

Young Turks Movement & 1908 Revolution

Dr. Tahir Kamran*

(1)

Generally decline as a phenomenon evokes more than one responses from those who are racked by it. In a bid to stall the impending collapse from the position of strength and glory, resorting back to tradition is very common prescription. By doing so, it is believed that by way of adopting the past practices, history can be made to repeat itself. Therefore in the day when decline set in, the proponents as well as the followers of the tradition drew lot of attention and support from the masses. Therefore the days when decline set in, the proponents as well as the followers of the tradition generally drew lot of attention as well as support from the masses. Here the statement must be qualified particularly with reference to “the masses”. The word “the masses’ specifically denotes the literate people being influenced by the print culture, coming to vogue during the British rule. Puritanical responses in the form of Deobandi Movement¹ or *Wahabism*², professing strict adherence to the pristine injunctions of Islam resonated similar sort of perception that was in circulation among the Muslims of the Sub Continent, exemplify that proclivity.

The exponents of that traditional streak had been the trenchant critics of the western modernity, unleashed in South Asia through the

* Chairman, Department of History, Government College University, Lahore.

1 For detailed study of Deoband see Barbara D. Metcalf, “The Madrasa at Deoband: A model for Religious Education in Modern India” in *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2004) pp.29-55. For more elaborate reference see Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India, Deoband 1860-1900* (Princeton University Press, 1982).

2 Puritanical Movement started of by Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahab from Najad, Arabia in the 18th century with the aim to restore the pristine Islam. For its implications on the Sub Continent see, Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.188-189.

agency of Colonialism. The western modernity explicated all the mysteries of nature, the principles of morality as well as rise and fall of civilization through rationality embedded in euro centric epistemology. In that process revelation and intuition were renounced as mere superstition and their authenticity as sources of knowledge was called in question. The introduction of the knowledge system whereby the practitioners in traditional (Islamic) knowledge who were the religious *Ulema* without any quotable exception had been put out of relevance *vis-à-vis* the contemporary age. That was the familiar tactics the colonial regimes had been deploying throughout to establish, in the words of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), cultural hegemony over the colonized,³ an act vehemently contested by the beholders of the tradition.

19th century also witnessed the practice of proselytizing, vigorously conducted by the Christian missionaries provided the *Ulema* with the *raison d'etre* to defend their faith in all possible earnestness also infusing in them a great deal of enthusiasm and zest to guard their religious tradition against the corrosive effects of modernist *weltanschauung*. However, this process the *Ulema* too could not escape the modernist influence as Barbara Metcalf has very explicitly demonstrated it in her seminal work on *Darul Ulum Deoband*. Thus, whatever the method or the means, revivalism of faith inspite of all odds came to be the mission of those, spearheading the puritanical movements, which later on, assumed divergent forms. Some of them ardently took part in politics and anything that concerned "this world". Whereas some declared "this world" as a mere illusion, not worthy of being hankered for. Francis Robinson designates that mode of thought as 'Other-Worldliness'.⁴ In that perception of faith, the optimum emphasis is laid on the performance of the rituals that is believed as the precondition for salvation on the day of reckoning, which is regarded as the eventual destiny of all the Muslims. Interestingly all those adhering closely and strongly to the

3 In his magnum opus the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci strives for developing a flexible and humane variant of historical materialism, an original and nuanced Marxist theory of society and social change. He was convinced that it was not possible to effect a change in advanced societies of Western Europe therefore he weaned away from the simple notion of superstructure and sponsored the notion of the cultural hegemony of the dominant class. For further details see, the *Prison Notebooks*.

4 Francis Robinson employed these phrases, *this worldliness* and *other worldliness* while responding to the PhD proposal of Imran Bashir on *Dini Madaris*. He locates the other worldliness to be a dominant trend among the South Asian Muslims from the 19th century onwards. Same impression can be drawn from his paper *Secularization, Weber and Islam* that became chapter 5 of his *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*.

tradition could not preclude modernity from influencing them. The concept of “Hybridity” by Homi Bhabha⁵ points exactly to such intricate relationship that tradition and modernity forged in the 19th century.

Other response was diametrically opposed to the one mentioned above, to say the least. Its proponents find panacea in assimilation of the ideas and the modes of the dominant power, British in the case of the Sub Continent, reformers like Ram Mohan Roy (1722-1833) and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1818-1898) exemplify such a trend. They strived to ascribe modernist meanings to the cultural ethos, which to their reckoning had been rendered both temporally as well as spatially redundant. Now, the collectivity of the humans that they claimed to represent was also designated as ‘nation’, a new social and political category with its euro-centric origin. During the later half of the 19th century, like most of the eastern communities, Muslims also seemed to be completely overawed by the civilizational as well as cultural superiority of the West, latent in the realization that power emanates from knowledge and vice versa. However, those influenced pervasively by the modernity could hardly do away with tradition (specially religion). Hence the phenomenon accrued in these countries can be designated as *arrested modernism*, modernism reconfigured as a result of its entwining embrace with tradition. Hypothetically speaking, all around the orient proliferation of modernism got arrested because of tradition, not allowing it a smooth passage. *Arrested Modernism* was witnessed not only in the colonial world but also in Turkey under Young Turks, which remained far more sovereign than most of other Asian/African countries. So modernism was allowed in by the ruling elite of Turkey’s own volition. Nevertheless tradition kept company with the modernity through out Turkey’s course of history to this day.

Another point needs to be impressed upon here is the practice of Orientalism and the construction of “East” as the “Other” by Western scholars during 18th and 19th centuries as stated by Edward Said, in his *magnum opus* ‘Orientalism’.⁶ It may not seem out of place to refer to Michel Foucault, a renowned French philosopher and the forerunner of

5 Famously difficult Homi Bhabha occupies the Chester D. Tripp Chair in the Humanities at the University of Chicago and is visiting professor at the University of London. He is the editor of *Nation and Narration* (1990) and author of *The Location of Culture* (1994). Various concepts like “hybridity”, “mimicry”, “slycivilty”, “Third Space” are the concepts he has given currency in the understanding of cultural formations. To have greater understanding see, Homi Bhabha by Prem Poddar in *Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. John C. Hawley (Westport, Greenwood press, 2001) pp.60-65.

6 See Edward Said’s Introduction in *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

Said, in the thoughts of whom the whole discourse of knowledge/power is embedded⁷.

Knowledge/power nexus worked wonderfully to the benefit of Western powers, seeking control over the orient. The methods deployed by the British in India i.e., ethnographical surveys, census and district gazetteers provide ample testimony to the significance of knowledge as a mean to establish control over the colony.⁸ The impact, the Industrial Revolution had on the Western social, economic and political formation went a long way in casting a peculiar mindset among the colonized, harboring ambition to emulate their masters. The state of countries striving very hard to sustain their sovereignty like 19th century Turkey was no different. As Bernard Lewis states, "Industry and science-factories and schools; these were the talismans by which both Mahmud II in Turkey and Muhammad Ali in Egypt tried to conjure up the wealth and power of Europe, and thus maintain the European-style armies which were their prime concern."⁹ In order to make the talismans work successfully some further secrets concerning its proper application needed to be discovered. The eager Turks exploring the 'elusive source of European strength'¹⁰ found some clue in the form of 'Liberalism' being the cause of enlightenment and progress along with constitutional and parliamentary democracy.

(2)

The response that various Turkish reform oriented minds came up with, had a great deal of modernist influence casting its strong shadow on the Movement of Young Turks, who also took it as a recipe for salvaging Turkey from the ignominy of eventual decline and the subjection to the Western overlordship. An endeavor of the Young Turks to stem the rot, undermining the sovereignty and integrity of Ottoman Turkey has a particular perspective with in which the movement and the methodology it employed would be brought under analytical scrutiny in the subsequent part of the paper.

7 For Michel Foucault's concept of Power/knowledge, see Willie Thompson, *Postmodernism and History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.82.

8 Bernard Cohen, *Anthropologists among Historians* (Oxford University press, 1994) pp.224-254.

9 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, Oxford University Press, 1968), p.131.

10 *Ibid.*

'Young Turks' is more of "a generic term denoting rebels attacking an established order".¹¹ However, Turkish historiography portrays them as the group of people striving for the rejuvenation of almost dysfunctional Ottoman Empire thereby intended to infuse a new *élan vital* in the body politic of the sick man of Europe, going through the throes of ultimate extinction. The multifarious problems plaguing Turkish Empire ranged from the stagnating economy, insufficient revenues to pay for the expenses, an inefficient bureaucracy, a corrupt administration and rampant lawlessness, sagging spirit of the army and depleted infrastructure to the outmoded education system needed massive reforms. The nationalist feelings erupting in the Non-Muslim areas of the empire added to already countless problems.

Furthermore, by the closing years of the 19th century the corpus of young "westernized officers and civil servants, supplemented by members of the new secular professions such as law and journalism, who set out to revive the empire by means of revolution, since the empire's own half hearted attempts to modernize itself-most recently in the 1870s-had run into sand".¹² The shared characteristics that together made a "typical Young Turk profile" had been their Muslim background with a single exception that of a Sabbataic Jew, and they came from divergent ethnicities: Turk, Arab, Albanian, Kurd or Circassian.¹³ Most of them were quite young when they joined the movement and even at the time of 1908 constitutional revolution very few of them were beyond forty. They also aspired to be young. Youth, with the qualities epitomized in it namely dynamism, activity and progressiveness, was viewed by the Young Turks as characteristics 'which gave legitimacy to their action.'¹⁴

When these educated Turks with liberal outlook started making their presence felt at the political scene, although with benign intention that they entertained for the empire, prompted the Ottoman monarch to clamp censorship on liberal and patriotic literature, closing down 'suspicious' newspapers and also putting liberal teachers out of job. Such extenuating circumstances provided 'Young Turks' quite a sufficient cause to set up

11 Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turks- Children of the Borderlands*. www.dayan.org/currentcontents12-2003.htm, 35k (Accessed May 02, 2005). University of Leiden.

12 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (New Delhi, Viking, 1995), p.284.

13 Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turks- Children of the Borderlands*. www.dayan.org/currentcontents12-2003.htm 135k (Accessed May 02, 2005), University of Leiden.

14 *Ibid.*

CUP *Ittihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*¹⁵(Committee of Union and Progress) in 1908 and immediately afterwards brought *coup d etat* and forced Sultan Abdul Hamid to promulgate the constitution of 1876, suspended by ‘the increasingly autocratic Sultan Abdul Hamid 11 in 1878, after the defeat in the great war against Russia, which brought the Russian army to the outskirts of Istanbul, the capital of Ottoman Turkey.’¹⁶ These Young Turks, four medical students met in the garden of the army medical school, were greatly influenced by the French Revolution therefore they grouped together in the centennial year, 1889 of that historic event. The founders were Ibrahim Temo, an Albanian from Ohri, Mehmed Resid, a Circassian from the Caucasus, Abdullah Cevdet and Ishak Sukuti, two Kurds from Arabkir and Diyarbakir respectively. Some accounts suggest Huseyinzade Ali, from Baku, being the fifth founding member of the said organization.¹⁷ “The version of Enlightenment which they chiefly cherished was inspired by the positivism of August Comte, which combined a passionate belief in science and inevitable modernization with the secular equivalent of a religion, non-democratic progress (‘order and progress’, to quote the positivist motto) and the planned social engineering undertaken from the above.”¹⁸

Before going any further, it would not seem superfluous to briefly trace the genealogy of western influence over Turkey particularly during the earlier decades of 19th century. Bernard Lewis mentions Sadik Rifat Pasa (1807-56) “who went to the Turkish Embassy in Vienna in 1837 and later held a number of senior appointments in Istanbul”¹⁹ as the first to be deeply impressed by the wealth, industry and science of Europe, and thought these as imperative for the regeneration of Turkish empire. His concern with justice and the lawful treatment of the subject as his ‘right’ was the novel idea, derived from France. Similarly Seyyed Mustafa Sami, a former chief secretary of the Turkish Embassy in Paris, in an essay published in 1840, spoke with admiration about the system of government, religious freedom, supremacy of law and concepts of liberty and progress.²⁰ However, these feelings, despite having impact though of marginal intensity could not rein in the autocratic rule of the Sultan. Rather, arbitrariness was in ascendancy throughout the 19th century

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 Bernard Lewis, p.197.

18 Eric Hobsbawm, p.284.

19 Bernard Lewis, p.132.

20 *Ibid.*, p.133.

primarily because the system of checks on Sultan's unbridled power had all gone i.e., the corps of Janissaries; the feudal sipahis and the local dynasties of the valley-lords etc.

The autocratic rule of Ottoman Sultan, however, did not go unchallenged. Ideologies of revolt in the midst of 1848 Revolution was rocking the whole Europe, the tremor of which could clearly be discerned in Turkey as well. Furthermore, economic difficulties along with enthroning of Abdul Aziz as Sultan stretched matter to the limit. In 1860s, cry for reforms particularly among literati reverberated in Turkey with full force. By that time Turkish literature had acquired new form and also content, radically different than the classical writings peculiar to Ottomans, profoundly influenced by the Iranian classics. Now literature of France was the source of inspiration as well as the model for imitation.²¹

Ibrahim Sinasi (1826-71), Ziya Pasa(1825-80) and Namik Kemal (1840-80) were the harbingers of new literary tradition that wielded great influence during the second half of the 19th century.²² Later on, they played prominent role in 'Young Ottomans', launched in 1867; Paris based prince Mustafa Fazil, of the Egyptian ruling house, being its chief architect.²³ They started their careers as civil servants but afterwards increasingly occupied with literature and journalism. All three of them had to endure considerable agony and anguish in various forms including exile at the hands of Ottoman state machinery. They incurred all that wrath of the 'establishment' because of their liberal prognosis, they had been suggesting for the honorable prolongation of their motherland. Namik Kemal, in particular, a zealous devotee to the ideas of Montesquieu and Rousseau, earned a repute of as apostle of freedom and fatherland. In countless essays, articles, novels and plays, he acquainted the Turkish Muslims with the two fundamental ideals of French Revolution. Generally the history of the Turkish liberal protest against absolutism is traced from *Kuleli* incident, of 1859.²⁴ That, in fact was the plot hatched to assassinate Sultan Abdul Hamid but the plot was discovered in advance and prisoners were sent to Asia. There is some ambivalence regarding the incident. Quite a few western writers contend that it was the first attempt to introduce constitutional parliamentary government; Lewis, however, infers on the basis of some latest research

21 *Ibid.*, p.136.

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*, p.153.

24 *Ibid.*, p.151.

that the conspiracy was directed against the Sultan because of the concessions; he accorded to his Christian subjects. But it was in 1860s “an unmistakable liberal critique of government action, and a programme of constitutional reform”²⁵ found its expression through Sinasi and Namik Kemal finally reached its culmination on 23 December 1876 when the committee of statesmen and Ulema, presided over by Server Pasa, completed the task of drafting the text of the constitution that was promulgated on that date.²⁶

Midhat Pasa played the role of a linchpin in that historic development. Midhat also could not last long enough and lost favour of his close associates like Namik for his indiscretion and absolutist government. The policies of tanzimat invoked severe criticism for accepting too much influence from the European countries. In such circumstance the constitution was abrogated in 1878 nevertheless that constitution kept on figuring as the central issue for the liberals throughout the closing years of 19th century, although Sultan kept on ruling the country for next thirty years as an absolute monarch.²⁷ Restoration of the same constitution acquired primacy when Young Turks Movement got underway during the initial years of the 20th century created circumstances, which eventually led to the outbreak of the revolution.

(3)

Having mapped the history of Turkish liberalism that crystallized into Young Turk movement, though with somewhat brevity, and the Western impact that it imbibed in the due course, one must not lose sight of the circumstances, responsible for its brewing up into a political force wielding tremendous impact in the earlier part of the 20th century. That movement had Ahmed Riza (1859-1930), one of the most consistent and fearless of the Young Turks as a key figure among them in 1895 in association with other exiles brought out a fortnightly journal by the name of *Mesveret*.²⁸ That journal earned lot of popularity, acclaim and credence in spite of gagging policies of the Ottoman Government. Soon after he was joined by Murad Bey who had been a close associate of Ahmed Riza but later on due to discrepancies in method they fell

25 *Ibid.*, p.152.

26 Lord Eversley, *The Turkish Empire: Its Growth and Decay* (Lahore, 1957), pp.343-44.

27 George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs* (Cornell University Press, 1962), p.26.

28 Bernard Lewis, p.198.

apart. Nevertheless, Ahmed Riza continued to be the central figure of the movement. Young Turks suffered a lot of punitive actions from the Ottomans. Very many of them were sent of exile to far-flung regions of the Empire. However, few of them successfully escaped to various European countries. Such members of Young Turks living in exile proved to be the main strength for those, stuck up in their own country. All such repressive measures employed by the ruthless Ottoman state could not halt the phenomenal growth of the movement. Perseverance exhibited by the members of the movement sent tremors in the ranks of the government. Resultantly Sultan resorted to stick out a reconciliatory hand to the recalcitrant Young Turks. Murad Bey was successfully persuaded by the Ottoman establishment to join hands with Sultan. Consequently he accepted a position in the Government in 1899. That defection of Murad earned him a bad repute not only among the ranks of Young Turks but also among the general public.²⁹

One of the prime motives of the Young Turks was to facilitate long over- due political, economic, judicial reform though remaining under the umbrella of the Ottoman rule. One of the prime concerns of that movement also was “that the empire was threatened by the centrifugal forces of separatist minority nationalism, which could be both stimulated and used by foreign powers with designs on Ottoman territory.”³⁰ Hence, “Unity of the (ethnic and religious) elements” (*Ittihad i Anasir*)³¹ the foremost ideal of the Young Turks which could be achieved by giving all communities and ethnicities living in the empire a stake through parliamentary representation.³² Hence, many believed that the event of 1908 whereby the need for the parliamentary representation was voiced marked the beginning of a Turkish national movement.

Young Turks demanded a written constitution, a bicameral parliament, universal adult (manhood) suffrage, civil rights and the status of Turkish as a national language. They also vehemently pleaded for freedom of religion and the equal treatment of all citizens no matter which religion they adhere to and what ethnicity they belong to. Free education for all, the introduction of reforms in the armed forces and the extension of railroads also figure prominently on their agenda. Hence the agenda of Turkey s modernization seemed to be in place after 1908

29 For more details see, *Ibid.*, pp.196-207.

30 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Young Turks: Children of the Borderlands*. www.dayan.org/currentcontents12-2003.htm, 135k (Accessed May 02, 2005). University of Leiden.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

though only in letter but not in spirit. CUP played very crucial role in the formation of the governments after the revolution. Its supremacy though suffered a few hic ups yet its ascendant position continued virtually till 1918.

Immediately after “the long night of Hamidian despotism was over”³³ and the Young Turks seized power, the cracks within the ranks of Young Turks started cropping up. Liberals espoused some measure of decentralization and autonomous rights to the minorities whereas nationalists favored centralized authority and Turkish domination³⁴. Latter enjoyed tacit support of CUP in the beginning but afterwards it came out in the open as the contender for supreme authority. Liberals and moderates under the first two Grand Veziers of the constitutional era, Said Pasha and Kamil Pasha were holding sway. But their stay in power proved to be short-lived due to the events they had no control over, nor it resulted out of their doing by any means. Austria seized Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria declared its independence and Crete took decision of joining Greece. Liberals as a consequence lost power in February 1908 and Huseyin Hilmi Pasha replaced Kamil Pasha as Grand Vezier who was more acceptable to the faction of nationalists.³⁵

CUP also lost goodwill of the common people because “of the cavalier way in which, while remaining in the background, they manipulated government appointments. They were also accused of using intimidation and murder against political opponent.”³⁶ However, the real challenge to CUP came only one month after the fall of Kamil Pasha when an armed, reactionary rising flared up, *31 March Incident*, as it is known in Turkish annals. An extremist organization by the name of Muhammadan Union founded on 5 April at a meeting in the Santa Sophia mosque. Muhammadan Union also brought out its journal, the *Volkan* that championed revolutionary Islamic Internationalism.³⁷ Murad Bey, the erstwhile radical and modernist also joined that Union professing militant pan-Islamism. That rising took the form of a full fledged mutiny by the soldiers, mostly Albanians, of the First Army Corps stationed in Istanbul. On the 12-13 April, the mutineers assembled in the Santa Sophia Square in front of the parliament. Gradually they gained in numerical strength as students from *dini madaris*, religious scholars and

33 Bernard Lewis, p.210.

34 *Ibid.*, pp.213-14.

35 *Ibid.*, p.214.

36 *Ibid.*, pp.214-15.

37 *Ibid.*, p.216.

soldiers from Army units joined them. “The *Seriat* is in danger, we want the *Seriat!*” was their simple demand.³⁸ Few of them also asked for the immediate removal of college-trained officers. To placate the mutineers the Sultan sacked grand Vizier. Protection for the Holy Law was promised along with amnesty for the mutineers who revolted ostensibly to defend it. All the governors were instructed to safeguard the *Seriat*. Ahmed Riza was also replaced with Ismail Khan as the speaker of the parliamentary chamber.³⁹

(4)

As alluded earlier, modernism could not entrench itself with ease as expected, subduing the age old *Weltanschauung* steeped in age old ‘tradition’ even Young Turks did not want the supremacy of modernism the whole hog. They, instead, were striving for the institutional change while keeping super structure of the Ottoman state intact, according it perpetuity through bringing in the time honored institution of constitutional monarchy. All those ostensibly noble intentions, notwithstanding the beholders of tradition did not let it transpire and registered their opposition in the name of safeguarding *Seriat* through violent means, incurring greater violence from the forces of change.

With out wasting much of the time an “Army of Deliverance” or *hareket ordusu* (Action Army) with General Mahmud Sevket Pasa marched on Istanbul and captured it on 23 April after little resistance.⁴⁰ The reactionary upsurge was not restricted to Istanbul only. Its repercussions in the Adana District, culminating in the large-scale massacre of the Armenians, ripped open the old sores reminiscent of Hamidian repression. These events smeared very badly the Turkish image in Europe in terms of the treatment meted out to the religious minorities was concerned.

Although the uprising was quelled yet it left the unionists shaken to the core. With ordeal over the Unionists set themselves with the task of restoring their image and position. Committee of Union and Progress established a firm control over the government; Sultan Abdul Hamid was not only deposed but also sent into exile to Salonika testifies the power CUP had been wielding at that time. Mehmed Resad was made a new Sultan who was no better than a mere lackey of the CUP that had pervaded to virtually every pore of the administration, putting their own

38 *Ibid.*, p.215 & for the detailed account of the counter revolutionaries, see Lord Eversley, *The Turkish Empire: Its Growth and Decay*, pp.371-74.

39 Bernard Lewis, p.216.

40 *Ibid.*

nominees into the key positions. The reign of terror was unleashed particularly when “Law of Association” and the “Law for the Prevention of Brigandage and Sedition” were enforced on 23 August and 27 September respectively. Thus the formation of political associations bearing the name of any ethnic or national group was proscribed. Similarly the Greek, Bulgarian and other minority clubs were closed down. The “Law for the Prevention of Brigandage and Sedition” allowed the formation of special ‘pursuit battalions’ from the army to hunt and repress armed bands (the famous were the Balkan *komitadji*) operating in the name of various nationalisms.⁴¹

The technology of control deployed by the Young Turks was repressive as well as centrist, confined not only to the Christian subjects but Rumelia and the Asian provinces also had to partake of the measures i.e. a policy of *Turkification* whereby the Turkish language was imposed on Arabs, Albanians, and other non-Turkish Muslims.⁴² Such centrist policies along with the suppression unleashed on the reactionary mutineers, like public hangings etc. and strangling the dissenting voices of liberals and proclaiming the state of siege in Istanbul got the CUP to the position of political dominance. However, its supremacy was by no means unchallenged. Instead it had many dissidents, within the ranks of the Committee as well as outside of its organization.

However, the first serious threat to the political supremacy came in 1911, when cracks within the ranks of the Committee began to appear, eventuating in the first major split in the Unionists. Consequently *Hizb i Cedid* or ‘New Party’ was formed, with Colonel Sadik and Abdulaziz Mecdi Bey as its leaders. That party stood for “the better observance of democratic and constitutional procedures”. It also exhorted to profess and practice the general religious and national ethics and morals, continuation of historic ottoman traditions and to reinforce the “sacred rights of the Caliphate and Sultanate”.⁴³ Quite converse to that right wing group was another party *Hizb-i Terakki* (Progress Party) that was closer to the overall agenda of the Committee.⁴⁴ These differences were tried to be ironed out in August-September 1911 at a party congress held in Salonika (the center of Unionists) and the compromise over the declaration of national unity could hardly preclude the emergence of a

41 *Ibid.*, p.217.

42 Arab Nationalism and Zionism, Jordan Table of Contents <http://countrystudies.us/Jordan/>. Source: U.S. Library of Congress. Accessed on 02 May 2005.

43 Bernard Lewis, p.220.

44 *Ibid.*

new party by the name of the Liberal Union. It came into existence by the merger of all the personalities and splinter groups, opposed to the CUP.⁴⁵ Liberal Union soon after its coming into existence assumed the role of a parliamentary opposition because most of its founders were already members of parliament. Just after 20 days of its existence the Liberal Union had to undergo an ordeal of contesting for the seat of the Foreign Minister falling vacant on Rifat Pasa's appointment to London as Ambassador. Tahir Hayreddin, a liberal journalist and son of the liberal grand Vezir Tunuslu Hayreddin (d.1889) whereas Memduh Bey, the sitting Minister of the Interior was the candidate of the Unionists. That contest was won by the Liberal candidate by a majority of a single vote of the Electoral College.⁴⁶

That defeat of the Unionists explicitly reflected the mood of the people, which was not at all favorably disposed towards the Unionists. The voice of venerable Kamil Pasa also joined the liberals against them pointing to the political prospects not auguring so well for the Unionists. Faced with such ominous situation, the CUP adopted the policy of intrigue, procuring the dissolution of the parliament it held the general elections in April which rigged so thoroughly that out of a total 275 members only six liberals could get through to the chamber.⁴⁷

After that contrived victory, Unionists shifted their headquarters to Istanbul from Salonika. "Obedient parliament" and meek and submissive Sultan notwithstanding, the difficulties for the Unionists seemed multiplied. Within Turkey possibility of any legal & legitimate opposition was squashed ruthlessly inviting thus extra-parliamentary opposition in the form of the military to be activated, to the horror of those who wanted liberalism and democracy to prevail. Young army officers in Rumelia took to the hills and forged alliance with Albanian rebels. In May-June 1912 a group by the name of *Halskar Zabitan* was formed in Istanbul comprising army officers in support of the rebels in Rumelia with the objective of doing away with the illegal government and to break the back of the CUP, to hold fresh and free elections so as to ensure constitutional legality.⁴⁸ Furthermore that group of the military

45 *Ibid.*, p.221.

46 *Ibid.*, and also see *The Young Turks Children of the Borderlands*. www.dayan.org/currentcontents12-2003.htm, 135k (Accessed May 02, 2005). University of Leiden. Also see Table of Contents <http://countrystudies.us/turkey/> Source: U.S. Library of Congress. Accessed on 02 May 2005.

47 This election is known as "The Big-stick Election" for greater details see Bernard Lewis, p.222.

48 *Ibid.*, pp.223-24.

officers demanded a complete withdrawal of the Army from the politics. On the other hand the situation in Albania was getting precarious by the end of June, causing serious alarm among the ranks of the Unionist. Gravity of the circumstance led the minister of war Mahmud Sevket Pasa to tender his resignation on 9 July but the criticism kept on mounting and the Government had to seek the vote of confidence on 15 July. The chamber approved the CUP overwhelmingly with only four dissenters.⁴⁹

However, *Halaskar Zabitan* conjured up such a machination that within 24 hours of the vote of confidence from the chamber, Said Pasa and his cabinet resigned. New cabinet was formed on 21 July 1912 and Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasa tipped, as the Grand Vezir while Nazim Pasa became Minister of War and Kamil Pasa as President of the Council of the State. However, by the October Kamil Pasa substituted Ahmed Muhtar Pasa as Grand Vezir. The most significant of the repercussions of that change was off course the ouster of the CUP from power and siege was lifted on 23 July just to be reinforced again on 6 August. The CUP dominated parliament was sent packing on 5 August and oath was administered on all the serving officers not to meddle in the politics.

In these circumstances the CUP was undoubtedly down but not out and observing the situation very closely that was becoming graver with every passing day. War was on against Italy when on 2 October 1912, Turkey found itself having caught into the quagmire because its Balkan allies had turned their back on it. Consequently Turkey was left with no other choice but to stick out a hand of reconciliation to Italy on 17 October. The Balkan War ensued with *Halaskar Zabitan*, the main force behind the government fully occupied in waging war when the CUP thought reaping advantage of the crisis and on 23 January 1913 the Unionists embarked on a surprise assault. Enver Bey led a small band of officers and forced his way into a cabinet room killing Nazim Pasa and coercing Kamil Pasa to tender his resignation, which subsequently was presented to Sultan.⁵⁰

Now again the CUP was saddled in power, having established firm control over the army, the police and the government offices. Mahmud Sevket Pasa was appointed as Grand Vezir but murdered on 11 June 1913. That eventuality afforded the CUP an opportunity to shove aside the last shreds of freedom and democracy. Mehmed Said Halim Pasa (1863-1921) succeeded Mahmud Sevket Pasa as Grand Vezir however;

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*, p.223.

Talat, Enver and Cemal Pasas were the *de facto* rulers of Turkey till 1918 with oligarchic dictatorship being the pattern of governance.

The political chaos entailed the assumption of power by the CUP and particularly after the revolution of 1908 is symptomatic of some mal adjustment modern political idols that all the Eastern societies come to imbibe and practice. Freedom and democracy could not be put in place in the Asian/African countries as a result of a smooth transition. There had been many hic ups in the realization of the dream of democracy and freedom in the societies with the long history of autocratic rule. With the absence of political and economic institutions and the conditions not conducive for their birth and evolution, the notion of democracy could not transpire into reality. The basic problem seems to be a sudden leap that the ruling class, inspired and equipped with the Western education, took did not yield the aspired results and understandably so. That has to be a gradual process, not merely a simulation but a new political and social synthesis can only make the democratic idols work in the countries like Turkey and Pakistan. Turkey is well on its way in minimizing the undue role of extra-political forces and it is sanguinely hoped, the same happens in Pakistan before it is too late.