

The Game of United States Diplomacy Within the Ottoman Empire: How the United States' Interests in the Ottoman Empire Delayed its Entrance into the Great War

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Abstract

At the outbreak of World War I, the Ottoman Empire expanded its diplomatic ties with many world powers, in hopes of remaining the gateway to the Middle East. The empire remained a target for land acquisition by Britain, France, and Russia through their expansion of imperialist interests. The United States at this time was a budding superpower that established a diplomatic tie with the Ottomans through Henry Morgenthau, the United States diplomat to Constantinople. The United States attempted to use its neutrality and diplomacy to keep the Ottoman Empire out of the Great War, prolonging the eventual Ottoman entry into World War I. The United States created a unique bond with the Ottoman Empire due to its lack of interest in Ottoman lands, but with more of an interest in building an economic, social, and political relationship. Scholars have overlooked the history of the United States' interests within the Ottoman Empire during the few months leading up to the Great War. As such, historians have missed the beginning stages of the United States becoming a global superpower. Using the primary sources from the United States' National Archives, this essay will discuss the untold history of American interests within the Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, World War I, Diplomacy

1. Body of Paper

The United States (US) attempted to use its neutrality and diplomacy to keep the Ottoman Empire out of the Great War, prolonging the eventual Ottoman entry into World War I. Because the US was not yet a world superpower, it advanced its political, social, and economic interests in the Ottoman Empire through diplomacy. This history of American interests within the Ottoman Empire, during the buildup of Ottoman entry into the Great War, is missing in the historiography of this topic. The United States' relationship with the Ottoman Empire lasted longer than other countries due to efforts to appease officials in order to preserve access to Middle Eastern markets. The United States' businesses were concerned with rising unrest within the empire as this affected their interests.

The United States' political, social, and economic interests within the Ottoman Empire became the main focus for a strategic relationship with the Ottomans. Political interest drove the Americans to defend their allies within the empire against any and all threats from the local Ottoman administrations. The US ambassador to Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, wrote about the threat to Greek and American interests: "On one hand were the Germans, urging their well-known ideas of repression and brutality, while on the other were the Turks, with their traditional hatred of Christians and their natural instinct to maltreat those who are helplessly placed in their power."¹ Morgenthau suggested that an Ottoman-German alliance would make it hard for him to create a mutual alliance between the US and the Ottomans. The Americans used every tactic at their disposal to defend their interests within this hostile environment, but changing laws and policies led to the loss of American privileges within the empire. During the Ottoman

mobilization for war, the government officials targeted American business properties and raided American businesses to fuel the Ottoman assemblage for war.

During the game of United States' diplomacy within the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, from 1913-1916, was the US Ambassador to Constantinople.² As a Jewish man, Morgenthau debated taking the ambassador position with one scholar stating, "Jews represented a natural bridge between Muslim Turks and Christian Americans merely rankled Morgenthau who, having no diplomatic experience, felt that he was more qualified for a cabinet-level position in the American government."³ Morgenthau felt that although his heritage helped him in working with Christians and Muslims, he lacked the diplomatic experience to engage in those conversations. In addition to Morgenthau, there were a few other consuls that reported to him directly in the region. Communication between the Ottoman Empire to the American Consulates were from local Viziers. The main Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) member that was involved in many of the decisions was Ismail Enver Pasha, Minister of War. Enver Pasha led the Ottoman Empire into an alliance with Germany and the end of the Ottoman Empire.

The most recent research on this topic is Karine Walther's *Sacred Interests: The United States and the Islamic World, 1821- 1921* (2015). She uses Henry Morgenthau's biographies to showcase the beginnings of the US and Ottoman relationship. Walther portrays the impact Morgenthau had within the empire, protecting US allies' interests while also protecting Greek interests. The main argument of her work focuses on Henry Morgenthau's impact on the crisis of the Armenians, skipping over US interests within the empire. She is the leading scholar to begin research into United States' relations with the Ottoman Empire but she does not use the diplomatic records from the United States' consulate in Constantinople. This research will add to her work by consulting diplomatic records that have not previously been used. Her work is at the forefront of this topic, building on the earlier works of Şükrü Hanioglu's *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (2008) and Stanford Shaw's *The Ottoman Empire in World War I* (2006).

Hanioglu and Shaw are able to construct the narrative of the Young Turk movement allowing historians to grasp the concepts of Ottoman politics. The Young Turk movement, also known as CUP, came to power shortly after the revolution of 1908, but power was further consolidated at the conclusion of the Second Balkan War. This movement revolutionized the government by creating a more modern bureaucracy. These works show how the Young Turk movement operated within the Ottoman Empire, giving the Ottoman perspective on this series of events. The US tried to intervene with the Ottoman Empire by prolonging "the life of the empire considerably if they opted for armed neutrality in 1914."⁴ The Young Turk movement is the main reason for the successes of United States' foreign policy within the empire. The limitation of only focusing on political history and the viewpoint of the Ottoman Empire, hinders the understanding of how the Ottoman government worked within global interests. Both of their works focused on the political history of the empire, while current scholarship is looking other angles of this event through the lens of other groups.

Eugene Rogan's *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (2015) and Sean McMeekin's *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908-1923* (2015) represents current research on Ottoman military history. Rogan and McMeekin provided data that shows the exports of what was going through the Dardanelles Strait, showing that Russia's economy relied on the strait to remain open with limited interruption. This portrays the reasoning behind the United States' desire for a neutrality agreement from the Ottoman Empire. This agreement would have allowed Russia greater prosperity on the Eastern front had it remained open during the war.⁵ This research gives a better understanding of why the Ottoman Empire mattered to the Entente powers, showing that the Dardanelles affected Russia's economy. The major source used by both scholars was Mustafa Aksakal's *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (2008) and is foundational to both of their arguments.

Leila Fawaz's *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (2014) provides the Lebanese viewpoint of the Great War, using primary sources from Lebanon. Fawaz's work shows the prosperous relationship between Germany and the Ottoman Empire which was due to the lack of German territorial ambitions in the Ottoman Empire.⁶ She fully supports this claim through Germany's willingness to finance a railroad to run from Berlin to Baghdad. This railroad became the foundation for a unique relationship between Germany and the Ottoman Empire. As European rights became more oppressed in the empire, Germans kept their rights even after capitulations were abolished.⁷ This work suggests that a US alliance was doomed from the start. However, she does not recognize the United States' involvement within the Ottoman Empire, focusing solely on the empire itself and Germany.

Walther, Fawaz, McMeekin, and Rogan do an excellent job of laying the foundation from which current scholarship can build. However, they overlook points about United States' foreign policy, the impact it had within the empire, and the effects the empire had on American interests. Their works do not consult sources such as Howard Jones's *The Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913* (2002) which illustrates the US' foreign policy up to 1913. Jones's work built on Stephen Cooney's *Political Demand Channels in the Processes of American Political and British Imperial Expansion, 1870-1913* (1975) which compared the US' imperialist goals during the era

of New Manifest Destiny to that of Great Britain. Without either of these sources, their works do not delve deep enough into the US' involvement within the Ottoman Empire in 1914 to maintain US' political, social, and military interests.

The research for this paper relies largely on the correspondence of the United States' consulates in the Ottoman Empire. These telegrams show what was going on within the empire until about November 1914 from the US viewpoint, which is when the Ottomans became fully engaged in the Great War. While these sources do provide the context of what is transpiring on the government level when used in conjunction with Henry Morgenthau's biographies, they provide a clear depiction from an American point-of-view. The American viewpoint is a web of economic, political, and social interests that consistently correlate to each other throughout this essay suggesting that they all inadvertently affect each other. These sources add to Karine Walther's work covering the summer of 1914 to the crisis of the Armenians in 1915.

Until recently, scholarship neglected American business interests. Walther briefly discusses Singer Sewing Machine Company stating that they "conducted millions of dollars' worth of business through hundreds of stores throughout the empire."⁸ However, Walther did not discuss the Standard Oil Company or Buffalo Specialty Company. The economics of these three companies declined when the Ottoman government seized products and machinery from the first two companies beginning on September 3, 1914. However, Buffalo Specialty Company was unable to start a Middle Eastern branch of business within a country mobilizing for war. Economically, these three businesses represented a few of the American interests within the Ottoman Empire.

The Standard Oil Co. and Vacuum Oil Co. began facing problems in June 1914, when the Ottoman government began deporting Greek employees without just cause. The atmosphere affecting American businesses in the Ottoman Empire calmed from June through July. However, on September 3, 1914, the Ottoman government seized kerosene oil and gasoline from both companies.⁹ The Ottoman government did this to supply the mobilization of the military with American goods. While gasoline was at the early stages for use in automobiles, the Ottoman government required kerosene to power lamps. A month later, after the Ottoman government seized gasoline and oil, the government began arresting Standard Oil employees.

The problem for company employees was that the Ottoman government would search for them to further requisition goods that anyone may still have. The military went into the yards of these businesses and arrest those that they believed violated the law, whether they did so or not. "On Saturday, October 3, 1914, Mr. Stanley Smith, local director of the Standard Oil Company, came hurriedly in search of the Consul-General and reported that there had been an invasion of the company's depot at Daragatch by armed police or gendarmes, who were threatening to carry off to the police station Mr. Finkelstein."¹⁰ While this was an instance of the prosecution of Greeks within the empire due to the invasion on American business property, the Ottomans targeted Americans and Turks for being at the wrong place, at the wrong time. It was because of these types of incidences that a company like Standard Oil was constantly losing its employees. On October 26, 1914, the Ottoman military used the gasoline they requisitioned, in addition to local fire pumps for the "spraying of oil on the buildings thus facilitating the burning of them."¹¹ The spraying of oil on the buildings was a threat to the Entente powers that if they would attack the empire, the Ottomans were going to burn Smyrna down. This was a cause for huge alarm because Standard Oil Co. had property interests invested worth around \$65,000 without considering what the buildings were worth.¹² This would be around \$1,565,544.50 worth of property today.¹³ Although the city of Smyrna was not burned to the ground, the actions taken by Ottoman officials showed how desperate the country was to threaten European intervention with empire affairs. This intimidation was used as a threat against the Entente powers; had they attacked, Smyrna would have most likely burned to the ground.

The Singer Manufacturing Co. faced similar conditions to that of Standard Oil, though what was taken from and performed against Singer Manufacturing was far worse. Singer Manufacturing's interests were affected because they "conducted millions of dollars' worth of business through hundreds of stores throughout the empire,"¹⁴ with locations such as Izmir and other islands around Anatolia depending on their Greek workforce. Singer had operated in the empire for more than five years by this time but "In June 1914, the Ottoman authorities ordered the boycott of Christian businesses and the deportation of 40,000 Greeks from Izmir, where Singer had four stores."¹⁵ It was common for Singer Manufacturing to include workers of Greek descent in their workforce and this deportation caused a large workforce shortage for not only the four stores in Izmir, but across the empire. The company viewed the deportation of workers as a "serious detriment of business of the company."¹⁶ The Ottomans responded to the company suggesting that 40,000 Greek employees could be easily replaced by Turks without affecting businesses. On June 19, 1914, "the interior agents of the Singer Manufacturing Co. had been driven out leaving their shops; that American firm requested safe-conducts for their agents to return to their posts otherwise the company would sustain serious loss."¹⁷ The threat against the agents of Singer Manufacturing pushed the business to send a letter to the local consul demanding the protection of its interests. It was not until two months later that Singer Manufacturing faced its next hurdle.

During the months when the Ottomans were seizing goods from American businesses, after they had already taken goods from other foreigners, they indiscriminately stole goods for the war effort. The Ottoman government seized kerosene oil and gasoline from Standard Oil and Vacuum Oil but also requisitioned from Singer Manufacturing “3 sewing machines taken directly from the Company’s store rooms, and about 20 (exact number still unknown) machines were taken from clients who had not completed payment therefor.”¹⁸ The Ottomans did not differentiate what could be taken from people and businesses to support the Ottoman war machine. Neither the National Archives, nor Walther has documents regarding anything else about Singer Manufacturing. These companies represented businesses previously established in the empire; however, it was especially hard for businesses to expand into the empire during the months at the beginning of the Great War.

One such company was Buffalo Specialty Co. which had interest in expanding its liquid veneer within the Ottoman Empire, but ran into multiple obstacles. The company gave a Mr. Nicolaides liquid veneer to start distributing to the populous, though they had only met this man once, entrusting him without knowing who he was as a person. Shortly after Mr. Nicolaides received the veneer, he disappeared in the Ottoman Empire, failing to contact Buffalo Specialty with updates of his venture. Buffalo Specialty sent a letter to the American Consul in Constantinople, looking for the whereabouts of this man Mr. Nicolaides, who was supposed to be introducing their liquid veneer, but had not contacted the business to begin the new branch of the company.¹⁹ The consul responded that it is not typically within their job to locate a man in another country, however they were able to locate Mr. Nicolaides to get the company an answer. The consulate also informed the company that Mr. Nicolaides was not a great man to trust as he had multiple interests within the empire. The company responded and valued the liquid veneer at \$40.00 and stated that they simply wanted it returned if the man was not going to hand them out to start a business. However, the American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant replied to Buffalo Specialty Co. that they “have interviewed this gentleman who states that he still has in his possession the 2,000 bottles of liquid veneer and that he has not been able to start a business in this article, but hopes to do so, as soon as the economic condition of the market shall have improved.”²⁰ Buffalo Specialty Co. gave Mr. Nicolaides a few more months and attempted to reach out to him in November to find out the status of their venture.

Buffalo Specialty sent another letter November 12, 1914, inquiring if Nicolaides had secured business for the company. The company wished that the consul would invite Mr. Nicolaides to their office and have him provide a statement of what he intended to do with the samples.²¹ This statement from the company displays a lack of trust between the company and Mr. Nicolaides after learning how Mr. Nicolaides does business. The company was not aware of the news that the Ottoman Empire had just entered World War I, not realizing that Mr. Nicolaides had interests at heart. The consulate recognized this and sent back a letter stating, “I would like to call to your attention to the complete paralysis of trade which has been caused by the present international situation and the utter impossibility of the pushing of your interests for the moment.”²² Trade came to a halt in and out of the empire due to the abolition of capitulations and Ottoman entry into the Great War. The company realized what was going on in the world shortly after they received this piece of mail but even in October, this was not a good time to start a business and Mr. Nicolaides saved this company from an unfortunate fate.

The fate of American companies within the Ottoman Empire began to deteriorate during the months leading up to the entry of the Ottoman Empire into World War I. It is especially important to note that Standard Oil Co., Vacuum Oil Co., and Singer Manufacturing Co., faced similar issues when it came to the government requisitioning goods for military use. As Consul J. B. Jackson in Aleppo, Syria, reflected the Ottoman government’s taking of goods as “American Citizens Plundered.”²³ Buffalo Manufacturing Co. did not face the same problems as the other companies because it had not established itself yet. Though had it been established, it would have most surely failed as a business, losing its new Middle Eastern foothold.

In addition to creating economic prospects within the Ottoman Empire, the United States was interested in building a political relationship with the Empire. This relationship with the Ottoman Empire had to do with the United States’ international standing, who its allies were, and using diplomacy and their newly formed Navy to create a sense of power. Henry Morgenthau used these tools and tactics to keep the US neutral when all of its allies were at war with each other. This was done prior to the beginning of the war and up until the US could no longer help through their use of “consult authority,”²⁴ which could “protect the people if necessary.”²⁵ This became the political stance of the US for the next six months.

The international standing of the United States during this time was that of a chief diplomat. Henry Morgenthau knew that if he could successfully create a bond with the Ottoman Empire, he could create a unique relationship to unlock the rest of the Middle East. However, to do this he had to show the Ottomans that the US was a friend of the empire through his ability to create political and social change, while also being able to defuse intense situations within the empire. Morgenthau’s ability to create a bond with the Ottoman Empire was noticed when “Ottoman officials expressed their fury with the US for promising to deliver two warships to Greece” which resulted in violence against

the Greek population within the Ottoman Empire.²⁶ The Young Turks believed that “deporting non-Turks constituted part of their modern nation-building efforts and that it removed a significant national security threat.”²⁷ Morgenthau used the American press to show the American public the massacres of Ottoman-Christian subjects; the Young Turks believed that this was necessary for a modern nation, while making the violence inherently worse. Although press tactics worked for the time being; the threats against Americans, American allies, and American interests led Morgenthau to deploy naval vessels to the area from time to time.

The first American allies at risk were Greek citizens, with relations becoming intensified when “Ottoman officials expressed their fury with the United States for promising to deliver two warships to Greece.”²⁸ After the US sold the two ships to Greece, the Ottoman government “accused the United States of compromising its own neutrality.”²⁹ The main issue for Karine Walther regarding this Ottoman accusation of the United States were that the attacks carried out against the Greeks were “Contrary to claims that Ottoman actions were the result of primitive Islamic fanaticism,” but rather it was believed by the Ottomans that their “modern imperial state was victimized by rebellious populations.”³⁰ The Ottomans were in a constant struggle with radicals within their empire, who challenged the changes made by the new government. Morgenthau feared that the Ottoman government would “intern them, establish concentration camps, pursue them with German malignity, and perhaps apply the favourite Turkish measure with Christians-torture and massacre.”³¹ However, Morgenthau’s hope for Turkish humility eventually subsided after continuous attacks against the Greeks.

The attacks on Greeks took a great toll on Morgenthau’s ethics as he felt it was important for the United States to stand up for the defenseless. He avowed that he “now told Enver, she would have to treat enemy foreigners in a civilized way.”³² During the summer months, the US sold two warships to Greece to bolster their defenses against the rise of Turkish nationalism. On June 19, 1914, Ottoman officials pushed Greeks out of their businesses and the Greeks flocked to the coast to escape from the boycotters.³³ Morgenthau immediately saw the boycotters as an issue for American business, but also a Greek issue, due to the matter of forced migration. He immediately sent a telegram to the Grand Vizier suggesting that he grant an extension to all Greeks employed by Americans a delay of two months to move.³⁴ The Grand Vizier reluctantly agreed to this and suggested that they be replaced by Turks. Morgenthau performed similar tasks for Russia.

Russia was at risk from Ottoman aggression during the summer of 1914, due to the budding relationship of the Ottoman Empire and Germany. Germany continued to build its relationship with the Ottomans, eventually creating a secret pact; supported by “a general consensus among Turks in favour of the German alliance, for it ended Turkey’s isolation.”³⁵ The Ottoman-German secret pact meant that Ottomans would remain neutral, but would begin to mobilize their military in case of an attack from Russia on Bulgaria, allowing Germany to provide “German gold to subvene Turkey’s war effort.”³⁶ George Horton proclaimed there was “much enthusiasm amongst Moslems in favor of the war as they hope to march against Russia.”³⁷ Russia, a US ally, had the most at stake when it came to the Ottoman Empire’s neutrality because the Dardanelles Strait controlled Russia’s trade coming from the Aegean Sea and the rest of the Mediterranean. The Dardanelles’ trade was drastically affected by what happened in the Ottoman Empire, as seen in 1912 with the collapse of Russia’s economy during the Second Balkan War.³⁸ On September 27, the closure of the strait made an immediate effect on Ottoman trade, but the Russians felt the effect shortly thereafter resulting in hundreds of ships filled with exports becoming trapped in the Black Sea.³⁹ Ottoman hostilities toward Russia had increased over time, eventually leading to an attack on Russian ports in the Black Sea as the Ottomans entered World War I. Anti-French and British sentiments did not begin until August with the arrival of the two German cruisers, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*.

With the Ottoman Navy in control of the German cruisers the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, they posed a threat to France, Great Britain, and Greece.⁴⁰ The arrival of these two ships forced the United States to provide a more active naval presence in the area. The arrival of the *USS North Carolina* helped to defuse the situation in Beirut as “The arrival of the North Carolina yesterday morning brought a joy, peace of mind and great rejoicing to the inhabitants of Beirut.”⁴¹ The people in Beirut were thrilled to have a foreign power in their area as it would protect them from increasing threats of riots and boycotts throughout Beirut. Two days after the *USS North Carolina*’s departure it was feared that an attack was imminent by the Ottoman Empire. This fear that an attack was imminent was attributed to the report released on September 25, 1914, when the American-Consulate commented that the Ottomans could be contemplating carrying out an attack against one of the countries belonging to the Entente alliance.⁴² The arrival of a United States’ man-of-war reduced tensions in the region as the ship gave a sense of peace among all those allied with the US. Though this peace would quickly dissipate among the allies due to the refusal to remove the German sailors from the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* in Istanbul.⁴³

The use of the United States’ Navy from September to late October, 1914, provided peace during difficult times. Scholars have neglected the effectiveness of the *USS North Carolina* and *USS Tennessee* to keep American political interests afloat in the Ottoman Empire. The comings and goings of these two ships constantly brought peace to the

areas in which they made port, relieving the people by providing a sense of peace and stability within the cities they visited. It was not until the *USS North Carolina* left that Henry Morgenthau stated:

*I think that I can safely say that all the law abiding, non-fanatical, and well disposed inhabitants of Beirut, irrespective of race, color, nationality or religion, are anxiously hoping and praying for the speedy return of the 'North Carolina', as the presence of an American man-of-war here during such times as these is practically an insurance against all outbreaks and outrages on the part of fanatics and evil doers of Beirut.*⁴⁴

The people in Beirut depended on the United States to protect its interests because this protection ensured the safety of all foreigners and not just the Americans. Nevertheless, Morgenthau believed that the method of making port should only happen sparingly, saying that: "Smyrna people are again requesting a war vessel. They are justified in feeling somewhat alarmed as Turkish officials continue making threats in case of foreign invasion yet I do not believe it advisable to have a war vessel go there."⁴⁵ Eventually, things deteriorated further in Beirut and there was need for American ships to stabilize the region once again. On October 24, 1914, the *USS North Carolina* and *USS Tennessee* made port in Beirut. The American Consulate-General in Beirut stated, "The presence of these two vessels has a most beneficial and tranquilizing effect upon all the inhabitants here, the great majority of whom sleep sounder at night."⁴⁶ The utilization of the United States' Navy gave American ambassadors in the region, a tool to create peace, but also provided militaristic support to their allies if needed. The American allies used these ships as a defense for their embassies which were increasingly under threat by the Ottomans.

The American ambassadors were successful in protecting their political and economic interests within the area because of their place within Ottoman society. While the Ottoman government pursued foreigners, the Americans were able to stay within the empire the longest. The Americans were able to keep Ottoman officials away long enough to take into their possession important belongings of France and Great Britain's consulates. After placing important government documents within the United States' consulate, the French ambassador urgently fled the country, "Consul de France désire quitter avec famille s'il y a moyen de quitter Constantinople Samedi ou plus tard pour la France" (The Consul of France desires to leave with his family, and wonders if there was a way to leave Constantinople Saturday or later for France).⁴⁷ The interaction between the French consul and Henry Morgenthau demonstrates that the US' international standing was that of a neutral power, but also an ally to the Entente powers because of the US' foreign relationship with France and Great Britain. This suggests that perhaps the reason for increasing hostility from the Ottomans to the United States was due to the US' ties to the Entente powers. The US constantly challenged Ottoman neutrality, hoping that the empire would remain neutral. Ultimately, the US' Navy ensured the protection of American economic, political, and social interests, while also protecting its allies within the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Empire welcomed the United States with open arms because the US was more interested in expanding business in the empire. The expansion of business came with Americans that were employed by the companies to run them. What began as an issue for Greeks transpired into an issue for Americans who were caught in the crossfire. They were being driven away with the same whips that had been used against Greeks by boycotters standing in front of Greek shops.⁴⁸ Although the event of Greeks being whipped began before the war, this event was the beginning of what Americans would continue to face. Eventually, Ottoman officials would receive word to "commandeer all horses, mules and camels fit for military service,"⁴⁹ showing that private property was not valued when it came to military mobilization and that consulates were powerless to protect foreign interests. This was not exclusive to Americans as French merchandise was unlawfully taken by the Vali about six days later.

American economic, political, and social interests were in a state of limbo as European privileges were abridged by increasing pressures of the Ottoman government. While the Ottoman Empire oppressed Europeans, Ottoman officials did not decide how to treat Americans. Morgenthau believed that this would allow the United States to become the "peacemaker" between the Ottomans and Europeans.⁵⁰ The events leading up to that point showed Americans losing more privileges, similar to those of their European counterparts from June to July 1914. Privileges were taken away when an American reported "that the police and soldiers took from him flour and hides to the value of Liras 800. The sacks of flour that they could not take away owing to lack of carts, they ripped open with knives. The receipt given was the usual piece of dirty paper."⁵¹ This event showed how one American lost property within the Ottoman Empire. This lack of focus is important because scholarship suggests that there was not an American victim in the Ottoman Empire, but only Greeks, Armenians, and members of the Entente powers. The intentions of the Turks were to alienate any potential enemy of the empire, to which the Americans were seen differently due to the neutral stance the US took to the Ottoman Empire.

Another instance on August 17, 1914, began when Ottoman soldiers visited another American shop and asked for five sacks of flour; the owner stated that he did not have any flour "but he was informed that it was his business to

obtain it and that he would be held responsible for that amount on the following day.”⁵² These practices continued with men like this facing the harsh reality of being within a country that created constant tragedies of war and by September, properties owned by Americans were forcefully seized. The government paid nothing in cash, but occasionally gave receipts for the value of items taken, so that a payment could be paid out of the next year’s budget.⁵³ The confiscation of property eventually expanded to American businesses causing more outrage by Americans living in the Ottoman Empire. During the seizure of business property, Americans were left defenseless by their consulate to deal with the Ottomans while the government officials took horses throughout the night.⁵⁴ Americans were subjected to changing laws and those who refused to pay were arrested for standing up to government officials.

Policies within the Ottoman Empire began to change in June 1914, to favor what the government continued to require from foreigners. As mentioned earlier, this began with the Greeks, who were pushed out of the empire by boycotters utilizing whips. In Smyrna, an American citizen purchased a piece of bread from a Greek owned bakery. Upon leaving the bakery, “he was set upon by three boycotters who beat him with clubs, and, taking his bread away from him, threw it into the gutter.”⁵⁵ Morgenthau fought against this change in policy with his belief that once the Dardanelles had closed, there was little chance that an outside government could help aliens within the empire; “the capitulatory rights, under which they had lived for centuries, had been abrogated. There was really nothing between the foreign residents and the destruction except the American flag.”⁵⁶ Morgenthau used the American flag to participate in governmental protests against the Ottoman Empire’s support of boycotters. Morgenthau also performed political protests; however, it was not until June 19, that he realized that the Ottoman government’s lack of action to stop it suggested that they wanted the boycotting to happen.⁵⁷ It later became evident that Americans would be subjected to the same laws as Ottoman subjects, with no protection from their consulate due to the abolishment of capitulations.

A few months passed before the Ottoman officials systematically targeted Americans. In one case, an American by the name of Finkelstein, who worked for Standard Oil Company, stood up for his Greek employee who was accused of not paying his taxes. When he confronted the Ottoman soldiers, they arrested him for interfering in their work with the Greek employee.⁵⁸ This was the only case that was documented by the local consulate that happened after October 1. This date is important because when capitulations were abolished, it closed the post offices which was the major communication method at the time.⁵⁹ It is possible that such events against Americans continued, but due to the abolition of capitulations, the local consulate was no longer able to involve itself with individual American interests. The only other set of events that came to be an issue for the Americans was that of the policies created to make their lives more difficult.

During the months leading up to the Great War, scholars have overlooked the policies created in the Ottoman Empire that oppressed American citizens within the empire. Within the Ottoman Empire, people who were non-Turks faced policies that were created to support the Ottoman mobilization for war. This began as early as June 9, 1914, when the American consul in Smyrna suggested that the forced migration of Muslims into Christian communities was conducted by the Governor of the Province. The consul supported this when he stated, “It is only when the mussulmans are officially incited against Christians that they resort to brutality.”⁶⁰ The brutality was similar to the Greeks, suggesting that government-sponsored brutality was indifferent to nationality due to the multiethnic nature of the empire.

On July 18, 1914, Ottoman soldiers demonstrated their brutality towards Greeks in the Long Island Massacre in Uzunada. The island is located in the Ege Denizi (Aegean Sea), east of Izmir, and was occupied by “Greek fisher-folk, whom a “detachment of 80 Turkish soldiers” targeted and took sixteen Greek peasants prisoners.⁶¹ The prisoners did not commit any crimes warranting arrest. While taking an order from the lieutenant, the soldiers marched their prisoners away from the fields that they were working in and killed the prisoners.⁶² This report also verifies that soldiers took two girls and repeatedly raped them throughout the night. This report was supported by Mrs. Giraud, “an English subject, who was living alone in her house at the time,” who saw the two girls and eleven new graves.⁶³ The government did not charge the perpetrators and Greeks were continually dehumanized, without recourse from the law.

Americans were faced with a challenging atmosphere created by Ottoman officials who were above the law and took property from Americans, while arresting anyone who challenged them. While it was unlawful for the Ottoman Empire to take property from Americans, the Ottoman government abolished capitulations to support their desires on October 1, 1914. The atmosphere created was that of fear, fear that the Ottoman military would come at any time and take whatever you owned, fear that death was ever present in your near future, fear that the city around you could erupt into chaos at any moment. An atmosphere that could be negated with the use of American men-of-war as they entered and exited the harbors of Anatolia. However, American property was not truly challenged until it became apparent that the Ottoman government would take property from American businesses.

While recent research has started to show more of a direct look at the United States during World War I within the Ottoman Empire, researchers have stopped with Henry Morgenthau’s biographies and have looked no further. This article has shown that the US had political, social, and economic interests within the Ottoman Empire. The US political

interest's included the US' international standing, who its allies were, and with use of the Navy, were able to persuade local politics of the Ottoman government. In regards to social issues, Americans were faced with changing Ottoman policies and actions taken against those who were not deemed Turks, American's loss of property within the empire, and a few instances of Americans being arrested without committing any crimes. The economic interests focused specifically on the maintenance and construction of businesses within a hostile conflict by using the examples of Standard Oil Company, Singer Manufacturing Company, and Buffalo Specialty Company.

This research into United States' interests within the Ottoman Empire is important because it gives us a clearer narrative of US imperialism at the time. The US was interested in expanding its influence to the Ottoman Empire, but unlike the ideals of New Manifest Destiny, the sole American interest in this region was to create trade with the Empire, not to conquer it. Due to the ever-increasing nature of the Great War, the Ottoman Empire degraded its relationship with the Americans by eventually treating them like any other foreign nation, with ever increasing pressures of Turkish nationalism. The US may have had the cure for the sick man of Europe, but due to the decision to enter the Great War, the death sentence was secured for the Ottoman Empire

2. Endnotes

- 1 Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1918), 131.
- 2 Within American primary sources, Istanbul was referred to as Constantinople when referring to the American Consulate. The United States also refers to the Ottoman Empire as Turkey.
- 3 Michael B. Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East: 1776 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), Quoted in Karine V. Walther, *Sacred Interests: The United States and the Islamic World, 1821-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 279.
- 4 Şükrü M. Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 4.
- 5 Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 32.
- 6 Leila Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Harvard University Press, 2014), 40.
- 7 Capitulations within the Ottoman Empire allowed foreigners to retain their rights and privileges granted in their country of origin.
- 8 Walther, *Sacred Interests* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015), 281.
- 9 Aleppo to Constantinople, *September 3rd, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (37.2).
- 10 Smyrna to Constantinople, *October 6th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M365, Roll 7 Ext. (15.1).
- 11 Aleppo to Constantinople, *October 26th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M365, Roll 8. (3.1).
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Coin News, *US Inflation Calculator* (Coinnews Media Group LLC, 2015).
- 14 Walther, *Sacred Interests* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015), 281.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Constantinople to Washington, *June 11th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. 867.00/626. (1.1).
- 17 Constantinople to Washington, *June 19th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. 867.00/630. (3).
- 18 Aleppo to Constantinople, *September 3rd, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (37.2).
- 19 Buffalo Specialty Company, *April 15th, 1914* (National Archives), General Records, RG 84, Turkey, Box 6-8. (IMG_2046).
- 20 American Chamber of Commerce for the Levant, *May 26th, 1914* (National Archives), General Records, RG 84, Turkey, Box 6-8. (IMG_2051).
- 21 Buffalo Specialty Company, *November 12th, 1914* (National Archives), General Records, RG 84, Turkey, Box 6-8. (IMG_2055).
- 22 Consulate General of Constantinople, *December 8th, 1914* (National Archives), General Records, RG 84, Turkey, Box 6-8. (IMG_2056).
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Walther, *Sacred Interests* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2015), 281.

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- 27 Ibid, 282.
- 28 Ibid, 281.
- 29 Ibid, 281.
- 30 Ibid, 282.
- 31 Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (1918), 130.
- 32 Ibid, 131.
- 33 Constantinople to Washington, *June 19th, 1914* (National Archives), Box M353, Roll 5, 867.00/630. (3).
- 34 Constantinople to Washington (National Archives), Box M353, Roll 5, 867.00/630. (3).
- 35 Leila Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 41.
- 36 Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908-1923* (New York: Penguin Press, 2015), 127.
- 37 Haifa to Beirut, *August 6th, 1914* (National Archives), Box M353, Roll 5. (19).
- 38 See Appendix B.
- 39 Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 42.
- 40 Henry Morgenthau to Secretary of State, August 8-11, 1914, *The Ambassador in Turkey (Morgenthau) to the Secretary of State, Outbreak of The War- Projects of Mediation*, Foreign Relations of the United States Database (FRUS), University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, Digital Collections, 763.72/447.
- 41 Beirut to Washington, *September 24th, 1914* (National Archives), Box M353, Roll 5, 867.00/689. (43).
- 42 Beirut to Washington, *September 25th, 1914* (National Archives), Box M353, Roll 5, 867.00/690. (44).
- 43 Constantinople to Washington, *October 19th, 1914* (National Archives), Box M353, Roll 5, 867.00/692. (45.2).
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Constantinople to Washington, *October 1th, 1914* (National Archives), Box M365, Roll 7, 711.673/45. (10).
- 46 Beirut to Washington, *October 24th, 1914* (National Archives), Box M365, Roll 8, 867.00/709. (1).
- 47 Constantinople to Washington, *November 4th, 1914* (National Archives), General Records, RG 84, Turkey, Box 6-8. (IMG_2183). trans. from French by Robert Nowland.
- 48 Smyrna to Constantinople, *June 9th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (4.1).
- 49 Beirut to Washington, *August 7th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5, 867.00/639. (13.2).
- 50 Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (1918), 131.
- 51 American Consulate-General to Constantinople, *July 14th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (22.2).
- 52 Haifa to Beirut, *August 17th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (28.1).
- 53 Aleppo to Constantinople, *September 3rd, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (37.2).
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Smyrna to Constantinople, *June 9th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (4.2).
- 56 Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (1918), 130.
- 57 Constantinople to Washington, *June 19th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5, 867.00/630. (3.1).
- 58 Smyrna to Constantinople, *October 6th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M365, Roll 7 Ext. (15.2).
- 59 While the telegraph could have also been used, when communicating transcontinentally, the use of mail was still widely prevalent. Mail was also important because it allowed for documentation to be forwarded it to Constantinople.
- 60 Smyrna to Constantinople, *June 9th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (4.1).
- 61 American Vice Consul-General to Constantinople, *July 18th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (10.1).
- 62 American Vice to Constantinople, *July 18th, 1914* (National Archives), RG 84, Box M353, Roll 5. (10.1).
- 63 Ibid.