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The struggle within: "moral crisis" on the Ottoman homefront during the First World War

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1. During the First World War, political, social, and economic problems were translated and merged into discourses of morality on the Ottoman homefront.
2. Debates about moral decline among the Ottoman intelligentsia were focused on a wide range of issues, such as social and political reform; the participation of women in social and economic life and its impacts on the future of the patriarchal order; modernization and the consequences of modernization; new lifestyles and the use of public space; and domestic and external political developments. Rival ideologies set forth their positions on these issues based on their understandings of morality.
3. During the First World War, violations of public morality became a pressing concern for national security and prestige in the eyes of the Ottoman state. Through the abolition of the capitulations and the declaration of martial law, the Ottoman government was able to establish a modicum of control over prostitution and the trafficking of women.
4. Widespread concerns about morality, values, traditions, and norms found echoes in regulations pertaining to family. Driven by moral concerns, these regulations sought to regenerate Muslim families while controlling sexual relationships on the homefront.
5. In today's Turkey, it is striking that contemporary debates are quite similar to those that were being carried out a hundred years ago. This is partly because the country has not come to terms with its history and the watershed events of the First World War that shaped the founding of the Republic of Turkey.
6. Scholars studying the late Ottoman Empire often view the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) as a united front represented by a central government. However, beside the existence of many fractions within the party, there were disagreements even among the ministries of the CUP government over policymaking.
7. Ottoman history has been restricted to a narrow perspective that either focuses on the capital city of Istanbul and its environs in the case of Turkish scholars or the "Middle East" for American academics. For that reason, I believe that the intellectual history requires further exploration as it provides a perspective that transcends the usual national and contextual borders.
8. Turkish historiography about the late Ottoman era has long been dominated by narratives revolving around the changing bureaucratic, economic, and political structures of the Ottoman Empire as a reaction to the rapid expansion of European economic, political, and military control. However, by using the methods of transnational history we can present a balanced account that can qualify European impacts and reveal authentic Ottoman contributions in the historical outcomes.
9. Today, many PhD students struggle financially. That is especially true for students working in the humanities and social sciences, as it is difficult for them to find a means to support themselves. Many companies refuse to hire students because they know that students are likely to spend more time on their dissertations than focusing on their jobs. For that reason, every department should have a student union which sets aside a budget for members who are struggling to get by. Also, a network should be set up which includes state-funded offices, NGOs and students to help students secure part-time jobs.
10. Virginia Woolf's "a room of one's own" once became a motto for the women's movement. In today's world, it could be reformulated as "a time of one's own."