Through bilateral treaties between Moscow, Ankara, Tehran and Kabul, revolutionary diplomacy shaped the ‘Northern Tier’ of the Middle East in the early 1920s. This article argues that the infamous Young Turk leaders, though in exile after the First World War, remained at the centre of a significant moment in transnational revolutionary diplomacy in Eurasia. Based on a hitherto underutilised collection of published and unpublished private papers in juxtaposition with other archival sources, this article illustrates the working of a dual process of internationalism. While campaigning for Muslim internationalism, the Young Turk leaders were able to partake in international politics, but ironically reduced their own legitimacy and capacity as non-state actors by championing revolutionary bilateralism between Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Soviet Russia.

Introduction

‘We are undoubtedly entering upon a new phase of international relations’, was the verdict of Pravda, the official newspaper of the Russian Communist Party, after the signing of the Soviet-Turkish Treaty of Friendship on 16 March 1921.1 Within the first three months of 1921 Soviet Russia had signed bilateral treaties not only with Ankara but also with governments in Tehran and Kabul. These treaties of ‘friendship’ were meant to create an anti-colonial buffer zone between Soviet Russia and the British Mandate of Iraq and the British Raj in India, respectively. The geopolitical formation that connected Mustafa Kemal’s Turkey, Reza Khan’s Iran and Amanullah’s Afghanistan in the interwar years would later overlap roughly with the anti-Soviet ‘Northern Tier’ of the Middle East during the Cold War.2 In contrast to the Cold War, however, the Northern Tier in its avant la lettre manifestation in the interwar years was the result of revolutionary internationalism against European hegemony in international politics.

Internationalism is commonly promoted by transnational actors.3 Contemporary diplomatic sources of the Entente help us identify some of these actors that transgressed state borders and national boundaries in Eurasia on behalf of Soviet foreign policy. On the same day as the above-mentioned Soviet-Turkish Treaty, the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement was signed in London, which

1 Quoted in ‘Imperial and Foreign News Items’, The Times, 22 Mar. 1921.
curtailed Soviet propaganda activities in the East. A leading British diplomat identified Cemal Pasha and his ‘mission to Afghanistan’ as the most prominent among such activities. As the former Ottoman Minister of Navy and war-time governor of Syria, Cemal Pasha was part of the infamous Young Turk triumvirate, alongside former Grand Vizier Talat Pasha and former Minister of War Enver Pasha. As influential members of the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti; CUP), they had established a dictatorial regime that ruled the Ottoman Empire from the Balkan Wars to the end of the First World War. After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, these leading figures went into hiding in Germany, partly to escape court martial prosecutions due to their crimes against humanity in the Armenian genocide. During the crisis of the peace settlement, the Young Turk leaders came out of their hideout in Berlin and returned to international politics in a campaign of Muslim internationalism against the United Kingdom and France. They played important roles in the diplomatic relations at the Berlin–Moscow–Ankara–Kabul axis, championing revolutionary alliances with Soviet Russia. In doing so, they displayed an impressive scale and variety in networks while manoeuvring across a wide and diverse political geography. A number of the nodes in their network, such as the Bolsheviks, were co-opted in the chaos and contingency of the post-war period, but most of their collaborators were the same cast of conspirators, revolutionaries and agents of the Ottoman–German alliance that had previously troubled the British Empire in the East. By the summer of 1922, however, they were driven out of international politics and eventually killed.

Although the Young Turk leaders are commonly featured as mavericks and desperados in the history of the aftermath of the First World War, there are only a few studies that provide critical insights into their transnational agency. In addressing this gap in the literature, this study will offer a micro-history of international politics based on a collection of published and unpublished private papers of the Young Turk leaders – most of them located in hitherto underutilised and restrictive archives of Ankara – in juxtaposition with British, German and Russian archival sources. Most studies that treat Soviet relations with Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan as a connected region in this period were written during the height of the Cold War in order to reaffirm the history of Russian influence and intervention in the Middle East’s Northern Tier. Other more recent studies underline the consolidation of

5 Erik Jan Zürcher, ’Young Turk Governance in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War’, Middle Eastern Studies, 55, 6 (2019), 897–913.
7 A major collection of private papers of the Young Turks, whose originals are lost, was published by Hüseyin Cahit Yağ forecasting in a series from 15 Oct. 1944 to 1 Apr. 1945, in the newspaper Tarih. In the citations below, I used the edited version, Hüseyin Cahit Yağ and Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu, eds., İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları: Bir Devri Aydınlatan Tarihi Mektuplar (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2002). Moreover, I had access to Cemal Pasha’s and Enver Pasha’s private papers which are located at the archive of the Turkish Historical Society (Türk Tarih Kurumu; TTK) as well as corresponding documents of the Ankara Government from the archive of the Turkish General Staff’s Directorate for Military History and Strategic Studies (Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi; ATASE). A relevant portion of Enver Pasha’s papers from the TTK archives was published in Yamauchi, The Green Crescent under the Red Star, but I omitted cross-references in the citations below. A compilation of some of these published sources centring on the theme of the ‘Asia mission’ of the Young Turks can be found in Murat Çalço, Paşaların Asya Müşavîleri, 1914–1922: Talat, Enver, Cemal ve Mustafa Kemal (İstanbul: E Yayınları, 2013).
Soviet foreign policy from Leninist internationalism to bilateral alliances with non-communist nation states in Asia as a result of historical contingencies. In the growing body of literature on different forms of interwar internationalism, the existence of Muslim internationalism that supported anti-colonial alliances of independent Muslim states with Soviet Russia is largely missing. When anti-colonial nationalism during the aftermath of the First World War is put into a global framing, it is generally assumed that national self-determination movements appealed mostly to Wilson’s liberal internationalism, since the reach of Lenin’s internationalism was limited. However, anti-Westernism was a crucial feature of the internationalism of Muslims and other Asians in this period that championed strategic alliances with Soviet Russia. Moreover, Cemil Aydın rightly draws attention to the ‘pan-Islamic moment’ in the aftermath of the First World War, in which Muslim internationalism was in itself a major movement against colonialism and imperialism. The question is how did the Muslim internationalism of the early interwar years accompany the international recognition of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan as independent nation states through a set of bilateral treaties with Soviet Russia and what roles did transnational actors like the Young Turk leaders play in this process.

The fact that the Young Turk leaders were able to partake in international politics after the First World War, despite their status as fugitive war criminals and stateless statesmen, is nothing short of remarkable. I describe their agency in international politics as transnational revolutionary diplomacy. Any approach to transnational relations relies on the asymmetric categories of state and non-state actors, assuming that states have supremacy in international politics. The non-state status of the Young Turk leaders is admittedly ambiguous in the post-war period because they were stateless statesmen exploiting their reputations, networks and resources as former state actors, but still lacking the legitimacy and capacity of statehood. As such, the legitimacy and capacity of states (as well as non-state actors) are related to their position within the ‘international society’ (i.e. ‘a society of states governed by its own distinct set of norms’) and the ‘international system’ (i.e. ‘chains and networks of interaction’). Though it is a given that revolutions are always international in their

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dynamics,17 ‘revolutionary diplomacy’, namely the foreign relations of revolutionary states, is a distinct phenomenon because revolutionary regimes continue to challenge the norms of international society and the status quo of the international system.18 By pointing out the limited prospects of the transnational revolutionary diplomacy of the Young Turk leaders, I will argue that the diplomacy of revolutionary states and revolutionary non-state actors have very different trajectories due to the supremacy of statehood, which in turn shaped processes of state formation in international politics.

This study of transnational revolutionary diplomacy illustrates the working of ‘a contradictory process’ of internationalism.19 As Fred Halliday pointed out, internationalism contributes to ‘internationalisation’ which enables ‘greater interaction and integration’ across and beyond states, but simultaneously enforces ‘the power of states and the sentiments of division and competition in the world’.20 In tracing this dual process, first, I show how the Young Turk leaders were part of a significant campaign of transnational revolutionary diplomacy, as they displayed an impressive ability to network across the political spectrum and transgress political boundaries while campaigning for Muslim internationalism and revolutionary alliances with Soviet Russia against the West. As I argue, the second part of this dual process, during which Young Turk leaders were sidelined in international politics, was a result of the integration of revolutionary states in Eurasia into the international society – ironically, a policy which the Young Turk leaders had vociferously supported.21

‘United by the Common Enemy’: The Setting of Transnational Revolutionary Diplomacy against the Entente

Amid the Versailles crisis in the Summer of 1919, a so-called ‘political salon’ was established at the Moabit Prison in Berlin that created a unique venue for transnational revolutionary diplomacy. Karl Radek was the salon’s host. As the leading connoisseur of German affairs within the Bolshevik leadership, Radek had arrived undercover in Germany to meet with German socialists and labour leaders.22 After clashes between the socialist Spartacists and the police in early 1919, Radek was arrested and imprisoned.23 In order to protect him from prosecution, the Soviets declared Radek ambassador of the Soviet Republic of Ukraine.24 This was, however, a revolutionary subversion of international diplomacy. After Radek voluntarily agreed to revoke his diplomatic status, German officials ended

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19 For a similar approach, but with a different focus, on Turkey’s internationalisation in the 1920s, see Carolin Liebsch-Gümüş, ‘Intersecting Asymmetries: The Internationalization of Turkey in the 1920s and the Limits of the Postcolonial Approach’, Acta Universitatis Carolinae Studia Territorialia, 19, 1 (2019), 13–41.
21 Armstrong argues that revolutionary states go through a process of ‘socialisation’ as they become part of the international society. In the case of revolutionary Russia see Armstrong, Revolution and World Order, 112–57. Fred Halliday argues that the international society is based on the homogeneity of ‘a set of norms shared by different societies and which are promoted by inter-state competition’. Fred Halliday, ‘International Society as Homogeneity’, Rethinking International Relations (London: Macmillan, 1994), 94–123.
23 Gutjahr, Revolution muss sein, 365.
24 Chicherin (Moscow) to Bela Kun (Budapest), 12 Jun. 1919, Political Archive of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, hereafter PA-AA), R 2043.
his solitary confinement. Since Soviet Russia was increasingly seen as a strategic ally in subverting the diplomatic and economic sanctions of the Versailles Treaty, Radek was even granted larger quarters with many privileges in the Moabit Prison.\(^{25}\) Hence, Radek’s political salon was frequented by various political entrepreneurs from left and right. Radek’s Moabit cell marked the beginning of a moment of transnational revolutionary diplomacy against the Entente.

As some of the first guests at the Moabit salon, Talat and Enver found themselves in the midst of this moment of transnational revolutionary diplomacy and contributed to its opening towards the East.\(^{26}\) After having escaped from the Ottoman Empire in November 1918, the Young Turk leaders had been hiding in sanatoriums and apartments in Berlin.\(^{27}\) Since the beginning of the Paris Peace Conference in early 1919 they had regrouped with Muslim agents and activists in Germany and Switzerland, who were formerly associated with the activities of the secret intelligence and special operations branch of the Ottoman Army, commonly known as the Special Organisation (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa). They had reached an understanding that Soviet Russia was the only force that could support Muslim anti-colonialism. In their negotiations with Radek at the Moabit Prison, they agreed upon a preliminary collaboration against the Entente between Soviet Russia and Muslim revolutionary societies led by the Young Turk leaders.\(^{28}\)

This encounter with Radek in Berlin promoted the Young Turk leaders to key players of transnational revolutionary diplomacy. Radek himself noted that Enver ‘was the first to bring home to the German militarists that Soviet Russia was a new and growing world force with which they would have to count, if they in fact meant to struggle against the Entente’.\(^{29}\) Regarding Talat, Radek was pleased that ‘he understood the significance of Soviet power at the moment of its greatest impending danger’ and ‘entered negotiations with the Soviet representatives abroad and propagated the idea of the Russian–Turkish rapprochement’.\(^{30}\) A German official who ‘had detailed conversations’ with Karl Radek reported that Radek and Talat ‘are united by the common enemy’ and that ‘regarding the anti-English propaganda in these [Muslim] regions [the Bolshevics] expect much from Enver Pasha’.\(^{31}\) Despite these great expectations, Enver had multiple aeroplane crashes, emergency landings and two imprisonments in Lithuania and Latvia while trying to reach Moscow.\(^{32}\) ‘Our friend E. [a.k.a. Enver] is still in Berlin’, complained a German friend helping Enver reach Soviet Russia. ‘It is a great pity considering the situation in the Near and Russian East that none of these matadors is there’.\(^{33}\) It took nearly a year for Enver to reach Moscow in August 1920. In the meantime, the international conjuncture had shifted. Socialist revolutions in Germany and Hungary and elsewhere were all defeated by counterrevolutions and the Polish–Soviet War had run into a dead end, while protests and uprisings against colonialism in the Muslim world had reached a critical point.\(^{34}\)

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\(^{31}\) Leugtion Council Hey, report on Radek’s deportation, 23 Jan. 1920, PA-AA, R 2044, A1275.


\(^{33}\) Hans Humann (Neubabelsberg) to Otto von Lossow (Munich), 21 Feb. 1920, Bavarian Central State Archives (Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv), Abt. IV, HS 3158.

‘I Want to Prepare a Road and a Gateway for Indian Revolutionaries’: Campaigning for Muslim Revolutions in Soviet Russia

‘The route to Paris and London is through the cities of Afghanistan, the Punjab and Bengal’, as Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky proclaimed in a memorandum at the end of the Third Anglo-Afghan War in August 1919.35 In face of the failed revolutions in Europe, the Bolshevik leadership was increasingly looking eastward in search of a way out for the world revolution. When the Politburo decided to ‘offer support for the liberation movements of the peoples of the East’, it was directed primarily at Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.36

On 18 June 1920 Karl Radek declared at an executive meeting of the Communist International that it was not enough to offer symbolic support for the liberation movements in the East. Instead, Moscow had to become the centre of incitement.37 The Second Congress of the Comintern was the first manifestation of this turn towards the colonial world by means of supporting non-communist revolutionary movements.38 After Baku was conquered by the Red Army on 28 April 1920, Soviet Russia had gained direct access to the Middle East via Turkey and Iran. Hence, the Comintern’s First Congress of the Peoples of the East in September 1920 took place at Baku due to its geopolitical location.39 The Baku Congress primarily addressed ‘the enslaved popular masses of Persia, Armenia, and Turkey.’40

Soviet Russia already enjoyed a certain reputation in ‘Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. In Turkey, the armed resistance against the Entente’s occupation was severe and resulted in the foundation of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara on 23 April 1920. There was a clear Bolshevik influence in Anatolia.41 As early as May 1920 Mustafa Kemal Pasha as the President of the Grand National Assembly offered diplomatic relations to Soviet Russian Foreign Commissar Georgy Chicherin in order ‘to unite both States in their struggle with international imperialism’. Chicherin responded with a promise for independence to Turkey.42 Meanwhile, many Turkish nationalists had converted to communism and looked towards Soviet Russia.43 Due to its proximity to the Russian Caucasus,
the Bolshevik Revolution had a direct impact on Iranian political movements. In Iran, Mirza Kuchik Khan’s Jangali movement, an Ottoman-German sponsored Muslim-nationalist insurgency against the British influence, had founded the Soviet Republic of Gilan in May 1920 based on a complicated alliance with Soviet Russia. In Afghanistan, there was no communist movement, but in May 1919, even before the Third Anglo–Afghan War, the new Emir Amanullah had exchanged friendly letters with Lenin. Seeing these struggles as a united front, Chicherin promised to give support to both the Turkish and the Afghan national movements.

Moscow was already the Mecca of revolutionaries of different colours who partaken a pilgrimage to seek the blessings and support of the Bolshevik leaders. Amongst them were also Muslim nationalists and pan-Islamists. ‘I am neither Communist nor Socialist, but my political programme so far is the expulsion of the English from Asia’, announced an Afghan emissary in Moscow. ‘Pan-Islamism was a revolutionary force’, Indian communist leader M.N. Roy noted dismissively after the first delegation of Indian Muslims were ‘welcomed and supported as an ally of the proletarian world revolution’. Accordingly, the Young Turk leaders were received and honoured as state guests in Moscow. Despite mutual distrust due to ideological differences, they quickly established a working relationship with the Bolshevik leadership. ‘Above all, they [Bolsheviks] are quite favourable to our Muslim Society of Revolution’, announced Enver, although no such organisation was formally founded. As a special guest of the Comintern, Enver participated in the Baku Congress in September 1920, where Bolsheviks declared a ‘jihad’ against colonialism and capitalism. Back in Moscow on 15 October 1920, Enver and his colleagues officially founded the Union of Muslim Revolutionary Societies (İslam İhtilal Cemiyetleri İttihatı). Resembling an Islamic International, the Union had a ‘national colour’, as it aimed to be a federation of Muslim revolutionary societies from different nations by championing slogans such as ‘Iran belongs to Iranians!’

In negotiations with the Bolshevik leadership, the Young Turk leaders proposed the following revolutionary campaign: Cemal Pasha would lead the Afghan and Indian revolutionary movements; Enver’s uncle Halil Pasha would lead the Iranian revolutionary movement; Mustafa Kemal Pasha would command from Ankara the resistance movements in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Egypt; Talat

47 Chief of General Staff İsmet (Ankara) to Deputy of Lazistan Osman (Rize), 30 Jun. 1920, ATASE, Independence War Collection (İstiklal Harbi Kolleksiyonu, hereafter ISH) 613-114. For Chicherin’s letter see also: Hirst, ‘Transnational Anti-Imperialism and the National Forces’, 216.
50 Cemal (Moscow) to Talat (Berlin), 11 Jun. 1920, in Yağış ve Kokahanoğlu, İttihat Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 237.
51 Enver, memorandum on the cooperation of the Muslim Revolutionary Organisation with Soviet Russia [Summer 1920], TTK, Enver Pasha Papers (hereafter EP) 04-15.
55 Cemal (Kabul) to Enver (Berlin), 1 Dec. 1920, TTK, EP 07-29.
Pasha would coordinate the exile networks in Europe and distribute propaganda; Enver Pasha would command all campaigns from the Moscow headquarters. Enver assured his friends in Berlin and Moscow that there would be coordinated insurgencies in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan in the spring of 1921.

In order to work for the 'Indian revolution', Cemal left Moscow for Afghanistan. At first sight conditions seemed welcoming in Central Asia. Reform thinkers in Turkestan and Afghanistan were shaped by Ottoman political thought and the Young Turk movement constituted a model for Young Bukharan and Young Afghan movements. The Young Turk leaders indeed enjoyed considerable notoriety as revolutionary leaders of the Muslim world. Even the Afghan Emir Amanullah belonged to the 'Young Afghans' and signed his respectful letter to Enver with red ink, implying that he too was a 'revolutionary' (revolisyoner) following the model of the Young Turks. The Bolshevik leadership eye witnessed with awe how Muslim delegates from Central Asia kissed the hands and feet of Enver at the Baku Congress. Cemal’s timing seemed right as several thousand Indian Muslims had taken refuge (the so-called hijret) in Afghanistan out of protest against British rule in India. The Communist International was supporting the establishment of an Indian exile government in Kabul and a revolutionary training camp in Tashkent. Hence, Cemal was accompanied by Indian revolutionaries such as Maulana Barkatullah, who had previously worked with the Ottoman–German alliance against the British.

The situation in Soviet Turkestan and Afghanistan was, however, more complex than previously assumed. The Red Army had brutally captured Bukhara in August 1920. The Emir of Bukhara had taken refuge in Afghanistan. From his exile in Afghanistan and with Afghan support, the Bukharan Emir was still leading the anti-Soviet insurgents in Turkestan. Siding with the Soviets, Cemal was openly criticising Bukharan Emir in his public speeches on his way to Kabul. Moreover, the Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mahmud Khan Tarzi, had recently reassumed negotiations with British India. In the words of the Young Turk agents, the United Kingdom was attempting to establish an ‘iron circle’ (demir çember) around Batumi-Baku-Rasht-Anzali-Mashhad-Ashkhabad-Merv-Bukhara in order to use

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56 Cemal (Moscow) to Talat (Berlin), 11 Jun. 1920, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 238–41; Cemal (Moscow) to Mustafa Kemal (Ankara), 3 Jun. 1920, in Kazım Karabekir, İstiklal Harbimizde Enver Paşa ve İttihat-Terrakî Erkân (İstanbul: Yapı ve Kredi Yayınları, 2010), 12–4.
57 Enver (Moscow) to Seeckt (Berlin), 25 Aug. 1920, BA-MA, N-247/195; Enver (Moscow) to Naciye (Berlin), 23 Aug. 1920, in Murat Bardakç, ed., Naciye, Ruham, Efendim: Enver Paşa’nın, Eş Naciye Sultan’a Rısyâ ve Ortâ Asya’da Yazdığı Sürgün Mektupları (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2016), 41.
58 Cemal (Moscow) to Talat (Berlin), 5 Jul. 1920, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 250 Cemal (Tashkent) to Mustafa Kemal (Ankara), 29 Aug. 1920, ATASE, Atatürk Collection (hereafter ATAZB) 38-17.
65 Abdullah Recep Baysun, Türkistan İstiklal Mücadelesi ve Enver Paşa, ed. Errol Cihangir (İstanbul: Turan Kültür Vakfı, 2001), 49.
Afghanistan as a buffer against Bolshevik advances to India. In the face of these British overtures to the Afghan government, Cemal explained his plans as follows:

I want to reach Afghanistan as soon as possible in order to thoroughly explain to the Afghan Emir what murderous consequence such considerations would have. And I want to invite and persuade him to animosity against the English, which is the sole solution for the political salvation of the East. In so doing, I want to prepare a road and a gateway for Indian revolutionaries at the border of India. Let’s see who will succeed.

The shifts in Soviet policies that increasingly turned it toward Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan in 1920 accommodated the Young Turk leaders’ experience in campaigning for Muslim anti-colonialism since the First World War. In their minds, all the uprisings in the Muslim world were connected through their singular agency. ‘It is about creating an Indian trouble to the English who only recently brought upon us the Greek trouble’, wrote Cemal to Mustafa Kemal. ‘In doing so, it is perhaps about being the instigator of a great incident that would grant the whole world a moment to take a breath!’ As former revolutionaries who became imperial rules, however, Young Turks had a very state-centric mindset even as non-state actors. Consequently, while championing Muslim internationalism they opted for enhancing bilateralism between governments in Ankara, Tehran, Kabul and Moscow which eventually prepared their own political marginalisation.

‘The Benefit to Afghanistan and the Whole Muslim World Lies in Coming to Terms with the Russians’: The Limits of Transnational Revolutionary Diplomacy

In early 1921 international relations were approaching a settlement. On the one hand, on-going negotiations in London resulted in the Anglo–Soviet Trade Agreement of 16 March 1921. Soviet Russia had to come to terms with British Empire in order to bring an end to the devastating effects of the trade embargo, famine and civil war in the Russian heartland. In return, the price which the Soviet government had to pay was the omission of any kind of anti-British revolutionary propaganda in the East. The Soviet Foreign Commissariat felt obliged to reassure Ankara that in return for the propaganda clause Soviet Russia would demand that the United Kingdom respect ‘the independence and integrity of the state territories of Iran, Afghanistan, and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey’. As a consequence, the Soviet government signed the Soviet–Persian Treaty (26 February 1921), the Soviet–Afghan Treaty (28 February 1921) and the Soviet–Turkish Treaty (16 March 1921) in this period. It also fostered the Turkish–Afghan Treaty (14 March 1921), which was signed in Moscow, as well as the Persian–Afghan Treaty (22 June 1921). These treaties were explicitly based on the idea of strengthening national sovereignties in a shared anti-imperialist struggle. The treaties became certificates of prestige and recognition. The Young Turk leaders abroad had campaigned for these treaties

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67 Cemal (Tashkent) to Mustafa Kemal (Ankara), 13 Aug. 1920, ATASE, ISH 570-58.
72 Jacobson, When the Soviet Union Entered World Politics, 116.
73 Gökay, A Clash of Empires, 111.
themselves. ‘I do not believe there can be any rational mind that would not accept and admit that Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan will constitute a great force by leaning against each other’, stated an internal report of the Union of Muslim Revolutionary Societies.74 The region constituted a connected unit in international politics. ‘Our policies in Turkey and Persia’, wrote Chicherin to Lenin, ‘were decisive in Afghanistan’.75

Nevertheless, Young Turk leaders’ space for autonomous action in transnational revolutionary diplomacy was shrinking. In Soviet–Turkish relations, the ambiguous status of the Young Turk leaders as transnational diplomats was a matter of confusion and contention. The Young Turk leaders’ claim to represent Turkey was based on an ambiguous agreement with Mustafa Kemal in early 1920, to the effect that the Young Turk leaders were permitted to operate abroad to promote the interests of Turkey and the Muslim world, but not to act on behalf of Ankara without a mandate.76 The national resistance movement in Turkey was initiated and conducted by former members of the CUP, including Mustafa Kemal, making the Turkish national movement in essence a Young Turk movement as well.77 Nevertheless, Ankara’s internal affairs were being formed by its international relations.78 Mustafa Kemal’s leadership resulted in the suppression and subordination of the usurping remnants of the CUP.79 Once Ankara’s official delegation reached Moscow, the Grand National Assembly released a decree disowning the fugitive Young Turk leaders and denying any association with their activities abroad.80 However, Ankara did not let the Young Turk leaders fully off the leash either. When Cemal reported that he was going to Kabul to work for the Indian revolution, Mustafa Kemal urged him not to forget ‘the special historic role held by Turkey in the formation and direction of Muslim Eastern revolution’.81 The Ankara government was increasingly confident about the exclusive power that came along with its growing national sovereignty in Anatolia and from its international reputation as the champion of the anti-colonial cause in the Muslim world.82

Despite their formal disavowal, the Young Turk leaders tried to act as informal intermediaries in the Soviet–Kemalist negotiations in Moscow.83 Busy promoting himself, Enver was more eager to please the Bolsheviks than the Kemalists, going as far as advising the Ankara delegation to give up the disputed province of Batumi in order to accommodate Soviet demands.84 During negotiations, Chicherin would often play the Young Turk leaders against the Ankara delegation.85 Chicherin even asked for Enver’s help in coming to an agreement with the Turkish government regarding the border between Kemalist Turkey and Soviet Armenia.86 For the Bolsheviks, factional strife between

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74 Azmi (Baku), report on Afghanistan and Bukhara, 31 Mar. 1921, TTK, EP 02-57.
78 Emel Akal, İşirakıyuncular, Komünistler ve Paşा Hazretleri: Moskova-Ankara-Londra Üçgeninde (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013).
80 Mustafa Kemal (Ankara) to Kazım Karabekir (Erzurum), 20 Jun. 1920, ATASE, ISH 613-80.
81 Mustafa Kemal (Ankara) to Cemal (Kabul), 1 Oct. 1920, TTK, EP 03-29.
83 Enver (Moscow) to Mustafa Kemal (Kabala), 26 Aug. 1920, in Karabekir, İstiklal Harbimizde Enver Paşa, 21.
84 Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), 6 Mar. 1921, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatlı Liderlerin Gizli Mektubları, 63.
85 Yusuf Kemal Tengiırşen, Vatan Hizmetinde (İstanbul: Bahar Matbaası, 1967), 167.
86 Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), 9 Mar. 1921, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatlı Liderlerin Gizli Mektubları, 64.
the two Turkish delegations in Moscow was useful. Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs Lev Karahan himself invited Enver to intervene in the Russian–Turkish negotiations. Enver recommended to Karahan and Chicherin that they work together in Tehran and the young intellectual Sayyed Ziya Tabataba'i was made prime minister. The new regime had initially enjoyed British support but proved to be more eager to establish Iran’s national sovereignty by annulling the Anglo–Persian Treaty of 1919. Although British support for the coup was meant to stop the looming Bolshevik influence in Iran, the Soviet–Persian Treaty, which was signed only a few days after the coup on 26 February 1921, came as a fait accompli. The Soviet–Persian Treaty enhanced the sovereignty of Iran with the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the Gilan region.

In the aftermath of the coup, Enver recommended to Karahan and Chicherin that they work together with the Iranian Democrat Party (Hezb-e Demokrat-e Iran, est. 1910) by supplying them with military and financial resources.

Both Cemal in Kabul and Enver in Moscow were influential in pushing forward the Soviet–Afghan negotiations. After he arrived in Kabul, Cemal was appointed by Emir Amanullah as the military advisor and chief of staff of the Afghan armed forces. On 28 February 1921 the Soviet–Afghan Treaty was signed in Moscow. Karahan complimented Cemal’s achievements in reforming the regime
Afghan armed forces located at the Indian border.\textsuperscript{99} Despite the signing of the treaty, the Afghan Emir was advised by his Minister of Foreign Affairs Tarzi to postpone the ratification of the treaty, since a potential rapprochement with British India was on the way. “There cannot be any other way of working as a revolutionary at the Indian border in Afghanistan than the way I proposed”, complained Cemal about the state of affairs in Kabul and insisted on the centrality of his person.\textsuperscript{100} “It is clear”, as Cemal wrote Enver, ‘that the only way for us to establish a secure and beneficial working area in Afghanistan is by way of Afghan–Russian friendship’.\textsuperscript{101} Yet, Tarzi was more interested in safeguarding Afghan sovereignty, which would mean coming to terms with British India.\textsuperscript{102} The Bukharan diaspora in Afghanistan and Emir Amanullah’s clandestine support for the anti-Soviet Basmachi revolt could not be reconciled with Cemal’s pro-Soviet policies, either.\textsuperscript{103} Eventually, Cemal was successful in having the Soviet-Afghan Treaty ratified. He summarised his achievements as follows: ‘after long talks with the Emir, I could convince him that the benefit to Afghanistan and the whole Muslim world lies in coming to terms with the Russians in order to . . . bring order and development to the Muslim world’.\textsuperscript{104} Actually, Cemal’s obsession with British India and his loyalty to Moscow limited his political prospects in Kabul.

\textit{‘They Don’t Want to Leave Room for Us in Foreign Politics’: Return to Interstate Diplomacy}

With the establishment of interstate relations in Eurasia, international politics were in a state of flux in the first half of 1921. Manifested in new bilateral treaties, the new international politics restricted revolutionary non-state actors’ ability to conduct transnational revolutionary diplomacy. The more they prepared the ground for pro-Soviet and anti-British treaties that recognised the sovereignty of new Muslim countries, the more the Young Turk leaders, ironically, eroded their own legitimacy in campaigning for Muslim internationalism.

Soviet treaties in the East were accompanied by diplomatic settlement with the West. Ankara’s diplomats had already been invited to the London Conference and signed the Ankara Treaty with France in October 1921. In Cemal’s absence, Tarzi signed the Anglo-Afghan Treaty on 15 November 1921. This treaty established the sovereignty of Afghanistan as ‘a fully entitled member of the international community’.\textsuperscript{105} Although continuing to work on behalf of Afghanistan in Europe thereafter, Cemal never returned to Kabul.\textsuperscript{106} Enver hoped that the Soviet–Afghan Treaty would alter the course of the ongoing Anglo–Soviet negotiations in London.\textsuperscript{107} He was mistaken. The consequences of the propaganda clause were immediately felt by the Young Turk leaders.\textsuperscript{108} ‘After concluding the trade treaty with the English’, reported Enver to Cemal, ‘Russians do not want to engage so openly’.\textsuperscript{109} Despite Chicherin’s praise, Lenin found excuses not to meet with Cemal, when he returned to


\textsuperscript{100} Cemal (Kabul) to Enver (Moscow), 17 May 1921, TTK, EP 01-02.

\textsuperscript{101} Cemal (Kabul) to Enver (Moscow), 29 July 1921, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, \textit{İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları}, 266.

\textsuperscript{102} Cemal to Tarzi, 16 Jan. 1921, in Ibid., 268–9.


\textsuperscript{104} Cemal (Kabul) to Enver (Moscow), 29 July 1921, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, \textit{İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları}, 368–9.

\textsuperscript{105} Note on the Anglo–Afghan Treaty (Berlin), 6 Jan. 1922, PA-AA, R 77936.

\textsuperscript{106} Hirt, \textit{Comrades on Elephants}, 24.

\textsuperscript{107} Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), 9 Mar. 1921, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, \textit{İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları}, 64.

\textsuperscript{108} Some scholars argue that the propaganda clause was merely a ‘dead letter’, because the Soviets continued their anti-British policies simply by other means. M. V. Glenny, ‘The Anglo–Soviet Trade Agreement, March 1921’, \textit{Journal of Contemporary History}, 5, 2 (1970), 63–82.

\textsuperscript{109} Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), 30 Mar. 1921, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, \textit{İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları}, 66–7.
Moscow, in order to avoid further diplomatic complications. Soviet support to the Young Turks was always cautious and it became increasingly unsustainable.

Bilateralism not only restricted transnational revolutionary diplomacy, it also curtailed revolutionary internationalism. As soon as the Soviet–Turkish Treaty was signed, Ankara ousted the Young Turk leaders from international politics. For example, without any reason, they wasted some unnecessary words to the Russians claiming that Enver Pasha and Cemal Pasha have no authority to talk in the name of Anatolia in Moscow’, Enver complained. Ankara even attempted to monopolise Muslim internationalism. Ankara’s ambassador in Moscow, Ali Fuat Pasha, noted that ‘pan-Islamist policies would no longer be an instrument of anybody and everybody’ – a reference to Enver’s Union of Muslim Revolutionary Societies. Mustafa Kemal had made clear to Enver, ‘if you want to do anything in the Muslim world, do it with me’. However, Enver bitterly concluded: ‘but now, as it was not enough for them to take over domestic politics, they don’t want to leave room for us in foreign politics either.’ In his ever shrinking space to manoeuvre in international politics, Enver became more aggressive. He attempted an usurpation in Anatolia in September 1921 that was never realised but forced him to cut ties with Turkey thereafter. In his desperation Enver soon turned his back on the Bolsheviks by joining the Basmachi insurgency in Turkestan. Thereafter, Enver became the person non grata of Soviet–Turkish friendship.

‘He ruined all our honour as revolutionaries’, Cemal complained after Enver went rogue. Enver’s insurgency in Bukhara received some clandestine support from Afghanistan. However, Kabul was performing a delicate balancing act. While secretly supporting anti-Soviet insurgents in Turkestan, Soviet–Afghan friendship was not to be abandoned as it was attracting rivalling British overtures to Afghanistan. Isolated and encircled, Enver was killed by the Red Army near Dushanbe in August 1922. Although Cemal was able to win back the confidence of both Ankara and Moscow, he was killed by Armenians in Tbilisi in July 1922 on his way to Turkey.

Soviet Russia’s revolutionary diplomacy turned towards supporting revolutionary states, and this had serious consequences throughout the region. The deal with Turkey meant the end of the Turkish friendship. Although the Bolsheviks indeed toyed with the idea of using Enver, if Mustafa Kemal would surrender to the Entente, Chicherin eventually forbid Enver to intervene into Anatolia. Enver (Batumi) to Naciye (Berlin), 27 Sep. 1921, in Bardakçılı, Naçiye, Ruhum, Efemdím, 302.

It is somewhat disputed that Enver was encouraged by the Soviets to intervene in Anatolia, as suggested in Harris, The Origins of Communism in Turkey, 103. Although the Bolsheviks indeed toyed with the idea of using Enver, if Mustafa Kemal would surrender to the Entente, Chicherin eventually forbid Enver to intervene into Anatolia. Enver (Batumi) to Naciye (Berlin), 27 Sep. 1921, in Bardakçılı, Naçiye, Ruhum, Efemdím, 302.

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110 Chicherin to Lenin, 14 Oct. 1921; Lenin to Chicherin, 16 Oct. 1921, RCHIDNI, f. 2, list 2-950, in Kazandzhian.
111 Cebesoy, Moskova Hatıralar, 290.
114 Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), 30 Mar. 1921, in Yaşar and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 67
115 Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), [early Jun. 1921], in Yaşar and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 81.
116 Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Afghanistan), 29 Jun. 1921, in Yaşar and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 83.
117 Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), 30 Mar. 1921, in Yaşar and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 67
118 Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), 30 Mar. 1921, in Yaşar and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 67
119 Enver (Moscow) to Cemal (Kabul), 30 Mar. 1921, in Yaşar and Kocahanoğlu, İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları, 67
Basmachi revolt, the deal with Afghanistan enabled the incorporation of the Central Asian republics into Soviet Russia.\textsuperscript{125} For Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan bilateral relations with Soviet Russia enabled benevolent Soviet support without inviting subversive Bolshevik agitation. These countries had long been exposed to Russian threat during the Great Game so that they feared Russian influence.\textsuperscript{124} It was convenient for all parties to form a safe buffer zone between Soviet Russia and British territories in India and Iraq – cleansed from rivals and usurpers.\textsuperscript{125} After a moment of transnational revolutionary diplomacy, revolutionary non-state actors were marginalised by the process of internationalisation and the establishment of interstate diplomacy in Eurasia.

Conclusion

The Soviet Union’s momentous settlement with international society not only had an impact on Eastern Europe, where communist revolutions had mostly failed by the end of 1920, it also shaped the modern Middle East and beyond.\textsuperscript{126} The Great Game, namely the Anglo–Russian rivalry over Turco-Persian lands in Asia, was in many ways reanimated in the aftermath of the First World War.\textsuperscript{127} Yet, it was Muslim internationalism, revolutionary struggles on the ground and diplomatic alliances against great power interventions that shaped the Northern Tier of the Middle East as a distinct geopolitical region.\textsuperscript{128} The absence of the ‘Arab South’ in these calculations demonstrates the limited reach of Bolshevik agitation and Soviet diplomacy.\textsuperscript{129} The First World War resulted in the subordination of nearly all Muslim countries to colonial and foreign rule, while Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan could safeguard their sovereignty as independent nation states in this process. As a result, also other countries, such as post-Versailles Germany, perceived Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan as a political-economic region distinct from the colonial Arab Middle East.\textsuperscript{130} While Turkey and Afghanistan institutionalised their diplomatic relations based on Muslim solidarity, Iran’s tribal frontiers remained bilaterally contested in the early 1920s.\textsuperscript{131} After long negotiations starting in 1933, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan (as well as Iraq) signed the Sa’dabad Pact in 1937, which ‘became a

\textsuperscript{124} Protocol of conversation with Bedri Bey, 17 May 1921, PA-AA, R 77922.
\textsuperscript{125} Kapur, Soviet Russia and Asia, 48.
\textsuperscript{126} Soviets later implemented the Soviet–Turkish model of bilateralism to China from mid-1920s onwards. Hirst, ‘Transnational Anti-Imperialism and the National Forces’, 215.
\textsuperscript{127} David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East, 20th year anniversary ed. (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co., 2009), 484.
\textsuperscript{131} On Turkish–Afghan relations see Ahmed, Afghanistan Rising, 185–90. On Iran’s frontiers in the 1920s see Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, Small Players of the Great Game: The Settlement of Iran’s Eastern Borderlands and the Creation of
precursor to the Northern Tier of the Cold War. However great their internal differences and border challenges, the path of state formation and modernisation in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan was both comparable in the interwar years and distinct from that in the rest of the Middle East.

The international society generally rejects the sovereignty of revolutionary and anti-colonial states that challenge Western hegemony. Western disregard for revolutionary claims to statehood led in the spring of 1921 to a parallel system of alliances among revolutionary states in Eurasia to certificate each other’s state sovereignty. Although the Soviet treaties with Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan were framed in terms of a revolutionary front of new nation states against Western hegemony, they eventually led to the normalisation of interstate relations with the West. In an international society that subscribes to the Westphalian myth of state sovereignty, the legitimacy and capacity of statehood is crucial capital in the field of international politics. Revolutionary politics, which ends up in a struggle to capture the state, also tends to feature statism as the norm, excluding other contenders to power. Cemal’s access to the symbolic and material capital of statehood also explains why he was more successful as the Emir’s chief-of-staff in Kabul than Enver as a professional revolutionary in Moscow. Nevertheless, they both were doomed to be outcasts in the post-war settlement of interstate relations. Their transnational activism, transgressive agendas and telltale reputations made them increasingly unbearable to the new political order that was being established.

In the making of international politics in the early 1920s, the trajectory of the Young Turk leaders illustrates the complex agency of revolutionary non-state actors as both the initiators and the outcasts of alternative channels of diplomacy. This bygone moment of Muslim internationalism in the aftermath of the First World War had manifold legacies. Later interwar years featured a major rise of anti-colonial internationalism against the United Kingdom and France. ‘Scholarship on interwar anti-colonialism and the competition among mass movements’, as Nathal Citio has noted, ‘provides a useful prologue to the Cold War in the Middle East because it reveals the inadequacy of a bipolar...’


132 How the Sa’dabad Pact evolved out of ‘Soviet security designs’ but turned out to be a security concern for the Soviet Union is discussed in Onur İçi, _Turkey and the Soviet Union During World War II: Diplomacy, Discord and International Relations_ (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 45–8, quote from 47. See also Bein, _Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East_, 86–90.


137 This legacy was first pointed out in Zafer Toprak, ‘Boşluğ Ittihatçalar ve İslam Komününter. İslam Ittihat Cemiyetleri Ittihadi (Ittihat-i Selamet-i İslam)’, _Toplumsal Tarikh_, 8, 8 (1997), 6–13.

narrative. Similar moments of transnational revolutionary diplomacy shaped also the decolonisation struggles during the Cold War. The origins of the ‘diplomatic revolution’ of the decolonisation that created a post-colonial transnational system should be traced back to the early interwar years in Eurasia.

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