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FROM EMPIRE TO NATION

IMAGES OF WOMEN AND WAR IN OTTOMAN POLITICAL CARTOONS, 1908–1923*

FATMA MÜGE GÖÇEK

The concept of ambivalence in representation—the constant fluctuation between depictions of actual life experiences and their idealizations in cultural narratives—is strikingly reflected in the images of women and war found in political cartoons. This fluctuation creates ambiguities as the lines between the idealized and the actual begin to blur; it becomes difficult to determine exactly the role of women and the impact of war, since the same formulations are used both to legitimate existing relations and, at the same time, to challenge them. The new interpretations of women and war become both liberating and confining. Still, even though political cartoons as a form tend to distort and embellish the traits of all social groups and events, they favor or disfavor some groups and events at the expense of others. All too often, women's actual experiences become trivialized and/or compartmentalized, and war's terrible ravages lose their edge. The ultimate puzzle is how and why these interpretations have come to prevail over others.

What causes lie behind this selective interpretation? The response to this question, I would contend, needs to be sought in the specific social and historical context within which political cartoons come into being. In the case of the early twentieth century, national struggles fought in the name of the citizenry provided the specific context within which cultural forms were replaced, produced, and reproduced around the idea of the nation. Edward Said remarks upon the ambiguities contained in this idea as the nation becomes “an agency of ambivalent narration that held culture at its most productive position, as a force for subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing, as much as producing, creating, forcing, guiding.” The ambivalent narration surrounding the nation thus creates a new space beyond

*I would like to thank Naomi Galtz and Şükru Hanioğlu for their feedback on this article. Needless to say, all remaining errors are mine.
existing formulations, one that has the potential to create new syntheses and reproduce old ones.

The early twentieth-century Ottoman transformation from empire to nation, from the vantage point of women and war, provides an excellent setting within which to approach the concept of ambivalent narration. My analysis of the portrayal of women and war in the political cartoons of this period indeed reveals an ambivalence between the idealized images and actual experiences of women and of war, one occurring almost always at the expense of the actual experiences. For instance, even though women's actual participation in society is consistent throughout this period, their perceived participation fluctuates among three contradictory images of women as asexual heroines, as immoral vixens, or as stolid mothers. I argue that this ambivalence, this fluctuation between actual life experiences and idealized representations, controls the emancipation of women and accounts for the checkered trajectory of their gains during the transformation from empire to nation. Hence, ultimately, in the case of women and war, the new space created through the ambivalent narration surrounding the nation fails to challenge and alter existing gender relations.

Actual Participation of Ottoman Women in the Transformation from Empire to Nation

The brief fifteen-year period from 1908 to 1923 contained constitutional reform, wars, rebellions, and the dissolution and replacement of an empire by a nation-state. 1908 marked the beginning of a new political era in Ottoman history as a group of officers mobilized the army and deposed Sultan Abdülhamid II, reestablished the Ottoman assembly, and reinstated the constitution. During the same year, however, capitalizing on the Ottoman domestic turmoil, Bulgaria declared independence, Crete announced its unification with Greece, and the Austro-Hungarian empire annexed Bosnia and Hercegovina; the Albanian and Yemeni rebellions followed a year later. In 1911, Italy invaded Libya, occupying the Twelve Islands on the Aegean the following year. The Balkan countries declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1912; the outbreak of World War I soon followed in 1914. When the Ottoman Empire, an ally of the Central Powers during the War, was defeated and occupied by the Allied forces, a group of officers commanded by an Ottoman general, Mustafa Kemal, escaped in 1919 to Asia Minor to start the Turkish War of Independence. There were two governments on central Ottoman lands for the next four years, as the sultan continued to rule under the guidance of the Allied Forces in Constantinople, and Mustafa Kemal established a national assembly in Anatolia for the same purpose. The divided allegiances of the people between the Ottoman Empire and the emerging Turkish nation-state endured until the final military victory of the Turkish nationalists against the Allied Forces in 1922. The Turkish Republic was established on October 29, 1923.

Women participated in this transformative period in many ways; they provided medical and social care to the vast numbers of refugees and soldiers, joined the workforce during World War I, and served as orators, care providers, and soldiers during the War of Independence. Yet this actual participation was not adequately presented in the media, and Ottoman political cartoons represented the participation of women through a set of three stock, self-contradictory images: asexual heroine, immoral vixen, and stolid mother. The ambivalence created by the disjuncture between these images and the actual participation of women often reinforced the constraints on women’s position in the transformation from the empire to the nation-state.

The mobilization of Ottoman women through participation in the labor force and in voluntary associations was a very significant factor in defining and transforming women’s identities, and therefore warrants a detailed analysis. The middle- and upper-class women maintained a strong presence in the new Western-style schools and in women’s journals, and mobilized to establish voluntary aid associations to assist in the war efforts throughout the extended period of wars after 1908. The first of these voluntary aid societies, founded in 1908, was the Aid Society [Cemiyet-i İmdadiye], which provided winter clothing to Ottoman soldiers fighting in the Balkans. During the same year, the Union and Progress Committee, which led the Ottoman constitutional reform, established a Women’s Branch [İttihat ve Terakki Kadınlar Şubesi] in order to enlist women’s political support in this endeavor. In addition, the Society for the Elevation of Women [Teali-yi Nisvan Cemiyeti] was established to improve the knowledge and culture of Ottoman women, and the Ottoman Women’s Compassionate Anthropropic Society [Osmanlı Kadınlar Şefkat Cemiyeti-i Havriyesi], to aid the needy. Hence women’s efforts to support the war, the Ottoman political transformation, and the needy went hand-in-hand with their attempts to educate and improve women’s social standing. Similarly, in 1909 women founded two organizations: the Protection Society [Eşirgene Dernegi], to provide assistance to wives and children of the war martyrs and refugees from the Balkans, and
the Women’s Ottoman Philanthropic Society [Osmâni Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvanîye], to arrange sewing courses, literacy seminars, and schools for women.

As the Balkan unrest continued in 1910, Ottoman women founded yet another society to aid the army, the Women’s Society for the Betterment of the Ottoman Nation [Teâli-ı Vatan-i Osmâni Hanımlar Cemiyeti], which assisted the Red Crescent—the Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross—raised money for the donation of a warship to the Ottoman army, and established workshops, schools, and birth clinics for women. Once again, women’s attempts to aid and ameliorate the conditions of the needy, and their attempts to strengthen the social positions of other women, coincided. In 1912, on the eve of the Balkan wars, three women’s organizations were founded, including the Women’s Philanthropic Society to Encourage the Use of Domestically Manufactured Goods [Mamulat-i Dahiliye Kadınlar Cemiyeti-i Hayriye], which also established textile and carpet-weaving workshops for women; the Women’s Branch of the Naval Society [Donanma Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi] to raise funds for the Ottoman navy, and the Women’s Central Committee of the Ottoman Red Crescent [Osmâni Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti Hanımlar Heyeti-i Merkeziyesi] to collect donations and supply volunteer nurses for those wounded at the Balkan wars. This central committee also published annually a 250-page almanac that included information on social and economic issues, etiquette, practical ideas, and numerous epigrams emphasizing the worth and education of women and continually reinforcing the idea that “the position of women is the indicator of a nation’s level of civilization.”

Other women’s associations to aid the Balkan wars followed in 1913 with the establishment of the Ottoman Women’s Society for National Defense [Müdafaa-ı Milliye Osmâni Hanımlar Cemiyeti], which ran a series of conferences for and by women. During these conferences, Ottoman women mobilized and acquired an identity as a social group. For instance, they employed a recent technological medium to dispatch three groups of telegrams—one to the Ottoman army on behalf of all the women to demonstrate their support; another to the Muslim women of India, Turkistan, and Russia asking for their financial support; and yet another to the wives of influential European leaders requesting their social and political support in international affairs. One could conjecture that these interactions with other, distinct groups also helped Ottoman women shape their own identity as a group. The conferences also formed the rallying grounds for soliciting donations in gold, jewelry, and fur coats to aid the national defense, the employment of the term “national” in this endeavor also signaling the nascent political realities. Of the other two organizations founded in 1913, the Union for Aid to the Families of War Martyrs [Şehit Ailelerine Yardım Birliği] provided financial and educational assistance to this group, while the Society for the Defense of Women’s Rights [Müdafaa-ı Hukuk-i Nisvan Cemiyeti] was founded with three explicit aims: to reform women’s public dress, to promote women’s economic employment and social presence and to enlighten women through the establishment of private schools, newspapers, books, and conferences. The activities of the society were thoroughly covered by the media, especially noted were the successful struggle of Belkis Şevket to become the first Ottoman woman to fly in a plane, and that of Bedri Osman to apply for, and gain, employment in a telephone company.

The outbreak of World War I marked the establishment of the Women’s Society for Aiding Soldiers’ Families [Askor Ailelerine Yardım Hanımlar Cemiyeti]. Then, in 1916, the Hark for Knowledge [Bilgi Yurdu] was established, providing courses for women in foreign languages, arithmetic, history, and pedagogy. Yet the most significant society founded in this period to expand women’s participation in the economic sphere was the Muslim Society for Women’s Employment [Kadınlar Çalıştırma Cemiyeti-i İslamiyesi], which aimed at finding jobs for women and providing legal and social protection for employed women; it also established and managed three manufacturing plants that employed approximately sixty thousand women.

Ottoman working women’s participation in the labor force during this period was also significant. According to one estimate, in 1908 women, mostly of working-class origin, comprised about thirty percent of the Ottoman labor force of 250,000. During the war, Ottoman women, like their sisters in Europe, were employed in government offices and manufacturing plants because of the labor shortage. A law passed in 1915 by the Ministry of Trade instituted a form of mandatory employment swelling the ranks of women workers. The Ottoman female employees often worked in separate rooms and were demobilized after the war, even though some petitioned to stay at their jobs and mobilized the media in support of their petitions by arguing that “women worked more enthusiastically than men.” Thousands of Ottoman women were also employed throughout Anatolia as workers in manufacturing plants ranging in type from textiles to tobacco and chemical products; some also worked as hairdressers, merchants, and artisans. After the war, these women lost their jobs to men in most sectors except,
for example, the textile industry, where they were able to keep their wartime jobs because of the low pay.\textsuperscript{11}

After the Ottoman defeat in the war and the subsequent Allied occupation of Ottoman lands, the role of Ottoman women in the public sphere became even more textured as middle- and upper-class women became orators and resistance organizers. Leading the public protests against the occupation, one Ottoman woman, Sabhat Hanım, gave an impassioned speech on May 20, 1919 against the Greek occupation of Smyrna; she emphasized how “we women will be the leaders in this holy war for our rights and constantly put our curses upon those who are the hypocrites of civilization.” Similarly, in another protest which occurred ten days later, another woman, Süzüfe Nihal, swore allegiance to the homeland, stating, “O noble homeland, you provided us with our cradles, and you shall also be our tomb [if necessary].”\textsuperscript{12} The societies that were established in the wake of these public protests now linked their cause with the Anatolian, Muslim homeland: the Muslim Women’s Society of Kasaba (Kasaba İslami Kadınları Cemiyeti) was founded to resist the occupation of Smyrna, and the Women’s Branch for the Defense of National Rights (Müdafaa-i Hukuk Kadınlar Şubesi) rallied to the “defense of the homeland.”\textsuperscript{13}

In the subsequent mobilization for the War of Independence, women encouraged the resistance fighters through passionate editorials and persuaded the able-bodied men at the imperial capital to join the resistance in Anatolia. The most significant organization, founded on November 26, 1919 on the eve of the War of Independence, when many national defense organizations were formed throughout Asia Minor, was the Anatolian Women’s Society for National Defense (Anatolu Kadınlar Müdafaa-i Vatan Cemiyeti) led by Melèk Reşit Hanım, the wife of the Ottoman governor of Sivas.\textsuperscript{14}

Soon thereafter, many branches were established throughout Anatolia, including the cities of Sivas, Amasya, Kars, Erzurum, Erzincan, Niğde, Aydin, Yozgat, Bursa, Konya, and Kangal.\textsuperscript{15} They wrote letters against the Allied Forces and the Ottoman government in Constantinople, sent congratulatory notes to those who had left the capital to join the War of Independence in Anatolia, and raised money and supplied goods to the National Army in Anatolia. The letters they sent on January 17, 1920 included, for instance, telegrams to the wives of the French President Poincaré and the American President Wilson asking them to “influence their husbands on behalf of giving political rights to the Turkish nation,” and appealing to them first as women “through their hearts, which are undoubtedly filled with compassion because

of being women,” then as “mothers who know how much suffering warfare causes,” and finally as “wives demanding righteous and just behavior from their husbands.”\textsuperscript{16} This active participation of women in aiding society both during the empire and at the time of the nascent nation-state was not, however, recognized in Ottoman cartoons.

**The Emergence of Ottoman Political Cartoons**

Political cartoons became a very significant form of visual rhetoric in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe when they were coupled with emerging public opinion and the nascent “imagined community” of the nation. Especially during World War I, political cartoons were used as a mode of propaganda to mobilize the population both morally and intellectually, explain setbacks, confirm belief in the superiority of the fatherland, and proclaim the hope of final victory.\textsuperscript{17} The development of Ottoman political cartoons occurred within this historical context: the first Ottoman cartoon appeared in 1867 in the journal *İstanbul*, approximately thirty years after the publication of the first Ottoman official gazette, *Takvim-i Vekayi* (Chronicle of Events), and fifteen years after the appearance of the first picture in a newspaper and the publication by an Ottoman Armenian, Hovsep Vartanyan, of the first humor gazette. The satirical gazettes in the Ottoman Empire were published monthly, bi-monthly, weekly, or daily, often by a well-educated class of men whose affairs included both literature and politics. Even though there were occasional gas- or steam-run presses in the empire, most journals were still hand-pressed in 1908. A four-page, black-and-white format was the most common form for these gazettes: only after World War I did color print come into common use. The run of these gazettes ranged from not less than 50,000 issues. As in Europe, the development of censorship clauses and laws in 1877 closely followed the emergence of the medium.\textsuperscript{18}

In 1877, Sultan Abdülhamid II closed the Ottoman parliament, abolished the constitution, and increased censorship further. When this period ended in 1908 with a military coup, in that year alone, ninety-two satirical gazettes began publication in Constantinople. Once again, censorship followed closely thereafter as 1909 marked the beginning of a press law, based on the French legislation limiting the freedom of the press. Most of these satirical gazettes had shut down by the eve of World War I, due to financial reasons, while the few surviving ones were censored, as in Germany, by the Ottoman military government during the war and then by the Allied Powers.
that occupied Constantinople until the end of the War of Independence in 1922. Printing blank pages where a cartoon was to have appeared [but had been censored] was a common mode of resistance in the Ottoman context, as in many European countries. Even though most of the press sided with the War of Independence fought in Anatolia, there were certain newspapers that advocated a pro-Allyed stand.

The symbolism employed in these political cartoons to convey the message is of particular interest. The images depicted in Ottoman political cartoons were either symbols adopted from the West or reinterpreted traditional images of Ottoman popular culture. In portraying the Western concept of liberty, Ottoman cartoonists often replicated the European image of a woman draped in a loose-fitting Greek garment with a laurel wreath on her head. Political cartoons attempting to capture tradition or the emerging theme of national identity centered instead on “indigenous” characters such as the shadow-play figures Karagöz and Hacivat, who were known for their simple, but astute, wisdom in interpreting life, or popular rebels like Köröghlu, who were famous for devoting their lives to give voice to the sentiments of the populace. A third pattern of adoption entailed the interpretation of European symbols within the Ottoman context as, for instance, in the caricatures of Münif Fehim, where the traditional Ottoman miniature aesthetic was employed in the cartoon form. Reference to the Ottoman past was a significant means for legitimizing the message of the cartoon, and thereby co-opting “a slice of eternity.” While reference to the Hellenic era often underscored the historical heritage of European civilization in European political cartoons, the Ottomans imagined two contradictory pasts: one, the immediate past, in which they were subordinate to Europe, and the other, the distant past when the ruling sultan represented power, justice, and imperial glory.

In this article, I analyze Ottoman political cartoons between 1908 and 1923 in relation to their depictions of women and war. I specifically undertake a content analysis of the most popular humor gazettes of the period, Cem and Kalem, which catered to an elite audience at the Ottoman capital; I complement this analysis with a survey of all the existing anthologies of Ottoman and early Republican cartoons, which also featured the less popular humor gazettes in both the capital and the provinces, and with a review of the very limited secondary literature on the topic. I argue that the combination of these three sources captures the transformation from empire to nation: the two most popular humor gazettes portray the images of the empire during the transformation, whereas the anthologies exhibit the emerging nationalist representations, which mostly occur outside the capital. The eight cartoons analyzed in detail in this article illustrate shifts in perceptions of gender and war during the transformation from empire to nation.

**Women in Ottoman Cartoon Space**

In both Western and Ottoman contexts, depictions of women in cartoons often contained contradictory elements. Cartoons either idealized women and set humanly unattainable standards of purity, or debased and delegitimized them by portraying them as the root of evil, dragging them down to inescapable depths of depravity. Even though women often appeared as ideal, allegorical figures representing the symbolic order, these representations were immediately trivialized when references were made to actual life-situations where women appeared predominantly as mothers, or, more negatively, as vixens. Women’s portrayal as judges, statesmen, soldiers, philosophers, or inventors were extreme idealizations that only occurred to emphasize the remoteness of women from these professions.

Sexuality was employed both in Europe and the Ottoman Empire to reinforce the impact of this portrayal; the presence or absence of sexual desire in the images of women was used to suggest approval or condemnation for what they represented in the cartoon. Implications of virginity, promiscuity, or elderly maturity each conveyed a set of messages: The ideal depictions of women were usually of untouched, young virgins with long hair and white, free-flowing, “natural” garments, alluding to a Greek past. These virgins easily metamorphosed into decadent vixens by the addition of trendy, avant-garde [in the Ottoman case, Western] clothing; in this transformation, the figure also gained another fifteen years in age [and experience] to insinuate the possession of dangerous carnal knowledge. The image often contrasted a curvaceous body with sharp heels and pointed jewelry to heighten the sense of danger. The garments became much more conservative and culture-bound when the cartoon reference was to the symbol of the nation—in the Ottoman case, the outfit often alluded to the “folkloric” women’s costume of scarf, shirt, and harem pants.

A study on the representation of Ottoman women in cartoons during the 1908–1911 period indeed demonstrates that women were depicted as four types: “as the heroic figure of Türkiye [the mythic female figure of the nation] . . . as the collaborator, representing Ottoman womanhood sacrificed on the altar of European culture . . . as the citizen-patriot, the non-mythic counterpart of Türkiye . . . and as
the old nag in the figure of the public, as everywoman.” When I extended my analysis to the 1908–1923 period, I discovered that this representation persisted in modified form: the differences became more polarized so that the everywoman represented by the old nag and citizen-patriot coalesced in the stolid mother figure of the emerging nation-state. Women thus became depicted primarily as asexual heroines, immoral vixens, or mothers. The gendered nature of the concept of citizenship also aided this depiction; even though both sexes were legally recognized as citizens, in practice men exercised the emerging rights almost exclusively and often at the expense of women. As these rights homogenized around a male-centered conception of Turkish citizenship, women’s position became articulated more and more as the “mother” of the nation. Such an idealization justified women’s removal from the presumably polluted everyday practice of the civic duties of citizenship. It also countered the earlier cultural construct centered on the sultan as the father of the empire—the anonymous mother of all citizens thus replaced the now alienated, aloof, and elite father of all Ottoman subjects.

**Ottoman Women as Asexual Heroines.** The idealized portrayal of women frequently found in Western European cartoon art was also translated into the Ottoman context. In the European press, such female figures were used to personify abstract concepts “such as the cardinal virtues (Prudence, Temperance, Justice, and Fortitude), theological virtues (Faith, Hope, and Charity), the liberal arts, and Philosophy.” America, Britannia, Germania, Democracy, Justice, Liberty, and Victory became recognizable descendants of mythical figures in the visual language created by political cartoons. Importantly, these figures also established a code of significant symbolic differences; while America, for instance, often appeared in Western European literature as a naked, “uncivilized” Indian princess figure, Europe emerged as matronly in some contexts and virginal in others, most often clad in ancient Greek clothing, which signified the origins of Western civilization. These symbolically differentiated figures were then adapted in non-Western contexts, some argue, in an instance of the non-Western “internalization of Western blueprints in the name of progress, modernization, industrialization and internationalism.” The Ottoman case represents just such an internalization to support this argument.

Figures 1–3, spanning the years 1908–1923, depict Liberty and Peace as women. In 1908, after the restoration of the Ottoman constitution, Liberty is depicted in her Western form, wreathed, wearing classical Greek garb and riding a Roman chariot pulled by lions, on

Figure 1. Cartoon drawn immediately after the restoration of the Ottoman constitution is subtitled “Long live free Turkey.” The building on the left is entitled “The National Assembly.” On the flag are the following notations: at the top “Justice,” on the right “freedom,” and on the left “equality.” The word next to the parrot (the symbol of the satirical gazette) is “long live.” Artist unknown, in Musavver Paşağan 14 (4 December 1908): 2–3 (Çeviker 1968: 46).

her way to the reopened Ottoman assembly building (Figure 1). Similarly, Peace appears as a young maiden during (Figure 2) and after (Figure 3) the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne—between the Allied Forces and the Turkish national army—that led to the establishment of the Republic in 1923. What is significant in the two depictions of Peace are the differences in modes of dress. Peace appears unclothed on April 12, 1923 before the signing of the Treaty, fearfully treading blindfolded on the tips of bayonets. The naked figure heightens the fragility and vulnerability of the female body. On July 23, 1923, upon the endorsement of the treaty, Peace becomes transformed into a modest bride, fully clothed, solidly treading on the ground, married to a man symbolizing the Turkish Republic (possibly referring to Ismet Pasha, who represented the nation at the European meeting). The wedding dress she wears approximates the women’s fashion of the time in Europe with some discrepancies and, in accordance with Western European conventions, she is carrying an olive branch and wearing a wreath.
All three figures also contain indigenous elements drawn from Ottoman society. In the case of the depiction of Liberty in 1908, the numerous flags bearing the star and crescent represent sovereignty. The audience also contains a soldier following and guarding the chariot accompanied by a bearded religious scholar, who probably signifies the support of Islamic religion; the figures surrounding the chariot dressed in different religious attire represent the communal leaders of the Ottoman minorities, which include Greeks, Armenians, and Jews. The persons on the extreme right, who are playing the drum and the double-reed instrument (davul and zurna), represent the traditional folk players who celebrate festive occasions and accompany proclamations on the streets to draw people’s attention to them. The children and the street dog running around at the edge of the illustration are figures that could be seen at celebrations on the streets of the imperial capital—these common elements may also signify the depth of support among the populace for the restoration of the constitution. The parrot featured in this cartoon—originally of Australian origin and now adopted as the symbol of the satirical gazette in which the cartoon appeared—conveys the gazette’s favorable stand toward this occasion. The various symbols on the cartoon are marked in both Ottoman script and French, demonstrating the cosmopolitan nature of the empire and its capital. Hence the 1908 representation predating the wars displays a pluralistic, inclusive identity, one that tends to disappear during the wars and with the emergence of the Turkish Republic.

The portrayal of unclothed Peace on April 12, 1923 does not seem to contain any Ottoman elements except, of course, for the signature of the caricaturist Ismail Hakki in Arabic script and the Ottoman subtitle explaining that Peace has arrived so late and with so much difficulty because she had to tread on bayonets. As a cartoon, it could have appeared in any journal in Western Europe. Once Peace loses her elusive and fragile characteristic and becomes domesticated in the cartoon on July 23, 1923, she becomes surrounded by Turkish figures, all men who are dressed in the fashion of the times, wearing either black hats (referred to as kalpak, which were the symbol of the national fighters in Anatolia), or the traditional fez [often worn by the westernized urban men]. The male figures may refer to specific characters involved in the independence movement as well. Once again, musicians celebrate the occasion with the drum and double-reed instrument, playing the tune to which all the others dance the traditional folk dance, holding hands and waving handkerchiefs.

What is particularly noteworthy in all three figures is the asexual
character of the young women; each heroine faces away from the viewer, intent on lofty and honorable missions. These figures are highly idealized and, unlike the common men who are ever present in the cartoons, do not at all depict the actual women of the empire or their real presence at such occasions. In the next set of figures, this image of the inaccessible heroine is replaced by its antipode, which is used to frame political issues surrounding the Turkish War of Independence that was waged against the Allied powers in general, and the Greeks in particular.

**Ottoman Women as Immoral Vixens.** The inclusion and exclusion of groups and identities define the boundaries of a newly forming nation. In the case of the Ottoman transition from empire to nation-state between 1919 and 1922, it was specifically through the exclusion of urban cosmopolitan women and foreign Greek elements that the Turks started to redefine their national identity. This exclusion signaled two significant transformations: Ottoman minorities such as the Greeks had always peacefully coexisted with the Ottoman Muslim majority of the empire; they had the sultan’s protection and license to regulate their internal affairs in return for the payment of taxes. This arrangement started to collapse with the advent of nationalism as the Ottoman Greeks aspired to equal citizenship in both rights and responsibilities, an aspiration that proved unsustainable in an imperial framework. When their demands were not satisfied, the Ottoman Greeks protested, only to find themselves excluded by the developing nationalist identity among the Ottoman Turks. Similarly, the cosmopolitan nature of the Ottoman capital and, in particular, the emergence of women who oriented their gaze to European modes of behavior and did not adhere to the norms and values “indigenous” to Ottoman society became less tolerable under the growing influence of nationalism. The exclusion of urban cosmopolitan women from the future vision of society ensued.

This process is reflected in cartoons that appeared in this period, when the previous image of the virtuous heroine gives way to the image of a feminized Greek enemy and a female enemy at home. In a cartoon that appeared toward the end of the war, on March 30, 1922 (Figure 4), the Greek enemy is depicted as a woman running away from a Turkish soldier; in Figure 5 the Greek commander, dressed as a vixen, offers flowers to Ismet Pasha while hiding a dagger behind his back. Another negative image, drawn on March 6, 1920, refers to an earlier period, to the Allied occupation of Ottoman lands and the War of Independence, during which urban cosmopolitan women, rather than supporting the war, immorally drink and toast the Greek commander (Figure 6).

War is often portrayed as an opportunity to prove one’s manhood, and sexuality is employed to heighten the impact of this visual message. In the case of Ottoman political cartoons between 1919 and 1922, when the Ottoman lands were under Allied occupation and the War of Independence had started in Anatolia, gender language and symbols were enlisted to help dramatize the tension-filled relations. Life in Constantinople during the Allied Occupation of 1919 to 1922 was chaotic, with military automobiles rushing through the city, cocktail receptions hosted for and by the foreigners, and an influx of thousands of Muslim refugees from the Balkan wars, as well as Russian White Army refugees. About 1,650,000 refugees were estimated to have arrived in the imperial city between 1919 and 1922. During the last years of the War of Independence fought in Anatolia against the Greeks, the corpses of both men and horses could be seen in Constantinople, being transported through the Bosporus to the Black Sea.

Although Ottoman women were in fact very active in raising
money and providing services to deal with the crises, as they had been before and during World War I,\textsuperscript{35} cartoons portrayed them as immoral vixens, employing images of female sexuality to depict women at the imperial capital as the enemy at home.\textsuperscript{36} The figure of the vixen epitomizes the pervasive image of these women as totally alienated from the nation, concerned only with their own pleasures, gleefully roasting the enemy in the company of degenerate Ottoman men who were either rich and fat from hoarding basic goods during the occupation, or senselessly drunk. All were portrayed as engaged in the pleasures and privileges of living in the cosmopolitan capital, thereby unaware of, and immune to, all the pain and suffering of the resistance movement in the provinces.

The Greeks, against whom the War of Independence was being fought, formed the other enemy. Even though that war was fought against all the Allied powers, including France, Britain, and Italy, it was the Greeks, who had joined the war at a late stage, who were the most frequent objects of ridicule in Ottoman political cartoons. The feminization of the enemy, their depiction as "anthropomorphized and naturalized into a woman," was a method frequently employed for derision.\textsuperscript{37} The Greeks were the ones most caricatured in feminine form, rather than demonized, because they posed the most immediate threat: they aspired to invade the Ottoman Empire and establish the former Byzantine Empire; this "megalio idea," coupled with the swift invasion of Asia Minor, the heartland of the Ottoman Empire, produced immense animosity on the Ottoman side. Since Greece also had been an Ottoman province, the Ottomans could not conceive it as being strong enough to confront them. Hence the Turks' confidence in their own superiority may have led them to feminize, rather than demonize, an enemy they held in contempt rather than fear. In the symbolic construction of power, the Greek enemy was endowed with the "womanly" qualities of a former mistress: cowardice, fickleness, and indecency. The portrayal of the Greek soldier in Figure 4 mocks his traditional fighting gear, which resembles a skirt. The Turkish soldier, dressed properly in a manly
fashion with pants and boots, is pulling the skirt-like garment of the Greek soldier, who wears tight, white pants and a hat with a sash that suggests the long hair of women—the outfit is completed with shoes that look like women's harem slippers. In Figure 5, the Greek commander is the only one drawn as a woman wearing a revealing diaphanous slip of a dress and high-heeled shoes. The other occupiers of the Ottoman lands, the Italians, French, and English on the side of Greece, are portrayed as males in their ceremonial military costumes, as is the figure probably indicating Soviet Russia, standing next to the Turkish commander. The body language of the Allied Powers represents their positions on the matter: the Englishman is coaxing the Greek commander to make peace, while the Frenchman, standing with folded arms, obviously does not approve. The Italian merely observes the situation, his hands in his pants pockets, not willing to get involved. The two characters placed in the background, the traditional Ottoman shadow-play figures of Hacivat and Karagöz, comment on this scenario and warn the Turkish commander to beware of the Greek trap.

Ottoman political cartoons often coupled the feminization of Greeks with the suggestion, and justification, of violence against them. It was the Greek threat of invading the body politic that led to their association in Ottoman perception with unruly women against whom force had to be wielded in order to control them. Indeed, the image of the escaping Greek soldier in Figure 4 suggests violence, perhaps even rape. The Turkish soldier, his legs firmly on the ground, is pulling the Greek soldier's skirt from behind toward his lap; the vertical dagger and the shoe of the Turkish soldier insinuate the subsequent course of events. In Figure 5, the feminized Greek commander treacherously hides his dagger behind his back, in full view of the Allied Powers, thus making them complicit in the process. Yet it is the written message that reveals the intensity of the envisioned violence: The threat of the Turkish populace, as voiced by Karagöz, is that he “would take what is in the commanders' hand and brain him with it.” Hence, these figures depict the enemy at home and outside as the immoral vixen who deserves the violence coming her way. Yet, in contrast to these negative portrayals, a different, very favorable image of women also emerged during the War of Independence: that of the stalwart mother who could do no wrong.

Ottoman Women as Stolid Mothers. During periods of war, the image of women was often used as a national symbol, as the guardian of the continuity and immutability of the nation and the embodi-

ment of its respectability. This image of respectability also desexualized women and depicted them in an idealized form. It was no accident that in these periods of war, visions of nationhood were articulated that highlighted women “as important images of a national morality, born to nurture new relationships in the shifting terrain of the nation.” Women came to embody all the qualities that the masculine men who formed the nation did not possess: they were the nurturers, producers, and reproducers of the nation as mothers. Yet one can argue that the nationalist discourse, by seeking to define the permanent features of national identity in these gendered terms, consigned women to the role of wives and mothers and forced these roles upon them with a sense of morality and integrity women could not escape.

In this vein, the Ottoman images of patriotic women took the form of the wise peasant mother or the traditionally dressed wife, all looking up to and nurturing the males and the nation. The cartoon in Figure 7, drawn on the eve of the Balkan wars on April 22, 1910, elaborates the constructive significance of gender in war. It depicts three women dressed in the traditional—unfashionable and non-

![Figure 7. Cartoon drawn on the eve of the Balkan wars depicting two traditionally dressed women conversing with the mother of a child in the cradle wearing a fez with a crescent and carrying a rifle: “May God protect your child, sister, is it a boy or a girl?” “By God's grace, it is a soldier.” Drawn by Papatrekas (probably an Ottoman Greek) in Kalim 88 (22 April 1910): 5 (Çeviker 1988: 356).]
decadent—garments, standing erect, self-contained, and self-confident and conversing with one another in a very supportive manner. Inside the elaborate cradle lies the subject of the conversation, the infant, who is holding a rifle and wearing a fez with a crescent to represent the Ottoman nation. The fact that the sex of the infant is not known is not an issue in the cartoon since, as the mother notes, what is significant at this time of limited human power is the birth of another able-bodied soldier to fight the enemy. Even though the cartoon suggests that gender constrictions are lifted during wars, it is telling that it is not the three women who are mobilizing for war, but the infant: of unknown gender—a revealing slip that may illustrate the often invisible boundaries of patriarchy. The cartoon in Figure 8, drawn on December 27, 1922, immediately after the War of Independence, depicts the patriotic mother as a peasant woman. Surrounded by her two sons, the soldiers who liberated Anatolia from the Greeks, she is older than the women in the previous figure as if years of fighting have matured her. Dressed in a peasant's costume, she also indirectly criticizes and delegitimizes the elitism of the imperial capital. Located in the background are, once more, the figures of Hacıvat and Karagöz. Yet the most significant message of the figure in gender terms is that the peasant woman-mother is able to engage the leader of the Turkish forces in conversation as an equal, commenting on the current political situation.

This imagined gender equality of the Turkish nation-state did not, however, always translate successfully into action. The emerging Turkish nationalist movement promoted equality for women—in the words of its ideologue Ziya Gokalp, the new republic aimed at restoring the “Turkish feminism” and gender equality that had existed in pre-Islamic central Asian Turkic tribes—but what was promised and what was actually delivered were rather different. For instance, the 1923 Family Law turned out to be much more conservative in tenor than the 1917 one. Even though the new woman of the republican era became an explicit symbol of the break with the past, and women’s legal emancipation was part of a larger political project of nation-building and secularization, the Republic’s rhetoric on gender equality did not translate into action for all women. Women’s autonomous political initiatives, such as the petition to authorize the foundation of the Women’s People’s Party in June of 1923, were actively discouraged as “untimely and divisive”; women were asked to form an association instead.

I conjecture that the persisting patriarchal patterns in society were not eliminated by the ambivalent narration of the nation: in the case of Turkish women, they produced limitations on actual participation in the public sphere. Indeed, the notion of citizenship, to which women now had to adhere, was based on the “fraternity of men,” which severely hindered the possibility of the restitution of women’s rights. Thus, even though the image of the Ottoman women changed throughout the 1908–1923 period independent of their actual experience, and even though the periods of war and the emerging nation-state contained within their discourse ambivalent narration, this ambivalence did not result in the elimination of gender inequality. The ambivalent narration had briefly eroded the legitimacy of the empire and the institutions supporting it, and had helped to create a new political space that ultimately led to the emergence of the nation-state. Yet these new political structures were based on a male-centered conception of citizenship that marginalized women’s participation. Women could have seized the same space to redefine their position in society, but the inherent male-

Figure 8. Cartoon drawn after the Turkish War of Independence upon the delays faced in drawing up a peace treaty. The conversation, listened to on the right by Hacıvat and Karagöz, the two traditional shadow theater figures, takes place between “the woman of Anatolia” and Mustafa Kemal, the commander of the Turkish forces, referred to as the “thunderbolt.” “Dear Pasha, my sons (the soldiers) seized Smyrna in two weeks; these European diplomats are such weird people, it has been a month and we still could not seize a word from their mouths.” The response by the pasha is “Your brave sons are strong enough to make those diplomats sing like nightingales, Grandma! Don’t you worry, look I haven’t taken off my stirrups yet!” Artist unknown, in Karagöz 1542 (27 December 1922): 1 (Çeviker 1991: 231).
centered structures of citizenship hindered, and still hinder, a complete acknowledgement of women's actual roles and the subsequent emancipation of women in all spheres of life.

Notes


2. For instance, Halide Edip became the highest-ranking woman in the Turkish army, a corporal. Asker (soldier) Saitte also fought in the war and later served the Republic as a teacher. Kılavuz (navigator) Hattie led the occupying French forces to an ambush. Tayyar Rahmiye commanded a military detachment against a French garrison and was martyred in the ensuing successful siege. Kara Fatma fought on many fronts throughout Anatolia, and Binbasa (Major) Ayse joined the Anatolian forces after the death of her husband at the Caucasian front, formed and equipped a band of brigands, and engaged in guerilla activity against the Allied forces. Many other women supported the War of Independence as they bartered nationalist dignities, tilled the lands for provisions for the soldiers, and manufactured and transported ammunition to the battlefield. See Ayşegül Yaraman-Boşboğaz, Elinim Hanımuyula Özgürüm [Turkish women’s search for freedom] (Istanbul, 1992), 121–27; Şefika Kurnaz, Cumhuriyet Öncesi Türkçe Kadın (1839–1923) [Turkish women before the Republic, 1839–1923] (Ankara, 1995), 121–24.

3. This study is the first to focus on Ottoman women’s mobilization; the material presented here likewise represents the first systematic attempt to research existing sources in order to generate information on women’s participation in society during this period.

4. The issue of the Western-style education of Ottoman women had come to the forefront in the mid-nineteenth century following political reforms. Schools were opened to educate women as future teachers. Legal reforms, including the abolition of slavery and concubinage, equal inheritance rights, and the ability to marry foreign men were introduced at the same time. Many women’s journals and associations were also founded by women during this period. See Kurnaz, Cumhuriyet Öncesi, 4–34, 78–95. See also Serpil Çarlar, Osmanlı Kadını Hareketi [Ottoman women’s movement] (Istanbul, 1992), 22–76; Yaraman-Boşboğaz, Elinim Hanımuyula Özgürüm, 95–155.

5. Kurnaz, Cumhuriyet Öncesi, 81.

6. Women’s efforts toward establishing societies and founding journals continued until the end of the war. During the last year of World War I, women founded three organizations: the Women’s Society for Music Appreciation (Musiki Mühürlü Hamami Comiyyeti), the Hçarş for Sewing (Büşk Kürdil) to train women in sewing skills, and the Society of the Alumni of the Women’s College (Hıças Dâvûlumu Mezuneleri Comiyyeti) to organize conferences and seminars on topics pertaining to women. During the same period, twenty-one women’s journals established at the capital focused exclusively on issues concerning women and ranging from the pedagogic to the practical. See Çakir, Osmanlı Kadını Hareketi; Ayvur Demirdirek, Osmanlı Kadınınn Hayer Hakkı. Avrasya’nın bir Hikayesi [A story of the Ottoman women’s search for Rights] (Istanbul, 1993); Deniz Kendiyot, “End of Empire: Islam, Nationalism and Women in Turkey,” in idem, ed., Women, Islam and the State (Philadelphia, 1991), 26–27. It is interesting to note that these journals also provided information on the women’s suffrage movements in England, stating that these movements “ought to be taken as role models for the Ottoman women.” Demirdirek, Osmanlı, 96.

7. Yaraman-Boşboğaz, Elinim Hanımuyula Özgürüm, 98.

8. The scope of this law in particular, and the Ottoman state policy with respect to the possible mobilization or conscription of laborers in general, have not yet been studied. See Kendiyot, “End of Empire,” 30–31.

9. Kurnaz, Cumhuriyet, 96–97. For the similar experience of French and British women during and after the war, see Laura Lee Downs, Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metal-Working Industries, 1914–1939 (Ithaca, 1995).


11. Yaraman-Boşboğaz, Elinim Hanımuyula Özgürüm, 99. In the capital, women’s participation in the workforce continued sporadically; in 1920, there were eight women employed in banks, two in the municipal utility company, and forty-eight in the telephone company in the Ottoman capital. See Kurnaz, Cumhuriyet, 96–97.

12. Ibid., 109.


15. Yaraman-Boşboğaz, Elinim Hanımuyula Özgürüm, 120.


Amazon warrior, reflecting the unrelenting and compelling masculine forces of progress, expansionism, and domination, i.e., a female transcending the mortal and thereby unleashing her superhuman power.” Sheppard, *Cartooning for Suffrage*, 58. According to Carl Jung, the polarization by men of women’s characteristics into the good/bad dichotomy lies in the male experience of the female as the Good Mother during his infancy and the devouring Great Mother during his youth; according to Freud, it reflects men’s unconscious fears of their own drives and weaknesses. Ibid., 58–59, 62.


28. This set of clothing was supposed to approximate the outfit worn indoors by Ottoman women in general. Still, the flowing gauze shirts, silk scarves, and broadcloth pants hat cartoonists draw portray the dress of urban, middle-class Ottoman women, and not of the much coarser, much repaired outfits of their peasant sisters.


32. These discrepancies are noteworthy since they may indicate the consequences of Ottoman decontextualization: European fashion at the time did not include a clearly drawn waistline or such a long hemline. Ottoman cartoonists thus seem to have paid little attention to the finer details of European fashion.


34. Vera Dumesnil, *İşgal İstanbulu* [Istanbul under siege] (Istanbul, 1993), 12, 82, 93–94.

35. Ibid., 60–61.

36. This sexuality was often portrayed as ambiguous and fickle, in order to justify men’s continuing patriarchal control, along with the emergence of both the American and British women’s rights movements, negative visual images of women activists began to appear in the popular press, often showing them as “aggressive, overbearing shrews who neglected their children and forced their menfolks into domestic drudgery.” Elisabeth Israels Perry, “Image, Rhetoric, and the Historical Memory of Women,” in Sheppard, *Cartooning for Suffrage*, 3. The women in the imperial capital had also been satirized on other occasions. Cartoons satirizing their sense of fashion had accompanied the westernization process, often commenting on the new straight posture gained by rigid corsets, the capes that replaced the traditional outer clothing that covered them completely, and the large underskirts that doubled the circumference of a woman’s skirt. See Nora Şenti, “Fashion and Women’s Clothing in Constantinople as Depicted in Late Nineteenth-Century Cartoons” (in Turkish), in Ş. Tekeli, ed., *1980’ler Türkiye’sinde Kadın* [Women in Turkey of the 1980s] (Istanbul, 1990), 43–67.
42. Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge, 1988). This follows from the proposition that only when women are seen as both producers and reproducers of a nation can they gain equal footing with men. See Nira Yuval-Davis, “Gender and Nation,” *Gender and Ethnic Studies* 16, no. 4 (1993): 627.