

**Lucien J. Frary and Mara Kozelsky, editors. *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered*.** The U of Wisconsin P, 2014. xii, 364 pp. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Index. \$34.95, paper.

**T**he Eastern Question—that perennial chestnut of standard histories of the nineteenth-century Middle East—has recently been dusted off and revisited in response to historical signposts such as the bicentennial of 1815 or the centennial of World War I. Most new approaches give greater scope to the global setting, which includes the Ottoman Empire and the twenty-odd countries that emerged from its collapse in 1918. Lucien J. Frary and Mara Kozelsky argue that “harmful policies prompted by the Eastern Question have their roots in Western imperial ambitions, greed, and periodic hysteria” (15). As they point out, in spite of remarkable recent work on the Ottomans and the Russians, it is all too easy for some new crisis to prompt the world’s leaders to reassemble the pieces of the Eastern Question puzzle.

The introduction by Frary and Kozelsky (3-33) includes a comprehensive review of the historiography, starting with J. A. R. Marriott’s long influential work from 1917, *The Eastern Question: An Historical Study in European Diplomacy*, with its six principles—the Ottomans in Europe, Balkan irredentism, the Black Sea straits, Russian Mediterranean aspirations, Habsburg interests in southeastern Europe, and, finally, European, especially British, attitudes toward all of these issues (14). The topic of the Crimean War has been subject to considerable revisionism, which includes many scholars agreeing on the war’s status as the most egregious of the Eastern Question follies. Similarly, the global hysteria over the Balkans in 1878, which generated some five hundred titles in Great Britain during the period (11), is increasingly viewed as the beginning of the crises leading to World War I. The ten essays in this volume reflect the new scholarship, and they offer some interesting views on a host of localized and intimate questions that arose because of the politics of the Eastern Question—politics that contributed to sectarian violence, national movements, economic rivalry and dislocation, migration and resettlement, and colonial administration (6).

Victor Taki (35-72) explores the ambiguity of Romanian-Russian relations during the Ottoman period. While pre-1800 boyars could be relied on to support Russia, the period of Russian occupation in the 1830s led to a growing distrust that culminated in the 1848 revolution and thereafter the construction of a national story that emphasized Latin, not Slavic origins. During the Crimean War, the Romanians supported the Ottomans and constructed a history of the “former capitulatory regime” as a means of maintaining their independence from the Pan-Slavism and “‘Asiatic despotism’” of Russia (47-48). Taki, moving on to post-1989 strategies,

argues for a continuity of hesitancy toward, and distrust of, Russia, especially as Romania has been drawn into the NATO and EU orbits.

Theophilus C. Prousis (73-99) examines the heretofore largely unexplored diplomatic correspondence of Lord Strangford (Percy Clinton Sydney Smythe), the ambassador to the Ottomans at the outbreak of the Greek Revolution; this is part of a multivolume effort to publish Strangford's dispatches. The 1820s were a period when trade and access to markets dominated British concerns and the Ottomans were still perceived as a bulwark against Russia's ambitions in the Mediterranean. The selection includes Strangford's description of the massacres of the Greeks of Chios; this description demonstrates an early formulation of the general condemnation of Ottomans as rapacious, corrupt, and arbitrary—a condemnation that grew clamorous by 1877-78.

Frary's essay (101-130) also focuses on the 1820s. It makes a good start on the question of Ottoman slavery and Russian manumission during the period when military slavery had slowed and commercial slavery came to dominate the markets. Frary points to Russian sincerity in pursuing and ransoming Orthodox Christians in response to the concerns of the emerging Greek state. His book *Russia and the Making of Modern Greek Identity, 1821-1844* makes a good companion to Will Smiley's work *From Slaves to Prisoners of War: The Ottoman Empire, Russia, and International Law* (in press with Oxford).

Jack Fairey (131-64), the author of the book *The Great Powers and Orthodox Christendom: The Crisis Over the Eastern Church in the Era of the Crimean War*, returns to the question of the role of religion in the Crimean War, and he convinces this reader of the intensity of Russian-Ottoman negotiations around Orthodox relics, shrines, and religious communities. Russia sought Orthodox integration of both Armenian and Greek religious practices under Russian control as the Ottomans embarked on reforms to liberate ecclesiastical monopolies and privileges; Fairey describes the latter as “[t]he opening up of Ottoman religious affairs to foreign competition” (153).

Lora Gerd (193-219) continues that story with a fascinating look at Mount Athos in the “golden age” (213) of Russian influence during the post-Crimean War period. At that time, Russia tried to extend its influence into Macedonia through ecclesiastical politics, by increasing the presence of Russian monks and sending diplomats to the holy mountain and other sites. Fostering Russian Orthodox spheres of influence in the New Greek state and remnants of Ottoman territories collapsed with the revolution of 1917. Russian pilgrimage since the 1990s and travelling exhibits of Mount Athos relics indicate a revival of spiritual interest in the sacred site, which is

maintained by the monks in its “more or less untouched Byzantine form” (214).

Kozelsky (165-92) returns to the fraught topic of the exodus of the Crimean Tatars in the years 1854 to 1863. This, too, is a welcome updating of the historiography, and she incorporates much recent work from Ottoman and Russian historians. She complicates our understanding of the peninsula by arguing forcibly that the two hundred thousand Muslims who left the Crimea for the Ottoman Empire were the victims not only of religious persecution but also of fluctuating Russian colonial administrations that were enacted haphazardly in the borderlands.

Candan Badem (221-50), the author of the book *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853-1856)*, echoes Kozelsky's findings in his essay on the Russian administration of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum from 1878 to 1918. The later period is marked, of course, by the Armenian exodus and genocide. Badem eschews the nationalist approach, preferring to look at how migration crises and tensions led to the development of a Russian “Military-Customary Administration” (223) in the Caucasus region, which often included toleration of local religious and legal practices. Successive administrators were forced to deal with the conflicting political claims of Kurds, Armenians, and Russian settlers and the emigration of the Muslim (Turks). Although one hundred forty thousand people (mostly Muslim) left the region between 1879 and 1882, more than half had returned by 1914, when statistics reveal that half of the population of the region of Kars and ninety percent of the region of Batum were still Muslim (245).

John A. Mazis (251-79) takes a look at the doomed idea of a Greek-Turkish Eastern Federation, based on the life and writing of Ion Dragoumis (1878-1920), whose sixteen-year career as a diplomat included being appointed as the Greek ambassador to Russia. Dragoumis, who is remembered in Greece today as a patriot, constructed a model of a widespread new empire that could involve co-operation with separately established territories such as Crete, which was semi-independent from 1897 to 1912 before it was united with Greece (262). His ideas arose out of late-nineteenth-century “dreams of brotherhood among peoples and restructuring of the economy and society,” advocating the coexistence of ethno-religious communities (256). Mazis focuses specifically on Dragoumis's efforts in Ottoman Macedonia to prevent the spread of the influence of Bulgaria. While Dragoumis's activities there suggest that he was a Greek nationalist, his views of a multi-ethnic state eschewed the Megali Idea, focusing on the possibility of co-operation with the Young Turks in the early days of the revolution. Austria-Hungary was another late model of inter-ethnic co-operation. Dragoumis argued that even the post-World War I proposals for Ottoman territories, which were later spelled out in the Treaty

of Sèvres (1920), could be seen as encouraging an Eastern Federation. Nationalist irredentism and inter-communal violence put paid to any proposals and to Dragoumis's life when he was killed by the paramilitary troops of Eleftherios Venizelos in August 1920 (255).

Franco-Russian relations from 1891 to 1917 are the subject of Ronald P. Bobroff's contribution (281-302). The Russians, guided by Foreign Minister Sergei Sazanov, were concerned with Bulgaria's unexpected victories over Ottoman forces in 1912-13, and they proposed an indemnity, as part of treaty negotiations, to Bulgaria in order to keep it from occupying Constantinople. The French carried forty-five percent of the Ottoman debt and were suspicious of Russia's own intentions regarding Constantinople, but then another turn ensued in the classic Eastern Question dispute over the straits and the Black Sea. While most histories have emphasized the issue of the British obsession with the straits, Bobroff's reflections remind us of the depth and importance of French interests throughout the eastern Mediterranean and of France's pivotal resistance to Russian claims to Constantinople and the Dardanelles, which played out until 1917.

The final essay in this remarkable volume is by Nazan Çiçek (303-30), who analyzes the ways in which the Eastern Question was represented in the history textbooks of the Turkish Republic from 1940 to 2007. The national story was strictly controlled by the Ministry of Education from the beginning. The textbooks of the 1940s to the 1980s are important for representing the "Turkish History Thesis," which separated the Republican past from the imperial one, in the process locating the Turkish nation in Central Asia, creating a proto-Turkish language, and adopting a "pro-Western Occidentalism" in the new secular environment. The Ottoman state was equated with past Western "arrogant" great powers, as part of a Europe that was considered a "toothless monster" after World War I (314-15). From the 1980s on, however, textbooks began reflecting the standard Eastern Question historiography while restoring Islam and imperial history to the narrative in the new Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (323).

Finally, editors Frary and Kozelsky close the volume with some comments on the legacy of Eastern Question politics in the spheres of contemporary national identities, territorial boundaries, conflict, and cultures from the Balkans to the Caucasus (see 331-45). A system of violence has replicated itself generation after generation, with most contexts resulting from unresolved nineteenth-century Eastern Questions. The "security state neurosis" (336) and "othering" (337) are most evident in the discourse on Turkey, but they also pertain to the disputed claims over Kosovo; to the contested ownership of Macedonia; to Ukraine and the question of the Crimea; and, finally, to the Caucasus, which is the most volatile and least understood of the legacies. I would also add to this list the war with Syria and

the destruction of Aleppo and Mosul, which are singularly gruesome present-day examples of dangerous continuities between the present and the interventionist past. The editors and contributors alike are to be congratulated for this timely volume.

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