

FROM THE ABODE OF ISLAM TO THE TURKISH VATAN



Map of the Republic of Turkey.

BEHLÜL ÖZKAN

From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan

THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL

HOMELAND IN TURKEY

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To My Parents, Nihat and Saime Özkan

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Introduction

MAX WEBER'S DEFINITION OF THE STATE as "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of force* within a given territory" (emphasis in original) became a well-established dictum in the social sciences of the twentieth century.¹ In line with Weber, who accepted the territorial element as given and focused on examining the legitimate use of force, most political scientists have long been ensnared in the "territorial trap," because they have neglected problematizing and questioning the territoriality of the nation-state.² As James Anderson noted, "Nations, like states, are not simply located in geographic space—which is the case with all social organizations—rather they explicitly claim particular territories and derive distinctiveness for them."³ The concept of homeland, the essential part of the nation-state paradigm establishing the link between the people and the territory, territorializes the national identity by creating the sense of belonging to the sacred soil and turning the imagined boundaries into physical ones. In Turkey, the nation-state accrued enormous power by convincing millions of its citizens of the need for unity, even if that meant sacrificing their lives for the national homeland's defense. While homeland provides physical space for the nation-state, it also reinforces the national identity by generating symbolic acts about the territory through geographical imagination.

This study is contextualized within the conflict of time and space and clashes over national territories that have arisen out of this fundamental conflict. It examines the development of national spatial consciousness within Turkey that makes it possible to view a particular space as embodying the *vatan* of the Turkish nation. *Vatan* signifies the territory of the Turkish nation-state and has been considered the most important factor in maintaining the cohesion of the society. *Vatan*—which, in Arabic, means the place of one's birth—can be translated as “homeland” in English. But this translation is problematic and does not fully reflect the implied meaning of the word in the Turkish language. In English, “homeland” refers to the territory of the nation-state, but in Turkish, *vatan* occupies a unique predominating status in political discourse. It refers not only to the national territory but also to major political and legal concepts derived from the word *vatan*, including citizen (*vatandaş*), patriotism (*vatanseverlik*), heimatlos (*vatansız*), high treason (*vatana ihanet*), and traitor to homeland (*vatan haini*). The first sentence of the constitution of Turkey underlines “the eternal presence of Turkish *vatan* and nation.” According to Article 66, the only criterion to deprive someone of citizenship is “an act incompatible with the loyalty to *vatan*.” Furthermore, according to Articles 81 and 103, both the president and the members of the Parliament should take an oath on assuming office that they will defend “the indivisible integrity of *vatan* and nation.”

In the twentieth century, as Muslim societies began to be shaped by the newly founded nation-states, the modernizing ruling elites faced an arduous task of creating national societies and national *vatans* in place of Islamic community (*ummah*) and the Abode of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*). The national homeland differs from previous entities that occupied the space of today's Turkey not only in terms of geographical shape but also in the nature of conception of space and sovereignty. Nationalist perceptions of space and of the need to defend the homeland from the dangers of enemies confers hegemonic status to the holders of political power. Belonging to the same *vatan* invoked national affection by insisting upon the kinship of individuals who were not related; national homeland thus served as the linchpin in overcoming the differences among various ethnic groups. Rather than accepting national homeland as self-evident and innocent as perpetuated by the nationalist ideology, this study criticizes the established conventions about Turkish *vatan* and its intersections

with politics and foreign policy. It seeks to displace the logic of nationalism by pointing to how national homeland is discursively constructed. As vatan has always been situated in a discourse, it should be analyzed in a contextual approach. Therefore, the rich details of Islamic and imperial territoriality are incorporated into this long-term case study of the making of the Turkish vatan. This study seeks to map out the role of vatan in Turkish politics, nationalism, and foreign policy and the critical socio-spatial background shaping it.

Before the establishment of the Turkish nation-state, sovereignty had not been associated with territorial boundary. The discourse of Western and modern geography displaced and vanquished pre-modern Islamic-Ottoman geographical understanding and replaced the historic romantic affection for vatan with strategic political allegiance. The newly established Republic of Turkey adopted the modern discourse of nationalism, presenting the nation's territorial conception as a naturalized and uncontested fact. Indeed, the circumstances that make possible the Turkish vatan constitute new conditions of knowledge production. Republican elites claimed that the roots of the Turkish nation-state were located in ancient Anatolian civilizations. At the same time, they rearticulated political concepts such as vatan and *millet* (nation) in a nationalist ideology that had been used by Ottoman elites in an imperial discourse since the beginning of the nineteenth century to sustain the empire's territorial integrity against the rising nationalist movements first in the Balkans, then in the Middle East and Anatolia.

Turkish nationalism reconfigured vatan's pre-modern Islamic-Ottoman meaning of one's birthplace to a "geo-body" of the Turkish nation, within which resided one's national brothers who were never known and would never be known.⁴ One comes readily to know other members of the nation through the construction of new maps, histories, and memories about the vatan. The construction of the Turkish vatan in the first three decades of the twentieth century occurred simultaneously with the transformation of the meaning of millet from a religiously defined entity to a nationally defined imagined community. After 1923, the Republican regime encouraged the selective remembrance of pre-Ottoman roots of Turks in Central Asia and pre-Islamic Anatolian civilizations. In so doing, it transfigured vatan from a local birthplace and the Abode of Islam to a land of origins, namely, a national homeland. While modern geography

and mapping of the space produced this geo-body, advocates of Turkish nationalism envisioned vatan as a sacred territorial body to love and be devoted to, to possess and be protected from enemy intrusions, and to kill and to die for, all of these elements playing a crucial role in representing a compact and solid national territory. The idea of defending the national homeland significantly answers part of the question raised by Benedict Anderson about nationalism: How can an idea so philosophically deficient and incoherent evoke such political power that men are willing to kill and die for it?⁵

Unlike the Islamic vatan, whose territorial borders were indistinctive, modern Turkey is, above all, a territorially well-defined geo-body. Its borders were demarcated as a result of the victory in the National Liberation War that terminated the Ottoman Empire and established the Republic of Turkey. The best exemplification of the transformation of imperial to national discourse occurred when the Ottoman territories were titled officially the Well Protected Domains of the Ottomans, signifying the unity of various provinces, while the name the Republic of Turkey emphasized a cohesive geographical unit, namely, Turkish vatan. However, as nationalist elites sought to initiate a radical break with Ottoman history and geography to legitimize the newly established nation-state, their policy of transforming an imperial space into a national vatan engendered an aporia in Turkey's geopolitical discourse. On the one hand, there was a huge loss of territories in the Middle East and the Balkans that were considered as vatan and had been ruled by Ottomans for centuries. In the last century of the Ottoman Empire, millions of people had migrated from these lost territories. On the other hand, the nationalist elites had to construct a national identity and solidarity to unite people from different ethnic backgrounds based on the glorification of the liberated territories in Anatolia, which is only a small section of the enormous Ottoman vatan.

The notion of a common Turkish vatan was deployed to override differences within the society. Republican reforms were unprecedented in terms of combining Turkish identity with territoriality. With the establishment of the Turkish nation-state, a sense of nationalism substituted servitude to the sultan and religion with loyalty to the homeland. This was revolutionary in that the nation was disassociated from Islam and God as the community of believers and from the Ottoman sultan as his

loyal servants and now was anchored to the life-giving homeland. The rejuvenation of vatan became a central project of Turkish nationalism, and repositioning the people's loyalty from the sultan onto the vatan radically changed Turkish politics. The practice of politics, which had been dominated by the sultan, was recoded as embodied within the right of the nation. Children of vatan became the new source of sovereignty, and they sought to promote the welfare of the Turkish homeland and to participate in its progress. Similarly, nationalism, previously considered by Ottoman statesmen as acts of disorder undertaken by unruly subjects, was proclaimed as the people's endeavor to regenerate the long-gone glories of Anatolia. Turkish nationalists argued that they would rehabilitate the wretched Turkish vatan, which had deteriorated under the tyranny of the Ottoman sultans.

Since the establishment of the Republic, vatan has been the constitutive dimension of Turkish politics. However, far from a static territorial structure as suggested by nationalist ideology, vatan has been continuously deterritorialized and reterritorialized by the hegemonic political discourse according to changing internal and external political and social conditions. The Kemalists waged the National Liberation War to save the vatan from invasion by European powers as proclaimed in the National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*), which identified the geographical borders of the vatan in 1920. Kemalists fought for vatan against imperialist powers and cooperated with the Soviet Union during National Liberation. However, after World War II, ruling elites argued that the same vatan was threatened by Soviet expansionism and, therefore, Turkey's entry into the Western bloc was the only way to protect the vatan from the "communist threat." While Turkey's participation in the Korean War was represented as a defense of vatan against communism on the far side of Asia, in the second half of the twentieth century Cyprus became the baby-vatan (*yavru-vatan*) in the foreign policy discourse, and unifying it with the mother-vatan (*ana-vatan*) constituted the popular national cause.

The ruling elites have dominated the "socio-spatial consciousness" to impose order and identity, thereby making the contemporary world comprehensible to the Turkish people.⁶ In 2001, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, arguably one of the most democratic prime ministers in Turkey's modern republic, said, "in Turkey, the Turkish Armed Forces have a very special role defined by the nation's unique geographical circumstances.

In terms of security, Turkey is located in a critically vulnerable region compared to Western European countries. Therefore, its internal and external security is indivisible. From this vantage point, European countries cannot set the example because Turkey is a *sui generis* embedded in a very delicate geopolitical position.”⁷ Ecevit’s statement was not an extraordinary one in Turkish politics. On the contrary, it reflected the well-established rationale that Turkey’s “special” geography requires a customized type of democracy, a principle that has been repeatedly articulated by generals, politicians, and foreign ministry bureaucrats since the end of World War II.

The perception of Turkey in a continuous state of emergency due to its geographical location continued after the end of the Cold War. As late as 2008, General İlker Başbuğ, in his first speech as the commander of Turkish Armed Forces delivered during the handover ceremony, underlined the fact that Turkey is located in the middle of a turbulent region, and quoting Napoleon he said that Turkey’s geography determines its fate: “If you look at the geography of Anatolia and the history of this geography, you realize that only strong states can survive and weak ones disappear soon from history’s stage . . . In its thorny geography, Turkey faces symmetrical and asymmetrical risks and threats. Therefore, it has to possess solid political, economic, technological, socio-cultural and military strengths that support each other . . . Contrary to the conventional ideas, Turkey’s conditions and difficulties due to its geography are not similar to some European countries. Such conventional ideas will cause tremendous delusions and irreparable results.”⁸

This geographical rationale, which depicts Turkey as seeking to maintain its territorial integrity against internal and external “threats” within the context of a “dangerous” geography, gained an ontological, if not practically a metaphysical, status in Turkish politics. Any argument criticizing this rationale was easily dismissed as marginal and failing to account for Turkey’s special geopolitical characteristics. As prime minister, Bülent Ecevit, who had strenuously criticized the military coups and interventions of the 1970s and 1980s, internalized this geopolitical rationale in due course and defended it in the 2000s, when Turkey’s membership in the European Union (EU) necessitated limiting the military’s role in Turkish politics. Ecevit criticized the demands for more political

reforms in order to enhance Turkey's democracy by saying that "Turkey's special geopolitical conditions require a special type of democracy."⁹

The well-established nationalistic stance in Turkish politics and society argues that since people in Turkey's "dangerous" geography are surrounded by enemies, they have to prepare themselves to live in a continuous state of emergency. The only way to maintain Turkey's integrity in this state of emergency is to embrace the *vatan* as the most precious asset of the Turkish nation and to be ready to defend it for any sacrifice. Explicit references to the Turkish homeland's "dangerous" geographical location have been made not only by military officials but also in day-to-day politics, school textbooks, and newspaper columns by politicians, academics, and journalists. Democracy, foreign policy, and ethnic problems have all been depoliticized and interpreted from the perspective of geographical determinism, which considers the Turkish homeland in a permanent state of emergency. A textbook for national security classes, which is compulsory for every student in the tenth grade, warns students that "the Republic of Turkey, because of its geographical position, has had to face schemes devised by external powers. The Turkish youth needs to be prepared to deal with such schemes."¹⁰ Since 1933, every morning millions of students gather in primary school courts to take an oath together. They shout in unison that their primary "principle" is "to love the homeland and the nation more than my being" and that they will be ready to "sacrifice my life for the Turkish being." State buildings including schools, police stations, and army headquarters put up billboards on their outside walls that display mottos such as "*vatan* first" and "who loves his *vatan* most is the one who fulfills his duty best." At the beginning of each football game, fans in the stadiums shout "the martyrs won't die and the *vatan* is indivisible" as a reaction against the armed Kurdish insurgency that has claimed more than forty thousand lives in the last thirty-five years. By doing so, they emphasize that they are ready to sacrifice themselves for the defense of Turkish *vatan*.

Contrary to this deterministic discourse, geography is not a product of nature. It is an outcome of a historical struggle over the control of territorial space. As Henri Lefebvre has argued, "space has been shaped and moulded from historical elements, but this has been a political process.

Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies. There is an ideology of space. Why? Because space, which seems homogenous, which seems to be completely objective in its pure form . . . is a social product.”¹¹ Parallel to this position, “when space is acknowledged as a physical fact, it is acknowledged by a subject; already here a man/space relation enters political knowledge as something indubitable, and space takes on political meaning as a clue to the sovereignty of a state; territory is naturalized right from the start.”¹² This study aims to deconstruct the taken-for-granted assumption that “only strong states can survive in Turkey’s geography” by identifying and analyzing its sources in politics.¹³ The nation-state, national identity, and *vatan* in Turkey are not already existing and pre-political entities. On the contrary, competing political groups always contest them.

Once the *vatan* is deconstructed, the erected tower of conventional wisdom and political truisms collapses onto itself. This book is focused on the modes of representation of space as national homeland in both theoretical formulations and political practices. On the one hand, it analyzes the nationalist ways of seeing the world that have been sponsored by academic geography and how Turkish *vatan* is constructed to fit into schemas of security interests of ruling elites. On the other hand, it examines how *vatan* is embedded in popular culture. Turkish state continues to rely on the motto “everything is for *vatan*,” proclaiming it on garrison walls and putting it on the mountains of Eastern Anatolia, which is mainly populated by Kurds. In the 2000s, people and groups who urged for the peaceful settlement of the Cyprus question in order to clear Turkey’s way for full EU membership were labeled as “traitors to *vatan*” and were accused of “selling *vatan* to Greeks.” Even the increasing volume of property purchases in Turkey by foreigners after 2003, as a result of liberal reforms, were depicted, by nationalists and Eurosceptics, as “selling *vatan*’s soil to foreigners.” Although defending territorial borders has become more difficult for the Turkish state as a result of increasing globalization, the state’s practice of patrolling the cyber-borders of *vatan* by blocking access to more than a thousand websites—including YouTube—makes Turkey one of the world’s strictest and most aggressive censors of cyberspace. Besides questioning the long-acknowledged fundamentals of national identity and territory, this study gives particular attention to

how everyday political practices discursively produced and disseminated the concept of vatan.

As in social studies that ignore the relationship between space and nationalism, vatan remains peculiarly unexplored and conspicuously absent from the analytical radar in state-centric approaches despite its overwhelming role and influence in Turkish politics. As Jens Bartelson has emphasized, “in political discourse, centrality and ambiguity usually condition each other over time. A concept becomes central to the extent that other concepts are defined in terms of it, or depend on it for their coherent meaning and use within discourse.”¹⁴ Vatan has acquired an ahistorical and ontological status, considered, as it is, a timeless natural symbol of the reality of Turkish nation and state. However, far from being neutral and authentic, vatan has been a historically constructed spatial grid, upon which various political forces have battled for control of the national power structure and for hegemony in physically controlling and representing the vatan. The hegemonic political discourse carries an enormous authority in its capacity to define the physical and imagined boundaries of vatan and, therefore, the difference between the inside and the outside. Correspondingly, such an authority allows the hegemonic political discourse to dictate who can stay inside the vatan and to exclude alternative representations of vatan by using the process of othering. By refusing to acknowledge vatan as a preordained, static, and unchanging spatial platform, this study aims to overcome the problem of “spatial blindness” and to explore how vatan has been conceptualized, reinstated, and transformed as a constitutive territorial parameter for the Turkish nation-state.¹⁵ It seeks to politicize the uncontested principle of a natural link between Turkish vatan and nation. Therefore, it focuses on the processes rather than the essences involved in vatan’s imaginations and representations.¹⁶ By problematizing the established geographical assumption of Turkey’s foreign policy that the nation is engulfed and surrounded by internal and external threats, the study concludes that defending the vatan legitimizes and confers hegemonic status to the holders of political power.

The methodology used herein is based on a range of critical writings in political theory, geography, sociology, and history to help enrich the understanding of the reciprocal relations shaped and dictated by the

construction of national territories, the question of the Other, and struggles over national identities. References are made to Michel Foucault and Ernesto Laclau on power-knowledge relationships and discourse theory, to Gearóid Ó Tuathail and David Campbell on geographical representation, and to Anssi Paasi on the role of education in inculcating national consciousness.¹⁷ This interdisciplinary approach effectively reveals the way that territorial transformations in Turkey are themselves reflective of state power in shaping the nation's social and cultural life. Political struggles among different groups and classes to control aspects of spatial socialization consistently echo the significance of the Turkish *vatan*, through which Turkish people internalize collective territorial identity and socialize as members of the territorially bounded spatial entity. Supplementing theoretical analysis with deep qualitative and empirical research, this study seeks to lay out a compelling map of the *vatan* through a largely diversified body of resources, such as archives, memoirs, geography textbooks, maps, newspapers, novels, and governmental sources. In an informed, provocative way, it outlines the ways in which *vatan* was precisely standardized for each period represented in the book, which covers the late Ottoman and the Republican periods.

Chapter 1 examines the thorny transformation of the Abode of Islam to the Western nation-state paradigm, which required constructing physical and mental borders of the Ottoman identity and space formed by multiple religious and ethnic groups, segmented horizontally and separated by fluid frontier zones. Chapter 2 chronicles how the spatial consciousness of the Ottoman ruling elite and society was transformed from an imperial *vatan* to a national one between the years of 1908 and 1923. Analyzing the change from a heterogeneous imperial *vatan* to a homogeneous national *vatan* reveals how national discourses and practices nationalized education, politics, and daily life in order to maintain social integration and order. In Chapter 3, I examine how a nationalist discourse prevailed in educational materials, particularly in how the state education system infused national ideals into geography textbooks, promoting Turkish national identity and the country's spatial and cultural features. The comparison of the pedagogy of space in Turkey before and after 1923 reveals how the newly established Turkish state effectively used geography education to construct spatial consciousness about the national homeland and to popularize collective national duties. Chapter 4 studies

how Turkey's foreign policy discourse generated specific systems of meaning, common sense, and regimes of truth in order to legitimize the Turkish state as a political unit. By using representations of threats and dangers to vatan, ruling elites formed a historical bloc to discipline Turkish people and eliminate other antagonistic groups that challenged the ruling class's power and hegemony.

CHAPTER ONE

Searching for a New Legitimacy: Ottoman Patriotism and Imperial Vatan

IN THE LAST TWO CENTURIES, nation-states have become the prevailing form of political and social organization. The success of the nation-state largely depends on its construction of individual and group identities based on bounded territories, in which it legitimizes its monopoly of power. To put it briefly, territoriality emerged as a significant form of power. However, to attain uniformity within its territory, nation-states had to abolish the heterogenic organizational structure of the political system it succeeded. In the case of Turkey, the millet system bound people to their autonomous religious institutions, which were the backbone of the political and legal system that played an intermediary role between people and state. This system was later replaced with direct loyalty to and identification of citizens with the state. It was a very complicated process, as it required the constructing of borders of the national identity and territory in an imperial space formed by multiple religious groups segmented horizontally and separated by fluid frontier zones.

In Turkey and in other Middle Eastern societies, this process also necessitated the transformation of a value-based ontological self-perception (*Selbstverständnis*) as an Islamic civilization into a completely different mechanism-based self-perception as a Western civilization.¹ According to Ahmet Davutoğlu, whereas “the axiological foundations of Islamic political legitimacy are eternal values given by a supreme divine being

which is sovereign over the human being and nature,” political participation is fundamental for Western legitimation: “The political mechanism is the formation of a new base of sovereignty: national or popular sovereignty. The rising importance of this mechanism led to a shift in political theory toward finding the best way to fulfill this aspect of procedural legitimacy. Liberal democratic tradition and socialist/populist democracies began to defend the supremacy of their systems due to their appropriateness for political participation rather than due to their attachment to a value system. Thus, political participation as a means of political legitimation became a value by itself and began to reproduce the norms of political life.”² The difference between these self-perceptions can be most clearly seen in political concepts such as nation-state and *ummah*, which can be translated as “the worldwide Muslim community.” It is difficult to find a corresponding term for “nation-state” in Turkish, Persian, and Arabic and similarly difficult to find an appropriate translation for “ummah” in Western languages.

According to the Koran, all Muslims comprise a single community, namely, *ummah*: “Verily, this *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah*, and I am your lord and cherisher: therefore serve me.”³ Islamic political understanding underlines the unity of *ummah* by disregarding ethnic and racial differences. As Davutoğlu emphasized, “the oneness of *ummah* depends on the common ontological approach of its members rather than on linguistic, geographic, cultural, or biological factors and is directly connected to the concept of Allah and to the specific *imago mundi* originating from this belief in *tawhid*.”⁴ Islamic jurists divided the world into two units: the Abode of Islam and the Abode of War. The Abode of Islam means “territories in which Islam and Islamic religious law prevail.” The explanation of the Abode of War is more difficult and problematic. It indicates “territories where Islam does not prevail.”⁵ Contrary to Bernard Lewis and other Orientalist scholars, this does not mean that “there is a morally necessary, legally and religiously obligatory state of war” between these two.⁶ Indeed, there is not a single reference to these concepts in the Koran and *hadiths*. These two concepts developed as a result of historical conditions and the expanding Muslim rule after the seventh century. After the tenth century, Islamic scholars started to use them more frequently as a reaction to the Crusades, the Mongol invasion of Islamic lands, and the end of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula.

The Islamic identification of a non-Muslim country as the Abode of War resembles that of the Cold War's military blocs rather than a constant state of warfare between the two. Although these blocs maintain armies for a possible conflict, the standard relations are based on accommodation and coexistence since ongoing trade and political links serve the reciprocal interests of both sides.⁷ It is striking that Prince Juan Manuel coined the term the "Cold War" in the early fourteenth century to define the political and military confrontation between Muslims and Christians in the Iberian Peninsula.⁸

The political legitimacy of the Ottoman state was based on its ability to defend the ummah and maintain its welfare within the Abode of Islam. However, far from accepting the relations between the Abode of Islam and the rest as an incessant warfare, Ottomans acknowledged the existence of an alternative political and religious order on the other side of the frontier. Their success rising from a small nomadic principality located in Bithynia—a frontier region between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of War—to a great empire cannot be solely explained by Holy War and *gaza* ideology based on religious zeal and commitment.⁹ As the title of Cemal Kafadar's book *Between Two Worlds* so aptly reveals, Ottomans used the opportunities provided by the frontier. They benefited from the Byzantine administrative model and adapted it to Turco-Islamic realities.¹⁰ Ottomans also changed the classical Islamic theory of legitimacy that stated that the caliph must be descended from the Quraish tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged. According to Ottoman political understanding, the sultan was the sovereign by divine right.¹¹ The concept of Holy War was employed to legitimize the dynasty, and Ottoman sultans were depicted as the greatest Holy Warriors after the Prophet Muhammad. Ebu's-su'ud Efendi, who was the *sheikh ul-Islam*—the highest authority on the issues of Islam for three decades during the era of the Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in the sixteenth century—presented the Ottoman sultans, not the Muslim community, as "the mighty annexer of the realm of war [Dar al-Harb] to the realm of Islam [Dar al-Islam]." ¹²

In the fifteenth century, Ottoman sultans initiated successful military campaigns against other Turco-Muslim principalities to establish their political and military hegemony in Anatolia. This fighting against other Muslims was presented as a Holy War, as the Ottoman religious

elite argued that these Muslim principalities in Anatolia hindered the Ottoman advance toward the West by making arrangements with infidels against the Ottomans.¹³ In the sixteenth century, Ottoman sultans “granted the necessary guarantees for residence, travel and trade in the Ottoman territories . . . to those non-Muslims from the Abode of War who gave the pledge of ‘friendship and sincere goodwill,’” namely, British and French merchants, whereas trade with the Habsburgs did not develop until the eighteenth century because of the adversarial relations between the two empires.¹⁴ During the same era, Safavids in Iran threatened Ottoman political-religious legitimacy by supporting Shiism among the Eastern Anatolian population. To counter the increasing Safavid influence, Ottoman sheikh ul-Islam declared Holy War against them and wrote a religious opinion to justify fighting against another Muslim state: “If the schismatics of Persia (May God abandon them) who live in the land of Persia under the rule of the sons of Shah Ismail consider as disbelievers those who recognize Abu-Bakr, Umar and Uthman as rightful caliphs, and they themselves hold the rest after Ali as possessors of nobility (May God’s approbation be upon them) . . . and if they consider them [the first three caliphs] as apostates and backbiters and openly curse and vilify them while considering themselves devout and believe that the killing of Muslims who are the people of the Sunnah is canonically lawful . . . the place where the cursers and believers of such things live, is it the Abode of War? Yes, it is the Abode of War and they can be considered as apostates.”¹⁵ Similarly Ebu’s-su’ud Efendi declared Safavids and their followers as infidels and argued that the war against them was a Holy War.¹⁶

At the end of the seventeenth century, Ottoman territorial expansion was halted as a result of the military defeats against the Habsburg Empire. According to the well-established historical understanding, the Treaty of Karlowitz signed between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires in 1699 signified the decline of Ottoman power. The treaty also signified the end of the expansion of the Ottoman frontier, namely, the Abode of Islam, in Europe. For the first time, the Ottomans were forced to acknowledge the territorial integrity of their major adversary in Europe and formed a joint boundary demarcation commission with the Habsburg Empire. What was more striking about the Treaty of Karlowitz was that although it was a peace instead of a truce treaty, the Ottoman statesmen represented it as a temporary cessation of hostilities with infidels. In order to avoid criticisms

about the unpopular treaty that marked the Ottoman territorial losses and to stabilize the border between two empires, the Ottoman Grandvizier Amcazade Hüseyin Pasha ordered the historian Naima to write a report to defend his policy. Naima compared the Treaty of Karlowitz with the Hudaybiyah Truce signed in 627 between forces of the Prophet Muhammad and the Meccans and argued that the cessation of hostilities with the infidels was preferable if the continuation of war was detrimental for Muslims.

Although the Ottoman statesmen sought to conceal the weakening of the empire against other European powers at the beginning of the eighteenth century, toward the end of the century the empire lost the first territory inhabited by Muslims, Crimea. Edward Weisband emphasized that the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed between the Russian and Ottoman empires in 1774 “was the most humiliating the Sublime Porte had ever been forced to sign, for the Ottomans were forced, for the first time, to concede to the despised *gavurs* (infidels) a section of the Dar al-Islam.”¹⁷ The loss of Crimea and its Muslim population to Russia was so appalling to the Ottomans that Sultan Selim the Third wrote an emotional poem about the lost Muslim territories:

“To the Divine Majesty I hath turned my face
 In my heart I hath enjoyed His Messenger’s grace
 Let us go to war against the heathen’s place
 Shall we let our country remain thus?
 Though upon Islam the heathen casts spells
 Here we still stand with our magnificence
 While every single Tatar is in chains
 Shall we let Crimea remain in heathen hands?”

After the Russian invasion of Crimea in 1774, thousands of Muslim Tatars left their ancestral lands, which turned into the Abode of War since *shariah*, the Islamic law, could not be implemented under the Russian rule. By following Prophet Muhammad and his followers’ emigration from Mecca to Medina—the *hijra*, according to Islamic discourse—Crimean Muslims migrated to the Ottoman Empire, which was considered the Abode of Islam. As Brian Glyn Williams argues, the migration of thousands of Crimean Tatars from Russian-controlled Crimea to Ottoman territories reveals that territorial patriotism did not exist among them:



FIGURE 1.1 Map of the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century.

“Far from articulating a unique ethnic right or claim to the Crimea as the eighteenth and nineteenth century Crimean Tatars’ sacred *Vaterland* or *patrie*, the widely accepted tenants of Hanafi Islam therefore seems to have actually dictated that the Crimean peninsula (as a land where the laws of the unbeliever prevailed over the shariah) was to be abandoned by all pious Muslims.”¹⁸

Contrary to Sultan Selim the Third’s desire to regain Crimea from “infidels,” the empire lost almost all of its territories in the Balkans and the Caucasus by 1918 (Figure 1.1). Because of the gradual retreat of Ottoman

rule in the Balkans and the Caucasus, not only the Crimean Tatars but millions of other Muslims left their lands and settled in the remaining Ottoman territories. They became known as *muhajirs* in Turkey, which was derived from the word *hijra* and originally used for Muslims who fled persecution in Mecca and migrated to Medina. During the same era, while the Muslim population was starting to face the devastating impact of nationalism prevalent among Christians in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the modernizing ruling elites of the Ottoman Empire had the arduous task of creating an imperial patriotism based on homeland in place of ummah and the Abode of Islam. Although the Ottomans had been adapting the meaning of these two concepts to the changing conditions for the political and religious legitimacy of the state since the fourteenth century, ruling elites realized at the end of the eighteenth century that they had to imagine and construct different political concepts in order to maintain the territorial integrity of the empire against the increasing nationalist movements and Western colonialism. To better explain the construction of the Ottoman patriotism and Ottoman vatan, I will first examine the perception of space in the Ottoman Empire and how it had changed as a result of military defeats and continuous loss of territory.

OTTOMAN COSMOLOGY CHALLENGED BY THE WEST

Cosmology is the philosophical and scientific study of the nature and the structure of the universe. Islamic theocentric cosmology is based on the concept of *tawhid* (*La ilaha illa Allah*), the code declaring God to be one and not composed of parts. The most important consequence of *tawhid* is that it created an ontological hierarchy from God to human being and from human being to nature in which the “transcendence and unity of Allah are the prime and only cause of all that take place.”¹⁹ The difference between the God-centered Islamic political justification and the nature-centered Western political justification has significant political and social consequences. Western political philosophy put the state of nature at its center and developed mechanisms of sovereignty to legitimize state authority. In the case of Islamic political philosophy, the main objective is to establish a state to fulfill justice on behalf of Allah on earth. Whereas the former prioritized political institutionalization and contractual-consensual methods to rationalize obedience to the political

authority and to law, the latter emphasized the dependence of political authority on the divinely based eternal value system. The values of social order and justice constituted the basic political philosophy of the Ottoman Empire summarized in the formula of the “Circle of Equity”: “a ruler can have no power without soldiers, no soldiers without money, no money without the well-being of his subjects, and no popular well-being without justice.”²⁰

The Ottoman worldview (*Weltanschauung*) organized knowledge about the world in four dimensions.²¹ Two dimensions were related to space. The first is the Islamic cosmography, which explains creation, the cosmos, and the physical realities in the world as a manifestation of the omnipotence of God. The second dimension is geography, which sought to explain physical conditions of regions and laws of nature. However, it was completely different from the modern understanding of geography, as political and military approaches were mostly disregarded by Ottoman authors. Aesthetic enjoyment played a more important role in maps and miniatures, and geographical books about other parts of the world were interested mainly in exotic creatures, supernatural forces, and mythical legends. According to pre-modern Ottoman cosmographers and geographers, every entity and creature, especially strange and exotic ones, confirmed the magnificence and omnipotence of God. The remarkable work of Piri Reis—a world map charting recent discoveries (in 1513) that included more information than Columbus knew after his last voyage—showed North and South America in detail. Piri Reis’s map represented a radical break from previous Islamic and Ottoman geography that called the Atlantic Ocean “The Gloomy Sea” (*al-Bahr al-Muzlim*) or “Sea of Darkness” (*Bahr al-Zulumat*). However, it did not arouse major interest until it was rediscovered in 1929, since the Ottoman elites were more committed to pious speculations about the cosmos than to cartography and maps. In a similar way, *Tarih-i Hind-i Garbi* (A History of the West India), a book about the New World written around 1580, was more interested in illustrating animals and local inhabitants than in the activities of Europeans. In the sixteenth century, when the empire was expanding, the Ottomans did not need to incorporate their extensive knowledge of geographic discoveries into their political practices. For the Ottomans, conquering Egypt, with its prosperous resources, made much more sense than pondering the unknown New World.²²