

Counterfactual history: what ifs of the gallipoli campaign research paper

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



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Counterfactual History: What Ifs of the Gallipoli Campaign

Introduction

Although counterfactual history is concerned with what didn't happen, it acts as a manifestation of what did. Without a doubt, counterfactual history challenges the traditional academic ways of thinking with regards to risk management in the historical analysis. It explicitly inflates the range of plausible explanations by focusing on the number of possible outcomes. In doing so, there is a threat that a multiplicity of chaotic perspectives, each facilitated by chance and contingency might open up. In the case of the Gallipoli Campaign, the following questions may be asked if the Ottomans did not win at Gallipoli:

Would the Republic of Turkey still have been established?

Would the Russian Revolutions have taken place and communism continued?

Would the forced emigration of the Armenians have occurred?

Would the Allied powers have taken advantage of the sick Ottoman and turned it into colonial empire just like France and British did to Africa?

The Establishment of the Republic of Turkey

Mustafa Kemal, in his highly-esteemed capacity as the military commander who had triumphed over the Allied forces in Gallipoli forwarded his first official report to the Ottoman Sultan on May 22, 1919, firmly stating that the Ottoman Turks would not embrace any form of foreign subjugation and yearned for national liberation. The report marked the start of the struggle for national sovereignty and may be perceived as a growing spirit of self-confidence among the Ottoman Turks. Noticing that Samsun was no longer safe because other European forces had surrounded it, Mustafa Kemal opted to move his staff to Havza.

Could Mustafa Kemal's newly-found determination to push for national liberation have eventually been compromised if he stayed at Samsun? Some scholars view his move to be both strategically and tactically correct since the British and Greek could easily have been tempted to make military expeditions against the Ottoman Turks from such a close geographical range. After all, many European powers had strived to conquer the Ottoman Empire for a long time.

In Havza, many top Ottoman army generals as well as their troops joined

forces with Mustafa Kemal and became signatories to the Amasya Declaration on June 22, 1919, proclaiming that the unity of the empire and the liberty of the Turkish people were in grave danger. This raises another vital question: would these army generals have joined forces with Mustafa Kemal if he were still based in Samsun?

It could be that Samsun held some military or strategic significance and these army generals wanted to share in such an advantage or perhaps, they were impressed by the achievements of Mustafa Kemal and looked up to him. What is more, the army generals may have seen the first indications of Ataturk's vision of a sovereign nation and democratic rule for the Turks and wanted to be part of the new transition.

Mustafa Kemal took the initiative of organizing two national congressional houses with representatives from all parts of the Empire including Erzurum and Sivas. He then pioneered the establishment of a national parliament on April 23, 1920, in Ankara. He was chosen to be the Commander-in-Chief of all the Ottoman forces including the irregular forces under the command of the Ankara government.

With a more unified and robust army, Mustafa Kemal built a new army that finally defeated the occupying army forces. The Turkish War of National Liberation took four years and led to the international recognition of Turkey's national borders through the signing of the Lausanne Treaty on July 24, 1923 and the subsequent establishment of the Republic of Turkey on October 29, 1923.

Several historical geographers in the current world are hesitant to present their narratives and analyses as categorical exercises that indicate cause-

and-effect relationships, which act as a reminder of the complexity of causal claims in various works. The victory in Çanakkale, which marked the success of the Ottoman Turks during the Gallipoli Campaign is arguably one of the greatest Turkish victories during the World War I.

The battle elevated the profile of Mustafa Kemal, who was later on referred to as Atatürk; as the most popular commander at Gallipoli who later on become the first president of the new Turkish Republic and the father of modern Turkey. In the process, Turkey began molding itself as a modern sovereign state and worked towards deleting the memory of its past defeats and massacres.

What stands out clearly from the Gallipoli Campaign is the fact that the modern Turkish state may not have existed without the contribution of Mustafa Kemal even if the Ottoman Turks had still won the Gallipoli war. It is one thing to win a military battle and another to build nationalistic tendencies among the citizenry; something that Mustafa Kemal achieved exceptionally. While the victory of the Ottoman Turks boosted the spirit and confidence of the people who had suffered a series of defeats and subsequent loss of territories, it more than a historic victory to transform the ancient Ottoman Empire into the modern Turkish Republic. Therefore, the modern Turkish State may not have been created if it were not for the strong influence of Mustafa Kemal.

Revolutions and Communism in Russia

With adequate British assistance, the revolutions that occurred in Russia as well as communism may have been avoided. Between February and March

1915, the British government and the Tzarist government of Russia signed a treaty. According to the treaty, the British and French governments declared that at the completion of a successful military campaign against the Turkish Ottoman Empire and its subsequent defeat, annexation to Russia would follow. The British goal in assenting to this was to retain their increasingly disinclined ally, Russia, in the war. By keeping the Russian troops committed to the Eastern Front during the military operation, thousands of German soldiers would be held away.

Instead of looking for ways of consolidating support for Russia to strengthen her as an equal partner in war, Britain focused on taking advantage of an ally in desperate need of help. Russia had been defeated at the Battle of Tannenberg towards the end of 1914 and was thinking about looking for a truce with Germany. Furthermore, it had just gone through a bloody phase caused by the Ottoman army at the Battle of Sarikamis.

Of all the explanations provided for the invasion on Dardanelles, the risk of a second German army coming from the Eastern Front and arriving at the Western Front, the epicenter of the war, would be a severe blow to the Allies. The outcome was the lost Dardanelles Campaign; the thwarted effort by British and French armies to attack Istanbul and the subsequent military expedition of the Gallipoli Campaign. The areas of interest relating to these historical events is that without the Ottoman victories against Russia and her allies, the Russian Revolutions would not take place and communism would not continue if Russia had received adequate help from her allies.

If Britain supported Russia during the hard times of war, then the Russian government would not have fallen out with its people; something that

triggered the revolutions experienced in the country. The obvious lack of political goodwill on the part of the British government to help Russia on the battle fronts against enemies such as the Ottoman Turks demoralized the people who were tired of the frequent losses in war. With British help with regards to the war, the Russians would have had more successful military expeditions and subsequently viewed the imperialist system of the British system to be effective. Such sentiments may have triggered the adoption of imperialism by the Russian government since it would have been popular among the people.

3. The forced emigration of the Armenians

Before World War I started, there existed ethnic and religious hostilities between the Ottoman Turks and the minority Armenians. As the war progressed, the level of hostilities against the Armenians intensified. Until the start of the nineteenth century, Armenians in the Ottoman Empire had not been exposed to any form of systematic subjugation. They were viewed as second-class citizens identified by the distinctive hats that they wore. Armenian Turks had to pay special taxes to the Turk government and were not permitted to own arms. Their testimony was usually disallowed in the courts of law, and they were prevented from holding the highest administrative ranks or military posts. The phrase ' kafir' meaning an infidel or unbeliever was used to refer to Christians, and it summed up the Muslim perception of the Armenians.

In the face of all these discriminations and abuses, for several centuries the Armenians had managed to derive significant gains from the limited autonomy made possible by the Ottoman Empire. Many Christians suffered,

and many excesses characterized the exiling of the Armenian people.

Several hundred thousands of Armenians were forced to move out of their homes with barely any notice; and as a result, unaccounted numbers of men, women, and women perished due to hunger and disease or were killed.

The Armenian position of the Gallipoli Campaign perhaps indicates that the Armenians were the innocent victims of a senseless act of annihilation propagated by the Ottoman government. Several Western scholars support this viewpoint. On the other side, the Turkish position, put forward by the Turkish government and backed by a few historians, may contend that the mass emigration of the Armenians may have been an inevitable reaction to a full-scale Armenian revolt, conducted with the support of Britain and Russia and that the multitude of deaths occurred due to food shortage and disease or as a result of a civil war within an international context.

Both the Armenians and the Turks present their argument by simplifying a multifaceted historical reality and disregarding key evidence that would produce a clear picture. Historians on both sides base their argument on the findings of past research works when a reinvestigation of the existing resources is required. These parties apply a tactical approach to advance their position and silence the critics. For instance, the Turkish government has used diplomatic threats and pressure while the Armenians have blamed all those who refuse to call the massacres as a case of genocide to soothe the Turkish government.

Besides the failure to implement the Armenian reforms of 1914, there is also reason to believe that the belated establishment of the Republic of Turkey contributed to the unfortunate events of 1915. The Young Turk leaders

deeply disliked the intervention of the powerful European powers on behalf of the Armenians. In particular, the Russian role led to strong suspicions. The rights granted to the Armenians in the reform agreement were never respected. Therefore, when several Armenians showed signs of open sympathy in 1915 for the Russian troops from the Eastern Front, the Young Turks became even more persuaded that only a radical move, such as the displacement of the Armenian people would result in a permanent solution for the recurrent treasonous behavior of the Armenians.

The Armenian minority population had considered the reform agreement as a progressive step towards the ultimate complete freedom from the Turkish repression. They did not anticipate that the Turks would do everything within their reach to stop the loss of what they viewed to be the epicenter of Turkish Anatolia. The long craving to be liberated from the chains imposed by the Armenian reform agreement may explain why the Young Turk leaders were eager to form secretly a military alliance with Germany and subsequently go into the war as an ally of Germany some months later.

Turning the Ottoman empire into a colony of the Allied powers

In February 1902, the first congressional meeting of the Ottoman opposition took place in Paris. Among the key attendants were the Ottoman liberals, members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), and Armenian delegates all who played an essential role in the discussions. All parties agreed that the incumbent Sultan had to be replaced; however, the CUP was divided over the matters involving Armenian sovereignty and foreign intervention.

The largest group was prepared to allow a considerable degree of autonomy to the national minorities of the empire and to receive the assistance of the European powers such as Britain and France in implementing the required reforms. The final declaration of the Congress called for the reinforcement of the constitution that had been suspended in 1878 and requested the European powers to execute the obligations of the treaty that they had signed.

In the years that followed, the nationalist faction of the CUP with its non-imperialist sentiments extended its influence, further increasing the hostility between the Young Turks and the minority groups in the Turk population. Following the defeat of Abdul Hamid in 1908, the past differences were relegated. More pertinent to the eventual influence on Turkish-Armenian relations than conceptual tolerance within the CUP was the sequence of overwhelming foreign policy setbacks encountered by the Ottoman government in the years between 1908 and 1913. These setbacks, it must be recalled, came at the brink of a continuous loss of Ottoman land ever since the aborted conquest of Vienna in 1683. From this period onwards, the Ottoman Empire had steadily declined in prosperity, losing part of its territories such as Persia, the Crimea, Greece, and Egypt.

With all the challenges that the Ottoman Turks were experiencing, the Allied powers may have taken advantage of the situation to transform it into a colonial empire. Since the Ottoman Turks had lost about 83 percent of their European territories by 1913, it would perhaps have been easy to colonize the empire. The Allied powers would have capitalized on the internal tension in the Ottoman Turk Empire particularly in the face of the Balkan wars. The

Turkish government did not completely trust even those Turkish Armenians who had served loyally in high-cadre ranks of the Ottoman military and subsequently lost many military commanders to other countries.

Conclusion

Facts on the Ottoman Empire

The establishment of the Ottoman Empire can be traced back to the year 1299 by Osman I. He made it possible for the several independent states of Anatolia to all come under one rule by creating a formal government that allowed for the peaceful coexistence of all people regardless of the religion that they professed.

The Ottoman Empire kept on expanding over the next 150 years with the Eastern Roman Empire being viewed as the most powerful empire in the land at the time.

In 1453, the Ottoman Empire seized Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Mehmet II the Conqueror made Constantinople the capital of the entire Ottoman Empire and changed its name to Istanbul. For many hundred years to come, the Ottoman Empire would remain as the largest and strongest empire throughout the world.

The Ottoman Empire got to its peak during the era of Suleiman the Magnificent who ruled over the Empire from 1520 to 1566. In the course of this time, the Empire grew and comprised much of Eastern Europe such as Greece and Hungary.

The Ottoman Empire started to lose its power in the latter years of the 1600s. It stopped to extend its territories and instead succumbed to

economic pressure from Europe and other parts of the world including India. Internally-bred corruption and lack of proper leadership culminated into a steady downfall until the empire was completely eradicated and the Republic of Turkey was formed in 1923.

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