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EMPIRE TO NATION

Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World

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Dreams of Empire, Dreams of Nations

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A T THE TURN OF the twentieth century, Morocco, the Ottoman Empire, and Iran were the only three sovereign political entities in the long stretch of land between the Atlantic Ocean and the Persian Gulf. The Ottoman Empire, the largest of these entities, had already lost some land, most notably in the Balkans and North Africa, but had managed to hold on to most of the territories it had been controlling for as long as 600 years. As the armies in Europe went to war and the Ottomans joined them in 1914, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that this situation would change radically and the Ottoman Empire would cease to exist within a few years.

Yet, by the mid-1920s, some ten separate states had been established in the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire; the Balkan lands had been further fragmented with the creation of new states and the consolidation of some of the existing ones; 900,000 Greeks had left their homes in Anatolia to move to Greece, other parts of Europe, and the Americas, in exchange for 300,000 Muslims who had made the journey in the opposite direction; and as many as 1.5 million Armenians had been murdered or expelled from the Ottoman territories.

While an older body of writing explained this transformation by emphasizing the primordial qualities of already existing nations who had been suffering under the Ottoman yoke, more recent studies have been more nuanced. Now the Ottoman Empire figures not just as a prison of nations, but also as having played a constitutive role in engendering nations and nationalisms. Also, reflecting the developments in the general literature on nationalism, studies on Ottoman transitions have become much more attuned to the role

of contingencies, crucial choices historical actors have made at important junctures, and the significance of the modern world in the emergence and development of nationalist practices.[1]

Armed with the rich theoretical framework that has grown out of the debates on nationalism, and the equally rich historiography, we have come to know a great deal about the historical origins and contemporary relevance of nationalist movements in the former possessions of the Ottoman Empire. But these works do not spend much time addressing where the idea of the "nation" came from and why it held such a sway over social transformations in the Ottoman Empire (and elsewhere in the world), superseding, or even suppressing alternative identifications. Nor is the general literature on nations and nationalism of much help. One does not find a clear answer in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, for instance, to the question of why it was the nation and not, say, religion that ended up being imagined by significant numbers of people as they were forming their new political communities. Nor, in his influential study, does Ernest Gellner make clear why, as a political community, the nation serves the requirements of modern capitalist societies best. In the years that followed the industrial revolution, Marx had thought a global alliance of people along class lines would follow much more readily from the logic of capitalism.[2]

What makes this question particularly intriguing is that of all the ways in which people in the Ottoman Empire could think of themselves, nationality would seem to make the least sense. The old imperial context certainly did not lend itself to such identifications, and even in its reorganization in the nineteenth century, the idea of Ottoman and other possible nationalities developed haltingly and with many ambiguities. Religion was a much more familiar way in which people were labeled and self-identified in the Ottoman Empire. Yet out of this uncertain environment the nation grew and came to dominate the entire region. Even the artificial creations of the post–World War I settlement, such as Jordan, have become permanent fixtures in the Middle East, and the distinctions that were once thought highly superficial, such as that between the Syrians and the Lebanese, have become deeply ingrained in people's mentalities.

This chapter is a first attempt at discussing how the idea of nation grew and came to dominate discussions of identity in the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. It argues that the idea of nation in the Middle East passed through two distinct stages that were linked to specific institutional changes that were taking place in the Ottoman Empire. The first of these was the notion of an Ottoman identity that would apply to all the residents of the Ottoman Empire. This, in effect, implied a territorial definition of the empire and its people. The institutional context for Ottomanism was created by the

reforms which the Ottoman state carried out in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The development of a distinct Ottoman identity was actively supported and cultivated by the Ottoman state both as a part of these reforms and as a way of strengthening them. There were wealthy and influential groups in the Ottoman Empire who supported the reforms and were open to the idea of strengthening a distinct community of Ottomans. The support of these groups made Ottomanism a much more potent project than it is sometimes made out to be. The second stage came with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in World War I and the division of the Ottoman lands among several European powers. The fragmentation of the Middle East in this way put an end to the more open and multiethnic notions of identity that had underpinned Ottomanism. The new institutions of colonial rule created the context for the development of distinct national identities, which were further promoted by the newly empowered states, following their independence after World War II.

The chapter starts with a review of the Ottoman imperial context in order to provide a point of contrast with the reforms of the nineteenth century. I then describe some of the changes that came with the reforms and consider the place of Ottomanism and similar broad identifications in this new institutional context. The chapter continues by showing how these broad identities were narrowed into more local and limited ways of thinking about identity at the end of the Ottoman Empire. Here, I pay special attention to the eclipse of Ottomanism by the newly developing Greek, Turkish, and Arab identities.

Imagining the Empire

The most common way of thinking about a political entity such as the Ottoman Empire is to refer to the borders that circumscribe it and assume that they contain something distinct. This is the assumption that lies behind many a historical atlas, which depicts the exact extent of the Ottoman Empire and its contemporaries, with heavily drawn lines and distinct colors. A close examination of these borders, however, reveals that such demarcations reflect little that was real or permanent. Until well into the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was surrounded by a chain of tributary states and princedoms. These were the Byzantine Empire (1372–1453), Serbia (1372–1459), a series of Bulgarian principalities in the late fourteenth century, Bosnia (1389–1463), Albania (1385–1478), Transylvania (1541–1699), Crimea (1475–1783), Morea and several North Aegean islands during the fifteenth century, Dubrovnik between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, and several South Aegean islands, as well as Wallachia and Moldavia between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of these tributary arrangements ended up being preludes to the full incorporation of the territory into the Ottoman Empire, whereas other tributaries maintained their special ties to the Ottoman government on a long-term basis. These tributary states and princedoms provided an added cushion of protection for the Ottomans, but they also introduced a layer of uncertainty in defining the precise extent of the empire.[3]

Moving toward a more substantive way of thinking about the Ottoman Empire, we might want to be guided by a general definition of what an empire is. Such definitions, however, have the drawback of freezing their subjects in time by ascribing to them some general characteristics or an unchanging essence. Furthermore, it is hard to define the Ottoman Empire in precise terms as its political system was in constant flux for much of its history. Its institutions and boundaries remained fluid, making it far more flexible and adaptable than many contemporary states and empires. Charles Tilly's well-known definition does a good job of capturing this indeterminateness that was at the heart of the Ottoman Empire:

An empire is a large composite polity linked to a central power by indirect rule. The central power exercises some military and fiscal control in each major segment of its imperial domain, but tolerates two major elements of indirect rule: (1) retention or establishment of particular, distinct compacts for the government of each segment; and (2) exercise of power through intermediaries who enjoy considerable autonomy within their own domains in return for delivery of compliance, tribute, and military collaboration with the center.[4]

Prior to the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire lacked uniform institutions, a unified mode of administration, or even a uniform imperial culture or ideology that applied to all of its territories. This was partly due to the nomadic and eclectic origins of the empire. It was also a consequence of the imperial government's pragmatic approach to ruling a region with a very large number of religiously, ethnically, and linguistically distinct communities, most of whom were also highly mobile. Today, the results of this variegated rule are readily apparent in the vast stretches of land that were once formally part of the Ottoman Empire. For example, in south and southeastern Turkey, it is much easier to find impressive reminders of pre-Ottoman Roman, Armenian, Seljuk, and Mongol civilizations than it is to locate any indicator that these were parts of the Ottoman Empire for more than four centuries.

This contrasts sharply with what one finds in western parts of contemporary Turkey, in the Balkans, and especially in parts of Greece and former Yugoslavia, where the Ottoman legacy is overwhelming. By building roads and bridges, fortifying urban centers, and designing thousands of mosques, baths, soup kitchens, religious schools, and libraries, the Ottomans clearly showed that they were determined to transform the physical landscape of these parts

and establish strong ties between them and the imperial center in Istanbul. In fact, some of the fighting in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s was motivated by a desire to erase as much of this legacy as possible and revive the mythical pre-Ottoman identity of the lands. It was only in this relatively limited area, which amounted to no more than one-third of the total territory of the Ottoman Empire, that the Ottomans invested significantly and deliberately. It was here that the land system known as *timar*, which is described as the land system of the classical empire, was applied most systematically and thoroughly. Fiscal and land surveys that were the basis for the Ottoman tax and land systems were conducted regularly only in this part. Administrators that came through the typical Ottoman system of recruitment and training wielded power in these regions.

In the rest of their domains, which at one point extended from Algeria in the west to the Persian Gulf in the east and from Crimea in the north to Yemen in the south, Ottoman rule was mediated by a diverse group of agents, including semi-autonomous governors, urban notables, tribal chiefs, and military officials. Instead of completely submitting to Ottoman rule, these groups perpetuated and even strengthened their local power under the Ottoman umbrella. Consequently, people in these parts experienced the Ottoman government not as a close and pervasive presence but more as a distant force that intruded occasionally and irregularly—most typically at times of social disorder, troop mobilization, or extraordinary levies.[5] To give but one example, the region around Adana, which is one of the most important agricultural and industrial centers of modern Turkey, was never surveyed, and its lands were never assessed or recorded by the Ottomans. The first land survey here was conducted by Ibrahim Paşa, the son of the rebellious governor of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, who occupied the area in 1832. After the Egyptian army withdrew in 1840, the Ottomans used these records as the basis for their fiscal and administrative innovations and reforms in the empire.[6]

The reasons for the variation in Ottoman methods of administration had to do, in part, with how the Ottoman elite saw the current and future strength of their empire. With their proximity to the Ottoman center, and as way stations in the empire's westward expansion, the western provinces and the Balkans were key to the priorities of the Ottoman officials during the earlier part of the empire's history. Accordingly, the Ottomans remained keen on integrating the western provinces in their imperial system. To be sure, the southeastern provinces, including the Arab lands, were also located on important networks extending east into India and East Asia, as well as south to the holy places in Mecca and Medina. Nevertheless, the pull of the West proved to be far too strong, especially after the fifteenth century. Consequently, in the eastern and southeastern parts, local potentates had the space and the opportu-

nity to wield their power freely and effectively for much of Ottoman history. It should be noted that the relative lightness of the Ottoman presence in these parts did not prevent the development of some very important and wealthy urban centers. In fact, the distance from the center turned out to be an asset for places like Beirut and Alexandria that developed into vibrant commercial centers in the nineteenth century. In addition to their own preferences and priorities, the Ottoman officials were constrained by the limited means that were available to them for running an empire as large as theirs had become. In a way, they had no choice but to set some priorities and manipulate and mobilize existing structures and relations for their own purposes and benefit.

That they were keen on thoroughly integrating only a relatively limited part of their imperial possessions did not mean that the Ottoman officials somehow regarded those faraway provinces as not being part of the Ottoman lands. When they described the Ottoman Empire with phrases like "the lands of the exalted state" or the "well-protected domains," they had in mind not only the "core" areas, but the empire in its totality. According to Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, one of the leading statesmen/scholars of the nineteenth century,

> The lands of the exalted state [of the Ottomans] do not resemble the lands of any other state. In its every corner, you can find unique conditions. No province resembles another province; nor does any given part of a province resemble another part of the same province. Therefore it is impossible for a method of administration that might be conceived by the state to be applied equally and uniformly everywhere.[7]

While the variations in directness of Ottoman administration may allow us to differentiate between core and peripheral parts of the Ottoman imperial lands, such a distinction would be primarily geographical and the boundaries separating such zones would by no means be fixed or impermeable. The very large numbers of circulating groups who constantly crisscrossed the large swaths of the imperial territories created an added layer of complication by blurring the boundaries between geographical regions and administrative units. These mobile groups included nomadic tribes, peasant youths who could not be accommodated in the typically small holdings of their families, those who were uprooted by the imperial government as punishment or as a way of colonizing the newly conquered territories, and finally, the refugees whose numbers soared as the empire withdrew from its possessions in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Ironically enough, none of these had become a source of weakness for the Ottoman state in its early years. Indeed, the strength of the Ottoman Empire depended not on the consistency of its practices and the uniform allegiance of its subjects, but on the fluidity, flexibility, and ambiguity that were the hallmarks of many of its central practices.

This variegated and fluid structure of Ottoman rule was neither [based] upon a generally accepted understanding of Ottoman identity, nor was [it a] system conducive to the cultivation of a uniform sense of belonging [among] the subjects of the empire. The idea of Ottomanness made sense only [for the] very core of the officials who were at the center of the imperial structure [but even] here, such an identification would be far from unambiguous. As was the [case] in other Turkic and Islamic realms of the time, Ottoman sultans and [princes] routinely married women from the Christian nobility in surrounding [states.] Some of these marriages were enacted with full and deliberate cogniz[ance of] the diplomatic and political advantages they bestowed on the parties. [But] the most common and typical conjugal relationship that produced almo[st all] of the Ottoman sultans was between a reigning sultan and a Christian [slave] girl. These relationships also originated with migration, albeit a unique [and] forced one that included both girls and boys. From the large numbe[r of] Christian boys who were brought to the capital, some were chosen [to be] trained for army, some for high bureaucratic service. Some of the girls w[ere] channeled toward the palace, and a few ended up being the sultan's favor[ites] and, in some cases, even his legal wife.[8] Even in these cases, and contrar[y to] prevailing myths, the women in question seem to have maintained var[ying] degrees of contact with their birthplaces and families. They used these c[on]-nections to wield power and influence, both in the palace and in the emp[ire's] foreign relations. Similarly, many of the high-ranking bureaucrats who [had] entered the Ottoman court or civil service as slaves also kept alive ties to [their] families and used their power and influence in the court to channel reso[urces] of the state to their places of birth. Hence, in what was supposed to be t[he] most secluded core of the empire's administration, the movement of indi[vid]-uals and groups helped maintain crucial ties with peripheral domains, ma[k]-ing it difficult to draw clear lines of distinction and identification even the[re.]

Outside the imperial household, conditions were even less conducive to [the] creation of clear-cut identities, on either the imperial or on the local level. O[n] the imperial level, there was no real basis for the development of an overarch[-]ing sense of belonging that would pull together the majority of the people who lived within the imperial borders and supersede other (local) affiniti[es.] Such bonds could develop through sustained interethnic contacts (includ[ing] marriage), common experience as subjects under a uniform system of rule, o[r] the impact of a uniform system of education. None of these were obtained in the Ottoman Empire before the nineteenth century.

The categories that the Ottoman government used to administer its sub[-] jects were vague, constantly shifting, and far from exclusive. By using such im[-] precise and changing definitions, the Ottoman state was neither seeking to meld together the separate communities nor consciously planting the seeds of

[oth]er divisions among the subject peoples of the empire. Their approach [was] more opportunistic and pragmatic than systematic. Some of the divisions [found in the] Ottoman domains were left as they were; others were manipu-[lated. In] some instances, the court created divisions and categories where [none had] existed. In most cases, the groupings the Ottoman officials came up [with reflected] not so much the intrinsic characteristics of the communities in [question] but the nature and extent of the group's obligation to the state. [In the] empirewide fiscal surveys, the population was broadly classified on [the basis] of religion as Muslim, Christian, or Jewish; and status, as peasant, [townsman], or nomad.[9] An individual's religion was the most generally used [identifier] in official documents, but the denominations were drawn very [broadly] without much attention to any of the subgroupings that developed [within] the religious communities as part of their own historical develop-[ment]. Generally, the official documents refer to Christians as "*zimmi*" or "*Nasrani*," and Jews as "*Yahud*," "*Yehud*," or "*çıfıt*"; but in some cases, *zimmi* [was] applied to all non-Muslims, not just the Christians, and *çıfıt* was in-[tended] as a derogatory term. The imperial government differentiated some [groupings] within the Christian and Muslim community. Hence, one finds [references] to Greeks and Armenians; and the names of the individual Gyp-[sies were] usually qualified with "*kıpti*," which was a bastardized form of *Cop*-[t, reflecting] a mistaken assumption on the part of the Ottomans about the [origins] of the Roma. After the sixteenth century, those who belonged to a [particular] branch of the Shi'i Islam, known as Alevi (or Alawite) were iden-[tified as] *Kızılbaş* ("red-head"), in reference to their sixteenth-century defec-[tion to] and service under the Shah of Iran in specially designated troops [wearing] red caps. However, none of these subcategories reflected a clear and [consistent] approach on the part of the Ottoman government.

[It is] sometimes assumed that the Ottoman state kept the various religious [communities] it ruled over in neatly delineated compartments called millets, [which] subsequently became the bases for the nationalist movements in the [Balkans.] It seems, however, that these interpretations that linked millets to na-[tions] are based not on historical realities but on a backward projection of the [conditions] that emerged in the late nineteenth century.[10] From the vantage [point] of the Ottomans, the purpose behind the constitution of millets was to [maintain] order within the framework of Islamic law. As such, these categories [tended] to be very broad and did not reflect the many divisions that existed within each of the main divisions. Furthermore, the categories used by offi-cials in identifying individual subjects were not always consistent with the broader millet classification. Hence, one finds references to Kurds and Gypsies in the documents but such nonreligious "ethnic" definitions were not used consistently to form the basis for the emergence of national identities within

the Ottoman framework.[11] To Western observers, this array of overlapping and crosscutting terms and classifications could be confusing, but it is also possible to see them as signs of Ottoman pragmatism that gave them a high degree of flexibility in managing the diverse peoples over which they ruled.

Until well into the nineteenth century, the Ottoman rulers legitimized their rule over this diverse set of communities by referring to their guardianship of Islam. For the Muslim subjects, this referred to the fact that the Ottoman sultans carried the title caliph (that is, successor to Prophet Muhammad) and that the Ottomans were "safeguarding" Islam's holy places in Mecca and Medina. Christians and Jews, on the other hand, benefited from the power and benevolence of the Ottoman rulers, who regarded these religions as worthy of protection because their prophets were recognized by the Koran as messengers from God. The Ottomans' hands-off attitude toward major religions gave their rule a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of those non-Muslims who preferred the relative order and stability of a powerful empire to the chaos that reigned in Eastern Europe and the Balkans during much of the late medieval and early modern periods.

Hence, Islam provided the main axis of unity in the Ottoman Empire both as the primary source of law and also as the basis of legitimation. This particular use of Islam and the categories that were derived from it, however, did not reflect accurately how the Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the empire practiced their religion and identified themselves. It is true that for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, religion was the primary form of self-identification, but in stark contrast with the totalizing categories used by the government, these self-definitions tended to be more specific and local. Non-Muslim subjects of the empire were fragmented and their allegiances were focused more sharply and firmly on their localities, creating smaller communities that had distinct ways of practicing the different Christian sects' beliefs. Among these were the various Catholic offshoots such as the Maronites, the Jacobites, the Nestorians, and the Chaldeans; the Melkites and other Arabized versions of Greek Orthodoxy; and nonrabbinical Qaraite Jews, Sephardim, and other subgroups within Judaism.[13]

The situation among the Muslim majority was also far from uniform or consistent. Ottoman territories included some of the largest concentrations of Shi'is, who, after the mainstream Sunnis, constituted the second largest group in Islam. The Alevis, who were an offshoot of Shi'i, concentrated in large numbers in east-central and southeastern Anatolia. Alevis were divided into orders with their own separate leaders, called *dede*. In some cases, the *dedes* moved around and performed their duties in different localities.[14] As a result of the chaotic way in which Turks and Muslims originally migrated to Anatolia and the Balkans over a long period of time, it was not the official "high

culture" version of Islam that became popular in this region. Not only among the Shi'ites but also among the majority Sunnis, unorthodox vernacular orders became the main venues in which the local population practiced their religion. Among the Sunni Sufi orders, which grew out of these vernacular practices, the allegiance of a follower or a disciple tended to be strictly and exclusively centered on the leader, or the sheikh, of the particular order, of which there were hundreds if not thousands in the territories of the Ottoman Empire. It was essential that the disciples maintain personal contact with the sheikh, which forced them to follow their leaders in order to stay close to him. In the absence of a coherent central direction, in many localities, Sufi disciples took it upon themselves to protect the shrines of their holy figures and developed ideologies that increasingly privileged independent thinking, innovation, and decentralized administration.[15]

Some of the Sufi orders interacted with Christian and Jewish communities freely and regularly, incorporating aspects of these religions, including their saints, into their own traditions. This was particularly the case in the distant provinces of the empire, in the relationship between the Sufis and the Armenians in the east, Pontus Greeks in the northeast, and Jews in the Arab provinces.[16] As a result of these cross-fertilizations, a series of hybrid social, economic, political, and cultural institutions and practices developed across the Ottoman territories. As people in Anatolia and the Balkans practiced Islam in these diverse settings, they created heterodox systems of belief that were very different from the more orthodox versions that prevailed in the urban centers of the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent, and, intermittently, in the imperial capital.

In addition to their religion, the subjects of the Ottoman Empire would also identify themselves on the basis of their household, tribe, or clan. These multiple frames of reference and identification cut across, overlapped, or sometimes coincided with each other. Hence an individual could be the focal point of several networks, and, as such, the subject of conflicting or competing loyalties. How an individual negotiated these forces depended on the specific circumstances. What is important to emphasize, however, is the fact that all the attachments that were meaningful to an individual were formed by unmediated and personal experience, and hence tended to focus on the locality rather than the region, the empire, or the world. Even the very large number of nomadic tribes did not break free from their tribal or clan ties despite the fact that they were highly mobile and hence open to interaction with, and influence by, other groups.

Those who ruled in the name of the Ottoman dynasty imagined themselves in charge of a vast domain and diverse peoples, and presented the sultan as not only in charge but in possession of these territories. The official documents

referred to the sultan as the shadow of God on earth, and his divine person was secluded in the inner sanctums of the palace and was protected and upheld through elaborate rituals and ceremonies. In this sense, it might be appropriate to think in terms of invented traditions, not only when referring to national rituals, but also to the practices of imperial rulers.[17]

Reforming the Empire

The road from the Ottoman imperial kaleidoscope to the rigidly defined world of the successor nation-states was a long one. The first part of this process goes back to the end of the seventeenth century when the imperial state undertook a multifaceted program of registering, settling, and conscripting the very large number of nomadic tribes that were among its tax-paying subjects. While it was implemented only partially, and was motivated by the military concerns of the state, this was nevertheless a first step toward creating more sedentary, and hence more easily taxed and administered, subjects for the Ottoman state. This was also the first step in transforming the imperial institutions into ones that were better equipped to define and apply uniform and centralized methods of overrule.[18]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Ottomans continued with more ambitious projects that aimed to reform the empire's legal, administrative, educational, and military institutions, and also adopted explicit rules that recognized the rights and exemptions of non-Muslim subjects.[19] These institutional reforms were reinforced by further initiatives that sought to cultivate a sense of Ottomanness that would cut across the various religious communities. For example, non-Muslims were no longer required to convert before they could enroll in military schools and serve in the Ottoman army. This created an important institutional context where people of different faiths could be trained to serve and even fight for the Ottoman state. Non-Muslims also became eligible to be appointed to some of the highest posts in the government without having to change their religion. Starting as early as 1845, a succession of representative assemblies and other elected bodies were convened to help govern the empire. Non-Muslims were part of these experiments as well. The Ottomans also tried to come up with a clearer definition of nationality and citizenship, which culminated in the drafting of the new Law on Nationality in 1869. According to this law, all persons who lived in the Ottoman Empire were considered Ottoman subjects unless they could prove otherwise. The same law also regulated the issuing and control of passports.[20] Ultimately, in a constitution that was adopted in 1876, the Ottoman government entered, for the first time, into a contractual relationship with various religious groups about the mechanisms of lawmaking and representation in the Ottoman Empire.

Even though they appeared to be well thought out and comprehensive, the reforms of the nineteenth century nevertheless contained a fundamental weakness. In particular, the way in which the idea of Ottomanism was articulated and promoted was not based on a thorough and serious study of who the subject people of the empire were, what their interests might be, or how they could be brought together to serve the broader interests of the imperial state. It seems that Ottoman officials expected that a sense of Ottomanism would develop by itself if people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds were provided with space and opportunity to interact and cooperate with each other. Beyond this, the questions of how the people of the empire would be affected by these policies, and whether they were in a position to provide substantive support to the new governmental structures, did not become central to the discussions of reform and reorganization. In official circles, problems of ethnicity and nationality were discussed mostly in relation to the non-Muslim communities of the empire, their separatist goals, or the threat they posed to law and order. Such references frequently conflated the questions of ethnicity with the religious identity of the people involved. The Ottoman Empire followed neither the path of the Russian Empire, with its autocratic centralization and policies of Russification going back to Peter the Great, nor that of the Habsburgs who tried to institutionalize and promote civic coexistence in a more systematic way in their empire.[21]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, these contradictions and inconsistencies in Ottoman reforms gave rise to an increasingly vocal opposition movement. Inspired by a diverse group of authors and journalists, these so-called Young Ottomans posed pointed questions about politics, society, religion, nation, and the West. They became increasingly critical of the reforming bureaucrats because they were seen as slavishly imitating the West and undermining the unity and coherence of the empire without putting anything in its place. It was the writers of this opposition movement who tried, for the first time, to clarify who was (or should be) an Ottoman. They were of the opinion that the Ottoman state would have to abandon the territorial definitions of its future and return once again to religion as an axis of legitimation. In 1868, one of the leading authors of this school, Namık Kemal, wrote in the newspaper *Hürriyet*:

This state is founded on the principle of Islam, and it endangers its own existence whenever it acts against this principle. If our state wants to have a long life, it should not cease being subject to laws of Islam and maintaining its character as an Islamic state. In short, sharia is the soul of our state; it is its source of life; and it is the most effective medicine we know.[22]

This does not mean that the answers that grew out of the conversation between the bureaucrats and their critics were any clearer than the worldview that had informed the early reforms. Even though they were conscious of their oppositional stand and very didactic in most of their writings, Young Ottomans belonged to the same elite milieu as the reforming bureaucrats. More than anything else, their primary audience consisted of these bureaucrats. Just like their bureaucratic interlocutors, the Young Ottomans and their successors found it hard to abandon the notion of empire as their main point of reference even as they considered the implications of adopting liberal, religious, or ethnonational definitions of Ottomanism.[23]

The long reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) reflects very well the problems and contradictions of Ottoman reform in general. During his rule, Abdülhamid II became famous as one of the most autocratic monarchs in Europe. It was against his rule that the new liberal organizations and opposition parties and movements sprang up, and they ultimately succeeded in overthrowing him in 1909. Abdülhamid's reign also saw a return to a more conservative interpretation of Islam and its upholding as a state religion in the Ottoman Empire. Finally, it was during Abdülhamid's reign that the first big pogroms against the Armenian communities took place in southern Anatolia. Yet it is also the same Abdülhamid who staffed some of the most important posts in his administration with prominent non-Muslims, including his Greek foreign minister, Aleksandr Karateodori Paşa, who negotiated with the Russians at the end of the 1877–1878 war. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, during the darkest period of Abdülhamid's autocracy, Greek and Armenian merchants and bankers succeeded in protecting their sphere of operations in the booming port cities, accumulating great wealth and influence. As late as the turn of the twentieth century, during the Balkan wars of 1912–1913, the Ottoman army included Christian soldiers of Serbian and Greek background fighting the "national" armies of Serbia and Greece.[24] Abdülhamid also combined his more austere and orthodox take on Islam with a deep interest in the Sufi thought and especially in the Sufis who came from Arabia. Based on these observations and revelations, Abdülhamid's rule has recently gained a new appreciation among those who study the latter years of the empire. Scholars now credit him for continuing and also significantly expanding administrative and in particular educational reform.[25] So enthusiastic is some of this new appreciation that one scholar finds in Abdülhamid a worthy predecessor even to Atatürk.[26] These conflicting interpretations reflect not so much the lack of or incompleteness of historical data but the continuing ambiguity of the ideological and cultural content of Ottoman identity as it was being formulated in the nineteenth century.

Despite their weakness, and despite the fact that they ultimately failed to save the empire, the reforms of the nineteenth century gave the Ottoman Empire enough breathing space that it survived for more than sixty years after Tsar Nicholas I of Russia first described it as a "sick man" in 1853. Furthermore, this was not a mere survival, as is apparent not only from the economic data, but also from the decisive Ottoman victories against the British and Allied forces at Gallipoli in 1915 and Kut al-Amara in 1916 during World War I.[27] Continuing nationalist propaganda notwithstanding, especially in the economically active and wealthier regions of the empire, there were many groups, Muslim and non-Muslim alike, who preferred the uncertainty of the late imperial conditions to the near certain destruction that a nationalist implosion would bring. From Macedonia to Yemen, all across the imperial lands, people of different backgrounds were pursuing rewarding lives by participating in diverse networks and relationships. The idea that people should only live with and be ruled by people of their own "kind" would be alien to most of the subjects of the empire. Therefore, many urban notables, merchants, and local intellectuals actively participated in the new experiments of the nineteenth century and helped give them substance. They emerged as the main delegates or electors in the six parliamentary elections that were held in the Ottoman Empire between 1876 and 1919.[28] In the parliaments that were elected in 1908, 1912, and 1914, 30–40 percent of the delegates consisted of Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Arabs, Kurds, or Albanians.[29]

Given this background, the neatly drawn ideologies that fueled the incipient local nationalisms could be conceived only outside the empire's borders, far from the social contexts which they were supposed to mobilize, and by individuals who had limited contact or experience in the regions they were theorizing about. As we will see in the following section, the new states that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century ended up being sharply incongruous, both with the networks and relationships that were developing on the ground and with the institutions that were reformed and created to govern them.

Dreaming the Nation

The precise trajectories of the more than twenty-five nation-states that emerged from within the Ottoman Empire depended on many local as well as regional and global factors, and hence varied across a wide spectrum. We can nevertheless make a number of generalizations about the broad outlines of this journey by focusing on some of the nationalist ideas and ideologies as

they took shape in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For this purpose I have chosen to examine the Greek, Arab, and Turkish nationalisms. Together, these three offer a wide spectrum of orientations, they were relevant to a significant part of the Ottoman territories, and they remained active over a long period of time.

The first significant common characteristic we can point to is the experience of exile that shaped the ideas of the intellectuals whose writings played a formative role in the origins and development of each one of these nationalist currents. The Greek thinker Adamantios Korais (1748–1833) was born in Izmir and lived most of his life in Paris. Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935), a key figure in the development of Turkish nationalist thinking, was an immigrant, having moved into the Ottoman Empire from the Volga region of Russia. Still others like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), whose anti-imperialist rhetoric would be incorporated into both Arab and Turkish nationalisms, were peripatetic intellectuals who moved around different parts of the Middle East as well as Europe.

All of these thinkers spent lengthy periods in Europe, particularly in France, and they were strongly influenced by the ongoing debates and discussions that took place there in the nineteenth century. Along with, and sometimes in conversation with their European counterparts, they raised questions about what constitutes a good society, what makes a good government, and how it should be formed, reformed, and administered. For example, Velestinli Regas (1757–1798), considered to be one of the godfathers of the Greek national movement, and Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi, one of the earliest proponents of Arab—specifically Egyptian—identity, spent time in Paris, and they both translated key works of the French Enlightenment into Greek and Arabic respectively.[30]

Partly under the influence of the early Enlightenment discussions, this early crop of nationalist thinkers was more interested in broader questions of civilization than narrow problems of identity. They saw no essential "civilizational" difference between their world and that of the West. In this spirit, Regas tried to contact Napoleon Bonaparte to urge him to bring freedom to southeastern Europe.[31] Tahtawi called his patron Muhammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt, "the second Macedonian," in reference to Alexander, to celebrate the Egyptian governor's success in rebelling against the Ottoman sultan, conquering a large part of the Fertile Crescent from the Ottomans.[32] While in Paris in 1884–1885, al-Afghani took exception to a lecture on Islam and science by Ernest Renan, and wrote a critique of it.[33] Yusuf Akçura acknowledged that he was exposed to the ethnic and even racial definitions of nation for the first time in Paris by reading authors like Gobineau.[34] Not surprisingly, this idea of a "universal" civilization was very prominent in the writings of early Greek

nationalists, who saw their mission as one of fulfilling the Greeks' foundational role in European progress. Partly as a result of their own perception of empire, the Ottoman reformers did not adopt an antagonistic stance toward Europe either. After all, the Ottomans considered their empire as being part of Europe, and focused their energies on integrating more closely, administering more efficiently, and, ultimately, retaining at all costs those parts of the empire that were closest to Central Europe.

Hence, these national projects started off with conceptions of communities that were far larger than the narrow nation-states that they ended up inspiring. Originally, the idea of a Greek nation was promoted not as an end but as a means toward the completion of European freedom.[35] This would be achieved only when Greek civilization would be freed not only from its Ottoman suzerains, but also from the clutches of the Orthodox Church. Adamantios Korais, who was part of the intellectual movement called the Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment, saw the future of the Greek nation not in its eastern, Byzantine past but in its absorption in the European-wide Enlightenment and revolution. Korais wrote: "If the Greco-Roman Emperors had given to the education of the race a small part of that attention which they gave to the multiplication of churches and monasteries, they would not have betrayed the race to other rulers more benighted than themselves."[36] Needless to say, such anticlericalism attracted the deep hostility of the Orthodox establishment, making the early nationalist intellectuals suspect not only in the eyes of their imperial masters in Istanbul, but also the Greek church, which was a pillar of the Greek community. In 1802, a monk warned the youth of Greece not to study in the West, which he described as a "chaos of destruction" where "the most atheistical lackeys of the arch-atheist Voltaire spew up from the foul-smelling gorges the most irreligious insults and blasphemies against the Divine Majesty."[37]

The intellectuals who first thought in terms of an Arab identity in the nineteenth century were inspired not so much by the narrow experience of the Arab communities in the Ottoman Empire but by the broad and rich tradition of Arabic literature and classical and literary Arabic language. Occasionally, alternative approaches that put emphasis on the broader understandings of the religion of Islam such as al-Afghani's conception of Islamic civilization or on the narrower definitions that were based on local political experiences such as Tahtawi's arguments about Egyptian exceptionalism gained currency among the intellectuals.[38] By the end of World War II, however, the liberal and religious interpretations were pushed aside almost completely by a harshly secular variant that became widespread in the region. Only in the last quarter of the twentieth century would Islam become, once again, a potent challenge to the fragmented and secular definitions of Arab identity.

Of the three cases under consideration here, Turkish nationalism is usually described as being the last to emerge and take root as a distinct project. While this is true in the sense that what being Turkish meant was not clarified until well into the twentieth century,[39] the idea of defining a community for political purposes goes back to the second half of the nineteenth century, to the Young Ottoman movement in the Ottoman Empire. Young Ottomans were critical of the institutional reforms of the nineteenth century because they viewed them as being too liberal, too close to the West and Westernization and hence a threat to the continuing importance of religion in the lives of the empire's subjects.[40] By raising these points they elevated their concerns over identity and state-society relations to a leading spot in the empire's political agenda. As such, Young Ottomans represent the first genuine attempt to define the people who were supposed to be the subjects of the reform and reorganization that was going on. The way they approached this problem, however, was not very conducive in providing long-term solutions to the dilemmas the empire was facing.

For one thing, the worldview of both the Young Ottomans and their successors, the Young Turks, remained firmly rooted in the Ottoman Empire. The question of identity which these intellectuals and political and military leaders grappled with was the (changing) nature of *Ottoman* identity. They came to believe that a clear identification of the Ottomans was essential for strengthening (more accurately, saving) the empire as it was being overwhelmed by external pressures and internal difficulties. Many of the Arab, Slav, Greek, Armenian, and Jewish leaders who would subsequently become prominent in their own separate nationalist movements were also Ottomanists at first because they believed that the empire could only be saved by maintaining its multiethnic and multireligious social makeup. Some of these leaders would even volunteer to serve in the Ottoman army, and defend the empire in North Africa, and the Balkans, and during World War I.[41]

Even as discussions shifted from Ottoman to Turkish identity among the Ottoman intellectuals and political elite, it was not clear exactly what Turkishness was supposed to cover. Through the writings and activities of several intellectuals, all of whom were immigrants from places like Azerbaijan, Crimea, and the Volga region of Russia (such as Ismail Bey Gasprinski, Ağaoğlu Ahmet, and Akçuraoğlu Yusuf) or from outlying provinces (such as Ziya Gökalp, who was a Kurd from Diyarbakır), Ottoman intellectuals became aware of a community of ethnic Turks who were spread across a large territory, extending from the Mediterranean basin into Central Asia. Another important link to the East was established more circuitously, by way of Europe, where exiled Ottoman intellectuals read the works of early Orientalists who were interested in Central Asian cultures, Turkic tribes, and languages.[42]

Through these and other channels, the idea of a distinct Turkish race found its way into new Turkish nationalist thought, which in the crucial years of the 1920s would become the official ideology of the new Turkish state, albeit on a territorially restricted basis.[43] It should be noted here that even though the race-based and more secular definitions of Turkish identity are thought of as alternatives to the more religiously grounded definitions, implicitly or explicitly, Sunni Islam would eventually become an integral part of the definition of who is a Turk.

The reformulation of the early discussions about ideology and nation from their expansive and even imperialist antecedents to narrow, distinct, and exclusive paths took place in the early decades of the twentieth century. The two main developments that provided the context for this reformulation were the end of the Ottoman Empire and the onset of European colonial rule in the eastern Arab region. Despite decades of debate and despite the fact that many of the ideologues tried to take part in and affect some of these conflicts and negotiations, when these ideologies were finally brought to bear on the social reality, the shape they took and the outcome they engendered depended not on the fine points of their definitions but on the radically changed regional and international context.

The end of the Ottoman Empire was a very messy affair. Between 1910 and 1923, the Ottoman Empire and its successor states were in a constant state of war, either with each other or against one or more occupying European armies.[44] The human cost of this prolonged conflict is hard to fathom. In Anatolia alone, more than 2.5 million people lost their lives. According to one estimate, the population of Anatolia declined by 20 percent through mortality during these years. In eastern Anatolia, one-half of the population was dead and another quarter had become refugees.[45] The situation in the Balkans and the Arab provinces was equally bleak with millions of dead and injured, and waves of refugees seeking food and shelter. At the end of the war, the Treaty of Lausanne between the new Turkish state and the European powers required the exchange of 900,000 Anatolian Greeks for 300,000 Muslims in northern Greece. As a result of this massive shuffle of people, cities like Izmir, which had been vibrant commercial centers with a diverse population, changed completely and became shadows of their former selves.

The disappearance of the Ottoman Empire as a political entity was followed, in the Arab provinces of the empire, by the establishment of European colonial rule. England and France received a mandate from the League of Nations to rule the newly created states until such time that they would be ready to run their own affairs. The immediate result of this new situation was that it put an end to all the expansive dreams of creating big states or new empires that would reach east and west. Now the reality was altered, as it turned out,

irrevocably. The resultant map reflected almost exclusively the competing interests of the European powers and had very little relationship to the dreams of the nationalists or the territories of the local communities. In this sense, World War I constitutes a fundamental break in both the imperial and national dreams that grew out of the Ottoman context. The national projects would have to be rethought and diffused separately within the borders of the newly minted states in the years that led up to and followed World War II in ways that differed significantly from their antecedents that had been conceived within the imperial context.

The way in which European statesmen approached this fragmentation brought to sharp relief the discrepancy between the Near Eastern intellectuals' regard for Europe as a source of inspiration and the deep contempt the European elite had for anything Arab, Middle Eastern, or Islamic. For example, Lord Curzon, who chaired the cabinet committee responsible for British policy in the East said, "The presence of the Turks in Europe has been a source of unmitigated evil to everybody concerned. I am not aware of a single interest, Turkish or otherwise, that during nearly 500 years has benefited by that presence."[46] During the Paris Peace Conference, the way in which the European statesmen discussed the postwar partition betrayed a deep sense of contempt for the people and cultures of the region. Here is a sample conversation:

"Well," said Clemenceau, the Prime Minister of France, "what are we to discuss?" The British Prime Minister Lloyd George replied, "Mesopotamia and Palestine." Clemenceau: "Tell me what you want." Lloyd George: "I want Mosul." Clemenceau: "You shall have it. Anything else?" Lloyd George: "Yes I want Jerusalem too." Clemenceau: "You shall have it but [Foreign Minister] Pinchon will make difficulties in Mosul."[47]

During another session, when Edwin Montagu, the British secretary of state for India, suggested that it might be better not to tell the Muslims what to think, Foreign Secretary Balfour replied, "I am quite unable to see why Heaven or any other power should object to our telling the Moslem what he ought to think."[48]

Once the borders were conceived and superimposed on Ottoman lands, those social groups that had prospered in the dense networks of the late empire lost their standing, almost overnight. From urban notables, most of whom were absentee landlords, to merchants and intellectuals, these people had become parts of highly cosmopolitan and polyglot lifestyles, cultural practices, and even languages in all parts of the empire. Once the material conditions for maintaining the expansive dreams of previous decades were lost, intellectuals and social groups who had put their stake in the continuation of these networks were crowded out by new ideas and ideologues that were more properly nationalist, in the sense of being more contained and also

defined in more exclusive terms. This shift is very well described in Yusuf Akçura's famous text, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Styles of Politics),[49] where he considers the three alternatives that were in front of the Ottoman Empire in the early years of the twentieth century. After going over the arguments for and against the creation of an "Ottoman nation" or, alternatively, subscribing to *panislâmisme*, Akçura concludes that the most realistic path for the empire's political and intellectual elite would be to concentrate on creating a Turkish nation based on race. What is remarkable about this pamphlet is that even though it was written relatively early in 1904, it contains almost a prophetic account of where some intellectuals and a segment of the Ottoman political community would be heading in a matter of several years.

In the Greek case, this shift came about after one last imperial reach into western Anatolia, which the Greek army carried out with the encouragement of Britain. The Greek occupation of a large part of western and central Anatolia in 1919–1922 appeared more in line with older dreams of a Hellas "stretching from the river Pruth to the Nile,"[50] than it did with modern nationalism. Not all local Greeks in western Anatolia had been favorably inclined toward the new Kingdom of Greece. Some had even returned to the Ottoman Empire after initially moving to the new state earlier in the nineteenth century. In the end, this disastrous campaign, known as "the catastrophe" in Greek historiography, not only led to the ejection of the entire Greek population from Anatolia, but also provided the crucial spark for the Turkish War of Independence and pushed both the Greek and Turkish nationalisms to confrontational and uncompromising positions that would last until the final years of the twentieth century.

The impact of the new borders in generating a narrower understanding of nation and nationalism can be seen most clearly in the Arab provinces. Even this refraction did not come before one last foray into empire building in 1916. This was carried out under the leadership of Sherif Husayn of Mecca who, once again with the support of the British, led his Hashemite family out of the Arabian Peninsula north to the Fertile Crescent, with the hopes that his would be the dynasty to rule over the entire Arab lands. Once this project for creating a new Arab kingdom was defeated and abandoned, Arab intellectuals gave up their earlier discussions about the Ottoman Empire, its Islamic content, the role of the sultan-caliph, and, most pointedly, the compatibility between Islam and modernity and strove to come up with a clear articulation of Arab identity. Arabness now would be defined in opposition to both the European policies, but also the Ottoman period, which was seen as another instance of foreign occupation. Unlike their predecessors who had a more universalist outlook, the main proponents of Arab nationalism in the twentieth century would see both the Ottoman Empire and Europe as responsible for

the eclipse of the once great Arab and Islamic civilization. Like European ro-
mantics who lamented the world that was lost with industrialization, nation-
alist thinkers of the Arab world who came of age in the second half of the
twentieth century were full of nostalgia for a time that may not even have ex-
isted in the way that they imagined it.[51]

There were only three instances where the borders imposed by the Great
Powers were directly challenged during the early part of the twentieth century.
The inspiration for these reactions came not from a deep-seated nationalist
sentiment but from the difficulties that were caused by foreign occupation.
The first of these was Libya, where the local forces of resistance fought the Ital-
ians for more than twenty years. The second was Palestine, where the Arab re-
volt in 1936 came close to forcing Great Britain to recognize the aspirations of
the local Arab communities there. And finally, there was the Turkish national
movement, which, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, beat back the oc-
cupying Greek army and successfully negotiated the withdrawal of the British,
Italian, and French forces that had claimed portions of Anatolia as their
spheres of interest.

Each one of these episodes has since been fully incorporated into the na-
tional histories of the three countries. They are presented as milestones in the
fulfillment of national dreams. Yet these three cases stand out in the degree to
which local networks and interests played a key role in determining the course
and outcome of these struggles. It was from such local communities as tribes,
villages, and religious orders that the main organizers and/or fighters in Ana-
tolia, Palestine, and Libya came. Libyan resistance was led by a Sufi sheikh,
Idris al-Sanusi.[52] One of the most important leaders of the Palestinian Revolt
of 1936–1939 in Palestine was also a Sufi sheikh, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, who
was able to tap the resentment of dispossessed Arab peasants.[53] Finally, the
Turkish resistance tapped into the Muslim sensibilities of the population in
Anatolia and took advantage of the previous mobilization of these communi-
ties.[54] His subsequent anticlericalism notwithstanding, Mustafa Kemal delib-
erately appealed to Muslims in Anatolia during the Greco-Turkish War. He
particularly benefited from the help of the Bektashi and Naqshibandi orders
during the war and accepted and used until his death the honorific title *Gazi*
(Holy Warrior), which was given to him by the National Assembly.[55]

What prompted the local groups to support these struggles were their local
concerns and interests, which had been undermined by the postwar settle-
ments and partitions. In the Turkish case, it was the fear that the Greek and
Armenian communities that had been evicted during the war would return to
claim their property, in Palestine, it was the expanding Zionist settlements,
and in Libya, it was the threats against tribal autonomy that were the key fac-
tors that motivated the fighters. The synergy between the aspirations of local

people and the national dreams of intellectuals allowed the latter to claim
moral and material victories and to defend the righteousness of their own
goals and visions in the years that followed. Nationalist histories were quick to
appropriate these movements and claim them as their own. In doing so, and
in their zeal to demonstrate how national identities are formed, they have ne-
glected to show that before and during these struggles, the national form was
only one (and an unlikely one) of a series of alternative identifications. In
Prasenjit Duara's words, "While the nation has been shown to be an unstable
and contingent relationship, History, on the other hand, has often worked to
secure the mystique of the nation, or in other words, its dubious claim to an
evolving, monistic subjecthood."[56]

Conclusion

This overview of the transition from the Ottoman Empire to its successor na-
tion states lends itself to two different kinds of conclusions. The first of these
is historically more specific and is relevant primarily to the study of the Ot-
toman Empire at the end of its long history: The material presented here sug-
gests that in this particular context the transition from empire to nation can
best be studied in terms of not continuity but a fundamental break that set the
Ottoman Empire and its successors far apart from each other. The second
conclusion, while still based on the historical example of the Ottoman Em-
pire, is more general and moves away from explanations that emphasize the
roles of capitalism and modernity as the causal factors in explaining the rise
of nations and nationalism in the modern world. Along with authors such as
Rogers Brubaker and Prasenjit Duara, I find that nations and nationalism can
best be understood as contingent phenomena deriving from a multitude of
choices and decisions people make under specific historical conditions.[57]

The conclusion about the rupture separating the empire from its succes-
sor nation states can be described as a revision of the revisionist history of
the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. Official history of the republic
that was articulated in the 1930s describes the emergence of the new state as
a Phoenix-like rise from the ashes of a decrepit old system that had become
doomed to oblivion. There was little, if any acknowledgment of the contri-
bution of Ottoman institutions and practices to this passage. If anything, the
writers of this history considered these as liabilities and implausibly turned
to ancient central Asia as the source of inspiration for explaining the success
of this transition.

Modern historians have questioned these arguments and have pointed out
several factors that suggested not so much a break but continuity between the

two entities.[58] After all, the leaders of the new republic were the products of Ottoman educational and military institutions; and many of these institutions, practices, and legal codes were carried over intact and utilized by the political leaders in setting up the new state. So simplistic and hagiographic was the official version of the foundation of the republic that revising it made perfect sense. But now, I suggest that this revision may have gone too far in minimizing the significance of some of the real and substantive changes that took place in this part of the world in the early years of the twentieth century.

It is worth remembering that in a matter of less than ten years, major cities like Izmir changed from being places where non-Muslims had a plurality to ones whose populations were more than 85 percent Muslim; with the killing and expulsion of Armenians, especially, the eastern parts of Anatolia lost a significant part of its artisan middle class; millions of refugees who had left the former territories of the Ottoman Empire were waiting to be settled and absorbed into the fast-changing social and institutional networks; Islam, which had served as the main source of legitimacy and the key axis of integration for six centuries in the Ottoman Empire, was forced out of the public domain and was replaced by a fanatical laicism. Lastly, we should note the actions of the political elite who were involved not only in talking and writing about this break but also in instituting it with wide-ranging linguistic, institutional, and sartorial reforms. The cumulative effect of these restructurings was such that in terms of its size, its ideological orientation, and the nature of its institutions, the new states had little resemblance to their imperial predecessor. Accordingly, the political and ideological visions that had been rooted in the late Ottoman era had to be rethought and reformulated. Although it is not useful to think of these transitions in absolute terms, rupture seems to be a better way of thinking about the historical passage from the Ottoman Empire to the many nation-states in the Middle East and the Balkans.

The second conclusion of this study relates more generally to the study of nations, and in particular to the study of the transition from empire to nation. The literature on nations and nationalism takes it for granted that ours is a world of nations and that other political forms, especially empires, would have little chance of surviving in this world. In moving away from such deterministic and functionalist arguments, this study identifies three elements and shows that it was their individual development and subsequent combination that determined the shape and character of the transition from empire to nation in the Middle East. These three elements were, first, the institutional changes that created a more centralized and effective state apparatus; second, the idea of nation that became available after successive reformulations and specifications in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; and finally, the redrawing of international borders that, even if they were imposed

from outside, had the effect of creating more compact units and reordering of priorities in the region.

There was nothing inevitable about any one of these factors and, even though they were influenced by each other, these three did not have to occur concurrently. But for this transition to take place, all three had to be there and form an integrated whole. In other words, all these factors are necessary for empires to change into nations, and, in Brubaker's words, for "nationness" to "happen,"[59] but none of them would be sufficient by itself in bringing about this transition. Without the reformed institutions, the ideas of nation would remain as ideas or even utopia; without the radical transformation of the regional and international context, the institutional reforms could serve to hold the empire together for longer or become conduits for the creation of new Hellene, Arab, and truncated Ottoman empires; and without the availability of the idea of nation or the reformed state institutions, the boundary changes would stop with the creation of colonial possessions in the region.

It was the political and intellectual elite who brought these three factors together. They did this on the basis of their own visions of how this transition should unfold. In doing so, they took advantage of the opportunities offered by the changes in the regional and international context and they also tapped the energies of the already mobilized groups and communities in the area. We can highlight the unusual and unpredictable nature of this process further by pointing out how rare it was for the political elite to challenge the borders that were created by colonial powers and, when they did, how it was even rarer for these challenges to succeed. Obviously, there was nothing intrinsically anti- or counternational about these boundaries. They could delineate the nation just as well as they had served the specific interests of the colonial powers. They were, in the words of Miles Kahler, empty vessels. Only subsequently and deliberately would they be filled with a national content and become the inviolable lines of national demarcation that they are today.

Notes

1. See, for example, Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (New York: Pella, 1987); Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Michelle Ursula Campos, "A Shared Homeland and Its Boundaries: Empire, Citizenship, and the Origins of Sectarianism in the Late Ottoman Palestine, 1908–1913" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2003).

2. To be sure, the literature on nationalism is extensive and this article, as well as the others in this collection, is indebted to this body of writing. By now there are several well-established ways of thinking about the relationship between nationalism on the one hand, and modernity (Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983]; Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992]), capitalism (Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. [London: Verso, 1991]; Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* [Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1990]), and historical and real alternatives to nationalism (Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000]). My question here is not so much how nationalism develops but how the idea of nation acquires the potency that it has in the modern world.

3. Viorel Panaite, *The Ottoman Law of War and Peace: The Ottoman Empire and Tribute Payers* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 2000), 148–70.

4. Charles Tilly, "How Empires End," in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1997), 3.

5. For an alternative description of Ottoman rule, see Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), where he argues that there was a thorough penetration of the periphery by the center and a complete application of imperial sentiments and priorities, at least in eastern Black Sea region. For one of the best discussions of this relationship, see Şerif Mardin, "Center Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?" *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (1973): 169–90.

6. Cevdet Paşa, *Tezâkir*, vol. 3, ed. C. Baysun (Ankara, Turkey: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1991), 108–9.

7. Cevdet, *Tezâkir*, 164.

8. See Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

9. Ömer Lutfi Barkan, "Research on the Ottoman Fiscal Surveys," in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, ed. M. A. Cook (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 165.

10. Kemal Karpat, "Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols., ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 141–70; Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963).

11. On Gypsies, see Elena Marushiakova and Vasselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: A Contribution to the History of the Balkans* (Hertfordshire, U.K.: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001). On Kurds, see Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed, 1992).

12. Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 66.

13. Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World*, chap. 2.

14. Yavuz Ziya Yörükan, *Anadolu'da Aleviler ve Tahtacılar* (Ankara, Turkey: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1998).

15. Ira Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 26–27.

16. John Barnes, "The Dervish Orders in the Ottoman Empire," in *The Dervish Lodge*, ed. Raymond Lifchez (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 34–35; Anthony Bryer, "Greeks and Turkmens: The Pontic Exception," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975): 113–48.

17. Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992); Hakan Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa* (Istanbul: Kitap, 2004).

18. Reşat Kasaba, "Do States Always Favor Stasis? The Changing Status of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire," in *Boundaries and Belonging*, ed. Joel Migdal (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 27–48.

19. Davison, *Reform*; Carter Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980); İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı* (Istanbul: Hil, 1983)

20. Davison, *Reform*, 263; Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 188.

21. Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 184–85, 282–83.

22. Cited in İhsan Sungu, "Tanzimat ve Yeni Osmanlılar," in *Tanzimat-I* (Istanbul: T. C. Maarif Vekaleti, 1940), 808.

23. Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962); Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: University of McGill Press, 1962), chap. 9; Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi* (Istanbul: Ülken Yayınları, 1979), 53–93; Sungu, "Tanzimat ve Yeni Osmanlılar," 777–857.

24. Eyal Ginio, "Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)," paper presented at the Fifth Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence, Italy (March 2001). See also Aram Andoyan, *Balkan Savaşı* (Istanbul: Aras, 1999).

25. Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

26. Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 174.

27. David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 157–58, 200–202.

28. Hasan Kayalı, "Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (August 1995): 265–86.

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32. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 73.

33. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 112.

34. Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara, Turkey: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976), 4.

35. See Reşat Kasaba, "The Enlightenment, Greek Civilization, and the Ottoman Empire," *The Journal of Historical Sociology* 16, no. 1 (March 2003): 1–21.

36. Quoted from Alfred Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilizations* (London: Constable, 1923), 337.

37. Quoted in Richard Clogg, "Elite and Popular Culture in Greece under Turkish Rule," *Indiana Social Studies Quarterly* 32 (1979): 69.

38. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 113–23.

39. See Soner Çağaptay, "Crafting the Turkish Nation: Kemalism and Turkish Nationalism in the 1930s" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2003); Gavin Douglas Brockett, "Betwixt and Between: Turkish Print Culture and the Emergence of a National Identity, 1945–1954" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2003).

40. Mardin, *The Genesis*.

41. Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 107–8.

42. David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism* (London: Cass, 1977), 10.

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57. Roger Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in New Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Duara, *Rescuing History*.

58. Erik Jan Zürcher's *Turkey: A Modern History* is the best example of this perspective (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993). See also Meeker, *A Nation of Empire*.

59. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 21.