

# The importance of historical connections between Turkey and Europe during the period of the late Ottoman Empire

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Bachelor Thesis

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## Abstract

In the context of EU enlargement policy, Turkey is probably the most controversially discussed EU membership candidate. However, Turkey's relationship to Europe is mostly discussed in terms of whether it can be seen as a part of Europe. The actual historical connections are mostly overlooked especially for the time in which Turkey was part of the Ottoman Empire. This paper aims at analysing connections that existed during the late part of the Ottoman Empire and their impact.

The research question for this study shall be: *"How strong were the connections between Turkey as a part of the late Ottoman Empire and Europe?"*

Concentrating on four individual authors and their writings during the later period of the Ottoman by retrieving historical data from primary sources it is attempted to analyse what kind of connections can be found and how important they were for the involved parties. Secondary sources are used to illustrate the chapters with additional information about the historical context of the respective periods.

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## 1. Introduction

The enlargement policy of the European Union has played a prominent role in European politics during the last couple of years. The European Union has grown recently to a point where Croatia, as the newest addition from the first of July, is now one of currently 28 official member states. The enlargement process however is far from over. There are still several countries that are discussed as next possible additions to the European Union.

Among them is also Turkey, which is probably the most controversial EU membership candidate. The question whether Turkey should become a member of the European Union has been discussed on many occasions. The EU itself attempted in the past to find out what the public opinion about this issue is on several occasions was. The Eurobarometer, a publication by the European Commission concentrated in their several surveys about the future of the European Union also on the support and opposition within member states regarding possible additions to the EU. Among these candidate countries is also Turkey, which usually received less support than most of the other suggestions (European Commission, 2006, p. 136, 2008, pp. 28- 30, 2011a, pp. 62- 63, 2011b, p. 89).

The general topic of enlargement policy has already been of interest for many researchers, who have conducted studies in this context. Among these studies are various cases, which also included Turkey. However, it becomes clear that although several researches have already dealt with the case of Turkey and its importance for the European Union in the future (Yesilada, Efir & Noordijk, 2006), the reasons for support in the candidate countries for an EU membership (Elgün & Tillman, 2007) or the opposition against Turkey's accession of countries that belong to a certain group (Dixon, 2010) there is still room left for further studies of this topic. Turkey's historic role in Europe is an issue that was not completely disregarded in the general discussion but still did not get very much attention and may have been underestimated in its importance so far. In this context, the general importance of the Ottoman Empire, of which Turkey was the centrepiece but which also covered far more than just the territory of the Turkish state, is mostly overlooked and deserves more attention.

The second part of the introduction provides a more detailed look at the current discussion regarding Turkey's EU candidacy in the Eurobarometer and its incapability to include historical ties as a factor in the relationship between Turkey and Europe.

## 1.1 Opinions within Europe regarding Turkey's EU candidacy

A look at recent measures conducted in 2010 and published in 2011 by the European Commission shows a rather negative perspective on Turkey's candidacy. Not only was the overall support with 30% in all 27 member states low in comparison with most of the other countries, which were discussed as possible additions to the European Union, the direct opposition against Turkey becoming a member state was with 59% the highest measured value of all countries. It has to be said though, that despite the obvious opposition in the EU, the opinion within Turkey showed strong support for a Turkish membership with 59% being in favour of and 28 % against it. In order to see whether these recent measures portray stable values or if these were subject to grave changes in the years before, it is necessary to take the development during the last couple of years before this measurement also into consideration. In 2008, the values for the EU 27 were fairly similar with 31% in favour of Turkey accession and 55% against it. Although this change is only small, it is still necessary to mention that apparently the opinions about Turkey's candidacy took a slight turn for the worse from this point on. Another three years back to the Commission's measure from 2005 however one can see the exact same values as in 2008, despite some changes during a measurement in between. All in all, it can be said that that in the entire time period from the measurement in 2005 until the one in 2010, the changes were rather small yet should not be overlooked. The support in Turkey on the other hand, did change from 75% supporting a possible membership and 12% opposing it in 2005 to only 61% supporting it and 25% opposing it in 2008, from which on the values worsened slightly more until 2010. From these findings it can be derived that the opinions in Turkey regarding a membership changed much stronger recently than in the EU member states. Therefore, the recent developments seemed to have a much stronger impact on Turkey than in the European Union (European Commission, 2006, p. 136, 2008, pp. 28- 30, 2011a, pp. 62- 63, 2011b, p. 89).

Even though it can be seen, that the overall tendencies of support or opposition within most countries seem to remain intact, it is obvious that the opinions of several people within the EU member states have been subject to changes over time, indicating that recent events influence the opinions of the citizens within the member states, although these changes were much stronger in Turkey itself than in the European Union.

The 64<sup>th</sup> issue of the Eurobarometer from 2006 laid the focus further on Turkey's candidacy. An additional set of questions concentrated on whether Turkey had to meet certain conditions in order to join the European Union as for instance the recognition of human rights, expected consequences from its accession like increased migration and further issues. One of these questions asked whether Turkey belongs to Europe partially because of its history, which 40% agreed and 45% disagreed on. Among the Turkish respondents 49% believed their country's history makes it belong to Europe partially (European Commission, 2006, pp. 138- 139).

Generally it can be said, that the overall opinions regarding Turkey's accession to the European Union seemingly depend at least to a certain degree on recent developments, as the changes over the years indicate. Furthermore, the discussion on certain factors concerning its candidacy concentrates mainly on current topics and approaches historical ties only once in a simplified manner. Since this is the only question, concentrating on history, it supports the claim earlier made during the introduction that history as a factor is not completely disregarded but also did not receive very much attention. The problem of the question itself is that it merely asks about perception of Turkey's historical belonging into Europe, which is a rather superficial approach. The actual historical interconnectedness between Turkey and the member states of the European Union is left out here. The historical connections in economical matters like trade, military conflicts or cultural exchange that took place over time are worthy to be taken into consideration, when the relationships between Turkey and Europe are discussed. As an example, the Crimean War, which will be brought up again later on in this paper, is an intriguing case in which economic as well as political motivations united Turkey with several European nations in their common cause against Russia (Engels, 1979, pp. 13- 17, Hösch, 1993, pp. 123- 126). Cases like this show how complex and significant the connections have been over time. Therefore, the historical ties of Europe and Turkey deserve a more in-depth analysis, which the Eurobarometer does not provide. For clarification, it is not the aim of this paper to prove or disprove the belonging of Turkey in Europe based on its history. It is much rather attempted to analyse some of the connections in the mutual history involving Turkey and countries, of which several succession states are now part of the European Union.

The next chapter concentrates on the research question of this paper.

## 2. Research question

The research question of this paper concentrates on the historical ties between Turkey and Europe. It reads as following:

*"How strong were the connections between Turkey as a part of the late Ottoman Empire and Europe?"*

The connections on which the question focuses on cover various fields. Historical relationships between countries usually involve numerous aspects as for instance conflicts, trade, and cooperation on certain matters etc., which all are important factors in the shaping of the respective nations. By the strength of connection it is meant, how much Turkey and the European nations were connected and how important these connections were. For clarification it has to be mentioned, that the time period, which is covered here starts approximately with the very late 18<sup>th</sup> century and ends in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

More information on the sources and the structure of the paper is provided in the following chapter, which is dedicated to these aspects and the additional content of the paper.

## 3. Structure and limitations

In this chapter the data collection, case selection, data analysis and finally the aim and limitations of this research are laid out briefly for a better understanding of the main part.

### 3.1 Data collection

The data for the current opinions within member states of the European Union are taken from official sources of the Union itself. More precisely the Eurobarometer by the European Commission is used to gather the required quantitative data. For the main part of the paper, a number of historical primary sources have been chosen to gather information from the respective time periods. Additional secondary sources are used to provide further

information about the historical context. Regarding the primary sources, four individual authors and their writings have been chosen. All publications are from different points in time, in order to provide an insight on different periods concerning the connections between Turkey and the European nations. The writings of these men are further analysed during the core part of this paper.

### 3.2 Case selection

The Eurobarometer was chosen because it provides the most recent official data regarding the opinions of member states toward Turkey as the next possible member. Nevertheless, the focus of this paper lies on sources written by four authors from different points in time and their perception of Turkey as part of the Ottoman Empire in the context of contemporary events. These sources are further analysed in order to gather information about the view on Turkey on different matters and during several points in time of the Ottoman Empire's later period. The selected authors are: Francois Pouqueville, Helmuth von Moltke, Frederick Engels and H. W. Schmidt.

Each of these authors has been selected for certain reasons. Pouqueville for instance, covered a great part of the Ottoman Empire during his journeys and documented his (Pouqueville, 1805). Von Moltke was not only an observer of the contemporary processes in the Ottoman Empire during his stay but also directly involved in some of them in his role as a military advisor, which makes him an interesting case in the context of this paper ( von Moltke, 1841). Engels is not only one of the probably most famous writers of his time, but he also wrote a series of articles about contemporary political issues, of which one analyses English interests in Turkey in 1853, making it a promising source for this study(Engels, 1979). Schmidt, who is probably the least well-known author among all four, was selected because his book provides a variety of information on several matters of and economic relationships in particular (Schmidt, 1917).



### 3.3 Analysis and conclusion

The primary sources used within the individual chapters of the main part of the paper will be discussed in the historical context in which they were written. On the basis of the provided qualitative data, the situation of Turkey as core region of the Ottoman Empire and its relationships with the European nations according to the sources will be analysed. The combined information from all chapters will then be further examined in the final analysis by comparing and contrasting the individual viewpoints and findings. Based on the results of this analysis, a general statement will then be made in the concluding remarks.

### 3.4 Research aim and limitations

As it was earlier mentioned, this paper does not aim at finding out whether Turkey can be historically regarded as a part of Europe and as laid out in the research question the focus of this study on the historical connections between Turkey and European nations.

Nevertheless, it should be clear that a single paper is unable to grasp all connections in general. The selected sources serve rather as samples from several periods in time during the era of the late Ottoman Empire to see, how strong the connections during the respective times were. Therefore, even though not all factors can be taken into consideration it is intended to find at least differences and similarities from different periods, in order to derive a general statement for the research question, which covers the entire time frame.

Furthermore, it should be noted, that several aspects in the writings may depend on the personal perception of the respective authors. This has the disadvantage, that some actual connections are portrayed in a biased way, but also the advantage, that if such a view is observable, the relationships between Turkey and the standpoint of the author as a representative of his nation can be established, in terms of e.g. positive or negative attitudes.

The following part concentrates on the analysis of the primary sources.

## 4. Analysis of the individual primary sources

This chapter is divided into four sections, of which each concentrates on a single author.

### 4.1 Pouqueville and the weakened empire

When Francois Pouqueville, a traveller who wrote about the observations he made during his journeys through the Ottoman Empire between 1798 and 1801, experienced the Sultans realm, he witnessed firsthand the impact of current and past events. Until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire had faced a great number of military conflicts with various opponents such as the Habsburg Empire and over the time had lost many of its territories and influence, while internal problems also caused growing instability. This probably influenced also Pouqueville's view, who believed this instability would cause the realm to fall. Generally, the historical context and his descriptions show rather negative prospects for the Ottoman Empire at the time (Kreiser, 2001, pp. 31- 33, Pouqueville, 1805, p. 112).

Seeing how much the of the relationships between the Ottoman Empire and countries from Europe were based on warfare, one could get the idea that military conflicts as a key reason for the Ottoman's loss of power, were the single feature that connected it with these foreign powers. Yet, there were also other sides to the interconnection. It is for instance noteworthy, that Ottoman embassies were established in the cities of Vienna, Berlin, London and Paris during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, to improve the diplomatic relations with the respective nations although this would prevent future conflicts in general, it showed at least the attempt at better communication with the European powers (Kreiser, 2001, p. 34).

In the matter of fact, despite continuing war and the pressure it created, the reasons for the decay of the empire depended also on other factors and were much more complex. The relationships with the European powers played an important role in that regard. An inside on several factors concerning the problematic situation of the Ottoman Empire is given by the perception of the traveller Pouqueville, who appeared to see it with mixed feelings.

About the political structure of the Ottoman Empire for instance, he found it noteworthy that on several occasions, common men or even slaves were promoted to the highest ranks of society. Society in general was to him composed without the usual differences between

classes, since anyone could end up in any position within a single day. He was fascinated by these men who were set into positions that stood in contrast to their prior occupations. Although he mentioned that they lacked erudition he accredited them surprisingly good political instincts a feature that to him was worth far more than the other attribute.<sup>1</sup> However, the problems he saw were that once they achieved their privileges, they merely concentrated on keeping them instead educating themselves further or trying to set up necessary reforms, for they knew, the Sultan who many of them owed their position to also had the power to replace them in an instant, if they would displease him. The Sultans namely were also completely uneducated according to Pouqueville, because they only learned about the Koran and to hate all Christians. Therefore, as he wrote, their subordinates preferred to remain Turkish and stick to the national prejudices about foreign cultures (Pouqueville, 1805, pp. 37, 112, 119 & 135).

Pouqueville illustrated further that self interests, arbitrary use of power and greed were common among high ranked officials in the Ottoman Empire. He even went as far as generalizing that all Turks were greedy and by naming by example of a minister who openly extorted an Armenian trader in the streets for money, claiming that the minister did so because he was a Turk (Pouqueville, 1805, p.63).

From this description can be easily seen how the French traveller's view featured in various regards a negative opinion on the Ottoman Empire and the Turks in particular, since he emphasized on their lack of education or alleged greediness. It has to be noted though that his opinion also might be informed by the fact that France was currently involved in a rather non- friendly relationship with the Ottomans at the time. Pouqueville's journey took place during the time when Napoleon Bonaparte landed with his troops in Egypt and seized control of the Ottoman province in 1798, until his military expedition was ended by the destruction of his fleet by the British navy and inner resistance, leading to the retreat of the French army until 1801 (Warraq, 2007, p. 29).

It has to be mentioned though that not all of Pouqueville's descriptions were negative and so he praised the good manners of the high ranked officials in the realm. Furthermore, he

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<sup>1</sup> Quotation: Indessen sind selbst die Großen des Reichs aus der Hefe des Volks genommen. Der Vezir Jezouf ist ein Reishändler gewesen, der Kapudan Passa war ein armer Georgischer Sklave, und die übrigen Personen des Hofes sind von nicht erlauchterer Abkunft. Der elendeste Schiffer kann morgen Passa werden, und sonderbar genug ist es, der Türke nimmt, sobald er auf dem von seinem Herrn ihm angewiesenen Posten steht, einen Ton von Würde an, der in Erstaunen setzt. ... Sie haben keine Kenntnisse, aber dafür oft Genie, das zum Regieren mehr hilft als Gelehrsamkeit (Pouqueville, 1805, p. 135).

said the only ones in general from who one could have expected open hostility were among the fanatics, who as he said one could encounter there just as well as in a European city (Pouqueville, 1805, p. 134).

Nevertheless, the problem of relying on prejudices and personal interests as well as the arbitrary use of power, that could strike down a man as well as make him one of the most powerful men in the entire realm indicated problems regarding the internal stability, when it was common to replace multiple advisors at once. Progressiveness seemed heavily restricted, which would logically result in stagnation and stagnation in disadvantages in comparison to other nations. It is therefore interesting to see, how different perceptions about the view on the state of the empire especially in terms of its continuation described it.

Perceptions from both sides, from Europe as well as from the empire within regarding the future of the Ottoman Empire featured surprisingly both an important key point, namely the fall of Islam in Europe, although the prospects Pouqueville laid out were much more drastic. He noted about the future of the empire that it was destined to fall and the process of its destruction could only be slowed but not prevented, since the Sultan had lost most of his power and the control over the provinces was only nominally given by his official titles.<sup>2</sup> The Turks on the other hand were apparently only certain that one day the European territories of the empire would be invaded by blond men and all Muslims would be driven out of Europe to the Asian part of Turkey (Pouqueville, 1805, pp. 74 & 112).<sup>3</sup>

But like his own opinions about them, the views on European culture were not entirely negative, as he wrote. For instance he described the rank of the highest among the doctors as an honorary title, which could be given to someone without further meaning since despite apparent cultural prejudices only those, who were trained in Europe, were actually trusted with the Sultan's health (Pouqueville, 1805, p. 87 & 135).

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<sup>2</sup> Quotation: Allein das ottomanische Reich ist ein ungeheurer Koloß, den die Hand der Zeit gewiß umstürzen wird, und dessen Fall bloß verzögert werden kann. Die Macht des Großherrn besteht ja in nichts mehr als in leerem Titelprunk, in der Aufzählung der verschlungenen Provinzen und unterworfenen Städte. Man wiederholt aber dessen ungeachtet noch immer diese Phrasen, so wie auch das alte Ceremoniel beym Empfang fremder Gesandten und Botschaften, indeß die Last der Jahre überall auf einen von Schwäche ausgemergelten, kraftlosen Körper losdrückt (Pouqueville, 1805, p. 112).

<sup>3</sup> Quotation: Derjenige, der die Ufer des Boshorus bewohnt, läßt seinen Blick gern auf die angenehmen Gegenden Asiens hinüberschweifen, wo seine Väter ruhen\*). Er betrachtet dieses Land überhaupt als dasjenige, welches einst die Zuflucht der Muselmänner werden wird, wenn eine Nation blonder Menschen sie aus Europa vertrieben haben wird [sic \*\*).

\*) Die reichen Türken von Constantinopel lassen sich meistens in Asien begraben.

\*\*) Eine gemeine Sage, die die Türken für eine Prophezeiung halten (Pouqueville, 1805, p. 74).

For the conclusion of this chapter it can be said that the relationship between the European nations and Turkey as part of the Ottoman Empire as well as perception of the respective other at the time can be described as ambivalent. Pouqueville for instance as a French and therefore European observer was both intrigued and displeased by a system that seemingly brought great talents from even the lowest ranks of society into powerful positions, who outmatched book knowledge with their cunningness. Nevertheless, he feared that this alone was not able to strengthen the damaged realm sufficiently, since the same people refused to educate themselves further, nor attempted to set up modern reforms since they must fear for their lives if they do so. A mixed view on the foreign cultures from the oriental perspective can also be seen in his descriptions. On the one side the progress of other nations was not only acknowledged but also occasionally preferred over the domestic skills as the example about the Sultans personal doctors indicates, but on the other hand one would have risked losing his position by promoting the adaptation of western ideas into the governmental structure. The facts that talent was to certain degree promoted but also left unused, the system blocked reformation of its structures and the political status-quo was preferred over changes due to common prejudices and personal interests can partially explain, why the Ottoman Empire was unable to cope with several issues at the time, whether it was military pressure from the outside or growing instability from the inside.

The mentioning of the downfall of the Ottoman Empire as he foresaw it could be found in later descriptions of other people again. The following chapter will show the realm at a later stage, when its instability had continued to weaken it further.

## **4.2 Von Moltke and the continuing process of destabilization**

The first half of the 19th century saw the Ottoman Empire at a point, where it faced threats from outside but also from within its realm. Nevertheless, this period was also the beginning of new connections and relationships between the Ottoman Empire and European nations.

Several conflicts with its foreign and inner adversaries had continued to weaken the Ottoman Empire. One example was the revolution in Greece. Although the Empire was able to defeat the rebellion on the battlefield in 1826, it could not stop the process of emancipation due to foreign intervention. Great Britain as well as France supported the uprising in Greece against the Ottoman rulers which ultimately lead to the founding of the

Greece national state in the Peace of Adrianople from 1829, which was officially recognized by Turkey in 1832 (Kreiser, 2001, pp. 36- 37; Langewiesche, 1993, p.13). The once so powerful Ottoman Empire continued falling apart.

One observer of this process was Helmuth von Moltke, a Prussian officer, who lived in the Ottoman Empire for several years during the 1830s. In 1836, he assessed the state of the Ottoman Empire as very fragile. According to him not only had the Ottoman Empire lost its power in Greece, but was also about to lose touch with many of its other provinces. A main reason for this was as he wrote, the continuing involvement of European powers into Ottoman politics like the aforementioned assistance for Greece in its battle for independence. Furthermore he claimed that the safety of some parts of the Empire depended on the risk to make oneself an enemy of the other European nations, when one of them would attempt to claim a colony for itself (von Moltke, 1841, pp. 43- 45). The prospects he laid out indicate that this realm had become subject to the control of European nations and their preferences about its continuance.

Indeed, the greater European powers France, Russia and England were heavily interested in using the Ottoman lack of strength to their own advantage. However, the interests of the various European powers regarding the “Eastern Question”, as the issues regarding the weakened Ottoman Empire were called, differed greatly. France for instance used the weakness of the Ottoman Empire, resulting from the revolt in Greece to gain control over Algeria in 1830. In order to stabilize its position in Africa, it began to support Egypt’s vice king Muhammad Ali, who attempted to strengthen his rule and also free himself from the supremacy of the Turkish Sultan Mahmud II. France offered help to the vice king by investing in Egypt’s modernization regarding economy, military and governance etc. thus creating a strong ally against Turkey. However, its actions caught the attention and displeasure of England, Russia, Austria and Prussia. Although those parties could not be seen as close allies of the Ottoman Empire and for the most part had their own history of conflict with it, they did not favour the prospect of the end of the Turkish reign. A familiar and weakened Empire was unlikely to become the source of unpleasant risks, while the outcomes of the initiated fragmentation process by France, was rather unpredictable. In 1840 the four opposing forces decided therefore to guarantee the stabilization of the Turkish rule (Langewiesche, 1993, pp. 15 & 17-18).

It is obvious that the necessity of foreign powers to form a coalition in order to guarantee the continuation of the Sultans reign indicates the lack of power the Ottoman Empire had about its own fate.

The official protection of the Turkish rule to maintain stability in the Ottoman Empire was foreshadowed by von Moltke, who estimated the Ottoman Empire in its contemporary state as too weak to protect itself. He commented on the situation in the late 1830s that those who had struggled over the years to protect themselves from the Ottoman power, were now those who tried to keep this Empire from falling apart.<sup>4</sup> But furthermore, they were also those who created the situation in which the Ottoman Empire was about to fall if it was left on its own devices. The danger von Moltke saw in this process was the possibility of a Russian conquest of Turkey, which was undesirable for the other European nations, yet indirectly enabled by keeping the Ottoman Empire weak (von Moltke, 1841, pp. 43- 46).<sup>5</sup>

Under these circumstances, the realm under Turkish rule appeared to be much rather in a position of utter dependency on the European powers and not a strong Empire.

However, von Moltke saw still potential in the Ottoman Empire. According to him the economic ties between it and European nations although existing for a long time featured especially then new possibilities for more than just economic exchange. To him, technological progress was a key for the modernization of the realm. In one of his letters from 1838, he explicitly mentioned the strong potential of European steamboats, which provided a much faster connection than the traditional trade routes, to bring civilization to the Orient (von Moltke, 1841, pp. 201-202). From his observations it can be deduced that there was apparently still a chance to keep up with European powers for the Ottoman Empire. The consistent modernization of the realm seemed to open the possibility to strengthen it again.

However, several chances to improve the situation with reforms and investments were either unused or approached in an inefficient way. As von Moltke described further, fortunes, which according to him should have been invested in production facilities and the agricultural sector, were wasted on ornaments and jewellery. Finished products had to be

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<sup>4</sup> Quotation: Es ist lange die Aufgabe abendländischer Heere gewesen, der osmanischen Macht Schranken zu setzen; heute scheint es die Sorge der europäischen Politik zu sein, diesem Staat das Dasein zu fristen (von Moltke, 1841, p. 43).

<sup>5</sup> Quotation: Sie öffnen Rußland den Weg in das Herz der Türkei, und führen herbei, was sie vor allem vermeiden wollten (von Moltke, 1841, p. 46).

imported in exchange for local raw materials at undesirable rates for the oriental traders (von Moltke, 1841, pp. 49-51).<sup>6</sup>

Besides issues with the economy, he also found the contemporary attempts to reform the administrative and military structure of the Empire highly regrettable. He characterized the new fiscal system as inefficient and changes in the composition of the administration as superficial with the same incompetent men retaining their positions only with different titles. For the military reforms the approach to establish an army after European model was to him rather uncoordinated and consisted mainly in the purchase of individual pieces of equipment from different nations, instructors from all of these countries, inexperienced local officers and a flawed recruiting system (von Moltke, 1841, pp. 283 & 419).<sup>7</sup> Taking into account that von Moltke himself was one of the foreign officers, who was sent to support the Ottoman's military, it is interesting to see that he was seemingly discontent with the contemporary developments. Apparently, his stay was under different circumstances than those of most other instructors. He emphasized that while usually the European powers made great efforts to have some of their officers brought into Turkish service, this did not include Prussia. Contrary to their other European counterparts, Prussian officers were only delegated to Turkey after repeated requests. For this reason, as he explained, he and his colleagues were of much higher standing compared to other instructors (von Moltke, 1841, p. 150).

Von Moltke's descriptions indicate strongly that he enjoyed a privileged position. The importance of Prussian officers on the one hand but the persistent try of other nations, also to be involved in the reformation process of the military indicate a mutual interest of Europe and Turkey in the respective other, although Turkey's officials were seemingly very selective in their interest. But although it was seemingly tried to form an army after European models, von Moltke saw still flaws in the approach taken. It has to be taken into

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<sup>6</sup> Der Rajah wird lieber ein Geschmeide für 100,000 Piaster kaufen, als eine Fabrik, eine Mühle oder ein Vorwerk anlegen. ... In einem Lande, wo dem Gewerbefleiß das Element fehlt, in welchem er gedeiht, kann auch der Handel größtentheils nur ein Austausch fremder Fabrikate gegen einheimisch rohe Stoffe sein (von Moltke, 1841, pp. 49-50).

<sup>7</sup> Quotation: So viele und so große Hindernisse stellten sich dem Plane des Sultans entgegen, und leider ist der Ausspruch wahr: qu'en Turquie on a commencé la réforme par la queue. Sie bestand meist in Äußerlichkeiten, in Namen und Projekten. Die unglücklichste Schöpfung war die eines Heeres nach europäischen Mustern mit russischen Jacken, französischem Reglement, belgischen Gewehren, türkischen Mützen, ungarischen Sätteln, englischen Säbeln, und Instructeurs aus allen Nationen; zusammengesetzt aus Lehnstruppen oder Timarioten, aus Linientruppen mit lebenswieriger und Landwehren mit unbestimmter Dienstzeit, in welchem die Führer Rekruten, die Rekruten kaum besiegte Feinde waren (von Moltke, 1841, p. 419).



account, that his privileged position and the apparent rivalries of some nations to have their officers included into Turkey's military were the reasons why he was not too fond of other nation's influences. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the key issue regarding a seemingly flawed reformation process in the military show how problematic the adaptation of foreign ideas for Turkey was even in the fields, where they were willing to do so.

The reasons von Moltke saw for the unused potential and misguided reforms were mainly religious fanaticism, cultural prejudices and a lack of education. For instance he said religious leaders would prevent the influence of modern thoughts that undermined their influence. The fact that the Sultan himself was also not very well educated posed a further problem for him, although he noted in 1839, that the Turkish Sultan Mahmud II had at least realized that the current state of his empire required the orientation on western European structures to stabilize his reign and was able to set up some important projects before his death like the dispatch of young men to be educated in western countries, who according to von Moltke could become essential for the future of this empire. On a further note he stated, that foreigners in general were mostly despised and even though the Turks would see the advantages of the European nations in the fields of science and power etc. they could not accept someone who wasn't a Muslim as an equal (von Moltke, 1841, pp. 408-410 & 412-418).

From the descriptions given by von Moltke in the context of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one can see the problematic situation of the Ottoman Empire but also the relationships between it and western countries. The disintegrating realm had come to a point where it was no longer a force the European nations had to fear and its mere existence depended on of foreign political agendas. Its relationship with the European powers was built on dependency and although the Turkish elite seemed to understand at least partially, why their reign was weakened, they were unable to overcome religious dogmas and prejudices to set up the required reforms as it was necessary. Even the few attempts, which were made, did not bring the required results. The inability and unwillingness to adapt modern thoughts, even if they were necessary to fight back the fragmentation process of the Empire posed serious problems. In combination with the powerlessness in comparison to the greater powers like France and Russia, these problems created an uncertain environment. Von Moltke's concern about the state of the realm foreshadowed upcoming events. Especially his claim, the Ottoman Empire would depend

on foreign powers to maintain its stability and his prediction of Russian aggression would play an important role less than twenty years later as portrayed in the following chapter.

#### **4. 3 Engels, the Crimean War and European interests**

During the further course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ties between European nations and the Ottoman Empire intensified further. Especially its core region Turkey became the focus of interest for various reasons.

Frederick Engels for example stressed the importance of Turkey for Europe in a newspaper article he wrote in 1853. According to him, Turkey was a crucial factor in economic and political matters, which especially England could not risk to lose (Engels, 1979, pp. 13-17).

This article is especially interesting with regard to the fact that the Crimean War would erupt later in the same year and Engels made some observations, which explain the actions of some of the involved parties and Great Britain in particular, but also showed some of the main interests of the European powers, which were connected to Turkey. The Crimean War is probably the most famous conflict of the 19th century, which involves the Ottoman Empire. In the context of this paper, this conflict deserves special attention. The reason for this is mainly the fact that in this war the Ottoman Empire fought alongside some of its greatest former rivals against a single common enemy namely Russia, which attempted to expand further into Ottoman territory.

Engels wrote in his article why the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles were of crucial interest. According to him, the safety of the Turkish ports was a necessity to maintain the flow of goods from Asia to Europe. Furthermore, Turkey and other parts of the Ottoman realm were also a lucrative market with growing importance especially for British products. By referring to the London Economist, Engels showed that the British exports to Ottoman regions increased from over 1.4 million British Pounds in 1840 to more than 3.5 million Pounds in 1848 and the following years. He claimed that two-thirds of these exports were delivered to the ports in the Black Sea and Constantinople. If Russia was to seize control of these regions it would heavily compromise the European trade with Asia, warned Engels. Additionally, he saw this region as a strategically important position with decisive

potential in military matters.<sup>8</sup> He feared that if Russia could invade the Bosphorus and Dardanelles successfully, it would become powerful enough to pose a threat to further countries in Europe and sooner or later take over other nations. If this should occur, Russia a nation of Absolutism would gravely endanger the democratic processes in Europe. For this reason, Engels saw the aims of England in the field of economy and the revolutionary Democracy in the field of politics united in their interest to keep Russia from invading Turkey (Engels, 1979, pp. 13-17).<sup>9</sup>

His fears about Russia's desire for conquest seemed justified, when Russia invaded the Danubian Principalities in the July of 1853, an act of provocation, which ultimately led to the beginning of the Crimean War in the October of 1853. In the beginning Russia's military apparatus made important progress by destroying the Turkish fleet at Sinop, but their victories raised the concern of those who had attempted to prevent the war in the first place. Austria and Prussia as well as France and Great Britain had tried earlier during negotiations to mediate between the adversaries and the latter two felt themselves dragged into the conflict as they saw the Turkish army hit by a devastating defeat. By weakening the Ottoman Empire gravely on the battlefield, the Russian army was causing more internal instability than the European powers were willing to risk. Thus Engels assessed the importance of European interests in Turkey correctly and also that they were eager to keep the status quo in this region for the sake of economic and political stability. The British and French fleet joined the Turkish forces and began to fight back the Russian influence in many strategically important regions such as the Black Sea and the Crimea, where a main part of the battles took place. They also prevented Russia to gather help from potential allies among those, which used to be or still were under Ottoman control and willing to rebel against their (former) rulers. The allied forces pursued their enemy further and finally began their charge on the Crimea attacking the base at Sevastopol. The combats would last for almost an entire year until September of 1855 ending with the Russian capitulation. The peace treaty was signed in March of 1856 in Paris, resulting in heavily compromised access for Russia to the Black Sea and territorial losses to the Ottoman Empire and the Principality of Moldavia (Hösch, 1993, pp. 123- 126; Langewiesche, 1993, pp. 17- 18).

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<sup>8</sup> Quotation: England cannot afford to allow Russia to become the possessor of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus. Both commercially and politically such an event would be a deep if not a deadly blow at British power (Engels, 1979, p.13).

<sup>9</sup> Quotation: But let Russia get possession of Turkey, and her strength is increased nearly half, and she becomes superior to all the rest of Europe put together. Such an event would be an unspeakable calamity to the revolutionary cause (Engels, 1979, p.17).

This case shows that although Great Britain and France were not eager to engage in a military conflict, they still joined the war on the side of the Ottoman Empire, when its stability was at stake. Engels perception of Turkey as a region of strategically and economic importance serves as a good explanation why the European powers could not watch the Ottoman Empire destabilize too much and let Russia gain control of this territory. Furthermore, the importance of the stability of the empire went as far as preventing uprisings within the empire, which is contrary to some of their previous actions like support of Greece independence, as it was mentioned in the prior chapter. It can be deducted that Turkey was too vital for them to be left unguarded. Therefore, the role of Turkey in this case can be seen as important trade partner and a bulwark for Europe to prevent Russia from further expansion in the south. On a side note it remarkable that Turkish independency was regarded by Frederick Engels himself as crucial for the continuation of the democratic revolution in Europe, because it could prevent an opposing force from becoming too powerful, as long as it remained in control of its strategically important regions. Generally, it is to say that at the time, Turkey played an important role for Europe in more than one regard.

The following chapter will show the Ottoman Empire close to its final days, when the modernization process had brought new features to the relationships between it and the European nations, which were involved in it.

#### **4.4 Schmidt and the late modernization process**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman Empire joined the First World War on the side of the Central Powers. The relationships to their allies and Germany in particular were essential during these days in various regards of which trade was one important factor. For this reason a man named H.W. Schmidt published a book in which he aimed to inform about trade with Turkey in 1917. Although not much is known about him, he was seemingly a well-respected capacity in this regard. The reason for this estimation is that he apparently wrote this book, because he was, as he said, frequently consulted for advice on that matter

and was able to provide a variety of in- depth information on economic but also social matters in his writings (Schmidt, 1917, p. 3).<sup>10</sup>

Schmidt wrote his book at a point, after Turkey had begun to implement several reforms aiming at modernization, which in the context of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century seemed to be necessary. The empire's inner stability was more threatened than it had been ever before and several parties used this to their advantage. But not all threats came from other nations. Several provinces began to fight the Turkish rule more successful than ever. Additionally, new forces made their claim to power in Turkey. The modernization process of the realm during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had brought modern thoughts with it and with the rise of the Young Turks, who organised themselves in the Committee of Union and Progress began to make political demands with the help of officers from European nations such as Great Britain. With the help of the Turkish military, they reinstated the constitution from 1876 in 1908, revised it and began to reform the realm, with their newly self- assigned competences. According to Schmidt, it was thanks to those men that Turkey was able to make progress in the fields of military, economics, education and more even during the war.<sup>11</sup> After successfully defeating the opposition, the Committee of Union and Progress took over the power. Sultan Abdülhamid II was exiled to Saloniki and replaced by his brother Mehmed V. But the internal struggles also caused the inability to prevent the losses of several territories to European nations, but also emerging independence movements in the Balkan region. The once so powerful Empire had shrunk within years to a much smaller size than it used to be (Kreiser, 2001, pp. 47-49, Schmidt, 1917, pp. 9- 10).

Taking the factors that lead to the contemporary situation during which Schmidt wrote his book into account, it appears that the destabilization process of the Ottoman Empire had continued further also while the reforms which should strengthen the realm were about to

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<sup>10</sup> Quotation: Dessen ungeachtet [dass noch Krieg herrscht] habe ich mich zur Ausgabe des Buches entschlossen, weil mir die vielfach an mich gerichteten Fragen zeigten, daß für eine große Anzahl Firmen, die jetzt schon für die hoffentlich nicht mehr ferne Zeit des Friedens ihre Fühler nach dem Orient ausstrecken (Schmidt, 1917, p. 3).

<sup>11</sup> Quotation: Die politische Zentrale der Türkei ist das jungtürkische Komitee Ittihad i Terreki (Einheit und Fortschritt). Alle heute maßgebenden Männer der Türkei sind aus diesem Komitee hervorgegangen und haben sich um die Neuschöpfung des Osmanischen Reichs unsterbliche Verdienste erworben. Der gesamte gewaltige Fortschritt, der selbst während des Weltkriegs nicht stillstand, ist ihr Werk. Ihnen verdankt es die Türkei, wenn sie heute über ein starkes, gut ausgerüstetes Heer verfügt, wenn neue moderne Gesetze geschaffen, Bahnen aller Art neu gebaut, die unvollkommenen Geräte aus der Urväter Zeit durch moderne Maschinen ersetzt werden, wenn überall Schulen gegründet, die Zölle den heutigen Forderungen angepasst und Ausfuhr und Einfuhr geregelt sind (Schmidt, 1917, p. 10).

be implemented. After they were implemented however, the situation in at least Turkey changed for the better, as his descriptions indicate. This means that the long-term process of continuing fragmentation and weakening came to a halt after the heavily compromised realm was finally the subject to a reformation process. It is also interesting to see that this process was not only influenced by foreign ideas from Europe but even supported by some people from European nations, showing there was actually an interest in this movement. But despite the fact that apparently people from multiple nations were of assistance to the Young Turks, the alliance with the Central Powers during the First World War indicates, where the priorities of Turkey laid. This topic was also discussed by Schmidt.

For Schmidt was the relationship between Turkey and Germany seemingly a very important factor. To him the standing of Germans in Turkey had always been excellent and German skills and behaviour in general would add to this impression. Regarding the Turks he found positive words about them too, naming them solid people, who should not be taken responsible for several issues in some economic sectors. To him problems in the small business sector occurred due to the minorities such as Greeks, Armenians and Jews, the dominant groups in this sector, who he all saw much less reliable than the Turks. But even some larger business sectors such as wholesale trade were according to Schmidt not controlled by the Turkish population, but rather by Germans, Austrians, Americans or other Europeans (excluding members of the Entente). In general, the Turks themselves appeared to be not very prominent in the trade sector (Schmidt, 1917, pp. 57- 58 & 146-147).

From Schmidt's descriptions and the repeated emphases on Germany and its apparent great impact on Turkey can be derived that his view on Turkish and German cooperation was very positive. It appears to be the case that the connection between Germans and Turks, happened to be very fruitful and the strong presence of mostly European foreigners demonstrates how important the connections to these nations were at the time for the economy.

The process of strong direct involvement in Turkish economic affairs had set in during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the Ottoman Empire was forced to borrow large amounts of money from various European nations. When the credits were standardized in 1881 France and England were initially the two main creditors, controlling about 40% and 29% of Turkish governmental loans. While France remained in its top position, the increasing cooperation between the German Empire and the Ottoman Empire caused

England's share to decrease over time. Between 1888 and 1893 German exports to Turkey increased by 350% and due to German companies' involvement in several important projects and their financing the connection grew continuously stronger up until Germany was not only one of the main creditors with about 20% but also a partner in various other fields, including the military and technology (Schöllgen & Kiessling, 2009, pp. 65- 68).

In the context of the projects, in which German companies were involved in, Schmidt also mentioned the importance of technological innovation in the Ottoman Empire, naming the construction of the Bagdad Railway Germany's most important project (Schmidt, 1917, pp. 146- 147). The project itself had a long story behind it. During the late 19th century, economic interests regarding technological innovation became a key issue in the context of the Eastern Question. The competition over the railway concessions in the Ottoman Empire created a strong rivalry between England and the German Empire, whose governments both aimed at economic profits and prestige. After several failed attempts to cooperate on this matter, the Bagdad Railway finally became a German project (Schöllgen & Kiessling, 2009, pp. 37; 67-68; 75 & 86). Seeing, how important this project seemed for Germany, it should be to no surprise, that Schmidt found it necessary to mention it especially in the context that this was also the result of a successful rivalry against an enemy in the war. Nevertheless, it is also a prime example of multifaceted relationships between both parties and the importance of foreign influence on Turkey's technological modernization.

Focusing further on the relationships between Turkey and Germany, Schmidt underlined the influence of Germany in cultural subjects too. He seemed delighted over the growing popularity of the German language, but also claimed that modern Turkish science was heavily influenced by Germany. He added on this subject that besides science German teachers, professors and education in general enjoyed a high demand in Turkey, which included eighteen German professors at the University of Constantinople (Schmidt, 1917, pp. 19 & 146- 147).<sup>12</sup>

From this part a deduction can be made that not only did foreign influences play important roles in economic or technological sectors, but even in social and educational matters.

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<sup>12</sup> Quotation: Die deutsche Schule in Konstantinopel ist zweifellos die beste Bildungseinrichtung am Platze. An der Universität in Konstantinopel sind 18 deutsche Professoren beschäftigt, und eine weitere große Anzahl verteilt sich auf die höheren Schulen des Reichs. Auch in den Volksschulen finden wir deutsche Lehrer. ... Soweit es ein modernes wissenschaftliches Leben in der Türkei gibt, hat auch die deutsche Wissenschaft daran einen großen Anteil. Dabei steht die Medizin an der Spitze (Schmidt, 1917, p. 146).

Thus the interconnection appeared to be even deeper than mere cooperation on some projects, but actual interest in the culture of the respective other at least from the Turkish perspective. However, Schmidt did not forget to stress the importance of the national culture in Turkey too.

Even though German culture found evidently approval in Turkey and foreign influences played a more significant role than before, national culture was still highly important, as Schmidt wrote. He therefore added some basic information on how to behave in Turkey. To him it was absolutely necessary to adapt to the customs of the country and not insist on those he is used to. Especially loud and intemperate behaviour would be regarded as impolite and one should attempt to remain calm and patient during negotiations. On a side note, he urged his readers to keep in mind that besides their businesses, they also represented Germany culturally and should always strive to improve its standing. Generally he advised anyone strongly who planned to engage in business relationships in Turkey to inform himself about the country and its culture (Schmidt, 1917, p. 65). Despite the fact that Schmidt mentioned this part rather shortly in his book, it still serves as an indicator for the relationship between foreign and Turkish culture. From his words can be derived, that although as earlier mentioned influences from other nations and Germany in particular were adapted in Turkey, it did not mean, that these influences took over the role of national customs and Turkish culture and behaviour remained important for everyone including strangers, who wished to engage in business relationships.

Concluding for this chapter it can be said that the interconnection between Turkey and some European nations, of which Germany evidently played a leading role at least during the time of the First World War, had become stronger in many regards. The reformation process set up by the Young Turks was informed by European models and even supported by several men from European nations. Additionally, the economical, technological and cultural influences of foreign nations seemed to have played a much stronger role during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in comparison to the earlier described periods, while the Turkish national culture still retained its importance.



## 5. Final analysis

Taking into account, how many different aspects of the connections between Europe and Turkey could be found in the descriptions of these four men, it is interesting to see that despite chronological differences, it is possible to find some connections between their findings. For instance, both Pouqueville and von Moltke mentioned the problems of a lack of education among high-ranked Turks and prejudices about European culture, although as it was indicated by both of them that there was actually some sort of interest in certain aspects as for instance European military, as von Moltke wrote, or medicine, as Pouqueville said. Therefore, this perception by two different people, whose writings were separated by more than three decades let this issue appear as a long-term problem of the Turkish ruled Ottoman Empire. Schmidt on the other hand added to this issue that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the process of modernization the Young Turks began to implement reforms, which were based on European influences and furthermore European education and culture began to play a prominent role in Turkey, while national identity and several customs still remained intact. This shows that existing prejudices, mentioned were surpassed, and the interconnection of different cultures became stronger in Turkey.

Another interesting factor that was mentioned more than once is the apparent weakness of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire as a whole and dependency on foreign help to exist. Pouqueville for instance was certain the Ottoman Empire would fall sooner or later and this process couldn't be prevented. Von Moltke and Engels saw Turkey as too weak to defend itself against a possible Russian threat and believed only European forces could protect it. Surprisingly the only author, who did not mention this point, was Schmidt. A possible explanation for this is the First World War, during which his book was written and published. As an ally of Germany, it would have been counterproductive to mention Turkish weakness during the war while illustrating business possibilities, since possible investors could have been discouraged by this. On the other hand, it has to be mentioned, that despite the loss of several territories, the reforms set up by the Young Turks and the ongoing modernization had seemingly strengthened Turkey and its provinces. Even though he did not assess Turkey as weak he indicated on several points the importance of European nations (Germany in particular) in several economic sectors and projects like the Bagdad Railway, indicating that Turkey's strength was due to European involvement. For

this reason it can be said, that in many regards Turkey seemed to depend on European support.

It is interesting to see that also the responsibility of European nations for Turkey's apparent weakness find mentioning in the writings. Von Moltke saw the same European powers partially responsible for weakening the Ottoman Empire in the pursuit of their own interests and Pouqueville noted that the Turks themselves felt threatened by the Christian Europeans and expected someday to be driven out of Europe completely.

At this point it is obvious that the relationship between the European nations and Turkey was rather ambivalent with European nations both weakening and supporting it on occasion. The factors, which are of utmost importance here, are the European interests, which are mentioned in the texts. As mentioned in the prior paragraph von Moltke said European interests would be a reason for the weakening of the Ottoman Empire. More precisely, he mentioned the desire to claim some of the Ottoman colonies for themselves as France for instance did in northern Africa. Furthermore he mentioned increasing economic relationships, a point he shared with Engels and Schmidt, who both stressed the economic importance of Turkey for England in the case of Engels article or Germany in Schmidt's book. Von Moltke and Engels also saw Turkey as some sort of bulwark against Russian expansion, which was required to maintain to prevent Russia from becoming too powerful.

Besides these main points there are some smaller aspects of the connections, which are mentioned. One factor that was mentioned only shortly but shouldn't be underestimated however is the factor of technological cooperation for the modernization of Turkey. Von Moltke expressed his belief modern steamboats would have the potential to bring modern civilization to Turkey and Schmidt also saw the importance of technological innovation, naming the German Bagdad Railway, Germany's most important project.

Generally it is to say, that the connections between Turkey and the European nations were quite complex. While the European nations seemed to play a more active role during these periods, by protecting or weakening the Turkish ruled empire, Turkey's role was not entirely passive, especially during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when inner movements caused Turkey to change from within and become a stronger partner for its allies.

Based on the findings of this research the final statement regarding the research question will now be provided in the following chapter.

## 6. Conclusion

It has been shown at several points in this paper that not only did a variety of different connections exist between Turkey and Europe but also that some of these connections were of utter importance. Mainly political and economical interests were important motivators for European nations to act in a certain way to either protect it or weaken it for their own profit. Regarding the research question it can therefore be said that the connections were very strong up to the point where the very existence of Turkey depended on its relationship to European powers as in the case of the Crimean War. In many other fields it can be seen, how the connections even became stronger over time, as for instance the increasing economic involvement of several nations in Turkey, up until the First World War, at which point the Central Powers became its main partners. Additionally, the influence of European culture began to increase over time from a point of prejudices and displeasure up to modern reforms after European models. The complexity of these connections should be kept in mind, when the relationship between Turkey and Europe is discussed.

With regard to the Eurobarometer it seems obvious that the issue about Turkey's accession to the European Union is discussed mostly in the context of current events and perceptions. The actual historical connections between it as a part of the Ottoman Empire and the European nations at the time, of which many succession states are now part of the EU, is left out in the official publication by the Commission. The single mentioning of history as a factor in one question from a 2006 issue, in which is asked whether the Turkey would belong partially to Europe because of its history is a rather superficial approach. The question whether Turkey is a part of Europe is mostly a matter of opinion, while the historical interconnectedness however can be analysed. In the context of this paper it has been shown, that these interconnections played indeed an important role in the mutual history of Turkey and several European nations in various regards and in some cases became even stronger over time.

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