For a weak Turkey, not a penny;

⁷⁵ See John F.V. Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 89ff.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 134. The quote is Jules Cambon's. Britain was aware of French claims, and supported them, according to O'Connor to Lansdowne, July 27, 1903, in FO406/19, no. 28, with enclosure. This document sketches out a partition of the Ottoman Empire, should the railway loan issue lead the Porte to insolvency again.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁷⁸ Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol. I, p. 539, holds this view. Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, p. 366 states it more succinctly.

for a strong Turkey, as much as she may desire.”⁷⁹ This program was directly opposed to the interests of the Entente powers. Britain, with its client sheikhs in Arabia and its growing trade interests in the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia, had long abandoned its 19th century policy of propping up Ottoman rule, and by 1914 routinely sided with Russia over “reforms” in Macedonia and Armenia designed to weaken Ottoman rule and expose ever more Ottoman Muslims to the ethnic cleansing and massacre that marked the long Ottoman retreat from the Balkans. What was left of the Ottoman Empire, thanks to these efforts, was in debt, filled with refugees it could not integrate or pay for, and crumbling around the edges thanks to secessionist sheikhs and Christian revolutionaries, all in the pay and protection of the Entente. The Germans did not necessarily endorse the CUP program, especially the provisions regarding the abrogation of the Capitulations. But Germany was the only large power willing to use its Ottoman investments to build up infrastructure, such as the Baghdad Railway, that strengthened the Sultan's hold on his domains. That some in the German government hoped that they would eventually inherit Anatolia is irrelevant. The Ottoman government faced a dangerous situation in 1914 and unsurprisingly turned to the Power most in need of their assistance and least likely to demand unacceptable conditions after the war. The turn to Germany was a risk, but a calculated one.

⁷⁹ O'Connor to Lansdowne, July 27, 1903, in FO 416/9, gives a British assessment of German thinking during the negotiations over the Baghdad Railway kilometeric guarantees. The Germans indicated that they would not accept any outcome that beggared the Ottomans even further, for fear of losing their investment in case of a partition.

Chapter 3: The Years of Crisis and the German Alliance

The factors that pushed the Ottomans away from the Entente powers in 1914 were many. What, then, made the Germans the more attractive power to align with for an Ottoman Empire run by men not only aware of, but obsessed with their state's relative decline in world position? Until now this has been a question belonging to the historiography of modern Germany. As outlined in the introduction, the contours of the debate were formed by Fritz Fischer, who articulated a view of Germany as a state bent on colonial expansion, with continuity between the policies of the *Kaiserreich* and the Nazi state's genocidal campaign of conquest.⁸⁰ Ulrich Trumpener believed in an Ottoman-German alliance that was patched together only under the exigencies of war with the Entente, which had actually begun the day before the treaty was signed on August 2, 1914, with the German declaration of war upon Russia.⁸¹ The post-Fischer debate historiography of German imperialism has no place for the Ottoman Empire. German expansion there can neither be easily related to its continental schemes, nor does the very indirect influence exerted by Wilhelm II's Germany over the Ottoman Near East prefigure in any way the horrors of the Nazi New Order in Eastern Europe.⁸²

There is, however, another option. The Ottoman government chose alliance with Germany, not because of German influence or economic power in the Ottoman lands. That influence was, after all, far smaller than the Entente Powers. Germany had a small, but growing, share of the packet steamer trade in the Persian Gulf, and a negligible share of holdings of Ottoman debt

⁸⁰ See Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht*, pp. 132-8, as this relates to the Ottoman Empire.

⁸¹ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 16-17.

⁸² A thorough historiography of the post-*Sonderweg* paradigm debate on German imperialism and expansionism can be found in Winson Chu, Jesse Kauffman, and Michael Meng, "A *Sonderweg* Through Eastern Europe? The Varieties of German Rule in Poland during the Two World Wars," forthcoming in *German History*.

compared to France and Britain. Germany lacked the *Régie*, the French-run tobacco monopoly, or anything comparable to the British right, enshrined in treaty since the mid-19th century, to a monopoly on the riverine trade of Mesopotamia. The only German investments of any substance were in the *Deutsche Bank* initiated Baghdad Railroad project, which had only begun to show its potential benefits by the time war interrupted the construction timetables. Instead, in a sort of inverse of the Trumpener thesis, the Ottomans were the suitors, and the Germans the pursued, precisely because they were the least powerful of the major European states in the Middle East, and because they were available, due to the pressures of war with Russia and Britain. Ottoman-German relations became closer during the years after the revolution despite the pro-Entente sympathies of some members of the ruling circle in Istanbul, and even in the face of hostile actions against the Ottomans by Germany's alliance partners. This was because the Germans offered the Ottomans precisely what they needed: a Great Power patron without existing interests or clients in the Ottoman lands, but eager to expand trade and influence at the expense of those who did have such interests. The Ottomans also had much to offer Germany, and they sold their services dear, contradicting any arguments that include intrigue, bribery, or the personality of Enver Pasha to explain the Ottoman decision-making process in 1914.

From the Ottoman point of view, negotiations toward a Great Power alliance began almost immediately after the victory of the Committee for Union and Progress and its associated groups in 1908. An insurrection of the Ottoman officers in Macedonia began on July 27, and the Constitution of 1876, with its guarantees of civil rights and system of parliamentary representation, was restored within days.⁸³ The first recorded diplomatic overtures of the revolutionary government were made

⁸³ Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *A History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Volume II: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 266.

in London, in 1908.⁸⁴ The British showed little interest, which sorely tested the initial Anglophilia of the new leaders in Istanbul.

The march on Istanbul and the restoration of the Constitution of 1876 set in motion a cascading series of calamities for the Ottomans in the Balkan theater. Bulgaria threw off the last vestiges of Ottoman sovereignty on October 5 and brought legality into line with reality by declaring its complete independence.⁸⁵ Much more seriously, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in a reversal of the policy of placing the Balkans “on ice,” which had been agreed with the Russians in 1897, decided upon the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸⁶ Bosnia had been occupied by the Dual Monarchy since the Congress of Berlin in 1878, but the crescent flag still formally flew over the governor's house in Sarajevo. Despite serious German misgivings regarding this action and the pressure it would place on the Porte, the Austro-Hungarians engaged in a flurry of diplomatic maneuvering to secure the province. In the end, after the annexation crisis nearly caused a European war, German prestige in Istanbul was damaged less than might have been thought. The Austro-Hungarians had evacuated the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, also occupied since 1878 and a key target of maximalists in Vienna, not as a concession to Russian pressure against further annexations but because of German insistence. There was, indeed, a German scheme, endorsed by the Kaiser, to have Austria-Hungary guarantee the remaining Ottoman Balkan lands after the crisis was over, but this was vetoed by the British ambassador to Vienna for fear of offending St. Petersburg. Also blocked by British diplomatic action was a potential Ottoman-Serbian alliance in late 1908 which, while directed against Austria-Hungary at the high point of the crisis, would have equally served as

⁸⁴ Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 77-8. See also Ernest Ramsaur, *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 141ff. See also Sir Edward Grey to Sir Gerard Lowther (Ambassador at Istanbul), July 31, 1908, No. 208, in *BDOW*, vol. V, pp. 266-7. Zurcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, p. 111 believes that Paris was first approached.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-8. Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, pp. 15-18.

⁸⁶ Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, pp. 166-7.

a check on further encroachment on the Sultan's lands in the Balkans.⁸⁷ Despite the actions of its Austro-Hungarian allies, the Germans had continued to impress upon the CUP government its unwillingness to pursue a partitioning of the Ottoman lands.⁸⁸

The German documents indicate that this unwillingness was not due to any scruples about expansion at Ottoman expense. On the contrary, Berlin simply felt the time was not right. With the Berlin-Baghdad Railway still far from completion and German trade still a small fraction of British and French in the Ottoman Empire, any partition would have resulted in Germany getting too small a share.⁸⁹ While the Kaiser continued to alternate between championing Ottoman interests and declaring the urgent need to secure parts of Anatolia in his marginalia, German policy consistently emphasized the former.

Another sore test of Germany's relations with the Ottoman Empire came in October 1911, when Italy attacked the Ottomans to seize the Porte's remaining North African provinces. Italy, as a member of the Berlin-centered Triple Alliance since 1881, could not have acted without Berlin's tacit acquiescence. Indeed, as Shaw points out, all the European Great Powers, which had solemnly signed the Berlin Act of 1878 guaranteeing Ottoman integrity, gave Italy permission to attack Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.⁹⁰ However, the Germans conspicuously backed the Austrians when the latter refused to allow Italian action against the Ottoman Adriatic coast and no rupture in relations between Germany and the Ottomans occurred. Moreover, it was at just this time that the economic aspects of Ottoman-German relations were raising Berlin's importance in Istanbul.

The Baghdad Railroad was the largest single foreign venture in the Ottoman economy when

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 17-18. Whitehead to Grey, Nov. 25, 1908, no. 455, in *BDOW*, vol. V, p. 502.

⁸⁸ Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, pp. 17-18.

⁸⁹ For a summary of German documents on this issue, see Gregor Schoellgen, "Dann Müssen wir un saber Mesopotamia sichern! Motive Deutscher Tuerkenpolitik zur Zeit Wilhelms II in Zeitgenoessischen Darstellungen." *Saeculum* 32, no. 2 (1981): 130-145. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, pp. 51-2.

⁹⁰ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 595. See also R.J.B. Bosworth, "Britain and Italy's Acquisition of the Dodecanese, 1912-1915," in *The Historical Journal* 13, no. 2 (1970): 683-705.

the Great War began.⁹¹ The initial groundbreaking occurred under the auspices of a consortium of German banks, led by the Deutsche Bank, but by the time the rail line had reached the Taurus Mountains, slowing construction and badly damaging profitability until the German railroad engineers could blast costly tunnels through the rock, the scheme had been largely nationalized. German government funding was matched by Ottoman government funding, though the latter was indirect. This came not in the form of cash outlays, but of “kilometric guarantees,” by which the Ottoman government pledged that the line would have a minimum profitability per unit constructed.⁹² The Germans agreed to much more than merely constructing the rails in return for these guarantees. The Ottomans wanted the Baghdad Railroad to enhance control over the difficult to govern interior of Anatolia. The railroad's right-of-way would include the rails themselves, spurs to all major towns passed, a telegraph line, electricity transmission lines, stations, post offices to handle the telegraphic messages of the wires and the parcels brought on the rails, and gendarmerie outposts to protect all of this, all of it to be built with German money. In return, the German consortium would be allowed to exploit the mines along the right-of-way, mines whose profitability to the Ottomans would have been negligible without the rails to ferry their output to the cities and ports. By the time the First World War disrupted employment figures all over the Ottoman Empire due to the mobilization of all able-bodied men for the armed forces, the Baghdad Railroad project employed 16,000 Ottomans.⁹³

The strategic and political ramifications of the railroad were even greater. As early as 1897, the completed European portions of the Berlin-Baghdad Railway, which then extended only to Istanbul, were instrumental in the Ottoman success that spring and summer against a Greek

⁹¹ Shaw, *ibid.*, pp. 6-7. Economic aspects in McMeekin, *Berlin-Baghdad Express*, pp. 35ff.; Jonathan S. McMurry, “Distant Ties: Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and the Construction of the Baghdad Railway, 1903-1908” (Unpublished PhD dissertation: Claremont University, 1999), pp. 75ff.

⁹² See “Summary of a pamphlet by Dr. Paul Rohrbach respecting the Baghdad Railway, dated January 18, 1902” in Sir N. O'Connor to Marquess of Lansdowne, no. 28, PRO 406/19, July 27, 1903.

⁹³ McMeekin, *Berlin-Baghdad Express*, pp. 45ff. McMurray, “Distant Ties”, pp. 113ff.

invasion of Thessaly. Reversing decades of defeat and military decline, the Ottoman Army mobilized rapidly using the German-built rails to speed troops from the capital into the Balkans, and pushed the Greeks back into their own territory. The settlement of the war, largely mediated by Britain and over the vocal protests of Germany, forced the Ottomans to relinquish their advantages both on the mainland and on Crete, but the impression made upon the Ottoman generals of the railroad's strategic value was tremendous.⁹⁴

All the while, attempts to reform the Ottoman economy continued apace. Turkish nationalist writers like Ziya Gökalp and Ömer Seyfuddin spread the word in their writings that “economic slavery was the root cause of political slavery.”⁹⁵ To withstand European encroachments, the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire had to engage in trade. To encourage this, nationalist newspapers in Anatolia and the Arab provinces began to encourage boycotts of not just foreign-owned businesses within the empire but even of native Ottoman Christian businesses that hid behind the Capitulations and the extraterritorial legal exemptions handed out so freely by the European consulates to preferred local agents.⁹⁶ Government initiatives, such as the opening of a Trade School and the holding of Ottoman trade fairs in foreign capitals, supplemented these exhortations. Attempts were made to circumvent the foreign stranglehold on the Ottoman banking system by the creation of the Ottoman Property Bank, which provided low-interest loans to Ottoman citizens who wished to buy land and manufacturing establishments. Some of the capital for this project came from *Muhajirs Balkan* who had fled the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia, or the Balkan Wars. Similarly, a government-established holding company began pooling capital to buy up

⁹⁴ McMeekin, *Berlin-Baghdad Express*, p. 37. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 3-4. See also the two articles by Ariadne Montifidou, “Das Deutsche Engagement im Orient im Spiegel der Unveroeffentlichten akten der Grossen Politik, 12 Mai-12 Juni 1897,” in *Südostforschungen* 51 (1992): 251-262, and “Der Osmanisch-Griechische Waffenstillstand von 1897,” in *Südostforschungen* 52 (1993): 73-79.

⁹⁵ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 227.

⁹⁶ Donald Quataert, “The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914,” in Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economy and History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 824ff.

uneconomical Anatolian mines. These were then sold to native Ottoman entrepreneurs on the understanding that Ottoman citizens would be employed at all levels in their operation, not just as manual laborers. By the middle of 1914, Ottoman-run mines and factories for making textile and ammunition began to proliferate through the core Anatolian provinces. Government mandates on use of native engineers and managers ensured that these enterprises would serve as the schools of a new Ottoman skilled professional class; government contracts ensured their profitability, even with the disadvantages of the Capitulations and the low tariff structure vis-a-vis Europe.⁹⁷

There were limits, however, to the Ottoman government's ability to encourage native enterprises. The inability to raise tariffs, or to hold merchants protected by the Capitulations to Ottoman legal standards, limited profitability. When government contracts or nationalist-led boycotts were not available as props to native industry, as they often were not outside of Istanbul, Izmir, and a few other large cities, competition from foreign and foreign-protected businesses continued to depress prices and harm Ottoman industrialization.⁹⁸ With the Ottoman Public Debt Corporation ensuring that service of foreign loans had priority over the domestic budget, the only monies readily available for investment were in the army ammunition factory established at Kayseri, which could be justified as a state necessity. Other priorities did not move the bond-holder Powers at all. Measures against the Franco-British monopolies were blocked, and the only concession which the Entente powers eventually agreed to, in April, 1914, was a minor measure to mandate the purchase of inferior Ottoman coal for the Ottoman Navy.⁹⁹ It was thus that the Ottoman government began to look at the abolition of the Capitulations, which were, after the revolution, the only obstacle to the trade and industrial policies of the CUP and the Porte.

⁹⁷ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 203ff. Background on Ottoman terms of trade and industrial development in Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914," pp. 907-8. See also Roger Owen, "The 1838 Anglo-Turkish Convention: An Overview," in *New Perspectives on Turkey* 7 (1992): 7-14.

⁹⁸ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 237, note 508. Quataert, "Age of Reforms," pp. 934-940.

⁹⁹ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 255ff.

The July Crisis found the Ottomans, therefore, frustrated in their attempts to circumvent their economic handicaps and incapable of breaking the Entente's united front. The Ottoman representatives on the Public Debt Commission board were always outvoted by the British and French representatives. Indeed, there was often little difference between those two categories, as the British and French ambassadors eagerly promoted their own clients within the Ottoman Empire for positions on the commission.¹⁰⁰ The only European state which had indicated any interest at all in renegotiating its privileges was Germany. In April 1914, the Germans had quietly responded to Ottoman feelers of the same type being put out to Britain, France, and Russia. The Germans were willing to forego the right to try protected persons in German courts. In other words, Berlin was ready to cease giving honorary citizenship to Ottoman-born merchants, though not to allow legitimate German nationals to be tried in Ottoman courts. It is interesting that the Germans agreed to this out of weakness. The Ottomans were attempting to extract these concessions by threatening an increase in duties on German industrial products.¹⁰¹ While Britain regarded the Capitulations as non-negotiable, the Germans could be persuaded if their growing trade with the Ottoman Empire were threatened.

These negotiations had little time to succeed, and nothing was done before the final crisis. Shaw's narrative of these events, certainly the most thorough account of late Ottoman politics and diplomacy to date, comes to the conclusion that "all of the Great Powers, whether they wanted Ottoman alliance or not, were unwilling to budge on the question of the Capitulations."¹⁰² Instead of noting the failure of negotiations, it might be better, however, to note which state was willing to negotiate. It was Germany, with an oddly paradoxical situation in the Ottoman Empire whereby

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. British responses in Mallet to Grey, no. 258, July 5, 1914, in *BDOW*, vol. 10 pt. 2, p. 415, and Mallet to Grey, no. 250, June 16, 1914, p. 409.

¹⁰² Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 255.

they had simultaneously less invested but more to lose, that proved willing to discuss the matter. Britain had more leverage. British influence in the Persian Gulf, as we have seen, rested on local clients and was entirely antagonistic to Ottoman rule. Germany had no other options. The Baghdad Railway was a government sponsored venture, and the negotiations with London over its potential Persian Gulf terminus had granted Germany a standing in Middle Eastern affairs all out of proportion to its small share of trade there and its recent arrival in the region's power politics.¹⁰³ But as we have seen, Germany's position was highly dependent upon the friendship of the Ottoman government. Specifically, the kilometeric guarantees, and the ancillary mining and industrial concerns along the railroad's right-of-way were important elements in securing funding and Ottoman cooperation. With the railway negotiations finally yielding the fruits Germany sought, Berlin could ill afford to alienate the Porte in the crises to come.

For the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan League's aggression of October 1912 began a final war of dissolution that would continue almost without pause until the victory of Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk)'s Turkish Republic over a decade later. As with the Bosnian annexation crisis, and the Tripolitan War with Italy, the Balkan Wars could have proved a strain on relations with Germany. The Kaiser's proclaimed policy of "free fight and no favor" left the Ottomans at the mercy of their enemies.¹⁰⁴ This policy, however, has to be placed in its context. At the time Berlin proclaimed its *laissez faire* attitude to the fighting in Macedonia and Thrace they had every reason to believe the Ottomans would win a land war in Europe, as they had in 1897.¹⁰⁵ The von der Goltz military mission of the 1880s had familiarized the *Reich's* General Staff with their Ottoman counterparts, and they were confident in the Ottoman General Staff's ability to devise a plan of campaign that

¹⁰³ This is the thrust of "Extract from *Novaya Vremya* of July 17 (30), 1903," enclosed with Sir C. Scott to Lansdowne, no. 29, July 30, 1903, in PRO 406/20.

¹⁰⁴ See Helmreich, *Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars*, p. 98, and Lord Granville to Grey, no. 29, October 14, 1912, in *BDOW*, vol. IX, pp. 21-2.

¹⁰⁵ Bernhard von Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow Vol. III: The World War and Germany's Collapse* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1932), p. 127.

would best the Balkan League. Ottoman staff work during the war was impressive even to the German military observers. The Ottoman staff officers anticipated enemy intentions, and devised a sequence of operational maneuvers that would have kept the Bulgarians from breaking out into the Thracian plain. The Ottoman failure against the Bulgars, as already discussed, was due to the inability of the junior officer corps to execute the complex, Prussian-style maneuvers that the German-trained Ottoman staff officers ordered.¹⁰⁶

The assassination of the Habsburg heir in Sarajevo, on June 28, 1914, produced the same flurry of diplomacy in Istanbul as in the other capitals of Europe. By July 14 the Ottomans had made overtures to both alliance blocs offering neutrality to the highest bidder. As we have seen, these proposals were not new, nor were the Ottoman conditions. With the exception of the return of some islands in the Aegean seized by the Greeks less than two years previously, the Ottomans desired only protection from other predatory powers. Contrary to his later reputation as a German agent of influence, it was Enver Pasha who argued most strenuously against any Ottoman military action, in conversations reported to Berlin by German Ambassador Hans von Wangenheim.¹⁰⁷ The Entente powers did not respond to Ottoman overtures, but the German negotiations quickly settled into a pattern that became familiar. Faced with a German demand that the alliance be limited to the period of the crisis, the Ottomans vaguely threatened to join the Entente instead. Berlin gave in, and Ambassador von Wangenheim was ordered to sign an alliance with the Ottomans on August 2, 1914. By its terms, the Germans guaranteed Ottoman territory, promised not to make a separate peace until territory lost in the war was recovered, and agreed to a large loan to the Ottoman

¹⁰⁶ Ottoman impressions of the changes made can be found in Pertev Demirhan, *General-Feldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz: Das Lebensbild eines Grossen Soldaten: Aus Meinem Personlichen Erinnerungen* (Göttingen: Unknown, 1960). Richard Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 43; Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans* (Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2009), pp. 206-9.

¹⁰⁷ Wangenheim to Auswärtiges Amt, no. 362, July 22, 1914, reproduced in full in Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 55-7. See also Karl Kautsky, ed. *Outbreak of the World War: German Documents Collected by Karl Kautsky*, document no. 120, pp. 156-8, Wangenheim to Foreign Office, July 23, 1914.

treasury. In return, the Ottomans agreed to go to war with the Entente powers, though the document was vague on the timing and form of any hostile action.¹⁰⁸ The Ottomans were aware that the articles committing them to war with Germany's enemies were not hypothetical: Germany had declared war on Russia the day before. With the protection of one of the Powers, the Ottomans quickly moved to secure their long-standing goals.

The end of the Capitulations came with the publication of the formal order that the Ottomans would no longer accept limits to their courts' competence over Ottoman nationals and matters taking place in Ottoman territory, on September 9, 1914. The spontaneous celebrations that greeted the announcement were attended by Ottoman citizens regardless of creed, “because of their feeling that the foreign influences which had prevented the Empire from prospering and restoring its old power and glory had been wiped away.”¹⁰⁹ Demonstrations in favor of the measure even occurred in British-occupied Egypt, despite attempts by the authorities in Cairo to prevent it.¹¹⁰ The British response, delivered by their ambassador, Louis Mallet, was typical in its insistence that the Ottomans had acted “precipitately,” that it must be a pro-German intrigue to harm the economies of the Entente, and that this measure would increase, not diminish, foreign interference in the affairs of the Sultan's realm.¹¹¹ The Germans, however, shared the dismay of the Entente powers. Despite their alliance with the Porte, German Ambassador Wangenheim was “in a state of confrontation and passion” over the decision and immediately made his anger known to the Grand Vizier, Said Halim

¹⁰⁸ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 60ff. The rapid negotiations can be followed in Kautsky, *German Documents*, Wangenheim to Foreign Office, no. 99, July 21, 1914; Wangenheim to Foreign Office, no. 117, July 22, 1914; Jagow to Wangenheim, no. 144, July 24, 1914; Wangenheim to Foreign Office, no. 147, July 24, 1914; Wangenheim to Foreign Office, no. 149, July 23, 1914; Bethmann-Hollweg to Wangenheim, no. 547, August 1, 1914.

¹⁰⁹ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 267.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Mallet to Grey, September 9, 1914, in *Correspondence Respecting Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey* (London: HMSO, 1918), pp. 22-3. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 262-3.

Pasha.¹¹² In paranoid mirror image of his British, French, and Russian counterparts, Wangenheim reported to Berlin that the Ottoman abolition of the Capitulations was actually part of an Entente scheme to break up the new alliance between Berlin and Istanbul.¹¹³ From this it seems that Berlin was not even warned of the Ottoman action, let alone consulted with beforehand. Istanbul's actions were taken in the advancement of a long-held goal and indicated the Porte's lack of subservience to Berlin, though none of the Entente ambassadors could be convinced of this.

The only decision remaining to the Ottomans was to enter the war. Having fulfilled their chief goal of abolishing the hated Capitulations, there now seems to have been some debate as to the timing of Ottoman entry into the conflict. The traditional narratives have long split the ruling figures into pro-Entente and pro-Central Powers camps. Enver Pasha, Minister of War, desired war at all costs, and the sooner the better. Cemal Pasha, Minister of Marine, is supposed to have favored the Entente, and specifically France, and to have desired the Porte to await the outcome of the opening campaigns in Europe. Talat Pasha, Minister of Interior, represented a persuadable middle position. Said Halim Pasha and Cavid Pasha, the Grand Vizier and Minister of Finance, respectively, are usually treated as pro-Entente but increasingly marginalized.¹¹⁴ There are two reasons to reject this categorization of the cabinet, one internal and one external to the Porte.

Externally, the Ottoman Cabinet was not the only body with divided counsel on an immediate Ottoman entry into the war. The German government heard conflicting reports from its own Foreign Office, General Staff, and from the men on the spot in Istanbul. The German General Staff, especially after the end of the German advance into France with the Battle of the Marne, insisted upon an immediate Ottoman attack to draw off British divisions to Egypt and Russian units

¹¹² Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 38-9.

¹¹³ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 263.

¹¹⁴ See Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 17-20 for the classical formulation of this narrative. For more recent, but very similar, retellings, see Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 667ff, and Hamilton and Herwig, *Decisions for War*, pp. 159-60.

to the Viceroyalty of the Caucasus.¹¹⁵ The Foreign Office came under pressure from the Finance Ministry to show that the massive subsidies the Ottomans were receiving had created advantages for Germany, and thus also supported an immediate Ottoman entry into the war. But the view from beside the Golden Horn in Istanbul was very different. Ambassador Wangenheim was of the opinion that the Ottomans were not ready for war, and that the Porte's neutrality was far more beneficial for Germany than a disastrous collapse in the face of British and Russian attacks which would require more German soldiers and weapons to be diverted to the Middle East.¹¹⁶ General Liman von Sanders was equally doubtful. The officers of his military mission were full of misgivings about the quality of their Ottoman counterparts and especially about the military skill of the Ottoman Army's rank and file. Liman von Sanders threatened to quit his post if the Ottomans were allowed to go to war with the plans they had, which he thought would lead only to rapid defeat and the need for a major German expeditionary force on the Turkish Straits. In the end, German War Minister and acting Chief of the General Staff Erich von Falkenhayn had to order Liman von Sanders to accept Ottoman entry under *any* plan they devised, so great was Berlin's desire to see the Ottomans open hostilities with the Entente.¹¹⁷ Berlin's desires won out over the objections of both of the *Reich's* principle agents in Istanbul, but the divisions within the German camp over Ottoman entry show that it was not the Ottomans alone who had misgivings about an immediate offensive action.

The second reason to doubt the traditional narrative of a German-influenced Enver Pasha triumphant over reluctant comrades is that the main Ottoman actors switched roles more than once in the period between the signing of the German-Ottoman Alliance and the attack on the Russian Black Sea coast at the end of October. Enver Pasha, far from being pro-German to a fault, played a

¹¹⁵ Strachan, *The First World War*, pp. 680ff. But see the contrary view in Jehuda Wallach, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe: der Preussisch-Deutschen Militärmissionen in der Türkei 1835-1919*, (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1976), p. 150.

¹¹⁶ Kautsky, *German Documents*, Wangenheim to Foreign Office, no. 81, July 19, 1914.

¹¹⁷ Liman von Sanders, *Fünf Jahre Türkei*, pp. 33-44.

double game with Berlin. Only three days after Ambassador Wangenheim signed the alliance agreement, on August 5th, Enver privately approached the Russian ambassador, Baron Giers, to propose once again an alliance with St. Petersburg. Giers, in immediate contact with his superiors, thought this a serious offer and advised acceptance, with no result. Enver at this point offered the Russians specific terms, which were confirmed by Said Halim Pasha in conversations with the British government.¹¹⁸ The terms were to be maintenance of Ottoman neutrality, the confiscation of German business interests in the Middle East, the return of some of the Aegean islands with large Turkish populations as well as the Turkish-speaking regions of Western Thrace now under Bulgarian rule, and an end to Russian and British interference on behalf of the Ottoman Armenians.¹¹⁹ Giers again wired Sazonov endorsing this.¹²⁰ As before, the Tsar's ministers waffled and nothing was done. Sazonov specifically ruled out giving up Russia's leverage with the Armenians.¹²¹ When the British were informed, Sir Edward Grey was dismissive of the need for any agreements with the Ottomans. Later in August, when it became clear that the German admiral Wilhelm Souchon was attempting to take his Mediterranean Squadron into the Straits, Grey continued to dismiss Russian attempts to interest London in an Ottoman agreement. Only the German ships, Grey believed, posed a danger to the Entente in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Ottomans he discounted as a force, emphasizing that he would never agree to return Christians to the rule of the Muslim Ottoman Sultan.¹²²

Enver was not the only Ottoman minister to switch his role during the final crisis.¹²³ Cemal, the pro-French member of the ruling circle, continued to believe in a swift German victory even

¹¹⁸ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 634.

¹¹⁹ Giers to Sazonov, July 25 (August 7), 1914, in *Negotiations*, p. 7.

¹²⁰ Giers to Sazonov, July 26 (August 8), 1914, in *Negotiations*, p. 9.

¹²¹ Sazonov to Giers, July 26 (August 8), 1914, in *ibid*.

¹²² Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, p. 150.

¹²³ Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 634ff. Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 94ff. Stachan, *The First World War*, p. 675, considers Talat's "conversion" to the German alliance more important.

after the Battle of the Marne and the Austro-Hungarian loss of Lemberg in Galicia. Even more importantly, whether the Germans won or lost, these setbacks had increased the value of the German connection to Istanbul by increasing the Germans' need for allies. This was an important consideration if the Ottomans were looking not for territorial conquests after a victorious war, but for the loans and other economic concessions that even the pro-Entente Cemal and Said Halim repeatedly emphasized as their goal.¹²⁴ In September, Mahmud Muhtar Pasha, Ottoman Ambassador to Berlin, even sounded out the Germans on the possibility of a smaller loan than previously requested in exchange not for belligerence, but for continued neutrality.

The arrival of Admiral Souchon's squadron, after a harrowing dash across the Mediterranean with the British and French fleets in pursuit, did not bring an end to Ottoman haggling over the terms and timing of their intervention and certainly did not mean that Ottoman intervention was “ordained”.¹²⁵ Two major decisions faced the Ottoman government after Souchon arrived at the Dardenelles on August 10. First, whether to allow the Germans in without disarming and interning them, as was expected of a neutral state. Secondly, once the ships were admitted, whether to use them to upset the balance of power in the Black Sea by attacking Russia as Berlin began to insist from the moment Souchon dropped anchor at the Golden Horn. Though the Ottomans eventually decided both of these issues in Germany's favor in neither case is there evidence that Enver Pasha, or any pro-German faction surrounding him, carried out these steps alone. Rather, the Ottoman government took the final step by a collective decision that while not unanimous, showed that most Ottoman leaders now wished for war with the Entente.

The initial decision to allow Souchon in was issued by Enver Pasha on August 4. This was, however, quickly countermanded after a meeting of the entire cabinet on August 5. Fearful of

¹²⁴ A representative example can be found in Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 91-2.

¹²⁵ Strachan, *The First World War*, p. 678.

provoking Bulgaria into marching on Istanbul, Said Halim Pasha mustered a majority against Enver, who bowed to the will of his colleagues and agreed to wait on events.¹²⁶ Another cabinet meeting the next evening reversed course again and decided to admit the German cruisers after all.¹²⁷ The importance of this indecisive behavior on the part of the cabinet lies in both the dynamic between its members and in that between the Ottoman government and its alliance partner. As for the Ottomans, the countermanding of Enver's initial order shows that cabinet rule was still intact in Istanbul. Even recent surveys of Ottoman decision-making during the crisis which acknowledge this often overstate the influence of Enver Pasha and understate that of Said Halim. The events of August 5 make it obvious that Said Halim could bring a majority of the cabinet to his side and that Enver could not overrule this body.¹²⁸ The Ottoman-German dynamic in this instance continued to favor the former. The cabinet reversal which finally allowed the *Goeben* and *Breslau* into the safety of the Straits also decided to acquiesce on immediate entry into the war in return for a new concession from the Germans. Berlin was now to secure for the Ottomans a defensive alliance with Bulgaria to ensure there would be no repeat of the events of late 1912, when the Bulgars had nearly taken the Ottoman capital. There is reason to believe that the Ottomans were aware, through their embassy in Sofia, of the impossibility of such an agreement at this time. The cabinet, therefore, voted to allow the German vessels sanctuary in return for diplomatic efforts on their behalf, in return for which they would still enter the war, eventually.¹²⁹

The final decision for war saw the Ottomans play a double game with the Entente. Again there seem to have been divisions in the cabinet. Again the primary Ottoman goal was clear. As soon as the German ships entered the Straits the Entente ambassadors began agitating for their

¹²⁶ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 631-2.

¹²⁷ Ibid. Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 114-15 claims the final cabinet vote was unanimous.

¹²⁸ Hamilton and Herwig, *Decisions for War*, p. 159.

¹²⁹ Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 632. Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 117-18.

disarmament or expulsion from Ottoman waters. The Ottomans responded, in all cases, with a willingness to consider breaking with the Germans even at this late date in return for substantial concessions on the Capitulations. Maurice Bompard, representing France at Istanbul, now played the role Giers had before, recommending that the Entente make concessions and provide guarantees against Russian aggression. The eventual Entente offer, however, offered the Ottomans only the nationalization of German concessions in Ottoman territory, and the removal of Germany's extraterritorial rights.¹³⁰ When the Ottomans turned this down, Ambassador Mallet telegraphed to London that it signified that “Constantinople [...] will become nothing more nor less than a sort of German enclave.”¹³¹

The level of German control was somewhat less than Mallet indicated. While the Entente demanded the internment of the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, the Germans insisted upon Admiral Souchon being allowed to move against the Russians in the Black Sea. The Ottomans again procrastinated. Enver Pasha himself informed Berlin that nothing could be done until the Straits defenses were stronger.¹³² This excuse, first used to deny Souchon entrance, was now used to deny him exit. When the issue had first been brought up the Germans had detached *Sonderkommando Usedom*, consisting of heavy coastal defense artillery units and hundreds of engineers, to strengthen the Dardanelles forts. While this was going on Said Halim Pasha was making yet another offer to the Entente. Having stalled them with the famous ruse of “purchasing” the *Goeben* and *Breslau* from Germany and inducting the ships' crews into the Ottoman Navy, Said Halim now “begged” London for some concession on the Capitulations.¹³³ Sir Edward Grey made Britain's final offer on August 22: an end to extraterritoriality, but only with qualifications that would continue to exempt

¹³⁰ Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 638.

¹³¹ Mallet to Grey, August 28, 1914, in *Correspondence Respecting Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey*, p. 15.

¹³² Reported in Wangenheim to Foreign Office, no. 852, August 4, 1914, in Kautsky, *German Documents*, pp. 588-9.

¹³³ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 665.

foreigners from Ottoman courts and taxes.¹³⁴ It was not enough.

Throughout the negotiations, which continued long after both contemporary Entente diplomats and subsequent generations of historians believed Istanbul firmly in Germany's camp, the Ottomans had shown a willingness to side with the Entente if certain conditions were met. This cannot explain the behavior of the principle Ottoman ministers. Rather than attempt to assign Cemal and Said Halim to a pro-Entente faction, or Enver to a pro-Central Powers one, it makes more sense to view the Ottoman cabinet as united in its desire for protection from Russia, abolition of the Capitulations, and a policy of inaction as long as they felt unready. Though Said Halim did threaten to resign at the cabinet meeting of September 16, it was Talat Pasha that exercised the decisive influence, and Enver backed down immediately.¹³⁵ The Germans were put off yet again on the issue of a sortie into the Black Sea. The Germans, however, would not wait on an answer indefinitely. After yet another evasive reply from the Porte, the German Foreign Ministry cut off the flow of gold to the Ottomans on October 1.¹³⁶ After one last attempt by Cemal to convince Britain to offer an equal sum, with the fig leaf that it be publicly proclaimed compensation for the seizure of Ottoman ships by the Royal Navy, the cabinet at last met to unleash Souchon.¹³⁷

Souchon had already attempted to leave on his own responsibility, but after Enver and the rest of the cabinet threatened to disavow his actions, the German officer backed down.¹³⁸ The Entente's unwillingness to make concessions over loans and the Capitulations combined with the Russians' unleashing of armed Armenian guerillas into Eastern Anatolia, decided the Ottoman government, at last, on intervention. Even then, the Ottomans cabinet awaited word that the last

¹³⁴ Grey to Mallet, August 22, 1914, in *Correspondence Respecting Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey*, p. 9.

¹³⁵ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 680.

¹³⁶ Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, p. 166.

¹³⁷ Mallet to Grey, October 2, 1914, in *Correspondence Respecting Events Leading to the Rupture of Relations with Turkey*, pp. 20-1.

¹³⁸ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 680; Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 164-5.

trainload of gold from the Germans had crossed neutral Romania and Bulgaria safely.¹³⁹ The decision to stop putting off the Germans had been made at an informal meeting that included Enver, Talat, and several leading parliamentarians, on October 6, 1914. The primary Ottoman concern was that further delay would endanger the concessions they had already won. The Germans were still formally protesting the abolition of the Capitulations and Berlin had indicated that no more gold or technical advisors would be coming if the stalling in Istanbul continued. The meeting's decision to speed up planning for war, conveyed to Berlin, had the desired effect. 2 ½ million Ottoman lira in gold was “set aside” for the Ottoman government, to be paid out only once action was finally taken.¹⁴⁰ By October 24, Cemal Pasha had been swayed by Enver's arguments and the orders for Souchon to sail were issued at last.¹⁴¹

Souchon's departure was the occasion of the last Ottoman attempt to avoid immediate conflict while securing the future of Ottoman development. Enver refused, even after Cemal had issued the orders to Souchon, to order hostilities with Russia. Over Wangenheim's furious objections, Enver played for time. Once Souchon sailed, Enver promised that he would get the cabinet to amend the orders. If not, Souchon could “manufacture” a battle with the Russian fleet. Considering the Ottomans' earlier threat to disavow Souchon if he sailed without permission, this can only be another attempt to give the Germans what they wanted without risking a final break with the Entente. Indeed, even after Souchon had fired upon Russian ships and cities during his sortie, Said Halim continued to insist to the British that the Ottomans had not sanctioned this action.¹⁴² In fact, the Central Committee of the Committee for Union and Progress, a far larger body than the cabinet, but comprising all the key government figures as well as others, had voted in favor

¹³⁹ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 680. The Entente was aware of the shipment, and what it might represent. See Giers to Sazonov, October 7 (20), 1914, in *Diplomatic Documents*, p. 50.

¹⁴⁰ Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, p. 170.

¹⁴¹ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 720.

¹⁴² Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, p. 184; see also Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 721-2.

of war, 17-10, on the evening of October 31, effectively endorsing Souchon's actions. This Ottoman action, noted in none of the older secondary works, is still presented as being dominated by Enver's fabrication of evidence by Aksakal.¹⁴³ This ignores the fact that, while it is certain that Souchon, and Enver, lied about the circumstances that led to the attack on the Russian minelayer *Pruth* on October 28, that ship had actually laid mines, off of the important port of Zonguldak, not the Bosphorus. The Russians had begun mining the Bosphorus itself over two weeks before, though their efforts had no effect on Souchon and may not even have been noticed by the Ottomans.¹⁴⁴ Enver was also not alone in attempting to convince the CUP and cabinet to go to war. Cemal, long supposed to be pro-Entente, was now one of the chief voices in favor of Souchon's actions.¹⁴⁵ Only Said Halim and Finance Minister Cavid attempted to disown the sortie, and there is reason to doubt their sincerity. The double game Said Halim had long played with the Entente often included such gestures, as when he had offered to intern the *Goeben* and *Breslau* in return for concessions on the Capitulations. It is notable that Said Halim did not resign, as he had threatened previously when the cabinet had moved too quickly for his liking. Cavid Pasha did resign, but only formally. He stayed on with the Finance Ministry even after the outbreak of war, on the excuse that the drastic fiscal situation required his presence.¹⁴⁶ If Cavid's *de jure* resignation does not count, the Ottoman cabinet, far from being dominated by Enver, or deeply split between pro- and anti-Entente factions, saw no defections at all, something not even the British cabinet could boast upon that nation's entry into the war.

¹⁴³ Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, p. 200. See also Hamilton and Herwig, *Decisions for War*, pp. 159-61. No mention of the CUP vote appears in Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, or in Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent*, which has a very detailed chronology of the final crisis as well. Strachan, *The First World War*, p. 678, mentions it briefly, but manages to make the vote into a conspiracy of pro-Germans.

¹⁴⁴ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 726-7.

¹⁴⁵ For Cemal's gradual "conversion" to an anti-Entente stance, see Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 37, 190. Also Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, p. 721.

¹⁴⁶ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, pp. 728-30. See also Trumpener, "Turkey's Entry into World War One: An Assessment of Responsibilities," in *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 34, no. 4 (1962), pp. 369-71.

The final years of the Ottoman Empire were characterized by the consistent pursuit of two goals. First, the Ottomans sought protection from one of the Great Powers of Europe. The major figures of the Committee for Union and Progress were unconcerned about which. Britain and Russia, the two powers most responsible for Ottoman difficulties both internally and externally, were pursued as avidly as the mostly pro-Ottoman Germans. In the end, despite setbacks attributable to Germany's allies, the German tie won out. The British, French, and Russians showed no concern for Ottoman interests, with the British especially being willing to compromise their long-standing commitment to Ottoman integrity in order to preserve their entente with Russia. The Ottoman courtship of Germany, however, was mostly one-sided. Many in the German government, especially those with knowledge of conditions in the Ottoman lands, doubted the utility of an Ottoman alliance. Berlin was constantly tasked by the Ottomans with providing more guns, more technicians, and more gold. In return, the first two months of the alliance saw the Ottomans anger Berlin by unilaterally abrogating their responsibilities to the Powers under the Capitulation treaties while meeting every request for anti-Entente action with delay and further demands. The Ottomans only entered the war when Berlin made it clear that no more concessions were forthcoming, but by that time the most important gains had already been made. The advantages gained from the Germans were enough to convince a majority of the ruling CUP to go to war, and the cabinet remained remarkably united throughout. In the end, war with the Entente was not the program of Enver Pasha, but of the entire Ottoman government.

Chapter 4: Conclusion-A Rational Disaster

In 1917, Talat Pasha summed up the reasoning behind his support for an alliance with Berlin by pointing out the long-term implications of what some future historians regarded as an ad hoc measure:

It would be wrong to consider our alliance with Germany as a temporary political combination. The Turco-German alliance is the result of a concrete policy based on the community of interests. The quadruple alliance which has proved itself during three years of war will, with the help of God, be able to triumph over the difficulties of the moment and ensure for our countries a glorious peace and a future of prosperity.¹⁴⁷

This fairly vague communication, a dispatch to Ernst Jäckh, the German government's liaison in Istanbul, is one of the few statements we have that indicates what the highest circles of Ottoman government were thinking. Unlike most of the other powers involved in the war, few Ottoman memoirs exist to rationalize the Porte's motives for future generations. Many of the principle Turkish statesmen, including the Grand Vizier, Said Halim, were killed by Armenian assassins in revenge for the genocide of their nationals during the war. Enver Pasha, whose enigmatic actions did so much to bring about the Ottomans into the conflict, died leading a band of guerillas in Soviet Central Asia, in 1922.¹⁴⁸ Many of the records of prewar decision-making remain sealed in the archives of the Turkish Republic and some of the more critical documents, such as the minutes of the cabinet meetings in October 1914 and the papers of the Committee for Union and Progress' Central Committee, may have been deliberately destroyed.¹⁴⁹

We are left with fragmentary records, in a difficult language that few modern Turks can read, and the reports of foreigners who often had a very skewed idea of Ottoman motives.

¹⁴⁷ Talat Pasha to Ernst Jäckh, October 23, 1917, quoted in Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 191-2.

¹⁴⁸ Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, pp. 487-8.

¹⁴⁹ Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, pp. 114-15. Yasamee, "Ottoman Empire", pp. 229-30.

Therefore, the quote from Talat Pasha above has a greater significance than would otherwise be the case. As these sentiments were aimed at a German government official in sympathy with the aims of the Porte, some flattery must be accounted for. Nevertheless, several conclusions can be drawn.

To begin with, the alliance with Germany was not seen by the Ottomans as a temporary measure. On the contrary, it was the culmination of the CUP's policy since its years in exile. The Germans were to provide the breathing space the Ottoman Empire required if it was to regain control of its territory, end the economic and judicial restrictions of the Capitulations, and modernize the empire's military and industry to resist any further encroachments by the Entente.¹⁵⁰

Far more important, however, is Talat's reference to the German-Ottoman “community of interests”. Britain and the Ottomans once had such a shared interest in resisting the encroachment of the Russian Empire. As this paper has shown, the German-Ottoman alliance of 1914 was the result of a long process by which the British not only abandoned the Ottomans in favor of a Russian entente, but became one of the predator powers engaged in the destruction of Ottoman sovereignty in Arabia. The hostility of St. Petersburg, Russian designs on the Straits, and Russian attempts to turn Ottoman Armenians into clients of the Tsar were long-standing threats to Istanbul, and did not change in the decade before the war.¹⁵¹ It was Britain's policy that altered, becoming increasingly hostile despite the overtures of the CUP after 1908.

The limitations of this paper have determined that only two major theaters of direct British-Ottoman conflict have been covered: the Persian Gulf/Central Arabia, and South Arabia.

¹⁵⁰ The key argument in favor of an ad hoc alliance is found in Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 366ff. Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent*, pp. 57-8 follows this view closely.

¹⁵¹ McMeekin, *Russian Origins*, pp. 33-4. Even Sazonov basically admits this, in *Fateful Years*, pp. 126-7.

Yet in the decade before the war, the British were also engaged in a territorial dispute on the frontier between British-occupied Egypt and the Ottoman Empire proper, including a show of force by the Royal Navy and threats of war over the desert oasis of Taba.¹⁵² Nor has any space been devoted here to the prewar machinations with the Sherif of Mecca and the British plot to remove the caliphate to Mecca in order to control Islamic influences in Muslim territories of the British Empire.¹⁵³ The British Liberal Party's use of moral panics in Christian circles to browbeat the Porte into compromising its sovereignty in majority-Christian provinces predates the Mürzsteg reforms in Macedonia or the Armenian autonomy crisis of 1914. No less than William Gladstone had made Turkophobia a key ingredient in his political comeback in 1876.¹⁵⁴ The decline in British willingness to uphold Ottoman sovereignty was a gradual process which reached its culmination with the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907, just before the Revolutions of 1908-9 led to a final Ottoman attempt at restoring the old connection to London. Though the Ottoman Empire was not among the territories partitioned in the agreement of 1907, the Entente nevertheless destroyed any remaining will in London to uphold the Porte, by making renewed pressure in Iran and Afghanistan the price of siding against Russia's claims.

It was the Entente, also, that prevented the CUP from fulfilling its economic goals. Even with the Germans marching on Paris the Entente powers proved totally unwilling to negotiate seriously regarding the Capitulations and the Ottoman tariff rates. Only the Russians seriously considered concessions, primarily because they believed themselves inferior to the Ottoman Navy in the Black Sea. Plans for seizing the Straits had been drawn up even before the Sarajevo

¹⁵² See G.H. Fitzmaurice, "Extract from Annual Report for Turkey for the Year 1906," received February 11, 1907, in *BDO*, vol. V, pp. 189-195.

¹⁵³ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, pp. 336-8.

¹⁵⁴ This is the central thesis of R. T. Shannon, *Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation, 1876* (London: Harvester Press, 1963).

assassination. They were, however, only feasible once the new dreadnoughts building at Sevastopol were completed.¹⁵⁵ The contrast with German aims was stark.

While the Entente powers were undermining the goals of the CUP government, the Germans were supporting them. The economic benefits of the Baghdad Railway were matched by political benefits. It is entirely possible that without the investment of German capital to connect Istanbul with Mesopotamia that region would have been lost to the British.¹⁵⁶ Germany had few Muslim subjects to worry about and did not fear rhetorical and diplomatic support for the Sultan-Caliph in Istanbul. Even when Germany's allies in Rome and Vienna violated their obligations under the Berlin Treaty of 1878 by seizing Ottoman lands, in 1908 and 1912, Berlin worked to limit the damage and uphold the Porte's sovereignty in what remained.

That does not mean, however, that German interests were completely compatible with Ottoman needs. The outrage in Berlin over the Porte's unilateral abrogation of the Capitulations and the nationalizations and tariff increases that immediately followed, was just as great as in the Entente capitals.¹⁵⁷ Had an amicable partition of the Ottoman Empire been arranged by the Great Powers before the war, the Germans would have participated. On the other hand, the Ottoman government seems to have been little interested in facing Russia and Britain on widely scattered fronts from the Sinai to the Caucasus in order to help the Germans extricate themselves from a two-front war. The two months' delay, and the additional concessions the Ottomans wrung from Berlin with their stalling tactics, do not indicate a rush to fight. As has been shown, even Enver Pasha was more than willing to tell the Germans to wait, and wait again. The final decisions, made by wide consultation among the ruling elite, were taken only when the Germans threatened

¹⁵⁵ McMeekin, *Russian Origins*, pp. 33-4.

¹⁵⁶ Anscombe, *Ottoman Gulf*, pp. 102-18.

¹⁵⁷ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 38-9.

to deny further money and materials.

Given the materials at hand, what *can* be said about the Ottoman decision to enter the First World War? As noted above, it was a conscious decision, supported by a majority of both the cabinet and the ruling party's Central Committee. There is no evidence of chicanery or bribery, or of the domination of any one person.¹⁵⁸ Enver Pasha was as often soothing the Entente as the Germans, and as often angering Berlin as London. Despite their protestations to the Entente ambassadors, Said Halim and Cavid Pashas did not dissociate themselves from the war effort. Said Halim seems to have supported it and, because he commanded the decisive voting bloc in the cabinet, may have had more to do with the final choice for war than Enver. It is clear that we do not truly understand the factions within the ruling bodies of the Ottoman Empire in 1914. The players stray from their assigned roles too often.

Similarly, the domestic politics of the Ottoman Empire after 1908 are poorly documented. This paper has tried to reconstruct the geopolitical situation the CUP inherited after the revolution, as well as detail some of the internal pressures the party faced. The flow of refugees, especially after the Balkan Wars, caused tremendous ethnic and religious tensions in Anatolia, besides draining the treasury of funds. The plight of the displaced Balkan Muslims also undermined the legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty itself by placing the state's ability to protect its citizens and the religion its monarch headed in doubt. Though some modern studies have begun to use Ottoman-era newspapers to reconstruct the political scene before 1914, the most widely read writings of that era seem to be the nationalist ideologues whose visions would

¹⁵⁸ Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 369-70 argues this. The point is made more forcefully by Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, p. 193. The classic statement of Enver's responsibility they are arguing against is in Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol. 1, pp. 539-40.

inform the Kemalist republic after 1923.¹⁵⁹ Without delving deeper into the letters, diaries, and newspapers of the pre-war era, historians will not be able to understand the issues and interest groups that enabled, or constrained, the Ottoman statesmen of 1914.

The war was a disaster for the Ottoman Empire. By the time Enver Pasha fled on a German U-Boat on November 1, 1918, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia had been occupied by the British. The subsequent peace reduced the empire to a Turkish-speaking rump and the severity of the terms fueled the Turkish nationalist rebellion that toppled the Sultan in 1922. War with the Entente, however, was not a foolish policy decided upon by a megalomaniac Germanophile, or an ill-considered gamble. It was the result of a widespread opinion among the empire's ruling class that the Ottoman state would not survive without a serious change to its political economy, which could only occur under the protection of one or more of the Great Powers. Although open until the very last minute to neutrality, or alliance with Istanbul's chief foes, the Entente powers never seriously considered those possibilities, so determined were they to continue their policy of gradual partition. And so, after drawing every last concession feasible, the Ottoman cabinet and ruling party entered the war on the side of the Central Powers.

Had the war ended in the autumn of 1914, as most of the belligerents believed it would, the German alliance would have proved a master stroke regardless of the outcome of the fighting in France and Poland. The Capitulations, once abrogated, would have remained so. Instead, the war ground on for four years. The Ottoman alliance with Germany became a rational catastrophe, a decision taken after serious deliberation which still produced an extremely adverse outcome. The serious problems the Ottomans faced, combined with Entente hostility, left them

¹⁵⁹ Yasamee, "Ottoman Empire," contains one contemporary diary in its citations. Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War*, is the only modern study to cite an Ottoman newspaper, *Tanin*. Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I*, contains no newspaper citations, and most of its primary sources are government documents.

little other choice.

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