

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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LATE OTTOMAN HISTORY

Migration and Mortality of Ottoman Muslims

The Course

These lessons describe one of the worst disasters in history—the murder and exile from their homelands of millions of Muslims of the Middle East and the Balkans.

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1. Ethnic Cleansing

This course is a study of the mass murder and dislocation of Muslims of the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus Region. Although it seldom is included in the histories of mass atrocity and what is frequently called genocide, the sufferings of these Muslim peoples were among the worst ever inflicted on innocent populations. Researchers must ask not only what happened to these Muslims, but why their suffering is so little known.

Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide

Many terms are used to describe the murder and exile of entire peoples—genocide, population transfer, ethnic cleansing, and others. Demographers prefer the term “forced migration,” a description that has a wide application. It includes all events in which peoples are forced from their homelands at gunpoint or by threat of slaughter if they remain.

Forced migration, while technically correct, is a cold category that carries little feeling for human suffering. It does not stir the emotions. The term that does stir emotions is genocide. Genocide, however, is so widely used to cover so many examples of inhumanity that it has little meaning. Indeed, the most common description of genocide, that of the United Nations, is so broad that it is essentially meaningless:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

It is obvious that “killing members of the group” and “in whole or in part” can be applied to any acts of inhumanity, including all wars, even if only one person is affected. Other definitions are better or worse. Most people think of genocide as “what Hitler did to the Jews,” and this was indeed genocide by any definition. The question is whether other acts of inhumanity can be compared in any meaningful way to the Holocaust. The greatest problem is that including any events that authors consider to be genocide gives wide scope to prejudice.

A Proper Description

Although the term ethnic cleansing is used in this course and the readings, because it is a widely understood description, what occurred in the late Ottoman times is better described as “religious cleansing.” Death and forced migration in the Near East and the Balkans were shared by many Muslim peoples—Turks, Bosnians, Albanians, Circassians, Kurds, and others—identified by themselves and by their oppressors primarily as Muslims. Often they shared the same language and customs as those who oppressed them. What the victims shared was religion, not ethnicity.

Omitting the Muslims

A search of the topics “ethnic cleansing” or “genocide” in any data base will very seldom yield any of the information presented in these lessons. The mass murder and forced migration of Muslims peoples is simply not included. When the killings of Muslims occurred, Europeans and Americans either did not know of the sufferings of the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, or they did not care. The press only began to write of the ethnic cleansing of Muslims, in Bosnia and Kosovo, in very modern times. The omission of Muslims has continued to our day. Books on genocide or ethnic cleansing do not include the Muslims of the Balkans or the Middle East in Ottoman times. Instead, they write of the sufferings of Ottoman Christians as if they were the only ones to suffer.

Histories of the Greek Rebellion, the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War, the Turkish War of Independence, or the Russian conquests in the Caucasus seldom mention the Muslim tragedy. The few that do acknowledge it include only a paragraph or two in an entire book. The exceptions are those who have researched the events in Ottoman archives and those who have actually read the reports of European consuls. Those are the books and

articles that are recommended in these lessons as readings. (A selection of books that neglect the Muslim travail is also included here in the section "Opposing Views," although it would not be possible to list the hundreds of books that neglect the Muslims.)

To Be Considered

The danger in books that consider ethnic cleansing and genocide as universal phenomena is that the writers necessarily describe history about which they know little. How can anyone have sufficient knowledge of the histories of Germany, Rwanda, Bosnia, Cambodia, Turkey, Russia, Ukraine, Ireland, and all the other countries to say they understand the history? RW?? They cannot. That is why the recommended readings for this lesson are only from a scholar who has considered ethnic cleansing only in a region whose history she knows well.

What actually happens is that authors choose the works of others with whom they agree and compile them. Contentious issues are brushed aside, because no author can read all the books telling all the sides of issues, much less do personal research on all the history they describe. . . .

The causes of ethnic cleansing and religious cleansing in different countries and different regions are in fact widely different. The only commonality in the tragedies in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Cambodia would seem to be a darkness in the human soul. How could people do such things?

It is probably best to consider the tragic fate of the Muslims as it was, without any attempt to put it in a larger context of man's inhumanity to man.

Readings

Carmichael, Cathy, *Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

_____, "Neither Serbs, nor Turks, neither water nor wine, but odious renegades'," in Várdy, Steven Béla and T. Hunt Tooley, eds., *Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe*, Boulder, Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 2003, pp. 113-132.

Seton-Watson, Hugh. *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*. Boulder, Colo., 1977.

Questions

Are identifying terms such as ethnic cleansing or genocide valuable, or do they obscure the study of the events of history?

The destruction of Muslim peoples was one of the worst calamities in history. What might be the reasons that such momentous events are relatively unknown?

What was the role of prejudice in keeping the history of the Muslim disasters from the public when they occurred? Today?

Governments deliberately suppressed news of atrocities against Muslims. Why?

How much did a policy of "give the people what they want to hear" cause the lack of reporting on the Muslims? What is the effect of that policy today?

2. The Ottoman Empire

It is obviously not possible to retell the history of the Ottoman Empire here. Instead, the factors in Ottoman history that most concerned the forced migration and mortality of Muslims are considered.

Losses

The Ottoman Empire began to lose territory in the seventeenth century (Map 19). The cause was military attacks from outside the Empire, not popular uprisings.

Like other countries of Asia and Africa, the Ottomans were ultimately unable to stand against European armies, although they held off the conquests for more than two centuries, slowly losing land but never losing all. In the end, only Modern Turkey remained of what had been a great empire in Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Many have written of so-called Ottoman decline, blaming the Ottomans for their own defeat. This was never true. While the Ottomans made mistakes, such as attempting to take Vienna in 1683, and for a time the control of the central government over provinces diminished, their problems were never enough to explain their losses to the Europeans. The Ottomans had simply never undergone the great changes that made Europe so militarily and economically powerful. Again like the other countries of Asia and Africa, they had not benefitted from the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution. The reasons Europeans and not others advanced can be debated endlessly. A combination of geography, cultural factors, and sheer luck played a part. Whatever the reasons, the Ottomans, whose system had ruled a great empire for centuries, only truly realized their disadvantage in the nineteenth century. They then attempted to copy the Europeans. It was too late. They could not accomplish in decades what had taken the Europeans centuries to develop.

Maps, and many histories, make the Ottoman loss appear as only territorial. It was much more than that. With the loss of territory came a disaster that struck the Muslim peoples of the Empire. With each Ottoman retreat came great mortality and the displacement of Muslim peoples.

The Russians

Russia was the great enemy of the Ottomans and the Muslims. The expansion of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania and the expulsion of the Muslims from those new countries were directly caused by Russian invasion and Russian threat of war.

In Europe, the Russians acted partly out of solidarity with fellow Orthodox peoples. Their main impetus, however, came from the desire to weaken a potential enemy and to create friendly states in the Balkans. In the Caucasus, Russian aims were purely imperialistic. The Russian Empire lived through expansion into neighboring lands. Russian expulsion of Muslims and welcoming Christian immigrants was a cold imperial calculation. They knew that Muslims would never completely accept Russian domination, so they acted against the Muslims.

The Europeans

The Ottomans had no real friends or allies. Occasionally, as in the Crimean War, Europeans might act to the Ottomans' benefit, out of their own self-interest. More often Europeans' actions weakened the Ottoman economy and took Ottoman territory. The Europeans ignored the trials of the Caucasian Muslims. In Europe, they ignored their treaty commitments to protect the Ottoman borders, allowing free reign to those who attacked the Muslims. The British, who styled themselves as friends of the Ottomans, plotted the dismemberment of the Empire. (See Lesson 9)

The Causes of the Rebels

While they could never justify the persecution of the Muslims, those who rebelled against Ottoman rule had justifications. Both Muslims and Christians sometimes suffered from poor government. For example, the depredations of Janissaries in Serbia fed what already was a Serbian hatred of Muslims. Government inability to protect settled Muslims and Armenians in Eastern Anatolia fed discontent with Ottoman rule. Some corrupt and incompetent local officials sparked rebellion among Muslims and Christians alike. Crushed in war and forced to pay great sums to Russians after the 1877-78 War, the Ottomans could not properly police the Empire.

Ottoman rebels were greatly affected by nationalist ideology imported from Europe. Each group felt that its people should have its own state. Muslim majorities or pluralities stood in the way of realizing the dream. Like other nationalists, they felt that creating "the nation" justified drastic measures—the expulsion of the Muslims.

Rebels felt, with much justification, that the Ottomans, weakened by wars, were close to destruction. It was seen as a propitious time for nationalist rebellion.

The Ottoman Tradition of Religious Toleration

The Christian and Jewish religions that existed at the time of the Ottoman conquest remained at the end of the Empire. As long as they paid their taxes and did not revolt, the Ottomans were content to allow non-Muslims to keep their churches, schools, and charitable institutions. The government even encouraged religious separatism through the *millet* ("nation") system in which religious leaders represented their followers to the state. There was no Ottoman "melting pot." No one wanted assimilation to one culture or religion—neither the state nor the religious groups.

Ottoman toleration was based on Islamic Law. The Prophet Muhammad had decreed that Christians and Jews should be allowed to keep their religions. There was also a practical reason: When the Ottomans began their conquests, Turks were a definite minority. If the conquered peoples were allowed to continue their lives as they wished, they would be more likely to accept Ottoman rule, which was often an improvement on that of previous Christian states. Politically, non-Muslims were not the equal of Muslims. They paid a special tax in lieu of military service. This did not mean that Christians were inferior in their lives. In the nineteenth century, Ottoman Christians, especially Greeks and Armenians, were generally richer than Muslims.

In the later days of the Empire, the Ottomans attempted to further integrate Christians into governance. Christians were placed in high positions as governors of provinces and ministers of state. Attempts were made to instill the concept of Ottoman nationality in the subjects. It is doubtful, however, if these attempts at unification had much effect on the Christian peoples, who largely continued to identify themselves as members of their religious groups, not as Ottomans.

The legal and cultural separation by religion was to become an element in the development of nationalism among the Christians.

Accepting Immigrants

Traditions of Islamic brotherhood and charity caused the Ottomans to accept an astounding number of Muslims forced from their lands (Map 20). As the Empire shrank, millions of Muslims flooded into the land that remained. Even those who were not Ottoman subjects were welcomed: the Ottomans rented whatever boats they could to transport Crimean Tatars, Circassians and Abkhazians from the Russian conquests. Great attempts were made to feed and house the refugees. These had limited success, because the Empire was poor and could only afford so much. Indeed, the refugees often became a liability. The Circassians, in particular, were a disruptive element when many of them, largely out of poverty, took to banditry and civil disturbance.

It is seldom recognized that the Ottomans took in a greater number (in proportion to their population) than any other country until very modern times.

The Impossible Position of the Ottomans

By 1881, the Ottomans were left with boundaries in Europe that were impossible to defend. Powerful enemies were everywhere. In the Balkan Wars, they were forced to split their forces in a futile attempt to protect the Muslim population. In World War I, they were forced to fight both a war with Russia and major Armenian revolts in Anatolia, losing badly. They simply did not have enough power to defend themselves.

The difficulties extended beyond the military: When the Ottomans attempted to improve their economy, they were hampered by the Capitulations. These regulations, enforced by the threat of European gunboats, did not allow the Ottomans to set their own customs duties. They could not protect nascent domestic industries from European competition. The government borrowed from the Europeans in an attempt to reform government, the economy, and the military. Ruinous interest rates and the fact that the Ottomans were poor economists led to financial disaster.

Readings

McCarthy, Justin, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922*, Princeton; Darwin, 1995, pp.1-10.

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McCarthy, Justin, *The Ottoman Turks*, London: Longman, 1997

Shaw, Stanford J., and- Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, two volumes, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976-1977.

Many of the readings for these lessons are contained in the Documents section. They are listed as pdf files after the name of the work. For example: (Galliard The Turks and Europe.pdf) above.

Questions

Some blame the Ottomans themselves for their losses. The section above primarily blames European military might and doubts if the Ottomans ever could have triumphed. Is there ever a single cause for historical events such as the retreat of empires?

Was the European dominance of the Ottoman Empire similar to the European imperialism that overcame most of the peoples of Asia and Africa?

If the Ottomans were less tolerant of religious differences would the Ottomans have avoided their later losses due to sectarian nationalism? Or would the Ottomans never have been able to rule unless they tolerated diversity?

Were the Russians different than other imperialists?

3. Beginnings: Hungary, Greece, and Serbia.

It is almost always a mistake to project present day realities onto the past. There was no nationalism in the modern sense in the Southeastern Europe or the Middle East until long after Hungary was taken from the Ottoman Empire. Hungary was conquered by the armies of the Habsburgs and their allies just as it had previously been conquered by the Ottomans, by victorious armies. Serbia was taken because of Russian victory in war. Neither Ottoman loss was the product of popular uprising.

Hungary

Hungary was lost after a disastrous Ottoman attempt to take Vienna in 1683. The victory of the Austrian Habsburgs was cemented in the Treaty of Karlowitz (1699). Ottoman forces in Hungary had been predominantly Slavic soldiers, and most of the Muslims in Hungary were Slavs. After the Ottoman defeat, approximately 80,000 (a very imprecise figure) Muslims migrated from Hungary.

For the next century after the loss of Hungary the Muslims of the Ottoman Balkans remained in place, but the political and military state of the Empire boded ill for the future. European military power advanced rapidly, while Ottoman power did not. To some extent the Ottomans were saved because the Europeans fought among themselves. Some territory was lost to the Russians on the Black Sea, but the core provinces of the Balkans where most Muslims resided were retained. Once Russia emerged successful from the Napoleonic Wars the situation changed radically against the Ottomans.

Rebels against the Ottoman government had legitimate grievances. Until the Empire began to reform in the nineteenth century, effective rule in the Balkans was often in the hands of local lords, some no better than bandits. Both Muslims and Christians rebelled at various times, although the rebels called for improved conditions, not independence. The nature of rebellion was to change.

Serbia

(Map 2) Serbian independence was more the product of popular uprising, or at least the uprising of Serbian leaders. Uprisings against Ottoman rule in Serbia took place from the seventeenth century—uprisings of Serbs and even Ottoman soldiers, all of whom took advantage of Ottoman weakness. It was, however, Russian intervention that led to Serbian independence

Russia defeated the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-12. Under the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest (1812) that ended the war, Serbians were granted the right to administer their own internal affairs. In 1826, threatened with Russian attack, the Ottomans signed the Ackerman Convention with Russia. Under the terms of the Convention (confirmed in the Treaty of Adrianople of 1829), Serbian independence was settled. Although Serbia remained theoretically an autonomous part of the Ottoman Empire, all the normal functions of government were in the hands of the Serbians. More important to Muslim inhabitants of Serbia, the treaty stipulated that the land be cleared of Muslims. Serbians were made the “administrators” of all Muslim property. Muslims were forbidden to live in Serbia, with the exception of soldiers in garrisons, and these were eventually removed also. Jews were also driven from Serbia and not allowed to return. In the case of the Jews, the reasons seem to have been prejudice and friendship between the Jews and the Turks, because the Jews were surely no threat to the new Serbia.

Compared with what was to come, the loss to the Muslims of Serbia was minor. What was most important was the precedent. Clearing lands of Muslim inhabitants was to be an essential part of the development of the Balkan nation-states. Serbia and the other Serb state, Montenegro, were to continue attacking Muslims and driving them out until 1913.

Greece

The eviction of Turkish Muslims from Greece was violent. The Greek rebellion began in March, 1821 with the murder of Ottoman officials and tax collectors. A general attack on the Turks in the Morea (Southern Greece) followed in April. All the Turks were murdered in their home villages or on the roads as they tried to escape. The only exceptions were women taken as slaves and a small number of Turks who managed to reach temporary safety in Ottoman fortresses. As the rebellion progressed, most of these were killed also. In villages the murders were with rapid fury. In towns, the massacres were more orderly; Turks were collected, taken out

of town, and killed. Many were tortured before their murder.

While precise figures are not known, it seems that 25,000 Turks died. As they had in Greece, Jews shared the fate of the Muslims. Both were viewed as infidels who should be killed. Both Turks and Jews were gone from Southern Greece.

It cannot be known how much of the eradication of the Muslims was caused by hatred and how much by calculation. A new Greek kingdom would be homogenous once the Turks were gone. A large Turkish population, loyal to the Ottomans, would not be an internal threat. It is also difficult to say how much of the Greek action was nationalistic in the modern sense, probably very little. The more likely cause was religious. Priests and bishops were at the forefront of the rebellion.

The Ottomans, relying on their sometime vassal, Mohammed Ali of Egypt, were able to defeat the rebels and retake much of Greece. Greeks unquestionably suffered in the reconquest, especially those on the rebellious island of Chios, where Greeks were massacred by Ottoman troops. But the Ottomans were not able to retain Greece. Without any declaration of war, Europeans in concert attacked and destroyed the Ottoman and Egyptian fleets at Navarino (October 20, 1827). A Greek kingdom, devoid of Muslims, was created by the Europeans.

Conclusion

The pattern set in Serbia and Greece was to be followed in the even more bloody wars that were to follow. In the calculus of Balkan nationalism, Christian national states could only be securely created if the Muslims were gone. Another pattern was also set: future creation of the Balkan states was to be the result of European intervention.

Readings

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Uyar and Erickson, pp. 175-202

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Questions

At first, were the national identifications of the Ottoman peoples only an extension of the European philosophy of nationalism?

Could the revolts in Hungary, Greece, and Serbia have been successful without European intervention?

Why did the Europeans intervene?

4. Beginnings: Russia in the Crimea and South Caucasus

Crimean Tatars

Russia began its conquest of the lands north of the Black Sea in the reign of Tsar Ivan the Terrible (1533-84). The Russians slowly expanded their rule against Muslim Turks, the Crimean Tatars. By the time of Peter the Great (1689-1725) only the Crimea and nearby lands to the north remained to the Tatar Khanate. The Tatar khans were vassals of the Ottomans, and the Ottomans unsuccessfully attempted to defend them. They were defeated in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74, and in the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca were forced to accept an independent Crimea. Independence did not last long; in 1783, Russia annexed the Crimea.

The Russian occupation of the Crimea (Map 20) started the process of exile of the Tatars. Immediately after the occupation, an estimated 20-100,000 Tatars left for the Ottoman Empire. (Exact numbers are unknown.) Forced emigration continued slowly, with expulsion of Tatar leaders and merchants, until the Crimean War (1853-56). During that war, the Tatars suffered intense persecution from Cossacks and the Russian Army. Villages were raided. An unknown number were killed. Many were sent to the Russian interior.

After the war, Tsar Alexander order that the emigration of the Tatars be “facilitated.” Tatar lands were seized or subject to exorbitant taxes. The apparatus of the government and the courts was turned against them. Rumors, initiated by Russians but spread by the Tatars themselves, abounded—Christianity was to be forced on them, serfdom, still present in the rest of Russia, was to be introduced, the Russians were to force all Muslims from Russia. The last was completely believable. More than 10,000 Nogay Tatars from north of the Crimea had been departed. They passed through the Crimea to boats taking them to Ottoman territory. The Crimeans could only expect that they would be next. The Crimean Tatars joined the exodus.

At least 300,000 Tatars fled to the Ottoman Empire by land and sea before 1860. Many drowned when rickety boats capsized. Those who went by land often starved on their journey. Once in the Ottoman Empire they found only minimal support in refugee camps. The Empire was poor and had little to offer the refugees. Food was provided in the camps, but medical care was almost nonexistent. Ottoman authorities could do little for them until they were finally settled on farms and in cities.

(The last Tatars in the Crimea were expelled to Central Asia by Stalin. Some were allowed to return decades later. Today make up slightly more than ten percent of the population of the area in which they were once a large majority.)

The largest settlements of Tatar refugees were in the Dobruja (today in Romania, Map 3), the closest Ottoman territory to the Crimea. They were once again to suffer from murder and exile in the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War.

“Administrative Measures”

Most of the Muslim refugees considered in these lessons fled with guns at their backs. The cause of the Tatar exodus was primarily what may be called “administrative measures.” These were to become an important of later persecution of the Balkan Muslims. Administrative measures were the turning of the organs of state, the courts, and the political culture against the Muslims. When their farms were seized illegally, administrators and the courts refused to hear Muslim complaints. Taxes on Muslims were double, triple, or more than those of their Christian neighbors. It was useless to call the police when Muslims were killed; the police were often allied with the attackers. With impunity, hooligans could rob Muslims, harass Muslims in the streets, and even burn down Muslim houses. To whom could the Muslims complain of injustice?

Administrative measures were surely better than outright murder, but they were a significant cause of Muslim emigration. Unlivable conditions forced the Muslims to flee.

The Caucasus

Russia began its conquest of the Caucasus region in the late eighteenth century (Map 10). At first, Russian forces only occupied central mountain passes, extending toward Georgia, then a kingdom attempting to break free of the Iranian Empire (Map 8). Citing bonds between Orthodox Russia and Orthodox Georgia, the Russians agreed by treaty to assist them. Instead, by 1801 the Russians had occupied all of Georgia and made it part of the Russian Empire. From there the Russians expanded east, conquering most of the *khanates*. These were largely autonomous regions with a large majority of Shia Turks. Although nominally part of Iran, each was ruled by a local Turkish lord (*khan* or *han*). Russia conquered what was left of Iranian Azerbaijan (Erivan,

Nahçıvan, and smaller territories) in the war of 1826-8 (Map 9). The Ottomans lost territories in their northeast in the war of 1827-9.

The Population Exchange Begins

The alliance of Armenians and Russians began during the Russian invasion of the Iranian khanates. Armenians in the khanates welcomed the Russian invaders, acted as spies and guides for the Russians, and even fought alongside the Russian troops in the wars against Iran and the Ottoman Empire.

It is doubtful if most of the Armenians had a part in these initial wars, preferring to be left alone by all the warring parties. Nevertheless, a climate of suspicion and animosity began to develop among both the Armenians and Turks. The animosity increased when the Russians began a policy of evicting Turks and replacing them with Armenians.

Russians believed that they needed a loyal population in the Southern Caucasus if they were to cement their hold on the region. Armenians and Georgians were to be the Russian agents of occupation. Turks had fled from the fighting in the 1827-29 Ottoman-Russian War. Despite Russian treaty commitments, they were not allowed to return. The Russians expelled many who had remained. It has been estimated that 30% (26,000) of the Muslims, mainly Turks, of the Erivan Khanate alone either died in the war or were expelled. Figures of the refugees from other regions are unavailable, but must have been significant. Their places were taken by Armenians who migrated from the Ottoman Empire and Iran, sponsored by the Russians. An estimate of 90,000 often given for these migrants is probably too high, but, once again, their numbers were significant. More Muslims and Armenians emigrated during and after the Crimean War (1853-6). The Erivan Khanate, approximately the area of today's Armenian Republic, had a Muslim majority before the 1820s wars. Muslim emigration and Armenian immigration made it Armenia.

Few of the Armenians who migrated to Russian territory would have been inspired by nationalist feelings or religious brotherhood with Orthodox Christians. (The Russians considered the Armenians to be heretics, but useful heretics.) The Armenian inspiration was more practical. The Russians offered Armenians the lands that had been taken from the Turks, tax-free, at least for a while. For poor farmers it was a great opportunity.

The exchange of Muslims and Armenians was to continue until 1920. As will be seen in later lesson, the division and animosity between the Armenians and Muslims that had been engendered by the Russian invasions was to grow until it became violent inter-communal war.

Circassians, Abkhazians

Russian conquest of the central and southern Caucasus had left behind large regions that were claimed by Russia, but were not under control (Map 10). Fierce fighters in Circassia and Daghestan held the Russians at bay until after the end of the Crimean War. Then the Russians adopted a policy of attacking the villages and families of the fighters. Their methods were extremely inhuman, but effective: Russian troops occupied villages. Any adult males that were not away at war were killed, then the women were raped. Often, the children and women were killed when the troops were done with them. Some always escaped to warn the next village to flee, which was the Russian plan. Fields were burnt and houses destroyed. The Circassians had no choice but to leave. Russian soldiers herded them to the sea coast, where they were left without food or water, hoping for rescue by boats sent by the Ottomans. Only a small percentage of the Circassians remained in their homeland.

Unlike the Circassians, the other large group of Muslims expelled by the Russians, the Abkhazians, could not have been viewed as a threat to Russian rule. Their homeland had been conquered decades before the Russians expelled them. The only cause for their eviction was the desire to take fertile land on the Black Sea.

Others, including Chechens and Daghestanis, were also evicted, but in smaller numbers. Their mountainous lands were simply not as desirable to the Russians.

Refugee numbers are imprecise, because the Russians did not count those they were evicting. The Ottomans did count many, but officials could not keep up with the massive flow of Circassians and Abkhazians. A conservative estimate is that 1.2 million were forced out. Like the Crimean Tatars, they came to the Ottoman Empire with nothing. As with the Tatars, the Ottomans could do little to assist them. The Ottomans saved them by renting, buying, and conscripting every boat they could to transport the refugees. Once they landed, however, the refugees could only be put them in camps in Black Sea ports. Disease took a great toll: British consuls reported 500 a day dying at Trabzon, 30 a day at Samsun. Other ports were similar. Smallpox and

typhus spread from the camps to the local population. As it had with the Tatars, the Ottoman government distributed the Circassian throughout the Empire, settling them as far away as Palestine and the Balkans. 800,000 survived; one-third of those who had set out from the Russian conquest died.

Conclusion

The techniques learned by the Russians in the Caucasus were to be repeated by them in the Balkans and by others who were to attack Muslim populations. The overall plan of the Russians must have been to kill or expel the Muslims from the areas they conquered. This may have been a conscious plan, developed over a century, or it may have been expedient in each time. It can be surmised that in each of the coming Russian attacks on Muslims, they had learned from the previous attacks. Whether or not there was an overall strategy, the effect on the Muslim peoples was the same.

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Questions

What were the reasons for Russian expansion?

Did imperial expansion bring new dangers from states that were now on the Russian borders, dangers that could only be dealt with militarily? Was there an "imperialist dynamic" that demanded constant conquest?

Were the Muslims of the Crimea and the Southern Caucasus a real danger to the Russians? Did the Russians believe they were a danger?

Could the Muslims ever have been loyal Russian subjects?

What was the long term effect of Russian conquest on Muslim-Armenian relations?

What was the effect of economic geography--the annexation of fertile land on the Black Sea coast--on the Russian conquest of Circassia and Abkhazia?

What were the methods of Russian conquest? Would the Russians have used such methods on Christian peoples (e. g., Poland, Finland)?

What were the effects of the expulsions on life in the Ottoman Empire?

5. The War of 1877-78 in Ottoman Europe

The greatest changes in the population of southeastern Europe were the result of two wars—the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.

Ottoman Europe was a thoroughly mixed society. Different religious groups were dominant in various regions, but large minorities existed in all. Populations were often mixed at the village level, making it hard to distinguish which region “belonged” to which ethnic or religious group. In 1876 (Map 3), Muslims were the largest religious group, but the majority was not Muslim. Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Macedonian populations together outnumbered the Muslims, although the Christians felt too much mutual antipathy to act in concert.

Rebellions against Ottoman authority were not uncommon. By no means were these only revolts of Christian groups. The main cause of the insurrections was the assertion of central government control over local leaders and warlords who had been virtually independent. Some revolts of local Muslim leaders, such as in Bosnia, used the new Europeanizing (“infidel”) reforms of the Ottoman government as an ostensible cause for revolt. There were also relatively small uprisings of Christian ethnic groups. All were put down by Ottoman forces. As they had in the past, more successful revolts depended on intervention from outside the Empire.

Bosnia

The precursor of the 1877-78 War was an 1875 revolt of Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosnia was coveted by Serbia as part of what Serbs considered to be their ancestral lands, even though it had a slight Muslim majority. Drawing aid from Serbia and Montenegro, in 1875 rebels began first to attack tax-collectors, landlords, and officials, but soon began assaulting Muslim villages. Muslims responded in what soon became a civil war.

The Ottoman army responded. It defeated the rebels, as it had defeated previous revolts in Bosnia. Serbia and Montenegro saw their plans for expansion in Bosnia thwarted. They attacked the Ottoman forces, but the Serbs were speedily defeated. (The Montenegrins were more successful.) European powers intervened to keep the Ottomans from claiming land or reparations from the Serbs. Despite that, suppressing the rebellion and subsequent war seemed to be an Ottoman triumph, until events in Bulgaria intervened.

Bulgaria

Taking advantage of the fact that the Ottoman army was occupied in Bosnia, Bulgarian rebels mounted assaults of Muslim Turkish villages. At first unable to send the army, to defeat the Bulgarian rebels the government relied on locals (called *başıbozüks*) and Circassians who had been settled in Bulgaria. They responded with ferocity out of revenge for the Bulgarian atrocities, committing further atrocities of their own. The Circassians were particularly violent; it is doubtful if they made much distinction between Bulgarians and the Russians who had driven them from their homes. Precise figures are not known, but more than 1,000 Muslims and 3-12,000 Christians died. When the Ottoman army was finally able to act, hanging many Circassians and *başıbozüks* for deeds against Bulgarians, it was too late.

Events in Bulgaria stirred the moral indignation of Europeans. While newspapers had not reported the Serbian and Bulgarian attacks on Muslim that precipitated the troubles, they featured attacks on Christians in gruesome detail. Atrocity stories, some real, most fanciful or grossly exaggerated, filled the news. Hundreds of thousands were reported killed. The effect on public made it impossible for any country to take the side of the Ottomans. Britain, which might have intervened when Russia attacked the Ottomans, as it had in the Crimean War, was forced to remain neutral. Not even fear of Russian aggrandizement that would upset the balance of power could oppose public sentiment.

Russian plans did not include an Ottoman Empire strengthened through ending rebellion and halting internal division. The events in Bulgaria offered the Russians a chance to portray themselves as the saviors of Christian peoples. In June of 1877 they invaded. Russian conquest was delayed by Ottoman defenses at the fortress of Plevna and in the Balkan Mountains, but by January of 1878 the Ottomans had lost the war. With Russian armies threatening Istanbul, they were forced to sue for peace.

The peace terms forced on the Ottomans (the Treaty of San Stephano, March 3, 1878) would have ended the Ottoman Empire in Europe. A Greater Bulgaria was to be created in Bulgaria and Macedonia, with Ottoman land also given to Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Romania. Crete and regions of Central Greece were granted limited self-government. This, however, was unacceptable to the other European powers. They acted not out of any sympathy for The Ottomans or the Ottoman Muslims, but out of fear of Russian dominance over

the new states, upsetting the balance of power. Russia was grudgingly forced to accept the Treaty of Berlin (July 13, 1878). The Ottomans retained Macedonia and Thrace (Map 4).

The Muslims and the War

Losses among the Muslim population were seldom the direct result of combat. The losses were the result of deliberate violence against civilian populations.

The Russian troops most responsible for murder and pillage of Muslim civilians were the Cossacks, autonomous units used as raiders by the Russian army. The Cossacks were often ill-disciplined, but it is difficult to believe that they acted without authority from their commanders. They attacked and destroyed Muslim villages as units, not as soldiers independently murdering, raping, and pillaging. This fit the military and political plans of the Russians: Cossack raids and fear of them forced masses of Turkish villages to flee. Refugees on the roads kept Ottoman forces from advancing or retreating, and soldiers were forced to defend the refugees rather than fight the Russians army. Once the Turks were gone, they would not be allowed to return to the new Bulgarian state.

Cossacks and regular units of the Russian army regularly acted in concert with Bulgarians. They surrounded Turkish villages, then set local Bulgarians on the Turks. Artillery was used to destroy defenceless villages of no military importance. Cavalry units attacked columns of refugees. Even after an armistice ended the war, the Russians continued attacks of Turkish villages, destroying them and forcing the inhabitants to take flight.

Most Bulgarians undoubtedly took no part in the massacre of Turks. They sensibly remained in their towns and villages and tried to avoid the conflict. Two groups of Bulgarians, however, were responsible for most of the worst attacks on Muslims: Many Bulgarian revolutionaries assaulted Turks out of hatred and the desire to free their lands from what they saw as occupying foreigners. (The Turks had by then been in Bulgaria for four centuries.) Ordinary Bulgarian villagers, with no special nationalist intent, acted out of the desire to take Turkish property and belongings. With the Turks gone, the Turkish property was theirs. The villagers were enriched. Another factor, one shared with the rest of humankind in all wars, was the inhumanity stirred in many by war. Murder, rape, and plunder resulted when men were freed from the authority that had kept evil impulses in check. In the case of Bulgaria, the only authority, the Russians, actually facilitated the worst.

Russian and Bulgarian actions forced the Turks onto the roads. They fled to whatever regions seemed likely to be safe, then fled these also when these came under attack. They were murdered and robbed on the roads. Typhus and starvation eventually killed more than had been murdered by their enemies.

The judiciaries and administrations of the new lands were set against the Muslims who remained in the territories taken by Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro. Those Muslims who had the temerity to go to governments and court to complain of murder and theft by Christians found no relief. Instead, they were often thrown into prison themselves. In fact, the police were prominent among those who abused and stole from the Muslims. All the machinery of the state, unchecked by the occupying Russian army, was against the Muslims. Many who had survived the wars were forced to leave after them.

Although politicians did not allow their reports to be seen by the European public, consuls recorded the suffering of the Turks in comprehensive detail. The British consuls, especially, sent reports of killing and destruction by Russians and Bulgarians.

The deliberate destruction of Turkish villages and Turkish houses and shops in towns can only be seen as a plan to ensure that the Turks would never return. There would be nothing to which they could return. Those who, despite all, did attempt to return were dissuaded by further violence. Under the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, all refugees were guaranteed the right to go back to their homes. Unprotected by the occupying Russian army, the refugees were at the mercy of the Bulgarians. Their lands were not returned, their homes were either destroyed or occupied by Bulgarians, and they were left to starve. Bands murdered and robbed the returning refugees on the roads. The survivors returned to the Ottoman lands.

The Jews and the War

Jews shared in the mortality and forced migration of the Muslims of the Balkans. They had long been closely tied to the Muslim state that had befriended them when they were expelled from Spain and Portugal by Christians. They were justifiably viewed as friends of the Turks who would be allies of the Ottomans. (When Jewish refugees attempted to return to the town of Yamboli after the war, they were met at the train station by a

mob shouting, "Away with the Turks and Jews! Bulgaria for the Bulgarians!")

The invaders and Christian inhabitants of the new states were as anxious to drive out the Jews and seize their property as they were to drive out the Muslims. But the Jews also suffered from the anti-Semitism of the Russians and other Orthodox peoples. When they had invaded Ottoman Bulgaria in previous wars, the Russians had pointedly picked Jewish communities for attack, burning synagogues and harassing Jews in Northern Bulgaria. They increased their persecution of the Jews in the 1877-78 War.

Jews suffered all the deprivations inflicted on the Muslim Turks. Jews were rounded up in cities across Bulgaria, their synagogues and Jewish quarters burned. Jews were either killed or exiled. The Jewish presence in much of Bulgaria, and the regions taken by Serbia and Montenegro essentially disappeared. (Note that the lack of more complete statistics makes it impossible to separate Jews from other "non-Muslims" in the table.)

Conclusion

Population Change in Ottoman Europe, 1876-1879*

	Pre-War	Post-War	Gain/Loss	
Muslim				
Remaining in Ottoman Empire	1,626,000	2,230,000	604,000	(+37%)
Taken from Ottoman Empire	2,597,000	1,174,000	-1,423,000	(-55%)
Total	4,223,000	3,404,000	-819,000	(-19%)
Non-Muslim				
Remaining in Ottoman Empire	2,349,000	2,162,000	-187,000	(-8%)
Taken from the Ottoman Empire	4,485,000	4,509,000	24,000	(+1%)
Total	6,834,000	6,671,000	-163,000	(-2%)
Total Population	11,057,000	10,075,000	-982,000	(-9%)

*For Greece, 1881.

In Bulgaria, a significant number of Muslims remained only in Northeast Bulgaria communities, where they had been a large majority before the war. Their numbers were augmented by refugees from the Romanian conquest of the Dobruja. The rest of Bulgaria was stripped of Turks. 17% of the Bulgarian Turks were dead, another 34% were refugees in the Ottoman Empire. The situation in the Romanian Dobruja and the regions taken by Serbia and Montenegro were even worse: The Muslim population of the Dobruja declined by 83%. 91% of the Muslims of the region taken by Serbia and all the Muslims of that taken by Montenegro were gone. (25% of the Jews and 35% of the Muslims of Bosnia were also gone, but, after an unsuccessful revolt against Austrian occupation, many of these left rather than be under foreign rule.)

Non-Muslims also suffered in the war. The non-Muslim population of what had been Ottoman Europe declined by two per cent. While not comparable to the Muslim mortality, this was significant loss.

The demographic nature of Ottoman Europe was changed significantly by the war. Refugees forced into the new borders of the Ottoman Empire in Europe swelled the Muslim population. Bulgarian migration from Macedonia to Bulgaria diminished Ottoman Bulgarian numbers. Before the war, the majority in Ottoman Europe was non-Muslim. After the war, the population of Ottoman Europe was 51% Muslim. The war had concentrated the surviving Muslim population in what remained of Ottoman Europe.

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Questions

Was there justification for the Russian invasion of 1877? Were the "Bulgarian Horrors" the real reason for the Russian attack?

How much of the Russian impetus to invade was due to solidarity with the Slavs of the Ottoman Empire?

How much of the impetus was the chance to damage a military rival?

What is the place of the expulsion of other ethnic groups in nationalism?

What were the methods of the attacks on the Muslims?

How were legal and "administrative" methods used to keep the Muslims from returning to their lands?

Does "terrorism," in its proper meaning, describe the actions of Russians, Serbs, and Bulgarians?

6. The War of 1877-78 in the Ottoman East

For the people Eastern Anatolia and the Southern Caucasus, the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War saw a continuation of the Armenian-Muslim population exchange. The pattern set in the 1827-29 wars was repeated. Muslims were forced from territories seized by the Russians, and their place was taken by Ottoman Armenians. (Maps 9, 10, 11.)

Unfortunately, reliable evidence from the East in 1877-78 is very limited. Both sides of the Russian-Ottoman border were undeveloped and far from the European consuls who reported on the war in Europe. It is known that Muslims fled the northernmost region of the Ottoman Empire when the Russians invaded and began massacres and destruction. In Ardahan, for example, the 800-man Ottoman garrison surrendered peacefully when faced with 12,000 attackers, but Russian troops killed them all. The murder of perhaps 1,000 of the city's Muslim inhabitants followed. There is little evidence on Russian actions in other areas; no neutrals were present. However, limited British reports claimed that Russians were murdering civilians and captured soldiers, aided in the killings by "their Armenian friends."

There can be no question but that a significant portion of the Armenian population took the side of the Russian invaders. When the Russians took the major city of Erzurum, they placed the police force in the hands of Armenians. The British ambassador reported that the Armenians "availed themselves of the protection they received [from the Russians] to molest, ill-treat, and insult the Mohammedan population." The molestation must have been severe, because 6,000 Muslim families fled Erzurum. Others fled the Russian occupation of other cities, such as Kars--an occupation that was marked by rape and theft..

When the Treaty of Berlin allowed the Ottoman to retain some territory that had been conquered by the Russians, Armenians feared Muslim reprisals. Innocent and guilty alike followed the departing Russian forces. The largest group of Armenian refugees left the Eleşkirt Valley (Map 7), an estimated 2-3,000 families. Others left other parts of the Erzurum province. Most settled in the Russian Erivan province (today's Armenian Republic) and the Kars-Ardahan region, newly a part of the Russian Empire. In the event, actual reprisal on the Armenian population was kept in check by the Ottoman army.

The Russians had a military rationale for their conquests in Eastern Anatolia. The Ottoman defensive forts of Kars and Ardahan fell into Russian hands (Map 7). The Ottomans were thrown back to much less defensive lines in the mountains. In most cases, the Russians occupied the high ground. The road into Eastern Anatolia was open.

Ongoing Population Exchange

Statistics of the population of Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus were either very deficient or, more usually, nonexistent. Calculation of migrations can be made from later data, but these statistics are very uncertain. The diplomatic record yields very broad estimates of migration, none of mortality. It appears that approximately 100,000 Ottoman Armenians crossed to Russia, mainly from regions returned to the Ottoman Empire in the peace settlement after the war. Approximately 70,000 Muslims, primarily Turks, fled the conquered territories. They were joined by 40,000 Laz (a Muslim people of the southeastern coastal region), making 110,000 total Muslim refugees.

The transfer of Muslims and Armenians continued the *de facto* population transfer of the peoples of the East. The Armenian population of Northeast Anatolia diminished, the Muslim population increased. It was exactly the opposite in Erivan and Kars.

Significance

The primary significance of the 1877-78 War in the East was not Muslim mortality. This was significant, but not nearly as great as what was to come in World War I. The primary significance lay in the building of animosity between Muslims and Armenians. Armenians in large numbers had taken the side of invading Russians. Armenians had so feared the Muslims that they migrated to Russia rather than face Muslim refugees returning to their homes. Animosity between the two communities naturally grew.

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Additional Readings (as in Lesson Six)

Questions

What was the reporting from the eastern sector of the war so limited?

What would be the result of the growing animosity between Muslims and Armenians on the society of Eastern Anatolia?

How do you think the Ottoman government would react? How should it have reacted?

Considering that Turks and Armenians had lived together in relative peace for more than 800 years, why was the situation changed so quickly (if a 50 year development of animosity can be considered quick)?

7. The Balkan Wars.

In Europe, the Ottomans had been left with an awful strategic position by the Treaty of Berlin. Long, winding borders were indefensible (Map 4). Each of the new states that had been carved from the Empire by the Europeans wanted more territory, Macedonia was the special prize. Each country felt that it should be theirs, part of the patrimony of their nation. They temporarily put aside their differences, however, and allied to defeat the Ottomans. Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Bulgaria agreed on a joint attack. Division of the Ottoman lands could come after victory.

Balkan nationalist historians have depicted the Balkan Wars as wars of liberation for the Christians who remained in Ottoman Europe. In fact, judged by population numbers, none of them deserved to conquer Ottoman Europe, because the majority of the population was Muslim, predominantly Turkish in the East and Albanian in the West.

Population of Ottoman Europe in 1911

Muslim	3,242,000	51%
Greek	1,558,000	25%
Bulgarian	1,220,000	19%
Other	333,000	5%
Total	6,353,000	

The leaders and nationalist intellectuals of each of the Balkan Christian peoples espoused a “racial” concept of nationalism. They defined themselves as separate “races,” different than the other Balkan Christians and definitely different than the Turkish “race.” (Such beliefs were common all over Europe at the time.) Part of their national mythology was that their races had been deprived of their rightful place by the Turks, whose race belonged in Central Asia. Each nation resolved to take what they believed to be rightfully theirs. The complexion of the population of the lands they claimed was unimportant. For example, Serbs claimed Kosovo as their ancestral homeland. Their loss at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 was still commemorated and mourned five centuries later. The presence of a large Albanian majority in Kosovo was irrelevant to Serbian plans to take Kosovo.

The First Balkan War began on October 22, 1912. Ottoman forces in Europe were divided between Macedonia and Thrace. Unable to concentrate their forces, they were swiftly defeated by both the Bulgarians and the Serbs. The Ottomans managed to hold the line in Western Thrace, keeping the Bulgarians from Istanbul. When the Balkan allies fell out and fought each other in the Second Balkan War, the Ottomans regained Western Thrace and its main city, Edirne, but the rest of Ottoman Europe was lost.

For the Ottomans, the sensible military strategy would have been to withdraw their forces from Macedonia, concentrate them in Thrace, and defeat the Bulgarians. They then could have turned to fight the others. One of the reasons they could not do that was the need to try to protect the Muslim population of Macedonia, a futile effort.

Mortality

Unique among the examples of forced migration of Ottoman Muslims, the primary causes of death among the Balkan Wars refugees were not disease and starvation, although these were rampant. There was dysentery, typhus, cholera, and typhoid among the refugees. Muslims whose farms were destroyed and sheep stolen starved. However, the primary cause of the mortality of the Balkan Muslims was outright murder.

Those who murdered the Muslims were often *komitajis*, joined by local Christians. The komitajis were partisan guerillas, seasoned fighters who had fought against the Ottomans and against members of other ethnic groups for decades. Usually mounted, they rode ahead of armies, harrying retreating Ottoman soldiers and attacking Muslim civilians. British consuls and Ottoman officials reported extensively on their actions: They entered defenceless villages, killed men, often raped women, and pillaged. Komitajis rode from village to village, killing and plundering. Troops of the Allies were also not innocent of barbarities. Serbian, Montenegrin, and Bulgaria troops, in particular, massacred Muslims in great numbers. Towns and villages that surrendered to them were often destroyed, all the inhabitants killed. European observers reported that the Bulgarian Army left a swath of death and destruction as they passed through Thrace, killing an estimated 200,000, mainly Turks, but also

Greeks, allies whom the Bulgarians treated as enemies. The Montenegrin Army, joined by Serbian units, laid waste to Northern Albania, not only killing but destroying all they found, even cutting down trees.

Ottoman officials and Muslim leaders were routinely killed by the invaders. The Muslims were thus deliberately robbed of leadership. It did Ottoman soldiers little good to surrender; they were often tortured and killed. When the Bulgarians took Edirne, for example, Ottoman soldiers were placed on an island without food or water and starved to death. (Note that the figures given below for mortality and migration are mainly for civilians. They do not include most of the deaths in the military, most of whom came from outside the Balkans.)

Refugees

(Map 12) Understandably, Muslim villagers fled their homes soon after the war began. They knew from the experience of the 1877-78 War what awaited them. The speed of the Ottoman defeat contributed greatly to the suffering of the Muslim refugees. Slow-moving columns of refugees, many of whom at first tried to take their farm animals with them, were overtaken by the Allies' armies. Refugees were often driven before the army of one conqueror only to pass into the hands of another. Refugees from Macedonia might pass the regions controlled by Serbs, Bulgarians, and/or Greeks. They had no protection from the soldiers or the komitacis who attacked them on the roads. The refugee columns were defenseless against them. The luckier refugees were only beaten and robbed. All too often, refugees were massacred.

Despite all, hundreds of thousands of Muslims did manage to escape. Many refugees from Thrace were able to pass through the Ottoman Army's defensive positions in advance of the Bulgarians. Those refugees from Macedonia who were lucky enough to reach Salonica found relatively safe refuge. Boats organized by Muslim charities and the khedive of Egypt took many to İzmir and elsewhere in the Empire. Some were taken by boat from Cavalla before Bulgarian komitajis and the Bulgarian Army sacked the city and surroundings, killing thousands. After the wars, the Greek government organized convoys to remove those remaining in Salonica to Anatolia. The Greeks had no wish for them to remain.

Like the refugees of the 1877-78 War, after the wars many attempted to leave safe havens and return to their homes. Others still survived, but had been unable to make it to the coasts or to the Ottoman lines in Thrace. These had no choice but to try to return home. Few survived. They were robbed and murdered on the roads. If they survived their journeys, they found their homes and farms occupied. The new authorities were hostile, and officials even organized massacres.

Christians

Although the Balkan Muslims undoubtedly would have wished to take their revenge on their Christian oppressors, they seldom had the opportunity to do so. Only in Eastern Thrace were there Muslim massacres of Christians. When the Ottoman Army retook Eastern Thrace, refugees from the region returned and attacked Christians. Approximately 5% of the Greek population and half the Bulgarians fled.

The Christians who suffered the most were Bulgarians. They were the victims of their fellow Christians when Greeks and Serbians defeated the Bulgarians in the Second Balkan War. Approximately 100,000 Bulgarians from Macedonia and Thrace became refugees in Bulgaria. An unknown number died.

Jews

The Jews shared in the suffering of the Muslims. Partly this was a reaction to the fact that the Jews were the most loyal of Ottoman subjects. Partly it was the result of traditions of anti-Semitism among Slavic peoples. A desire to steal what the Jews had may have played an important part in the attacks on them, as it was with attacks on Muslims. Pillage of Jewish property was widely reported. Hatred of all non-Christians cannot be discounted as a motive. Mosques and synagogues, symbols of non-Christian religion, were both destroyed all over the Balkans.

Jews suffered the same attacks and forced migration as the Muslims. Their mortality was only less because they were concentrated in major cities where mortality for all was lower. This accounts for the much greater number of Jews who were gone from the Serbian conquest; it was much farther from the Aegean coast.

The Jewish population in the area of the Bulgarian conquest diminished by 24%, in the Greek conquest by 13%, in the Serbian conquest by 38%. As years went on, the Jewish population further diminished. Salonica, a center of Jewish life and culture once known as "the most Jewish city in the world," was to lose much of its Jewish population. Hitler was later to end the Jewish presence completely.

Muslim Mortality and Migration

By the end of World War I and the Turkish-Greek War that followed, only 124,000 of the original 746,000 Muslims who had lived in the area of the Greek conquest remained (17%, which includes the Greek-Turkish population exchange, See Lesson 11.). 179,000 of the original 328,000 Muslims remained in the Bulgarian conquest (55%), 566,000 of the original 1,241,000 in the Serbian/Montenegrin conquest (46%). 813,000 were refugees in the Ottoman Empire, later the Turkish Republic. 632,000 (27%) had died, one of the worst disasters every visited on a people. And many of the refugees who survived were again to suffer alongside their fellow Muslims in the wars that were to come

The makeup of populations of the countries of Southeastern Europe was irrevocably changed by the Balkan Wars (Map 5). Where there had been Muslim majorities, the lands were predominantly Christian. Only Albania and Eastern Thrace retained their Muslim majorities, and much of the land that had been majority Albanian was now in Greece and Serbia. Parts of the new states still had Muslim majorities—Kosovo, Western Thrace, and Northeastern Bulgaria. But what had been a Muslim land was gone.

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Questions

What part did irredentism (the belief that what was thought to belong to a nation, no matter its population, should be regained) play in the Balkan Wars?

What part did ideas of national history play?

Given the movement of peoples over the centuries, could the Balkan lands be considered to inherently belong to any one people?

How did the mortality and migration in the Balkan Wars compare to those of the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War?

What could the Ottoman Government have done, if anything, to reduce the carnage?

What were the implications of the Balkan Wars for others who planned to defeat the Ottomans?

Why were the Jews and the Turks tied together in their own minds and in the minds of the Balkan Christians?

8. Prelude to World War I

Destitution and Disorder in Eastern Anatolia

For most of the time of Ottoman rule in Eastern Anatolia (Map 7), the government was more a referee than a commander. Ottoman soldiers garrisoned cities and protected borders and trade routes. Ottoman governors attempted to collect taxes, usually unsuccessfully. The main function of government in the Ottoman East was to keep the peace by mediating among local powers. The most important of these were Kurdish tribes—nomadic and semi-nomadic confederations who recognized no state authority unless forced to do so. Left on their own, the tribes would engage in constant conflict, attacking other tribes and stealing from each other, from the settled, and from merchant caravans. The tribes were not naturally murderous; sheep-stealing was common, atrocity was not. Nevertheless, they were a disruptive element, damaging both commerce and agriculture.

When it was strong, the Ottoman government used its armed forces to preserve the peace in the East. It did not attempt the impossible task of destroying the tribes' power. Instead, the army protected merchant caravans and towns and intervened when conflicts between tribal chiefs escalated. No chief was allowed to amass enough power to become independent. Ottoman forces were always strong enough to defeat any one tribe or confederation, because, even had some wished to be free of Ottoman rule, the tribes were never able to unite. At the same time, the tribes cannot be said to have been completely disloyal subjects: Although some Kurds belonged to heterodox sects, most Kurdish tribes were loyal to Islam. Some revered the image of the sultan/caliph. None, however, respected the governors or tax-collectors. (It should be noted that the situation of most Kurds—urban dwellers and settled farmers—was much different than that of the tribes. The settled, whether urban or rural, always preferred peace.)

The situation in Eastern Anatolia changed in the nineteenth century, when the central government began to assert its control. Reform of the government and especially the military allowed the state to expand its rule. With increased government power came the tax collector. Major tribal revolts were put down. Before the 1877-78 war (Map 9), on the whole, the region became more peaceful.

The new regime in the East depended on military force. The war (Maps 10, 11) greatly diminished this. Much of the army had been destroyed, and the rest was in disarray. Financial losses in the war, the loss of productive provinces, and onerous indemnities forced on the Ottomans by the Russians greatly weakened the Ottoman government. The forces that had been held in check quickly reasserted themselves. Not until the government of sultan Abdülhamit II began to reassert control in the 1890s was the situation to greatly improve.

The leaders of Kurdish tribes could see that they were losing their positions and authority when the government began to reassert governmental control in the East. The government unquestionably favored the settled population. The settled paid taxes and were felt to be less likely to revolt. (For the Muslims, this was true.) Ironically, just as conditions improved, Armenian rebels and their European supporters began a campaign against Ottoman rule.

Population of the Six Provinces Claimed for an Armenia (Map 13)

Province	Muslim		Armenian		Other		Total
Sivas	1,196,300	81%	182,912	12%	93,626	6%	1,472,838
Bitlis	408,703	67%	191,156	31%	11,532	2%	611,391
Mamuretülaziz	564,164	83%	111,043	16%	5,034	1%	680,241
Diyarbakır	598,985	79%	89,131	12%	66,335	9%	754,451
Van	313,322	61%	130,500	26%	65,975	13%	509,797
Erzurum	804,388	83%	163,218	17%	6,590	1%	974,196
Total	3,885,862	78%	867,960	17%	249,092	5%	5,002,914

Encouraging Rebellion

Ottoman loss in the 1877-78 war encouraged those who would further dismember the Ottoman Empire. In particular, rebel nationalists in Macedonia and Eastern Anatolia were to organize and take up arms. Unable themselves to defeat the Ottomans, they were to rely on Europeans to gain their ends.

All the settled people of the East, Christian and Muslim alike, suffered from the disorder after the war. A great famine that reigned from 1878-81 deepened their suffering. The Muslims could do nothing but hope for a return of government-ordered peace and security. Most Armenians could only hope for the same, but many took the path of rebellion.

Armenian revolutionary parties, the Hunchaks (founded by Russian students in 1887 in Geneva, Switzerland) and the Dashnaks (founded in Russian Tiflis in 1892) were the product of Armenian nationalism and the climate of revolutionary philosophy in Russia. Unable to stand against the Russian state, the Armenian revolutionaries focused on the Ottoman Empire, where the state's weakness gave them a greater chance of success. Both parties avowedly depended on European, especially Russian and British, intervention in the Ottoman Empire. Their model was the successful rebellion in Bulgaria.

The Hunchak plan was to attack Muslims and draw reprisals on Armenians—a cold-blooded, pragmatic nationalism. They knew that Muslim attacks on Armenians would be widely reported in Europe, not the rebel Armenian attacks on Muslims. The Europeans would then, it was expected, force the Ottomans to create a separate Armenia to protect the Armenians. In the 1890s, the Hunchaks attacked across Eastern and Central Anatolia. Their attacks were highly prominent: firing into crowds gathered for Friday prayer at mosques and markets and attempting to seize Sasun, Zeytun, and Van. The Hunchak attacks did indeed draw reprisals and the expected European and American press reports of Armenian travail, but the Europeans failed to act out of fear that Russia would be the real beneficiary.

The Dashnak Party was more successful. At first it attempted to follow the Hunchak plan, organizing very public actions, such as the attempted assassination of the sultan, the takeover of the Ottoman Bank and subsequent Armenian-Muslim conflict in Istanbul. As they had with the Hunchaks, such actions failed to draw in the Europeans. The Dashnaks then began a policy of slow development, taking over the Armenian people and Armenian institutions of the East. Their fights were confined to small battles, mainly against Kurds, in Eastern Anatolia.

Kurds were unquestionably viewed as the enemy by the Armenians, often with good cause. (The important distinction between settled Kurds and Kurdish tribes was not considered. In fact, not all tribes were malefactors, and the guilty tribes oppressed Kurds and Armenians in equal measure.) Dashnak policy was to attack Kurds. Dashnak sources reported more than 100 battles, including major attacks on Kurdish tribes, between 1890 and 1908. This allowed them to portray themselves as the champions of the Armenian people, but it turned the Kurds into implacable enemies.

Merchants and churchmen might have been expected to oppose the Dashnaks, whose doctrine was avowedly communistic and atheistic. Their voices were silenced through terrorism and assassination. Armenians who dared to serve in the Ottoman governments of Eastern provinces were also assassinated. Bishops, abbots, and priests were killed and replaced by others sympathetic to the rebellion.

The Ottoman government would have been able to stop the Armenian rebellion. If it had used the harsh methods employed by the Europeans in their colonies, it would have swiftly dealt with the rebels. The government actually attempted to use more legal methods, apprehending rebels and those who spread sedition, trying them in courts. But the government was never allowed to fully use even legal means. Always fearful of invasion and seizure of the Empire, the Ottomans were forced by the Europeans, particularly the British, to treat the Armenians with great leniency, granting amnesties again and again to rebels, even to convicted rebel murderers. The effect was to embolden the rebels and draw more adherents to their cause.

The Communities Fatally Divided

Muslims and Armenians had begun to be disastrously drawn apart in the Russian conquests of the early nineteenth century. The wedge between them had become greater in the 1877-78 war. Armenians had come to rely on the Russians, Muslims to view Armenians as the allies of their arch enemy, Russia. But the effect of this history might not have led to terminal forced migration and bloodshed. Despite the presence of refugees among them, local Muslims far from the Russian border might not have believed the disaster would ever come to them.

The Armenian rebellion in Anatolia brought intercommunal conflict closer to home. Those believed to be the friends of the Russians were attacking all over the East. Muslim tribes were battling with and killing Armenian rebels. The gap between the communities widened.

Most Armenians surely had no desire for revolution and war. It seemed to be clear, however, that the Ottoman Empire was doomed. It had, after all, been defeated by the Russians in the past wars. The Russians could be expected to continue their conquests soon. The Ottomans had lost the Balkan Wars. They seemed to be greatly weakened, unable to stand against the expected Russian invasion. Common sense seemed to indicate that it was better to stand with those who were expected to win. British consular observers reported that the Armenians of the East had become committed to the Russians.

The Foundations of the Coming Intercommunal War

Muslims and Armenians in Eastern Anatolia might hope that peace would endure, but the signs were against it:

- Armenian and Muslim communities had been driven apart by Russian policies.
- The Russians were expected to invade Eastern Anatolia. The Ottomans were expected to lose.
- The Armenians of the East would ally themselves with the Russians.
- Muslims could expect the treatment from the Russians that had been central to their past conquests.
- If war came, both Muslims and Armenians could expect that they would have to fight, if only in self-defense.
- When war came, the worst mortality and forced migration of both the Armenians and the Muslims would ensue.

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Questions

Looking at the nineteenth century history of the Ottoman Empire, would an observer have believed the Empire could long survive?

How did the Kurdish tribes contribute to the division and animosity between the Muslims and the Armenians?

How would the demography of the Ottoman eastern provinces affect the creation of an Armenia?

Consider the effect of the creation of Bulgaria on the Armenian rebels. Were they justified in believing that they would have similar success? What were the political and demographic differences between the two rebellions?

Did past history and rebellion make intercommunal conflict in World War I inevitable?

Was the Armenian rebellion indigenous to the Ottoman Empire, imported from Russia, or both?

9. European Interference and Intervention

The Europeans who were most responsible for the tragedy of the Balkan and Anatolian Muslims were obviously the Russians. It would not be too much to state that without Russian intervention none of the losses described in these lessons would have occurred. There were other Europeans, however, who contributed to the Muslims losses. They did this through inaction in the face of Muslim suffering, deception, and political pressure on the Ottomans. Primary among them were the British.

The British and the Muslims

It is often said, quite wrongly, that the British were the friends of the Ottomans. The British taking the side of the Ottomans in the Crimean War is often cited as an example of this. Disraeli's efforts at the Congress of Berlin to deny the Russians all they had demanded from the Ottoman Empire after the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War is given as another example. Both are deceptive examples. The British actually acted completely out of their own interests, not any desire to aid the Ottomans. In both cases they feared the aggrandizement of Russia and an upset of the balance of power in Europe. It would be understandable if British policy toward the Ottoman Empire were driven solely by self-interest. After all, as Charles de Gaulle famously and accurately stated, "No nation has friends, only interests." However, the British antipathy toward the Ottomans went beyond self-interest. The British attitude to Turks was rooted in prejudice and domestic politics.

The British Propaganda Organizations

In any democracy, politicians are constrained to follow the wishes and opinions of the public. Only in rare cases can great statesmen ignore public opinion and do what they believe to be morally correct. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the times of the Muslims' travail, the British had no such great statesmen. They were greatly affected by popular feeling against Muslims and, in particular, Turks. It was easy for them to conform to public opinion, because they themselves agreed with the public.

The British public was unable to learn anything good of the Ottomans. The only story they read in the press or heard from politicians and preachers was directed against the Turks: Three prominent organizations in Britain maintained a steady propaganda against the Turks-- the Anglo-Armenian Association, the Balkan Committee, and the British Armenian Committee. All were dominated by members of the Liberal Party and religious leaders. As the organizations attracted public attention, the organizers were joined by mayors of towns, members of Parliament, literary figures, and government officials.

The weapons of the organizations were public meetings and press releases. The organizations gave the press heart-rending stories of Turkish evil, using all the tools of what has come to be called "yellow journalism." Stories of rape and mutilation of women and attacks on children were prominent. Claims now are seen to be absurd were standard: Tens of thousands of Christians had been killed in each of what were actually small towns. The Muslims would gladly accept Christian rule. "Any outrage committed by a Turks against a Christian goes unpunished." All attacks on Christians were orchestrated by the sultan. Christian groups might be attacking each other (a rare truth), but it was all the fault of the Ottomans; if the Ottoman government were removed, all would live in peace.

Mass meetings were the theater and public education of the day. The organizations gave such meetings to audiences in large cities and small. The meetings featured leaders of the propaganda organizations, Dukes and other lords, politicians, and clergy. The claims of the organization were intemperate, often outrageously so: Turks were accused of mass rape, slaughter of innocents. At one meeting, the president of the Anglo-Armenian Association, Stevenson, MP, told the audience, "The Turk had never done anything good, or had made the slightest improvement, except under the compulsion of one or more Powers." A speaker at another declared that Ottoman law forced Christian women to be "at the disposal" of Turks sexually. Ex-prime minister Gladstone delivered a speech to the Anglo-Armenian Association in which he called Turkey "the scourge of the world," "a disgrace to civilization at large," and "a curse to mankind."

The organizations did not hesitate to call upon religious sentiment. They stressed what they described as "common Christianity," shared by the Europeans and the Ottoman Christians. Most avoided mentioning the Jews, but some attacked them as "stubbornly Turcophile," and repeated the common litany of ant-Semitism. Christians, they stated, should never be ruled by non-Christians.

Leaders of both the Anglican and Nonconformist churches were prominent on the governing boards and the platforms of the public meetings of the organizations. Bishops, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, were

prominent supporters. Bishops and clergy were prominent speakers at public meetings called to excoriate the Turks. In fact, men of religion were among the most unrestrained in their attacks on the Turks: They described the Turkish government as, "a blight and a curse," a "despotism" that massacred its Christian peoples, and "an oppression" that must be ended. Turks exhibited a "cold-blooded fanaticism," committing "every kind of outrage to life, liberty, religion, and the honour of women" and "outrage, torture, and murder of [the] defenceless." Religious leaders stressed that the Turks were enemies of Christians who intended to extirpate Christianity in their domains. Called upon their leaders to do so, ministers in churches throughout Britain gave sermons against the Turks.

The solution offered by the propaganda organizations and the clergy was always the same—Ottoman rule was to be ended and Christian governors put in charge. The propagandists, including the clergy, called for Europeans to intervene militarily. Many called for the destruction of the Ottoman Empire by force.

The effect of the propaganda against the Turks cannot be overstated. Newspapers printed the press releases of the organizations verbatim. Hundreds of articles described in detail the public meetings of the organizations. For example, *The Times* printed 404 articles and letters on the topic "Anglo-Armenian Association." The British Library's British Newspaper Archive, mainly a collection of provincial newspapers, listed a staggering 1,196 entries on the Association, almost all of them actual articles. Public meetings on the iniquities of the Turks filled. Those meetings held in large halls routinely attracted thousands. The Balkan Committee organized 300 public meetings in 1903 alone.

Anti-Turkish propaganda was all the more effective because no counter-balancing views were seen. Even had they wished to do so, newspaper editors knew that nothing good said of the Turks would be accepted. There were very few Turks in Britain or Western Europe. The only ones to defend the Ottomans were Ottoman ambassadors. Their complaints, seldom seen in the press, were ignored, overwhelmed by anti-Turkish sentiment.

Politicians

Disraeli's Conservatives may not have been truly concerned with the welfare of Ottoman Muslims, but Disraeli did inadvertently benefit the Muslims of Europe by opposing Russian plans for Ottoman Europe. Because of the Congress of Berlin, some of the Muslims were able to return to their homes, at least for a while. In response, he and his party were effectively tarred by the Liberal opposition as lovers of the Turks.

It was quite different with the opposition to the Conservatives, the Liberals. The longtime leader and guide of the Liberal Party, William Ewart Gladstone, was a steadfast enemy of the Turks. Part of his opposition to the Ottomans was political: Conservatives could be pilloried as friends to the unpopular Turks, advancing the Liberal cause. But much of Gladstone's impetus was religious. A staunch defender of Christianity and Christians in all things, he set an anti-Turkish policy that was to remain with the Liberals until after World War I. The Liberal prime ministers Lord Roseberry (1894-5), Henry Campbell-Bannerman (1905-08), and Herbert Asquith (1908-16) all made plain their dislike of the Turks.

The Conservatives soon joined the Liberals in their condemnation of the Turks. Conservative Prime Minister Lord Salisbury (1886-92, 1895-02) put an end to even the halfhearted support the Turks had received from the Conservatives under Disraeli. His antipathy derived from his religious convictions, which led to an intolerant view of all non-Christian religions. He once stated that Islam was "capable of the most atrocious perversion and corruption of any religion on the face of the globe." Salisbury's convictions led him to suggest the deposition of sultan Abdülhamit II by the European powers, to be replaced by someone who would do the bidding of Europeans. He suggested forcing the Ottomans to acquiesce to his plans by sending the British fleet to blockade the Bosphorus and the Holy Lands of Mecca and Medina, seizing Ottoman ports, and sending gun boats up the Tigris River in Iraq. Salisbury suggested that the Europeans dissolve the Ottoman Empire and divide its lands among themselves. Those and other plans only were frustrated by the failure of the other Europeans to agree to his plans.

The prime ministers who followed Salisbury in 1902 were content to allow their foreign secretaries deal with the Ottomans. The Conservative, Lord Lansdowne (foreign secretary 1900-05), while less ferocious than Salisbury, attempted to place all of Ottoman Europe in the hands of a European governor and local Christians, a plan once again thwarted by the other powers. His plan was an exact duplicate of that proposed by the Balkan Committee.

British commitment to the balance of power had dictated that the British work to contain Russia, the dominant

land power in Europe. As Germany's power increased, however, the British changed sides, again following the dictates of the balance of power. In 1907, the British allied themselves with Russia, the worst enemy of the Ottomans

Sir Edward Grey, the British Liberal foreign secretary from 1905-16, was a founding member of the Anglo-Armenian Association, a fact that says much of his orientation toward the Turks. As foreign secretary he advocated the use of "coercive measures" to force the Ottomans to name European governors in their provinces, following the suggestions of the propaganda organizations. Like his predecessors, however, he was thwarted by the other powers. The Austrians, in particular, felt that Grey's interference had prevented a settlement to the problems of the Balkans. Grey was more successful in forcing his (and Russia's) will on the Ottomans after most of Ottoman Europe had been lost in the Balkan Wars. There would be no need for a Christian governor in Ottoman Europe, but the Ottomans were forced to accept European governors for Eastern Anatolia. (The scheme began to be implemented, but was cut short by the advent of World War I.)

Ignoring Treaty Commitments

The destruction of the Ottoman Muslims was a direct result of conquest of Ottoman territories. If European promises had been sincere, the history of Muslim suffering would have been quite different. Treaties signed by the European powers were unambiguous in promising the Ottomans would not lose territory: In the Treaty of Paris of 1856, the European powers promised "to respect the independence and the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire" (Article VII.) In a separate treaty signed at the same time, Britain, France, and Austria undertook to defend militarily the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. The promises were ignored when the Russians invaded the Ottoman Empire in 1877. Britain, France, and Germany remained neutral. Austria colluded with the Russian invasion in exchange for Austrian occupation of Bosnia. Nevertheless, the Treaty of Berlin, 1878, once again promised that the (new) Ottoman borders were inviolate.

The Treaty of Berlin also stipulated that Muslim real property in the new states, including the property of refugees who had fled the states, would be guaranteed. If lands were seized, the owners were to be compensated. All "civil and political rights" of Muslims were to be recognized and upheld. This was violated in each of the new states. By ten years after war's end, virtually all the property of Muslims in the Montenegrin, Serbian, and Romanian conquests, and much of the Muslim property in Bulgaria had been either taken illegally or destroyed. In the Serbian, Montenegrin, and Romanian conquests, in particular, the guarantee of Muslim rights was meaningless, because the Muslims were gone.

In violation of the Berlin treaty's stipulations, Greece invaded Ottoman Crete in 1897. The Ottomans declared war and defeated the Greeks. Rather than aiding the Ottomans, the British representative at the peace talks, Ambassador Philip Currie, made sure that the Ottomans would be given little land in reparations. Instead, a Greek prince was made governor of Crete, gaining for the Greeks what they had lost in the war. Crete would later be annexed by the Greek kingdom and its Muslims evicted. Currie declared that no land that had ever become Christian should ever again be Muslim.

In 1908, Bulgaria annexed Eastern Rumelia and Austria annexed Bosnia. Despite their treaty commitments, the British and the other powers did nothing. The commitments were also ignored in 1912 when Italy invaded Ottoman Libya. Rather than even remaining neutral, Britain closed the borders of Egypt (at least nominally part of the Ottoman Empire) to Ottoman troops, making it impossible for the Ottomans to defend Libya. The Ottoman asked the Europeans to honor their commitments when they were attacked in the Balkan Wars. Grey refused, instead blaming the Ottomans and attempting to force the Ottomans to give up what little they retained in Europe to the Bulgarians. The other Europeans refused to allow him to do it, but they gave no other assistance to the Ottomans.

Promises made to the Ottomans were obviously worthless. The effect on the Muslim people was devastating.

Suppressing the Evidence

In none of these wars and annexations did the British or the other Europeans give any consideration to the Muslims who were killed or forced out. Christian suffering had been proclaimed and greatly exaggerated, Muslim suffering ignored. Worse, evidence of the persecution of Muslims was deliberately hidden. The British and French governments refused to publish the reports of their consuls, who detailed the attacks on the Muslims. When asked in Parliament to make public the reports on the Balkan Wars, Grey refused. The British government officially stated it was sure the conquering nations would not engage in "outrages." Not until generations later were the British consular reports on "outrages" against Muslims in 1877-78 and 1912-13

made public, when the archival records were opened. The history of Muslim death and exile only became part of the historical record in the 1990s.

The Other Europeans

It must be said that the other governments of Europe did not publicly share the level of visceral dislike of the Turks shown by the British. Although it had its share of anti-Turkish articles, the European press did not dwell on an anti-Turkish sentiment. Nor did European politicians and rulers allow such sentiment to have much effect on their plans. When it came to the suffering of either the Ottoman Christians or Ottoman Muslims, they simply did not care. The Russians might cite Christian suffering for their attacks in 1877-78 or 1914, but their real reasons were political and military. The Austrians did not seize Bosnia for any interest but their own. Trade concessions and economic control of the Eastern Mediterranean were more important to the French than was any human suffering. Of course, none of this assisted the Ottoman Muslims who were killed or exiled. Indeed, it often contributed to their ruin.

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Questions

What part did the balance of power politics play in European actions (or inactions) in the Ottoman Empire?

Did European treaty promises to the Ottomans mean anything? Can they be compared to promises made to Native Americans in the United States? Put plainly, did the Europeans ever feel obliged to keep promises made to non-Europeans?

How did religious differences affect European, especially British, politicians and the public?

Was there any way for the British public to discover what was actually happening in the Middle East and the Balkans?

How do you think propaganda and the British suppression of evidence shape today's view of the history of the Middle East and the Balkans?

10. World War I.

World War I and the Turkish War of Independence that followed were the bloody culmination of the Ottoman-Russian wars and the end of the great population exchange in the Ottoman East.

The War and the Muslims of the East

The Ottoman Empire entered the war on November 2, 1914. Armenian rebel forces had prepared for war and had committed themselves to the Russian side. Before the war began, young Armenians throughout the eastern provinces had left their homes rather than be conscripted into the Ottoman Army. More than 12,000 Armenians of fighting age went to Russia. Many of these joined the Russian army in Armenian units or as scouts who knew the land the Russians planned to invade. Others stayed behind, organized into guerilla bands.

The deaths and forced migration of Muslims began almost immediately. Even before the war began, Armenian gangs had begun raids on Muslim villages. Once the Russians had taken far northeastern Anatolia (Map 14). Armenian gangs had free reign to terrorize the Muslim Turks and Kurds of the region. They were joined by Cossacks from the Russian forces. An estimated 1,500 Muslims were killed in the environs of Bayazıt city alone. Many more must have been killed in the rest of the occupied zone.

Van Province was the epicenter of Armenian revolt in the Ottoman East. In the first month of the war, November of 1914, Russian troops from Iran seized the Başkale region, south of Van. Russian troops disarmed local Muslims and Armenians began to slaughter the Muslims. In the villages and in the cities of Dir and Başkale there was mass murder and rape. Mosques were destroyed, sometimes first filled with civilians, then burned to the ground. When the Russians retreated in December, the Armenian population fled toward Iran, justifiably fearing reprisals. Armenians destroyed government buildings and houses as they fled. Those Armenians who could not flee or were caught on the roads were killed by returning villagers and Kurdish tribes.

By March, 1915, Armenians in Van Province were in full revolt, attacking Muslim villages with rifles, pistols, and dynamite bombs. Government forces and local villagers responded by destroying villages where Armenians had rebelled. As fighting progressed, Muslim and Armenian villagers who had no wish to fight were nevertheless drawn into intercommunal war. In April, 1915, their numbers inflated by refugees from rural fighting, 30,000 Armenians attacked Ottoman troops, officials, and local Muslims in Van City. The troops were overwhelmed and forced to flee to the city's citadel; the city's Muslims only held a small part of the city. The Muslims who could not escape were killed. The Ottomans detached 6,000 troops from the fight with the Russians, but they were not enough to dislodge the Armenians. The Armenians held the city until they were relieved by invading Russians. In Bitlis, Armenians revolted just before the Russians arrived, murdering all the Muslims who could not escape. The Muslims fled.

Rebel actions in other regions included massacres of Muslims, albeit on a smaller scale. Ottoman officials, gendarmes, and Muslim villagers and city dwellers were killed in major rebellions in Karahisar-ı Şarkı and Zeytun/Maraş. Armenian guerilla bands attacked all over the East.

Refugees

As the Russians advanced, slaughter of Muslim villagers began in earnest. The Russians did not have the manpower to police the hinterlands, and probably had little desire to do so. Armenian gangs again had free reign. As the first Muslim villages were destroyed and their inhabitants killed, villagers throughout Van and Bitlis provinces fled, some to Iran, most west into Anatolia.

The Muslim refugees from Van and Bitlis provinces, most of them Kurds, had to pass through a war zone. Only the small number who managed to accompany retreating Ottoman forces were relatively safe for a while. Others were attacked by Armenian bands and Cossacks on the roads. Once the roads were interdicted by the Cossacks and Armenians, the refugees had no choice but to travel over mountains. Animals and possessions left behind, they had only what food they could carry. Much more than half of the Muslim population of Van and Bitlis must have taken to the road, and this does not count the many killed in their villages before the others left. As in Van and Bitlis, Muslims, mainly Turks, who fled the Russian and Armenian advance in Erzurum Province made up approximately half of the Muslim population.

Refugees were frequently forced to move a number of times, losing members of their groups each time. Some who escaped from Van and Bitlis returned when the Russians were briefly defeated and retreated. They were forced to flee again when the Russians returned, then again when the Russians expanded their conquests into

regions that had offered temporary refuge.

There were few established camps for the refugees. A government refugee commission did what it could to aid the refugees, but there was not enough food and medicine. They died in great numbers. The Ottoman Refugee Ministry recorded or estimated that it had given some sort of assistance to 702,900 refugees by October, 1916. One year later this had risen to 869,000. But these were figures for those who were assisted, not the actual number of refugees, which must have been well over a million. In some areas the numbers were overwhelming. At one time there were an estimated 300,000 Muslim refugees in Sivas province alone.

The Last Days of World War I

The Russians cemented their control over Eastern Anatolia in 1916. Order improved. The worst depredations of Armenians ceased. The Russian Command had realized that Armenian bands, very useful during the conquest, were a liability in lands that the Russians wished to incorporate into their empire. They needed civil order and internal peace. Muslim farmers were needed to sustain the agricultural economy. In addition, the actions of the Armenians had shocked even the Russians, who were appalled by the acts of inhumanity against the Muslims. Acts of the rebel bands were curtailed. Armenian units in the army that had previously acted independently were disbanded. Soldiers were court-martialed for offenses against Muslims. A small number of refugees even returned to Russian-occupied territory.

The peace did not last. Russian power in Eastern Anatolia and the Southern Caucasus disintegrated in the Russian Revolution of 1917. Northeastern Anatolia was left in the hands of Armenians (Map 17). At first, the Armenians were nominally part of the Transcaucasian Republic (1917-18), along with Georgia and Azerbaijan, then they formed an independent Armenian Republic. Authority was in the hands of a new Armenian Army. It was an ill-disciplined force whose main activity seems to have been attacking the Turkish villages that remained. Muslim villagers fled to the mountains. The only ones that could sometimes oppose the Armenians and offer protection to the refugees were Kurdish tribes.

The Ottoman Army took action, attacking into the Northeast. It was the Armenians' turn to flee. They destroyed all they could as they left. Ottoman officers reported scenes of carnage. Those Turks who had been unable to flee to the mountains were killed. Inhabitants of the cities, from which comparatively few had fled, suffered the worst: In Erzincan, for example, the Muslims were burned to death in houses and other buildings. Villagers in the city's surroundings were rounded up, led into the city, and all killed. All the mosques and other Islamic buildings were destroyed, along with an estimated 1,000 houses in the city and countryside. When the Ottoman soldiers arrived, they found 900 bodies stuffed into wells and in the streets. Other cities were much the same, buildings destroyed and inhabitants massacred. In the far Northeast, nearly all the Muslim houses were gone.

The Armenians knew they would never return, so they ruined all they could, leaving returning survivors with nothing. The crops were burned, the trees cut down.

Kars and the Southern Caucasus

At the end of World War I, a British expeditionary force took control of the Kars-Ardahan region that had been part of the Russian Empire after 1878 (Map 11). Even though Muslims outnumbered Armenians two to one, the British gave civil and military control to the Armenians, distributed guns to them, then left. Destruction of Muslim villages and massacres began even before the British left, then intensified when Armenians were in sole control. Murders and rapes were typical of those seen elsewhere. Turks who managed to escape took shelter with Kurdish tribes in the mountains.

In the last act of the great population exchange, Muslim forced migrants from the Southern Caucasus replaced Armenian forced migrants from Anatolia. They fled massacres in Erivan Province, now the Armenian Republic, and Nahçivan. 67% of the Turks who had lived in the Russian Erivan province before World War I were gone at the end of the wars, either dead or forced out. 244,000 Muslim refugees from the Southern Caucasus survived in the Kars province when it was taken by the Turks. They more than took the place of the 80,000 Armenians who had lived in Kars province before the war. The refugees from the Southern Caucasus passed into more massacres in Kars, as seen above.

Armenian Relocation and Mortality

Armenians had begun attacks in Van Province and Cilicia (Map 14), and the Ottoman knew of Armenian plans to aid the Russians and British in invading Anatolia. In reaction, the government decided to relocate Armenians from potential danger zones. Until the relocations had stopped in February, 1916, 556,000 Armenians were sent south to Syria, Palestine, and Iraq. Undoubtedly, many were relocated who were no danger to the war effort, but slightly more than half of the Armenians in the territory under Ottoman Control were not relocated. With the exception of leaders of rebel groups, the Armenians of Istanbul, İzmir, and other major cities were not moved. Those who remained were not seen to be a danger.

The Ottomans did not properly defend all of the transferred Armenians from attacks by tribes, theft by rapacious officials, and hunger on their journeys. They did not have the manpower or the supplies to do so. It has been claimed that the government intended to kill these Armenians, but the facts belie the assertion: The government tried 1,673 for crimes against Armenians; of the cases decided, 10% of the defendants were executed, 90% imprisoned. The government allowed American relief organizations to provide a massive amount of aid to the Armenian, even though the relief organizations only aided Christians, not suffering Muslim refugees. A large majority of the relocated Armenians survived the war, as did nearly all the Armenians of the major cities that were most under government control.

The Armenians who suffered most in the war were those of Van, Bitlis, and Eastern Erzurum provinces—the provinces in which Armenians had first revolted. Most of these were Armenians who fled when the Ottomans briefly retook territory in the East in 1915. The Russians, who wanted the territory for themselves, did not allow them to return, so they starved in the South Caucasus. Armenian sources have estimated that more than 50% of them died. Some survivors must have moved to Eastern Anatolia when it was occupied by the Armenians in 1917. They fled once again when the Ottomans retook the territory. As was true of the native Erzurum Armenians, those who were not able to flee died when returning Muslims took their revenge.

Conclusion

Muslim Population Loss in Eastern Anatolia, 1912- 1922

Province	Before the Wars	After the Wars	Loss
Van*	313,000	119,000	62%
Bitlis*	409,000	239,000	42%
Erzurum*	804,000	556,000	31%
Diyarbakır	599,000	441,000	26%
Mamuretülaziz	564,000	475,000	16%
Sivas	1,196,000	1,016,000	15%

*provinces largely or completely occupied by the Russians and the Armenians
Eastern Anatolia was a ruin. Its population and economy were not to rebound for generations. The population loss was so great as to be inconceivable. How can one imagine the effect on survivors when, as in Van Province, nearly two-thirds were dead?

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Questions

Given their justifiable fear that, if the Russians won World War I, they would next attack the Ottoman Empire, were the Ottomans forced to join the war?

Once the intercommunal war had begun, did the Armenians and Muslims that had no wish to fight have any choice but to take sides?

Were the Ottoman justifications sufficient to transfer Armenians to the South?

The Armenian revolutionaries were self-proclaimed rebels. Can they also be considered legitimate combatants in World War I?

The Muslims of the Kars and Erivan regions had not been enemies of the Russians and Armenians in World War I. Some had even served in the Russian Army. Why were they attacked by Armenians after the war?

How much of the suffering of the Muslims and the Armenians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the result of Russian imperialism?

11. The Turkish War of Independence

The Ottoman Empire surrendered to the Allies (Britain, France, and Italy) on October 30, 1918 and signed the Mudros Armistice with Great Britain. At the war's end, Britain controlled Syria and most of Iraq. According to the terms of the armistice, the Allies were only allowed to occupy more Ottoman land "in the event of any situation arising which threatens the security of the Allies (Article VII) or "In case of disorder in the six Armenian vilayets" (Article XXIV). Neither of these took place, but the Allies still occupied more territory or gave it to their friends, the Greeks and Armenians.

(Map 16) The Italians began their occupation of Southwest Anatolia on April 29, 1919. Their occupation was generally peaceful; the Ottoman civil administration was allowed to continue to function. It was not to be so in the Greek occupation. Despite the fact that all was peaceful and there was no threat to then, the Allies took the forts around İzmir on May 14, 1919, disarming the Ottoman troops. On May 15, they landed a Greek army at İzmir, sanctioned by the Allies at the Paris Peace Conference. Although the peace conference had only granted the *sancak* (sub-province) of İzmir to them, Greek forces immediately occupied the entire Aydın Province and adjacent areas. The Allies acquiesced. On June 22, 1920, the Greeks advanced further into Anatolia, capturing Bursa on July 9.

The Allies, led by the British, greatly aided the Greeks. Again contravening the terms of the armistice, the Allies landed in Istanbul on March 16, 1920. They took control of the capital and the Straits. They not only permitted Greeks to take Eastern Thrace, but gave them military assistance: British ships bombarded the port of Tekirdağ on July 21, 1920 and landed Greek troops. Other areas on the Sea of Marmara, originally occupied by the Allies, were also given to the Greeks. These took control of all Thrace up to the line of Allied occupation around Istanbul. In July, 1920, the British took the İzmit peninsula, ultimately giving it to the Greeks in October. The Turks were at war with the Allies, not only the Greeks.

Massacre of Turks

The record of the evils visited on the Turkish population of Western Anatolia and Thrace is complete and damning. It does not rest only on Turkish reports. Under the terms of the armistice, the British sent "control officers" throughout the region. These reported the murder and despoliation of the Turks in great detail. (The British refused to publish the reports, but they are to be found in their archives.)

The murders of 700-800 Turks began in and around İzmir on the first day of the Greek invasion. There was looting of Muslim property by local Greeks and the Greek Army. As the Greek Army expanded its rule, the massacres continued. In the city of Aydın, for example, Greeks burned down the Muslim quarter, mounted machine guns on rooftops, and killed the Turks as they fled. 2,000 Turks of the city were killed. Turks in other cities endured similar attacks: In Menemen, the Greeks killed Turkish officials and soldiers, pillaged and destroyed Turkish houses, and killed approximately 2,000 in the city and its environs. Greek troops that landed at Dikili burned the Turkish villages on their line of March, killing the Turks who could not escape. In general, almost all the Turkish villages on the Greek line of March were destroyed. Those inhabitants who were caught by the Greeks were killed.

As had been the case in the Balkan Wars, much of the pillage and murder of Muslims was done by irregular forces—bands of local Greeks and Armenians. These were often armed by the Greek Army, which even distributed Greek uniforms to the partisans. Much of the attacks on Turks in the countryside were made by these bands. They functioned as raiders for the Greek Army, but most of their activities were attacks on Turkish villages. In addition to murder and plunder, rape and the abduction of women were common. A British commission reported that there was a systematic Greek plan to eradicate the Turkish presence in the Greek-occupied territory, what the commission called, "the extinction of the Moslem population." The agents were the Greek and Armenian bands, sometimes aided by Greek regular troops. The plan was directed by Greek officials.

The Greek intention to rob the Turks of effective leadership was obvious. When a city was occupied, the first to be led off to die were officials and religious leaders. Once a region was occupied by the Greek Army, leaders of secondary cities and even villages were also killed.

The Greek actions against the Muslims appalled even the Allies who had brought them to Anatolia. Two Allied commissions investigated the Greek invasion. Both found the Greeks guilty of massacre and destruction. (Except for a highly redacted summary of one, the British refused to publish the reports.)

The Turkish Nationalist Reaction

How the Turks might have reacted if the Greeks had approached their occupation differently will never be known. They would surely never happily accepted Greek rule. They had been defeated in a war in which they had lost much, however, and might have been resigned to further loss. As it was, the Turks were left with no choice but to oppose the Greeks. If the Greeks remained, the Turks would be expelled or would die. Once their villages had been destroyed and their friends killed, the Turks could only have hated the invaders and resolved on revenge. Ottoman soldiers and officials might have followed the orders of the Allied-occupied quisling government in Istanbul, and cooperated with the Greeks, but soldiers and officials that had dutifully surrendered had been killed. Generally pacific city dwellers and merchants might have continued their lives and worked under a decent government, but their shops and homes were destroyed. There was no possible way for Turkish villagers, city inhabitants, officials, or soldiers to cooperate with the Greeks. Their only recourse was to resist.

The Greek invaders could only have seen the deaths and expulsion of the Muslims as a political necessity. Muslim Turks were three-fourths of the population of the region coveted by the Greeks. If the Greeks were ever to safely rule, they must be rid of the Turks. That was the plan that had worked effectively in the Balkans.

The Turkish struggle against the Greeks began with the organization of small resistance groups. These offered some protection to villages and refugees from Greek and Armenian bands. They could not stand against the Greek regular army. Some units of the Ottoman Army were able to defeat the Greeks in small battles, but they too could never defeat the entire Greek Army. Only if all the forces of Turkish resistance united could they defeat the Greeks.

The catalyst that united the Greeks was Mustafa Kemal Paşa, the most successful of the Turkish generals in World War I. Mustafa Kemal refused the orders of the Istanbul government, rightly considering it a tool of the Allies. He began to organize the disparate units of the Ottoman Army, local resistance units, and politicians into an effective opposition to the Greeks. A new capital was created in Ankara and a new Turkish parliament and government formed, led by Mustafa Kemal. Friendly officials in Istanbul facilitated smuggling of arms from government armories. Telegraph operators spied on the British and Greeks. Turks from all over Anatolia joined the cause, known as the Turkish Nationalists.

Mustafa Kemal's lieutenant, İsmail Paşa, won victories over the Greeks early in 1921, but the Greeks regrouped and a new Greek offensive threatened the Nationalist capital at Ankara. Mustafa Kemal took personal command of the Nationalist Army. In the great battles at the Sakarya River in September, 1921, the Turks first held, then defeated the Greeks. After a pause to recuperate, the Turks attacked on a wide front in August, 1922. They defeated the Greeks once again. In two weeks Turkish forces had reached İzmir. On September 9-11, they took the city.

The Greek retreat soon became a rout. Greek soldiers and civilians fled to ports to be taken to Greece. İzmir filled with Greek and Armenian refugees. Most were evacuated by Allied ships. Although the Nationalist Army generally kept good order, returning Turkish villagers took their revenge on Greeks who could not escape. İzmir burned. (Although Greeks and others claimed that the Turks set fire to the city, it makes no sense that the Turks would destroy the city they had just retaken. Most likely, multiple fires set by many destroyed the city.)

Turkish forces then moved to the British-occupied Dardanelles. It appeared that war with Britain would result, but the British had no wish to fight another war. The French had already left Cilicia and signed a treaty with the Nationalists. The Greeks retreated from Thrace. After the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Istanbul was evacuated by the Allies and Anatolia and Thrace once again were ruled by Turks.

Forced Migration

Muslims began to flee the Greek Army and the Greek and Armenian bands in the first days of the invasion. More than 20,000 Turks had been driven from İzmir Sancak by July, 1919, 50,000 by August. The flight continued throughout the Greek occupation. Numbers of refugees were never actually counted. British reports from various cities used descriptions such as, "There must be 100,000 refugees." Reports listed tens of thousands of refugees in many locations—60,000 at Soma, 8,000 in Bulgaria, 30,000 from Thrace and more than 75,000 from Anatolia in Istanbul, etc. All told, approximately 1.2 million Turks became refugees.

A large number of the Turkish migrants were refugees a second time. 335,000 Muslims had been settled in Western Anatolia and Eastern Thrace after the Balkan Wars. Less than a decade later they were to become refugees once again. The Turkish refugees passed from one region to another as the Greek Army advanced.

Villagers in the beginning of the invasion went to cities, seeking safety. The safety evaporated when massacres began in the cities. The refugees set out on the road again, their numbers diminished.

Reports of the condition of the refugees indicate great misery among them. In Istanbul, for example, refugees received soup and bread on alternate days. It was hoped that the allocation would be increased to bread every day. (Despite the actions of the British against the Turks, British charities in Istanbul were offering some aid to the Turkish, as well as the Greek and Armenian, refugees.)

By the end of the Greek occupation, the countryside of Southwest Anatolia was largely devoid of Turks. Those who survived were refugees in areas under Turkish control, hiding in places inaccessible to the invaders, or organized into bands that fought the Greeks.

Destruction

Massive of Turkish property accompanied the Greek invasion. The “political” purpose of the destruction of property was the same as it had been in the 1877-78 War and the Balkan Wars—to leave the Muslim refugees with nothing to which to return. Unquestionably, this calculation played a part in the destruction of only the Muslim quarters in cities such as Aydın. However, much of the devastation was done by Greek and Armenian irregular bands that were only marginally under the control of the Greek Command. There was no rational reason for the actions of these bands.

Much property had been spared while the Greeks seemed to be succeeding. They had no desire to rule over a desert. This changed when they were defeated by the Turkish Nationalists. In their retreat, Greek soldiers and civilians destroyed all they could—Greek houses as well as Turkish. Units of the Greek Army were delegated to obliterate everything that was left behind. They used kerosene and dynamite from army stores. An American Consul who toured some of the devastated region reported that 90% of the city of Manisa had been destroyed, 90% of Kasaba, 70% of Alaşehir, 65% of Salahi, etc. He reported, “The burnings of these cities was not desultory, not intermittent, nor accidental, but well planned and thoroughly organized.”

Even worse than the destruction of physical property was the killing of farm animals and cutting down of trees. The retreating Greeks killed all the farm animals in their path and cut down the olive, grape, and nut trees. Homes could be rebuilt, but olive and grape trees took years to grow, if the seed stock was available. It would take many generations of breeding before animal numbers could be replaced. The Greeks had deliberately left the Turks in great poverty.

The defeated Ottomans had been unable to keep a detail record of the destruction of Muslim property in the Balkan Wars, but the victorious Turks were able to do so, comparing Ottoman records from before the wars with the reality in 1922. They recorded in detail the loss of millions of farm animals (134,040 horses, 821,339 goats, 1,770,316 sheep . . .). 141,874 houses had been destroyed, as had all or nearly all the buildings in many cities. The statistics could not have been perfect, but their great number indicates huge loss.

Mortality

1,246,068 of the Turks who had lived in these provinces in the table were gone by the end of the Independence War, 19% of the population had died. The only way to figure mortality is by comparing the population each province before and after the wars. (The “total” figure in the table is the most accurate, because many from Konya must have migrated to other, more fertile provinces. It is impossible to include the numbers from the population exchange—see below-- in the calculations. If they were included, the mortality percentages would have been higher.) The Turkish mortality in Thrace is unknown, because the region was flooded with refugees from Greek-occupied Western Thrace, making it impossible to compare the populations before and after the wars.

Muslim Population Loss in Western Anatolia, 1912- 1922*

Province	Before the Wars	After the Wars	Loss
Aydın	1,888,000	1,401,000	26%
Hüdavendigâr	1,643,000	1,438,000	13%
İzmit	272,000	260,000	4%
Ankara	1,273,000	1,158,000	9%
Konya	1,551,000	1,124,000	28%
Total	6,626,965	5,380,897	19%

*including the population exchange.

Other Mortality and Migration

During the war, all groups fled battlefields. The Turks and Jews were most affected, but Greeks and Armenians went to Istanbul and İzmir in smaller numbers.

The Jews of Anatolia endured the same misery as the Turks, just as they had in the earlier wars. Through death and emigration, the Jewish population of the provinces most affected by the Greek invasion decreased by 55% from 1912 to the 1927 Turkish census. (Many of these had been able to leave before or during World War I.) The figures do not include Jews who came to Western Anatolia during and after the Balkan Wars, so the percentage was actually higher.

Greek mortality was worst in the headlong Greek flight from the Nationalist Army. 1,104,000 Greeks became refugees in Greece. 314,000 Anatolian Greeks died, a figure that does not include the Greek Army. Mortality among the Armenians of the affected region is unknown. After the wars, 45,000 Armenian refugees were recorded in Greece, 30,000 in France, 20,000 in Bulgaria, 35,000 in North America. How many of these were refugees from Thrace and Western Anatolia is also unknown.

Population Exchange

The Turkish and Greek governments agreed that their peoples could not again live in peace. After the hatred caused by the wars, neither side could guarantee the rights, or even the survival, of minorities. The two governments agreed on a population exchange. Except for those in Western Thrace, the Muslims of Greece were deported to Turkey. Except for the Greeks of Istanbul, the Greeks of Turkey were deported to Greece. More than 600 years of coexistence between the two peoples ended forever.

The East

At war's end, in accordance with the terms of the armistice, the Ottoman Army withdrew to roughly the 1878 Russian border. In contravention to the armistice terms, however, the army did not disband. The Kars region was once again occupied by the Armenian Republic. Massacres of the Muslim population began anew. In 1920, the army, now the Turkish Army, attacked. It quickly defeated the Armenians. The subsequent treaty ceded the Kars region to the new Republic. Once again, the Muslims returned to the Kars region. The Armenians once again fled to the Armenian Republic, which became a part of the Soviet Union.

Cilicia

The region of Cilicia (the Adana-Antep Region, Map 14) had been promised to the French in wartime agreements with the British and under the terms of the short-lived Treaty of Sèvres (August 10, 1920) . It was to be part of the French Syrian Mandate. The British, who had occupied the region, turned it over to the French.

The French had limited military resources to occupy their large Syria-Cilicia territory, and the mainly needed what regular French troops were available to control restive Arabs in Syria. The therefore depended on Colonial troops from Africa and the Armenian Legion to control Cilicia. The Armenian Legion had been formed from

Armenians from Anatolia and elsewhere, including those who had escaped from the Ottoman Empire. Nominally under French, the Armenians served in wholly Armenian units over whom their French officers often had little control. They had enrolled with the express of fighting the Turks. In addition to the legionnaires, thousands of Armenians went to French Cilicia from Syria by ship and by land, facilitated at first by the French.

The French found it impossible to restrain the Armenians. The legionnaires so hated Muslims that they attacked French colonial Muslim troops. Once in Cilicia they began to pillage and destroy Muslim villages, driving the Muslims into the mountains. Murders of Muslims became common. Newly arrived Armenian civilians joined into bands that raided and killed. Muslim complaints to the French went unanswered. The French general Hamelin stated that French authorities were unable to respond to Muslim complaints: "complaints, unfortunately most often well-founded, against all sorts of [Armenian] excesses against the population (robbery, armed attacks, pillaging, murders)."

The French were dismayed. They needed peace in their new conquests. The problem came to a head in February 16, 1919, when Armenian legionnaires rioted in İskenderun. They burned and plundered Muslim homes, attacked French Muslim soldiers, and refused to accept military discipline. The Armenian Legion was disbanded, but many of the legionnaires remained in Cilicia, joining the armed bands that were attacking the Muslims.

As it had in Western Anatolia, violence against the Turks brought a response. Local Turks began to join in guerilla units that defended villages and attacked the Armenians and the French. Late in 1919 they were joined by Nationalist soldiers, who brought weapons for the defense and formed a militia. The Turks took the offensive, at first engaging in guerilla attacks, then driving the enemy from cities on the periphery of French control. French units were captured. The French brokered a truce, but the truce was not accepted by the Armenians. Armenians began new massacres, which included burning down the Muslim quarter of the main city, Adana. Finally, the French capitulated. They disarmed Armenian units, arrested Armenian leaders, and signed a treaty ceding Cilicia to the Turks. When the French left, the Armenian population followed them.

Conclusion

The Turkish War of Independence was the final act in the history of forced migration and mortality of the Muslims of the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Caucasus. Much had changed: Outside of Azerbaijan, Muslims were largely gone from the southern and western Caucasus. Their numbers were much diminished in the Balkans; only Albania and European Turkey remained as countries with Muslim majorities. Greeks and Armenians were gone from the new Turkish Republic. The various peoples of the region had coexisted for many centuries had separated, and great numbers had died. One of history's great disasters.

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Questions

Could the outcome for the Greeks have been different if they had adopted a conciliatory approach toward the Muslims?

In what way was the Greek invasion of Anatolia an extension of the Balkan Wars?

Western Anatolia and Thrace had been ruled by Greeks in the Byzantine Empire, before the arrival of the Turks. How did this affect Greek intentions in 1919? Should it have affected them?

The Europeans, especially the British, violated the terms of the armistice with the Ottomans, as they had violated earlier treaties. What gave the Europeans the right to act as they did in the Ottoman Empire?

Do the events in the Ottoman Empire demonstrate that religious and ethnic minorities, especially in the Middle East and Balkans, cannot live together in peace?

12. Conclusion. Causes, Tactics, Results

Causes

The reasons for the expulsions of Muslims varied by time and place. The imperialist aims of the Russians were different than the nationalist aims of Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, and Armenians.

Imperialism

Imperialism was the driving force behind Russian expansion. Russians conquered peoples of all religious and ethnic groups, whether they be Finnish and Polish Christians or Central Asian and Caucasian Muslims. Imperialism had its own logic. When one territory was taken, the conquerors perceived a threat from adjacent territories, necessitating conquest of them. Imperialists also always desired to have greater empires. There can be no doubt, however, that the Russians treated the Muslims far worse than the Christians in their conquests. Muslims may have been considered a greater threat to imperial rule than Finns or Ukrainians. And Russian prejudice against non-Christians undoubtedly contributed to persecution of Muslims. It is instructive that Russians also engaged in persecution of Jews, when Jews were no threat to the Russian Empire.

Plunder

To take what belongs to others--this was arguably all that was needed for dispossessing Muslims (or anyone else in a similar situation). Poor villagers saw a way to double their farm's size by taking that of another. Farm animals, money, and possessions were temptations that those who were themselves close to the economic edge could not resist. City dwellers could take houses and businesses, supplanting Muslim and Jewish tradesmen or craftsmen. The impulse to profit from the misfortune of others, and to cause that misfortune in order to profit, was human. It was seen in every rioter who broke into a store and every soldier who plundered the losers in a war.

Nationalism.

Those who rebelled against the Ottomans and expelled and murdered Muslims were seldom members of majority communities. Only the Bulgarians can be said to have been the largest part of the land in Bulgaria claimed by Bulgarian nationalists, and they claimed much more that was not majority Bulgarian. Serbs, Greeks, Romanians, and Armenians all demanded land in which they were a minority, not even the largest single group. Nationalism, however, was a thing of the spirit, not of statistical reality. Each national group asserted that the land was theirs by right. Many believed that God had given it to them; others believed that the land was theirs because they were superior to others. All called on history to justify their claims; what their people had once ruled was always theirs. The fact that most of the land in question had been ruled by many peoples over the centuries was ignored.

In many ways, the expulsion of the Muslims was the creation of a demographic reality to match the nationalist belief.

Resentment and Hatred

The Ottoman government had ruled for centuries. In the Ottoman system, one group, Muslims, ruled over the others. In local society, Muslims could be justifiably criticized for asserting superiority over their Christian fellow subjects. True, the rules of the Empire and of Islam guaranteed the continued existence of non-Muslim religions. Christians and Jews even had a great deal of autonomy, and religious separatism was fostered by the Ottoman system. None of this would have obviated the natural tendency to resent rule by others.

The place of hatred in attacks on Muslims cannot be discounted, especially in the Balkans. Nationalists saw Turks as interlopers who had arrived from Asia to seize the rightful lands of Christians, despite the fact that Turks had lived in the Balkans for more than 500 years. While there was much justification in hating Janissaries and some governors, animosity grew to include all Muslims—not only Turks but Bosnians and Albanians (who had been in the Balkans longer than the Slavs).

In Eastern Anatolia, Russian invasion led to resentment and hatred among both the Armenians and the Muslims. Russia was seen as the ally of the Armenians and the oppressor of the Muslims. Muslims and Armenians expected the Russians to conquer the rest of Eastern Anatolia, to the benefit of the Armenians and detriment of the Muslims. The communities were set against each other.

Religion

Each of the churches in the Ottoman Empire--Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike--firmly believed that they were God's children; the others were not. As religious wars throughout the centuries have shown, it is easier to kill and plunder those who are damned as infidels. It was no accident that the Jews suffered death and forced migration alongside the Muslims. They too were "infidels."

The Christian churches in the Balkans and Anatolia were national churches, separated from other Christians. They subscribed to nationalist agendas.

Creating Loyal Populations

Those who were seizing Muslim lands undoubtedly felt that the Muslim inhabitants would remain loyal to the sultan, not to the new regime. There was little chance that the Muslims would ever assimilate. Should war with the Ottoman Empire come, many of the Muslims would act as agents of the enemy. The treatment given to Muslims assured that this was true. After massacres and persecution, the Muslims would never have anything but animosity toward their new rulers. Ridding one's land of all or most of the Muslims insured that the Muslims would never take their revenge.

Tactics

While the causes for attacks on Muslims may have varied, the tactics were nearly always similar. Indeed, the same tactics have been seen in more modern times in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Techniques of Terrorism

The word terrorism has been expanded today to include many forms of irregular warfare, usually violent attacks intended to force governments to change policies (e. g., Al-Qaeda in New York, Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma, bombings in the London Underground). These may or may not fit the more exact definition of the word. Terrorism, in fact, is extortion—the use of violence or the threat of violence to force compliance with the wishes of the terrorist. In the Balkans, Anatolia, and the Caucasus, terrorism was used as a weapon against civilian populations. Murder of civilians and the fear of murder, rape, and pillage terrorized populations, causing them to flee. The intent was always the same—to force out the Muslims and to create "facts on the ground." New lands were to be given compact Christian ethnic majorities through the expulsion of Muslims.

The Russians made effective use of terror techniques in their war with the Caucasian Muslims. Despite a cycle of victories and losses, Muslim fighters had proven to be impossible to conquer in battle. The Russians, therefore, took the war to the villages, relatively unprotected because the fighters had gone to the mountains and forests. Villages were surrounded by troops, and men sent in to rape, murder, and pillage, ultimately killing all but a few. Survivors fled to neighboring villages to warn of what was to come. In the case of the Circassians and Abkhazians, most surrendered and were expelled. Circassia and Abkhazia became Russian and Georgian.

The tactics were to be used in the 1877-78 War, the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the Turkish War of Independence.

"Judicial Terror"

The Muslims of the Crimea and the Balkans were forced to rely on the courts if they were to gain any redress for the theft of property or abuse and murder by local Christians. This was not only futile, but dangerous in itself. Judges appointed by new states were active enemies of the Muslims. The police were among those who stole and oppressed the Muslims. Those who complained to the courts found themselves in jail or worse. Soon, no Muslim went to the courts. Instead they fled.

"Administrative Terror"

In all of the conquered territories, Muslims who remained after the wars or who attempted return to their homes found the machinery of the state turned against them. In the Crimea, Russian officials seized vast lands from Turks (Crimean Tatars). The Tatars were forced to either emigrate or remain on their lands as sharecroppers. They feared that, like other peasants in Russia, they would soon be made serfs. Complaints to judges and administrators went unheard. Those who remained in possession of their lands faced new and exorbitant taxes.

Lands were seized when they could not pay. Pillage and physical attacks by Russian soldiers continued. Faced with an impossible life, the Tatars emigrated *en masse*.

In the Balkans, Muslim property was either taken over by Christians or destroyed. The destruction was sometimes irrational—the sheer joy of watching buildings burn, especially when the properties belonged to those viewed as the hated “other.” Such is seen throughout the history of warfare. The other, more rational, reason for destruction of Muslim property was to ensure that the Muslims could not return. Without their crops, animals, houses, and shops, those who tried to return could not survive. Occupying countries could go to great lengths to accomplish this. For example, in addition to the seizure of property, Montenegrins took all the roofs from Muslim houses. The authorities would not allow Muslims to buy timber. Not able to withstand winter without a roof, the Muslims forsook their farms. The situation in Bulgaria was much the same: Russian soldiers and Bulgarians destroyed Turkish houses. Returning Turks were not allowed to build new houses, and so were forced to leave once again.

In each of the wars, Muslim farms, houses, and shops were occupied by Christians. Even had they wished to do so, it would have been politically impossible for the governments of the new states to return the stolen property. In fact, the new governments had no consideration for the rights of Muslims.

Treaties, such as the Treaty of Berlin, guaranteed the property and civil rights of Muslims in the new states. The Europeans did nothing to enforce them, nor had they probably ever intended to do so.

An Example. The Greeks in Anatolia

The techniques of the Greeks in the Turkish Independence War were a refinement of those found to be effective in the 1877-78 War and the Balkan Wars. They are illustrative of the use of terror to evict populations:

- Ottoman security forces were disarmed and murdered.
- The weapons of the security forces and guns and even military uniforms brought from Greece were distributed to young Greek men.
- Attacks on Turks and Jews began. In the city of İzmir, these began on the first day of the invasion.
- As the Greek forces advanced, Turkish quarters in cities were surrounded, attacked by cannon, machine gun, and rifle fire, and set afire. Turks were shot down as they fled.
- News of the attacks spread quickly as refugees fled the occupied territories. The population fled, ultimately more than a million became refugees.
- The result was a land now mainly Greek in population, whereas Greeks had been only % before the invasion. This remained true until the Turks counter-attacked and the Greeks in turn took flight.

Results

The results of the migration and mortality are best seen graphically (Map 18). The graph compares the losses of the Muslims to some of the worst population calamities in the twentieth century. Barring the Holocaust of the Jews, no people suffered proportionately as much as did the Muslims.

Appendix 1. General Readings

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Appendix 2. Opposing Views

Because this course concentrates on the sufferings of Muslims, the readings are necessarily on that topic. Some of the issues considered are contentious. It would be impossible to list all the works that describe a long history, but these books are representative. Some of them contain extensive bibliographies that will aid further study:

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Appendix 3. Why this History Is So Little Known.

Although it is outside the scope of the history considered here, it is valuable to consider the question of why the sufferings of the Muslims are so little known. The answer is that no one in the past spoke for them, and few speak for them today. The history has been based on the opinions and prejudices of those who resolutely stood against the Turks, particularly British propaganda organizations, newspapers, World War I propagandists, and American missionaries.

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Appendix 4. The Peoples

In the Ottoman Empire, peoples were classified by religion. Because population registration and administrative records were kept by religion, it is often impossible for researchers to separate peoples onto their ethnic groups. For example, in Macedonia, when the Ottomans enumerated Christians they identified them as Greek (Greek Orthodox) or Bulgarian (Bulgarian Orthodox—members of the Bulgarian Exarchate), the latter including both ethnic Bulgarians and Macedonians, and some Macedonians were in the Greek Church. Muslims were labelled as Muslim, whether they were Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Bosnians, or others. Each religious group, called *millet* ("nation"), had a high degree of autonomy, operating its own churches, schools, hospitals, courts, and other institutions. Insofar as it can be known, the primary identification of Ottoman subjects, and often their primary allegiance, was to their religious group.

Nationalism and the concept of race were virtually unknown in the Ottoman Empire until the nineteenth century. Then the European concept of ethnically-based "race" or nation began to spread among Ottoman Christian peoples. It was imported from Europe, spread by missionaries, merchants, and Ottoman subjects who began to travel to Europe and read European literature. Nationalism was also spread by the relative enrichment of Christians. Benefitting from economic contact with Europeans, who traded with Christians, seldom Muslims, and the superior education offered Christians by American and European missionaries, Christian groups developed a sense of superiority and national identification. Nationalism among Muslim peoples had only spread to intellectuals, not the common people, before World War I.

The peoples of the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Balkans are considered here as the Ottomans described and recorded them, by religion.

Muslims

The Muslims of the Middle East and the Balkans were divided into Sunni ("Orthodox") and a number of Shia religious communities. Sunni Muslims were the majority in most of the Ottoman Empire.. The Shia, divided by different beliefs, were a majority in Southern Iraq, and parts of today's Lebanon, Yemen, Coastal Syria, and other smaller areas.

Turks

Before the expulsions from the Crimea and during and after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, Turkish-speakers were a majority in today's Crimea and its hinterlands, Northeastern Greece (Thrace), North-central and Northeastern Bulgaria, Northeastern Romania, and Anatolia (today's Turkey in Asia). After the expulsions, in addition to the Turks of Central Asia, Turks remained predominant in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Northwestern Iran (South Azerbaijan), with large minorities in Bulgaria and Eastern Thrace, and smaller minorities in Romania, Russia, Georgia, and elsewhere in Iran. Most were Sunni Muslims. Azeri Turks were Shia Muslims and spoke a different dialect of Turkish than the Turks of Turkey and the Balkans, who were mainly Sunni Muslims.

Kurds

Kurds, divided by tribal groupings and multiple dialects of Kurdish, lived in what today are Eastern Turkey, West-central Iran, Northern Iraq, and parts of Syria. The majority were Sunni Muslims, although some were Alevis (Shia Muslims) and Yezidis (an ancient religion with similarities to Zoroastrianism).

Arabs

Inhabitants of what today is loosely called the "Arab World." Religiously, the Arabs were divided into Sunnis (the majority) and various Shia groups. Arabs are not much considered in these lessons, because they did not have a large part in the migrations and mortality of the Turks and other more northern Muslims. They were not subjected to large-scale forced migration until more modern times.

Albanians

A majority of the Albanians were Muslims, although there were large Orthodox and Catholic minorities in Albania. Until the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 killed many Albanians or forced them from their lands, the Albanian population was dominant in a region that included today's Northwestern Greece, Western Macedonia, Kosovo, and parts of Montenegro and Serbia.

Bosnian Muslims

The Bosnians were Sunni Muslim Slavic-speakers who dwelled in Bosnia-Herzegovina and nearby areas. They had converted to Islam in Ottoman times.

Circassians and other Caucasian Muslims

The Caucasian Muslims were generally Sunni Muslims, although many had mystical (Sufi) beliefs that might not be acceptable to the strictly orthodox. Those most considered in these lessons included Circassians on the northeast Black Sea region, Abkhazians, to the south of the Circassians, Laz, in the southeast Black Sea region, and smaller groups. All of these groups suffered expulsion by the Russians in the nineteenth century.

Other Muslims

Relatively small but significant populations of Pomaks (Bulgarian-speaking Sunni Muslims) and Roma "Gypsies"). The Ottoman Roma were both Muslim and Christian, both of which often had varying beliefs from those considered orthodox.

Jews

Three broad groups of Jews lived in the Ottoman Empire. One, the so-called Middle Eastern Jews, lived in the Arab World and Iran. Sephardic Jews were the descendants of Jews who came to the Ottoman Empire after being expelled from Spain and Portugal. Ashkenazi Jews, the majority of Jews in the world, were the smallest group of Jews in the Ottoman Empire. Although the Jewish minorities in Palestine, coastal Syria, and Iraq were affected by World War I, they were not the subjects of ethnic cleansing until much later. Other Jews, in the Balkans and Anatolia, definitely suffered because of Balkan anti-Semitism and because they traditionally sided with the Turks.

Christians

The Christians of the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East were not unified. The defense provided by the mountains of the East allowed smaller Christian groups, considered heretical by the Orthodox, to persist in the face of Byzantine persecution. Although the Christians of the Balkans and most of Anatolia had theoretically been under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople since Byzantine times, they were actually divided ethnically. Nevertheless, nearly all the Balkan Christians kept to the religious canons of Orthodoxy.

Greeks

Greeks were a majority in what today are southern and central Greece and the Greek Islands. Greeks also made up sizeable minorities in Ottoman Western Anatolia, Thrace, Northeastern Anatolia, and Istanbul. Smaller Greek communities, primarily of merchants, were found in most Ottoman cities. Greek Orthodoxy traced its origins to early Christianity. The Greek population increased with the incorporation of Ottoman Greeks and expulsion Muslims in the wars and expulsions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Although each bishopric had much independence, the Patriarch of Constantinople was recognized as the titular head of the Greek Orthodox Church. The Ottomans placed the Patriarch and the Greek orthodox bureaucracy in charge of all the Orthodox Christians in the Empire, a situation that lasted until the Balkan Orthodox asserted the autonomy of their churches (see below).

It is important to note that the Ottomans defined peoples by their religion. Many of those styled as "Greek" by the government, therefore, were not ethnically Greek. For example, the Orthodox Arabs of Syria and Palestine were described as Greek.

Romanians

Romanians were an Orthodox people who lived in Moldavia and Wallachia in the Ottoman Empire. Originally Greek Orthodox and under control of the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople, the Romanian Church became autocephalous (self-governing) when Romania became independent in the nineteenth century. The church remains part of the Orthodox community.

Serbs

In Ottoman times, the Serbian population was predominant in Montenegro, Serbia, and adjacent areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. A large Serbian minority lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as did smaller communities in Macedonia and Kosovo. The Serbs were members of the Greek Orthodox Church. However, before the Ottoman conquest the Serbian church had been autocephalous. It retained a great deal of independence. It became autocephalous once again when Serbia became legally independent in the 1878 Treaty of Berlin. The church remains part of the Orthodox community.

Bulgarians

Before the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish War, Bulgarians were the largest population group in what today are After the 1877-78 War and the expulsion of Muslims from the New Bulgarian and Bulgarians from Macedonia, Bulgaria became much more ethnically uniform. Further migration during the Balkan Wars increased the Bulgarian predominance. Under the Ottomans, the Bulgarian Church was ruled by the Greek Orthodox until 1870, when the Ottoman Government officially created an independent church, call the Bulgarian Exarchate, much to the displeasure of the Patriarch of Constantinople. After 1870, those counted as Bulgarian by the Ottomans were members of the Bulgarian Church, not all of whom were ethnically Bulgarian.

Macedonians

Orthodox Christians of Macedonia, an area today divided among Macedonia, Greece, and Bulgaria. Their language was close to Bulgarian, and Bulgarians claimed them. (Recent history has shown that the Macedonians rejected the claim.) Most belonged to the Bulgarian Church, so it is impossible to tell the numbers of the Ottoman Macedonians, because the Ottomans kept population records by religion..

Armenians

The Armenians originally came from Eastern Anatolia, the Southern Caucasus, and parts of Western Iran. In Ottoman times and before, Armenians spread throughout the Middle East and the Caucasus, forming significant communities in cities throughout Eastern and Western Anatolia, Istanbul, and the Southern Caucasus. Armenians were Monophysite Christians, considered to be heretics by both the Greek Orthodox and the Catholics. They formed a completely independent Christian church. In the nineteenth century, many Armenians became Protestants, converted primarily by American missionaries.

Other Christians

Most prominent among the Protestants in the Ottoman Empire were the missionaries sent by American and British missionary organizations. They were mainly successful only in converting Armenians. Most of the Roman (Latin) Catholics were originally foreigners, including missionaries, merchants, and communities of Catholics who had settled in the Empire, often called Levantines. A relatively small number of Ottoman Christians were members of Uniate churches that accepted papal authority, but kept their original rites. The exception was the Maronite Church, dominant in parts of Lebanon. Assyrian Christians and uniate Chaldeans were a significant minority in Southeastern Anatolia and Northern Iraq. In addition, the Ottoman Empire contained small communities that continued to espouse all the various beliefs descended from early religious controversies. None of these Christian groups made up more than a small proportion of the population.

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AUSTRIA - HUNGARY

RUSSIA

17 9 8 Border

Belgrade

Bucharest

Sarajevo

Danub

Niş

ÖTTOMAN
EMPIRE

Varna

BLACK
SEA

Priştina

Sofya

Border

Üsküdar

Manastır

Selanik

Edirne

Istanbul

Yanya

Bursa

Athens

İzmir

ADRIATIC
SEA

MEDITERRANEAN
SEA



Southeastern Europe in 1832



Southeastern Europe in 1876

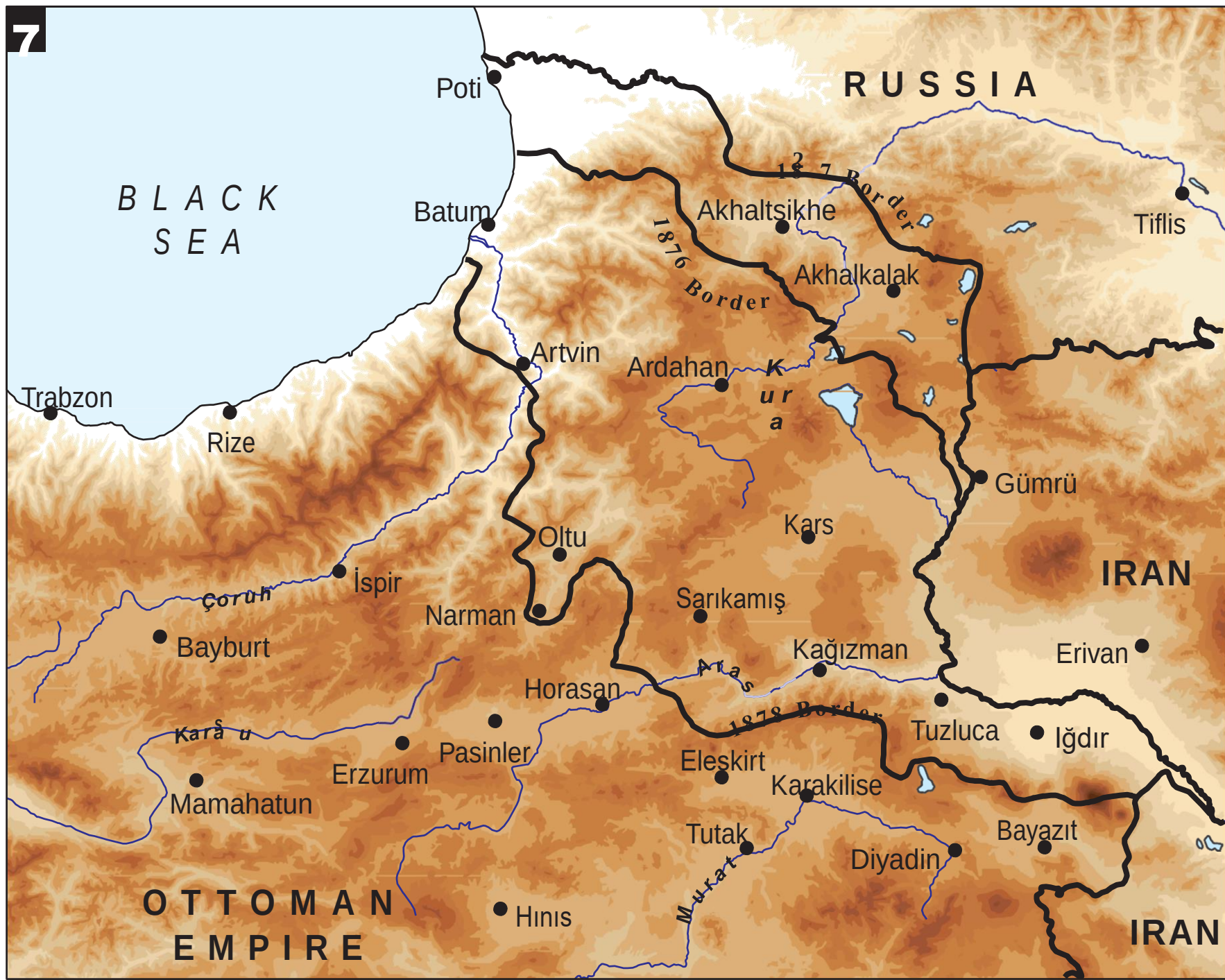


Southeastern Europe in 1878



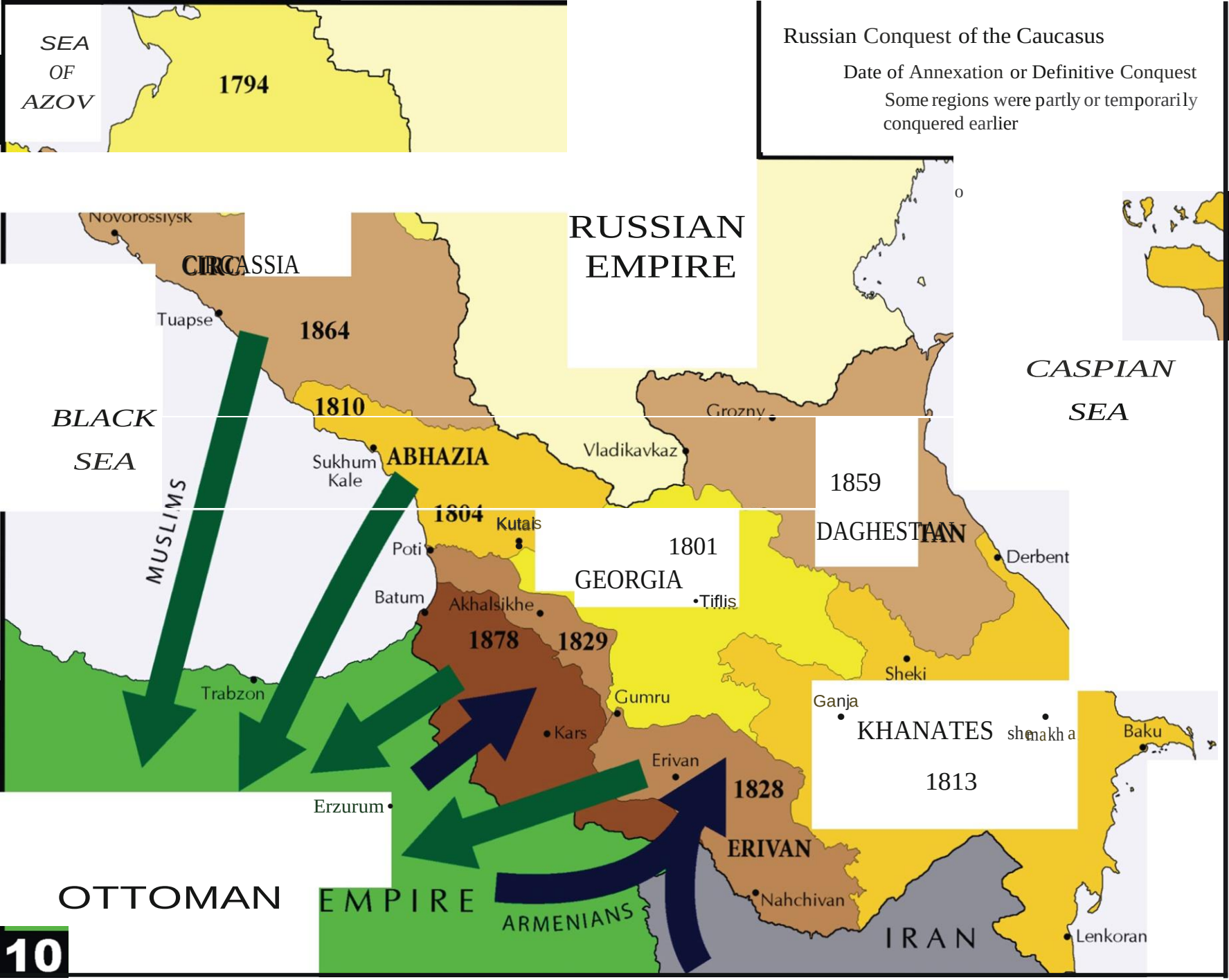
Southeastern Europe in 1914



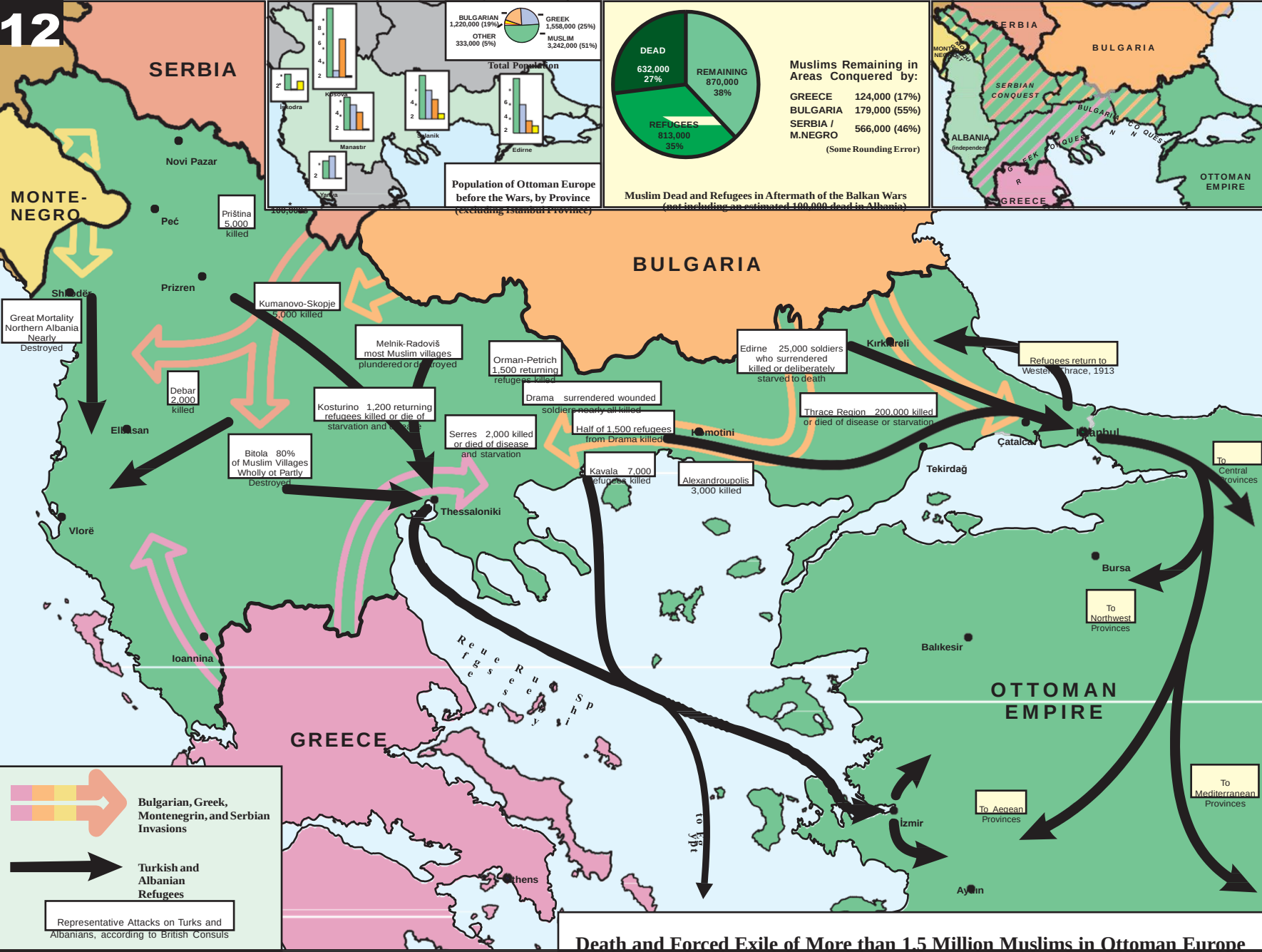




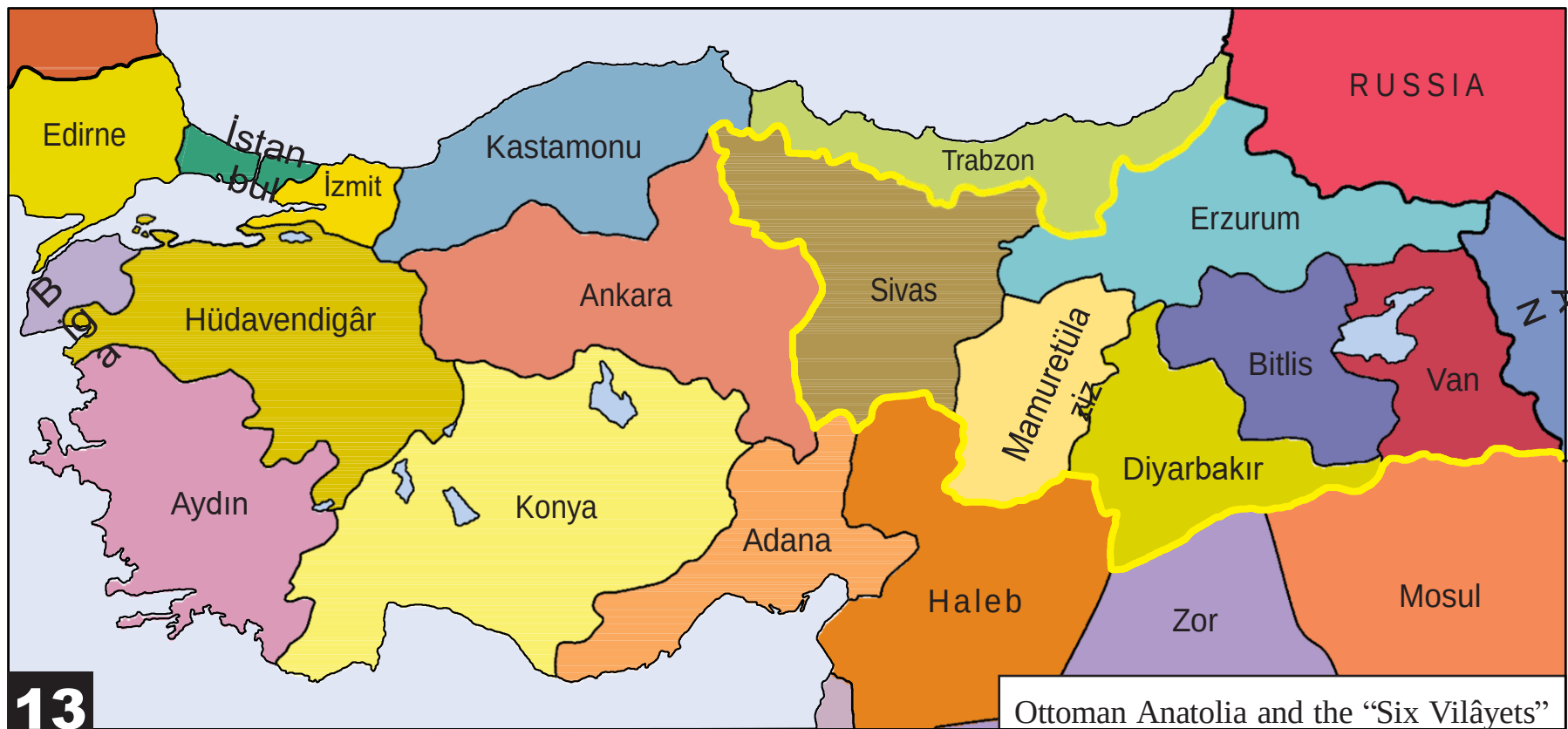








Death and Forced Exile of More than 1.5 Million Muslims in Ottoman Europe





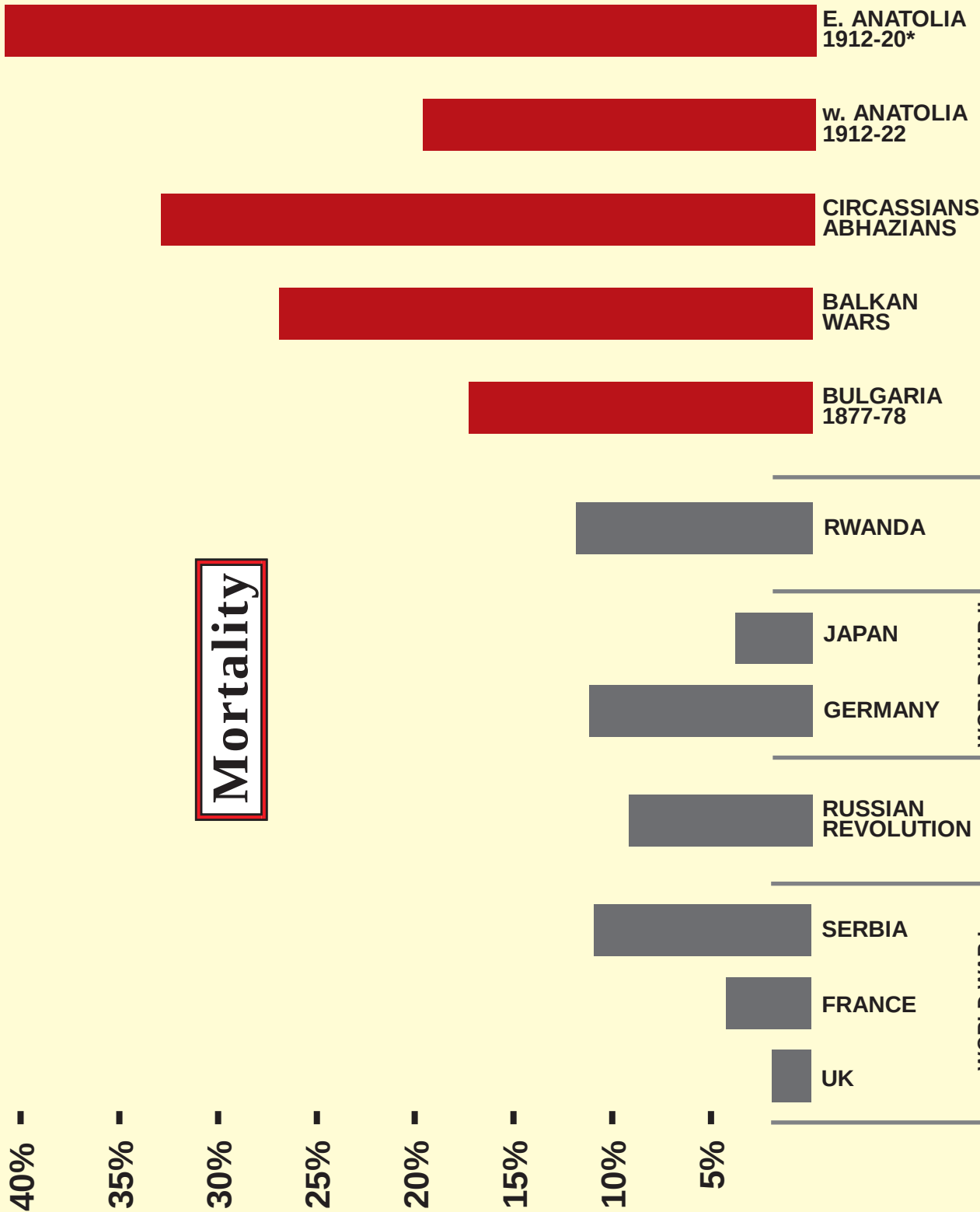
Eastern Anatolia in 1914



MODERN





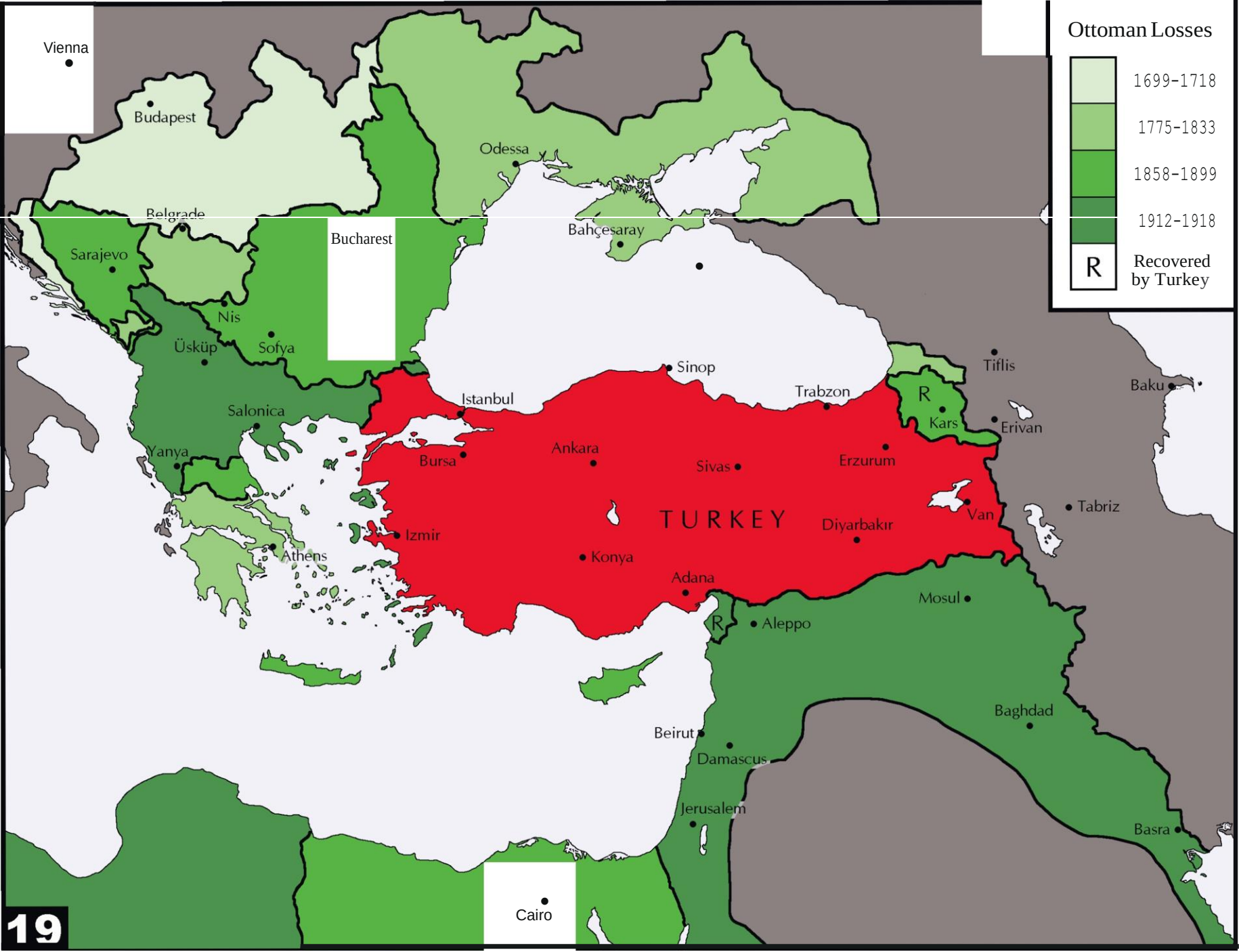


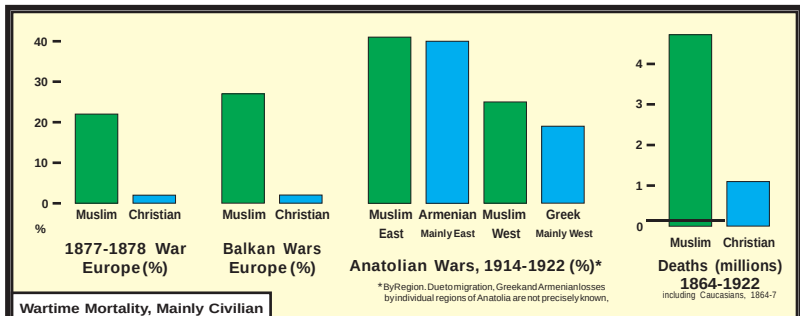
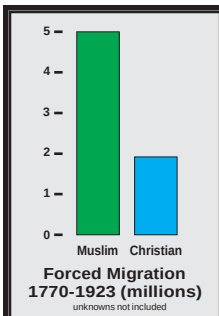
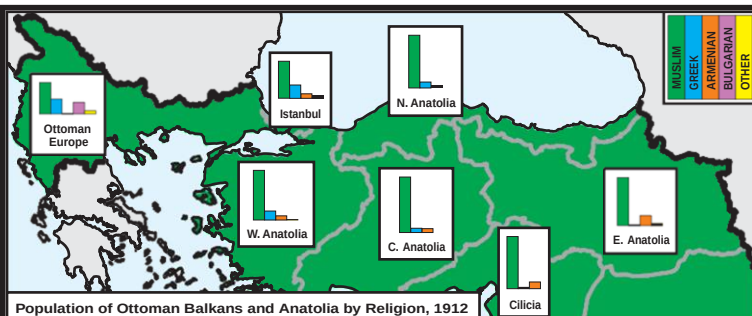
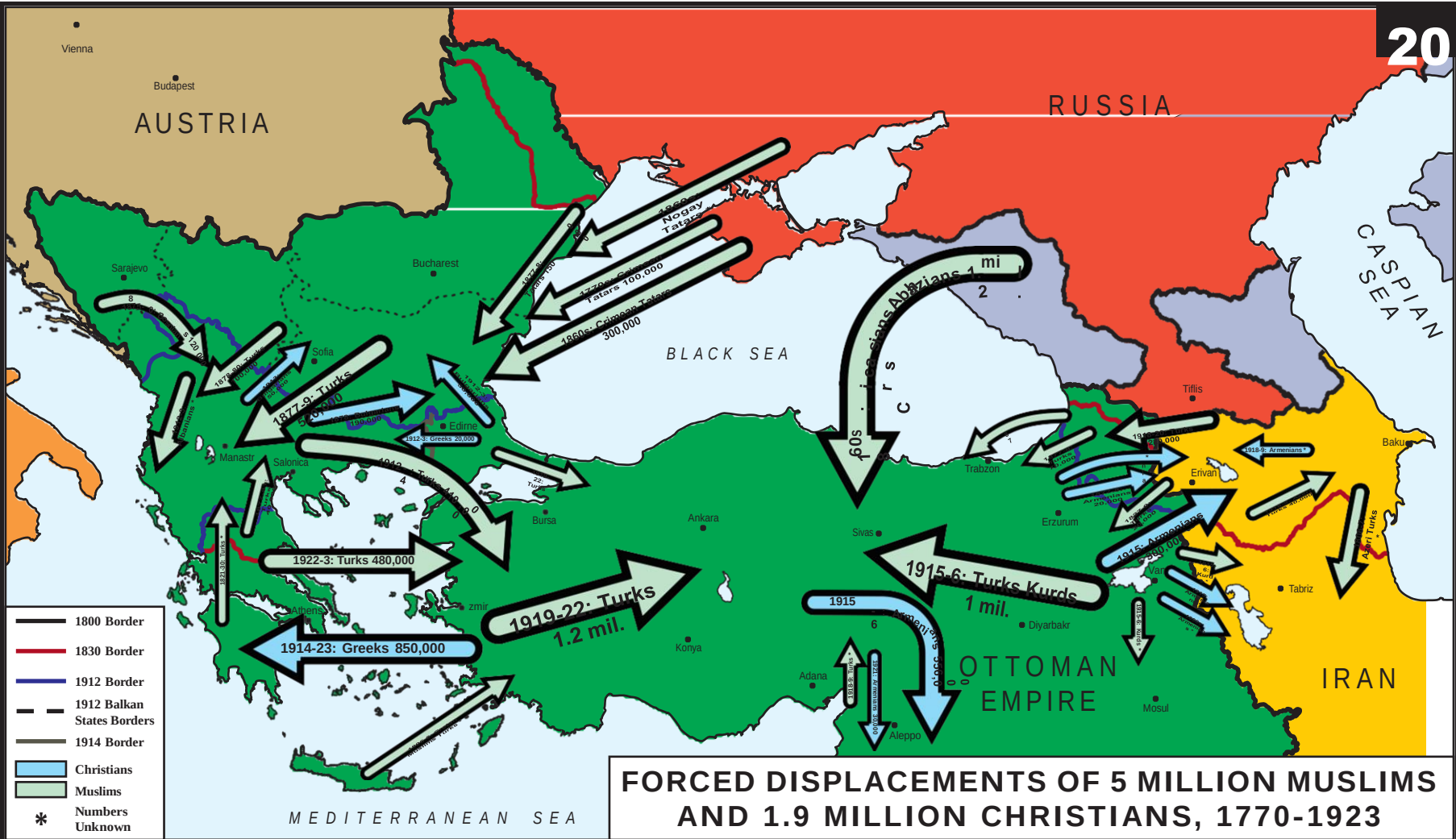
MUSLIMS

WORLD WAR II

WORLD WAR I

*Van, Bitlis, Erzurum Provinces





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