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Review

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**Yiğit Akın. *When the War Came Home: the Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018. 288 pp. Paper, \$28. ISBN: 978-1503604902.**

Among historians, the centennial of the First World War has brought forth a needed reassessment of this conflict's global dimensions, focusing on the identification of new archives, translation of memoirs, and a serious exploration of war's social dimensions. Several important studies of the war in the Ottoman Empire have emerged in recent years; collectively, they illustrate the empire's geopolitical centrality while arguing the need to consider the war's long-term sociocultural traumas. In *When the War Came Home*, Yiğit Akın brings us an exquisite exploration of civilian life on the Ottoman home front. He reveals an Ottoman state that invested enormous resources into creating (and enforcing) a new moral order through celebration of patriotic heroes, sacrificing wives and mothers, and the forceful repression of dissent. At the same time, the experiences of civilians, conscripts, and displaced persons reveal resistance to this new order at the level of local endurance and survival. Drawing directly on stories from the civilian home front, the book illustrates how the Unionists' most destructive policies irrevocably altered the lives of civilians living far away from any battlefield.

*When the War Came Home* provides a new look at the relationship between the Ottoman home front and the state's war-making capacity. Its early chapters argue that the Unionist government sought to totalize state control over civilian spaces, building on the twin issues of mobilization and provisioning that predominate in Ottomanist historiography. From there, the author pursues significant ways that Ottoman subjects limited, subverted, and resisted state power at the local level. As a result, this work is as focused on resistance to total war as it is on state ideologies, giving it an excellent social historical quality in addition to needed exploration of the war as mass trauma. Akın works in Turkish archives as well as published serials and unpublished manuscripts to foreground the experience of civilians.

*When the War Came Home* comprises an introduction, six thematic chapters, and a brief conclusion. The book's introduction orients readers in the war's major timeline and prompts us to reflect on the "totality of warfare" not as a sudden event, but as a mounting force that informed the state's mobilization policies through the entire Second Constitutional Period (pp. 4–5). Akın lays out four interrelated proxies for assessing total war on the Ottoman home front: the empire's infrastructural deficiencies, its lack of access to global resources, the disastrous conflicts it endured before 1914, and the CUP's "perception of the war as an opportunity to redesign the empire demographically" (p. 5). His goal is to demonstrate how each factor influenced the others, resulting

not only in the empire's military defeat but utter economic devastation, social disintegration, and ethnic cleansing.

Chapter 1, "From the Balkan Wars to the Great War," situates the Unionist entry into the First World War as coming on the heels of previous conflicts that has already stretched the empire's military reserves and human capital to the brink. In addition to the cession of most of the empire's European territories, the Balkan Wars in particular shaped the state's emerging impulse toward mobilization and the home front's militarization: Istanbul's approaches to conscription, requisitioning, and repression of dissent after 1914 were mostly intensifications of policies initiated during the Balkan Wars, even if notable Arab and Armenian reform movements persisted for a time. Chapter 2, "From the Fields to the Ranks," examines mobilization, dealing with the unprecedented conscription order which drew hundreds of thousands into military service as well as the Unionists' bending of the economy towards provisioning. The author explores the state's attempt to control the civilian mindset, which he calls the "mobilization of the imagination" (p. 53). Despite the clear continuities which existed between this mobilization and previous ones, the press, Ottoman governors, and the CUP all sought to underline this emergency's unprecedented nature and in so doing, clear a path for total war amid an unenthusiastic political climate (p. 57). In addition to conscription, *When the War Came Home* also explores other proxies for mobilization: press censorship, an emergent official war narrative, and the increasing reliance on religious imagery, all of which set the stage for the book's focus on home front spaces as an extension of the battlefield in its second half.

The rest of the book's chapters analyze the disastrous policies the CUP's vision of war-making would have on everyday Ottomans. In chapter 3, "Filling the Ranks, Emptying Homes," Akin outlines the infrastructural limitations the CUP faced with regard to conscription and material provisioning. Even as the state lauded the courage, altruism, and modesty of Mehmetçik, a soldier who figured prominently in state propaganda (p. 93), the CUP struggled to move men into training and from there, to the front. In addition to draft evasion and desertion, the chapter explores how state attempts to regulate civilian morale through propaganda produced a "connectedness between the front and the home" in the public imaginary (p. 98). That sense of connection became more acute as the Unionists annulled exemption fees and called more men to service, deepening the sense of panic that visited local municipalities (p. 104–05). Chapter 4, "Feeding the Army, Starving the People," examines state requisitioning policies which, Akin argues, "essentially obliterated the boundaries between *the military* and *the civilian*" (p. 112). The CUP delegated the requisitioning of crops to provincial authorities, resulting in the "arbitrary use of authority and widespread corruption" (p. 116). The empire's limited rail

and roadway infrastructure necessitated state confiscation of draught animals, halting local agriculture and producing shortages of comestibles that deepened into famine. Seeking to bolster its economy, the state began printing new paper currency, a policy driven by immediate military needs but which had lumpy impacts on local economies nearer the frontiers (p. 134). The reader feels a growing tension between an Ottoman state attempting to force compliance with requisitioning policies and the everyday peasants, civilians, and conscripts who staged rebellions large and small by refusing paper banknotes, participating in smuggling, or deserting the Ottoman Army.

Chapter 5, “In the Home: Wives and Mothers,” shifts focus from how Ottoman women responded to the absence of men and the dire crises that CUP policies visited on provincial and rural communities. Mobilization efforts led to the expansion of Ottoman women’s public roles including workforce participation; farm labor; and engagement with municipalities through petitioning, court proceedings, and oversight of public duties once reserved for men. With the “increasingly ubiquitous presence of women in public life,” argues Akın, came “the frequent transgression of established socioeconomic and cultural norms” (p. 147). The chapter explores efforts by Ottoman women to make claims against the state through petitions for allowance payments, against conscription, and in favor of relief for devastated rural communities (pp. 158–59). The author elucidates the mismatch between state goals and civilian needs. Even as state propaganda celebrated soldiers’ wives and mothers as altruistic symbols of feminine sacrifice, the proliferation of women’s petitions for relief suggests a vastly different reality (p. 155).

In Chapter 6, “On the Road: Deportees and Refugees,” Akın makes a compelling juxtaposition between state policies towards Muslim refugees and forced migrants, and its concurrent genocide against the Armenian population. Akın argues that although clear divergences in treatment, execution, and outcomes are evident between the two groups, comparing them demonstrates a clear Unionist attempt at “demographic engineering” through deportation, ethnic cleansing, and refugee resettlement (pp. 176–77). In examining refugee displacement, Akın is focused on humanizing the story by telling how individuals experienced these expulsions. This is a necessary treatment, although categorical slippages between expulsion, deportation, ethnic cleansing, and migration remain, synonymizing them in a way that risks eliding the continued role of coercion. This issue aside, the author achieves an excellent migrant-centered telling of “the road,” hewing closely to the scholarship on Ottoman policies, ethnic cleansing, and demographic engineering.

*When the War Came Home* is a brilliant synthesis of the Ottoman home front that will be useful for scholars in Ottoman and Middle Eastern history. Its greatest strength is its attention to bottom-up social history; the book is replete

with stories of everyday people, illustrated through close readings of socially-produced documents like women's petitions; epic poetry and novels; and memorably, popular songs of lamentation (p. 109). Challenging the fixation on battlefields that once characterized the historiography, Akin restores needed unity to a history often bifurcated into spheres of influence (the civilian versus the state). The book's interrogation of the gaps between state ideology and its limitations will also make *When the War Came Home* an easy classroom adoption. In graduate and undergraduate settings, the work will open conversations about how conflict is experienced in civilian spaces. In *When the War Came Home*, Akin shows us what happens on the home front is anything but mundane.

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**Umut Uzer. *An Intellectual History of Turkish Nationalism: Between Turkish Ethnicity and Islamic Identity*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016. 288 pp. Paper, \$25. ISBN: 978-1607814658.**

In *An Intellectual History of Turkish Nationalism: Between Turkish Ethnicity and Islamic Identity*, Uzer traces the changes in the phenomenon of "Turkish Nationalism" with a detailed analysis of published texts. Given the abundance of literature on politics, Uzer easily fills a gap by keeping his analysis primarily on the texts while addressing the political context only when necessary. He defines nationalism as "a cultural phenomenon based on language, sentiments, and symbolism and thus cannot be defined as purely an ideology or a political movement" (p. 9). He begins by exploring the birth of Turkish nationalism by highlighting three main factors behind its emergence. Later, he defines three different nationalisms as he traces the transformations in Turkish nationalism from a forward-thinking, revolutionary approach to a conservative ideology that highlights the Islamic past of Turkey.

Uzer defines the three main factors that led to the formation of Turkish nationalism as: beginning of nationalist movements among non-Turkish minorities under Ottoman rule that made Ottomanism "irrelevant"; discovery of a Turkish history that existed before the Ottoman Empire through texts; and migration of Turkish people from Russia who admired the culture but disliked the rule of the sultan, which kindled the need for a "Turkish Nationalism." The second factor, discovery of pre-Ottoman Turkish texts, was the main motivation for the Ottoman intelligentsia to reconnect with their roots. In line with the main argument of many scholars, enabling an earlier history for these