Winning at Land, Losing at Sea: The Greek Revolution and the Intellectual Genealogy of the 'Blue Homeland' Doctrine*

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The recent bi-centenary of the Greek revolution constituted an opportunity for a re-evaluation, and indeed a regeneration, of historiographical interest in an event the importance of which far surpasses Greece.[1] The Greek revolution was the first instance of an independent nation state emerging out of the Ottoman Empire. While there have been several studies on the revolution itself, the question of Turkish perceptions of the Greek Revolution continues to hold several insights, even though it has attracted some interest in the past.[2] Despite the obvious good reasons for this, the broader picture reveals an overall lack of Turkish interest in the subject roughly until the 1990s, when historiographical production gradually developed both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. A new generation of Turkish scholars has successfully synthesized between sources in the two languages and scholarly traditions,[3] a trend that not only concerns the Greek revolution but also other topics of mutual Turco-Greek interest.[4] On the other hand, what we may define as main-

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1 See below for a more comprehensive list of recent works. For the most characteristic publications in Turkish, see Anna Vakali, ed., *1821 Yunan İhtilâli'nin 200. Yıldönümü: Tarihyazımı ve yeni yaklaşımlar*, special issue of *Toplumsal Tarih* 327 (March 2021); Konstantina Andrianopoulou and Anna Vakali, eds., *1821 Yunan Devrimi. Yunan Tarihyazımında Yeni Yaklaşımar* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2021).

2 Leonidas Karakatsanis, "'We', 'They' and the 'Human' in the Middle: Foreign Interventions for 'Humanitarian Reasons' during the Nineteenth Century in Turkish Historiography," *Middle Eastern Studies* 52, no. 2 (2016): 233–59; Leonidas Moiras, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση μέσα από τα μάτια των Οθωμανών* (Athens: Topos, 2020), 16–17; Hercules Millas, "Non-Muslim Minorities in the Historiography of Republican Turkey: the Greek Case," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography,* eds. Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2002), 155–91.

3 Hüseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, "A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2011), 9–11; Vakali, *1821 Yunan İhtilâli*, 12–37; Anna Vakali, *"Those Infidel Greeks": The Greek War of Independence through Ottoman Archival Documents*, 2 Vols. (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2021); Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak, "Making Sense of an Execution: Patriarch Gregory V between the Sublime Porte and the Patriarchate," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 47, no. 1 (2023): 85–102; Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak, "Ottoman Attempts to Define the Rebels During the Greek War of Independence," *Studia Islamica* 114, no. 3 (2019): 316–54; Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak, "Between Submission and Fidelity: Ottoman Muslim Elite's Changing Perceptions of the Greek Orthodox Populations," *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 1 (2020): 89–111.

4 Ayşe Ozil, *Orthodox Christians in the Late Ottoman Empire: A Study of Communal Relations in Anatolia* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013); Ayşe Ozil, *Anadolu Rumları: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Son Döneminde Millet Sistemini Yeniden Düşünmek* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2016); Hasan Çolak and Elif Bayraktar Tellan, *The Orthodox Church as an Ottoman Institution: A Study of Early Modern Patriarchal Berats* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2019); Hasan Çolak, *The Orthodox Church in the Early Modern Middle East: Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusa-*

stream Turkophone historiography has not significantly diverged from the approaches and explanatory schemes proposed during this first century of the Turkish Republic. These largely revolve around the uncritical reproduction of official discourse found in Ottoman documents and historical narratives, which analytically remain engulfed within an ethnocentric epistemological framework.[5]

The terminology used to describe the revolution is indicative: *isyan*, *ihtilal*, *fesad,* or *fitne*, terms conveying the meaning of rebellion, revolt, sedition, anarchy, or mutiny. Equally revealing is the geographical denomination commonly used: *Mora İsyanı* (the Pelopponesian revolt). While it is true that the Peloponnese was a major center of rebellious activity, it was by no means limited to there. Even when the rebels were expelled by Ottoman forces from what is today central Greece, the role of the islands, for example, cannot be overemphasized. In fact, the fleet of the islands constituted one of the key reasons why rebellious Greeks were able to hold on long enough before intervention by the Great Powers gave them their independence against all military realities and odds.

That the 1821 uprising constituted a revolution is, of course, not a given. Much has been written from various perspectives. An earlier Anglophone literature opted for the term "War of Independence,"[6] putting emphasis on the eventual political result. At stake is the revolutionary character of the changes that 1821 ushered in. Current consensus leaves little doubt that by the international recognition of the Greek state in 1830, much had been revolutionized: society was profoundly different,[7] politics, albeit still in dialogue with past Ottoman institutions and structures, creatively blended the old with the new to produce a novel political reality;[8] the same is true of culture, while in the realm of the economy, Mark Mazower is fairly convinced that capitalism was well on its way.[9] Kostas Kostis, who had previously expressed his incredulity towards the appropriateness of the term revolution, by now accepts the characterization.[10]

Turkophone audiences are particularly familiar with discussions on revolution, with reference to Kemalism. In that, the present discussion is of value, especially as the Turkish reluctance to define 1821 as a revolution is not confined to nation-centric circles but also extends to Marxist ones. One pioneer of Turkish Marxism argued in 1941 that the Greek revolution was a national but not a social one, unlike the English, French, and Russian ones.[11] The presumption that the mode of production was not altered may explain the fact that circles of the Turkish Left avoided attributing a rev-

lem and Alexandria (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu/Turkish Historical Society, 2015); Gürhan Yellice, *Ege Adaları Meselesi ve Türk Yunan İlişkilerine Etkisi, 1911–1914*, Second Edition (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2022).

5 For a typical example, see Ali Fuat Örenç, *Balkanlarda İlk Dram. Unuttuğumuz Mora Türkleri ve Eyaletten Bağımsızlığa Yunanistan* (Istanbul: Babıali Kültür Yayıncılığı, 2008).

6 See for example, Richard Clogg, ed., *The Struggle for Greek Independence: Essays to Mark the 150th Anniversary of the Greek War of Independence* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1973).

7 Michalis Sotiropoulos and Antonis Hadjikyriacou, "*Patris*, *Ethnos* and *Demos*: Representation and Political Participation in the Greek World," in *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean, 1750–1860*, eds. Joanna Innes and Mark Philip (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 99–124.

8 Michalis Sotiropoulos and Antonis Hadjikyriacou, "Geriye Adım Atarak Muharebeye Yürümek: 1821'in Siyasi Kavramları ve Devrimler Çağı," in *1821 Yunan Devrimi. Yunan Tarihyazımında Yeni Yaklaşımar*, eds. Konstantina Andrianopoulou and Anna Vakali (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2021), 21–46.

9 See, generally, Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (London: Allen Lane, 2021).

10 Interestingly, however, he still uses the term "War of Independence," even though he accepts the revolutionary character of 1821. Kostas Kostis, "Σκέψεις για τον Ελληνικό Πόλεμο της Ανεξαρτησίας," in *Κατανοώντας τον Πόλεμο της Ανεξαρτησίας*, eds. Elias Kolovos and Kostas Kostis (Athens: Ekdosis Pataki, 2022), 15–33, here 15.

11 Kerim Sadi, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun Dağılma Devri ve Tarihi Maddecilik* (Istanbul: Çeltut Matbaası, 1941), 5.

olutionary character to 1821. Indeed, while a recent special issue of *Toplumsal Tarih* uses the term *ihtilal* in the title, the contributions use the term *devrim*.[12] True, *ihtilal* has a bisemic meaning, connoting both revolt and revolution; yet, *devrim* is unambiguous in denoting the latter.

The starting point of the present chapter are the ways in which republican historiography perceived the Greek revolution by tracing the birth moment of this engagement: Fevzi Kurtoğlu's *The Greek War of Independence and the Battle of Navarino*, published in 1944.[13] The book was the first monograph based on Ottoman sources to become available since 1858 and Cevdet's *History*. To contextualize this work, it provides an overview of the historiographical context by first examining the Ottoman legacy and then the early republican Turkish historiographical foundations; it then examines the book itself, the author and his oeuvre, and the political and intellectual context within which it was produced. Far from being the first of its kind, the book's importance lays in the fact that it puts the maritime dimension of the Greek Revolution at center stage. Considering that Kurtoğlu was a naval officer, this may not be surprising; however, a deeper investigation of the political and intellectual climate reveals a much richer context. The author's thalassocentric approach, at a time when this went against the grain of Kemalist orthodoxy (albeit, by the 1940s, this had somewhat shifted), makes Kurtoğlu a pioneer in considering and arguing for the importance of the sea in Turkish geostrategic considerations. The latter point gives the discussion a present-day relevance, in that it makes Kurtoğlu the intellectual forefather of the currently influential 'Blue Homeland' doctrine. This is important because, regardless of the self-declared historical landmarks that shaped the doctrine such as the Cold War or the 1974 invasion of Cyprus,[14] an earlier historical argument directly (but not exclusively) connected to the Greek revolution had (unintentionally) preceded the articulation of the doctrine and present-day popularity.

The Ottoman Legacy

Cemal Kafadar and Hakan Karateke selected the Greek revolution as the starting point of the chronological table they include in an essay on late Ottoman and early republican historiography.[15] This choice reveals an appreciation of the historical weight of the revolution. Yet, while this awareness leads them to attribute a foundational character for the inauguration of modern Turkish historiography, the revolution itself is entirely absent from the text. If this is understandable given the topic of the essay, it also reflects a broader phenomenon: a general lack of interest in the topic by the founding fathers (and one mother) of Turkish historiography.[16]

That said, it is important to emphasize that the Turkish historiography is extremely diverse: for example, there are works published in Turkish, works by authors based in Turkey, and works by Turkish authors abroad in languages other than Turkish; none of these categories is comprehensive (nor is this categorization exhaustive) or even exclusive of others. These distinctions became established and consolidated in the second half of the twentieth century and developed much more intensively at the turn of the twenty-first.

Be that as it may, until the publication of Kurtoğlu's *The Greek War of Independence*, little was known by way of Ottoman archival documents on the Greek revolution. What was avail-

12 Vakali, *1821 Yunan İhtilâli*.

13 Fevzi Kurtoğlu, *Yunan İstiklal Harbi ve Navarin Muharebesi (Çengeloğlu Tahir Paşa),* 2 vols. (s.l.: Askeri Deniz Matbaası, 1944).

14 Cem Gürdeniz, *Mavi Vatan Makaleleri* (Ankara: Pankuş Yayınları, 2023).

15 Cemal Kafadar and Hakan T. Karateke, "Late Ottoman and Early Republican Turkish Historical Writing," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, Vol. 4: 1800–1945*, eds. Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maiguashca, and Attila Pók (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 559–77, here 576.

16 For a discussion, see Ilicak, "A Radical Rethinking," 9–14.

able from an Ottoman-Turkish point of view largely reproduced official Ottoman discourse[17] and was based on court histories, the narratives of high-raking officials, bureaucrats, intellectuals, and eye-witnesses.[18] These sources constitute a repetition of the same narrative with some nuanced minor differentiations.[19] The main arguments and views reproduced can be codified thus:

- 1821 started as a foreign-instigated event, unjustifiably turning an internal matter into an international one: thus, the West bore heavy responsibility by undermining the Empire and its territorial integrity.
- The revolution broke out at time of weakening of Ottoman power due to the corruption and arbitrary rule of local powerholders and the janissaries.
- Tepedelenli Ali Pasha played a crucial role as an 'internal enemy' with his contacts with the rebels.

17 Şânîzâde Mehmet 'Atâ'ullah Efendi, *Şânî-zâde Târîhî: 1223–1237/1808–1821,* 2 Vols., ed. Ziya Yılmazer (Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2008); Ziya Yılmazer, ed., *Vak'a-nüvis Es'ad Efendi Tarihi (Bahir Efendi'nin Zeyl ve İlâveleriyle): 1237–1241/1821–1826* (Istanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 2000); Fahri Maden and Mustafa Eğilmez, eds., *Vahid Paşa'nın Hayatı. Sakız Vak'ası* (Istanbul: Roza Yayınevi, 2013); Ömer Koçyığıt, ed., *Kabudlu Mustafa Vasfi Efendi: Tevârîh (Analysis—Text—Maps—Index—Facsimile)* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 2016); Ahmet Aydin, "Mir Yusuf Tarihi: Metin ve Tahlil" (MA thesis, University of Marmara, 2002); Sofia Laiou and Marinos Sariyannis, "Kişisel Bir Anlatı Olarak Hatırat: Moralı Yusuf Bey ve Kabudlu Vasfi Efendi'nin Metinleri," in *1821 Yunan Devrimi. Yunan Tarihyazımında Yeni Yaklaşımar*, eds. Konstantina Andrianopoulou and Anna Vakali (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2021), 241–56; Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, 2 Vols., eds. Bilge Bozkurt and Mustafa Güçlükol, trans. A. Basad Kocaoğlu (Istanbul: İlgi Kültür Sanat, 2011).

18 For a discussion of these works, see Sophia Laiou and Marinos Sariyannis, *Οθωμανικές αφηγήσεις για την Ελληνική Επανάσταση. Από τον Γιουσούφ Μπέη στον Αχμέτ Τζεβντέτ Πασά* (Athens: NHRF/IHR, 2019); Moiras, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση*; Karabıçak, "Ottoman Attempts;" Hüseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, "Revolutionary Athens through Ottoman Eyes (1821–1828): New Evidence from the Ottoman State Archives," in *Ottoman Athens: Archaeology, Topography, History*, eds. Maria Georgopoulou and Konstantinos Thanasakis (Athens: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2019), 243–89; Hüseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, "Greek War of Independence and the Demise of the Janissary Complex: A New Interpretation of the 'Auspicious Incident'," in *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire. Halcyon Days in Crete IX, A Symposium Held in Rethymno, 9–11 2015*, ed. Marinos Sariyannis (Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2019), 483–93; Irini Kalogeropoulou, "Ζητήματα ανεφοδιασμού και πειθαρχίας στο πολιορκούμενο φρούριο της Πάτρας (1821–1825), Η Μαρτυρία του στρατιωτικού διοικητή Γιουσούφ Μουχλίς Πασά," in *Όψεις της Επανάστασης του 1821, Πρακτικά συνεδρίου, Αθήνα 12–13 Ιουνίου 2015,* eds. Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Christos Loukos, and Panagiotis D. Mihailaris (Athens: EMNE-Mnemon, 2018), 45–58; Dilek Özkan, "The Final Phase of the Greek Revolution: Delimitation, Determination and Demarcation of the First Greek Boundary in Ottoman Sources," in *European Revolutions and the Ottoman Balkans. Nationalism, Violence and Empire in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitris Stamatopoulos (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 111–37; Hakan Erdem, "'Do not Think of the Greeks as Agricultural Labourers': Ottoman Responses to the Greek War of Independence," in *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, eds. Faruk Birtek and Thalia Dragonas (London: Routledge, 2005), 78–82; Hakan Erdem, "Perfidious Albanians and Zealous Governors: Ottomans, Albanians and Turks in the Greek War of Independence," in *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760–1850: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation*, eds. Antonis Anastasopoulos and Elias Kolovos (Rethymno: University of Crete, Department of History and Archaeology, 2007), 214–40; Hakan Erdem, "The Greek Revolt and the End of the Old Ottoman Order," in *The Greek Revolution of 1821: A European Event*, ed. Petros Pizanias (Istanbul: Isis, 2011), 257–64; John C. Alexander, "Yusuf bey al-Moravi on the Siege and Capture of Tripolitsa in 1821," in *Μνήμη Πηνελόπης Στάθη. Μελέτες Ιστορίας και φιλολογίας*, eds. Kostas Lappas, Antonis Anastasopoulos, and Elias Kolovos (Herakleio: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis Kritis, 2010), 139–55; Sophia Laiou, "The Greek Revolution in the Morea according to the Description of an Ottoman Official," in *The Greek Revolution of 1821: A European Event*, ed. Petros Pizanias (Istanbul: Isis, 2011), 241–55; Sophia Laiou, "Η συμμετοχή των Σαμίων στην επανάσταση του 1821 και η αντίδραση του οθωμανικού κράτους," in *1821. Σάμος και επανάσταση, Πρακτικά συνεδρίου* (Samos: Genika Archeia tou Kratous-Archeia Nomou Samou, 2011), 41–56.

19 Ilicak, "A Radical Rethinking," 14.

- That the Greeks occupied an important position in trade brought them into closer contact with the West, leading to the proliferation of Enlightenment ideas and the development of national consciousness.

- The rebels breached the Ottoman/Islamic social contract based on the tolerance of non-Muslim otherness in exchange for submission; this turned the conflict into one of Islam vs. Christianity.

Overall, in between the lines one can detect a sense of injustice in the conduct of the rebels towards the Ottoman state, whereby the Rum subjects of the Sultan betrayed and backstabbed the Empire; at the same time, there is indignation against Europe for supporting the rebels and working behind the stage to weaken the Empire. Resentment emerges as a strong sentiment in reading these histories—though the same is true in the opposite direction.

It is worth further examining some more specific dimensions of the above tendencies, which will help better conceptualize the subsequent perception of the Greek revolution by Turkish historiography, especially until the 1950s. The most widespread and popular one concerns foreign instigation.[20] Both France and Russia are thus considered crucial factors behind the revolution, to the degree of stripping the rebels of their agency. If, in the former case, the influence of revolutionary ideas is obvious, in the case of Russia the situation is more complicated. The deep Russophobia of the Ottoman state is an important element here. Mahmud II, for example, was deeply convinced of Russian intervention despite the declared—and sincere—distaste of Petersburg for any revolutionary activity as a matter of principle.[21]

While the Ottomans had every reason to distrust Russia, not all evidence presented by historians substantiate these fears. Indicative is the interpretation of a letter by Kapodistrias, minister of the Czar at the time and subsequent first Governor of independent Greece, during a visit to Corfu in 1819. Şani-zade, an official court historian, reports this visit and takes Kapodistrias' conspiratory activities for granted and misinterprets the letter as incitement to revolution. Kapodistrias' revulsion at revolutionary activities is well-documented; more to the point, however, is the fact that what he discusses in the letter is the development of education, advising against any activity that would overturn the status quo.[22] This misinterpretation by Şani-zade became so embedded in subsequent Turkish historiography that even historians directly opposed to nation-centric views, such as Taner Timur, attribute to Kapodistrias the role of a leading figure of the *Philiki Etaireia*, the secret society behind the outbreak of the revolution.[23] That said, more recent works by Turkish authors working on the Greek revolution and who know Greek, and are thereby able to synthesize sources and historiographies like Şükrü Ilıcak or Yusuf Karabıçak, have diverged from such tendencies.[24]

Another significant trope is the overall sense that the Greek revolution, or any national movement within the empire, was an act of ingratitude and treachery towards the Ottoman state. Indeed, the terms used in Ottoman documentation (*ihanet*, *hain*) directly point to this.[25] Şani-zade describes an incident prior to the revolution when a Rum grocer had threatened a group of Muslims, talking of the maritime power of his co-religionists and how this in the future would turn the tables. When the revolution broke out, his Muslim interlocutors

20 See, for example, the analysis of Şani-zade in Moiras, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση*, 111–12.

21 Ilicak, "A Radical Rethinking," 172–79.

22 Laiou and Sariyannis, *Οθωμανικές αφηγήσεις*, 33–34.

23 Taner Timur, *Osmanlı Çalışmaları: İlkel Feodalizmden Yarı Sömürge Ekonomisine* (Istanbul: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2003), 134.

24 Ilicak, "A Radical Rethinking;" Vakali, *"Those Infidel Greeks;"* Karabıçak, "Making Sense of an Execution;" Karabıçak, "Ottoman Attempts to Define the Rebels," 316–54; Karabıçak, "Between Submission and Fidelity."

25 See, indicatively, Ottoman Archives, Istanbul, C.ADL. 1342, D.BŞM.MHF.d. 13323, C.DH. 2115, HAT 16506.

remembered those words and were offended of his 'ungrateful' behavior and infuriated by their inability to take revenge.[26]

What is the ungratefulness that Şani-zade refers to, and what is the deeper meaning of the Ottoman perception of backstabbing? If there is one point of deep and unbridgeable break that modernity brought, it was the rejection of the status of the protected non-Muslim, a status that entails the acceptance of the superiority of Islam. It was this novelty that renounced a centuries-long social contract. Ottoman tolerance, one of the cornerstones of multi-confessional coexistence in the empire and unmatched elsewhere in Europe, was not unconditional.[27] Useful, in this instance, is the notion of antagonistic tolerance by anthropologist Robert Hayden, which accurately describes the dynamics of interconfessional coexistence where different groups have asymmetric relations of power.[28]

Thus, Ottoman tolerance came with strings attached; it entailed submission, acceptance of a second class-subject status, and hierarchies of an intersectional nature. That ethno-religious ones acquired prominence during the age of nation-state building in the nineteenth century is not to say other cleavages that marked difference such as gender or social class ceased to exist. But it did mark the end of a long period when power and authority were uncontested, even if the new structures that replaced the old ones remained far from the ideals they preached. Be that as it may, Ottoman claims to tolerance require a critical evaluation, just as the emancipatory declarations of the national ideologies that replaced them.

The questioning of Ottoman sovereignty by the rebels was the cause of surprise and indignation evident in many of the Ottoman texts examined here.[29] Equally important, however, is to not take at face value the ideological and Islamic language employed in these texts. Even if the source of Muslim superiority was religious, its renunciation was also a material, not only an ideological, condition. It is in this context that the notion of antagonistic tolerance is crucial to understanding the perceptions of the Greek revolution in Turkey.

The Early Republican Historiographical Foundations

These tropes and motifs continue to persist in early republican historiography but in very different ways and in an entirely new context. Upon its foundation, the Turkish Republic was faced with a conundrum regarding its historical past: the Turkish War of Independence was fought upon the ruins of an Empire, much of the legacy of which seemed an anachronism and constituted an anathema.[30] Much as this

26 Moiras, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση*, 121.

27 Eleni Gara and Yorgos Tzedopoulos, *Χριστιανοί και μουσουλμάνοι στην Οθωμανική Αυτοκρατορία. Θεσμικό πλαίσιο και κοινωνικές δυναμικές* (Athens: Σύνδεσμος Ελληνικών Ακαδημαϊκών Βιβλιοθηκών, 2015), 20–21.

28 Robert M. Hayden, "Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites in South Asia and the Balkans," *Current Anthropology* 43, no. 2 (2002): 205–31; Robert M. Hayden et al., *Antagonistic Tolerance: Competitive Sharing of Religious Sites and Spaces* (Abington, New York: Routledge, 2016).

29 Moiras, *Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση*, 125.

30 Büşra Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de "Resmî Tarih" Tezinin Oluşumu (1929–1937)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2018); Büşra Ersanlı, "The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era: A Theory of Fatal Decline," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography,* eds. Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2002), 115–54; Büşra Ersanlı, "History Textbooks as Reflections of the Political Self: Turkey (1930s and 1990s) and Uzbekistan (1990s)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34, no. 2 (2002): 337–49; Kafadar and Karateke, "Late Ottoman," 572–76; Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks, and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 9–28; Kristin Fabbe, *Disciples of the State? Religion and State-Building in the Former Ottoman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 83–127; Veronika Hager, "A Past, so Distant, and Yet so Very Near: *Belleten* and the Creation of a Historiographical Rupture," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 24 (2017); Enver Ziya Karal, "Historiography in Turkey Today," *Middle Eastern Affairs* 10 (1959): 318–25; Erdem Sönmez, "A Past to be Forgotten? Writing Ottoman History in Early Republican Turkey," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 48, no. 4 (2021): 753–69; Christine

seemed clear in the realm of construction of a novel political ideology, whereby the Ottoman past was a historical deflection, this relationship remained ambiguous. This ambiguity led to a series of tensions, largely stemming from the conscious, unconscious, or subconscious assumption that Ottoman history is Turkish national history. For example, 'successes' were Turkish and 'failures' were Ottoman.

In this sense, that the Greek revolution constituted a historical failure meant that this was an Ottoman one. As such, the absence of historiographical interest on behalf of Turkish scholars should raise no eyebrows. Of the thousands of conference papers published under the auspices of the Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*) in the context of its well-established Congress, only four address the Greek revolution.[31] The first one came in 1981, almost five decades after the inaugural meeting, by Romanian historian Valeriu Veliman. The first paper presented by a Turkish historian came in 1999.[32]

The ambiguity with which early republican historiography treated the Ottoman past is therefore transformed into an awkward silence in the case of the Greek revolution. In the words of Şükrü Ilıcak,

> [t]o the Turkish historian of the early Republican period, keen to distance the nascent Turkish nation from its Ottoman past and burdened by the unique historical oddity of fighting a war of independence against the very same enemy that had engaged in its own war of independence against the Ottoman state a century earlier (although neither party recognize the other side's struggle as being a war of independence), the Greek War of Independence was a non-issue.[33]

These tensions, and the resulting silence, illustrate the lack of systematic engagement with the Greek revolution by Turkish historians in the first decades following the foundation of the Republic. While it was not until 1944 when such an engagement would appear in the form of a monograph, we can trace the position of the Greek revolution in larger historical narratives. Two examples suffice to illustrate this but also identify the subtle changes between them, largely the result of the shifting intellectual and political climate in the country. These examples come from two of the founding fathers of Turkish historiography: Yusuf Akçura and Enver Ziya Karal.

Neither of them offers a radical break from existing conceptualizations, but they choose to emphasize particular dimensions that carry their own significance. Writing in 1935, Akçura encounters a different contradiction: his key historical argument comes from the realm of ideas, emphasizing the role of the Enlighten-

M. Philliou, "When the Clock Strikes Twelve: The Inception of an Ottoman Past in Early Republican Turkey," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 1 (2011): 172–73; Christine M. Philliou, *Turkey: A Past Against History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021); Gavin D. Brockett, "When Ottomans become Turks: Commemorating the Conquest of Constantinople and its Contribution to World History," *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 2 (2014): 408–12; Alev Çınar, "National History as a Contested Site: the Conquest of Istanbul and Islamist Negotiations of the Nation," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 2 (2001): 369–71; Nicholas Danforth, "Multi-Purpose Empire: Ottoman History in Republican Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 4 (2014): 655–78; Nicholas Danforth, "The Ottoman Empire from 1923 to Today: In Search of a Usable Past," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2016): 5–27; Nicholas Danforth, *The Remaking of Republican Turkey: Memory and Modernity since the Fall of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

31 Valeriu Veliman, "Osmanlı Devleti ve Roman prensliklerinde 1821 senesi olayları," in *IX. Türk Tarih Kongresi. Ankara, 21–25 Eylül 1981, Kongreye sunulan bildiriler*, Vol. 2 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1981), 967–75.

32 Nedim İpek, "Rum İsyanı ve Sonrasında Türk-Yunan Nüfusu Meselesi," in *XIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi, Ankara, 4–8 Ekim 1999*, *Kongreye sunulan bildiriler*, Vol. 3, Part 1 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2002), 471–85.

33 Ilicak, "A Radical Rethinking," 14.

ment in his narrative regarding both the emergence of modern Turkey[34] and the Greek revolution. On the one hand, he avoids using terms like *isyan*, *fesad*, or *fitne*, which carry more negative connotations, and opts for *ihtilal*, carrying the double meaning of revolt/revolution. It is interesting that he adds the adjective "great" (*Büyük Yunan ihtilalı*), thereby implying that it was more like a revolution than a simple rebellion. In fact, Kemaleddin Şükrü, writing in 1931, uses the same terms for the French revolution.[35] Akçura, therefore, acknowledges the emancipatory capacity of the Enlightenment, one that is central to his narrative for the Turkish Republic. On the other hand, however, he does not avoid discussing the "secession of Greece" (*Yunanistan ayrılması*), thereby rearticulating the imperial trauma in an era of republican politics.[36]

Similar to Akçura, Karal also does not significantly diverge from the patterns discussed above other than to underscore and deepen his understanding of particular ones. Interesting, in this sense, is his university training in France (1926–1933) and influence from the *Annales* school. In one of the passages discussing the preceding events to the revolution, he emphasizes the geographic distribution of the Greek Orthodox populations (which he interchangeably calls Greeks [Yunan], *Rum*, and Christian) alongside the coastlines of the Empire. In making this connection with geography, he attempts to explain why maritime trade and activities were concentrated among them, thereby opening channels for economic, ideological, and political ties with the West, which instigated, according to Karal, the revolution itself.

In remaining faithful to the main patterns discussed above, he also reproduces certain important misconceptions. For example, when referring to the *Philiki Etaireia*, he misidentifies it as the "*Ethniki Etaireia*," another secret group composed several decades later in 1894 and which promoted the irredentist program of the "Great Idea" (*Megali Idea*) with the objective of uniting all Greeks within or without of the country. Karal's misnomer is no simple mistake: it is a persistent motif in Turkish historiography identifying *Philiki Etaireia* with the *Megali Idea*—when the former was founded in 1814, while the latter was first articulated by Ioannis Kolettis in 1844. So persistent is the (mis)identification of the *Megali Idea* with the Greek revolution in Turkish historiography that, six decades later, Halil İnalcık also reproduces this inaccuracy, thereby constructing an ideological monolith vis a vis Greek irridentism,[37] ignoring the many differentiations and conflicting agendas within it.

Before moving on to discuss Kurtoğlu's contribution, a few words will suffice for the subsequent evolution of Turkish historiographical perceptions of the Greek revolution, even though the topic remains outside the temporal limits of this essay. It was not until the 1950s, when the Ottoman historical past, and its Islamic character in particular, started to be gradually, but eventually radically, reconceptualized, leading to the present-day paradigm of Turco-Islamic synthesis in the aftermath of the Evren dictatorship in the 1990s.[38] During

34 On the importance and significance of Akçura in the formation and shaping of Turkish nationalism and a nation-centric historical narrative, see François Georgeon, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri. Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935)*, trans. Alev Er (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996).

35 Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans*, 43–44.

36 Yusuf Akçura, *Osmanlı Devletinin Dağılma Devri (XVlll. ve XIX. asırlarda)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1988), 17—20.

37 Halil İnalcık, *Türklük Müslümanlık ve Osmanlı Mirası* (Istanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2016), 312. In another article, İnalcık incorrectly mentions that the *Philiki Etaireia* was subsequently renamed *Ethniki Etaireia*. See Halil İnalcık, "Helinizm, Megali İdea ve Türkiye," *Doğu Batı* 31 (2005): 15–24, here 17.

38 On the occasion of the anniversary of 700 years of the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, a 12 volume collective work was published in 1999. The publication contained 810 contributions, including some of the biggest names in the field internationally. The approach and underlying narrative was in line with the ideological tents of Turco-Islamic synthesis. The editors extend their thanks to three individuals, one of which is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who was serving a prison sentence

this period, one can observe the first stages of the process that replaced Kemalist modernity with Islamic modernization in the constitution of state and society. By then, the Ottoman past and its Islamic character were organically integrated in the Turkish national narrative.

With reference to the Greek revolution and its reception in Turkish historiography, what is worth noting is that this paradigm shift is not the result of a new methodological approach that leads to new questions, for example through the lens of social or intellectual history. Similarly, subfields such as economic history remain completely absent in the Turkish historiography of the Greek revolution. Nor is the new paradigm the result of a new reading of the sources, let alone a new body of sources which could have overturned existing knowledge. The sources remain the same and reflect the vantage point of the state, which is in turn reproduced by nation-centric historians regardless of political leanings. In this context, new narratives do not produce new knowledge; they merely confirm, enrich, and mainly reinterpret historical certainties depending on the (internal or external) political conjuncture.

Kurtoğlu's the Greek War of Independence

Eighty-six years had elapsed since the publication of a book containing Ottoman archival material and offering a consistent narrative of the Greek Revolution when, in 1944, Fevzi Kurtoğlu's *The Greek War of Independence* appeared.[39] This was a book that did not leave an impact on Turkish historiography: it is sometimes referenced as a staple work but never extensively discussed or analyzed. Therefore, it attracted little attention. This is for good reason: the author was not among the noteworthy historians of his time and was certainly not part of the Turkish historical establishment. At first glance, this is a relatively unremarkable book. It is fairly descriptive and cites extensive passages from primary sources, while it uses material from other works on the verge of plagiarism. If there is one element that stands out, it is the 68 transcribed Ottoman documents in the appendices of the two volumes. Why should such a work concern us?

One element that attracts attention is the title: Kurtoğlu is the first author in the twentieth century to put the Turkish and Greek wars of independence on an equal footing. While it is unclear exactly when the book was written, it is reasonable to assume that the choice in title reflected the positive climate in Turco-Greek relations following the 1930 pact,[40] as well as the 1934 Balkan pact in which the two countries participated. That the pact became a dead letter in 1941 on account of the Nazi occupation of Greece does not necessitate a reversal of this climate. Indeed, the author goes as far as to call Kanaris, the renowned Greek admiral who burnt many an Ottoman ship, "a great hero."[41] In fact, this is a direct translation of a French text[42] from which Kurtoğlu borrowed liberally without referencing; yet, the choice to include this evaluation in his text still remains impressive.

Here is where the influence of the positive climate in Greek-Turkish relations ends. The author abides by all the above-described patterns of Turkish historiographical engagement with the Greek revolution. Thus, the emphasis on foreign instigation or the use of terms such as revolt, mutiny, bandits, etc., persist,

at the time for reciting a poem with a politically Islamic content. To mention his name in the midst of the politically controversial climate of the period carries special significance and weight. Equally interesting is the title of the abridged English version of the collection, as is the name of the publisher: Kemal Çiçek, ed., *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, 4 Vols. (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 1999); Kemal Çiçek and Cem Oğuz, eds., *Osmanlı*, 12 Vols. (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 1999).

39 Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, Vol. 6 (Istanbul: Dar üṭ-ṭibaat ül-amire Matbaası, 1858).

40 Damla Demirözü and A. Petsas, "The Repercussions of the 1930 Greek-Turkish Rapprochement in Turkey," *Balkan Studies* 46 (2012): 61–79.

41 Kurtoğlu, *Yunan İstiklal Harbi*, Vol. 1, 56.

42 Jean Pierre Edmond Jurien de La Gravière, *La station du Levant*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Plon, 1876), 325–27.

meaning the work is firmly embedded within a nation-centric framework.

What does make the book stand out and constitutes an original contribution is the fact it adopts a staunchly maritime perspective. In fact, if one knew nothing about the Greek revolution, after reading this book, they would have the impression that this was a war essentially fought at sea. The author starts the book with a description of the islands, discusses the intricate details of ports, such as their depth or the role of winds, includes several detailed maps, describes how many of the citadels of the Peloponnese would be approached or would look from the sea, and includes several maritime terms (on winds, types of sails, ship/boat parts, etc.) that would be incomprehensible to a layperson. Overall, the latent argument between the lines of the book is that the Greek revolution was a war won on land and lost at sea by the Ottomans.

Indicative of the author's thalassocentric approach are the titles of the subsections of the three first chapters of the book:

> Chapter 1: The Greek [*Yunan*] revolt. The Septinsular Republic – Nautical islands – The shores of Mani and Peloponnesian peninsula.
>
> Chapter 2: The operations of 1821/1236. The Ethniki [sic.] Etaireia – How the revolt started – The measures Hurşid Paşa took – What the Porte did – At the port of Izmir – New measures – The exit of pirates to the sea – The rebellion of Samos – The admiral's fleet in danger – When the Turkish [sic] fleet departed – The Mansuriye galleon – The fleets of Tunis and Egypt – The rebellion of Ayvalık – The expedition of Patrona Muhtar Bey – The rebel fleet encountered the Turco-Egyptian fleet – The surrender of Navarino [Anavarin] and Monemvasia [Menekşe].
>
> Chapter 3: The operations of 1822/1238 and 1823/1239. The munity expands – The siege of Chios [Sakız] – The admiralship of Nasuhoğlu Ali Paşa – The death of Kapudan Ali Paşa – The rebellion of Crete [Girit] – Attack on the island of Kasos [Kaşot] – At the island of Cyprus [Kıbrıs] – At the islands before the Straights – In the waters of the Pelponnese – Following the execution of Tepedelenli Ali Paşa – The expedition of Hüsrev Paşa in 1823 – Hüsrev Mehmet Paşa – Hüsrev Paşa in the Aegean Sea.[43]

A second observation that emerges concerns the simplistic language used by the author, even in the titles of these subsections. This is, again, understandable on account of the fact that he had not been a professional historian with an academic background. He was a naval officer who had taught for a while at the Naval College.

Inherent in this argument is a subtle, yet clear, criticism of Ottoman neglect of maritime affairs. Kurtoğlu suggests that the lack of Muslim naval force accounts to a large extent for the successes of the rebels—indeed, he extensively discusses how the loss of Greek Orthodox sailors due to the revolution meant that the Ottomans had to rely either on inexperienced Muslim sailors or hire expensive Italian ones. The book opens with a table of all Ottoman ships in 1781, where 222 large ships are listed: 174 of those (80%) belonged to Greek Orthodox subjects of the Sultan.[44] At times, Kurtoğlu says this openly: he discusses how, while the Ottomans were turning their attention to the larger islands, "the ports where Greek sailors got together were neither large islands nor the shores of Anatolia or Greece; they got together at the rocky, hard-to-get-to smaller islands that Turkish commanders did not bother taking control of."[45] At another point, he mentions how the rebels were fully aware of the importance of the sea, since "in

43 Kurtoğlu, *Yunan İstiklal Harbi*, iii.

44 Kurtoğlu, *Yunan İstiklal Harbi*, 56.

45 Kurtoğlu, *Yunan İstiklal Harbi*, 3.

case the Turkish fleet were to be destroyed, then the Turkish army would encounter great difficulties having lost the maritime front."[46]

A thalassocentric approach may not raise an eyebrow for a naval officer. Could there be something more than sheer professional obsession to this perspective? Born in 1890, Kurtoğlu received his basic education in Ottoman Turkish. This means that he was part of the generation that was able to use both the Arabic and Latin alphabet of Turkish after the Language Reform of 1928. As a result, he had access to documentation in what was by then a dead language. That he had a particular historical curiosity and the ability to come up with a synthesis, but not a doctoral training in history, meant that his work was more akin to that of an amateur historian. Having taught at the Naval Academy, between 1928 and 1931, he was Director of the Naval Department of the General Staff's Institute for Military History. It was in this context that he produced much of his publications, having authored over 25 books before he died of fatigue in 1945.[47]

Some indicative titles of his books include *The Naval Battles of the Turks*,[48] *Our Maritime Heroes*,[49] *The Services of the Turks to the Art of Naval Warfare*,[50] *History of the Russian Black Sea Fleet*,[51] *The Memoirs of a Turkish Sailor who Participated in the 1736–37 Expedition*,[52] and *Cezayrili Hasan Pasha and the Mediterranean Expedition of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74*.[53] In short, naval history is at the center of almost all of his books and research, while the vast majority of his work concerns the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. What was the political and intellectual environment in which he composed his books?

The Political and Intellectual Context

What is remarkable about Kurtoğlu's work is that his constant engagement with all things maritime diverges from the Kemalist geostrategic vision of confining Turkey to its land borders, at least in the first decade of the Republic. The overall diplomatic environment at the time supported Mustafa Kemal's vision for building a nation within a Turkish-Muslim territorially-bounded homeland that refrained from looking outwards, and towards the sea more particularly. Relations with the countries it had maritime borders with had smoothed after Lausanne: Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union. In the aftermath of the War of Independence, the Navy was generally considered as having suspicious loyalties, given their attachment with the Ottoman regime. Therefore, senior officers were not trusted. This was clearly not the case with Kurtoğlu, who was a man of the new regime, occupying positions of significant responsibility and on good terms with the establishment. But it did mean that there was little incentive on behalf of the young Republic to invest in its naval infrastructures.[54]

By the 1930s, the situation had changed. At that time, the Mediterranean became a con-

46 Kurtoğlu, *Yunan İstiklal Harbi*, 6.

47 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Fevzi Kurdoğlu," *Belleten* 9, no. 36 (1945): 505–8.

48 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Türklerin Deniz Muharebeleri*, 2 Vols. (Istanbul: Deniz Matbaası, 1932).

49 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Deniz Kahramanlarımız* (Istanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitaphanesi, 1931).

50 Ali Haydar Alpagot and Fevzi Kurtoğlu, *Türklerin deniz harp san'atine hizmeti* (Istanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1934).

51 Mozgfesky, *Rus Karadeniz filosu tarihi*, ed. Fevzi Kurtoğlu (Istanbul: Deniz Matbaası, 1935).

52 Fevzi Kurtoğlu, *1736–1737 seferine iştirak eden bir Türk denizcisinin hatıraları. 200 sene evvel yazılmıştır* (Istanbul: Deniz Matbaası, 1935).

53 Fevzi Kurtoğlu, *1768–1774 Türk-Rus harbinde Akdeniz harekâtı ve Cezayirli Gazi Hasan Paşa* (Istanbul: Genelkurmay Başkanlığı IX Deniz Şubesi, 1942). For a full list of Kurtoğlu's publications, see Uzunçarşılı, "Fevzi Kurdoğlu," 506–7.

54 Serhat Güvenç and Dilek Barlas, "Atatürk's Navy: Determinants of Turkish Naval Policy, 1923–38," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 26, no. 1 (2003): 1–35; Dilek Barlas and Serhat Güvenç, "To Build a Navy with the Help of Adversary: Italian-Turkish Naval Arms Trade, 1929–32," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 4 (2002): 143–68.

tested maritime space. Mussolini's *Mare Nostrum* policy upset the balance between the two existing colonial powers of Britain and France for hegemony over the Mediterranean. Indeed, this was not unrelated to Braudel's interest in composing his magnum opus.

How did this affect Turkey and how is it be related to Kurtoğlu? Mussolini's declarations for expansion in the Mediterranean reasonably attracted the attention of Turkish foreign policy and security circles.[55] There were three regions where Turkey felt exposed. The first, and more direct one, was Antalya, persistently contested by Mussolini on account of the Italian control over the Dodecanese.[56] A recent contribution has questioned the deterioration of relations between the two countries, the degree to which Italy constituted a threat to Turkey, and whether it was even perceived as such by Turkish policy makers. It does, however, acknowledge that Mussolini's declarations provided a "useful propaganda benefit of a popular perception of threat" that the latter employed, developed, and cultivated.[57] Indeed, this is most visible in the second geographical area of interest: Thrace. According to a scenario entertained at the time, Italian influence over Albania and good relations with Bulgaria and other neighboring countries meant that an Italian invasion into the Balkans through the Adriatic crossing all the way to Istanbul was possible. It was this perceived threat and the cultivation of this fear that led to the 1934 pogrom against the Jewish population of Edirne,[58] considered as possible fifth columnists that would collaborate with the invaders on account of their non-Muslim status. Finally, a third, less-known dimension of the geostrategic threat posed by Italy concerned Cyprus.

Although never publicly proclaimed as part of Italian claims for Mediterranean supremacy, Cyprus caused concern for Ankara as a possible future case of regime change. British sovereignty over the island was a convenient arrangement for Turkey that caused little concern—indeed, the documentary evidence in the Turkish Republic Archives and the Foreign Ministry Archives until 1930 consists of only 129 documents (34 and 95, respectively). Britain was a reliable ally,[59] and Ankara was content with the colonial status of Cyprus and ready to support it as long as its configurations did not change.

This was going to change. In the period immediately subsequent of equal length, Cyprus appears to attract increased interest, evident in the proliferation of bureaucratic production: 220 documents in total. Whatever

55 Dilek Barlas, "Friends or Foes? Diplomatic Relations Between Italy and Turkey, 1923–1936," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 2 (2004): 231–52; Dilek Barlas, "Turkish Diplomacy in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. Opportunities and Limits for Middle-Power Activism in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 40, no. 3 (2005): 441–64. On how Italy was a preoccupation for Turkey with reference to Alexandretta, see Hazal Papuççular, "Hatay Meselesine Bölgesel Bir Bakış: 1930'larda Akdeniz'de Uluslararası Durum ve Türk Dış Politikası," in *Anavatana Katılışının 80. Yılında Hatay Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı*, eds. Erdem Ünlen H. Aytuğ and Tokur (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 2020), 755–69.

56 Hazal Papuççular, "İki Savaş Arası Dönem Türk Dış ve Güvenlik Politikasında Oniki Ada, 1923–1929," *History Studies, International Journal of History* 9, no. 5 (2017): 143–54; Hazal Papuççular, "Fragile Balances: Turkish Foreign Policy on the Sovereignty of the Dodecanese Islands (1940–1947)," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 20, no. 5 (2018): 405–19; Hazal Papuççular, "War or Peace? The Dodecanese Islands in Turkish Foreign and Security Policy, (1923–1947)" (PhD diss., Boğaziçi University, 2015); Brock Millman, "Turkish Foreign and Strategic Policy 1934–42," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 3 (1995): 483–508, here 486.

57 Mehmet Doğar, "The Place of Italy in Turkish Foreign Policy in the 1930s," *Middle Eastern Studies* 58, no. 1 (2022): 48–69, here 51.

58 Ayhan Aktar, "*Η Τουρκία ανήκει στους Τούρκους". Το κράτος και οι μη μουσουλμανικές κοινότητες στην Τουρκία. Εκτοπισμοί, Ανταλλαγή των Πληθυσμών και Φόρος Περιουσίας 1918–1945* (Limassol: Heterotopia, 2015), 247–51.

59 Dilek Barlas and Seçkin Barış Gülmez, "Turkish–British Relations in the 1930s: from Ambivalence to Partnership," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 5 (2019): 827–40.

the reasons for this, Italy was part of it. Ankara closely monitored all things Italian,[60] from the visits of warships to the purchase of donkeys for the military,[61] and a meeting of the High Commissioner with Mussolini regarding the construction of a gasoline storage facility in the port city of Larnaca.[62] A report was even authored concerning the publication of a history book entitled *War against Turkey in Cyprus and Lepanto*.[63] These documents indicate the Turkish Foreign Ministry's anxiety over a possible sovereignty change in Cyprus whereby, if it involved Italy, this would mean a maritime border stretching from the Dodecanese to Cyprus, effectively sealing off almost half of the western Anatolian coast and the whole of the southern one.

Once more, regardless of how realistic such a scenario was, the fact of the matter remains that it attracted Turkish attention to the Mediterranean. Moreover, if in the interwar period competition over Mediterranean supremacy was largely ideological and did not escalate, during the Second World War, it turned into outright conflict between the Axis powers and the Allies. Farther north at the Black Sea maritime border, by the mid-1930s, the originally close relations between Turkey and the Soviet Union went sour, eventually collapsing by the end of the Second World War.

It was in this intellectual and political climate of the interwar period that Kurtoğlu composed his books. These were the news reports that he would have heard on the radio or read about in the press. While a direct causal relationship cannot be established, the foci of his research interests should not escape our attention. Shortly before his death, Kurtoğlu was working on two more books, which remained uncompleted: *Turks in the Mediterranean* and *The Expedition of Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa in France*.[64] Another indication that further substantiates such a hypothesis comes from his book on the Greek revolution. The final incident narrated by Kurtoğlu concerns Çengeloğlu Tahir Paşa, the vice-admiral (*Patrona*) of the Ottoman fleet in the Battle of Navarino. Kurtoğlu shifts his focus from the Greek revolution and fastforwards to 1830, when Çengeloğlu Tahir Paşa was sent to Algeria to confront the French navy.[65] If the Greek revolution seems irrelevant to the subsequent French occupation of Algeria, one may surmise that Kurtoğlu saw a direct connection between the end of Ottoman presence in the Greek peninsula to that in the western Mediterranean. As if to underline this connection, he added the name of Çengeloğlu Tahir Paşa as the subtitle of his book: *The Greek War of Independence and the Battle of Navarino (Çengeloğlu Tahir Paşa)*. Equally interesting is the fact that he devoted five books to the maritime confrontations of the Ottoman Empire and Russia. It is therefore improbable that his interest in the Mediterranean or the Black Sea was unrelated to the contemporary changing dynamics with reference to Italy, France, and the Soviet Union.

Kurtoğlu's concern about Ottoman maritime engagement in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, so evident in his scholarly production, could not but have informed his teaching. In the midst of the current affairs of the period, he was also shaping the future officers of the Turkish Navy. Many of them had the audacity to publicly advocate the strengthening of Turkey's naval forces, indirectly criticizing exist-

60 Turkish Diplomatic Archive of the Foreign Ministry (*Dişişleri Bakanlığı Türk Diplomatik Arşivi* [DİBTDA]), Ankara, Turkey, 541–44178–209581–18, 18/9/36; DİBTDA 534–37630–151265–21,5/2/29; DİBTDA 534–37193–149243–19, 2/11/35.

61 DİBTDA 534–36975–148562–17, 13/11/26; DİBTDA 541–44138–209257–12, 3/7/34; DİBTDA 541–44138–207472–21, 3/7/34; DİBTDA 541–44138–209259–13, 23/10/35; DİBTDA 541–44138–209259–14, 10/10/35.

62 DİBTDA 541–44095–208952–100, 10/7/26; DİBTDA 541–44095–208952–99, 21/7/26.

63 DİBTDA 541–44238–210136–1, 22/2/36.

64 Uzunçarşılı, "Fevzi Kurdoğlu," 507.

65 Kurtoğlu, *Yunan İstiklal Harbi*, vol. 2, 203–4.

ing policies.[66] It is unknown whether he agreed with the opinions of his former cadets, but his books emphasized the long-lost Ottoman naval prowess and maritime power, shifting attention from land, where the Turkish military establishment had focused its energies, to the sea.

From the Greek Revolution to 'Blue Homeland'

The ways in which Kurtoğlu underlines the importance of maritime affairs, the Mediterranean, or the Navy from a historical-geostrategic vantage point significantly diverged from the dominant perceptions in Turkey at the time. It is also important to note that the Navy had historically been neglected in the Turkish armed forces, particularly in comparison to the Air Force, considered to be the cornerstone of modern military force and central to Turkish military culture. In this sense, as natural and expected as the obsession of a naval officer with all things maritime may seem, to express these views at that particular time had political and ideological connotations.

Subtle as this criticism may have been, it never acquired the character of outright opposition. Kurtoğlu, after all, was a man of the establishment. He had occupied positions of responsibility that could only have been given to a man trusted by the single-party regime in Turkey. Indeed, as İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı wrote in his obituary for Kurtoğlu, these positions were the result of his close relationship to and the high esteem he enjoyed from Mareşal Fevzi Çakmak. Çakmak was an emblematic figure of the Turkish War of Independence, acquiring the rank of Chief Marshall. He remained one of the close associates of Atatürk until the end, expected to be his successor as one of the three most powerful men in Turkey. When İnönü managed to acquire the Presidency of the Republic following Atatürk's death, relations between the two men were tense, and Çakmak withdrew from the Republican People's Party in 1944 to became one of the founding members of the Democrat Party. By 1948, he became one of the founders of the Nation Party and its honorary chairperson. The Nation Party, and Çakmak himself, expressed the political-intellectual movement of pious nationalists (*milliyetçi-mukkadesatçi*), situated to the right of both the Republican People's Party, which they viewed as not nationalist enough, as well as the Democrat Party, which they viewed as too mild against the Republican People's Party's secularist policies. An early blend of anti-communist Islamist nationalists,[67] the party had several political offshoots, one of which was the Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP).

That Kurtoğlu was extremely close to Çakmak does not necessitate that he shared the same political convictions. Currently available information does not allow an accurate reconstruction of his political identity. He was, however, within Çakmak's close circle, something that points towards his political influences. That a historian of the caliber of Uzunçarşılı chose to publicly discuss their close relationship in Kurtoğlu's obituary through the pages of the esteemed *Belleten* historical journal in 1945, i.e., shortly after Çakmak had left the Republican People's Party due to İnönü's political supremacy and the clash with his former associate, speaks volumes at the political level.

Judging from the positions expressed in his works, there is little doubt about Kurtoğlu's nationalist disposition, although it is unclear which shade of nationalism he ascribed to. Be that as it may, the positions he expressed on the centrality of the sea and the importance of strengthening the naval forces of Turkey cannot but bring to mind the currently in-vogue 'Blue Homeland' doctrine. Putting aside the old Kemalist terracentric policy, it shifts attention to the country's maritime role and claims in the eastern Mediterranean. In many ways, it reflects the political, ideological, intellectual, and cultural shifts in the country since the Cold

66 Güvenç and Barlas, "Atatürk's Navy," 18–19.

67 İlker Aytürk, "Nationalism and Islam in Cold War Turkey, 1944–69," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 5 (2014): 693–719, here 698.

War.[68] A direct link with this doctrine or its supporters cannot be established; yet, Kurtoğlu's thalassocentric geostrategic and historical vision long preceded that of the 'Blue Homeland.' That the Greek revolution was one of the historical events that highlighted the necessity of enhancing naval forces adds new significance and provides a deeper historical context. That both Kurtoğlu and Gürdeniz were naval officers—and not scholars—who utilized history in constructing their geopolitical vision makes them all the more relevant to each other. In this sense, it is no exaggeration to consider the former as the intellectual predecessor of the 'Blue Homeland' doctrine.

Conclusion

While a largely inconsequential work of historical scholarship, Kurtoğlu's *The Greek War of Independence* has more to offer than meets the eye. Situating it within the broader framework of Turkish historiography of the Greek revolution of 1821, it becomes clear that (a) while at first glance, the Turkish historiographical treatment of this cataclysmic event was fairly consistent and without many differentiations that altered the overall narrative, there exist subtle shifts reflecting political, ideological, and intellectual junctures at the national and international level and (b) demonstrates that, while it follows all the basic traits and patterns identified, it further adds an important, unprecedented component: the significance of the maritime dimension of the Greek revolution.

This position is consistent with the rest of his work, which is staunchly thalassocentric. An explanation for this cannot be confined to his capacity as a naval officer; this was a position where he significantly diverged from Kemalist orthodoxy. That he was a trusted man of the establishment with extremely close links to one of the three most powerful men of the single-party period of Turkish history carries significant weight. His constant gazing towards the sea and emphasis on the maritime dimensions of ideology, policy, and practice is not merely an issue of historiographical interest. Tracing the political implications and context of his life and work, as well as the subsequent political, intellectual, and cultural developments in Turkey from the second half of the twentieth century until the present, brings the 'Blue Homeland' doctrine to mind. His work, therefore, opens important windows onto things much bigger than the evaluation of his scholarly work or the Greek revolution as the topic of his interest.

68 Cihat Yaycı, *Mavi Vatan: Bir Harita ve Bir Doktrin Kitabı. Türkiye'nin Denizlerdeki Misak-ı Millisi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2022); Gürdeniz, *Mavi Vatan*; Serhat Süha Çubukçuoğlu, *Turkey's Naval Activism: Maritime Geopolitics and the Blue Homeland Concept* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023); Mehmet Bardakçı, "Turkey and the Major Powers in the Eastern Mediterranean Crisis from the 2010s to the 2020s," *Comparative Southeast European Studies* 70, no. 3 (2022): 516–39; Tancrède Josseran, "How Far can the Mavi Vatan Fo? Turkey's Grand Design for the Mediterranean," *Confluences Méditerranée* 1, no. 120 (2022): 55–68; Aurélien Denizeau, "Mavi Vatan, the 'Blue Homeland': The Origins, Influences and Liits of an Ambitious Doctrine for Turkey," *Études de l'Ifri, Ifri* (April 2021), https://www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/migrated_files/documents/atoms/files/denizeau_mavi_vatan_turkey_2021.pdf (accessed 14 October 2024).