Chapter II

Rise of Arab Nationalism and Impact of World War I
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A. Decline of Ottoman Empire

(i): The Ottoman Empire

Modern Turkey is a successor to the Ottoman Turkish empire, the heart of the Islamic world for four centuries, from 1517 to 1918.

The Arab-empire did not survive the Umayyad caliphate, and from the Abbasid caliphate onward it was more a Muslim empire than an Arab one. The Turks entered the Islamic world, as converts, as tribal invaders, as adventurers and mercenaries who became its rulers. Turkish tribes of Central Asia were the early converts to Islam and a group of these, the Oghuz Turks, in 1040 occupied Merv in Persia under the leadership of SelJuq clan. They established semi-independent principalities in Persia, Syria, and part of Anatolia and Armenia. The Mongol invasion in thirteenth century broke up the SelJuq Sultanate in Asia Minor, but from its ruins a Turkish-dynasty, the Ottoman, emerged in northwest Asia Minor and gradually extended its influence. Ottoman expansion was crowned by the capture of Constantinople in 1453, which
brought an end to the Roman empire of the east and brought a good part of South eastern Europe to the Islamic system.¹

By the middle of the Ninth Century Abbasid caliphs had already lost most of their power to provincial governors who were frequently Turkish mercenaries. It was the Turks who ultimately provided the strong political framework, which the Islamic empire established, by the Arabs had lacked. In 1258 the Mongol invasion which brought the Abassid caliphate to an end also destroyed the SelJuq sultanate in Asia Minor, but before the end of the century the foundation of the Ottoman empire had been laid on its ruins by Othman, a Turkish mercenary recently converted to Islam. He and his successors gradually extended their rule throughout Asia Minor and their influence into the Balkans.²

The Ottoman ancestors for two centuries were no more than rootless nomads, who sold their services to the highest bidders, leaving their claimed connection with the SelJuqs very questionable. Further, it was considerably afterward, after the Ottomans had built an empire, that they spread the idea that their ancestors had entered Anatolia as military Commanders in SelJuq service rather than as common nomads, to enhance their own claims to rule.³
The first century of Ottoman existence was their heroic age. The founders of the dynasty were no more than commanders of Turkish tribes organized primarily to raid and conquer the infidel territory around them. Advancing rapidly through Thrace and Macedonia, the Ottomans took much of Bulgaria, north Greece, Bosnia, and Serbia, developing a system of rule by which the native Christian princes retained their positions and lands in return for acknowledging Ottoman suzerainty and providing soldiers and money.

The first Ottoman empire was, then, based on both religious and economic motives. Its followers sought to extend the dominion of Islam and to secure booty. But when the last ruler of the period tried to use the wealth and power gained by European conquests to capture the Turkish and Muslim East, he brought on himself and its state the onslaught of new nomadic hoard, led by Tamer lane, who defeated the Ottoman army, broke up the empire, and reduced the Ottomans to the equal status with the other restored Turkoman principalities.

When Muhammad II (1451-81) seized Istanbul in 1453 he became heir to the Byzantine empire. Under Selim I (1512-20) the Ottoman empire acquired Islamic primacy by usurping the caliphate from the Mamluks based in Cairo, the Ottoman ruler
thus becoming the Sultan Caliph, the secular religious ruler. The empire expanded until the late seventeenth century, stretching from the Persian Gulf to Algeria and from Sudan in the South to Southern Russia in north east, and just beyond Budapest (in the Balkans) to north-west. Like its rivals, the Tsarist and Persian empires, it had Muslim, Christian and Jewish subjects.

(ii) Ottoman Decline

Ottoman rule was a military-religious autocracy of the Islamic pattern centred on Sultan-Caliph, whose office was hereditary in the house of Othman but became increasingly subject to the will of Janissaries. Authority within the empire was devolved either regionally through local governors or viceroy, or through semi-independent princes in treaty relations, or through communities, each of which had internal autonomy under an ecclesiastical functionary with temporal powers. At its best Ottoman rule, providing internal security and communications over a vast area and considerable individual and communal freedom in return for the payment of taxes and some degree of personal conscription, was preferable and preferred to other governments of its time. During its time of decay it became tyrannical, arbitrary, and inefficient; and Janissaries became increasingly rebellious and uncontrolled, especially from the
seventeenth century onwards Muslims began to be admitted to the corps and the whole system was decisively weakened. The massacre of the Jainissaries in 1826 by the Sultan Mahmud II (1808-39) enabled him to further the process of modernizing the army began by Selim III (1789-1807), and gained a century's respite for the empire, which, under the name of Turkey, was accorded the nominal status of power like those of Europe. The system of the Capitulations, or the grant of extra-territorial privileges in the empire to the subjects of foreign states, became the means by which different European powers secured rights amounting in the end almost to complete control of Ottoman economy.

The decline of Ottoman empire is a process to whose beginning a date is not easily assigned. The year 1683 has been chosen, as it was then that the Ottoman armies were forced to abandon the siege of Vienna, and the symptoms of decay appeared for the entire world to see. The Ottomans, for so long victorious, could not comprehend the reasons for their failure. They blamed their former ally, John Sobieski, on the incompetence of the Turkish Army, instead of their failure to compete with the advances made by West. Young and vigorous nations had emerged in Europe,
fired by new ideas, equipped with new knowledge and techniques, while the Ottoman Empire was marking time.

The retreat from Vienna was the first of a series of setbacks, which culminated in the loss of Budapest to the Austrians (1686) and was interrupted in 1699 by the treaty of Carlowitz.⁹

Mustafa III (1757-1773) laid all the Turkish misfortunes at the door of Janissaries, corrupt, pampered and undisciplined, zealous only in guarding their own privileges.¹⁰

The Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774 did nothing to awaken the Ottoman government to a sense of reality. Selim III, who became sultan in 1787, during the ruinous war that had been provoked by Russia's seizing the Crimea, was one of the most enlightened members of the house of Othman. Although it is his military reforms that have attracted most attention, he was not so narrow minded as his father, Mustafa III, who had regarded the Janissaries as the root of all evil. For Selim III was not blind to the anarchy that reigned among the ulama, the hierarchy whose leaders had the power to vote any measure which they regarded as contravening the sacred law. But Selim III was wiser not to under rate the religious opposition.¹¹

The Nizam-I-jedid, the 'new order' that he planned, embraced the whole administration of the empire. Selim and his
handful supporters were not strong enough to fight against the entrenched forces of the old order. Incited by *ulama*, the people of Istanbul rose against him in 1806. The new troops were defeated by the Janissaries, and the Mufti (Seyah-ul-Islam) pronounced it lawful to depose the impious Sultan.\textsuperscript{12}

By the early nineteenth century, owing mainly to rapid advances made by European powers in technology and administration, the military balance began to turn against the Ottoman empire. Sultan Mahmud (1808-39) tried to rectify the situation by introducing administrative and military reforms along European lines under the title of Tanzimat (literally Reorganization) in 1827. Tanzimat, 'Regulation' or 'reordering', is the name given to the programme of reform that was inaugurated in November 1839. Its architect, Mustafa Resid Pasha, was a well read and a foresighted statesman who had served as Ambassador in Paris. He was very anxious to save his country from the doom that had overtaken the French monarchy.\textsuperscript{13}

Resid and his companions were of the opinion that if nothing was done to remove the grievances of the subjects the empire might crumble into ruin even without foreign interference.\textsuperscript{14}

Yet the Tanzimat was still born; it 'stopped at the door step of sublime Porte'. Good intentions were not enough; however
much European liberals applaud this manifestation of a genuine desire for reform on the part of the Ottoman statesmen, public opinion in Turkey was hostile. For as yet the only educated class of any size among Muslim Turks was that of the ulama, who saw no reason for altering the Status quo, although they deemed in prudent to pay lip-service to the ideals of the Tanzimat, being indeed singled out in charter for a special threat of punishment in the event of their obstructing the reforms.¹⁵ On November 3, 1839, Sultan Abdul Mejid (1839-1861) gathered the notables of the empire in the palace and had his foreign minister read a statement which has come to be known as the hatti Sharif or the "noble rescript." Seventeen years later, on February 18, 1856, the same Sultan issued another statement which is known as the hatti Humayun "Imperial rescript". Both of these rescripts were issued under pressure and were partly made for the purpose of appeasing European governments. Nevertheless, they did inaugurate an era of reform in the Ottoman empire, which is called Tanzimat. It must be noted, however, that Tanzimat was as much the result of upheavals in the eighteenth century as it was the cause of change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁶ European favoured Tanzimat; but that did not deter them from attacking the Ottoman empire. Tsarist Russia was the most aggressive, determined to act
as the militant protector of twelve million Eastern orthodox Christians under the Ottomans.

Taking their cue from Russian aspirations towards the Christians of the Ottoman empire, the leaders of the central Asian Muslims appealed to Sultan Abdul Aziz (1861-1876) to establish himself as the guardian of Muslims in Tsarist Russia. But Abdul Aziz, heavily indebted to European powers, could do little. In the mid 1870's, at the Russian behest, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Serbia and Montenegro rebelled against Istanbul. This paved the way for the overthrow of Abdul Aziz by Midhat Pasha, the leader of the Young Ottomans, a powerful group formed in 1859 with the main objectives of securing an elected assembly for the believers. The causes of troubles faced by Ottoman empire were complex, and decline did not proceed at the same pace in all institutions. Alterations in military technology that reduced the importance of sipahi cavalry, a severe dislocation of the financial and economic position of the empire after the European discovery of America, and shifts in land holding arrangements to adapt to these changed circumstances all combined to undermine the classical system of first sultans. The break down of law and order in the countryside, the emergence of quasi-autonomous local gentry, and the marked unruliness and disaffection of the Janissary troops demonstrated
the breadth of internal disarray. The increasing success of the European military forces against the Turks illustrated the external dimension of the debilitation.¹⁸

With these structural problems came alterations in the conduct of monarchy. Failure to resolve the procedures for succession hastened the immersion of the ruler in the harem politics, to the detriment of national issues. But even when the sultans and the advisers sought to understand why the empire was being left behind, their traditional approach of trying to restore the institutions of the golden age of the past could not address the dynamic changes that were in fact responsible for the decline. Attempts to increase military strength by borrowing technology from the West encountered stiff opposition from the more conservative elements of the ruling elite.¹⁹ The sultan was the supreme ruler in Ottoman empire and as such presided over the meeting of Divan and personally lead the campaigns. Suleiman, however delegated this duty to grand vazir who ruled in the name of sultan became corrupted by the system. Having brought his way up to that position, the grand vazir was not a free agent. He was usually indebted to the women of the harem, or eunuchs, or the army or the ulama, or the combination of these, who wanted him to exploit the population for their own benefit.²⁰
In late nineteenth century Midhat Pasha produced a constitution, which formalized the religious status of Ottoman Sultan, and included a bill of rights and a provision for an elected chamber. It was promulgated by Sultan Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909) in December 1876.\(^1\)

In April 1877 the Russian army crossed the Ottoman borders with the objective of winning freedom for Slavs and reached Istanbul. The Sultan had to sign the humiliating Treaty of San Stefano in March 1878. It was revised in July 1878 by the Treaty of Berlin under its terms Cyprus was handed over to Britain, and Tunis to France, and Russia was left in control of districts of kars, Batum and Ardahan.\(^2\)

The continued loss of territory, coupled with growing interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman empire by the Europeans, convinced Abdul Hamid II that the fifty year old Tanzimat programme had failed to reassure either European powers or his Christian subjects. It was therefore time to change the direction.\(^3\) In February 1878 he suspended the constitution and dissolved parliament. He arrested Midhat Pasha and banished the Young Ottomans to different parts of the empire. He repudiated Islamic modernism and turned to traditional Islamic values and thought. He tried to regenerate cohesion in Ottoman
society by activating the masses on a religious platform around the Islamic banner and harnessing their energies. In order to succeed in the venture he activated sufi brotherhoods and used them as channels for communication to reach the masses. His strategy succeeded since there had all along been a wide spread current of Islamic feeling among the humbler Muslim subjects of Ottoman empire.\(^24\)

However, by the early twentieth century Abdul Hamid II's populist approach to Islam at home and espousal of pan Islamism abroad proved inadequate to revitalize the disintegrating empire. In 1908 the army officers of the empire's European territories and a group of young intellectuals, later to be called the 'Young Turks', compelled the Sultan to reinstate the 1876 constitution. They were having idea of pan Ottomanism, rather than pan Turkism, or pan Islamism.\(^25\)

Soon after the 1908 coup, Crete announced its union with Greece, Bulgaria proclaimed its independence, and Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. In April 1909 an unsuccessful attempt was made to overthrow young Turks. They in turn deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid II, hoping that would improve the health of the empire. It did not.\(^26\)
The Balkan war of 1912-13, which resulted in the Ottoman empire's loss of its remaining European territories as well as Libya, once again underlined its weakness. The latest conflict destroyed the concept of pan Ottomanism; and by reducing the empire it made it religiously more homogeneous. This encouraged the young Turk triumvirat of Enver Pasha Jamal Pasha and Talat Beg—which assumed effective power in Istanbul in 1913 to highlight pan Islamism and pan Turkism. It was therefore receptive to the suggestion by the Kaiser of Germany in 1914 to liberate fellow Turks and fellow Muslims from Russian bondage in central Asia, and thus compensate the Ottoman's loss of empire in Europe and North Africa. Hence Ottoman Turkey joined Germany in the First World War October in 1914.\textsuperscript{27} The young Turks wanted to unite the empire on the basis of Turkish language. They started the programme, of Turkification with the help of writers like, Ziya Gokpal and Helide Edib who highlighted the virtues of the Turks in their speeches and writings. This programme was oppressive unacceptable to non-Turks and was doomed to failure. The non-Turkish elements, mainly Arabic speaking, who as Muslim still had some sympathy with the empire, lost it altogether in the face of the pressure to give up their language in favour of Turkish.\textsuperscript{28}
Encouraged by Enver Pasha, the Ottoman war minister, Sultan Caliph Mehmet VI (1909-23) urged Muslims worldwide to mount a Jihad against their imperial masters-Britain, France and Russia.\(^{29}\)

Elsewhere, though, the Ottoman forces found themselves pounded by Allies. The Young Turk ministers resigned, and the Sultan appointed a new cabinet. It signed an armistice with the victorious Allies on 30 October 1918, twelve days before the surrender of Germany.\(^{30}\)

B. The Arab Revolt of 1915

(i) Ottoman Empire and the World War I

The first Balkan war (1912-13) marked the beginning of the ten-year period of war, which was to shake the traditional structures of the Islamic world. In 1913 the Ottoman empire could give up all its Rumelian provinces with out Jeopardizing its existence; the First World War, however, was to lead to the destruction not only of the empire, but also the centuries old political and cultural alliance between Turks and Arabs.\(^{31}\)

The covert German interventions against Odessa in 1914, the bloody fights for the Dardanells in 1915-16, the last Ottoman military tirumph in Qut al-Amara in 1916, the Suez offensive in 1916, the gradual conquest of Iraq and Palestine by allied troops
in 1917-18, and finally the armistice of Mudros in 1918, caused such sufferings among the civilian and military populations that they are widely remembered even today. On the Ottoman side the war caused about 325,000 casualties. The number of people died from starvation or were killed is still unknown, but probably amounted to the three million.

The Islamic countries could not remain neutral in the 1914-18 war, they either had to follow the policy of their colonial masters or join the small group of those loyal to central powers. Ottoman empire tried its best to act against the division of Islamic world. Ottoman tried to check the division through intensive Islamic propagation. An Islamic war (Jihad) was proclaimed by Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam on 15 November 1914. Aside from some local expressions of the sympathy among a few small intellectual circles, Islamic propaganda was unable to check the military and political division of Islamic world.

(ii) The Arab Revolt

In the latter years of the nineteenth and the first years of the twentieth century, Arab nationalists began to articulate their vision of a polity that would eventually replace the Ottoman framework. By the time Sharif Husayn Ibn al-Hashim assumed the mantle of the Sharifate in Mecca in 1908, three ideas were in
circulation which would have an impact on Husayn's vision of the post Ottoman order. These were the idea of a spiritual Sharifian or Arabian Caliphate, the importance of Arabs, and of the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula in particular in an Islamic revival, and the important role the Hijaz could play in a post-Ottoman polity. While the polity that Husayn envisaged borrowed from previous formulation, it included ideas developed from his own experience as the leader of an Arabian chieftancy. The outbreak of World War put the Decentralization party and the Syrian Reform Committee in the shade. The British, seeking allies against Ottomans, tempted Husayn to join their side.

The Sharif of Mecca, Husayn, who like Ibn Sa'ud had been able to build up his local power with British support, had since the height of the Turkification policy of the Ottoman empire (from about 1912/13) entertained hopes of founding a sovereign Arab empire with British military support. For both Husayn and Ibn Sa'ud the nation was only conceivable in the form of an empire.

The diplomacy of letters with the British authorities in the form of the British high commissioner in Egypt, Henry McMahon, so keenly pursued by Husayn and his son Abdallah, was aimed mainly at international recognition. This correspondence
between Husayn and Mc Mohan raised the hope both among Arab politicians especially in Syria, and in Husayn himself, that great Britain would no longer stand in the way of founding an Arab empire.\textsuperscript{37}

The correspondence has been a subject of controversy ever since, particularly in connection with the Palestine Mandate, the Arab having taken the view, later challenged by the British government, that Palestine was included in the area of Arab independence. In 1915-16 a savage campaign of repression by the Turkish governor of Syria precipitated the revolt, and Arab independene was proclaimed by Amir Ali and Amir Faisal at Medina on 5 June 1916 to a body of Arab recruits who had nominally been enlisted for the Turkish army. With artillery assistance from the Sudan the Turkish garrison in Mecca was overcome and the other towns of the Hejaz, except Medina, quickly fell to the Sharif and the British Navy.\textsuperscript{38}

The Arab national movement did not offer Husayn much backup, as it was evident from early 1913 that, for Arabs the real issue was not the establishment of one Arab nation state, but the independence of Arab regions as nation states. Even Husayn did not see himself as the political leader of the entire Arab world. What he was really striving for was the political confirmation of
his’ territory by the international public. The British authorities confirmed him King of Hijaz in 1916. But the Borders of his territory were, however, unclear. Husayn made demands of more area at least districts upto Ma’an in today’s Southern Jordan, and even the inclusion of Damascus in its territory.39

In the summer of year 1917, a real race began between Mecca powers and Great Britain for supremacy in Palestine and Syria. The British army commander entered with troops in to Palestine, while Arab troops, sent by Husayn entered there on 15th June 1916. On 9 December British troops finally conquered Jerusalem, and Haifa fell as late as 23 September 1918. The new advance of British and Arab troops encouraged notables and politicians of Damascus to rise openly against the Ottoman empire. On October 1918 Arab troops and British troops, marched in to Syria capital. For the Arab nationalists Syria was liberated by the Arab army and political power belonged to the liberators, who immediately tried to establish an Arab civil administration in Syria. With the establishment of the National Assembly in Ankara, Arab nationalists in Damascus organized an Arab National Congress, which was led by Faisal, in it meeting from June 19 upto July 1920, this congress, of Arab Nationalists, was to look after Arab interests. The National congress included a good number of former Ottoman deputies.40
Faisal's appearance at the Pairs Peace conference encouraged the Congress to great extent, and soon they proclaimed the independence of 'Arabia' as Kingdom in 1920. Faisal was appointed king of the Arabs; his father Husayn remained king of Hijaz. The 'new Arab government' which had nominated Husayn as 'Sharif of Mecca' in 1916, no longer played any part in Damascus because the citizens of Hijaz who had supported this government were unwanted on Syrian territory. At the same time, the Congress had also acknowledged the independence of Iraq, although Iraq and Syria were to form a kind of economic community. Lebanon and Palestine were considered as inalienable parts of Syria.  

The intervention of French troops, the devastating defeat of the quickly organized 'Regular Syrian Army' near Maisalun (24th July, 1920) and the bombing of Damascus put an end to the dream of a Syrian nation state.  

In 1920 great Britain separated its new 'Mandated Territory' of Palestine from eastern Jordan for strategic reasons, and the latter was renamed Trans Jordan. Iraq and Trans Jordan were put under the formal regency of Husayn's two sons Faisal and Abdullah in 1921 and 1922 respectively.
REFERENCES


4. Ibid p 12.

5. Ibid


7. Elizabeth, Monroe, *OP. Cit; No. 1* p 10.


10. Ibid p 34.

11. Ibid

12. Ibid


22. Ibid

23. Ibid pp. 46,47.

24. Ibid p 47.

25. Ibid


30. Ibid


32. Ibid p. 41

33. Ibid p. 41


37. Ibid

38. Elizabeth, Monroe, *OP. Cit*; No. 1 p. 23.

39. Reinhard, Schulze, *OP. Cit*; No. 31 p 56, 57.


41. Ibid

42. Reinhard, Schulze, *OP. Cit*; No. 31 p. 58.

43. Ibid pp. 58, 59.