

History of Islam

An encyclopedia of Islamic history

The First World War and the Dissolution of the Caliphate

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The Balkans was the powder keg that ignited the Great War. Surrounded by the Adriatic Sea to the west, the Black Sea to the east, and the Mediterranean Sea to the south, the strategic Balkan Peninsula funnels down and meets up with the landmass of Asia at the Sea of Marmara. The ancient city of Istanbul sits astride the Bosphorus Strait that separates Asia from Europe and provides the only outlet for shipping from the Black Sea to the warm waters of the Mediterranean.

The Balkan Peninsula lies at the crossroads of three great religious traditions. The expansive Islamic world extends from West Asia into the Peninsula with a large concentration of Muslims in Turkey, Albania, Bosnia, Kosova and Skopje. Catholic Europe meets up with the Islamic world along an axis linking Istanbul with Vienna. Bisecting it almost at ninety degrees is the Orthodox Christian world running roughly along an axis linking Athens with Moscow. Compounding the mix of beliefs are a multiplicity of nationalities and ethnic groups: the Croats, Slovans, Czechs and Hungarians to the north; Bosnians, Albanians and Macedonians to the west; Serbs, Bulgars and Romanians to the east; Turks and Greeks to the south. The simultaneous presence of myriad religious beliefs, nationalities and ethnic groups has produced a volatile mixture of competing interests throughout history.

Towards the turn of the 19th century, Islamic influence extended deeper into eastern Europe, northern Thrace and the territories around the Black Sea. This was a result of Ottoman rule, which had kept the Balkans united for more than 500 years under a single political umbrella. The regression of Ottoman power encouraged the ambitions of the Hapsburgs in Austria-Hungary and Czarist Russia. The Czars encouraged local nationalist uprisings against the Turks, hoping to dominate the emerging Eastern Orthodox states while the Austrians expanded their influence with fellow Catholic Croats. While these three great land empires contested for turf in southeastern Europe, the maritime powers of England and France had their own interests in preventing Russian access to the warm waters of the Mediterranean and containing the rising tide of German power in continental Europe.

Economic interests dominated the geopolitics of the times. After the war of 1871, Germany, under Bismarck, emerged as the single most powerful land power in continental Europe. Germany sought to cultivate influence in the Balkans and to keep the competing Austrian and Russian interests at bay by arranging a series of treaties with the local nationalities. Germany also sought to compensate for its late arrival on the colonial scene by expanding its influence in East Africa and the Persian Gulf. German diplomatic activism alarmed England and France who held the lion's share of colonies in Asia and

Africa. The interests of France, England and Russia thus converged in containing German ambitions and the three entered into a treaty called the Triple Entente. To counter this coalition, the Germans formed their own alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy.

The military weakness of the Ottomans was obvious to the European powers after the Crimean War (1854-1856) and the geopolitical game was to see who would pick up the pieces once the empire came apart. To the British, Egypt was the key to the Indian Empire. The French, remembering the Norman kingdom of the Levant, desired Syria and had their eyes on Morocco as well. The Russians, as the self-proclaimed champions of the Eastern Orthodox Church, claimed Istanbul and the Straits of Dardaneles but their interests lay in access to warm waters, which the British and the French were equally determined to deny them. Even the Italians, latecomers to the imperialist game, had their eyes on Libya, Ethiopia and Somalia.

The competing ambitions of Austria-Hungary and Russia and their covert support for Balkan nationalisms added to the convulsions in the Balkans. Both sought to expand their influence at the expense of the Ottomans. Sultan Abdul Hamid (1876-1909) waged a valiant battle to frustrate the European ambitions. But he was up against heavy odds. The Empire was deep in debt after the Crimean War. The cost of containing Balkan nationalisms was high. Military pressures from the Austrians and the Russians were unrelenting. The debt burden kept mounting until, at times, more than 80% of the Ottoman budget was earmarked for debt servicing. To service these debts, Sultan Abdul Hamid had to swallow a series of capitulatory agreements with the European powers and acquiesce in the British occupation of Egypt (1882). The stresses on the old Ottoman system kept building until it cracked under the double hammer of European pressures and internal calls for reform. Finally, in 1908 Sultan Abdul Hameed was forced to surrender his powers to the Young Turks.

That same year, in 1908, the empire of Austria-Hungary, encouraged by Germany, annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, a move that let loose the fires of nationalism in the Balkans. The first to explode was Albania. Seeking to expand their influence further south, the Hapsburgs encouraged the Catholic minority in Albania to demand greater autonomy from the Ottomans. Taken in by propaganda, a large number of Muslims also joined in the protests, demanding a greater share of political power in the empire and recognition of Albanian language and culture. While the Ottomans were preoccupied with Albania, the Italians invaded Libya (1911). The cities of Tripoli and Benghazi were bombarded and the Ottoman garrisons were forced to surrender. The Ottomans sent two of their ablest generals, Enver Bey (later to become the Ottoman Defense Minister during World War I) and Mustafa Kemal (later to lead the Turkish War of Independence) to prevent the Italians from penetrating deeper into Libya. The generals were partially successful in their efforts thanks to the support they received from the Sanusiya Sufis and the Italian advance was contained to the coastal cities.

The Italian invasion of Libya and the disturbances in Albania were only a prelude to a total onslaught on European Ottoman territories. When the Catholic Hapsburgs annexed Bosnia, each of the Balkan rump states pressed their claims on Macedonia. The Czar in St. Petersburg openly supported the aggressive designs of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece. In 1913, these states reached an understanding on carving up the Balkans and began a combined assault on the Ottomans. While the Turks were busy defending Libya, the Serbs advanced on eastern Albania and took Kosova. The Montenegrins overran northern Albania, the Greeks moved into western Thrace, while the Bulgars occupied the city of Edirne and advanced towards Istanbul. The combined strength of the invading armies was 700,000 against Ottoman defensive garrisons numbering 100,000. Unable to defend themselves, the Ottomans retreated on all fronts. Serb terrorism against Turkish peasants increased. Tens of thousands of Muslims were

butchered by the so-called Christian armies and more than a million refugees were sent reeling towards Istanbul. The Balkan War of 1913 marked the end of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. By the Treaty of Bucharest (1913), the Ottomans withdrew from the Balkans, except for a small portion of Thrace.

Occupation of Balkan territories did not satisfy the rival claims of the Eastern Orthodox states, which were soon at each other's throats. Bulgaria felt cheated and fought a losing war with Serbia and Greece. The Serbs, encouraged by the Russians, initiated a guerilla war against the Catholic Hapsburgs in Bosnia to force them out and swallow up the territory for themselves. With the Balkans in turmoil, Francis Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria, set off for Sarajevo to bring the situation in Bosnia under control. There, a Serbian terrorist, Gavrilo Princip, murdered him on June 18, 1914. Austria, holding Serbia responsible for the murder, declared war on July 28. Russia, as protector of Eastern Orthodox Serbia, declared war on Austria. Germany, bound to Austria by language and treaty, declared war on the Czar. The Russians, French and the British were bound as partners in the Triple Entente. France and England therefore joined the fray on the Russian side. On August 3rd, Germany declared war on France. On August 4th, Britain declared war on Germany. The Great War had begun.

Ottoman entry into the war was not inevitable. In historical hindsight, Istanbul could have successfully waited out the war and could have even benefited from the bloodshed between the European powers. But the Ottoman defense minister, Enver Bey saw in the ensuing hostilities a golden opportunity to recover lost Balkan territories and to contain the Russian threat. Initial German successes against the French and the Russians seemed to indicate that Germany and Austria-Hungary might well win the war. In their initial thrust, German armies occupied Poland in August 1914 and pushed deep into Serbia and Romania. On the western front, they attacked through Belgium, broke through French defenses and in September 1914, were within 20 miles of Paris. Opinion within the Turkish cabinet was divided. Turkey was not ready for war after the disastrous Balkan War of 1913. But Enver was determined on his course. Negotiations with the Germans were conducted in strict secrecy. Only Enver and the Grand Vizier knew of the negotiations and the defense treaty was presented to the cabinet as a *fait accompli* only after it was signed and sealed. Sensing that most Turks were still vacillating, Germany sent two billion kurush of gold to Istanbul on October 21, 1914. To the debt ridden Ottomans, this infusion of cash was most welcome news. The gold tipped the scales and the Ottomans went to war. Hostilities commenced between the Ottoman and Russian navies in the Black Sea. On November 5, 1914, Britain, France and Russia declared war on the Ottomans.

Thus it was that the Ottomans entered the Great War for which they were not prepared. At great historical moments, the instincts of those in power play a decisive role in the fate of nations. Enver Bey and his supporters were so preoccupied with the Russian threat that they did not grasp the full import of their fateful decision. Their instincts failed them at this critical moment. Germany nudged the scales in favor of war by a delivery of gold to an empire that was exhausted by war and was deeply in debt to the bankers of Europe.

Ottoman goals during the First World War were different from those of the Germans. Their primary objective was to forestall Russian ambitions on Anatolia. A secondary objective was to recover the territories in the Balkans lost during the Balkan War of 1913. The Germans initially encouraged Turkish aims in the Balkans. But when many of the Balkan states opted for neutrality, the Germans pushed Turkey towards opening a second front against the Russians in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan. A German-Turkish region of influence was established around Tabriz and the Germans tried to get Persia involved in the war against Russia. The Russians responded by occupying northern Persia. Great Britain was a nominal ally of Russia, but its long-term strategic interests dictated that the Russians be denied access to warm waters. Concerned that the Russians might break through to the Persian Gulf, a British-Indian

force occupied Isfahan and southern Persia. During much of the Great War, Persia remained a country occupied by three contesting powers, Russia to the north, to the south and German-Ottoman garrisons to the west.

From a Muslim perspective, the conduct of the Great War may be divided into three phases. The first phase, 1914-1916, was a stalemate with neither side scoring decisive victories. The second phase, 1916-1918, was marked by Arab uprisings in the Hejaz and Syria and a methodical advance of the British-Indian armies to occupy the Arab provinces. Two other major events occurred towards the end of the war. The United States entered the war in April 1917 and the Bolshevik Revolution took Russia out of the war in October 1917. Both events profoundly affected the course of the war. In the third phase, the Ottoman Empire was dismembered, Greece invaded Anatolia and was beaten back, Turkey became a republic and the Caliphate was abolished.

The first major engagement for the Ottomans occurred right at the outset of the war. The British naval secretary, Winston Churchill, ordered an assault on the Dardaneles. His strategy was to occupy the Straits, then move on to Istanbul and thus knock the Ottomans out of the war. In April 1915, a combined force of British, Australian and New Zealander troops, almost a million strong, landed on the western side of the Straits. The French tried similar landings on the eastern side of the Straits. A determined Ottoman resistance beat back the invading forces time and again. After an effort lasting more than nine months, the invading armies withdrew (January 1916), having suffered 213,980 casualties during this single campaign. It was here, in the Dardaneles campaigns, that Kemal Ataturk first distinguished himself.

The real threat to the Ottomans was from Russia to the northeast. The Armenians saw a golden opportunity in the war to drive the Turkish population out and establish an independent Armenian state in eastern Turkey. A systematic campaign of terror was initiated against the Turkish peasants before the Russian invasions. The Czar's armies advanced on a broad front taking the province of Kars and finally capturing Erzurum, Trebizond and Erzincan. The Armenians supported this push with massive propaganda against the Turks and the supply of war material. The Russians and the Armenians forced out the Turks from their homes in eastern Anatolia and tens of thousands were slaughtered as they sought to flee the Russian advance. The Ottomans finally established a defense line west of Erzurum under the leadership of Ahmed Izzet Pasha and stabilized the front. In retaliation, 200,000 Armenians were expelled and a large number of them perished.

All parties to the conflict used religion to further their national interests. The Ottoman Sultan, who was also the Caliph, declared a jihad on England, France and Russia, expecting support from the Turkomans in Central Asia and the Muslims in India. The British in India were particularly vulnerable. India, with a population of over 300 million at the beginning of the war, provided the empire with a vast pool of manpower. The Indian army, one million strong, was extensively used in Iraq, Egypt, North Africa, Palestine and Syria. It was recruited primarily from the regions between Delhi and Peshawar and had a strong Muslim component. The British similarly recruited a large number of Egyptians for their war effort, while the French did the same in Algeria. For the first time in modern history, a large number of Muslim soldiers were faced with a dilemma, either to fight fellow Muslims while serving in the armed forces of a colonial (nominally Christian) power, or to refuse to do so. The British successfully combated the Ottoman call to *jihad* in India and Egypt and the Ottomans were only partially successful in neutralizing the Muslims in India. In more than one campaign in Iraq, Indian Muslim troops fired over the heads of defending Ottoman troops to avoid killing fellow Muslims. The Russians achieved similar results in Central Asia, through both propaganda and force.

On the Iraqi front, a British-Indian force entered the Shatt al Arab in November 1914 and occupied Basra. Ottoman resistance was determined. In November 1915, the Ottomans smashed the British forces near Baghdad, cut off their supply lines from Basra and sent them reeling back towards the Persian Gulf. On the Egyptian front, a strong force of 80,000 Ottoman soldiers moved south from Syria towards the Suez Canal. British resistance was stiff and a stalemate developed around the Suez Canal area, which lasted until the summer of 1916.

With the military lines grinding to a halt on all fronts, the focus shifted to the propaganda war and in this sphere the Entente Powers had an advantage. The Ottoman Empire contained within it a large number of national and religious minorities who could be incited against the Porte in Istanbul. The Balkan caldron had led to the onset of hostilities. The Armenians were sandwiched between the Russians and the Turks. Now the focus shifted to the Middle East. The Arabs in peninsular Arabia were restive and impressionable. Palestine evoked deep emotions among Muslims, Christians and Jews. Lebanon had a large Maronite community. These were materials tailor-made for a propaganda war. British intelligence was particularly active in this area. Three major agreements signed during the period 1916-1918 not only changed the course of the Great War but had a major impact on historical developments in West Asia in the latter half of the 20th century. The first, between Henry McMahon of Britain and Sharif Hussain of Hejaz, enlisted the support of the latter for the British war efforts in return for a promise to set up an independent Arab state. The second, between Great Britain and Emir Abdulaziz Ibn Saud entailed a subsidy by the British to the latter in return for a promise not to attack Sharif Hussain in Hejaz. The third, between the British and world Zionist leaders, to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine led to the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Needless to say, there were glaring contradictions in these promises and declarations.

The Entente Powers reached secret agreements among themselves to divide up the Ottoman provinces at the termination of hostilities. The most notorious of these, the Sykes-Picot agreement (May 16, 1916), gave Egypt, Iraq and Palestine to the British. The French were promised Syria and Lebanon. The Straits as well as Istanbul were promised to the Russians along with the provinces of eastern Anatolia. Anatolia itself was to be partitioned between the Russians, British, French, Italians, Greeks and Armenians. Similarly, Persia was to be partitioned into a northern Russian zone and a southern British zone. Thus were sown the seeds of strife that were to drive a wedge between the Turks and the Arabs, destroy the historical good relations between Muslims and Jews and haunt West Asia throughout the rest of the 20th century.

Meanwhile, a combination of internal sabotage and a mobilization of the British Empire gave the British an advantage. By October 1916, the Arab revolt was in full swing, aided and abetted by British intelligence officers such as T.E. Lawrence, which changed the course of the war. Sharif Hussain, believing that the Entente Powers would indeed honor their pledge to create an Arab state under him, organized guerrilla attacks on Ottoman garrisons. His commandos successfully destroyed the Hejaz railway and overran the cities of Mecca and Jeddah. Hundreds of Ottoman soldiers were killed in the desert. The Ottoman garrison at Madina was surrounded while that in Yemen, at the entrance to the Red Sea, was isolated.

The enormous advantage enjoyed by the British Empire in manpower and material began to have its effect. In December 1916, the British attacked on two fronts. British-Indian armies advanced along the Shatt al Arab while another front was opened through the Sinai towards Palestine. By the summer of 1917, British forces had occupied Baghdad and were advancing towards Mosul in northern Iraq. Ottoman resistance was weak, as most of the Ottoman forces had been diverted to northwestern Persia to support German ambitions in the oil fields of Azerbaijan.

The British advance on Palestine was even more ominous. Moving methodically, building a railroad as they went to keep their forces supplied through the Sinai desert, the British took Gaza, Accra, Jaffa and Ramallah. The Ottomans valiantly defended Jerusalem but the city fell, under repeated assaults, on December 9, 1917. The French landed on the coast of Lebanon and took control of Beirut. Allenby continued his march through Syria. The Arab nationalists in Damascus rebelled and the Ottoman forces were withdrawn from that city. As he led the victorious British-Indian forces past the tomb of Salahuddin, Allenby is reported to have stopped, tapped his shoes and said: "We are here! We are here!" The Crusader dream had finally come true!

Even as late as the summer of 1916 it was not obvious who would win the war. The Ottomans had successfully beaten back the British-Indian armies in Iraq and Egypt and had stopped the Russian advance in eastern Anatolia. The western front between Germany and France was a stalemate with trench warfare exacting its toll on all sides. German submarines were taking a heavy toll on Trans-Atlantic shipping. The rate of tonnage sunk was just about equal to the Allied capacity to replace it.

American entry into the war was not inevitable. The United States had strong ethnic ties both with England and Germany and, initially, provided credit and material to both sides. The loss of American shipments to Great Britain was of concern to the Americans but Woodrow Wilson was reluctant to get involved in a European conflict. However, as the stalemate continued and the war took its toll, there was increasing concern in the financial community of New York that if Germany were to win the War, Britain might not be able to pay back her war debts. This fear tilted the scales in favor of the interventionists. Public opinion in the United States was prepared and President Wilson finally entered the War as an ally of the Entente Powers in April 1917. The Ottomans, however, never formally declared war on the United States.

Meanwhile, Russia exploded. It had entered the war first to help Serbia and had expanded its operations on the Polish front to divert the Germans pressing in on Paris. Except in northeastern Anatolia, the Russians paid a heavy price in war casualties, suffering major reverses at the Battle of Tannenberg (August 1914) and during successive thrusts at Poland in August 1916 and April 1917. The war caused major shortages and the Russian economy was in a shambles. The peasants starved while the aristocrats in Moscow reveled in their luxuries. This was an explosive social political mixture, ready for ignition. In April 1917 the Germans released the Bolshevik leader Lenin to Russia, hoping to increase pressure on the Czar to pull out of the war. Lenin called for an end to hostilities and the establishment of a Soviet Republic embracing all the nationalists of the Czarist empire. After the defeat of April 1917 on the western front, the Russian army began to collapse. The Revolution followed in October 1917 and it sealed the fate of the Czar. In November 1917 the Bolsheviks came to power. The Allies, alarmed at the prospect of a peasant revolution sweeping through Eurasia, intervened and offered assistance to the "White Russians" fighting the Bolsheviks. The British, French, Japanese and Americans alike landed their troops in Russia but were ultimately expelled by the victorious Bolsheviks.

The Russian Revolution was a major turning point in the history of the Great War. The Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 removed the Russian threat to Anatolia from the east. On December 5, 1917, the Russians entered into a treaty with the Ottomans, renouncing all claims to Ottoman territory. It is conceivable that the Russians would have successfully overrun eastern Anatolia and western Iran if their armies had not dissolved in the chaos of the Revolution. Once they were out of the war, the Russians made public the secret provisions of the Sykes-Picot agreements splitting up the Ottoman Empire between the European powers. This caused some embarrassment to the British in the eyes of their Arab clients. But it was too late, because by now the United States had entered the war and was supporting the war efforts of the Entente powers and the tide of the war had turned.

With the resources of the United States, the war of attrition in Europe tilted to the advantage of France while the British successfully completed their invasions of Syria and Iraq. Both Germany and the Ottomans were financially broke and the collapse of the Central Powers came quickly in the summer of 1918. The Ottomans made overtures for peace through President Wilson, believing that his 14-point program would apply to Turkey. When no reply came, the Ottomans had no choice but to accept an unconditional surrender. The British won the right to occupy Istanbul and the Straits. The Italians landed in southern Turkey. The French extended their zone from Syria into southern Anatolia while the British took all of the Kurdish areas in southeastern Anatolia. Turkey was left with a small area around Ankara.

The terms of the Armistice were exceedingly harsh. Turkey was to dismantle its armed forces except for a lightly armed force of 50,000. The administration and finance were to be under the direction of officers of the victorious powers. Discrimination against Muslims became an accepted norm. Only Christians were allowed to attend state schools. Christian missionaries were put in charge of Muslim orphanages where Turkish children were openly converted to Christianity. Police forces were put under the direction of Greek and Armenian officers who promptly butchered a large number of recently discharged Turkish soldiers while the victorious forces not only looked the other way but also condoned such practices.

The British and the French desired nothing less than the total dismemberment of the Empire and the subjugation of Arab and Turk alike. Even before the Ottoman surrender, it was obvious that the promises made to the Arabs were only a ruse. At the London Conference in 1919, Sharif Hussain was not even invited to attend and only the last minute intervention of the British foreign office enabled him to sit in as an observer. The occupation of Arab lands was total and complete. The sacred sites in Jerusalem as well as the oil wealth of the Persian Gulf were entirely at the disposal of Europe.

One of the strategic goals of Britain and France was to destroy the Caliphate. This institution, established by the Companions of the Prophet to provide historical continuity to Islam, had survived 1300 years of turbulent Islamic history. Not even the savagery of the Mongols could extirpate it. The Caliphate had moved from Madina to Damascus (662), from Damascus to Baghdad (751), from Baghdad to Cairo (1262) and from Cairo to Istanbul (1517). Even when its influence was at low ebb, it was the universally accepted hinge around which Islamic politics revolved. In Istanbul it had proved to be a binding institution for the Ottoman Empire uniting the Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Albanians, Bosnians, Berbers, Egyptians and the Sudanese into a universal community. The victorious European powers were quite aware that with the Caliphate, the Muslims were a unitary force. Take the Caliphate away and what is left is a plethora of nationalities, each jockeying for power and position.

The attempts to terminate the Caliphate brought a worldwide reaction. In India, the Caliphate Movement was born. Its stated goal was to put pressure on Great Britain not to adopt a policy that would remove the Caliphate. The Movement gained the support of Indian national leaders, including Gandhi and it continued until the Turks themselves decided to dissolve the institution.

Turkish resistance to the occupation began almost immediately after the Armistice. All strata of Turkish society, from the poor peasants to the bureaucrats-and the Sultan himself-contributed to the resistance either covertly or overtly. Societies for the Defense of Turkish Rights sprang up in the areas directly under foreign occupation. At first they tried to convince the occupation forces of their human rights. When this proved futile, armed resistance ensued. The "Societies" rapidly coalesced into the "National Forces" and received direct support from the nationalist government in Ankara. Men and material were smuggled under cover of night from the independent zone to the occupation zones. At first the nationalists received material support from the Bolsheviks in Russia who hoped that the turmoil in

Anatolia provided them with a golden opportunity to foster communist rule in Turkey. The nationalists played the Bolshevik card very adroitly, receiving arms for the Turkish War of Independence, but keeping the communists at arms length.

It was the Greek invasion that galvanized the Turks and determined the shape of post-war Turkey. The Greeks had always coveted Ottoman territories and they saw an historic opportunity to grab what they could. The Western powers connived with the Greeks. On May 14, 1919, a flotilla of British, French and American ships landed a division of Greek troops in Izmir. The city was turned over to the invaders and a general massacre of the Turks followed. From Izmir, the Greeks moved towards Bursa, raping and killing as they went. The local Greek population joined in the mass pillage.

At critical moments, history throws up strong personalities, who bend the flow of history by the sheer power of their will. Mustafa Kemal was one such man. Although considered controversial by many Muslims because of his secular leanings and his part in the dissolution of the Caliphate, there is no question that he was the one leader to whom the Turkish nation turned in the hour of its need.

Born into a poor family in Thrace, Kemal showed unusual capabilities as a young man, attended the officer's academy in Istanbul and distinguished himself in military service in Libya and Syria. This was a difficult time for the Turks. The Empire was in shambles and the Turks were searching for new modalities for their changed relationship with the world. The idea of a Turkish nation, shorn of its attachments to Arabs and other non-Turkish peoples, was gathering momentum. Two separate centers of power sprang up in Anatolia, one based in Istanbul around the Sultan-Caliph, the other based in Ankara around a national parliament. The British openly encouraged disaffected groups to wage armed warfare on the nationalists. The Soviets, while supporting the nationalists, had their own agenda. Against this background, Kemal was trying to organize an army to repel the invaders. Representations were made to Moscow, which was more than willing to help with arms, hoping that in the process Turkey would join the Communist camp.

On June 19, 1919, Kemal met with leaders of the resistance movement at Amasya and drafted a protocol for a National Resistance Movement, which declared that the Turkish fatherland was in danger and it was the movement's goal to rid the country of all foreign forces. At this stage, Kemal and his supporters were still in support of the Sultan-Caliph. The position of the Istanbul government was less equivocal about the nationalists. Considering that Istanbul was under occupation, the grand vizier and the Sultan were scarcely in a position to openly take an independent position, maintaining instead that the future of the Turkish nation lay in cooperation with the occupation forces. Their actions, however, showed great sympathies for the nationalists. Indeed, when Ali Reza Pasha became the Grand Vizier in October 1919, he negotiated with the nationalists a protocol reaffirming that no Muslim province of Anatolia would be ceded to the enemy. The British would not tolerate such cooperation. They pressured the Istanbul government to condemn the nationalist movement. Many of the national deputies were arrested and extradited to Malta.

In August 1920, the Treaty of Sevres was imposed on the Istanbul government. The Treaty gave all of Thrace to Greece right up to the gates of Istanbul. The districts of Izmir and Bursa were also left under Greek administration. The Turkish army was to be disbanded. What remained of Turkey would be under the financial and military control of the invading powers. The nationalists in Ankara rejected the treaty. To them it was another indication that the Sultan was not a free agent and could not be entrusted with the affairs of the nation.

The Greeks began a general offensive in June 1920 to capture more territory. Alashehir, Bahkesir, Bandirma and Bursa fell one after the other. In October 1920, a second offensive began. Simultaneously, the Armenians went on a rampage in eastern Turkey, advancing as far as Erzurum. The Turkish forces first contained the Armenian advance and pushed them back beyond the old Ottoman borders. The Armenians sued for peace. Meanwhile, Turkish resistance forces made their stand against the Greeks at the Inonu River under the leadership of Ismet Inunu. The Greek invaders were beaten and started to retreat. Seeing the strength of the nationalist movement, the Entente Powers tried the diplomatic trap. A conference in London held in March 1921 tried to coax the Ankara government to agree with the Istanbul government. But by now the break between Istanbul and Ankara was complete. The nationalist representatives would not even talk to the Istanbul representatives.

It was in London that the nationalists achieved their first diplomatic victory. France backed out of the capitulation agreements, soon followed by the Soviets (March 1921). The Italians had no stomach for fighting. But the Greeks had not given up yet. After the London conference, they tried again, this time with superior forces. Their offensive carried them all the way to the gates of Ankara. The battle raged at the Sakarya River. Finally, on September 2, 1922, the Turks broke through and sent the Greek armies reeling towards Izmir. Athens tried to keep Izmir through diplomacy, using Britain as an intermediary. But Kemal would have nothing of it. The Greek enemy was pursued and by September 18, 1922, the invading Greeks had either been destroyed or chased back across the Aegean Sea. Kemal surrounded the occupying British forces in the Straits and forced them to withdraw. The Turks had won their war of independence.

The internal situation in Turkey was far from stable. The National Resistance Movement had represented all elements of society-from left wing communists to right wing *ulema*. But the cooperation of the Sultan-Caliph Vaheeduddin with the British during the Turkish war of independence had destroyed whatever trust existed between the nationalists and the Sultanate. In October 1922 Vaheeduddin, cognizant of his untenable position, fled Istanbul on a British destroyer. Abdul Majid II was chosen as the next Caliph. When those opposed to the nationalists congregated around the Caliph and tried to destabilize the nationalists, the Turkish National Assembly responded by abolishing the Caliphate on March 3, 1924. The Islamic world was shocked. Protests came from all over the world. But it was too late. The experience of the First World War had taught the Turks that the Caliphate was a burden they could no longer carry and they decided to abandon it.

Thus it was that in the 20th century, the sun set on the Caliphate, an institution that had survived 1300 years of turbulent history.

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