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CHAPTER 4

Frontiers of Revolution and Empire in the Middle East

Alp Yenen

Introduction

Looking back at the beginning of the twentieth century, whether one sees the grandeur and optimism of the *belle époque* or the decadence and pessimism of the *fin de siècle*, the twentieth century kicked off with a bang. The Japanese victory of 1905 triggered the Russian Revolution and inspired the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1906–1911 and the Young Turk constitutional revolution of 1908–1913. Other revolutions soon followed in Mexico and Portugal in 1910 and in China in 1911.[1] The First World War gave way for further revolutions and revolts throughout the world. The most momentous of them, the Russian Revolution of 1917, unleashed once again a wave of revolutions and

[1] Charles Kurzman, *Democracy Denied, 1905–1915. Intellectuals and the Fate of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

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armed conflicts of its own. In this period of war and revolution, the broader geography of Eurasia saw the end of the continental empires of the Qing (1911), Romanov (1917), Hohenzollern (1918), Habsburg (1918), Ottoman (1923), and Qajar (1925) dynasties.[2] Immediate after-pains of this revolutionary period continued throughout the interwar years.

The making of the modern world was the result of an interplay between forces of empire and forces of revolution, as it unfolded through all these episodes that marked the first decades of the twentieth century. This period showcased not only great revolutions, but many other forms of contentious politics—such as protest, resistance, revolt, insurgency, civil war, and terrorism—defined the revolutionary struggles of this period.[3] All revolutionary politics are a struggle against hegemony. More than any other form of polity, empires embody hegemony—even if their rule might be indirect and symbolic at that. Great revolutions were always directed against great empires—whether ancient or modern, Western or Eastern.[4] By allocating differences among multiple subjects and territories, empires generate asymmetrical power relations under a universal hegemonic reign.[5] As Pierre Serna noted, "every revolution is a war of independence" and therefore "a kind of war of decolonization".[6] Therefore, I shall claim that empires foster revolutions.[7] Empires are not only

[2] Alfred J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian Borderlands. From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 532–614.

[3] George Lawson, 'Reform, Rebellion, Civil War, Coup d'État and Revolution', in James Defronzo (ed.), *Revolutionary Movements in World History. From 1750 to Present* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006), Vol. 3, 3:721.

[4] Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolutions. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[5] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History. Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[6] Pierre Serna, 'Every Revolution Is a War of Independence', in Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt and William M. Nelson (eds.), *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), p. 174.

[7] In many ways, empires manage "multiple sovereignties", which is according to Charles Tilly one of the main sources of revolution. Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1978), pp. 191–194; Charles Tilly, 'How Empires End?', in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (eds.), *After Empire. Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building, the Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 1–11. Rebellions in empires are commonly

caught in revolutions, but they themselves can also promote and provoke revolutions in distant places. Moreover, revolutions are always transnational and international, if not global, as they easily have effects across borders and boundaries.[8] Since revolutions take place both within and across empires, I argue that the frontiers of empires shape revolutions. Therefore, I will propose a preliminary frontier theory of revolution and empire in the history of the modern Middle East. The Middle East was one of the major frontiers of empires in the world, where revolt and resistance against empire culminated in a revolutionary process of state formation in the first decades of the twentieth century.[9]

A frontier theory was first proposed by Frederick Jackson Turner in explaining American exceptionalism.[10] One of Turner's followers, Walter Prescott Webb idealized the frontier as a space of innovation in contrast and distance to the static and otherwise stagnating metropolis. "It was in the wilderness, on the frontiers", as Webb spoke of democratic revolutions, "that men found nature working with them to throw off the shackles of political domination and reshape governments", hence "frontier served as the matrix of the modern world".[11] Of course, the frontier was not only a source for Western ascent to world power through conquest of new resources. Frontiers also generate the means of usurpation and demonstrate the reach of empires.[12] Throughout world history then, frontiers were spaces of transgression, transmission, and

caused by dissident agents uncontrolled by the imperial centre, as argued by Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires* (New York, NY: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).

[8] George Lawson, 'A Global Historical Sociology of Revolution', in Julian Go and George Lawson (eds.), *Global Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 76–98; David Motadel, 'Global Revolution', in David Motadel (ed.), *Revolutionary World. Global Upheaval in the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 1–37.

[9] Isa Blumi, *Foundations of Modernity. Human Agency and the Imperial State* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012).

[10] Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, NY: H. Holt and Co., 1920).

[11] Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Frontier*, New edition (Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press, 2003), pp. 143–144.

[12] Owen Lattimore, 'Origins of the Great Wall of China. A Frontier Concept in Theory and Practice', *Geographical Review* 27/4 (1937), pp. 529–549.

transformation for empires and frontier societies.[13] On the one hand, there are unilateral frontiers that are subjected to colonial conquest, imperial centralization, and civilizing mission, where empires identify a space of illegitimate subversion and autonomy. On the other hand, there are external frontiers subjected to bilateral conflict between shattering empires, a space that simultaneously shapes cultures of violence and parameters of belonging.[14] What I call frontier effects, namely how frontiers in the peripheries affect political centres, have cultural ramifications, too, as they create frontier cultures both among conquering and defending societies facing each other. Beyond acknowledging this centre-periphery dialectic,[15] however, this geopolitical process of making of new frontiers out of formerly autonomous and sovereign territories needs to be understood as a historical trajectory with multiple paths and variations in shaping revolts and revolutions. My argument is that direct frontier experiences, indirect frontier effects, and intangible frontier cultures uniquely shaped the revolutionary politics in the Middle East.

Many scholars have problematized the fateful role played by European empires in the state formation in the Middle East, but failed to compare and connect revolutionary processes in a comprehensive framework.[16] In this chapter, I will illustrate how frontiers of empires revolutionized the modern Middle East.[17] First, I will illustrate the frontier experiences in

[13] Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*, New edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010).

[14] For the concept of frontier of empires see: Alp Yenen and Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, 'Age of Rogues. Transgressive Politics at the Frontiers of the Ottoman Empire', in Ramazan Hakkı Öztan and Alp Yenen (eds.), *Age of Rogues. Rebels, Revolutionaries and Racketeers at the Frontiers of Empires* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp. 7–8.

[15] Frederick F. Anscombe, 'Continuities in Ottoman Centre-Periphery Relations, 1787–1915', in A. C. S. Peacock (ed.), *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 235–252. For an innovative reading of spatial differences in historical trajectories see: Cem Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East. Modernity, Imperial Bureaucracy, and the Islamic State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

[16] Leon Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East. Old Rules, Dangerous Game* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Fred Halliday, *The Middle East in International Relations: Power, Politics and Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[17] For historical overviews on Islam, revolution, and anti-imperialism see: David Motadel, 'Islam and the European Empires', *The Historical Journal* 55/3 (2012), pp. 831–856; Nikki R. Keddie, 'The Revolt of Islam, 1700 to 1993. Comparative

the nineteenth century. Then, I will discuss the frontier effects and the frontier cultures in revolutionary politics before, during, and after the Great War. In lieu of a conclusion, I will elaborate on the continuities of this period on the decolonization and modernization of the Middle East in the second half of the twentieth century. While a new world order with new empires created new frontiers and shaped new revolutions, the revolutionary struggles of the early twentieth century had a lasting legacy.

Prologue to Revolutions: Revolt Against Empire in the Frontiers

Revolt and change in the Middle East had not waited the advent of revolutions in Europe. Major transformations were already changing the political order in the Ottoman Empire.[18] In fact, the French Revolution coincided with a phase of urban and rural rebellions in the Muslim world.[19] Most Muslim elites did not immediately adopt French revolutionary ideas either. However, revolutions in Europe unleashed a renewed colonial ambition, opening up external frontiers between Europe and the Muslim world via North Africa, the Caucasus, and India.

Russian expansion into Turkish and Persian imperial territories in the late eighteenth century set aside, European colonial advance into the Middle East and North Africa started with Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798. This direct frontier experience created a strong frontier culture for generations to come.[20] After Napoleon's brief Egyptian campaign, it was in Algeria in 1830 where French colonial ambitions

Considerations and Relations to Imperialism', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36/3 (1994), pp. 463–487. For Muslim encounters with European empires in different regions see the contributions in David Motadel (ed.), *Islam and the European Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). For an extensive study of contentious politics, see: John Chalcraft, *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[18] Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire. The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[19] Ian Coller, 'The French Revolution and the Islamic World of the Middle East and North Africa', in Alan Forrest and Matthias Middell (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to the French Revolution in World History* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 128–129.

[20] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 34.

escalated into a war of colonial occupation.[21] Experience of colonial violence in Algeria resulted in a popular resistance movement.[22] The Algerian resistance under the charismatic leadership of Amir Abd al-Qadir (1808–1883) combined guerrilla tactics of rural brigandage, decentralized inter-tribal self-governance, Sufi traditions of brotherhood and mission, and anticolonial framing based on Islamic notions of jihad.[23] The Algerian frontier experience created a blueprint for later resistance movements against colonial invasion in Tunisia in 1881, Sudan in 1881, Libya in 1911, and Morocco in 1912. Like Abd al-Qadir, in face of Russian colonization of the Caucasus, Sheikh Shamil declared jihad and founded an Islamic state until his surrender in 1859.[24] Simultaneously, jihad was declared against the British Empire in the Indo-Afghan frontier in 1826–1831, 1863, and 1897.[25] Despite local differences from Maghreb over Dagestan to Khyber, the revolt against empire in the colonial frontiers was similar in conduct and culture. Resistance turned to guerrilla-styled insurgency where external frontiers of foreign colonization met with internal frontiers of non-governed lands in highlands and deserts. Resistance was mobilized by charismatic leadership and organized according to tribal and sectarian traditions. The revolt against empire was framed in Islamic notions of jihad against infidels. Resistance led to formation of short-lived quasi-states based on religious legitimacy and military sovereignty.

The Ottoman Balkans constituted another frontier of empires. Frontier struggles in the Balkans were distinctly more revolutionary in the European sense because of their geographical proximity and cultural appropriation. Thanks to European interventions, the revolts and revolutions in Ottoman Balkans such as in Serbia (1804–1817), Greece

[21] Mahfoud Bennoune, *The Making of Contemporary Algeria, 1830–1987. Colonial Upheavals and Post-independence Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 29–31.

[22] Benjamin Claude Brower, *A Desert Named Peace. The Violence of France's Empire in the Algerian Sahara, 1844–1902* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 2.

[23] Bruce Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830–1914* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 56–59.

[24] As contemporaries, Abd al-Qadir and Sheikh Shamil were aware about their similar, if not mutual, struggle against colonial occupation. Michael Kemper, 'The Changing Images of Jihad Leaders. Shamil and Abd Al-Qadir in Daghestani and Algerian Historical Writing', *Nova Religio. The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 11/2 (2007), p. 31.

[25] Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah. Jihad in South Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 114–175.

(1821–1832), Bosnia (1831–1834), and Wallachia (1848) resulted in the autonomy and independence as well as in the politicization of identity boundaries between Christians and Muslims.[26] Similar to Muslim frontiers, revolts against empire in the Ottoman Balkans were based on the frontier experience of brigandage and warlordism of mountainous and non-governed terrains.[27] Yet distinct from Muslim frontiers, some few Balkan revolutionaries organized themselves following the Jacobine and Carbonari models from Europe.

Revolt against empire changed course in the second half of the nineteenth century. Orientalist and imperialist approaches racialized the frontier between Christianity and Islam.[28] Although brigandage and sectarian-tribal uprisings continued in some frontiers, urban classes and rural peasants were becoming ever more politicized in their collective of action.[29] Print media, cultural associations, secret societies, and political parties created new public and secret spaces for emerging political movements.[30] French revolutionary ideas were now receiving considerable attention among the new generation of intellectuals, bureaucrats, and officers.[31] While Western lifestyles were being enthusiastically adopted at the

[26] Frederick F. Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 66–83.

[27] Frederick F. Anscombe, 'The Balkan Revolutionary Age', *The Journal of Modern History* 84/3 (2012), pp. 572–606; Tolga U. Esmer, 'Economies of Violence, Banditry and Governance in the Ottoman Empire Around 1800', *Past & Present* 224/1 (2014), pp. 163–199.

[28] Cemil Aydın, 'The Emergence of Transnational Muslim Thought, 1774–1914', in Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (eds.), *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 121–141.

[29] Joel Beinin, *Workers and Peasants in the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 44–70.

[30] Fatma Müge Göçek, 'Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish and Arab Nationalisms', in Fatma Müge Göçek (ed.), *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 15–84.

[31] Ami Ayalon, 'From Fitna to Thawra', *Studia Islamica* 66 (1987), pp. 166–168; Şerif Mardin, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Ottoman Empire', *International Social Science Journal* 41/119 (1989), pp. 25–29; Elbaki Hermassi, 'The French Revolution and the Arab World', in Joseph Klaits and Michael H. Haltzel (eds.), *The Global Ramifications of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 130–137; Nikki R. Keddie, 'The French Revolution and the Middle East', in

turn of the century by a newly emerging Muslim bourgeoisie,[32] Western revolutionary ideas were ironically contributing to their anti-Western Muslim nationalism. Mobility of Muslims within and across empires created transnational networks of Muslim solidarity.[33] Major outbursts of urban violence in the Middle East against European foreigners and indigenous Christians in the mid-nineteenth century, all had an international imperial dimension.[34]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, three contentious events in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Iran particularly prepared the ground for future revolutions. Although the Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876) were intended to encounter popular dissent and to modernize the rule of law in the Ottoman Empire, they had created new forms of opposition and resistance.[35] Frontier effects of a revolt in Bulgaria in 1876 was causing political dissent in the Ottoman capital, where students of the Islamic colleges started a demonstration in the capital in May 1876. After the demonstrations, a group of leading oppositional state officials were invited to enter the cabinet, who soon later organized a palace revolution backed by the public opinion, replacing the Sultan.[36] As a

Iran and the Muslim World. Resistance and Revolution (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 242–247.

[32] See Adam Mestyan, 'The Muslim Bourgeoisie and Philanthropy in the Late Ottoman Empire', in Christof Dejung, David Motadel and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *The Global Bourgeoisie. The Rise of the Middle Classes in the Age of Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019), pp. 207–228.

[33] R. Michael Feener, 'New Networks and New Knowledge. Migrations, Communications and the Refiguration of the Muslim Community in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', in Robert W. Hefner (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of Islam Volume 6: Muslims and Modernity. Culture and Society Since 1800* (Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 39–68.

[34] H. Ozan Özavcı, *Dangerous Gifts. Imperialism, Security, and Civil Wars in the Levant, 1798–1864* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[35] Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought. A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, 2nd edition (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000); Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans. Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Aylin Koçunyan, *Negotiating the Ottoman Constitution. 1839–1876* (Leuven: Peeters, 2018).

[36] Florian Riedler, *Opposition and Legitimacy in the Ottoman Empire. Conspiracies and Political Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 42–57; Murat R. Şiviloğlu, *The Emergence of Public Opinion. State and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 222–249.

result, a constitutional monarchy with a two-chamber parliament was proclaimed on 23 December 1876. The constitution and the parliament were, however, prorogued by Sultan Abdülhamid II after the defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878, establishing an authoritarian regime and breeding more radical revolutionary opposition.

The ‘Urabi revolt in Egypt was a collective social movement of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and military officers under the leadership of Colonel Ahmed ‘Urabi against the economic policies of the Egyptian Khedive, the privileges of the Turco-Circassian aristocracy, and the increasing influence of British imperialism.[37] After continued urban, rural, and military unrest, ‘Urabi could seize the government under the banner of his National Party, but the nationalist discourse under the slogan of “Egypt for the Egyptians” led to urban violence against foreigners in Alexandria in 1882. The British responded with an invasion of Egypt, defeating the rebels and putting an end to the uprising.[38] Yet, the ‘Urabi revolt constituted a model for popular politics in the Arab Middle East.

The tobacco boycott of 1890–1892 was an expression of anti-imperial claims by non-violent protest performances in Qajar Iran.[39] After a British company was granted a monopoly over production and commerce of tobacco in Iran, a nationwide boycott of tobacco started. The direct frontier experience of indirect colonization by the British and Russian empires was the major cause for the boycott. During the tobacco boycott, secret societies (*anjoman*) organized the mobilization and publicly framed the protest in anti-imperialist terms. The coalition between the leaders of the ulama and the leading shopkeepers and merchants enabled a

[37] For more detail, see: Juan R. I. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East. Social and Cultural Origins of Egypt’s ‘Urabi Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For ‘Urabi’s conflict with the Turco-Circassian aristocracy see: Eugene L. Rogan, *The Arabs. A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), pp. 123–128.

[38] Alexander Schölch, *Egypt for the Egyptians! The Socio-Political Crisis in Egypt 1878–1882* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981).

[39] For more detail, see: Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran. The Tobacco Protest of 1891–1892* (London: Cass, 1966).

coordinated boycott movement in several cities.[40] Certification and sacralization of political claims was manifested in December 1891 in the form of an Islamic judicial decree coming from a Shi'ite cleric in Ottoman Iraq.[41] Although the tobacco movement was foremost against European influence, it also antagonized indigenous Christians.[42] The patterns of organization and mobilization would become a model for future urban protest in Iran.

Without resulting in complete revolutions, revolt against empire in the nineteenth century was the long prologue for revolutions of the early twentieth century throughout the Middle East. The increasing connectedness of local events in distant places illustrated a shared awareness, solidarity, and negotiation among Muslim publics at the turn of the twentieth century.[43] Muslim elites, whether rebels or rulers, increasingly perceived the Middle East as the emerging frontier of empires.

War and Revolution at the Frontiers of Empires, 1905–1939

At the turn of the century, revolutionary movements in the Ottoman Empire and in Qajar Iran were increasingly mobilized especially in the frontiers of empires in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Secret societies were mushrooming in urban centres, while insurgencies in rural areas were

[40] Nikki R. Keddie, 'Why Has Iran Been Revolutionary? II: Multi-Urbanism in Iran's Revolts and Rebellions', in *Iran and the Muslim World: Resistance and Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 76–77; Ahmad Ashraf, 'Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 1/4 (1988), p. 545.

[41] Mansoor Moaddel, 'Shi'i Political Discourse and Class Mobilization in the Tobacco Movement of 1890–1892', *Sociological Forum* 7/3 (1992), pp. 451–452. The Islamic decree was actually forgery. Fatema Soudavar Farmanfarmaian, 'Revisiting and Revising the Tobacco Rebellion', *Iranian Studies* 47/4 (2014), pp. 595–625.

[42] A pamphlet, for instance, threatened to kill Europeans and local Armenians. Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864–1914. A Study in Imperialism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 258. In Shiraz, Islamist student activists even called for the expulsion of all Christians from the city. Vanessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact. Bargaining Protest and the State in Nineteenth Century Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 61.

[43] Tanya E. Lawrence, 'The Iranian Community of the Late Ottoman Empire and the Egyptian 'Crisis' Through the Persian Looking Glass. The Documentation of the 'Urabi Revolt in Istanbul's *Akhtar*', *Iranian Studies* 51/2 (2017), pp. 245–267.

increasingly threatening state control. Ottoman suppression of Armenian revolutionary activism resulted in large-scale massacres of Christians in Eastern Anatolia in 1890s, contributing to the solidification of identity boundaries and resistance cultures at the frontiers.[44] These new revolutionary committees, most notably the Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, would embody the emergent model for revolutionary struggles in the frontiers of empires.[45] Through the mobility of revolutionaries within and across frontiers of empires, most notably the Armenians, a connected underground world of revolutionaries emerged across the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Caucasus in the early years of the twentieth century.[46] What marked the wave of revolutions in the Middle East was the convolution of war and revolution at the frontiers of empires.[47]

Constitutional Revolutions and Frontier Effects, 1905–1911

While ideas of constitutionalism were wide spread in the Middle East in early twentieth century,[48] the impetus for a constitutional revolution came from a very distant frontier of empires in the Pacific. The Russo-Japanese War of 1905 was a clash of empires that changed the course of world history.[49] Russia as a European empire under traditional and absolutist rule of the Tsar was defeated by Japan, a modernizing

[44] Toygun Altıntaş, 'The Abode of Sedition. Resistance, Repression and Revolution in Sasun, 1891–1904', in Ramazan Hakkı Öztan and Alp Yenen (eds.), *Age of Rogues: Rebels, Revolutionaries and Racketeers at the Frontiers of Empires* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp. 178–207.

[45] Yenen and Öztan, 'Age of Rogues', pp. 10–19.

[46] Houri Berberian, *Roving Revolutionaries. Armenians and the Connected Revolutions in the Russian, Iranian, and Ottoman Worlds* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019).

[47] On the correlation between war and revolution see: Stephen M. Walt, *Revolution and War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 18–45; Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 234–260.

[48] Thomas Philipp, 'From Rule of Law to Constitutionalism', in Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (eds.), *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age. Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 142–166.

[49] John W. Steinberg, 'Was the Russo-Japanese War World War Zero?', *The Russian Review* 67/1 (2008), pp. 1–7.

and constitutional empire of Asia. The military victory against a European great power certified the success of the Japanese modernization project and constitutional reforms since the Meiji revolution of 1868. The ambiguity between fearing Western hegemony and desiring Westernization marked the Japanese model of constitutional government, military modernization, and Asiatic pride an alternative path in the eyes of Muslim revolutionaries.[50] A revolutionary wave that started in Russia in 1905 was soon followed by constitutional revolutions in Qajar Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Beyond the global diffusion of democratic constitutionalism, however, both revolutions in Qajar Iran and Ottoman Empire were subjected to frontier effects from the Caucasus and the Balkans.

The Iranian constitutional revolution of 1905–1911 began as a nonviolent popular protest movement against the price increase of sugar in 1905.[51] The first demonstrations started against the Iranian Minister of Customs, who was further antagonized for being a Belgian expat. The brutal beat down of prominent protesters by the police enhanced mass mobilization. The socio-economic dissent of the merchants found religious certification by the ulama which led to the mobilization of large crowds in several cities in 1906.[52] Secret societies, cultural associations, and political parties were responsible for the revolutionary organization and the framing of the struggle in terms of constitutionalism, democracy, and social justice.[53] Against Russian influence, a major sit-in demonstration with thousands of protestors was permitted to take place at the

[50] Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia. Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 71–92.

[51] For a comprehensive overview see: H. E. Chehabi and Vanessa Martin (eds.), *Iran's Constitutional Revolution. Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations and Transnational Connections* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

[52] Ahmad Ashraf, 'Bazaar-Mosque Alliance: The Social Basis of Revolts and Revolutions', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 1/4 (1988), pp. 545–547; Ervand Abrahamian, 'The Crowd in the Persian Revolution', *Iranian Studies* 2/2 (1969), pp. 128–150.

[53] On the role these *anjomans* see: Nezam-Mafi M. Ettchadieh, 'Origin and Development of Political Parties in Persia 1906–1911' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1979).

British Embassy's grounds for several weeks in July 1906.[54] Under pressure, Shah Muzaffar al-Din proclaimed the constitution on 5 August 1906. Although the revolution had been limited to non-violent performances, the new Shah's anti-constitutionalist schemes soon resulted in a violent conflict.

Meanwhile, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, which divided the Iranian territories into two interest spheres between Britain and Russia, established the frontier demarcation in the Great Game. In protest, some secret societies turned to terrorism, most prominently in the assassination of Prime Minister Ali Asghar Khan by a suicide assassin (*feda'i*) in late-August 1907.[55] After the monarchist coup d'état of 1908, when the Shah and Russian officials ordered the Cossack brigade to bomb the parliament, the revolutionaries turned to guerrilla tactics.[56] The frontier effect of the Caucasus shaped the culture and repertoire of revolutionary action against the Shah.[57] From the Ottoman Empire, Young Turk committees sent an envoy of revolutionaries to the Caucasus in 1907 to start a collaboration with Armenian and Iranian revolutionaries.[58] In Qajar Iran, urban strongmen, tribal warlords, and militia bands—who had been middlemen of state coercion in the past—were now revolting against the Shah.[59] Local gang leaders in Tabriz and Caucasian revolutionaries were joined by

[54] Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911. Foreign Policy, Imperialism, and Dissent* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), p. 54.

[55] Edward Granville Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–09* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), pp. 150–151.

[56] James D. Clark, 'Constitutionalists and Cossacks. The Constitutional Movement and Russian Intervention in Tabriz, 1907–11', *Iranian Studies* 39/2 (2006), pp. 199–225.

[57] Mangol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution. Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1909* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 76–105; Moritz Deutschmann, 'Cultures of Statehood, Cultures of Revolution. Caucasian Revolutionaries in the Iranian Constitutional Movement, 1906–1911', *Ab Imperio* 2 (2013), pp. 165–190.

[58] Farzin Vejdani, 'Crafting Constitutional Narratives. Iranian and Young Turk Solidarity 1907–09', in H. E. Chehabi and Vanessa Martin (eds.), *Iran's Constitutional Revolution. Popular Politics, Cultural Transformations and Transnational Connections* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 319–340.

[59] Vanessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact. Bargaining Protest and the State in Nineteenth Century Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 127.

the Bakhtiyari tribe and other militias on their march towards Tehran.[60] In 1909, the Shah abdicated. A further revolt in Tabriz in 1911 resulted in the Russian invasion of the northern frontier of Iran. This frontier culture of the revolution was formative for the political history of Iran for the remainder of the twentieth century.[61]

The constitutional revolution of 1908 in the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, was coordinated by a single revolutionary movement, commonly known as the "Young Turks". The Young Turk movement—secretly founded by Muslim students at the military school of medicine in the centennial of the French Revolution in 1889—had grown from a political network of activists into a considerable coalition of Ottoman (mostly Muslim and Armenian) opposition parties.[62] After the revolutions in Russia and Iran, the Young Turks were increasingly opting for revolutionary action against the Sultan.[63] The frontier experience in the Balkans was crucial in the contingency of revolutionary action. A restless group of Young Turk military officers were trained and employed in counterinsurgency operations against Macedonian revolutionaries, finding much inspiration in their insurgent counterparts and adopting themselves a revolutionary frontier culture. In 1907, Young Turk networks in European exile merged with the more militant network of Young Turks based in Ottoman Macedonia into the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP).[64] Soon thereafter, the CUP adopted a new strategy of

[60] Arash Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009), pp. 159–191.

[61] Mansour Bonakdarian, 'A World Born Through the Chamber of a Revolver. Revolutionary Violence, Culture, and Modernity in Iran, 1906–1911', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25/2 (2005), pp. 318–340; Olmo Gölz, 'Racketeers in Politics. Theoretical Reflections on Strong-man Performances in Late Qajar Iran', in Ramazan Hakkı Öztan and Alp Yenen (eds.), *Age of Rogues: Rebels, Revolutionaries and Racketeers at the Frontiers of Empires* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), pp. 120–147.

[62] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 71–109.

[63] Nader Sohrabi, 'Global Waves, Local Actors. What the Young Turks Knew About Other Revolutions and Why It Mattered', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44/1 (2002), pp. 65–66.

[64] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution. The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 210–217.

revolutionary action following the Macedonian model.[65] The meeting between British King Edward VII and Russian Tsar Nicholas II in June 9–12, 1908, in Reval (today Tallinn in Estonia), where the Macedonian Question was on the agenda, defined the contingent frontier effect for revolutionary action.[66] Following the executive orders of the CUP, secret committee members in the Ottoman army in Macedonia started a military mutiny that turned to guerrilla insurgency against government posts and engaged in popular mobilization among the Muslim villages.[67] The frontier effects were multiplied and magnified by the flood of telegrams sent to the capital from various places.[68] Finally, the revolutionaries threatened to march to the capital in order to reinstate the constitution of 1876. In fear of further chaos, Sultan Abdülhamid II caved in and announced the restoration of the constitution on 24 July 1908.[69] However, the highly celebrated revolution soon turned into bitter disappointment in its ever-violent aftermath—the frontier culture of the Young Turks was a burden for democratic constitutionalism.[70]

Besides constitutionalism, the Young Turk revolution was propagated as a beacon of revolt against empire.[71] There was a great deal of anti-imperialist and constitutionalist solidarity among revolutionaries in the

[65] Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, pp. 221–227; Erik J. Zürcher, 'Macedonians in Anatolia. The Importance of the Macedonian Roots of the Unionists for Their Policies in Anatolia After 1914', *Middle Eastern Studies* 50/6 (2014), pp. 963–964.

[66] Ernest E. Ramsaur, *The Young Turks. Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 133–134.

[67] Erik J. Zürcher, 'The Historiography of the Constitutional Revolution. Broad Consensus, Some Disagreement and a Missed Opportunity', in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building. From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), pp. 37–40.

[68] It is, however, highly disputed whether the preceding Anatolian tax revolts of 1905–1907 were expressions popular demands for constitutionalism, as it is argued by Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 29–72.

[69] Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 261–278; Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, *Die Jungtürken und die Mazedonische Frage (1850–1918)* (München: Oldenbourg, 2003), pp. 162–205.

[70] Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution. From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 149–172; George W. Gawrych, 'The Culture and Politics of Violence in Turkish Society, 1903–14', *Middle Eastern Studies* 22/3 (1986), pp. 307–330.

[71] Palmira Johnson Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–1911* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 10–15.

Ottoman and Qajar empires in the aftermath of the revolutions.[72] In 1909, a Young Turk delegation of a military advisory mission was invited to Morocco which was a major setting of imperial competition since the international crisis of 1905. Inspired by the Young Turks, a secret committee of Young Maghreb was founded.[73] A rebellion in 1911 resulted in military occupation of Morocco and the creation of a French protectorate in 1912, but resistance continued in the interior frontiers.[74] While championing anti-imperialism, the Young Turks themselves faced revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the Yemeni uprising of 1911 and the Albanian revolts of 1910–1912.[75] Meanwhile, the Italian invasion of Ottoman Libya created a major contingency for the anticolonial defense of the empire's last frontier in Africa.[76] Due to the impossibilities of a deployment of conventional forces, the Ottoman Army started a campaign of revolutionary warfare.[77] In addition to Bedouin tribes and Libyan nationalists, the religious order of the Sanussiya under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmed al-Sharif became the Ottoman Empire's major local allies. Ottoman-Libyan resistance witnessed the merger of revolutionary organization of the Balkan frontier with sectarian-tribal resistance of the North-African frontier. Under the Ottoman Army's special operation forces *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (Special Organization), this would become a future model for Muslim anticolonial struggles in the Muslim world.

[72] Vejdani, 'Crafting Constitutional Narratives'; Serpil Atamaz, 'From Enemies to Friends with No Benefits: The Failed Attempt at an Ottoman-Iranian Alliance in the Aftermath of the 1908 Revolution', *Iranian Studies* 54/5–6 (2021), pp. 879–905.

[73] Odile Moreau, 'Aref Taher Bey. An Ottoman Military Instructor Bridging the Maghreb and the Ottoman Mediterranean', in Odile Moreau and Stuart Schaar (eds.), *Subversives and Mavericks in the Muslim Mediterranean. A Subaltern History* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016), pp. 61–62; Edmund Burke III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco. Precolonial Protest and Resistance 1860–1912* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 141–142.

[74] Jonathan Wyrtzen, *Making Morocco. Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), pp. 93–115.

[75] Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians: A Study in Counterinsurgency* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2013), pp. 57–77.

[76] On Libya's history as an Ottoman "frontier-cum-borderland" see: Mostafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[77] Jonathan C. McCollum, 'The Anti-Colonial Empire. Ottoman Mobilization and Resistance in the Italo-Turkish War' (PhD thesis, University of California Los Angeles, 2018).

Revolutionary Frontiers of Total War, 1912–1916

The Balkan Wars of 1912–1913 were the brutal culmination of frontier cultures in the revolutionary processes of state-building and nation-building, where former revolutionaries were enlisted on all sides as irregulars.[78] In face of military failures in the First Balkan War, the CUP, which was previously forced into opposition, took over the government with a violent coup d'état in early 1913. After the Second Balkan War, the CUP regime not only recovered some of its former territories, but a short-lived revolutionary quasi-state, the Provisional Government of Western Trace was founded by CUP's paramilitaries in the frontier region which could not be reconquered by military means.[79] The loss of Balkan provinces was particularly bitter for the Young Turk leadership that mostly originated from Ottoman Macedonia and deepened their frontier culture that antagonized Great Powers and Ottoman Christians.[80] Despite the rise of revanchist nationalism and anti-imperialism, Young Turk revolutionaries remained committed to save their empire.[81]

The Balkans continued to be central in the convolution of war and revolution, as the Great War among empires was triggered by a Balkan revolutionary in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, as the Habsburg Empire had unilaterally annexed Bosnia-Hercegovina soon after the Young Turk revolution of 1908.[82] With the Ottoman entrance to the Great War, the

[78] M. Hakan Yavuz, 'Warfare and Nationalism. The Balkan Wars as a Catalyst of Homogenization', in M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi (eds.), *War and Nationalism. The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2013), p. 32.

[79] Katrin Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg. Kleinstaatenpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan* (München: Oldenbourg, 1996), pp. 76–78.

[80] Eyal Ginio, *Ottoman Culture of Defeat. The Balkan Wars and Their Aftermath* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Murat Kaya, 'Western Interventions and Formation of the Young Turks' Siege Mentality', *Middle East Critique* 23/2 (2014), pp. 127–145.

[81] Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, 'Point of No Return? Prospects of Empire After the Ottoman Defeat in the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50/1 (2018), pp. 65–84; Alp Yenen, 'Envisioning Turco-Arab Co-Existence Between Empire and Nationalism', *Die Welt des Islams* 61/1 (2021), pp. 72–112.

[82] For the role of Balkan revolutionary networks in the initiation of the First World War, see: Christopher M. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), pp. 3–64; Tetsuya Sahara, 'The Making of "Black Hand" Reconsidered', *Istorija 20* 34/1 (2016), pp. 9–29.

Middle East became a military frontier of empires, where revolutionary schemes accompanied conventional warfare. The Young Turk regime declared a global jihad to revolutionize the colonial Muslim subjects of their enemy empires.[83] The CUP regime regarded pan-Islamism as a transnational force of revolution in the service of Ottoman imperial interests.[84] On behalf of the Ottomans, these secret operations were conducted by the Ottoman's army's *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* (soon renamed as Office of Eastern Affairs) in various missions from Morocco over Caucasus to India.[85] Although the Ottoman call for jihad failed to mobilize Muslim insurgencies, it shaped the frontier culture of Muslim revolutionaries for future struggles against colonialism.

The Ottoman call for a jihad against foreign empires met its counterpart in the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1916. The CUP regime's relentless centralization policies towards the empire's Arab provinces were generating opposition among the Arab nationalists.[86] The prosecution and public hanging of a prominent group of Arab nationalists in Beirut and Damascus in 1916 for allegations of revolutionary conspiracy with French officials further intensified existing tensions.[87] After secret negotiations with the British, Sharif Husayn, the Ottoman official guarding the holy city of Mecca, started the Arab revolt.[88] Although the revolutionary reach of the Arab Revolt remained limited, it was successful in military terms in curtailing Ottoman war efforts in the Middle East. The Arab Revolt resembled the Ottoman defense of Libya,

[83] Erik J. Zürcher (ed.), *Jihad and Islam in World War I. Studies on the Ottoman Jihad at the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's "Holy War Made in Germany"* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015).

[84] Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World. A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 104–105, pp. 109–115.

[85] Polat Safi, 'The Ottoman Special Organization - Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa. An Inquiry into Its Operational and Administrative Characteristics' (PhD thesis, Bilkent University, 2012).

[86] Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks. Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 209–210.

[87] M. Talha Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria. Cemal Pasha's Governorate During World War I, 1914–17* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 43–56.

[88] Eugene L. Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans. The Great War in the Middle East* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2015), pp. 275–309.

where intelligence officers, nationalist volunteers, tribal militias, and religious leaders were conducting a guerrilla war against a conventional imperial army in a remote frontier.

The Armenian genocide of 1915–1916 was the culmination of revolution, war, and imperial rivalry at the Ottoman-Russian frontier in Eastern Anatolia.[89] Fears of a great Armenian revolt in support of enemy powers justified in the eyes of the CUP regime the mass arrests of Armenian political elites and the disastrous displacement and destruction of the Armenian (and Assyrian) population. Previously during secret meetings, CUP's emissaries had proposed to Armenian revolutionaries to revolt against Russia in return for autonomy, but most Armenian revolutionaries decided to remain neutral in the war of empires.[90] As local Armenian committees prepared for armed defense against potential pogroms and lootings, this created further suspicions in the paranoid eyes of state surveillance.[91] The formation of Armenian volunteer battalions in the Russian army provided the final evidence for the CUP regime to frame the Armenians as the fifth column of Ottoman Empire's enemies.[92] However, the actual extent and threat of Armenian revolutionary activism were exaggerated in the state security discourse.[93] Excesses of violence, organized theft, and systematic demographic engineering accompanied the deportations. The genocidal interplay between revolution and empire demonstrated the twofold facet of frontiers. On the one hand, the deportations created a new demographically homogenized space for the

[89] Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires. The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 140–166. On the correlation between revolution and genocide see: Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide. On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 258–286.

[90] Yektan Türkyılmaz, 'Rethinking Genocide. Violence and Victimhood in Eastern Anatolia, 1913–1915' (PhD thesis, Duke University, 2011), p. 160.

[91] Donald Bloxham, 'Terrorism and Imperial Decline. The Ottoman-Armenian Case', *European Review of History* 14/3 (2007), pp. 311–315.

[92] The military value of Armenian volunteers should not to be overstated, as they were soon dismantled by the Russian military, precisely because of their revolutionary motivation. Manoug Joseph Somakian, *Empires in Conflict. Armenia and the Great Powers, 1895–1920* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), p. 109.

[93] For conflicting, yet complementing, views on the decision-making process, see: Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians*, pp. 161–182; Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity. The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 158–175.

revolutionary regime that aimed to re-appropriate the internal frontier of Anatolia as a secure homeland for the Ottoman-Muslim nation. On the other hand, the imperial logic of the CUP regime considered Armenian provinces in the external frontiers from the coastal region of Eastern Mediterranean to the Russian Transcaucasia to be open to military and revolutionary interventions. Convolution of revolution, war, and empire at the contested frontiers created a devastating contingency for mass destruction.

Revolts and Revolutions at the Final Frontier, 1917–1939

The end of the Great War subordinated nearly the whole of the Middle East under European imperial hegemony.[94] After the armistice, Muslim insurgents in the Middle East and beyond shared transnational solidarity with each other, engaged in similar forms of revolutionary struggles against empires, and demonstrated a unified zeal to resist and fight off colonial occupation and imperial partition of Muslim lands.[95]

In the heat of the global moment of the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik leadership championed an anticolonial agenda. The "East", namely Asia and Africa, was depicted in the words of influential Bolshevik leader of Tatar origin, Sultan Galiev, as a frontier of empires "squeezed and convulsively writhing in the clutches of international capital" and "divided by Europe into 'spheres of influence'".[96] The Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in September 1920 was the sensationalist climax of the Bolshevik support for anticolonial Muslim nationalism, as the Bolshevik leadership called for a "holy war" against European imperialism and capitalism.[97] It was ironically the Russian Revolution that once again enhanced the notions and emotions of pan-Islamism in form of

[94] Michael Adas, 'Contested Hegemony. The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology', *Journal of World History* 15/1 (2004), pp. 31–63.

[95] Alp Yenen, 'The 'Young Turk Zeitgeist' in the Middle Eastern Uprisings in the Aftermath of World War I', in M. Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad (eds.), *War and Collapse. World War I and the Ottoman State* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2016), pp. 1181–1216.

[96] Quoted in Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union. A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 136.

[97] Alp Yenen, 'The Other Jihad. Enver Pasha, Bolsheviks, and Politics of Anticolonial Muslim Nationalism During the Baku Congress 1920', in T. G. Fraser (ed.), *The First*

an anticolonial revolution.[98] In the Muslim frontiers of Russia, revolutionaries founded new republics in Crimea, Bashkortostan, Azerbaijan, and Bukhara. Insurgencies against Sovietization took place, most notably the Basmachi revolt in Turkestan.[99] While the Great War had intensified revolutionary struggles in the frontiers of empires, the Russian Revolution reversed the frontier effects and subordinated warfare to the service of revolutions against empires.

After the Ottoman defeat in the Great War, the whole of the connected Muslim lands became practically the final frontier of empires, but a wave of revolts, revolutions, and wars disrupted the peace settlement. Many republics, autonomous governments, national assemblies emerged one after another in the Muslim world.[100] Muslim revolutionaries understood and organized themselves as part of a global struggle of Muslims and other oppressed people against Western colonialism.[101]

Although Iran had remained officially neutral in the Great War, its northwestern and southwestern frontiers were occupied by Russian, British, German, and Ottoman forces. The *Jangali* (forest) insurgency in the Caspian province of Gilan under the leadership of Mirza Kuchik Khan had been a partner of the Ottoman-German war effort.[102] After the Russian Revolution of 1917 and similar to the frontier effects of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911, Iran was strongly influenced by revolutionary movements originating from the Caucasus.[103] In May

World War and Its Aftermath. The Shaping of the Middle East (London: Gingko Library Press, 2015), pp. 273–293.

[98] Adeeb Khalid, 'Pan-Islamism in Practice. The Rhetoric of Muslim Unity and Its Uses', in Elisabeth Özdalga (ed.), *Late Ottoman Society. The Intellectual Legacy* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), pp. 218–220.

[99] Martha B. Olcott, 'The Basmachi or Freemen's Revolt in Turkestan 1918–24', *Soviet Studies* 33/3 (1981), pp. 352–369.

[100] Stefan Reichmuth, 'The Transformation of Muslim Societies and the Reorganization of Muslim Statehood During and After the First World War', in Helmut Bley and Anorthe Kremers (eds.), *The World During the First World War* (Essen: Klartext, 2014), pp. 47–58.

[101] Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World. A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 122–127.

[102] Touraj Atabaki, 'Going East. Ottoman's Secret Service Activities in Iran', in Touraj Atabaki (ed.), *Iran and the First World War. Battleground of the Great Powers* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 36–38.

[103] Pezhmann Dailami, 'The Bolshevik Revolution and the Genesis of Communism in Iran, 1917–1920', *Central Asian Survey* 12/2 (1999), pp. 51–82.

1920, Mirza Kuchik Khan founded with Bolshevik support the Soviet Republic of Gilan in his struggle against the British influence in Iran.[104] The regime in Iran changed after General Reza Khan (Pahlavi) from the Iranian Cossack Brigade conducted a successful coup d'état on 21 February 1921, and the young intellectual Sayyed Ziya Tabatabai was made Prime Minister.[105] A new deal with Soviet Russia finished the Soviet Republic in Gilan and abandoned the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 in order to establish the sovereignty of the new regime in Iran.[106]

In North Africa, Mulai Ahmed al-Raisuni and ʻAbd al-Krim al-Khattabi were conducting war against the colonial settlement in Morocco. Between 1920 and 1925, the Rif Republic in Morocco maintained an autonomous government.[107] In Libya, resistance against Italian colonialism had continued throughout the war. In 1918, the political leaders founded the Tripolitanian Republic which ultimately disintegrated in 1922.[108] The Indian-Afghan frontier was in revolt as well. Following the assassination of the Afghan Emir Habibullah in February 1919, the new Emir Amanullah Khan declared jihad against British India to legitimize his new reign. The Third Anglo-Afghan War resulted in an Afghan military defeat, but it enabled the independence of Afghanistan as the first sovereign Muslim nation-state of the post-war order.[109]

In Egypt, a British protectorate since the beginning of the war in 1914, political leaders were publicly demanding independence inspired

[104] Cosroe Chaqueri, *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920–1921. Birth of the Trauma* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 1995).

[105] Michael P. Zirinsky, 'The Rise of Reza Khan', in John Foran (ed.), *A Century of Revolution. Social Movements in Iran* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 53–56.

[106] Oliver Bast, 'Duping the British and Outwitting the Russians? Iran's Foreign Policy, the "Bolshevik Threat", and the Genesis of the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Iranian-Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 261–291.

[107] Wyrtzen, *Making Morocco*, pp. 51–52, pp. 116–135.

[108] Lisa Anderson, 'The Tripoli Republic, 1918–1922', in E. G. H. Joffé and Keith S. MacLachlan (eds.), *Social & Economic Development of Libya* (Wisbech: Middle East & North African Studies Press, 1982), pp. 43–65.

[109] Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan. A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 179–182; Faiz Ahmed, *Afghanistan Rising: Islamic Law and Statecraft Between the Ottoman and British Empires* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 161–206.

by Woodrow Wilson's proclamation on the right of national self-determination.[110] The Egyptian "Delegation" (*Wafd*) Party under the leadership of Sa'ad Zaghlul was rejected by the peace conference in Paris. The ensuing arrest and deportation of the *Wafd* members to Malta by British officials on 8 March 1919, caused mass demonstrations and labour strikes in Cairo and later in other cities. The protest movement became truly a national revolution once peasant and Bedouin uprisings started in the internal frontiers.[111] Like the 'Urabi revolt, the 1919 revolution was directed against the British colonial hegemony as well as against the dominance of the Turco-Circassian aristocracy. Egypt was granted semi-independence in 1922.

Although considered to be liberated from the "Turkish yoke", Ottoman-Arab provinces became a frontier of resistance against colonialism.[112] In British-occupied Iraq, local Kurdish notables were granted to establish a Kurdish autonomy government in 1918, but it still led to a Kurdish uprising in May 1919.[113] Due to war-time promises made to France, Syrian territories were abandoned by the British forces for the French to take over, while Palestine and Iraq were declared a British mandate at the San Remo Conference. Hence, Syria, Palestine, and Iraq also became a contested frontier. During Nabi Musa celebrations in Eastern 1920, a revolt broke out among Palestinian Arabs against the British occupation and the Zionist settlement.[114] In Syria, a national congress and local popular committees started a revolutionary struggle for constitutional sovereignty and independence. A popular resistance movement was mobilized in Syria against the French occupation which ended

[110] Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 141–157.

[111] Ellis Goldberg, 'Peasants in Revolt—Egypt 1919', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24/2 (1992), pp. 261–280.

[112] Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 101–146.

[113] Saad Eskander, 'Britain's Policy in Southern Kurdistan. The Formation and the Termination of the First Kurdish Government, 1918–1919', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27/2 (2000), pp. 139–163; Jordi Tejel Gorgas, 'Urban Mobilization in Iraqi Kurdistan During the British Mandate. Sulaimaniya 1918–30', *Middle Eastern Studies* 44/4 (2008), pp. 539–540.

[114] Abigail Jacobson, *From Empire to Empire: Jerusalem Between Ottoman and British Rule* (New York, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), pp. 172–175.

up in a military defeat of Syrian forces at the Battle of Maysalun on 24 July 1920.[115] A great revolt broke out in Iraq in the summer of 1920 that united the various segments of the Iraqi society against the British occupation. The insurgency could only be suppressed by air strikes—the up-to-date tactic of counterinsurgency in colonial frontiers.[116]

In hopes to counterbalance Italian colonial schemes in the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece was encouraged by the British to engage in an ill-conceived invasion of Anatolia in May 1919.[117] The Greek occupation triggered the frontier culture of the Muslim population and enabled the mobilization of a national resistance movement. The CUP's underground branches were already involved in secretly organizing and preparing an armed resistance.[118] The frontier culture in Anatolia was brought in by Muslim refugees from the Balkans and the Caucasus, further aggravating intercommunal relations where they were settled.[119] Popular politics based on local assemblies and regional congresses accompanied the armed struggle against the occupation and local Christians. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) Pasha, the Grand National Assembly was founded in Ankara, on 23 April 1920, practically a revolutionary government that soon conducted a victorious war of liberation in 1922. The abolition of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924 by the newly founded Turkish Republic marked the symbolic end of the Ottoman Empire.

Only a very few Muslim states could claim independent sovereign statehood after revolts, revolutions, and wars, while most remained under

[115] James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties. Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 87–137; Elizabeth F. Thompson, *How the West Stole Democracy from the Arabs. The Syrian Arab Congress of 1920 and the Destruction of Its Historic Liberal-Islamic Alliance* (London: Grove Press, 2020).

[116] Aula Hariri, 'The Iraqi Independence Movement: A Case of Transgressive Contention (1918–1920),' in Fawaz A. Gerges (ed.), *Contentious Politics in the Middle East. Popular Resistance and Marginalized Activism Beyond the Arab Uprisings* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 97–124.; Priya Satia, 'The Defense of Inhumanity. Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia', *American Historical Review* 111/1 (2006), pp. 16–51.

[117] Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision. Greece in Asia Minor 1919–1922* (London: Lane, 1973), pp. 77–81.

[118] Erik J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor. The Rôle of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905–1926* (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

[119] Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores. Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 169.

foreign imperial influence during the interwar years. Yet, revolts against empire continued to take place during the interwar years. Following the Egyptian example in 1919, another revolution broke out in 1924 against the Anglo-Egyptian condominium in Sudan.[120] The French mandate of Syria witnessed a great revolt in 1925–1927.[121] Another wave of revolt against empire targeted the British mandate of Palestine during the Arab revolt in 1936–1939.[122] Also in the frontiers of the Soviet empire in Central Asia, the Muslim resistance against the Sovietization was suppressed towards the end of 1920s.[123] Elsewhere, ruling elites of new nation-states continued to bring their populations in internal frontiers under central rule, hence fostering revolts. Tribes were a major thorn in side of the new Pahlavi regime in Tehran and its nationalizing policies.[124] In Afghanistan, Amir Amanullah was dethroned by a tribal uprising in 1929.[125] Especially, Kurdish Eastern Anatolia in Turkey manifested itself as a frontier of resistance against state control and centralist projects.[126] Revolutionary struggles against empire intensified only after the Second World War with the onset of decolonization at the new frontiers of the Cold War.

[120] Elena Vezzadini, *Lost Nationalism: Revolution, Memory and Anti-Colonial Resistance in Sudan* (Woodbridge: James Curry, 2015).

[121] Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005); Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria Under the French Mandate. Insurgency, Space and State Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 101–130.

[122] Laura Robson, *The Politics of Mass Violence in the Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 77–81.

[123] Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca. The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917–1941* (Westport: Praeger, 2001).

[124] Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921–1941* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[125] Ahmed, *Afghanistan Rising*, pp. 237–238.

[126] Jordi Tejel Gorgas, 'The Shared Political Production of "The East" as a "Resistant" Territory and Cultural Sphere in the Kemalist Era, 1923–1938', *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (2009), available at: http://journals.openedition.org/ejts/4064.

In Lieu of a Conclusion: Continuities at the Frontiers of Revolution and Empire

Locating waves of revolutions across time and space is admittedly a tempting enterprise. "Historians have called many ages the age of revolution", noted Samuel P. Huntington in his *Political Order in Changing Societies*, published in 1968, but he could not resist the temptation to propose the ongoing twentieth century as the "century of revolution".[127] Beyond the early twentieth-century revolutions, the processes of modernization and decolonization in the Third World after 1945 was perceived by many contemporaries as the culmination of revolution in world history. Despite formal decolonization, however as another contemporary scholar admitted, the dependent conditions of the postcolonial world still resembled colonialism.[128] The emerging world order of the Cold War created new "international frontiers", as one contemporary scholar observed, and the Middle East was one of the frontier zones, where state sovereignties were contested and great power interests collided.[129] In many ways, new nation-states mimicked old empires, while old empires mimicked new nation-states, hence continuing the interplay between revolution and empire.[130] The new generation of revolutionaries in the Middle East were shaped by the memories and legacies of the revolutionary struggles during the first decades of the twentieth century. As one historian rightly noted, the revolts and reforms of that period should be considered a "prologue"

[127] Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 314.

[128] Manfred Halpern, 'The Revolution of Modernization in National and International Society', in Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), *Revolution* (New York; NY: Atherton Press, 1967), p. 197.

[129] H. Duncan. Hall, 'Zones of the International Frontier', *Geographical Review* 38/4 (1948), pp. 615–625.

[130] Krishan Kumar, 'Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States. Two Principles, One Practice?', *Theory and Society* 39/2 (2010), pp. 119–143; Siniša Malešević, 'The Foundations of Statehood. Empires and Nation-States in the Longue Durée', *Thesis Eleven* 139/1 (2017), pp. 145–161; Robin Blackburn, 'Revolution and Empire', in John Foran, David S. Lane and Andreja Zivkovic (eds.), *Revolution in the Making of the Modern World. Social Identities, Globalization, and Modernity* (New York. NY: Routledge, 2008), pp. 165–181.

to the processes of decolonization and modernization during the Cold War.[131]

Claiming that empires foster revolutions and demonstrating that the Middle East turned into a frontier of empires, I have argued that direct frontier experiences with colonial occupation and indirect frontier effects of imperial subjugation since the nineteenth century generated distinct frontier cultures that shaped revolutionary moments and movements in the Middle East between 1905 and 1930s, especially in combination with war and other armed conflicts. In this period, frontiers were the matrix of revolution and empire in shaping the modern Middle East. While the revolt against empire righteously manifests the agency and sovereignty of the Muslim subject against the interventions of great powers, this revolutionary period also tragically marks the solidification of identity boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims with the marginalization and persecution of the latter—a process that would continue throughout the twentieth century with Israel being the only reverse case.[132] Frontiers—mostly "fixed" as borders—may have shifted and changed here and there, but frontier experiences and frontier cultures remain intact in their impact on shaping contentious politics until today. The US occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq during the War on Terror and the revolutionary wave during the Arab Spring and its bitter aftermath in the armed conflicts of Libya, Syria, and Yemen are reminders that the frontiers of revolution and empire in the Middle East have a long history, if not an impending future.

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[131] Nathal J. Citino, 'Between Global and Regional Narratives', Roundtable: 'Relocating the Cold War', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43/2 (2011), p. 314. For further historical continuities see also: Odd Arne Westad, 'The Third World Revolutions', in David Motadel (ed.), *Revolutionary World. Global Upheaval in the Modern Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 175–91.

[132] Ussama S. Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence. The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2019).

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