The mystery of Gallipoli and occupation

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What is referred to as the Gallipoli Campaign in the textbooks all over the world is the only major Ottoman victory of World War I. In our country, it is always referred as “The Çanakkale Zaferi” and regarded as a defining moment in our history; it was the final surge in the defense of the motherland as we knew it crumbled on other fronts. The Gallipoli Campaign took place on the Gallipoli peninsula at the northern bank of the Dardanelles. Intending to secure the Dardanelles Strait, Britain and France launched a naval attack followed by an amphibious landing on the peninsula, with the aim of capturing the Ottoman capital of Constantinople (modern Istanbul).

It was an ill-fated assault that lead to half a million casualties. Turks lost 200 thousand people. Not only the entire student cadres of military schools perished in 322 days; but many engineering faculties, medical schools even high schools lost all their graduating classes.

The British naval commander Admiral Sackville Carden, in his telegram to Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, stated that the fleet would arrive in Constantinople within 14 days. But, a year and 300 thousand soldiers and officers, 14 battleships and 2 submarines later, the British and French commanders had to sound the “general recall” to protect what remained of their forces on 18 May 1915.

Thus, the adventure spearheaded by Churchill to “control the Turkish Straits and occupy Istanbul” ended on that fateful day. Evacuation began in December 1915, and was completed early the following January.

Yet it had not ended there: this combat formed the basis for the Turkish War of Independence, which resulted in the declaration of the Republic of Turkey eight years later. President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk rose to prominence as a commander at Gallipoli. Australia and New Zealand created their national consciousness fighting against the last Empire of the world. Even today the grandchildren of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) come to Gallipoli to commemorate the fallen between 17 February 1915 and 9 January 1916.

Now please fast-forward your mental timeline; almost 3 years later:

On the first 10 days of November 1918, the quasi-military junta of the Committee of Union and Progress that had been running the Ottoman government since 1908, abolished itself; its members fled to their patron states in Europe; and they left the doors open behind them. On 13 November 55, pieces of Allied navy passed through the Dardanelles and anchored right in the Istanbul harbor—without firing one single bullet!

If the story of Gallipoli is a study in religion and the evolution of Islamic concepts, there is no separation between materialistic and value centered things. “So Islam does not use the term ‘progress’ because we have its equivalent that includes both meaning and materiality.” he said.

Regarding the question whether Islam prevented Muslim countries from progressing, Mr. Khanfar stressed that with 1400 years of civilization and the evolution of Islamic concepts, there is no separation between materialistic and value centered things. “So Islam does not use the term ‘progress’ because we have its equivalent that includes both meaning and materiality.” he said.

But according to Mr. Khanfar, governments sometimes use a certain concept of sharia as a narrow-minded approach to what they regard as religion in order to justify their authoritarian rules and to confiscate the right of people to elect their representatives.

On the question of whether Islam accepts religious freedom, Dr. Brown answered that the question should be phrased differently. He underlined that a many countries, including those in the West, have boundaries for religious freedom and the freedom of Muslims is restricted in some countries. Dr. Brown said: “In Britain in 2015, Muslims faced restrictions on some certain expressions because they were considered ‘counter to fundamental British values. So if it happened in a Muslim country, would it be considered a restriction of religious freedom? If this question it true, than it should be asked in Western countries as well.”

Ibn Haldun University co-organized a panel at Oxford University

The panel discussion organized by Oxford Union, the Islamic Society of Oxford University, and Ibn Haldun University, focused on the past, present, and the future of Islam in politics.

Religion plays an increasingly prominent role in politics across the Muslim world. In a panel discussion sponsored by Ibn Haldun University, a scholar of Islamic law and a leading Middle Eastern media editor came together at Oxford University, to answer the question of whether there is something inherited in Islam that lends itself to politicization, and to discuss what role faith should play in modernizing governments in the Muslim world.

Wadah Khanfar, the President of Al Sharq Forum and former Director-General of Al Jazeera Jazeera, observed that extremism is not a result of Islam but a result of ignorance. Khanfar said, “When Western world stood silent while the dream of democracy in the Arab world was murdered, extremism was born.”

Freedom sacrificed

Mr. Khanfar argued that from 2013 onwards, no Western or American politician mentioned democracy for the Middle East and that the word “democracy” became a “taboo.” Mr. Khanfar emphasized the point that the extreme ideologies that emerged in the region cannot be regarded as representative of Islam or of Muslims. “Because Muslims are the ones who mostly suffer from it” he said.

Wadah Khanfar added that in the Middle East, freedom has always been confiscated for the sake of certain colonial interests, Western oppression, and other geopolitical interests, but warned, “Freedom has now been sacrificed for something called ‘stability.’”

Associate Professor Jonathan A.C. Brown, Chair of Islamic Civilization at Georgetown University and the editor-in-chief of the Oxford Encyclopedia of Islam and Law, defined Muslims as part of the West and observed that they made significant contributions to its moral and social values. He said, “When we discuss who we are and our values in the West, it would be seen that the Islamic legal tradition, Sharia, is incredibly dynamic and rich.”

Progress in Muslim countries

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