RELIGION AND WORLD CIVILIZATIONS

How Faith Shaped Societies from Antiquity to the Present

VOLUME 2

MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN WORLDS

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exposure to the intense desert heat. Individuals who could not walk anymore, or who stopped to rest, were shot. The Young Turks also created killing squads composed mainly of violent criminals who murdered scores of Armenians, including by crucifixion and burning them alive. Concentration camps were established, in which victims died from disease and starvation. The Armenians were subject to human experimentation by Ottoman doctors. Armenian women, especially those who were young and attractive, frequently fell victim to rape, including gang rape, and sex slavery; survivors and witnesses reported women being raped so many times and so violently that they died from their injuries. Additionally, Armenian children, in particular, infants and toddlers, were often taken from their parents and given to Turkish Muslim families; the forcible transfer of children from one group to another is considered genocide because the children grow up with no knowledge of their heritage, contributing to the destruction of the culture of their birth. When the genocide began, approximately two million Armenians lived in the Ottoman Empire. By the time it ended, only 388,000 remained.

In early November 1918, approximately one week before an armistice was signed ending World War I, the Three Pashas fled the Ottoman Empire and traveled around Europe and central Asia to avoid punishment for the crimes they committed during the war, including the Armenian Genocide. However, the Allied Powers ordered the new Turkish government to hold war crimes trials, and the Three Pashas were sentenced to death. Additional former government and military officials were tried as well, and several were sentenced to death and executed. The Three Pashas evaded judicial punishment, but in 1921 and 1922, all three met violent deaths, two at the hands of Armenians.

Despite the ample evidence to substantiate the Armenian Genocide, including photographs and government documents, the Turkish government denies that it took place, and that the deaths of Armenians during World War I were not intentional.

CYNTHIA G. COUNSIL

See also: Volume 2: Seljuk and Ottoman Civilizations: Collapse of the Ottoman Empire; Establishment of the Secular Republic of Turkey; *Jihad*, World War I, and the Ottoman Empire; Millet System; Ottoman Empire; *Volume 3: Modern Europe:* Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust; Impact of the Holocaust

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Collapse of the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire, reaching its peak in the sixteenth century, began to lose its former power and experienced stagnation in the seventeenth and decline in the eighteenth centuries. While the Western world was improving economically, militarily, and intellectually via its geographic discoveries, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment throughout the premodern period, the Ottomans struggled with administrative and economic problems and internal crises such as instabilities that were caused mostly by the undisciplined Janissaries. Moreover, the Ottomans failed to understand the broader nature of European development in contrast to the Ottoman decline and only focused on military reforms. Ottoman rulers thought that if the Ottoman army had regained its old power and if they revived the Old Order (Nizâm-ı Kâdîm), its various problems would have been solved. In seeking to restore the glorious past, the Ottomans missed the spirit of the times, and the empire entered the nineteenth century with their administrative, military, and economic systems completely deteriorated. Furthermore, the Great Powers, who referred to the Ottomans as the Sick Man of Europe, reflecting their understanding of modern Ottoman decline, were in a race for a share of the empire's lands, which they pursued in the context of the Eastern Question, a term used in diplomatic writing reflecting Western concerns over the continued viability of the vast, but weak, Ottoman Empire.

Selim III (r. 1789–1807) became the first sultan to realize that the empire fell far behind the Western world and that fundamental reforms were needed. He initiated a significant reform movement called the New Order (Nizâm-ı Cedîd), which included the development of a modern army as an alternative to the Janissaries and the appointment

of resident ambassadors in France, Britain, Prussia, and Austria to follow major developments in Europe. In doing so, Selim III brought in firearms experts from France and opened modern military and technical schools with French as the language of instruction to meet the officer needs. The New Order Army demonstrated its improved fighting capabilities by defeating Napoleon Bonaparte in his invasion of Egypt and Syria in 1798. However, anti-reformers, led by the Janissaries who opposed his military reforms that diminished their influence, dethroned him in 1807 and he was eventually murdered.

During the following reign of Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), the Ottomans experienced major developments that eventually laid a foundation for modern Turkey. He accepted the Charter of Alliance (Sened-i İttifak), in 1808, for example, likened to the British Magna Carta, signed between the Ottoman viziers and some local rulers. He persistently tried to increase the power of the central administration and forcibly abolished the Janissaries, previously the elite troops of the Ottoman Empire, and formed a modern army in 1826. The Old Imperial Council (Dîvân-ı Hümâyun), Manorial System (Timar Sistemi), and Palace School (Enderun) were replaced with ministries such as Foreign Affairs, councils, and modern schools. Culturally, he also challenged Ottoman traditions when he wore pants for the first time as the sultan-caliph. Yet it was during his reign that several non-Muslim peoples and territories, perhaps most notably the Greeks in 1821, inspired by the nationalism resulting from the French Revolution, successfully rebelled against the empire and won their independence, leading to the rapid disintegration of the empire.

When Abdul Majid came to the throne (r. 1839–1861), he proclaimed two significant imperial edicts in 1839 (Reorganization) and 1856 (Reform) that were intended to prevent the Great Powers from interfering with Ottoman affairs, to reduce the nationalist influence of the French Revolution, and to connect non-Muslim nations to the empire. These edicts, in part, called for the sultan, for the first time, to restrict his own absolute power. According to these edicts, everyone's life, property, and immunity of honor were under the guarantee of the state, taxes would be fair, and the trials would be open. Also, especially with the Reform Edict, important rights were granted to the non-Muslim subjects in terms of citizenship law, ensuring full equality with Muslims. For example, they could be civil servants and able to rise to top bureaucratic positions such as foreign minister, as seen in the examples of Ottoman Greek Alexander Karatheodori Pasha and Ottoman Armenian Gabriyel Noradunkyan Effendi. More important, the Ottomans emphasized that all, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, are Ottoman citizens, in an effort to stop the rebellions of non-Muslim subjects. Yet such efforts had little success, as non-Muslim peoples living under Ottoman rule, including the Serbs, Montenegrins, Romanians, and Bulgarians, continued to gradually establish their own independent states.

The economy of the empire continued to deteriorate throughout the nineteenth century. While the Ottomans, supported by the British, French, and Italians, defeated the Russians in the Crimean War (1853 to 1856), they acquired foreign debt for the first time in 1854 to be able to fight the war, which imposed a huge cost on the treasury from which it could not recover. Indeed, in 1875, the empire had to declare a moratorium regarding its foreign debt repayments. These circumstances led to the establishment of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration in 1881, managed by Europeans, to collect tax payments and pay off Ottoman debts. Thus, its finance became fully under the control of the Great Powers, and vital income sources of the empire were gradually mortgaged for each debt.

During the reign of Abdul Aziz (r. 1861–1876), a society, called the Young Ottomans was established. The society did not find former reforms sufficient and demanded constitutional rule. Since the sultan did not accept their demands, he was deposed in a coup supported by the Young Ottomans.

Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876–1909) came to power after promising to accept the establishment of a Constitutional Monarchy. Once he became sultan, he declared a Constitution (Kânûn-ı Esâsî), which envisaged a General Assembly with a two parliaments. The Parliament (Ieclis-i Mebusân), consisted of members elected by the representatives of the people (two-level electoral system) and the Senate (Meclis-i Ayân), consisted of distinguished Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans appointed for life by the sultan. Meanwhile, due to the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by the Russians in the 1877–1878 war and concern over Russian encroachments into the outskirts of the capital Istanbul, prompted the Ottomans to sign the Treaty of San Stefano. The provisions of the treaty supported the Russian policy of Pan-Slavism and shifted the international balances in the region in favor of the Russian Empire. The Great Powers, led by Britain, intervened in the situation, which led to the signing of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. According to this treaty, the Ottomans recognized the independence of the Serbian, Montenegrin, and Romanian principalities

and gave Cyprus to the British Empire for supporting them in negotiations against the Russians.

Furthermore, the situation of Armenians living under Ottoman rule, otherwise referred to as the "Armenian Question," was addressed in these treaties thanks to the efforts of Armenian Patriarch Nerses Varjabetyan. Due to his diplomacy, which took advantage of the bad situation of the Ottomans, the patriarch succeeded in putting an article in both treaties calling on the Ottomans to make reforms in favor of the Armenians in the provinces in eastern Anatolia and ensure their protection from the Kurds and Circassians. After that, the Armenian Question became an issue used by the Great Powers in negotiations against the Ottomans.

In the years that followed, the Marxist and radical nationalist Russian based Armenians founded two militant organizations: Hunchak in Geneva in 1887 and Dashnak, today's Armenian Revolutionary Federation, in Tbilisi in 1890. Their goal was to separate "Western Armenia" (eastern Anatolia) from the Ottoman Empire, with Armenians representing only a minority of the population, and establish a "Great Armenia" by uniting it with Russian Armenia. They sought to achieve their goal through terror and violence, including armed raids, uprisings, bombings, and assassinations. For example, they raided the Ottoman Bank playing an important role in the international financial world in 1896 and unsuccessfully tried to kill Sultan Abdul Hamid II with a time bomb in Istanbul in 1905. Such activities helped provoke massacres of Ottoman Armenians prompting the attention and intervention of the Great Powers in Ottoman affairs as they related to the Armenians.

Upon the very negative results of the 1877–1878 war and the tensions lived in the Parliament, Abdul Hamid II dissolved the Parliament indefinitely and suspended the Constitution in 1878. He followed a policy of balance against the Great Powers and took advantage of the conflicts of interest among them. Since the Balkans were no longer under the empire's control, and the Middle East, where Muslims were concentrated, remained within its borders, he started to pursue a Pan-Islamist policy encouraging solidarity among Muslims, which disturbed the Great Powers whose colonies were in Muslim lands. He also made efforts to seize firm control over the government and many elements of society, which included the censorship of the press. This prompted the formation of a secret opposition, called the Young Turks, consisting of young army officers in the army. They were organized under the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and made the sultan restore the Constitutional Monarchy in 1908 before deposing him a year later.

After Abdul Hamid II, the Ottoman Empire, under the administrative influence of CUP, was defeated in a series of wars against the Italians in 1911, the Balkan League in 1912, and then, most devastatingly, the Allied Powers in World War I (1914–1918). After the Mudros Armistice signed by the Ottomans and the British in October 1918, the Allies began to occupy Ottoman lands, and thus negotiated the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 from a position of strength over Ottoman weakness. The treaty reflected the solution of the European countries to the Eastern Question, which resulted in the effective elimination of the Ottoman Empire. Yet it was also due to the consequences of World War I, with the occupation of Ottoman lands by European forces, that nationalist Turks gathered under the leadership of General Mustafa Kemal to fight the Turkish War of Independence in May 1919. Turkish forces defeated the Armenians in east, the Greeks in west, and the French in the southeast in the wars. Meanwhile, the sultanate was abolished by the Turkish Parliament in Ankara in November 1922. Thus, the Ottoman Empire, which had existed for more than six hundred years, came to an end. Finally, the victorious Turks and Allies signed the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923 which superseded the Sevres Treaty and led to the founding and recognition of the Republic of Turkey as a sovereign state in the international arena. Contrary to other peace treaties such as Versailles, Saint Germain, and Trianon that ended the World War I, the Lausanne Treaty remains valid despite some changes in its provisions.

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See also: Volume 2: Seljuk and Ottoman Civilizations: Abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate; Armenian Genocide; Establishment of the Ottoman Caliphate; Establishment of the Secular Republic of Turkey; *Jihad*, World War I, and the Ottoman Empire; Millet System; Ottoman Empire

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