

Young Turks

The **Young Turks** (Turkish: *Jön Türkler* (plural), from French: *Les Jeunes Turcs*) were a coalition of various groups favouring reformation of the administration of the Ottoman Empire. The movement was against the absolute monarchy of the Ottoman Sultan and favoured a re-installation of the short-lived Kanûn-ı Esâsî constitution. They established the second constitutional era in 1908 with what would become known as the Young Turk Revolution.

The term Young Turks referred to the members of Ottoman society who were progressive, modernist and opposed to the status quo. The movement built a rich tradition of dissent that shaped the intellectual, political and artistic life of the late Ottoman period generally transcendent to the decline and dissolution periods. Many Young Turks were not only active in the political arena, but were also artists, administrators, or scientists.

Many modern Turkish citizens glorify the Young Turks as a group that initiated the process of liberalization in what is now known as modern Turkey. Although certain sub sections of modern Turkish community still regard that the Young Turks were actually the perpetrators of the first coup d'état in modern Turkish History—1913 Bab-i Ali Baskini, it is widely believed among the Turkish community that their actions can be classified as of a progressive movement even by today's standards.

Thus, the term "Young Turks" has come to signify any groups or individuals inside an organization who are progressive and seek prominence and power.^[1]

Prominent Young Turks

The prominent leaders and ideologists included:

- Pamphleteers and activists
 - Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935) a Tatar, journalist with a secular national ideology, who was against Ottomanism and supported separation in religion and social life.
 - Ayetullah Bey
 - Nuri Bey
 - Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910), painter and owner of the first specialized art school in Istanbul (1883).
 - Refik Bey
 - Emmanuel Carasso Efendi, a lawyer and a member of the prominent Sephardic Jewish Carasso family.
 - Mehmet Cavit Bey (1875–1926) a Dönmeh from Thessalonica, Jewish by ancestry but Muslim by religion since the 17th century, who was Minister of Finance.^[2] He was hanged for treason in 1926.
 - Abdullah Cevdet, a supporter of biological materialism, who later in his life promoted the Bahá'í Faith.
 - Marcel Samuel Raphael Cohen (aka Tekin Alp) (1883–1961), born to a Jewish family in Salonica under Ottoman control (now Thessaloniki, Greece), became one of the founding fathers of Turkish nationalism and an ideologue of Pan-Turkism.
 - Lewis Daly (1866–1921) a radical anthropologist specializing in Turkish peasantry.
 - Agah Efendi (1832–1885) founded the first Turkish newspaper and, as postmaster, brought the postage stamp to the Ottoman Empire.
 - Ziya Gökalp (1875–1924), a Turkish nationalist from Diyarbakir, publicist and pioneer sociologist, influenced by modern Western European culture.
 - Talaat Pasha, whose role before the revolution is not clear.
 - Ahmed Rıza (1859–1930), worked to improve the condition of the Ottoman peasantry. He served as minister of agriculture, and later ministry of education.
 - Military officers
 - Resat Bey
 - Enver Pasha
-

History

1889–1906

The Young Turks originated from groups of so-called "*Progressive*" university students. They were driven underground along with all other forms of political dissent after the constitution was annulled by the Sultan. Like their European forerunners such as the Carbonari, they typically formed cells, in which only one member might be connected to another cell.

Congress of Ottoman Opposition

The first congress of Ottoman Opposition was held on February 4, 1902, at 8 pm, at the house of Germain Antoin Lefevre-Pontalis. He was a member of the Institute France. The opposition was performed in compliance with the French government. It was closed to public. There were 47 delegates present. The Armenians wanted to have the conversations held in French, but other delegates rejected this proposition.

The Second congress of the Ottoman opposition took place in Paris, France in 1907. Opposition leaders including Ahmed Riza, Sabahheddin Bey, and Khachatur Maloumian of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation were in attendance. The goal was to unite all the parties, including the CUP, in order to bring about the revolution. However, varying positions on issues such as nationalism made unity among the factions impossible.



The first congress of the Ottoman opposition (1902) in Paris

1906–1908

The Young Turks became a truly organized movement with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) as an organizational umbrella. They recruited individuals prepared to sacrifice themselves for the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. In 1906, the Ottoman Freedom Society (OFS) was established in Thessalonica by Mehmed Talaat. The OFS actively recruited members from the Third Army base, among them Major Ismail Enver. In September 1907, OFS announced they would be working with other organizations under the umbrella of CUP. In reality, the leadership of the OFS would exert significant control over the CUP.

The Young Turk Revolution

In 1908, the 'Macedonian Question' was facing the Ottoman Empire. Czar Nicholas II and Franz Joseph, who were both interested in the Balkans, started implementing policies, beginning in 1897, which bring on the last stages of the balkanization process. By 1903, there were discussions on establishing administrative control by Russian and Austrian advisory boards in the Macedonian provinces. The House of Osman was forced to accept this idea although for quite a while they were able to subvert its implementation. However, eventually, signs were showing this policy game coming to an end and on May 13, 1908, the leadership of the CUP, with the scale of its organization, having had increased their power to such a point, were able to say to the Sultan that the 'Dynasty will be in danger', if he were not to bring back the constitution. The Third Army in Macedonia on June 12, 1908 begins its march to the Palace and on July 24, 1908 the constitution is restored.

Constitutional Era

With the Committee of Union and Progress coming out of the election box the unity among the Young Turks that was originated from the Young Turk Revolution replaced itself with the realities of the Ottoman Empire. The details of the political events can be found under Second Constitutional Era, while the details of the military events can be found under Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

1914–1917 period

On November 2, 1914, the Ottoman Empire entered World War I on the side of the Central Powers. The Middle Eastern theatre of World War I became the scene of action. The combatants were the

Ottoman Empire, with some assistance from the other Central Powers, and primarily the British and the Russians among the Allies of World War I. The conflicts at the Caucasus Campaign, the Persian Campaign and the Gallipoli Campaign affected where the Armenian people lived in significant amounts. Before the declaration of war at the Armenian congress at Erzurum the Ottoman government requested from Ottoman Armenians to facilitate the conquest of Transcaucasia by inciting a rebellion with the Russian Armenians against the tsarist army in the event of an Caucasian Front.[50][51]

Jakob Künzler, head of a missionary hospital in Urfa, has documented the large scale ethnic cleansing of both Armenians and Kurds by the Young Turks during World War I.[60] He has given a detailed account of deportation of Kurds from Erzurum and Bitlis in winter of 1916. The Kurds were perceived to be subversive elements that would take the Russian side in the war. In order to eliminate this threat, Young Turks embarked on a large scale deportation of Kurds from the regions of Djabachdjur, Palu, Musch, Erzurum and Bitlis. Around 300,000 Kurds were forced to move southwards to Urfa and then westwards to Aintab and Marasch. In the summer of 1917, Kurds were moved to the Konya region in central Anatolia. Through this measures, the Young Turk leaders aimed at eliminating the Kurds by deporting them from their ancestral lands and by dispersing them in small pockets of exiled communities. By the end of World War I, up to 700,000 Kurds were forcibly deported and almost half of the displaced perished

Ideology

Liberalism

The European public and many scholars commonly labeled the Young Turks as liberals. The Young Turks did adopt liberal ideas, and under the influence of the theories of Gustave Le Bon, they devalued parliaments as hazardous bodies.

Materialism and positivism

Another guiding principle for the Young Turks was the transformation of their society into one in which religion played no consequential role. In this ultra-secular and somewhat materialistic structure, science was to replace religion. However, the Young Turks soon recognized the difficulty of spreading this idea and began suggesting that Islam itself was materialistic. As compared with later efforts by Muslim intellectuals, such as the attempt to reconcile Islam and socialism, this was an extremely difficult endeavor. Although some former members of the CUP continued to make efforts in this field after the revolution of 1908, they were severely denounced by the Ulema, who accused them of "trying to change Islam into another form and create a new religion while calling it Islam".^[3]



Photo by FRATERNITY. 17496.
A Turkish mufti (in the center) is shown sitting at the voting table with a Greek priest on his right and an Armenian priest on his left. Behind are two little girls holding the members of the Constitution decorated with flowers. In front is the altar box. The wall at the back is the facade of a Greek church. (The Photo Page 172.)

Declaration of the Constitution Muslim, Armenian, Greek leaders together

Positivism, with its claim of being a religion of science, deeply impressed the Young Turks, who believed it could be more easily reconciled with Islam than could popular materialistic theories. The name of the society, *Union and Progress*, is believed to be inspired by leading positivist Auguste Comte's motto *Order and Progress*. Positivism also served as a base for the desired strong government.^[3]

Centralised government

During the late Ottoman Empire, all the intellectuals were state officials, and all Young Turks were on Empire payroll. Their participation in the government apparently had led them to value state. They were reluctant to approach theories against the state, such as Marxism or anarchism.

Another result of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution was the gradual creation of a new governing elite, which had consolidated and cemented its control over the Ottoman civil and military administration by 1913.

As empire-savers the Young Turks always viewed the problems confronting the Ottoman Empire from the standpoint of the state, placing little if any emphasis on the people's will. Thus the Young Turks' inclination toward authoritarian theories was by no means a coincidence. All the theories that the Young Turks developed and took particular interest in, such as biological materialism, positivism, Social Darwinism, and Gustave Le Bon's elitism, defended an enlightenment from above and opposed the idea of a supposed equality among fellow-citizens.

Nationalism

Further information: Millet, Ottomanism, Turanism, Kemalist ideology

In regards to nationalism, the Young Turks underwent a gradual transformation. Beginning with the Tanzimat with ethnically non-Turkish members participating at the outset, the Young Turks embraced the official state ideology: Ottomanism. However, Ottoman patriotism failed to strike root during the first constitutional era and the following years. Many ethnically non-Turkish Ottoman intellectuals rejected the idea because of its exclusive use of Turkish symbols. Turkish nationalists gradually gained the upper hand in politics, and following the 1902 Congress, a stronger focus on nationalism developed. It was at this time that Ahmed Riza chose to replace the term "Ottoman" with "Turk". However, it was not until 1904 that nationalism came to be based on a scientific theory, and following the Japanese victory over Russia, the Young Turks began to base their nationalism on the pseudo-scientific race theories of Europe.

Effect on Republic of Turkey

The Young Turk movement created a certain degree of dissent and anarchy in order to shape intellectual and political life of the late Ottoman period, but they had constituted the foundations for Atatürk's revolution which had turned Turkey into one of the most progressive and modern states by the standards of the time (e.g. in terms of women's right to vote). Most of their leaders believed that the central government, but not the popular will which was embodied in uneducated, pre-industrial, feudal masses, was the instrument by which social and political change could be achieved through.

Except for the shift in focus on nationalism, the official ideology of the early modern Turkish state was shaped during this period. The Young Turks who lived long enough to witness the coming into being of the Republic of Turkey saw many of their ideals realized – it was a regime based on a popular materialistic-positivist ideology. The effect of the Young Turks on shaping the official ideology of early modern Turkey went far beyond the political changes they brought about.

References

Notes

- [1] Young Turks ([http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=young turk](http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=young+turk)), Dictionary.com
- [2] Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries*
- [3] M. Şükrü Haniöğlu. "The Political Ideas of the Young Turks"

Bibliography

- M. Şükrü Haniöğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, Oxford University Press 1995, ISBN 0-19-509115-9
- M. Şükrü Haniöğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908*, Oxford University Press 2001, ISBN 0-19-513463-X
- M. Şükrü Haniöğlu, *The Anniversary of a Century-Old Ideology* (<http://www.zaman.com/?bl=commentary&trh=20050929&hn=23455>), Zaman Daily Newspaper (<http://www.zaman.com>), September 29, 2005
- Stephen Kinzer, *Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2001, ISBN 0-374-52866-7
- David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*
- (French) Yves Terson, *Empire ottoman : Le déclin, la chute, l'effacement*, Paris, édition du Félin, 2002, ISBN 2-86645-601-7
- Necati Alkan, "The Eternal Enemy of Islam: Abdullah Cevdet and the Baha'i Religion", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Volume 68/1, pp. 1–20; online at Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayIssue?jid=BSO&volumeId=68&issueId=01>)
- Necati Alkan, *Dissent and Heterodoxy in the Late Ottoman Empire: Reformers, Babis and Baha'is* (<http://www.theisispress.org/>), ISIS Press: Istanbul, 2008
- Hasan Kayali. *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7n39p1dn/>). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997

External links

- Committee of Union and Progress (<http://www.turkeyswar.com/prelude/cup.htm>) Turkey in the First World War website

Article Sources and Contributors

Young Turks *Source:* <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?oldid=443672362> *Contributors:* 119, Adam Carr, Adngkiem501, Adoniscik, Aivazovsky, Alex756, Alperator88, Alpha Quadrant (alt), Alphachimp, Alsandro, Aramgar, Aranherunar, Arma2, Athena854, Baristarim, Baylink, Berkay0652, Blahedo, Born1913, Bouarf, Brand0130, Brandon5485, Briaboru, Brunnock, Buldri, Calm, Caltas, Catgut, CeeGee, Chris Roy, ChrisCork, Cmdrjameson, Cobaltcigs, Commander Keane, Cookie im fresh in one two many ways, Cosika, Crusadeonilliteracy, Cscotts, DBaba, Davenbelle, Davidcannon, Dayewalker, Discospinster, Domitius, Doniago, Dori, Dppowell, Dr. Blofeld, Ed Fitzgerald, Efilnickufesin, El C, Elryacko, Emax, Erud, Euchiasmus, Fad, Fedayee, Felisopus, Filibeli, Fremsey, Gabbe, Galoubet, GeorgeStepanek, Gizzakk, Goti123, Gotipe, Green Owl, Grendelkhan, Gurch, Gurubrahma, Hakozen, HappyCamper, Harput, Hectorian, Horses In The Sky, Huangdi, Igiffin, Iwalters, JamesBWatson, Jayanta Sen, Jbucciero11, Jelali, Jeltz, Jim10701, John of Lancaster, John of Reading, Jor, Joriki, JosephMarzen, Jp, Keldan, Kewp, Khoikhoi, Kielbasa1, Ksyrie, Lambiam, Lence, LiniShu, Lkinkade, MCJstyle, Macukali, Makalp, Manicotti, Margacst, MarsRover, Master Of Ninja, Mibelz, Michael Hardy, Michcan, Mike Halterman, Mirv, Mol1987, Montrealais, Mtaylor848, Mu5ti, Mwaner, Nancy, NantucketNoon, NatusRoma, Necademic, Nfreshman, Nigholith, Night Gyr, Nihavend, NikoSilver, Nostradamus1, Nozdref, Nudve, Oguz1, OilEnglish, Olaf Davis, Orkh, OttomanReference, OwenBlacker, Oyeahiitidat, Palmiro, Parkwells, Pdpd, Persian Poet Gal, Physicistjedi, Planetneutral, Polyxeros, Prodego, Pylambert, ROOB323, RafaAzevedo, Reach Out to the Truth, Reaper7, Redman19, Relata refero, Rjwilmsi, Rklawton, RobDe68, Rrburke, SONSAVASCI, Sarah, Sarsintu, Septemberfourth476, SimonP, Siredwlynch, Sj, Sjakkalle, Squiddy, Stassa, Sumguy333, SunCreator, Symphony Girl, Tabletop, Taranet, Tcotrel, The Myotis, ThisThat911, Thprfssnl, TigranTheGreat, Travelbird, Trumen, TylerMad8, Ufinne, VartanM, Vivacissamamente, Vonones, Vovevoda, Wetman, Witchzilla, Xianbataar, Yandman, Ygraber, Zohab, Zvar, とある白い猫, 280 anonymous edits

Image Sources, Licenses and Contributors

Image:Young Turkfirstcongress.jpg *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Young_Turksfirstcongress.jpg *License:* unknown *Contributors:* --Cuemarin 10:03, 15 May 2008 (UTC)

Image:Young Turk Revolution - Decleration - Armenian Greek Muslim Leaders.png *Source:* http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Young_Turk_Revolution_-_Decleration_-_Armenian_Greek_Muslim_Leaders.png *License:* Public Domain *Contributors:* Charles Roden Buxton

License

Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>