

# Concise Essay on the Ottoman Empire in Turkey (1300-1923)

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## The Ottoman Empire in Turkey (14<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries)

**Origins.** How did the Ottoman Empire in Turkey originate?

A great deal had occurred in Anatolia before the Ottoman Empire took over the region in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Anatolia first entered Near Eastern history in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, when Assyrian merchants created trading colonies there. The entrepreneurial Assyrians exported silver, copper, wood, and gold from Anatolia in return for imports of tin and woolen textiles from Mesopotamia. The center of the Assyrian merchant colony network was Kanesh (near modern Kayseri in Cappadocia, central Anatolia).



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkey\\_topo.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkey_topo.jpg)>

*Topography of the Anatolian Peninsula*

The Indo-European-speaking Hittite people, who had migrated to Anatolia in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, created a powerful new kingdom, Hatti, and ruled large parts of Anatolia, northern Syria, and western Mesopotamia between 1700 and 1200 BCE. The land-locked Hittites, however, were under constant threat from neighboring kingdoms – Mesopotamian Assyria, and Dynastic Egypt.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hittite\\_Kingdom.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hittite_Kingdom.png)

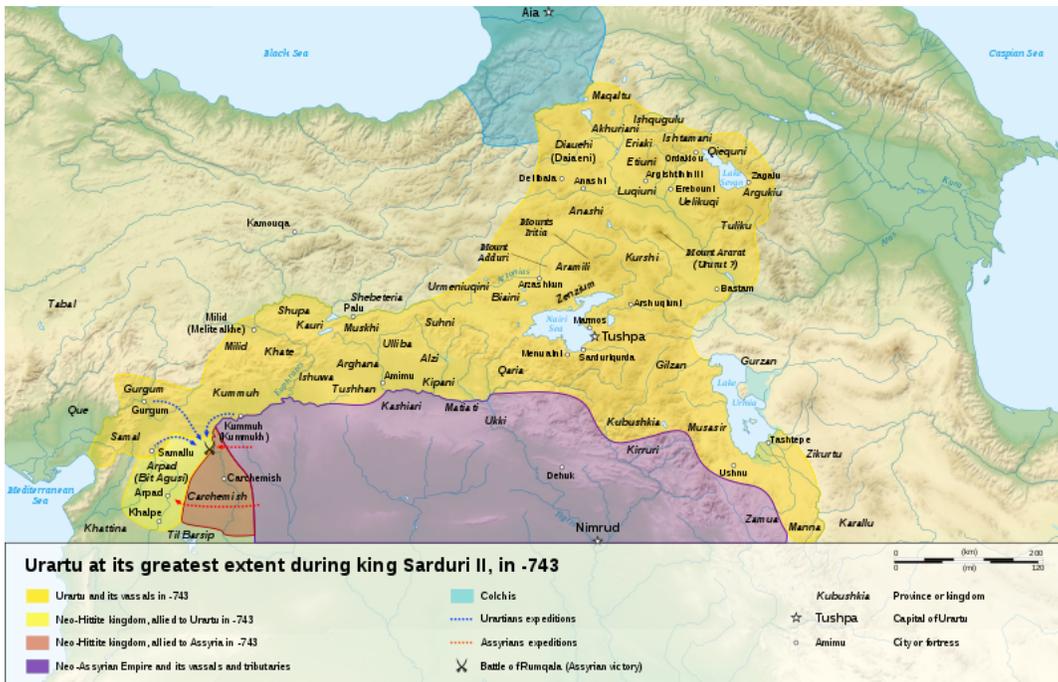
*The Hittite Kingdom (Hatti) At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, c. 1295 BCE*

The Hittite kingdom collapsed suddenly about 1200 BCE.

Succession struggles had weakened the kingdom and caused it to become a food importer, susceptible to famine. After the Greek Mycenaean Kingdom fell and unleashed waves of marauding invaders, the weakened Hittites succumbed to an invasion from the Kaskans, their adversaries to the north.

Between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, Anatolia was divided into numerous kingdoms. The Phrygians migrated from the Balkans in the 13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. A Phrygian confederation of kingdoms, based on gold mining and trade, prospered between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, controlling western and central Anatolia. The last Phrygian ruler, King Midas, was overrun by Cimmerian warriors from north of the Black Sea. Three waves of Greek migrants established port city-states on the Aegean coast of western Anatolia between 1000 and 800 BCE. Ionians settled the center (Ephesus), Dorians the south (Rhodes), and Aeolians the north (Mytilene).

In eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, an Anatolian dynasty ruled the Kingdom of Urartu for much of the 11<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. The Urartians produced impressive wealth from extensive natural resources – timber, metals (silver and copper), rivers (irrigated grain and grapes), and pastures (horses).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Urartu\\_743-en.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Urartu_743-en.svg)

### *The Kingdom of Urartu At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, c. 743 BCE*

Cyrus the Great created the Achaemenid Persian Empire in 559 BCE and conquered Anatolia thirteen years later. The Persians were benevolent despots. They encouraged free peasants

to develop agricultural wealth, but their provincial governors taxed heavily. In 334, Alexander the Great of Macedonia began his attack on the Persian Empire and swept through Anatolia. A year later, Darius III of Persia brought 250,000 Persian troops to southeastern Anatolia to stop Alexander's advance. Despite having only 35,000 men, Alexander won the epic Battle of Issus with superior cavalry and strategy and conquered all of Persia in the following decade.

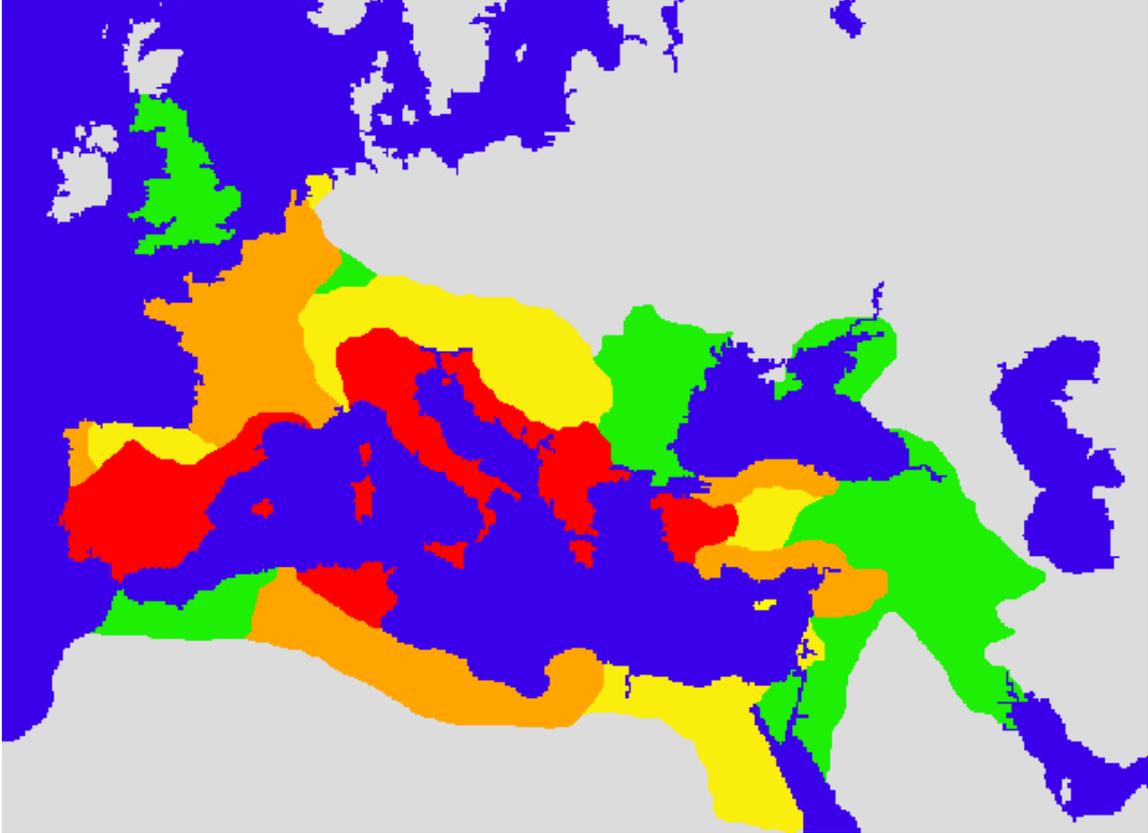


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map-alexander-empire.png>

*Alexander the Great's Empire –  
After Defeating Achaemenid Persia, 323 BCE*

After Alexander died (perhaps from malaria) in 323 BCE, his generals divided his conquests into three Hellenistic kingdoms – Macedonian (centered in Greece), Seleucid (Syria), and Ptolemaic (Egypt). Until 195 BCE, the Ptolemies controlled the coasts of western and southern Anatolia and the Seleucids governed the plateau. Thereafter, the Seleucids held most of Anatolia, including the three richest cities – the Greek ports of Miletus, Ephesus, and Smyrna – until the Roman Empire intervened.

The Roman Empire first entered Anatolia in 190 BCE, when Rome helped the Kingdom of Pergamum crush the Seleucid King Antiochus. The childless King Attalus III bequeathed Pergamum to the Roman Empire, and it became the Roman Province of Asia in 130 BCE. Rome later added Cilicia (in 101 BCE), Armenia (64 BCE), Galatia (25 BCE), and Cappadocia (15 BCE).

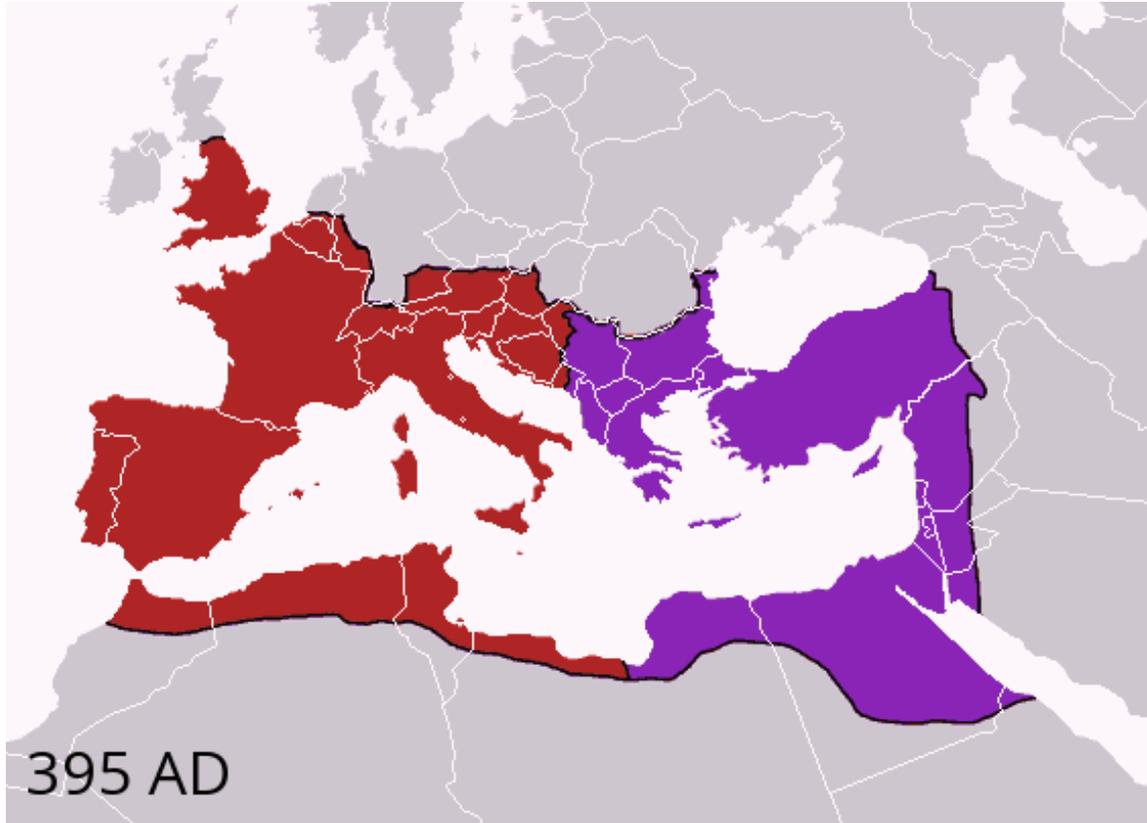


Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman\\_Empire.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Empire.png)>

*The Roman Empire under Augustus, 14 CE (Red, Tan, and Yellow)  
and At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, 117 CE (Plus Green)*

In Anatolia, Rome sought to pacify, preserve the Greek culture, rule indirectly through existing local governments, and tax enough to pay provincial expenses. Roman Emperor Constantine built an impregnable fortress in Constantinople (Byzantium) to control the Bosphorus Straits and be closer to Rome's principal foe, Sassanid Persia. In 330, he transferred the capital of the Roman Empire to

his new city, divided the Roman Empire in two, and created the Byzantine Empire as the eastern half.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Theodosius\\_I%27s\\_empire.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Theodosius_I%27s_empire.png)>

*The Divided Roman Empire Under Theodosius I in 395 CE –  
Western Roman Empire (Red) and Byzantine Empire (Purple)*

After Rome fell in 476, most Byzantine emperors hoped to reunite the former Roman Empire through conquest. Justinian I, who ruled the Byzantine Empire between 527 and 565, achieved

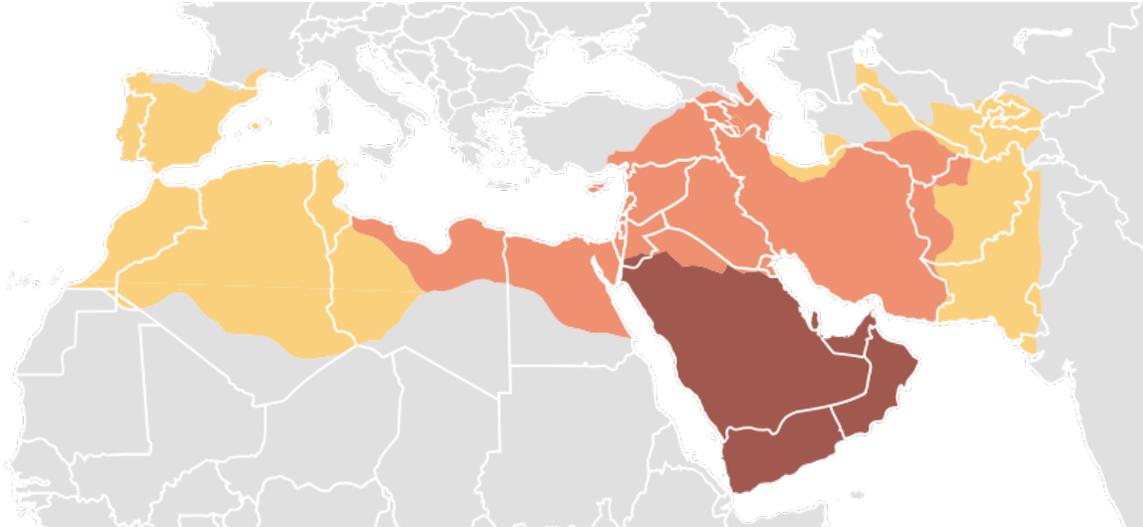
that goal. But his warfare, tribute, and building projects drained the Byzantine economy, and his territorial gains were soon lost.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Justinian555AD.png>

### *The Byzantine Empire At Its Greatest Extent – After Emperor Justinian’s Reconquest, 555*

Between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Byzantine Empire was gradually dismembered because of invasions by Muslim Arabs, European Crusaders, and Seljuk Turks. The Arab invaders shrunk the Byzantine Empire by capturing Syria, Egypt, and North Africa.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_of\\_expansion\\_of\\_Caliphate.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_expansion_of_Caliphate.svg)>

*The Muslim Arab Diaspora –  
622-632 (Dark Red), 632-661 (Light Red), 661-750 (Yellow)*

The Crusades, military expeditions by European Christians to control the Holy Land, were a disaster for the Orthodox Christians of Byzantium. The Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) was an invasion of Constantinople to pay Venice for the fleet it had supplied to Frankish Crusaders. The Franks and Venetians mercilessly plundered the city, and the Byzantine Empire never recovered.

The migrations of Seljuk Turks into Anatolia in the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries ensured the fall of the declining Byzantine Empire. In 1064, Seljuk Sultan Alp Arslan invaded Anatolia, conquering

Armenia and sacking Cappadocia. At the Battle of Manzikert (1071), Alp Arslan annihilated the Byzantine army and opened eastern Anatolia to waves of Turkish migrations. The Seljuk Turks set up the Sultanate of Rum in Anatolia in 1080.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seljuk\\_Empire\\_locator\\_map.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seljuk_Empire_locator_map.svg)>

### *The Seljuk Turkish Empire At Its Greatest Territorial Extent, 1092*

Hulegu, a grandson of Ghengis Khan, defeated the Seljuks in 1243 and created the Il-Khanate (1258-1335) to govern Persia and Mesopotamia. The Mongol incursions created a second massive wave of Turkish migrations of refugees and soldiers into Anatolia.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia\\_in\\_1335.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asia_in_1335.svg)>

*The Four Khanates of the Mongol Empire – Yuan Dynasty, Chagatai Khanate, Ilkhanate, and Golden Horde, 1335*

The first four Ottoman sultans gradually created the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia and southeastern Europe during the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Osman (ruled 1300-1326), the ruler of a small Turkish kingdom south of Constantinople, was the founding father of the Ottoman Empire (1300-1923). The keys to Ottoman success were the skilled use of Islamic Turkish horse-warriors in conquest and religious tolerance for the Orthodox Christian Greek majority in

western Anatolia. Orkhan (ruled 1326-1360) conquered all of Byzantium, except Constantinople, and expanded into Thrace in nearby southeastern Europe. Murad I (ruled 1360-1389) built the Ottoman Empire in southeastern Europe through conquest and diplomacy. He established the first imperial province, Rumelia, and placed his capital at Edirne (in Thrace) in 1365.

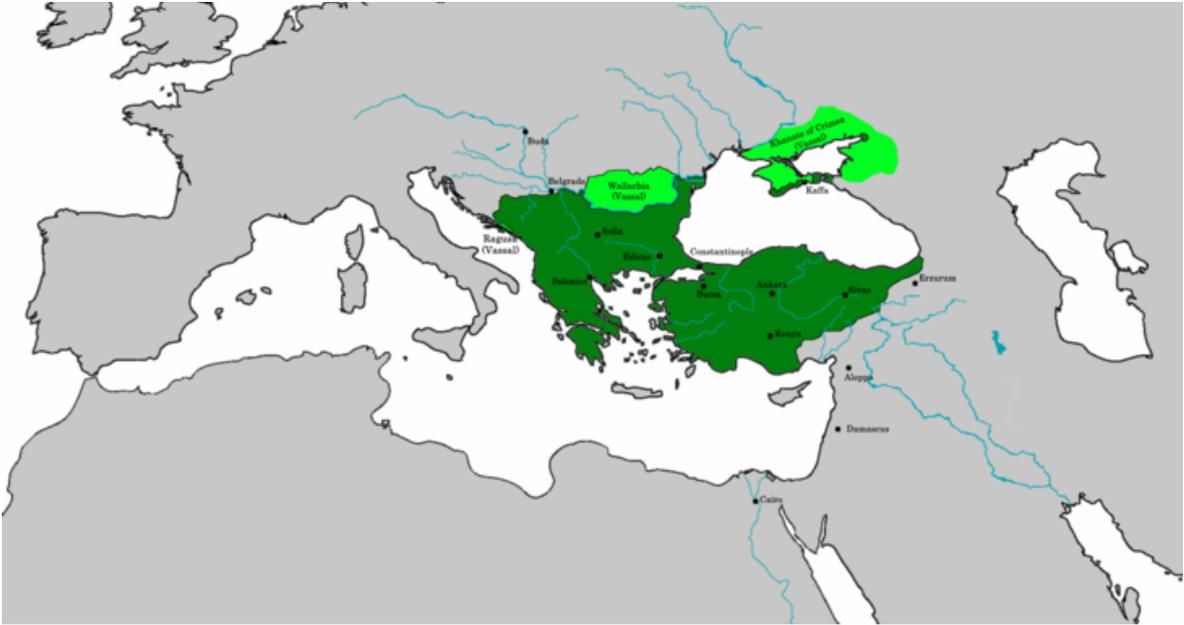


Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3\\_Murad\\_I\\_map.PNG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:3_Murad_I_map.PNG)

### *Early Ottoman Conquests, 1301-1389*

Bayezid I (ruled 1389-1403) claimed much of central-eastern Anatolia and formed the Ottoman province of Anatolia. By the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, the fledgling Ottoman Empire had expanded into much of Anatolia and parts of southeastern Europe.

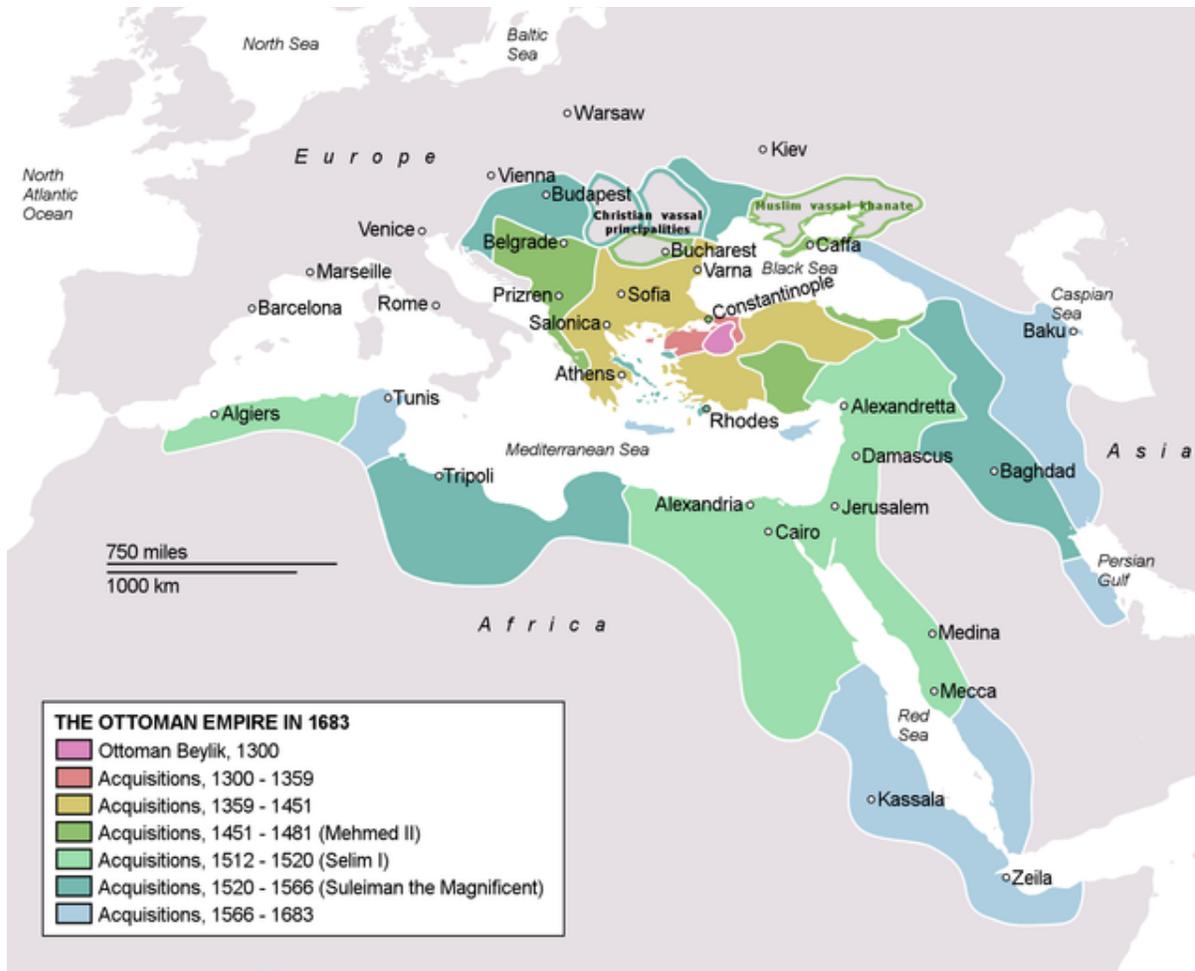
The Ottoman Empire nearly ended in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Timur the Lame of Samarkand destroyed the Turkish army at the Battle of Ankara in 1402. Timur died in 1405, and his empire quickly disintegrated. Murad II (ruled 1421-1451) then rebuilt the Ottoman state. His son, Mehmed II (The Conqueror, ruled 1451-1481), besieged Constantinople in 1453, and its fall ended the Byzantine Empire. Mehmed expanded Ottoman control in the Balkans in the 1460s by taking Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Albania, and Greece.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OttomanEmpire1481.png>>

*The Ottoman Empire in 1481 – Two Lands (Rumelia and Anatolia)  
and Two Seas (Black and Mediterranean)*

Selim I (The Grim, ruled 1511-1521) incorporated Syria, Egypt, and Western Arabia into the empire, paving the way for expansion across North Africa. His son, Suleiman I (The Magnificent, ruled 1521-1566) was the Ottoman Empire's greatest leader. Suleiman won the critical Battle of Mohacs in 1526, and Hungary became an Ottoman vassal in 1543. Suleiman led three campaigns against Safavid Persia between 1534 and 1554, claiming Mesopotamia.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OttomanEmpireIn1683.png>

### *Expansion of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1683*

Conquered Egypt, Hungary, and Mesopotamia were three of the empire's richest agricultural regions. In three centuries (1300-1600), the Ottoman Empire thus expanded from Anatolia to include large parts of southeastern Europe, southwestern Asia, and North Africa.

**Wealth.** In the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, what were the main sources of wealth and power – agriculture, foreign trade, and foreign conquest? Agriculture – producing cereals (wheat and barley), olives, grapes, and animal products – was the main source of wealth in the Ottoman Empire. The key agricultural regions in the Ottoman Empire were the Balkans, Hungary, the Anatolian valleys, and Egypt’s Nile Valley. Because there was little new agricultural technology, increases in agricultural output came from the conquest of new regions and from resettlement or reclamation schemes that expanded farmed area.

The Ottoman government had an effective system of agricultural taxation. Farmers paid taxes equal to 10 percent of the expected value of farm output, calculated from cadastral surveys that registered crops, cropped area, and yields and from averages of recent regional prices. Tax revenue peaked in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter, farm taxes declined as farmers gave gifts to tax-free Islamic foundations, which owned one-third of agricultural land in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The gains from foreign trade were an important supplementary source of wealth for the Ottoman Empire. The principal Ottoman exports were cloth – silk from Bursa, cotton from Anatolia, and mohair from Ankara – carpets, and furs. Bursa and Izmir were the main Ottoman entrepôts on the lucrative Asia-Europe trade routes in which Indian spices and Iranian raw silk were exchanged for European woolen cloth. Istanbul was the nexus of the critical Black Sea trading system in which Russian and Danubian grain, meat, and furs moved south and Turkish silk, cotton, and woolen cloth moved north. The government imposed trade taxes at a rate usually of 20 percent on both imports and exports. Those trade taxes served as an important supplement to agricultural revenues.

Booty, tribute, or taxes from foreign conquest was a third source of wealth for the Ottoman Turks. Ottoman conquest occurred in two phases – of the heartland (the Balkans and Anatolia) in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and of Syria, Egypt,

Arabia, North Africa, Hungary, and Mesopotamia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ottoman\\_empire.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ottoman_empire.svg)

### *Territorial Gains in the Ottoman Empire – in Southeastern Europe, Egypt, Syria, and North Africa, Late 17<sup>th</sup> century*

In the heartland, the Ottomans settled Turks, organized ethnic *millet*s (self-governing units), assimilated diverse cultures, and taxed heavily. But in Western Asia and North Africa, they

pacified existing Islamic cultures, ruled indirectly (using Ottoman governors), and effected only moderate tax transfers to Istanbul. Throughout the empire, Ottoman governors collected taxes, maintained law and order, and recruited soldiers.

**Control.** What forms of religious persuasion, political organization, economic sanction, and military coercion did the leaders of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey use to extract wealth for the elite and maintain imperial power? The Ottoman Empire was based on centralized control, a disciplined military, a hierarchical society, and an effective bureaucracy to collect agricultural and trade taxes. After the conquest of Mecca and Medina in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman sultans assumed the role of Islamic caliph (the leader of all followers of the Muslim faith).

Ottoman administration in regions that were not wholly Islamic was organized around ethnic *millet*s (self-governing units), sometimes led by non-Muslims (Orthodox Christians, Armenian Christians, or Jews). While Turkish was the principal language of government, a wide variety of languages – Greek, Arabic,

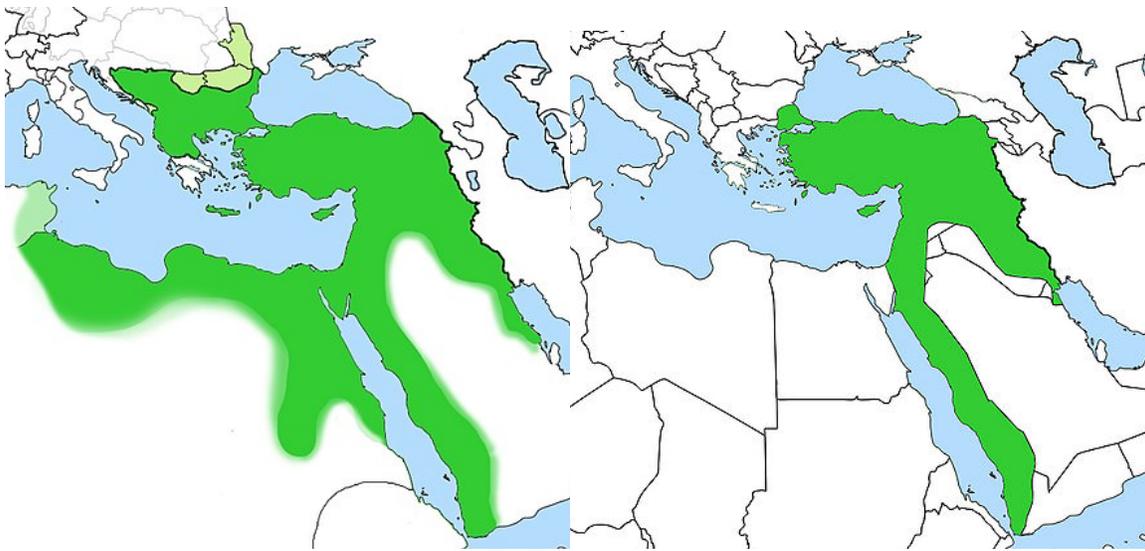
Armenian, Hebrew, Ladino, and many others – were employed in commerce throughout the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman government intervention in industry and commerce was limited, except for state monopolies on salt, soap, candle wax, and armaments. Ottoman leaders regularly used threats of or actual military force to suppress rebellions or demonstrations when local administrations could not maintain control.

**Decline.** What caused the Ottoman Empire in Turkey to weaken and fall apart? Succession crises and military conservatism were the key causes of Ottoman decline. The first ten sultans practiced fratricide to ensure the succession of their eldest sons. Thereafter, competing heirs to the throne were kept alive and brutal succession disputes ensued. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, most European powers adopted a new mode of warfare – massive infantry and mobile field artillery, which required a strong bureaucracy and tax base. But the Ottomans continued to rely on non-permanent infantry and cavalry and on foraging in the field for military supplies. The Ottoman leaders introduced significant

military reforms – universal conscription, training in modern tactics, and up-to-date weaponry – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But those changes came too late to preserve the empire.

By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the survival of the Ottoman Empire depended on European balance-of-power politics. In a policy known as the Eastern Question, Britain and France aided the Ottomans to forestall Russian gains in the Black Sea region. The dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire began in 1830 with the independence of Greece.

Britain and France joined the Ottomans to defeat Russia in the Crimean War (1853-1856). The Treaty of Paris (1856) called for all nations to preserve Ottoman territorial integrity, but dismemberment accelerated. Through the Treaty of Berlin (1878), Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro became independent, Bosnia-Herzegovina went to Austria-Hungary, Cyprus to Britain, and eastern Anatolia to Russia. Bulgaria received its independence in 1913, following the Balkan Wars.



1830

1913

Sources: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial\\_changes\\_of\\_the\\_Ottoman\\_Empire\\_1830.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial_changes_of_the_Ottoman_Empire_1830.jpg)> and  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial\\_changes\\_of\\_the\\_Ottoman\\_Empire\\_1913b.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Territorial_changes_of_the_Ottoman_Empire_1913b.jpg)>

### *The Declining Ottoman Empire in 1830 and in 1913*

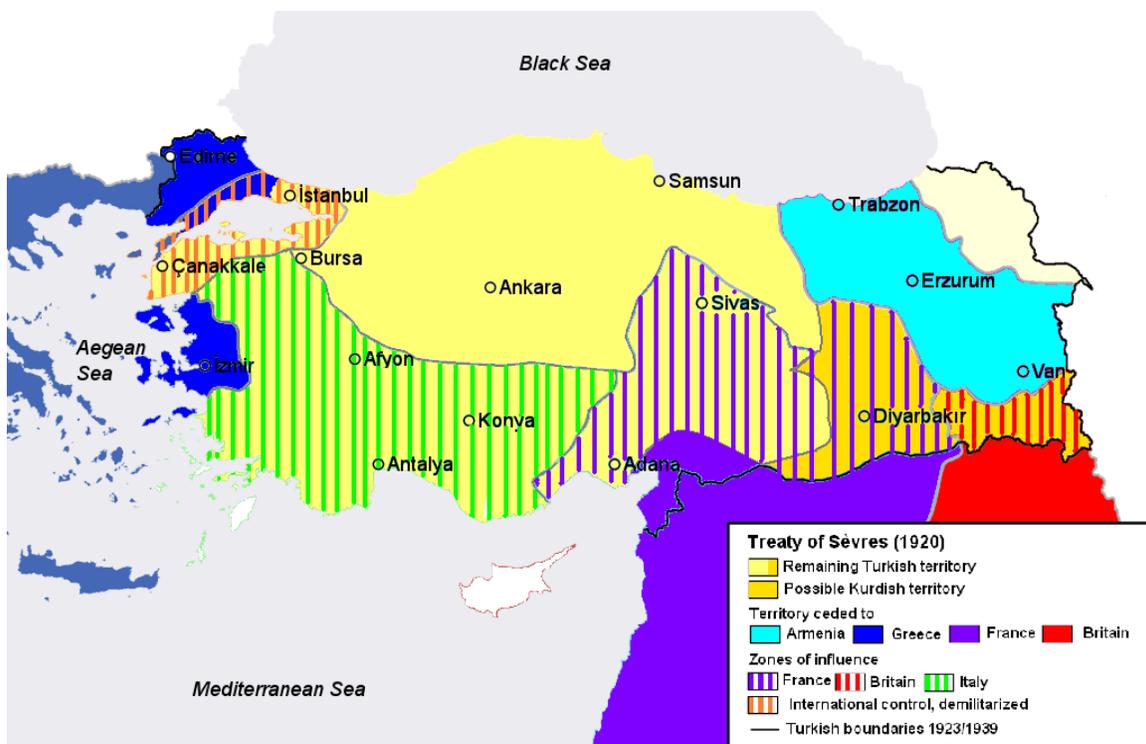
World War I (1914-1918) was the product of two entangling alliances – the Triple Entente (Britain, France, and Russia) versus the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary). In 1914, the Ottoman Empire signed a secret pact with the Central Powers after Britain and France rebuffed its overtures to join the Entente. The loss of the First World War ended the Ottoman Empire.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map\\_Europe\\_alliances\\_1914-en.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Europe_alliances_1914-en.svg)

*Triple Entente and Triple Alliance (Central Powers) in World War One – The Ottoman Empire Later Joined the Triple Alliance*

Under the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), Turkey was to be a rump state, consisting only of northern Anatolia, Greece was to take Thrace and western Anatolia, and the remainder of Anatolia was to be divided among Italy (southwest), France (south), and the new states of Armenia (east) and Kurdistan (southeast).



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Treaty\\_of\\_S%C3%A8vres\\_map\\_partitioning\\_Anatolia.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Treaty_of_S%C3%A8vres_map_partitioning_Anatolia.png)>

*Division of Turkey under the Treaty of Sèvres (1920) –  
 Proposed But Not Implemented*

However, in the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), Turkey gained sovereignty over Anatolia and eastern Thrace and there were no provisions for allocating land in Anatolia to Armenia or creating an independent Kurdistan.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at  
<[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkey-Greece-Bulgaria\\_on\\_Treaty\\_of\\_Lausanne.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkey-Greece-Bulgaria_on_Treaty_of_Lausanne.png)>

*Turkey (Light Tan Area), After the Treaty of Lausanne, 1923*

Moreover, in 1923 League of Nations mandates were given to Britain for Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq and to France for Syria and Lebanon.



Source: Wikimedia Commons, available at  
<<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PalestineAndTransjordan.png>>

*League of Nations Mandates, 1923 –  
Palestine and Transjordan to Great Britain*

**Aftermath.** After the fall of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, what groups succeeded to power and how successfully did they wield power and extract wealth? In the aftermath of Ottoman rule, the leaders of the new Republic of Turkey, formed in 1923, carried

out enormous political, economic, and cultural changes. In the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), Turkey gained sovereignty over Anatolia and eastern Thrace and the Allies agreed that Turkey would not have to pay reparations for World War I. Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), the brilliant Turkish nationalist leader who defeated a Greek invasion in 1922, served as the first president of the Republic of Turkey (1923-1938).

Atatürk created a secularist, parliamentary democracy, ended the practice of Islamic law (*sharia*) in Turkey, and adopted new civil and penal codes based on European law. He legislated use of the Gregorian calendar and a new Turkish alphabet, replaced Islamic schools with a secular education system, and gave women the rights to vote, inherit equally, and participate in divorce.

Atatürk's loyal prime minister, Ismet İnönü, served as Turkey's second president (1938-1950) and continued Atatürk's policies of secularism and *étatisme* – large government participation in the economy.

Turkey received ample Marshall Plan aid from the United States and joined NATO in 1952. For the next half century, however, Turkey experienced political instability and was often led by weak coalition governments. The Turkish military engineered three coups, followed by periods of military rule (1960-1961, 1971-1973, and 1980-1983), in which it enforced economic stabilization, suppressed civil unrest, and then returned the country to elected civilian governance.

The new Justice and Development Party (AKP), a moderate Islamist group led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, won the 2002 election and increased its commanding share of parliamentary seats in the 2007, 2011, and 2015 elections. The popularity of the AKP has rested on their success in building grassroots political organizations and creating steady growth of per capita income (3.8 percent annually, 2002-2019).

Following a failed coup attempt by a military faction in 2016, the AKP government dismissed 130,000 military personnel, civil servants, judges, academics, and journalists. A constitutional

referendum in 2017 gave the president the authority to form ministries, select a cabinet, draft the budget, and declare a state of emergency. Erdogan was re-elected President in 2018. He subsequently carried out an aggressive regional foreign policy, intervening in Syria, Libya, and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh).

In 2019, Turkey had a price-adjusted per capita income of \$28,134, 43 percent of the US level and 60 percent of the EU average. Turkey ranked in the top third of the World Bank's listing of per capita incomes (52<sup>nd</sup> of 186 countries). Life expectancy in Turkey was 77 years, and the rate of adult literacy was 96 percent. Turkey's ranking in the UNDP's Human Development Index –which incorporates income, health, and education data – was 54<sup>th</sup> of 189 countries (2019).

Because of reforms that greatly reduced administrative inefficiencies and bureaucratic controls, Turkey ranked an impressive 33<sup>rd</sup> of 190 countries in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (2019). But corruption in Turkey was widespread. The country ranked only 91<sup>st</sup> of 198 countries in the

Corruption Perceptions Index compiled by Transparency International (2019). Investors in Turkey thus faced mixed indicators. Foreign direct investment was only \$8.8 billion in 2019 – down substantially from a peak of \$22 billion in 2007 and from \$19.3 billion in 2015.



Source: *Wikimedia Commons*, available at <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tu-map.png>

### *Contemporary Turkey*

**Lessons.** What lessons for contemporary powers can be drawn from the experiences of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey and of predecessor rulers of Anatolia? The Byzantine Empire (395-1453) debilitated its strength and fell to invading Seljuk and

Ottoman Turks in part because it focused its expansionist attentions in the wrong direction. After the fall of Rome in 476, Byzantine leaders, who considered themselves eastern Roman emperors and thus legitimate successors of Rome, wanted to emulate the former Roman control of the entire Mediterranean region. In the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, Byzantine emperors expended enormous resources and bled their empire to re-conquer the Mediterranean area, only to lose control after short-lived victories. But the Mediterranean by then was largely sapped of wealth and thus not a profitable target for Byzantine conquest. The real economic opportunities – and military threats – for Byzantium lay with the Persians and Turks to the east and north. Byzantine fixation with the ex-Roman Mediterranean thus provides a classic example of imperial myopia – looking backward in time and westward in direction when the present and future were in the east.

Effective taxation, essential for the survival of early empires, offers a second lesson. Agriculture was the primary source of wealth and government revenue in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman

officials astutely devised an agricultural taxation system (similar to that used in Mughal India). To prevent tax avoidance, the tax liabilities of farmers were based on cadastral surveys of crops, planted area, and yields plus averages of recent regional prices. The typical tax rate was ten percent of the value of farm output. Ottoman officials supplemented their revenue from agriculture by taxing both imports and exports, usually at a rate of 20 percent. In their Balkan-Anatolian heartland, the pragmatic Ottomans governed directly and taxed heavily, whereas elsewhere in Western Asia and North Africa they ruled indirectly and taxed moderately. For more than three centuries, the Ottomans taxed effectively.

Two lessons can be drawn from the decline of the Ottoman Empire. It is important to place a high priority on research for science and technology and on public investments in infrastructure. The military aristocracies that led the Ottoman Empire – and also the Safavid Persian and Mughal Indian Empires – lost sight of this key principle. At a time when European countries were benefiting from commercial, agricultural, and industrial revolutions, the

world's three leading Muslim empires gave inadequate attention to investments in science, technology, and public infrastructure.

Muslim states – Fatimid Egypt, Islamic Spain, and the early Ottoman Empire – had led the Western world in making advances in applications of science and technology between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. When the Muslim governments' attention shifted elsewhere, Christian European governments occupied the scientific vacuum and regained the lead held much earlier by Greece and Rome. The northern European states – Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands – began to ascend technically, politically, and economically. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, those European nations had become imperialistic expansionists whereas the remaining Muslim empires – Ottoman and Mughal – were on the defensive and soon to disappear.

After peaking in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire gradually deteriorated during the next three centuries. Military conservatism, an inability to adopt new technologies and strategies, was a key cause of Ottoman decline. The mode of warfare in

Europe changed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century toward greater use of massive infantry and mobile field artillery. But the Ottomans continued to rely on traditional infantry and cavalry and on foraging in the field for military supplies. Military obsolescence set in during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the old system proved unworkable. The Ottomans introduced military reforms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – universal conscription, training in modern tactics, up-to-date weaponry, and employment of foreign officers in battle. But those changes were inadequate and too late. The loss of the First World War sounded the final death knell for the Ottoman Empire.