The Ottoman Culture of Defeat:
The Balkan Wars and Their Aftermath

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The Balkan Wars are among the harshest defeats the Ottomans ever experienced. The shock that was felt with the loss of the Balkan territories, the bulk of which had been conquered even before Istanbul, was quite profound. The defeat of Ottomans in the Balkan Wars provoked the emergence of various publications on the defeat's causes and the possible directions the Empire could take to avenge the defeat and regenerate. Through a careful study of these publications, Eyal Ginio, in his book *The Ottoman Culture of Defeat: The Balkan Wars and Their Aftermath*, deals with the Balkan Wars' impact on Ottoman society.

The Balkan Wars, understood collectively as the first 'total war' of the Ottoman Empire, have hitherto been understudied. Ginio's book is significant in that it sheds light on a topic which has been overshadowed by World War I. The Balkan Wars contained almost all of the horrific elements of WWI, notably in their eruption as a multi-state conflict which included mobilization of not only the armies but also the entire public. The reason the Balkan Wars have received less scholarly attention is due to their scale and length compared to the Great War. However, Ginio argues, the impact of the Balkan Wars was no less traumatic to the Empire. The loss of large domains, a wave of refugees and the impact of the press let the war penetrate the entire Ottoman society. The entire society was shocked by the atrocities committed in the Balkan states, which were disseminated by an unprecedented diffusion of press and photography.

The Ottoman Culture of Defeat is quite successful in capturing the dynamic atmosphere of the aftermath of the Balkan Wars, which was characterized by a search for consolation, revenge, revival and return to Balkan lands. Although the book makes reference to the literature on the late Ottoman period, it speaks relatively less to the Ottoman studies on the Balkan Wars, and rather uses a new theoretical framework to evaluate the post-war atmosphere in the Empire. The author uses the concept 'culture of defeat' to define Ottoman society at the time. He brings ample evidence from the Ottoman archives as well as newspapers and books in multiple Ottoman languages to provide details of his definition. Thus, he is successful in showing that the Balkan Wars were a major watershed that shook the Empire's long held convictions and pushed the Empire into new directions.

The author, studying the Balkan Wars, taps into the literature of the culture of defeat. The term was coined by Wolfgang Schivelbusch to refer to the defeats of the American South, France and Germany. The study of the Ottoman defeat in the Balkans contributes to this literature and reveals parallels in the psychol-

ogy and culture of post-defeat societies. Both the trauma and the desire for change are astonishingly similar in these nations. Ginio capably deals with a mixture of misery and hope; belief in the Empire's decadence but also in its innate superiority, and a search for models outside and enemies inside.

Chapter one of the book provides a chronology of the events of the Balkan Wars. It traces the shift from a self-confident society to a culture of defeat. Chapter two focuses on the emergence of 'the Ottoman culture of defeat.' This chapter deals with the description and discussion of Ottoman publicists on the defeat. Chapter three's concern is an indivisible part of the culture of defeat: an incessant desire for national renewal. It explores the discourse of awakening, rejuvenation and renewal. Chapter four focuses on the project of educating boys as citizen-soldiers to rejuvenate the Empire. This chapter discovers the two ways children find place in the debate: as victims of the war and as agents of future change. Chapter five explores the debate on the creation of a national economy where Muslim consumers will sustain a Muslim class of producers through their choices of consumption and boycott. It tries to capture a view of the economy as a battlefield where enemies within should be defeated. Chapter six deals with the atmosphere after the restitution of Edirne to Ottoman rule. The author focuses on the presentation of the return of Edirne as the rebirth of the Empire and a partial recovery of national honor.

The purpose of the author is to understand how the defeat was experienced, perceived, analyzed and commemorated by the different sectors of Ottoman society. Indeed, he is quite successful in giving voice to Ottomans of different ethnicity, religion, and gender to reveal their unique ways of experiencing the

defeat. He does not neglect covering the role of women and children. Ginio's inquiry into the situation of non-Muslims is definitely a meaningful contribution to the literature as well. Particularly, his competence in Ladino allows him to access the Jewish community's concerns during and after the war. Furthermore, he is able to provide us with a complex picture of the emotions and ideas related to the Balkan Wars. It would be accurate to say that he is quite proficient in depicting the emotional landscape of the Empire, which is quite a difficult undertaking.

One criticism that can be directed at the author is that he fails his aim of elaborating on how the defeat was experienced from below. Despite the diversity of his horizontal sources, namely the diverse religious communities and genders, he lacks vertical variety and focuses mostly on the elites of each group. The culture of defeat, in this book, is predominantly the culture of the elite of the Empire, which excluded the voice of the masses. Culture is supposed to be an ambiance which covers the entire society; what the author presents as the Ottoman culture is actually a high culture within the Empire. *The Ottoman Culture of Defeat* predominantly covers the urban, educated, literate elite who produce written materials and consume them. Ginio considers the newspapers and the books of the period as means of mass communication which reflect the popular opinion. However, the message they transmitted in the Ottoman context was one-sided and unidirectional: from the elite to the masses. Low literacy rates during the period further compromise the validity of the assumption of culture in the book.

The culture of defeat is a suitable conceptualization with which to analyze post-defeat societies. Ginio skillfully adopts the concept

and uses it to make sense of the tremendous amount of written material on national grief, guilt and loss of honor. The usage of the concept helps us make sense of the military defeat in the Balkan Wars as the most painful reminder of 'Ottoman decadence' in the eyes of Ottoman publicists. *The Ottoman Culture of Defeat* is a helpful guide to elucidate both the crush of confidence in the Empire, and the belief in its rebirth which were intertwined.

Iran and Russian Imperialism:
## The Ideal Anarchists, 1800-1914

Reviewed by Saeed Shokoohi, Allameh Tabatab'i University, Tehran, Iran

Moritz Deutschmann in his book *Iran and Russian Imperialism: the Ideal Anarchists, 1800-1914*, seeks to depict a broad and comprehensive picture of Russia's policy towards Iran, as one of its most important neighbors in Asia. It covers a key and critical era in Iran's modern history. The Iran and Russia wars, the Turkmanchay and Gulistan treaties and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran are important events that took shape during this era, with long-lasting effects on every aspect of political life in Iran, even up to now.

"Ideal anarchists," a term borrowed from Konstantin Smirnov, a Russian orientalist, denotes what the author calls "disorder," or "absence of political order in Iran" (p. 1, pp. 213-14). Deutschmann tries to analyze Russian goals and strategies in Iran during the years between 1800 and 1914. He believes that the inefficiency and weakness of the central government (failed state) in Iran provided maneuvering room for other non-state actors such as tribal groups and urban merchants. The interactions of these actors with each other and with foreign powers (the "great game,"
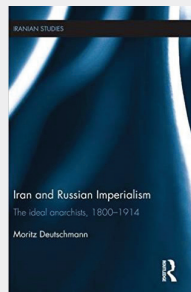
p. 4), created a situation which the author calls "the unruliness of Iranian society." He argues that this unruliness was the main variable that shaped Russian policy toward Iran (p. 214), and even paved the ground for or legitimized Russia's intervention in Iran (p. 213). According to Deutschmann, Russia's major goal in Iran was to bring political stability to Iran's monarchical system. Besides that major goal, Russia pursued some economic and colonial objectives; another main objective of Moscow was border settlement in Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

After a brief history of Iran-Russia relations, the author describes the relations between Russia and Iranian merchants (pp. 40-57) and nomads (pp. 58-78). Russia's imperialistic objectives in Iran, specifically its interventions in Iran's domestic developments such as the Constitutional Revolution, the civil war in Tabriz, and the opportunities and challenges posed by tribes constitute the remaining chapters of the book. Deutschmann evaluates Russia's role in Iran's internal politics as positive and constructive, supportive of the transfor-