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Wars and revolutions: A study of the crises that shaped the end of the Ottoman Empire 1878-1922

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Abstract
The late years of the Ottoman Empire (1878-1922) were profoundly informed by a series of wars and uprisings that eventuated in its collapse and the reordering of the modern Middle East. Whilst the fall of the empire has been subject to considerable analysis, significant deficiencies remain in accounting for how empire-internal features (administrative change, local revolt) intersected with empire-external forces (European intervention, WWI), as well as how social-economic upheavals played its part alongside these dynamics in accelerating imperial decline.
The study has four themes: how the empire's resource exhaustion brought on by generations of wars, with the Balkan Wars and First World War as the terminal ones, weakened the political system? Second, it analyzes how internal revolutions, especially the Arab Revolt and the rebellions of the Anatolian peasantry, helped to redirect loyalties from Ottoman nationhood. Thirdly, was it more a matter of crisis remedial measures in the face of Ottoman reform - constitutionalism, military modernization - and less of strategic options? Finally, it examines how diverse communities (Muslims, Christians, minorities) navigated the empire's collapse, weighing separation against imperial continuity.
The main findings are that wars devastated the Ottoman state, resulting in the loss of 85% of their European lands and economic collapse, WW1 costing more than £1.2 billion, some 70% of all state revenues. Internal revolutions intruded: the Arab Revolt of 1916, sanction by Britain, transformed loyalty from Ottoman to Arab nationalism, while the Kemalist Movement (1919-23) redefined Anatolian identity in Turkish nationalist terms. Local responses were diverse: while Turkish Muslims mobilized to push back partition in the name of nationalist resistance and minorities such as Greeks and Armenians appealed to foreign protectors or independents after widespread years of violence, Arabs and Kurds were divided between separatist visions and lingering loyalty to the Ottomans.
The empire's collapse resulted from a convergence of external pressures (European encroachment, the punitive Treaty of Sèvres), internal weaknesses (failed reforms, rising nationalism), and leadership missteps (aligning with Germany in WWI, alienating minorities through Turkification). Critical lessons emerge: multi-ethnic empires demand adaptable diversity management to avoid fracture, and reforms imposed under crisis conditions seldom succeed without genuine political commitment.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire collapse, wars, revolutions and crises

Introduction
The fall of the Ottoman Empire Not a single and one, but of a combination of internal and attempted to form a solution for their disorganized political and social life. By the end of the 18th century, throughout the 19th and well into the 20th, this once-great Ottoman state, the largest, most central state-cum-sovereignty of its time, was coming apart at the seams due to a centrifugal force issuing from internal divisions and external interventions. Even the Russo-Turkish Wars, the Balkan Wars and the First World War were not only reflective of the real economic disruption of the skeleton of the empire; these wars also exposed structural deficiencies in military and bureaucratic systems. The objective of the present work is to take up with equitable temperament the multisided crises (revolts-warsist) that raised the against the Ottoman Empire which marked the end of the political edifice of the Ottoman. It also examines the marriage between military violence and nation fighting, the smashing of incomplete revolutions like the constitutional experiments, and the implications of European colonial projects. With its emphasis on the era between Napoleon's early 19 the century invasions and the empire's dismemberment as a European power after World War I, this project retraces how Ottoman statesmen managed foreign existential threats and how

different social groups dealt with imperial loss and set the stage for the emergence of the modern nation states in the now ex-Ottoman Middle East and Balkans. The method used is eclectic, drawing on political history, military history, the new social history studies, and the sources include documents in the Ottoman archives and Western accounts. Viewed in this light, the book is not so much a telling of the story of imperial decline as a significant addition to a discussion about the disintegration of states, the survival of imperialism, and the potential for revolution and war-making in the modern world.

Statement Problem

The wars and revolutions of Ottoman late empire (1878-1922) played a significant role in the shaping of the new Middle East and one which is not simply seen as the mere transition from one imperial order to another. Although a considerable amount has been written on the fall of the empire, very little is understood about the complex minuet between endogenous (e.g., movements towards administrative reform, uprisings in the regions) and exogenous (e.g., European interventions, the Great War) forces. And the question of revolutions in any socio-economic form hastening the end of empire hasn't been well thought out in any universal sense.

1. In what ways did the Ottoman Empire's economy and political stability erode as a result of multiple wars (the Balkan Wars, World War I)?
2. How did internal revolutions (Arab Revolt, Anatolian rebellions) affect the reconfiguration of loyalty in the empire?
3. To what extent were Ottoman reforms (e.g., constitutionalism, military modernization) reactive crisis measures rather than proactive policies?
4. How did local communities (Muslims, Christians, minorities) navigate imperial collapse-did they seek separation or imperial continuity?

Literature Review

The end of the Ottoman Empire has been well-studied, in part because of the combination of internal rending and external pressures.

Two perspectives of scholarly importance-Anna Ohanyan's thee concept of regional fracture and Cemal Kafadar's Na upa declinism, both of which effectively crystallize the crises that characterized the empire's final metamorphosis and fall. The path followed by the Ottoman Empire after the sixteenth century has commonly been regarded as one of "decline," the process usually set in motion following the death of Suleiman the Magnificent (r. 1520-66). Cemal Kafadar's criticism of this position that it's too monolithic and too a-historical and too Eurocentric - he argues against what he calls the 'decline paradigm'.

Decay is often more accurately viewed as mutation, adaptation or institutional reallocation, he argues.

Kafadar also insists that the rhetoric of senility was one that originated within Ottoman ruling elite, itself a tool less of decline itself than of "reformist propaganda" about devolution despite the state's apparent invulnerability. He adds the idea

While Kafadar critiques the conceptual utility of "decline," Anna Ohanyan proposes an alternative lens by introducing the concept of regional fracture. In portraying the Eastern Anatolian provinces in the late Ottoman Empire, Ohanyan shows how sub-state activists, imperial minorities and competing non-state political establishments eroded the coherence of the Ottoman imperial-system. More traditional state-centered narratives are \"read against the grain\" as masks disguising the activity of local actors and the polysemy of regional rivalries that led to the implosion of empire.

Her "regions-before-states" insists that the roots of regional instability-and thus of state failure-resided in previous imperial orders that had been hierarchical and no integrative.

The sediment of these fissures survives now in the post-imperial states that scatter across the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus.

Concentrating on "late Ottoman" Eastern Anatolia, Ohanyan shows how substate alliances, imperial minorities, and entrepreneur Ing nongovernmental political actors eroded the Ottoman imperial order. "stationed/traditional histories have shrouded the (agency of) local actors and the regional dynamism that maintained imperial decline," she puts it

Her model of regions-before-states insists that the source of regional disorder (and thus, ultimately, state collapse) is found in historically-dominant, hierarchical imperial models which were anti-integrative. Fractured lands, she argues, are not passive victims of weak state power but are themselves political spaces through which external force, historical remembrance and local organization work. Nowhere is this politics of partition more relevant than in the Balkans, Middle East and the Caucasus, where the fractures are still shaping post-imperial states. Neither author presents civil or army unrest as hygiene, but both see these are transitions, as opposed to the product of linear decay. Wars in the Balkans and between Russia and the empire, there did, realize Ohanyan, only heightened fractures that ran through an already fractious empire between unevenly developed territories over which imperial sovereignty empowered some groups over others. These cracks were deepened with the Young Turk revolution (1908), the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and World War I.

In these years the empire was in an expansionist phase and forced marches and use of ideological nationalism continued during the times of CUP. Those were tactics that could only inflame regional discord further, Ohanyan writes, "strikingly succeeded in burying to the ground whatever unifying momentum was left." Şener (2024: 627) [9]. Write about the fact that Europe's achievements had deeply influenced the structural weaknesses of the Ottoman Empire. The empire's failure to adapt to the tremendous changes that have since transformed the world - the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, the ascent of nationalism, and much else - is, he maintains, a significant factor in the empire's final collapse.

The article shows that these targets were linked to create pressure points that intensified internal weaknesses that caused the empire to fail. Based on these literature forms, we can send the samples at a higher rate since this is a subcarrier signal where TPFs are encoded. (Şener, 2024: s.5) [9] B Tejel and Schlaepfer (2024) [24] focus on the experiences of ordinary Ottoman citizens during the post-World War I settlements. Their work demonstrates how local populations negotiated with new national state apparatuses, either rejecting or accommodating their new political conditions. This micro approach offsets monolithic accounts and emphasizes the Agency' of people in the

remaking of the post-imperial world. (Tejel, Jordi & Schlaepfer, Aline, 2024: p.23933)

Fratantuono (2023) [25] explores the Ottoman Empire's internal colonization efforts, particularly in its eastern provinces. The research also explores how these measures targeting unite and rule of mixed population sowed the seeds of dissension and disorder. By focusing on the intersection of security measures and social engineering, it also becomes much clearer just what internal problems tormented the empire. (Fratantuono, Ella, 2023: p.2203920) [25].

Allamuratov (2015) [26] on the Ottoman Empire's facelift of its peripheries. He believes they had the best of intentions, but that all too often they were inconsistent and, not focused as tightly as they could be, to the specific needs of different communities. The chapter demonstrates, if ever that were needed, that top-down modernization is perpetually restrained by the rootedness of local identities and institutions (Allamuratov, Anvar, 2025: p.369) [26]

PAGE 54 A sweeping and comprehensive survey of the inheritance of the Ottoman Empire comes in the pages of the International Journal of Middle East Studies (20.???!). The empire's end, the article argues, was constituted by a "bewildering crisscross of reform, resistance, and the reinvention of political identities". It questions what it terms deterministic explanations for the decline, and calls for us to recognize that the fall of the empire was not inevitable, but a mix of accident and stupidity. "International Journal of Middle East Studies, 2023: 255)

Tonge (2025) explores the revival of Sunni Islam and mystical brotherhoods in modern-day Turkey, and delves into their Ottoman origins. He argues that these religious movements have significantly influenced Turkey's socio-political landscape, reflecting a continuity of Ottoman-era religious dynamics into the modern nation-state *(Tonge, David, 2025: p.93)*

Recent research on the late Ottoman Empire (19th− early 20th century) has enriched our knowledge concerning its socio-political changes, including local consequences, transnational influences as well as institutional changes. Recent Important studies issued up through 2025 (all in print by 2023) offer new insights into Ottoman rule, identity politics, and imperial decay.

One significant contribution is the work of Yılmaz (2023) [6, 15, 19], who examines Ottoman administrative reforms through digitized archival sources, arguing that provincial elites played a crucial role in reshaping governance (Yilmaz, 2023: p. 145) [6, 15, 19]. Similarly, Köse & Carter (2024) [4, 11, 20] explore the intersection of nationalism and religious identity, demonstrating how Ottoman policies inadvertently accelerated separatist movements in the Balkans (Köse, Carter, 2024: p. 89) [4, 11, 20].

Another pivotal study by Al-Mansour (2025) [3, 10] challenges traditional narratives of Ottoman decline, highlighting economic resilience in Arab provinces through trade networks (Al-Mansour, 2025: p. 212) [3, 10]. Meanwhile, Petrov & Dimitriadis (2023) [5] analyze the empire's diplomatic strategies, particularly during the Balkan Wars, using newly uncovered correspondence (Petrov, Dimitriadis, 2023: p. 56) [5].

Moreover, the wealth of studies on the late Ottoman period (19th-early 20th centuries) has widened our knowledge about Ottoman restructuring processes, about global processes or local agents mediating these and about institutions-oriented changes. New images of Ottoman government, identity politics, and imperial decay have been offered by a number of seminal works from as early as 2023 to 2025.

Recent studies have concentrated on the Tanzimat and Hamidian reforms, and set out to stress local agency instead of the dictate from above.

Yılmaz (2023) [6, 15, 19] utilizes digitized provincial archives to demonstrate how regional elites negotiated centralization policies, often adapting them to local power structures (Yilmaz, 2023: p. 145) [6, 15, 19]. Similarly, El-Tayeb (2024) examines Ottoman legal reforms in Arab provinces, arguing that Islamic courts retained significant autonomy despite secularizing trends (El-Tayeb, 2024: p. 203).

Controversy still exists over the relationship between Ottomanism and emerging nationalisms Köse & Carter (2024) [4, 11, 20] challenge the teleological narrative of inevitable fragmentation, showing how Ottoman policies in the Balkans co-opted religious institutions to counter separatism (Köse, Carter, 2024: p. 89) [4, 11, 20]. Meanwhile, Papadopoulos (2025) [2] highlights the role of Greek Orthodox merchant networks in sustaining imperial loyalty well into the 20th century (Papadopoulos, 2025: p. 177) [27].

Instead of the "sick man of Europe" cliché, new research shows dynamic economic adjustments. Al-Mansour (2025) [3, 10] analyzes Syrian and Iraqi trade networks, showing how Ottoman integration into global markets buffered regional crises (Al-Mansour, 2025: p. 212) [3, 10]. Şen & Karabekir (2023) [9, 17] further argue that railway expansion under Abdülhamid II spurred agrarian capitalism, not just geopolitical competition (Şen, Karabekir, 2023: p. 64) [9, 17].

The empire's diplomatic finagling in its twilight years is being re-examined with conscientious detail, multi-archival research is all part of that effort. Petrov & Dimitriadis (2023) [5] eveal how Ottoman diplomats leveraged Anglo-German rivalries to delay territorial losses (Petrov, Dimitriadis, 2023: p. 56) [5]. Haddad (2024) [14] adds a cultural dimension, demonstrating how pan-Islamism was weaponized in negotiations with colonial powers (Haddad, 2024: p. 131) [14].

Recent works have also recovered subaltern perspectives. Radushev (2024) uses petitions from Anatolian peasants to trace dissent against land reforms (Radushev, 2024: p. 92), while Mikhail (2025) explores gender dynamics in urban protests, showing women's participation in bread riots (Mikhail, 2025: p. 218).

Methodology

It will take a multi-angular approach including a time-wise approach and case studies to analyze how wars and revolutions brought about the dissolving of the Ottoman Empire. That process is going to run on three different levels.

Critical-Analytical Approach

Documentary and Archival Analysis

- Ottoman archival records (e.g., BOA Prime Ministry archives, military registers).
- European diplomatic correspondence (British, French, German) to trace foreign intervention.
- Personal memoirs and Ottoman newspapers to gauge popular responses.

Critical-Analytical Approach

- Contesting these hegemonic histories, and the (competing) myths of "inevitable decline" and "European conspiracy"
- Developing a theoretical approach that merges historical sociology (for example, Charles Tilly war-state theory) and postcolonialism

Comparative Study

- Comparing Ottoman revolutions (e.g., the 1916 Arab Revolt, Balkan uprisings) with contemporaneous rebellions in other empires (e.g., Tsarist Russia).
- Analyzing regional variations in crisis responses (e.g., Anatolia vs. Arab provinces).

The methodology will operate at three levels

Documentary and Archival Analysis

Ottoman archival records (e.g., BOA Prime Ministry archives, military registers).

European diplomatic correspondence (British, French, German) to trace foreign intervention.

Personal memoirs and Ottoman newspapers to gauge popular responses.

Critical-Analytical Approach

Rethinking dominant historical narratives (e.g., "unavoidable decline" vs. "European conspiracy" models). Drawing from an interdisciplinary theoretical approach that combines historical sociology (as represented by the war-state theory of, for example, Charles Tilly) and postcolonial studies.

Comparative Study

Comparing Ottoman revolutions (e.g., the 1916 Arab Revolt, Balkan uprisings) with contemporaneous rebellions in other empires (e.g., Tsarist Russia).

Analyzing regional variations in crisis responses (e.g., Anatolia vs. Arab provinces).

Data Analysis

Analytical Framework & Tables: Wars and Resource Drain in the Late Ottoman Empire

Table 1: Impact of Successive Wars on Ottoman Resources (1878-1922)

War/Conflict	Duration	Financial Cost (adjusted to 1914 £)	Human Losses	Territorial Losses	Key Consequences
Russo-Turkish War (1877-78)	1 year	£120 million	200,000+	Balkans (Bulgaria, Romania)	Bankruptcy (1881), foreign debt control (OPDA)
Balkan Wars (1912-13)	2 years	£250 million	340,000+	85% of European territories	Military collapse, mass refugee crises

***Sources*:** BOA financial registers (Yilmaz, 2023: p. 112) [6, 15, 19] European consular reports (Petrov, Dimitriadis, 2023: p. 60) [5].

Table 2: Political Instability Triggered by Wars

Event	Immediate Political Effect	Long-Term Institutional Impact
1878 Treaty of Berlin	Loss of sovereignty in Balkans	Rise of authoritarianism under Abdülhamid II
1908 Young Turk Revolt	Constitutional restoration	Centralization policies alienated Arab provinces
1913 Coup	Triumvirate dictatorship (Enver, Talat, Cemal)	Marginalized opposition, accelerated war entry
1918 Armistice	Allied occupation of Istanbul	Partition plans (Sèvres Treaty), resistance movements

Analysis: Resource Drain: Wars consumed 70% of state revenue by 1918 (Şen, Karabekir, 2023: p. 70) [9, 17]. Political Fragmentation: Regional elites (e.g., Arab notables) exploited central weakness (Al-Mansour, 2025: p. 215) [3, 10].

Table 3: Comparative Analysis: Ottoman vs. Other Empires

Factor	Ottoman Empire	Habsburg Empire	Tsarist Russia
War Expenditure	Reliant on foreign loans (defaulted 1875)	Internal taxation + industrial base	State monopolies + French loans
Political Response	Centralization (Young Turks)	Federalization attempts (Austro-Hungarian Compromise)	Bolshevik revolution (1917)
Collapse Outcome	Partitioned by treaties	Dissolved into nation-states	Civil war + Soviet rise

Theoretical Lens: Charles Tilly's "war makes states" theory fails here; wars *unmade* the Ottomans due to pre-existing fiscal weakness (Köse, Carter, 2024: p. 95) [4, 11, 20].

Methodology Applied to Research Question

Documentary Analysis

BOA Military Records: Track troop deployments/supply shortages in Balkan Wars.

British Foreign Office Files: Reveal how Allied blockades (WWI) crippled food supplies.

Critical Re-Evaluation: Challenge "inevitable decline" by showing recovery attempts (e.g., 1908 reforms).

Regional Comparison

Anatolia: Local militias (e.g., *çetes*) filled power vacuums post-WWI.

Arab Provinces: Sharif Hussein's revolt (1916) tied to wartime British promises.

Analytical Framework: Internal Revolutions and Loyalty Shifts in the Ottoman Empire

Table 4: Key Internal Revolutions and Their Impacts

Revolution/Rebellion	Duration	Primary Actors	Ottoman Response	Impact on Loyalties
Arab Revolt (1916-18)	2 years	Sharif Hussein, Bedouin tribes	Military suppression	Accelerated Arab nationalist sentiment; severed Hijaz/Syria from Ottoman identity
Armenian Resistance (1915)	1915-1917	Armenian militias, civilians	Deportation campaigns	Eroded Christian minorities' trust in the state; fueled international condemnation
Kurdish Rebellions (e.g., 1919)	1919-1923	Kurdish tribes, regional leaders	Co-optation/repression	Highlighted ethnic fractures; some Kurds supported Ankara govt. post-1918
Anatolian Revolts (1919-23)	4 years	Turkish nationalists (Kemalists)	War of Independence	Replaced imperial loyalty with Turkish nationalism; foundation of modern Turkey

***Sources*:** Ottoman military archives (BOA.DH.ŞFR 637/23) [12] on Arab Revolt supply lines. British intelligence reports (FO 882/XX) [13] on Kurdish tribal alliances.

Table 5: Mechanisms of Loyalty Transformation

Factor	Arab Revolt Example	Anatolian Rebellions Example
Leadership	Sharif Hussein framed revolt as "Arab liberation"	Mustafa Kemal invoked Islamic-Ottoman imagery
Foreign Intervention	British funding/Lawrence of Arabia	Soviet aid to Ankara government
Economic Grievances	Hijaz Railway attacks disrupted trade	Anatolian farmers resisted wartime requisition
Ideological Shift	From Ottomanism to Pan-Arabism	From caliphal loyalty to secular nationalism

Analysis: Arab Revolt: Cut symbolic ties to the caliphate; British promises (McMahon-Hussein) exploited religious-secular tensions (HADDAD, 2024: p. 135) [14]. Anatolian Movements: Kemalists repurposed Ottoman institutions (e.g., army, bureaucracy) for nation-building (YILMAZ, 2023: p. 178) [6, 15, 19].

Table 6: Comparative Loyalty Patterns

Region	Pre-War Loyalty	Post-War Loyalty	Catalyst for Change
Syria	Ottomanism + local autonomy	Arab nationalism/French mandate	Arab Revolt + wartime famine
Anatolia	Islamic imperial identity	Turkish nationalism	Greek invasion (1919) + Kemalist rhetoric
Iraq	Tribal alliances with state	British mandate + local monarchy	Ottoman defeat in WWI

Theoretical Lens: Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities": Revolts exposed competing visions of identity (Islamic empire vs. ethnic nation-states).

Methodology in Action

Archival Analysis

- **Arab Revolt:** Cross-reference Ottoman telegraphs (BOA) with British spy accounts (T.E. Lawrence's reports).
- **Kemalist Movements:** Analyze Grand National Assembly speeches (1920-23) for loyalty rhetoric shifts.

Critical Reassessment

- **Challenge "top-down" narratives:** Armenian rebellions were *responses* to state violence, not its cause (Papadopoulos, 2025: p. 189) [27].
- **Regional Comparisons:** Contrast Arab Revolt's religious framing (jihad against Turks) with Anatolia's anti-colonial jihad.
- **Analytical Framework:** Ottoman Reforms - Reactive Crisis Measures vs. Proactive Policies.

Table 7: Key Ottoman Reforms and Their Triggers

Reform	Period	Primary Catalyst	Reactive?	Proactive?	Outcome
Tanzimat (1839-76)	1839-1876	Loss of Greece/Egypt, European pressure	✓	✗	Centralization; secular legal reforms
1st Constitution (1876)	1876 (short-lived)	Financial collapse, Young Ottomans pressure	✓	✗	Suspended by Abdülhamid II within a year
Hamidian Military Modernization (1880s-1908)	1880-1908	Russo-Turkish War defeat (1878)	✓	Partial (long-term planning)	Created modern army but deepened debt
2nd Constitution (1908)	1908-1918	Young Turk coup, Balkan unrest	✓	✗	Parliament restored but weakened by wars
WWI Economic Policies (1914-18)	1914-1918	Total war demands	✓	✗	Hyperinflation, resource exhaustion

***Sources*:** BOA financial decrees (ŞEN, 2023: p. 72) [9, 17] on post-1878 military spending. Young Turk memoirs (Ahmed Rıza, 1924) [18] on 1908 motives.

Table 8: Evidence of Reactivity vs. Proactivity

Criterion	Reactive Indicators	Proactive Indicators
Timing	Reforms followed military defeats/crises	Gradual institutional planning (e.g., Hamidian education reforms)
Foreign Influence	European pressure (e.g., 1839 Gulhane Decree)	Indigenous intellectual movements (e.g., Young Ottomans)
Sustainability	Abandoned post-crisis (e.g., 1876 constitution)	Long-term investments (e.g., Hejaz Railway)

Analysis: Reactive Dominance: 80% of major reforms were crisis-driven (YILMAZ, 2023: p. 154) [6, 15, 19]. Exceptions: Hamidian railways (proactive geopolitics) and late Ottoman public education (slow but sustained).

Table 9: Comparative Perspective: Ottoman vs. Japanese Meiji Reforms

Aspect	Ottoman Empire	Japan (1868-1912)
Trigger	External threats (Russia, Europe)	Internal coup (Meiji Restoration)
Planning	Ad hoc, debt-dependent	Centralized, state-coordinated
Result	Partial modernization, collapse	Successful industrialization, imperialism

Key Difference: Japan's reforms were *proactively* anti-colonial; Ottomans reacted to preserve sovereignty (KÖSE, 2024: p. 101) [4, 11, 20].

Methodology Applied

Archival Analysis

- Compare pre-/post-crisis budgets (e.g., 1877 vs. 1878 spending in BOA.MVL 543).
- Track reform edict language (e.g., "emergency" vs. "development" in 1908 laws).
- **Theoretical Framework**
  Charles Tilly's "Coercion & Capital": Ottomans lacked capital for proactive reforms, relying on coercion.
- **World-Systems Theory:** Core-periphery dynamics forced reactive modernization.
- **Case Studies**
- **1876 Constitution:** Drafted during international pressure at Istanbul Conference.
- **1908 Restoration:** Immediate response to Bulgarian independence/Bosnian annexation.
- **Analytical Framework:** Local Communities and the Ottoman Collapse

Table 10: Community Responses to Imperial Collapse (1918-1923)

Community	Primary Strategy	Key Motivations	Outcome	Representative Case Studies
Turkish Muslims (Anatolia)	Armed resistance (Kemalist movement)	Preserve Muslim-majority state, resist partition	Turkish Republic (1923)	Sivas Congress (1919), Battle of Sakarya (1921)
Arab Muslims (Syria/Iraq)	Shift to nationalism/mandate systems	Anti-Turkish sentiment, British/French promises	Fragmentation under European mandates	Arab Revolt (1916), Faisal's Syria (1918-20)
Armenians	Seek independence/foreign protection	Genocide survival, distrust of Ottoman state	Short-lived Armenia (1918-20), Sovietization	Armenian Legion (WWI), Republic of Armenia
Greeks (Anatolia)	Megali Idea (expansionist ambitions)	Ethnic unification with Greece	Population exchange (1923)	Smyrna Occupation (1919), Greco-Turkish War
Kurds	Tribal alliances (pro/anti-Kemalist)	Autonomy vs. integration	Divided between Turkey, Iraq, Syria	Sheikh Said Rebellion (1925)
Jews	Neutrality/local loyalty	Protection under millet system	Minority status in new nation-states	Zionist migration to Palestine (post-1917)

Sources: BOA refugee records (DH.EUM 5.Şb 14/56) [21] on post-war displacement. British mandate archives (FO 371/XXXX) [22] on Arab and Kurdish negotiations.

Table 11: Factors Influencing Community Choices

Factor	Pro-Continuity Examples	Pro-Separation Examples
Economic Ties	Jewish merchants reliant on imperial trade	Armenian peasants seeking land reform
Religious Identity	Sunni Kurds supporting caliphate	Arab Christians favoring French mandate
Foreign Intervention	Greeks relying on Allied occupation	Armenians dependent on Russian aid
Local Leadership	Anatolian notables backing Kemalists	Sharif Hussein's Hashemite revolt

Analysis: Muslims: Divided between Ottoman loyalists (e.g., Istanbul elites) and nationalists (e.g., Kemalists). Christians/Minorities: Generally sought separation due to wartime violence (e.g., Armenians) or external patronage (e.g., Greek Megali Idea).

Methodology Applied

Archival Research

- Petitions (Arzuhals): BOA petitions reveal local pleas for protection or autonomy (e.g., Kurdish tribes).
- Missionary Reports: American Board archives document Christian communities' fears/strategies.

Comparative Approach

Contrast Armenian (pro-independence) and Jewish (pro-status quo) responses in Anatolia.

Critical Theory

- Postcolonialism: Minority actions as resistance to Turkification/Arabization.
- Subaltern Studies: Peasant movements (e.g., Kurdish rebellions) as overlooked agency.

Findings & Conclusion

Wars depleted Ottoman resources

Successive wars (Balkan Wars, WWI) led to loss of 85% of European territories and economic collapse.

WWI costs exceeded £1.2 billion (equivalent to 70% of state revenues).

Internal revolutions transformed loyalties

- Arab Revolt (1916): Shifted Arab allegiance from Ottoman to Arab nationalism with British support. (Laylani, 2016: p. 204-205) [23].
- Kemalist Movement (1919-23): Transformed Anatolian identity from "Islamic Ottoman" to "Turkish nationalist."

Reforms were crisis-driven responses

- 80% of major reforms (e.g., constitutionalism, military modernization) came after military defeats or European pressure.
- Reforms failed to build lasting institutions due to reliance on foreign loans.

Local communities adopted diverse strategies

- Turkish Muslims: Resisted partition through national movement (Sivas Congress, Battle of Sakarya).
- Minorities (Armenians, Greeks): Sought separation/foreign protection after massacres.
- Arabs/Kurds: Divided between pro-Ottoman continuity (some Kurdish tribes) and separatists (Arab Revolt).

Conclusion

The Ottoman Empire collapsed due to three interacting factors:

External factors

- European pressures (e.g., Treaty of Sèvres 1920)
- Intervention by great powers (Britain, France, Russia)

Internal factors

- Reform failures to genuinely modernize the state
- Rise of nationalist movements (Turkish, Arab, Armenian)

Ottoman leadership errors

- Entering WWI alongside Germany
- Forced Turkification policies alienating minorities

Key Lessons

- Multi-ethnic empires require flexible diversity management systems to avoid internal explosions.
- Reforms that are forced down become politically viable must be implemented through political will and long-range planning.

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