

Geopolitics, Social Crisis, and Revolution: The Uneven and Combined Origins of Revolutions in the Ottoman Middle East.

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According to Fred Halliday, the pioneer of the study of revolutions in IR, revolutions are far from representing anomalies in the otherwise relatively stable "logic" of international relations (marked by the dominance of neorealism's transhistorical concept of anarchy). Revolutions, counter-revolutions, and even failed revolutions represent, on the contrary, central components – both analytically and empirically – of the study of international relations.

In that regard, Halliday sketched an alternative history of the modern world order based on revolutions as turning points. Thus, this alternative history of starts with the protestant reformations, followed in the 17th century by the Dutch War of Independence and the Glorious Revolution in England. The locus then switched, during the 18th and 19th century to the Atlantic Revolutions – French, American, and Haitian – and ending, during the "short" 20 century, with the Bolchevik Revolution. From that point on, the locus of revolutionary uprisings decidedly shifted from the "West" to the "Global South" - Mexico, Turkey, China, Egypt, Algeria, Cuba, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Angola, Iran and so on.

From that perspective, the growing interest in the study of revolutions from the point of view of IR has represented a central component in the "historical turn" recently taken by the discipline and the growing interest in International Historical Sociology (IHS) as a novel research program (see Hobson, Lawson and Rosenberg 2010). The study of revolution has been used both as a way to historicize international relations, but also as a way to fill the disciplinary gap between IR and historical sociology, which represents a central unifying theme of the research project of HIS. This second objective stems from the fact that revolutions represents the pressure points and the crisis through which international relations are linked to socio-political change: they act as "transmission belts" between the international and the social.

The general aim of this paper is to further these research objectives by analyzing two crucial events that underpinned the breakdown of Empire and inaugurated the transition to the modern inter-national order in the Middle-East: the Young Turk Revolution (1908) and the Arab Revolt (1916). On the one hand, the centrality of the 1908 revolution for the modern history of the Middle East has already been well acknowledged. As Halliday argues:

The 1908 Young Turk revolution was arguably the greatest turning point in

¹ My definition of revolution is strongly influenced by their significance for the study of IR. In that perspective, the concept will be used to define an episode of sharp social and political change that significantly affects the composition and definition of the political community in which it takes place.

the modern history of the Middle East. It was this event which set off political and military conflict in the Balkan wars (1912–13) and led, through the events in Sarajevo in June 1914, to World War I, then on to redrawing of the map of the modern Middle East in 1918–26 – through British and French colonial demarcation, on the one hand, and, in the Peninsula, the rise of the modern Yemeni and Saudi states, the first independent Arab countries in modern times, on the other (Halliday 2005: 7).

On the other hand, the Arab revolt was the culmination of a process of struggle over the definition of the Ottoman political community and who should benefit from privileged access to the principal institutional apparatus of surplus appropriation: the state. It acted as a counter-revolution against the centralizing tendencies of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the main organizing body of the Young Turk revolution, and consolidated the power of an entrenched class of notables in the Arab provinces of the Empire.

This paper is not to be understood as a close study of revolutionary conjuncture and agency, but the location of revolutionary (and counter-revolutionary) events within the *longue durée* of international relations in the region, and the long-term trajectory of the Empire within this context. Although a number of short-term, conjectural factors are necessary to explain these events (and are not provided here), it argues for the necessity of an historical sociological time frame and an international analytic lens.

In this endeavor, I will pick up a theoretical thread left behind by Halliday by further developing the explanatory potential of the Trotskyist framework of uneven and combined development. This framework will then be mobilized in an effort to locate the aforementioned events *within the long-term, geopolitically mediated, and socially contested transition to global modernity* in the Middle East.

Uneven and Combined Development, Social Crises, and Revolutions

In digging for a deeper theoretical grasp of revolutions as international phenomenon, Halliday uncovered Trotsky's idea of the uneven and combined development (UCD) of world history (Halliday 1999; see also Teschke 2011). This approach firmly locates revolutions as organic components within the meta-narrative of the global expansion of capitalist modernity. Trotsky argued that the development of capitalism, by imposing its productive imperative on other forms of social organization, changed the very texture of social change by deepening its uneven character (see Rosenberg 2007: 456).

Thus, in contrast to the sketch provided by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* (1988), capitalism did not expand following a *transnational* and *homogenizing* logic. As the works of Benno Teschke (2003) and Hannes Lacher (2006) have convincingly argued, capitalism was "born into" an international system marked by a variety of different and "unevenly developed" units – in terms of the production and appropriation of fiscal, military, and human resources – crystallized within different definitions of political communities (absolutist states, city-states, empires, and so on), supported by distinct class

constellations and social relations of appropriation², with varying expressions of territoriality and diverging patterns of conflict and cooperation.

According to the framework of UCD, the *point of departure* of what can be generally defined as the “modern international system” (dominated by territorially stable states, responding to a “national” interest rather than a purely personal, i.e. dynastic, one; see Teschke 2003) was marked by the consolidation of capitalist social relations in postrevolutionary England. But this represent merely the point of departure of a protracted and uneven, yet cumulative development of modernity at the global level. Contrary to two major current of Historical Materialist scholarship in IR, the 19th century world order was a long way from representing a fully formed capitalist world-system (Wallerstein 1974) or a British-led liberal (i.e. bourgeois) *hegemony* (Cox 1987). Rather, and in large part as a result of the superior productive and financial capacities that the consolidation of capitalist social relations brought to England, the world order (and more specifically its European core) was marked by a high degree of geographical unevenness that reproduced a fragmented, “multi-actor” system and prevented any form of bourgeois hegemony. On the contrary, the geopolitical and economic pressures created by the increasingly unevenness of developmental trajectories, filtered through the legacy of continental absolutism, led to increasingly authoritarian strategies of catching up (Lacher and Germann 2012).

Thus, rather than creating a world after its own image, the regionally limited rise of capitalist social relations – England was itself very uneven – deepened the multilinear character of social change, first in Europe, and then globally. As Robbie Shilliam (2004: 63) argues, “when the imperatives imposed by the capital relation travelled from the ‘heartland’ of English capitalism into differentially developed socio-political orders, these different constellations of social forces gave rise to different forms of social transformation”. As a result of *combined* development – the interaction of “new” and “old”, “foreign” and “local” social relations and ideas – the result of the encounters between the productive pressures of English capitalism and divergent developmental trajectories gave birth to “unprecedented socio-political forms” (Shilliam 2004, *Ibid*) and novel expressions of *political subjectivity*. This also made the region increasingly prone to crisis, as the prevailing internal balances of power were upset, pre-existing class conflicts were deepened, and new conflicts arose over the nature and definition of these “unprecedented socio-political forms”.

This is why I refer to the protracted expansion of global *modernity* rather than global capitalism, as the meta-concept of modernity (or multiple modernities) is more adequate in representing the multiplicity of developmental trajectories that

² This refers to the key social relations that regulate the appropriation and redistribution of a society’s productive surplus.

³ Although we recognizes many deficiencies with their arguments, Arno Meyer (1981) and Sandra Haperin’s (2004) thesis about the reactionary and aristocratic nature of pre-1945 Europe points to this lack of bourgeois hegemony.

cannot be subsumed under a singular “logic” of capitalism. The French revolution, for example, along with the rise of Jacobinism and Bonapartism, was the result of the increasingly fiscal and military pressure that England was able to impose on continental absolutism. Through this process, the interventionist Jacobin state and the creation of the “citizen-soldier” emerged as a competing social model (Shilliam 2009). Similarly, the ideologies (Saint-Simonism in France or Listian economic nationalism in Germany, for example) and institutions supporting late industrialization differed greatly from the English model, involving various “substitutions” in order to cope with the absence of certain institutions and social relations in “backward” polities (see Gershenkron 1962).

It is within this shifting order, strongly influenced by capitalism but not (yet) capitalist in essence nor logic, that the main subject of this paper – the historical trajectory of the Ottoman Empire, and more specifically, its Middle-Eastern provinces – is located. UCD provides the overarching framework in which to integrate the multiplicity of diverging development trajectory and to capture the interactivity that constitute the specifically “international” dimension of social change.

As a more concrete operationalization of this general abstraction about the nature of social change, my conception of UCD points to the “geopolitically mediated” nature of the expansion of global modernity, as the expansion of capitalism encountered the uneven developmental geographies of the existing world order. These encounters unhinged existing power constellations and generated sociopolitical crises in “backward” polities (from the standpoint of existing social relations of appropriation and the capacity to accumulate fiscal, military and human resources) leading to social and political struggle both *within* and *between* polities over the basic rules of social reproduction, class relations, and definitions of the political community. It out of these crises that war, revolts, revolutions, and counterrevolutions emerged as different forms of internationalized social conflict within the protracted process of transition (or non-transition) to modernity. Revolutions thus represent central components of “the nationally specific and diachronic, yet cumulatively connected and internationally mediated nature of global modernity” (Duzgun *upcoming*).

Geopolitical and Social Crisis in the *Longue Durée*: The Ottoman Trajectory

As suggested, the consolidation of capitalism in England drastically altered the prevailing balance of power and international hierarchy of power. While the developmental superiority of capitalist social relations had more diffuse, indirect, and delayed effects, the most direct advantage conferred on England by the development of capitalism was in the increasing fiscal and financial capabilities of the state to sustain the war effort (through the creation of the National Debt and the Bank of England) and maintain a favorable balance of power by financing destructive absolutist and dynastic rivalries on the continent and beyond (Teschke 2003).

During the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire saw its position within the shifting international order drastically altered, as the agrarian empires of Eurasia lost

momentum in the face of the increasingly dynamic character of social change brought by capitalism in Northwestern Europe. The century was marked by a prolonged period of territorial stagnation and military failure that followed the defeat of the sultan's army during the second siege of Vienna (1683), which marked the definitive end to the "golden age" of Ottoman expansionism.

Within this reorganization of the international order, the geopolitical location of the Empire, at the southeastern edge of the transforming European state system, had mixed consequences on its internal and external development. From both Marxist and Weberian standpoints, it is widely recognized that the fiscal and military superiority of European states was the result of the highly competitive nature of the process of state building on the continent (e.g. Tilly 1990; Teschke 2003). On the one hand, the Ottomans' peripheral involvement in this process relieved it from the more immediate geopolitical stress put on its neighbors – the Romanov and Habsburg empires. On the other hand, it conditioned the late nature of reform attempts and the "accumulated backwardness" of its administrative and productive capacities: central state revenues stagnated at a time where most European states were undergoing administrative and fiscal reforms underpinned by major changes in agrarian relations (Karaman and Pamuk 2010: 594).

This relative decline and accumulated backwardness of the Ottomans brought the "Eastern Question" to the forefront of European great power politics. The new balance of power between the Sultan and its European neighbors was consolidated by the capitulations, which conferred on European subjects legal exemptions and privileges - particularly favoring mercantile activities - and opened the door for European power to claim protectorship over the Empire's Christian populations. While on the one end, the balance of power favored the maintenance of the territorial integrity and sovereignty (at least nominally) of the Empire, on the other hand, the major European powers, with Great Britain and Russia in vanguard, planned the eventual dissolution of the Empire and competed for its spoils.

Transformations in "Political Geography"

The Ottoman imperial hierarchy, during its "golden age" of expansion (1453-1566), was built around the sultan's delegation of authority to an official class, and it is through the political, legal, and fiscal privileges associated with this devolution of power that the ruling class of officials acquired access to surplus and reproduced itself as a class (Haldon 1993).

The shifting political geography of the Empire, marked by alternating phases of centralization and decentralization, was based on the Sultan ability to reign in this office-holding class and limit their autonomous material basis by controlling their powers of appropriation. This first depended upon an alliance between dynasty and the producing subjects, where the sultan's power would protect the stable reproduction of traditional productive units (mainly the peasant communities). Second, it depended on the distribution of the spoils of war, in order to keep officials loyal and materially tied to the ruling dynasty.

The maintenance of this balance of power structured the aggressive and expansionary character of the Empire. The fact that this compact relied on the reproduction of precapitalist relations of appropriation (i.e. the maintenance of traditional units of production, mainly in the form of peasant households) meant that the problem of accumulation had to be exported outside of the realm, in the form of territorial conquest. This pattern of geopolitical accumulation (see Brenner 2007) was disturbed once expansion had reached its limits. The Empire was thrown into fiscal crisis and was soon unable to cover increasing military expenditure. The lack of a geopolitical solution triggered a protracted social crisis during the era of the Celali Revolts, punctuated by tax-revolts, military demobilization, and the rise of banditry.

These transformations in the balance of forces gave way to a renegotiation of the nature of the social relations of appropriation supporting the imperial community. The Palace lost its exclusive control over the highest administrative offices of the Empire as competing households arose in the capital (Abou-El-Haj 2005).

Underpinning this transformation was a change in the organization of surplus appropriation throughout the Empire. The auctioning of life-long tax-farms (*malikane*) was generalized as a fiscal innovation to finance the increasing deficit, and this new form of appropriation slowly absorbed the revenues formerly collected by the grant of military fiefs.

The generalization of the selling of life-long tax farms *deregulated* access to the economic privileges associated with state power. The investment in acquiring such state-sanctioned rights of appropriation became a privileged strategy of accumulation for the ruling classes. This developed to a point where an “entrepreneurial” rationality emerged around the management, renting, and selling of tax-farms (Salzmann 1993).

These new relations of appropriation represented the basis upon which the center/periphery relation was recomposed within the Empire. It gave way to the emergence of a parallel hierarchical structure, linking central and provincial elites through interpersonal networks built around the management of tax-farms. A class of provincial tax-farmers increasingly became the *de facto* political elite in the periphery against relatively powerless governors appointed by Constantinople, which were often forced to rule in the name of these notables.

The Search for a New Elite Compact

The geopolitical and social crisis identified in the previous section led to the gradual breakdown of the classical definition of the Ottoman community, which tightly regulated access to surplus through a system of exclusive estates (see Darling 2013). The privileges of office, which had been the monopoly of the military estate, became available to a wider group of wealthy individuals with favorable social and political ties, independent of social status.

The new social relations of appropriation, while providing a short-term solution to the fiscal and military crises of the 17th centuries, undermined the long-term capacity of central authority to collect taxes, raise troops, and finance military expenditure. The increased dependence of the Sublime Porte on local notables for the collection of taxes and the maintenance of soldiers led to the emergence a stratum of semi-autonomous provincial power holders (see Douwes 2000).

Social turmoil and decentralization raised growing awareness among ottoman elites of the backwardness accumulated by the Empire, fueling the spread of a narrative of civilizational decline. It became increasingly clear to the Ottoman ruling classes that the existing order, marked by destructive inter-elite competition, was becoming unsustainable in the face of growing geopolitical challenge.

Early attempts at reforms were marked by a struggle between center and periphery. In Anatolia and lower Rumelia, notables were granted renewed offices and tax-farms in exchange for submission to central authority. But in the most productive agricultural provinces – Serbia, Greece, and Egypt – the attempts to pacify local magnates led to a series of revolts and wars. In the Balkans, dissident notables managed to mobilized a disaffected peasantry against the encroaching power of the Porte.

Secessionist revolts in the Balkans upset the balance of power in the east and marked a turning point in the development of the “Eastern Question”, which was dominated by the competing geopolitical objectives of Britain and Russia. For Britain, the central objective was to protect access to the empire’s crown jewel: India. For Russia, uninterrupted rights of passage through the straits for Russian vessels were an imperative for the lucrative grain trade. If the maintenance of a weak but stable Ottoman dynasty managed to satisfy both objectives, the Balkan revolts – combined with the treat posed by Muhammad Ali in Egypt (which will be discussed shortly) – put that situation in jeopardy and opened the door to further outside intervention.

Not only did this lead to the eventual secession of Greece and Serbia, but brought the empire to the verge of collapse. In 1829, Russian troops captured the cities of Adrianople in southern Rumelia and Erzurum in Eastern Anatolia, menacing the empire directly at its core. Constantinople was spared only following British intervention, forcing the Russians to sign the treaty of Adrianople and retreat to the Danube.

The subsequent period of Ottoman history, starting with the *tanzimat* reforms in 1839, represented a series of novel attempts to resolve the twin problem of inter-elite unity and the geopolitical reproduction of the Empire: “a new social base was needed if the empire was to survive”, a novel *social compact* (class compromise) that would guarantee its social and geopolitical reproduction (Deringil 1993: 4).

Ottomanism and Combined Development

From its inception, the project of rejuvenation of the Empire was marked by the tensions between diverging objectives and interests. A first objective was the freeing of the productive capacities of the imperial subjects in order to catch-up with the superior human, fiscal, and military resources of more developed societies. Traditional principles of justice and reciprocity, based on the protection of traditional productive units and the collective and customary rights of peasant communities and craft guilds, were no longer able to support the material reproduction of the Empire in a shifting geopolitical environment. The lower classes now needed to be *actively* mobilized in the productive effort of the community.

In this endeavor, elites benefited from social models available from more advanced societies, particularly Britain which had developed capitalist social relations. But the development of private property relations, the egoistic relations of the market, and the self-interested nature of liberal subjectivity associated with capitalist development posed a threat to the second objective of the reform project: unity, inter- and intra-class balance, and reproduction of the community. The potential of an atomization of society under capitalism threatened the reproduction of the social fabric of the Empire.

In this situation, modernization efforts were done in combination with attempts to conserve and consolidate, as much as possible, existing structures of hierarchy and authority: this translated in limitation and rejection of certain aspects of the capitalist model. Within this novel “combined” socio-political arrangement, referred to as *Ottomanism* (see Deringil 1993), “existing institutions [or ideas] are mobilized to perform novel tasks, and through this process a novel political subject can be created that articulates a novel encoding of rights and duties” (Shilliam 2009: 18). Traditional conceptions of justice, as the guarantor of the reproduction of the collective whole, were reinterpreted in order to constrain the potentially disruptive nature of liberal principles. The reform project was “engaged in a continuous balancing act between the exigencies of a rule of justice and a rule of property” (Islamoglu 2000: 33-4).

In short, Ottomanism juxtaposed and subordinated the rights of reproduction of private individuals, including the rights to possess and alienate property, to the geopolitical reproduction of the nation as an *indivisible* whole. It aimed at creating such an *impersonalized collective* premised on the equality of all before the law, unmediated by special communal or corporative privileges, nor by the self-interested individualism of the market.

Ottomanism in the Levant

Previewed above, perhaps the greatest geopolitical challenge to the reproduction of the Empire came from a former ottoman dominion: Egypt. Napoleon’s invasion had severely weakened the ruling Mamluk elite and allowed for the rise of Muhammad ‘Ali, who was able to eliminate local power-holders and inaugurate an ambitious project of military reform and fiscal centralization. In order to finance his program of modernization and industrialization, the viceroy embarked on a campaign of geopolitical expansion that eventually led him to

invade the Ottoman provinces of the Levant (the research below focuses on Greater Syria).

These events had profound consequences on the balance of power in the Levantine provinces. As elsewhere in the Empire, the eighteenth century was marked by the rise of quasi-autonomous power-holder. Their struggle for influence led to a fierce inter-elite competition unchecked by the diminishing influence of the central state (Douwes 2000).

These elite rivalries were cut short by the easy defeat of the Ottoman forces by Egypt's new conscript army, leading to a period of Egyptian occupation lasting from 1831 to 1840. Under Occupation, the Levant was re-organized under a single administration headquartered in Damascus. Following the Egyptian model, state monopolies were imposed on silk, cotton, and soap in order to secure raw materials for Egypt's nascent government-owned industries. Centralization also led to the enforcement of stricter taxation measures and the introduction of a new personal income tax despite the resistance of the local notability.

The Egyptian interlude had important consequences on the future of inter-ruling class relations in the Levantine provinces. The notables celebrated the return of Ottoman rule in 1840, when a coalition of European powers forced, on behalf of Constantinople, the withdrawal of Egyptian troops. This context represented an opportunity for a new balance to be struck between local power holders and central authorities. Paralleling the situation in the imperial center, the Levantine elites were in search of new collective principles to reassert their dominance in a period of social and geopolitical crisis.

The reintegration of the Levantine ruling class was done primarily through two reforms emanating from the center: the introduction of local councils and the land code of 1858. First, provincial councils accorded political representation and an advisory role for provincial notables in the process of reform. The councils' powers to "set taxes and customs, supervise their collection, register and regulate land transactions, approve appointments of petty officials" allowed members a tighter hold on the sources of patronage and accumulation (Khoury 1983: 17). Second, the land code of 1858, administered through the councils, allowed notables to secure sources of wealth by turning fiscal revenues into private property, facilitating the concentration of landed estates (Al-Khafaji 2004: Ch. 1). These reforms allowed to normalize inter-elite competition, regulate the allocation of offices and tax-farms, and empower the ruling class *collectively* (Khoury 1983: 48-49).

Education in state schools also became a primary mechanism allowing the (re)integration of provincial elites into the Ottoman political community. Education geared for bureaucratic formation and learning of official Ottoman Turkish facilitated alliances among provincial and well-connected Constantinople families, cementing solidarities beyond the local level (Khoury 1983: 50-51). In the end, Ottomanism became the dominant ideology in the Levantine provinces because consolidated the dominant position of the

provincial notables while cementing the new balance of power between center and periphery (see Dawn 1973: Ch. 6).

The Contradictions and Struggles of “Combined” Development: The Road to Revolution.

If Ottomanism became dominant in the Levant, the imposition from above of a new and foreign political subject – the Ottoman citizen – was nevertheless bound to create tensions within the social relations of the Empire. This had the potential to foster novel forms of political subjectivities – along with new antagonisms – that endangered the initial project of transformation, and the reproduction of the class position of the actors involved.

Ottomanism introduced new categories with social, political, and legal meaning: political equality, citizenship, and the nation. The introduction of these new categories had crucial importance as they combined with attempts, by the entrenched office-holding class, to maintain the existing “tributary” relations of appropriation. As suggested earlier, the principal form of surplus appropriation in the Empire depended on “extra-economic” forms of property – primarily associated with the legal, political, and fiscal privileges conferred upon the office-holding class.

The new social categories associated with Ottomanism questioned the reproduction of these privileges and highlighted the contradictions within the elite-led project of modernization, which emerged from its geopolitically combined origins – grafting novel and “foreign” ideas and social relations upon the existing premodern and precapitalist social structure.

Up until the end of the Empire, the project of Ottoman modernity remained marked by a profound contradiction between a formally equal subject and the very unequal social relations of the Empire. Ottomanism, in practice rather than in theory, was primarily an expression of *ruling class solidarity*, an exclusive “political nation” of office-holders organized around loyalty and identification with the centralized state as the guarantor of class reproduction. It essentially represented a collective mode of regulation of intra-class relations as well as a rationalization of the extractive and accumulative capacities of the state. The rights and duties associated with the Ottomanist project were unequally distributed: the elites monopolized the rights of equality between themselves while imposing the duties of the reproduction of national sovereignty – conscription and taxes – on the producing classes. The more lucrative offices remained monopolized by the semi-hereditary bureaucratic and notable class who kept reforms under control and used their political power for private accumulation (Mardin 2006: 19-20).

This contradictory combination was challenged by lower echelons of the bureaucracy. The *Tanzimat* reforms were accompanied by the (over)development of a bureaucratic apparatus that absorbed an increasing part of state revenues: in the 1890s around 70 per cent of government revenues was used to pay civil

servant salaries and pensions (quoted in Duzgun 2016: 154). With the growth of state schools geared toward bureaucratic formation, state employment became a privileged strategy of reproduction for the offspring of lower notables and *petit bourgeois*.

This created a particular *class* with interest in the continued bureaucratization of the Empire, marked by their specific relation within the Empire's tributary structure of accumulation. Devoid of sufficient property, lower notable and *petit bourgeois* household *depended*, for their reproduction and social mobility, on access to state employment (either in the bureaucracy or military hierarchy).

It was this class that provided the strategic leadership of the Young Turk Revolution. The ideas introduced by Ottomanism, namely political equality, citizenship, and the nation as a horizontal community, resonated strongly with this new non/small-propertyed and educated "middle class". In times of crisis, these ideas could be mobilized against the despotic nature of the Hamidian regime and the unequal access to the state (Karpas 2001: 340). These educated classes, owing their positions to their talents and formation, saw their social mobility frustrated by the patronage networks of the bureaucratic aristocracy. Universal and secular ideas of meritocracy, science, and progress – inculcated via the modernized school system – were used in order to fight the patrimonialism and privileges of the *ancien régime*. The meaning of the categories introduced by the reforms became the site of struggle, contestation, and reinterpretation by factions with different views on who should benefit from privileged access to the resources of the state, which still represented, despite the steady growth of private property, the main site of accumulation. As Kayali (1997: 58) argues, access to state employment constituted the driving force of the process of politicization: "[t]he attempt by individuals to gain or regain government positions constituted the main arena of political activity and increasingly underlay ideological rivalries".

It is through this process of class struggle over access to the state (as the primary institutional apparatus of surplus appropriation) that competing political projects emerged out of contestations over the definition and meaning of Ottomanism. The revolution succeeded in great part through such a reframing of the sociopolitical project of Ottomanism, introducing a populist redefinition of the Ottoman political community mobilizing the ideas of the first constitutional period – liberty, equality, and humanity – in order to rally the lower classes against Hamidian despotism (Mardin 2006: 121).

Led by the aforementioned educated middle-class, which included many junior military officers, the CUP was founded on an elitist and scientific understanding of social change. But their conception of the passive masses was transformed by the outbreak of tax revolts in the Empire's heartland of Anatolia between 1906 and 1907. The people awakened to the increasingly neopatrimonial tendencies on the Hamidian regime and the imposition of new taxes (see Aytekin 2013). It is in this context that the CUP adopted "revolutionary populism" as a strategy, calling for armed resistance and general uprising (Sohrabi 2011: 96-97).

As suggested earlier, the reorganization of social relations within the Empire had triggered secessionist revolts in the Balkans. This severely weakened the power of the Porte in the remaining borderland of Macedonia and made the region a hotbed for revolt and popular mobilization. The Ottoman dynast had already granted the province a semi-autonomous status following a major revolt that took place in 1903. Within this power-vacuum arose a number of rebel groups (garnishing its ranks among a disaffected peasantry, and recruiting primarily on the basis of ethno-religious affiliation) supported by the newly constituted “National States” in the Balkans. This initiated a competitive and violent process of land-grabbing, tax-extortion and accumulation that put increasing pressure on Muslim villagers as well as the Ottoman Army. This increasingly competitive process created the conditions for popular uprising, and opened the door for CUP officers to directly participate in the channeling and organization of popular discontent, by recruiting Muslim villagers into newly created “national regiments” (Ibid: 108-134).

Although elite-led, the content of the revolution was strongly influenced by the struggle of the producing lower classes. According to Kansu (2000: 11), the years following the revolution represented a “constant struggle between the proponents of the new regime working through, and depending upon, the newly created parliament, and the monarchist forces who aimed at restoring the ancien régime at all costs”. Throughout this struggle, including the counterrevolutionary attempt of 1909, the CUP deepened its reach among the popular classes through continuous appeals to the principle of equality, developing “an extensive and cohesive network of CUP branches, clubs, and societies around the empire” (Sohrabi 2011: 136). In trying to manipulate popular action, the CUP “partially conceded to the lower-class reframing of the nation” (Duzgun 2016: 170-171). One neglected aspect of this period is the emergence of the “people” as a legitimate social category (Karpat 2001: 316). Following the revolution, the CUP lost its monopoly over the definition of this new political subject as the lower class kept “misinterpreting” the concept of liberty and equality beyond its elitist definition – for example, claiming “liberty” from the obligation of paying taxes (Shorabi 2011: 175-188).

Revolution and Counter-Revolution: Struggles over Modernity in the Levant

As noted above, the “Turkish Revolution” can be considered “as the most important upheaval in modern Middle Eastern history” (Halliday 2005: 7). Its impact can be measured in the fact that it “prompted processes of inter-societal comparison and learning throughout the Middle East, which, in turn, left an enduring impact on the way in which subsequent Middle Eastern revolutions unfolded” and also “launched or inspired the development of modern institutions in a wider regional context, decisively reshaping the international relations of modernity in the Middle East” (Duzgun *upcoming*).

But in terms of initial response, this popular and more egalitarian redefinition of the Ottoman project did not align with the prevailing balance of power and ruling-class constellation in the Levantine provinces. From the point of view of the meritocratic standards of Unionist officials, the Arab notables represented the

epitome of the *ancien régime*. They saw them as “an entrenched, unprofessional, untrustworthy provincial upper class and preferred to replace them with men closer to their own mold” (Khoury 1983: 58). Two opposing principles of social legitimacy – meritocracy and patrimonialism – were opposed in the struggle for control of the provincial administration.

The revolution was accompanied by a “reorganization” (*tansikat*) of the civil bureaucracy aimed at purging the patrimonial structure of the Hamidian era (Findley 1980: Ch. 7). Because many Arab office-holders were associated with the patrimonial practices of the *ancien régime*, they were disproportionately the victims of administrative purges: “most of the Arab officials in high administrative positions both at the capital and the provinces were purged between 1908 and 1914” (Gocek 2002: 54). Subsequently, Arab graduates of state schools lost their privileged access to positions within the provincial administration (Haddad 1994: 206). Arab notable became victims of their own success in raising their status through the Hamidian patrimonial ladder.

This conflict over class reproduction had a distinctively geopolitical character. The Empire’s constant loss of territory created a crisis in the reproduction of the official class: members of bureaucratic households, whom through the generations had began to consider office-holding as an hereditary right, suddenly lost their positions in the wake of military defeat and had to find new posts. The American consul-general in Beirut noted, in 1913, the presence of “hungry Turkish ex-office-holders, belonging to the hereditary office-holding class, of whom a vast horde have been driven out of Tripolitania and Macedonia” (quoted in Haddad 1994: 212). This influx of “foreign” officials from distant provinces replacing local notables fuelled the nascent “national” character of the opposition, which now argued for decentralization and the autonomy of the Arab nation within the Ottoman framework.

The revolution and its aftermath challenged the dominant position of Arab notables in the Levant. The rise of Arabism, as an ideological competitor to Ottomanism, resulted from attempts by these notables to mobilize against the new leadership that the revolution had brought to power in Constantinople:

“To legitimize their opposition to the Young Turks, factions within the elite tapped a number of new intellectual currents which had developed in reaction to or in defense of the forces of modernization and secularization that had penetrated Syria and other parts of the Empire in the course of the nineteenth century. These currents were a mixture of traditional Islamic and modern secularist elements. At their core lay an emphasis on the primacy of the Arabs, their great cultural influence upon Islam, and their language, from which an ideological weapon, Arabism, was fashioned. Using Arabism, disaffected members of the urban elite could both justify and advance their opposition movement” (Khoury 1987: 18-19).

The Arab Revolt, in this perspective, represented a counter-revolutionary movement against the modern ideas of the Young Turk Revolution and the threat it represented to the entrenched class of Levantine notables. The revolt was led by one of the most privileged and respected notable in the Arab provinces: the Sharif of Mecca (see Dawn 1973: Ch. 1). The end of the *ancien régime* in the former Levantine provinces would have to wait another half

century, when Baathist Officers took power in Syria and Iraq.

Conclusion

Revolutions and counter-revolutions are thus large-scale and momentous expressions of the social conflict generated by the expansion of “global modernity”. The transformation of the world order brought by the development of capitalism in England drastically transformed the international hierarchy of power and threw the Eurasian agrarian empires in crisis. The class constellation and balance of power that supported the Ottoman Empire during its “classical” era was derailed. Reform attempts, which aimed at *combining* modernization with conservation of the tributary structure of the empire led to intensified contradictions and struggle, resulting in the outbreak of revolutionary uprising. But in the Levantine province, the entrenched power of the ruling notables could not (yet) be broken, highlighting the protracted and conflicting nature of the spread of modernity in the Middle East.

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