

# THE CAPITULAR REGIME IN THE CONTEMPORARY AGE AND ITS ABOLITION

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## ABSTRACT

The regime of capitulations was a complex system of international agreements that regulated the status of the subjects of the Christian powers living in Ottoman country with recognition of rights, privileges and guarantees by the Sultan.<sup>1</sup>

It originates from the exemptions and trade freedoms recognized to some Italian coastal cities in the Byzantine era. These prerogatives were then extended in a new form and with a wider and more detailed content to the nascent European states. The capitulations over the centuries have been the subject of numerous changes connected to the political, economic and social events of the Ottoman Empire.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the inadequacy of these privileges with respect to the changed situation of the Ottoman Empire and the most modern agreements concluded between States, in line with the nascent international right, was clearly manifested.

In this period, the Ottoman government became the promoter of a campaign aimed at obtaining an agreement for the abolition of the regime of capitulations.

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<sup>1</sup> In Ottoman diplomacy the term that indicated the agreements defined in Europe "capitulation" was *ahdname*. In the Ottoman Turkish language *ahd* comes from *ahd*, "obligation", "agreement" or even "treaty", and *name*, "written", used for various types of document, such as victory letters (the *fethname*) and ambassadors' reports (the *sefaretname*).

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## **Introduction**

Relationships between Europe and Turkey have a long history, during which capitulations played a central role in regulating the status of citizenship of Western States in the Ottoman Empire.

The present document aims at analyzing the evolution of this system, with particular reference to the phase of abolition.

The capitulations, in fact, have been subject to many changes mainly related to the political, economic and social events happened in the Ottoman Empire.

In the nineteenth century the Ottoman government promoted a long campaign aimed at defining with the signing States an agreement able to cancel the regime of capitulations. This goal was achieved only with the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

## **The origins of the capitular regime in the modern age**

The first capitulation between the Ottoman Empire and a European state was signed on February 18, 1536 with France. It was negotiated between Jean de La Foret, the first official and resident ambassador to the Sublime Porte<sup>2</sup> from 1534 to 1537, and Ibrahim Pasha, Grand Vizier under Suleiman the Magnificent, who succeeded his father Selim; although it was qualified as a treaty of alliance, it was mainly concerned with friendship and trade.<sup>3</sup> However this document, long thought to be the first French capitulation, was never ratified, and it was only in 1569 that Claude du Bourg, treasurer of the king and ambassador to the Porte, obtained the first capitulation of eighteen articles granted to the French state. This grant came as a useful confirmation of a *de facto* establishment of a few French traders and consuls in some Ottoman ports which went back to the 1540s.<sup>4</sup>

France, during the reign of Louis XII, had already concluded with the

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<sup>2</sup> It is an expression that refers to one of the architectural elements of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, the residence of the Ottoman Sultan. "Sublime Porte", during the centuries it has been used as a metonym to indicate the government of Ottoman Empire.

<sup>3</sup> Charles White, *Three years in Constantinople; or, Domestic manners of the Turks in 1844*, London, H. Colburn, 1845, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Edhem Eldem, *Capitulations and western trade*, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, Vol. 3, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi, 2008, p. 290.

Mamluk Sultanate a first capitulation, which had as its main object some concessions which the French and Catalans would benefit. In 1512 the Mamluk sultan Qānsūh Al-Gūrī granted the French king Louis XII a capitulation permitting French merchants to live under his legal protection at Cairo for up to three months at a time. This appears to have been a renewal of a similar privilege given on August 23, 1507 to a French establishment at Alexandria.

This treaty was confirmed by the Ottoman Empire following the conquest of Egypt by Selim II.<sup>5</sup>

The Capitulation of 1536 marked as a turning point in relationship between East and West. In 1219, Louis IX, had led the Sixth Crusade that had brought to the conquest of Damietta. After three centuries his successors tried, instead, to consider Islam as a valid ally against their Christian rivals, first of all the Habsburgs.

The main advocate of the 1536 agreement with the Sultan was Francis I who had the intent to tighten the Habsburgs in a pincer maneuver, from the Balkans and from the West. This strategy did not bring great results, as the Ottoman progress in Hungary and Austria was the consequence, not so much of the pressures from the King of France, considered by the Sultan no more than an aspirant to commercial favours, but of the fear of a possible alliance between the Habsburgs, the Hungarians and the Safavid Empire, worst enemy of the Ottoman Empire from the East, and of the attraction that the Habsburgs felt for the vassal States of Moldavia and Transylvania.

For their side, in addition to military advantages, the Ottoman Empire proposed to increase the import of those goods that were scarce in its territory or in any case of strategic importance (steel, tin and fabrics). Certainly, the intention to increase customs revenue was not secondary. A correspondence was thus established between the economic policies of the European mercantilist States and the Ottoman Empire. The mercantilist States, in fact, aimed to accumulate gold through a favourable trade balance, that is, exporting as much as possible and importing as little as possible.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Alexander H. De Groot, *The Historical development of the capitulatory regime in the Ottoman Middle East from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries*, in *The Ottoman capitulations: text and context*, Oriente Moderno Anno 22 (83), Nr. 3, Roma, Istituto per l'Oriente C. A. Nallino, 2003, p. 595.

<sup>6</sup> James L. Gelvin, *Storia del Medio Oriente moderno* [History of the modern Middle East] Trad. it., Torino, Einaudi, 2009, p. 65.

This capitulation, like those that followed, had a limited duration of time, as its validity ceased with the death of the Sultan who had signed it. Consequently, for two centuries these documents required periodic renewal. Only with the French Capitulation 1740 the Ottoman ruler did also commit himself on behalf of his successors, eliminating the need for subsequent confirmation of the agreements.

The capitulation stipulated with France in 1536 looked as an agreement concluded between two authorities acting on a pair dignity, and not as a “gracious” concession of the Sultan. Consequently, it represented the first example in the Ottoman context of a real treaty in the modern sense.

Relationship changed in the second half of the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire reached the peak of its power, also thanks to the numerous military victories, especially in the Balkans, and the figure of the sovereign began to acquire hieratic characteristics.

In this context, in adapting to the new character of sacredness that surrounded the figure of the Sultan, the capitulations became unilateral concessions that guaranteed some privileges to the European States, as it was the case with the French capitulation of 1569. Unilateral concessions were also the capitulations concluded with England in 1580 and with Holland in 1612.<sup>7</sup> On behalf of England the agreement was negotiated by Sir Harebone, the first official ambassador.<sup>8</sup>

The change is highlighted by the addition of words such as *ahd*, “obligation”, and *aman* (*ahd ve aman*), “security”, “protection” of life and possessions granted to someone to words such as “peace” and “friendship” (*sulh ve salah*).<sup>9</sup>

### **Capitulations in the nineteenth century**

At the beginning of the contemporary age, the Ottoman Empire, being a European power, enlarged the number of States with which to conclude capitulations.

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<sup>7</sup> De Groot, *The Historical ...*, p. 600.

<sup>8</sup> White, *Three years ...*, p. 147.

<sup>9</sup> Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, *La dimora della pace, considerazioni sulle capitolazioni sui paesi islamici e l'Europa* [The abode of peace, considerations on the capitulations on Islamic countries and the Europe], Venezia, Ca' Foscarina, 1996, pp. 30-31.

In 1783, the only capitulation with Russia was signed. The main concern of the Russian negotiators was to guarantee to the tsar the same commercial advantages as the French and British sovereigns.

The first Austrian capitulation, dated back to the Treaty of Passarowitz, was renewed in 1747 and in 1784 and included the Treaty of Trade and navigation and the one of settlement. Article 2 is particularly relevant, as prevented the Austrian vessels to trade in the Black Sea; this restriction, however, was abolished with the capitulation of 1784.

Other capitulations were concluded by Sweden in 1737, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1740, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany in 1747, Denmark in 1756, Prussia in 1761, Spain in 1782, Hanse Cities in 1839, Portugal in 1843, Brazil in 1858, Bavaria in 1870.<sup>[10][11]</sup>

Unlike the French and Russian ones, these capitulations were very synthetic. The shortest one, the Prussian, was composed only by eight chapters. Instead, the longest one, the Spanish, contained 21 chapters.

The most-favoured-nation clause was contained in each of them, at least implicitly.<sup>[12][13]</sup>

The capitulations signed by three new States are particularly interesting: the United States of America in 1830, Belgium in 1838 and Greece in 1855.<sup>[14] [15]</sup>

These are capitulations conceived on the model of those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, being also treaties of trade and settlement.

The capitulations kept this dual character for about three centuries, but the treaty of settlement ended up prevailing over the one of trade.

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Olson, *The Ottoman – French Treaty of 1740: A Year to be Remembered?*, Vol. 15, No. 2, Indiana University Press, 1991, p. 347.

<sup>11</sup> Lucius Ellsworth Thayer, *The Capitulations of the Ottoman Empire and the Question of their Abrogation as it Affects the United States*, The American Journal of International Law, Cambridge University Press, 1923, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> Clause in an international treaty by which the Contracting States undertake to grant each other the most favourable treatment they have granted, or possibly grant in the future, to one or more States in a given subject (trade, navigation, movement of persons, etc.).

<sup>13</sup> François Georgeon, Nicolas Vatin, Gilles Veinstein, *Dictionnaire de l'Empire Ottoman* [Dictionary of Ottoman Empire], Paris, Fayard, 2015, p. 221.

<sup>14</sup> A. K. S. Lambton, S. V. *Imtiyāzāt* [Privilege], in *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, 2nd édition, Tome III, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1975, p. 1222.

<sup>15</sup> Thayer, *The Capitulations* ..., p. 217.

The treaty of settlement regulated:

- the inviolability of the domicile, with the obligation for the authority to enter only with local consular assistance;
- exemption from territorial jurisdiction, both in civil and criminal matters, where the case concerned compatriots or in general citizens of Christian States;
- the right to the presence of the dragoman in both civil and criminal cases, involving Ottoman people and therefore subject to the competence of the local authority.<sup>16</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the European powers modified their trade relationships with the Ottoman Empire, stipulating numerous trade treaties with the Porte. Thus, the treaties stipulated with France in 1802, 1838 and 1861 did not contain the name of “Capitulation”, which, however, explicitly recalled, declaring that all the rights, privileges and immunities conferred by the capitulations were maintained.

The new trade treaties were written having almost exclusively as their object the determination of customs tariffs, while the old trade treaties included in the capitulations had a more general content.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the treaty of settlement was then independent from the treaty of trade, which had absorbed it during the previous three centuries, with its autonomy recognized.

The trade and settlement treaties had basically a different requirement. The Treaties of settlement, containing consular conventions, were normally never-ending, by their nature and by the reasons which had determined them: they had to last as long as the situation which gave them birth, and its end could not generally be foreseen by the Contracting Parties.

Conversely, the trade treaty was by its nature temporary, being linked to the economic conditions of each country, subject to frequent changes.

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<sup>16</sup> The dragomen (from Arabic *tarǧūmān*) were the interpreters to whom the Europeans resorted in their relations with the Sultan's subjects.

<sup>17</sup> Mustafa, Fehmi, *Le capitolarioni in Turchia, la loro abrogazione e il regime post-capitolare* [The Capitulations in Turkey, their abrogation and the post-capitular regime], Rome, Tipografia Poliglotta “C. di M.”, 1930, p. 24.

It was therefore necessary to find a new regulation for trade that would take into account the economic situation of the Ottoman Empire and the different signing powers.

The independence of the two treaties meant that the abrogation of former did not involve the abrogation of the latter.

### **The abuses related to the capitular regime and the first steps towards its abolition**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, there were many protests on the Ottoman side against the regime of capitulations. The Ottoman government promoted a campaign to abolish this system.

The opposition of the Sublime Porte to the capitular regime can be identified by two reasons.

The first was that the shape and the content of these agreements, which remained unchanged, had become inadequate in relation to the international context that had been emerging. The capitular prerogatives appeared to Ottoman politics, but also to public opinion, as old-fashioned treaties, an outdated way of stipulating conventions between States; modern conventions were concluded under the umbrella of an embryonic international law.<sup>18</sup>

The inadequacy of the capitular system was a consequence of the context in which it had matured.

The Ottoman Empire, despite having reached the apogee of power, had stipulated in the XVI-XVII centuries unilateral concessions for the benefit of the habitants of foreign powers, without any apparent advantage for the Sublime Porte and its citizens. With this policy, the Empire aimed to increase the import of those goods that were scarce in its territory or that were of strategic importance and to increase customs revenues.

However, in the long run, this choice would have proved to be harmful, creating a heavy constraint in the following centuries. It represented a complex obstacle for a state like the Ottoman one that proposed, on one

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<sup>18</sup> Giampaolo, Conte, *Il tesoro del Sultano. L'Italia, le grandi potenze e le finanze ottomane 1881-1914* [The Sultan's treasure. Italy, the great powers and Ottoman finances 1881-1914], L'Aquila, Textus Editions, 2018, p. 59.

hand, to modernize the Empire, on the other to assume a role of power with a dignity equal to the great European nations.

To achieve these goals, the Sublime Porte, starting in 1839, had started a season of reforms with the aim of modernizing the State apparatus and the army.

This pressure on change, called the “era of tanzimat” (which can be translated as “reforms”), was also due to the different economic and social conditions. The Empire was, in fact, facing one of the most complicated phases of its decline, due, among other things, to a deep financial crisis.

The second reason that made the capitular regime unpopular was the spread of the abuses connected with it. When we talk about the abuses of these agreements, we are not referring to isolated cases that occurred only in certain specific areas, but to an established system. These were a series of violations perpetuated by the representatives and citizens of the Capitular States, which undermined the sovereignty itself of the Ottoman Empire. The capitulations had in fact become an instrument that favoured European penetration into the Ottoman economy and society, reducing the Empire to a semi-colonial condition.

These abuses consisted in the fact that foreign citizens and consular authorities, going beyond the capitular prerogatives, were able to illegally escape Ottoman legislation and taxation. Not only foreigners were responsible for these abuses, but very often the Sultan’s non-Muslim subjects, in particular merchants and commercial intermediaries, who illegitimately took advantage of the concession recognized only to foreigners.

One of the most widespread abuses was to obtain, through bribes to European officials, tax exemptions and privileges not provided in the capitulations, which exempted foreigners from paying almost all taxes paid by Ottoman citizens.

One of the ways the malpractice of illegal exemptions was most manifested with was linked to the body of dragomen, employed in the embassies and consulates, following political and commercial missions, in port offices and customs of the major cities of the Empire. Non-Muslim subjects bribed foreign ambassadors and consuls to be fictitiously hired in their service as dragomen, thus taking advantage of tax exemptions and, not infrequently, of the extremely advantageous legal status provided for this



office. Symptomatic is the case of Aleppo which, in 1793, counted more than fifteen hundred local merchants who pretended to be dragomen, of which only six really played the role of interpreter.<sup>19</sup>

A further abuse of capitulations was the fact that the consulates of European countries had begun to sell to the Sultan's non-Muslim subjects, for the most part traders, trade rights with Europe, legal benefits and tax relief. In other words, Ottoman subjects belonging to minorities bribed ambassadors and consuls to be granted the same commercial and legal rights as citizens of European States. Those who had illicitly obtained one or more of these privileges, recognized through the *berats*, were called *beratlı* <sup>[20]</sup> <sup>[21]</sup>. The number of *beratlı* was by no means insignificant. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Austrians had guaranteed consular recognition to about two hundred thousand subjects of the Sultan. In the same way, the Russians had recognized it to one hundred and twenty thousand people, mainly Greek Orthodox, therefore belonging to their own religious confession. Examining only these two cases it can be estimated that ottoman subjects, in a percentage of more than 1%, were granted the same rights as Russian and Austrian citizens resident in the Empire. The British, French and Prussians also chose their preferred minority, Maronites in the case of the French, Protestants in the case of the British, and conferred them the same privileges which they benefitted themselves.<sup>22</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman government began a campaign with the aim of reaching an agreement that would involve the suppression of the system of capitulations and that, at the same time, would fully legitimize the role of the Porte internationally as a political and economic partner, and not as a subordinate entity.<sup>23</sup>

The first formal request to the Powers dates back to the Congress of Paris in 1856.

<sup>19</sup> H. İnalçık, S. V. *İmtiyâzât* [Privilege] ..., pp. 1216-1217.

<sup>20</sup> In Ottoman diplomacy with the term *berat* it indicated a letter patent issued by the Sultan with the character of concession. It could be the appointment for an assignment, a privilege or the assignment of an annuity.

<sup>21</sup> Cihan Artunç, *The Protégé System and Beratlı Merchants in the Ottoman Empire: The Price of Legal Institutions*, Department of Economics, Yale University, 2012, pp. 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> Gelvin, *Storia* ..., pp. 126-127.

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad Feroz, *Ottoman perceptions of the Capitulations 1800-1914*, in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 6.

During the Congress session of March 25 Alî Pasha, the plenipotentiary of the Sultan, asked for the abolition of capitulations and its corollaries which stood, he said, in the way of the renewal of the Ottoman state.<sup>24</sup>

On that occasion, all the countries that had taken part in the Crimean War were gathered in the capital French. The moment was very favourable to put the matter on the table: the Kingdom of Sardinia for political reasons was not able to do without supporting the abolition of an instrument that limited the sovereignty of a State on its territory and, on the same way, France, which followed a nationalist policy, would not fail to guarantee its support to the Ottoman instance.

The Ottoman representatives, in order to convince the Powers, argued that the cessation of this system was in the interest of all parties involved. Getting rid of the capitulations and replacing them with a more modern type of treaty would have allowed Europe to have more profitable relationship with the Empire, thus benefiting resident foreigners on its territory. These arguments were apparently accepted by the European plenipotentiaries, in particular, by the Count of Cavour, who supported the Ottoman thesis with a great speech, describing the relationships between the Sublime Porte and foreigners as poorly regulated: in the mid-nineteenth century the signed treaties were antiquated and outdated, fostering the abuses.<sup>25</sup>

In this climate, the Powers committed to make themselves guarantors of the independence and territorial integrity of the Porte, as can be seen from Article 7 of the Treaty of Paris:

S. M. l'Empereur des Français, S. M. l'Emmpereur d'Autriche, S. M. la Reine du Royaume-uni de la Grande bretagne et l'Irlande, s. M. le Roi de Prusse, S. M. l'Empereur, de toutes le Russies et S.M. le Roi de Sairdaine, déclarent la Sublime-Porte admise à participer aux avantages du droit public et du concert européens. Leurs Majestés s'engagent, chacun de son coté, à respecter l'indépendance et l'intégrité territoriale de l'Empire Ottoman, garantissant en commun la stricte observation de cet engagement, en considéreront en conséquence, tout acte de nature à y porter atteinte comme une question d'intéret général.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Eliana Augusti, *From Capitulations to Unequal Treaties: The Matter of an Extraterritorial Jurisdiction in the Ottoman Empire*, in *Journal of Civil Law Studies*, Vol. 4, 2011, p. 304.

<sup>25</sup> Fehmi, *Le capitolazioni ...*, p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

In reality, this article was limited to recognizing only formally the independence of the Sublime Porte. The encouraging promises made to the Ottoman plenipotentiaries, so that concrete efforts were made to abolish the capitulations, remained a dead letter: The Ottoman demand, although officially supported by all, in fact, was not supported by any of the European countries.

The only result achieved was the general recognition, which had been reached through a vote of the diplomats gathered in Paris, of the opportunity to review some clauses that regulated trade relationship with the Empire and the position of foreigners. At the end of the vote, a protocol was drawn up in which the Powers committed to define a review of the entire system of capitulations.

Prevision was made for a later conference at Constantinople to consider the matter of the capitulations, but this council never was called: it was clear that these statements did not correspond to a concrete will to act.<sup>27</sup>

This situation, however, should not be surprising if we consider the evolution of the capitular regime over the centuries, from a “gracious” concession of the Sultan, recognized during a strong territorial expansion and strength of the Empire, to a system detrimental to sovereignty within its own borders. It was unthinkable that the European States could unilaterally give up to a system that guaranteed the almost total extraterritoriality to their citizens, in addition to the considerable advantages for those countries that, following Great Britain on the path of the industrial revolution, wanted to guarantee themselves access to the Eastern markets. In fact, France in 1861 stipulated a new capitulation that, instead of carrying out a revision of the entire system by contrasting the countless abuses, confirmed the prerogatives already recognized. Afterwards, Great Britain, the Tsarist Empire, Italy, Prussia and the German Customs Union concluded new capitulations with the Ottoman Empire on the example of the French one, to obtain confirmation of the treaties formalized earlier.

Meanwhile, between the first and second half of the nineteenth century, the Empire had embarked on the path of reforms and the new course was used by the representatives of the Porte as a further reason to insist on abolition and to legitimize their demands. As a result of this great work of

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<sup>27</sup> Thayer, *The Capitulations* ..., p. 213.

reorganization and modernization, the legislation was subjected to important changes affecting several areas. It went from a law system strongly influenced by religion to a secularized law system, which did not with the religious affiliation of the party or defendant and which had as a prerequisite the equality of all individuals against the law. Law system thus conceived, being the product of the activity of the civil authorities, directed its action not only towards Ottoman citizens, Muslims or non-Muslims, but also towards foreigners.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, there could be no form of extra-territoriality affecting nationals of other countries.

A further stroke to the attempts to eliminate the capitulations dates back to 1871, when for the umpteenth time the Porta asked the powers to implement the decision voted in Paris in 1856. The answer was that there would be no change until Istanbul would have promoted very deep reforms to protect foreigners. In addition, on January 17, an agreement was signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Capitular States that clearly stated the principle that a treaty could not be cancelled without an agreement between the contracting States. The powers referred to one of the basic principles of international law, precisely that right to which the Empire laboriously hoped to be admitted.

When the Empire was attempting to start a serious debate on the abolition of the capitular regime, its aspirations were frustrated by the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877. The military success of the tsarist troops over the Ottoman ones led to the conclusion of the Treaty of St. Stephen (named after the homonymous locality on the Sea of Marmara), signed in March 1878. The peace agreement, extremely favourable to the Russians who were carrying out unprecedented indirect control over the entire Balkan area, provoked the reaction of Great Britain, interested in maintaining the balance between the powers, and Austria-Hungary. Wanting to mediate between the parties, German Chancellor Bismarck organized a congress in Berlin to revise the 1878 treaty. In the German capital, the delegations of the Great Britain, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, France and Italy met and the Romanian, Serbian, Montenegrin and Greek delegations were also present without a formal role.

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<sup>28</sup> Gulnihal Bozkurt, *Review of the Ottoman legal system*, Vol. 3, Issue 3, Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihî Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi, Ankara, 1992, p. 9.

In Berlin, thanks to a patient and diplomatic work, the expansionist aims of the Tsarist Empire were stopped, limiting the territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>29</sup>

Istanbul was, however, obliged to grant greater guarantees to the citizens of the countries gathered at the congress and to accept the extension of the capitular prerogatives to the States whose independence had been confirmed there, such as Serbia, Romania and Montenegro. To this it was added the great result achieved by the Austro-Hungarian Empire which, despite not having participated militarily to the conflict, obtained the right to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina, which remained only formally an Ottoman province.

Despite this failure, which had only worsened its subordinate position, in a completely unexpected way, at the end of the century, there was a time when the Porte was closer than ever to obtaining an agreement that brought to the suppression of the capitulations. In 1890, during the negotiations undertaken between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers for the renewal of the capitulations that had expired in the meantime, German diplomats expressed their willingness to comply with Ottoman demands about the abolition. During this period Germany was pursuing a policy aimed at obtaining the Sultan's favour.<sup>30</sup> This sudden opening of a European state to the abolition of the capitular regime was, however, subject to on the subscription by all the other States. Obviously, there was no definitive resolution approved by all the other powers, indeed the European Powers took advantage of that session to obtain, in addition to the renewal of the previous treaties, new concessions that allowed the privileged European companies to extend the range of their economic activity also in the strategic sectors of the Empire, such as railways and electrical infrastructure, or in services, such as postal and telephone.<sup>31</sup>

A turning point in the Ottoman government's campaign to abolish the capitular regime was the Revolution of 1908. In July of that year, the Young Turks, a political movement born at the end of the nineteenth century, imposed to Sultan Abdülhamit II the restoration of the Constitution of 1876,

<sup>29</sup> Egidio Ivetic, *Le guerre balcaniche*, [The Balkan Wars], Bologna, Il Mulino, 2006, pp. 13-15.

<sup>30</sup> James B. Angell, *The Turkish Capitulations*, Oxford, Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association, 1901, Vo. 6, No. 2, p. 258.

<sup>31</sup> H. İnalçık, S. V. *İmtiyâzât* [Privilege] ..., p. 1218.

suspended thirty years earlier by the Sultan himself after only two years of validity. Thus, a great renewal was achieved in Ottoman politics and society: in fact, radical changes date back to this period, such as greater freedom of the press and association. Censorship of the press was abolished and all the parties, Muslim and non-Muslim, Liberals, Islamists, and Unionists, published their own papers so as to publicize their views. It is therefore possible to speak of an emerging public opinion during these years. The capitulations were a constant theme discussed in the press of the day.

The intense debate that characterized Ottoman society at this stage made the presence of a system such as the capitular system even more unbearable, perceived by public opinion increasingly inadequate to the contingencies of the present and an obstacle to the desired adhesion of the Porte to the new international dimension of those years. Moreover, the cabinets controlled and then led by the Young Turks intended to pursue a policy that would not prove to be tolerant of any form of limitation of the sovereignty of the state within its borders.<sup>32</sup>

The attitude of the executive was directed, rather than to the achievement of a complete and, above all, immediate cancellation of the capitular regime, towards a revision or towards the choice of a transitional period of five years before the definitive abolition.

After the Young Turk Revolution, there were two moments when Istanbul carried out the campaign more effectively, gaining the support of some European States for its cause. The first opportunity was on October 6th, 1908 with the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria-Hungary. The Empire had to accept the loss of the two provinces in exchange to the renunciation of the counterpart to the Sandžak of Novi Pazar, an Ottoman enclave between Serbia and Montenegro that had been militarily occupied immediately after the Congress of Berlin. This compromise was signed in a protocol between the two Powers on February 26th, 1909. The agreement also contained Vienna's commitment not to fail to support any future Ottoman initiative aimed at achieving the abolition of capitulation.

Article 6 committed Austria-Hungary to terminate within the next ten years trade agreements independently from those contained in the capitu-

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<sup>32</sup> Feroz, *Ottoman perceptions ...*, p. 17.

lations, based on the public law applied in similar agreements in Europe. This was a significant deviation.<sup>[33] [34]</sup>

The second circumstance in which the Porte managed to achieve important results is represented by the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war in 1911. Immediately after the invasion of the provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica, which represented the last Ottoman strips between Egypt, a British controlled zone, and Tunisia, a zone of French control, the German ambassador in Istanbul, Marshall von Bieberstein, became the guarantor of the Italians who were in the Empire. On October 2nd, the Ottoman government recognized German protection, specifying that all the capitular rights that Italian citizens had enjoyed up to that time lost its validity for the duration of the conflict.

Rome reacted by protesting to the Council of Diplomatic Litigation and denounced the unilateral decision of the Empire. The Council confirmed the illegitimacy of the positions taken by the Porte, believing that not even a state of war between the two countries could lead to the deprivation of the prerogatives attributed to the Italians by the capitulations.

Italy decided to bring the matter to the attention of the other countries, believing that the temporary cessation of the validity of these prerogatives due to the beginning of a conflict was a problem that concerned all the Capitular States.

These attempts had very limited effects. Moreover, the Italian Government did not intend to insist on this issue, as at that very moment the first negotiations with the Porte had begun.

The defeat on the ground of the Ottoman Empire led to the signing of the treaty with Italy, which contained conditions very similar to those of the agreement with Austria-Hungary and established an increase in tariffs from 11% to 15%. In addition to the stipulation of a new trade agreement on the model of the one with Austria-Hungary, Italy undertook to guarantee to the Empire support for its campaign for the abolition of capitulations and support in international integration both politically and economically.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Pierluigi La Terza, *Abolizione delle capitolazioni in Turchia* [Abolition of capitulations in Turkey], Rome, Tipografia Garroni, 1924, pp. 15-16.

<sup>34</sup> Mehmet Emin Elmacı, *Itihat-Terakki ve Kapitülasyonlar* [Union-Progress and Capitulations], Istanbul, Homer Yayınları, 2018, pp. 51-52.

<sup>35</sup> *Ivi*, p. 55.

Article 5 provided for the acknowledgment by Italy of the legitimacy of the Ottoman reasons that had led the Porte to ratify during the conflict the cancellation of the capitular rights.

This was perhaps the most relevant clause of the document, as such acknowledgment by one of the European Powers was particularly significant for the immediate future. In this way, the Ottoman government was given the power to unilaterally revoke prerogatives already recognized, although in a completely exceptional situation such as a war.

### **The Ottoman Empire in World War I**

The Porte succeeded to obtain the abolition of capitulations only after the outbreak of the First World War. Initially, during the summer of 1914, the Ottoman government had tried to achieve this result by seeking the support of countries such as Great Britain and France, declaring itself willing to maintain its neutrality in the ongoing conflict in exchange for the signing of a convention that issued the abolition. After having obtained no adequate guarantees, on 9 September Ottoman grand vizier and foreign minister Said Halim Pasha notified the embassies of the countries concerned by the decision to abolish the capitular regime with effect from October 1st.<sup>36</sup> The memorandum describing the decision noted that:

These privileges, which on the one hand were found to be incomplete opposition to the juridical rules of the century and to the principle of national sovereignty, constituted on the other hand an impediment to the progress and the development of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>37</sup>

The cancellation of prerogatives at the outbreak of the Italo-Turkish war had represented a precedent that the Ottoman representatives used to reach the unilateral act of 1914.

The moment was very favourable: since the war had already been going on for several months, it would have been impossible for the European Powers engaged in the conflict to organize a common reaction to restore an instrument that had proved to be extremely advantageous.

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<sup>36</sup> Georgeon, *Dictionnaire ...*, pp. 222-223.

<sup>37</sup> Kate Dannies, Stefan Hock, *A Prolonged Abrogation? The Capitulations, the 1917 Law of Family Rights, and the Ottoman Quest for Sovereignty during World War I*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 2020, 52 (2), p. 245.



The day after the note was delivered, 10 September, became a day of celebration, as important as Constitution Day, observed 23 July. People decorated their shops and houses with flags. The press hailed 9 September as the day of freedom and independence. Meetings were organized in the capital and in provincial towns in support of the government.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, the Empire, joining secretly the conflict on the side of Germany since August 2nd, could count on the support of the Central Powers for the pursuit of its goal.

Finally, the European Powers would in any way have put at risk the safety of their citizens resident in Ottoman territory at such a critical time.

In response, the Capitular States sent a communication to the Empire in order to refuse the reasons for the Ottoman decision. This was not a polemic note, but a reference to the principle that no country could unilaterally modify or even cancel an international agreement without the consent of all the parties involved.

It was, in fact, evident that a total rejection of the Ottoman position would lead Istanbul to join militarily the war on the side of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, greatly extending the battlefield. To avoid this eventuality, the representatives of Great Britain, France and the Tsarist Empire forwarded a new note to the government in Istanbul, identical to the previous one, specifying however that they were willing to examine any request in this regard, in order to modify the clauses of the treaties that were more distant from international law. The only condition was the assurance by the Ottoman government not to enter the conflict on the side of the Central Powers.

The Porte remained impassive and decided to insist in the established direction, taking advantage of the unrepeatable moment. The following October they implemented what was announced, closing all post offices run by foreign companies, increasing customs duties, obliging foreigners to pay taxes from which they had been exempted for centuries, eliminating consular courts and revoking the possibility of making use of the dragomen in legal disputes. The Ottoman Empire, more than fifty years after the first formal request to the Congress of Paris, implemented the abolition of capitulations.

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<sup>38</sup> Feroz, *Ottoman perceptions* ..., p. 18.

In the same month, the Ottoman Empire entered the conflict militarily against the forces of the Entente.

On March 16, 1915 the Sublime Porte regularized the condition of foreigners in its territories, promulgating a “Law on the rights and duties of foreigners”.<sup>39</sup>

Over the next three years, the main allies of the Ottoman Empire ratified a series of conventions, accepting the definitive abolition of capitulations. The first was Germany on January 11th, 1917; on 11th March of the following year, Austro-Hungary.<sup>40</sup>

The situation that was emerging seemed to confirm the success of the Ottoman policy in achieving abolition, which would have favoured the integration of the Empire with the other Powers and the formation of a new model of relationship at the international level that would allow the Porte to shake off a type of treaty now outdated. But the legitimate aspirations of the Sublime Porte would be frustrated by the military setbacks suffered by its army during the conflict.

On October 30th, 1918, the Ottoman Empire signed the armistice that sanctioned the end of hostilities.

Some of the clauses of the document provided the obligation for Istanbul to restore almost entirely the capitular prerogatives, suppressed during the previous four years. The only difference was the creation of a mixed Judicial Commission, competent to judge legal disputes between all individuals of different nationalities.<sup>41</sup>

Between Sèvres and Lausanne: reimposition and definitive abolition

The armistice dictated the rules to be observed until the peace treaty between the Ottoman Empire and the Entente Powers was concluded.

The treaty was signed on August 10th, 1920 in the French town of Sèvres by representatives, albeit of secondary importance, of the government of Istanbul and those of Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and Greece. The document had a strongly punitive character for the defeated, bringing to

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<sup>39</sup> Thayer, *The Capitulations ...*, p. 230.

<sup>40</sup> Fehmi, *Le capitolazioni ...*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>41</sup> La Terza, *Abolizione ...*, pp. 23-24.

the separation between Turkish and non-Turkish territories of the Empire and the division of Anatolia into zones of influence French, British, Greek and Italian. The Empire, already seriously reduced by the results of the First Balkan War, was thus divided among the Allied Powers.<sup>42</sup>

The harshness of the treaty was evident, as well as in the territorial revision and, in the economic clauses. In particular, Articles 261 and 317 re-established the capitular regime, extending it to Allied countries that did not benefit from it before the war, such as Japan.

The potential modification of these prerogatives was up to the Financial Commission, which would rule on the Empire, managing with no limitations almost all its resources.

Despite the reintroduction of capitulations, in Sèvres, the Allied countries agreed on the need to replace the capitular regime, formulating a judicial reform project in a very short time. Article 136 stipulated that, within three months of the entry into force of the Treaty, a commission would be set up composed by representatives of four winning countries, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan, with the aim of studying as soon as possible a judicial reform to replace the current system. The work of the commission would be submitted for final approval of all the other countries concerned, but not of the Turkish Government: with the signing of the peace treaty, the Turkish undertook to accept any decision of the victorious Powers.<sup>43</sup>

The treaty was criticized not only by Turkey, but also by international public opinion. It is not a coincidence that many, perfectly aware of its impracticability, ironically defined it as the “porcelain treatise”, playing with the porcelain manufacturing tradition of the French town.

The decisions taken in Sèvres remained, in fact, a dead letter, since the treaty was not ratified by any of the signatory parties. In this situation, subsequent political and military events were decisive, starring Mustafa Kemal. Few at the time could have imagined the breadth and depth of the changes it would have brought.

Kemal was born on May 19th, 1881 in Thessaloniki. Trained in various military academies, he had fought within the Ottoman forces during the

<sup>42</sup> Gelvin, *Storia ...*, pp. 235-236.

<sup>43</sup> La Terza, *Abolizione delle capitolazioni ...*, pp. 24-25.

Italo-Turkish War and the Balkan Wars. He had gained great prestige at the Battle of Gallipoli in 1915, becoming a national hero. In April 1919 he was appointed by the government, with the approval of the British, inspector at the 9th Army stationed in Erzurum to deal with demobilization and to keep order within the same Turkish regular units.

This decision was a gamble, in fact Kemal placed himself at the head of the Turkish nationalist movement, rebelling against the government of Istanbul, and founded the government of the Grand National Assembly (in Turkish *Büyük Millet Meclisi*, BMM), creating a counterpower in Ankara. Kemal was elected president. On January the 20<sup>th</sup>, Assembly, following the approval of a Constitution defining the nation as a “Turkish State”, changed its name to *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, TBMM, (Grand National Assembly of Turkey).<sup>44</sup>

The Treaty of Sèvres, presented to the Assembly on May the 20th, 1920, was not accepted.

Meanwhile, Greece, considering the political and military situation very favourable, had begun hostilities against Turkey. The Greek army, better equipped, obtained, in a first phase, some important successes. The tenacious resistance of the Turkish forces led, however, to the defeat of the invader. The following year, the Turkish army took the initiative and achieved the final victory. On October the 11th, 1922, the armistice of Mudanya was signed.

The many military victories and the determination of the Turkish people to pursue independence had in fact altered the outcome of the First World War, forcing the Allied powers to return to the negotiating table.<sup>45</sup>

On October 27th, 1922, the Allied Powers convened a new peace conference, to be held in Lausanne the following month, to which both governments of Turkey were invited. Kemal was, however, convinced that only the Ankara government should take part in the conference.

On November 1st, the Grand National Assembly passed, with only one vote against, a resolution that legitimized itself as the only authority that could represent Turkey.

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<sup>44</sup> Gelvin, *Storia* ..., pp. 235-236.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*.

With this law, which had retroactive effect, Turkey declared null and void the Treaty of Sèvres, signed by ministers who had no authority to decide on behalf of the Turkish nation. From this moment on, the government of Istanbul was delegitimized, no longer being able to legally represent the country.

The formal abolition of the Sultanate marked the *de facto* end of the Ottoman Empire.

In Lausanne, in the castle of Ouchy, the delegations of France, Japan, Italy, Great Britain, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the United States (the latter as observers) and Turkey met. Kemal had wanted at all costs to head the delegation İsmet İnönü, who had recently become Foreign Minister.

There were still many issues to be resolved: for example, the territorial issues, namely that of Mosul, Western Thrace, Alexandretta and the Straits, but also the issue of Turkey's economic independence, perceived as incompatible with the capitular regime. For this reason the Turkish delegates were adamant on the subject, firmly convinced that they did not accept a resolution that would leave this system. In fact, if all the delegations seemed to agree on the opportunity of the abolition, nevertheless Great Britain, France and Italy asked for a regime, at least transitional, that would offer adequate guarantees for their citizens.

On November 20th, during the first plenary session, three commissions were set up, each with the task of studying one of the subjects brought to the attention of diplomats. The second commission, the Commission for the Regime of Foreigners and Minorities in Turkey, would deal with, among other things, the capitulations.<sup>46</sup>

It was chaired by the head of the Italian delegation, the Marquis Camillo Eugenio Garroni, who, first of all, proposed and obtained to form subcommittees to analyze more effectively the issues that had been entrusted to him. A first subcommittee dealt with reviewing the legal regime of foreigners, a second the regime of foreigners from an economic point of view and a third the questions of citizenship and archaeological research in Turkish sites.

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<sup>46</sup> *Diplomatic documents relating to peace with Turkey*, presented to the Italian Parliament: minutes of the plenary sessions and sessions of the Commissions of the Lausanne Conference, Rome, Tipografia del Senato, 1923, vol. 1 p.8.

A first debate on the legal basis of the capitulations followed. The British delegate Curzon, who chaired the Conference, argued that, since these are commitments in accordance with international law, they could not be modified or cancelled without the agreement of all the parties involved.

On the other hand, the head of the Turkish delegation replied that these treaties had the character of a unilateral act and, therefore, could be revoked at any time.

After these preliminary discussions, the work of the subcommittees began. Numerous proposals were formulated to be presented to the attention of Turkish diplomats, who deal with the right to purchase movable and immovable property and to be able to leave them as an inheritance, the exercise, without any constraint, of all those professions also carried out by Turkish citizens, equality from a fiscal point of view with Turkish citizens.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to these issues, the discussion on the Judicial Declaration continued between the Allied delegations and the Turkish delegation.

With this respect, the Turkish counter-proposals differed greatly from the Allied proposals. Meanwhile, the discussion on Mosul and the public debt was at an impasse, as it was the jurisdictional discipline. This helped to frustrate months of long and patient negotiations. This situation led to the suspension of the work of the Conference, bringing Turkey and the Allied countries back into a state of great tension.<sup>48</sup>

Later, there was the economic congress convened by Kemal in the city of Smyrna. On this occasion, he made it clear, to both domestic and international public opinion, that the attainment of complete independence could only be achieved on condition that there was also economic and legal independence. The achievement of these objectives could not be separated from the abolition of capitulations.

On April 23th, more than two months after the suspension, the delegations met again in Lausanne and resumed work on a further attempt to reach a peace treaty. From the very beginning, the discussion was characterized by a lively debate, which led to the approval, on June 4th, of the

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<sup>47</sup> La Terza, *Abolizione ...*, pp. 24-26.

<sup>48</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 26-29.

final text of the Declaration Relating to Judicial Administration.

At this point, a draft of the text of the treaty was submitted to the Turkish delegation that would have involved the abolition of capitulations.<sup>49</sup>

After further talks, an agreement was reached on a new text - in the final document it would have been Article 28 - which set off the complete abolition of the capitular regime:

Each of the High Contracting Parties Hereby accepts, in so far as it is concerned, the complete abolition of capitulations in Turkey in every respect.<sup>50</sup>

Four centuries after the first capitulation between the Ottoman Empire and a Christian State, the capitular regime was abolished by a convention. İsmet İnönü ensured that the cessation was final, being independent of the validity of the treaty over time and being precluded from the possibility of restoring later the capitular regime, with retroactive effect.

The peace treaty was signed on July the 24th, 1923 and the first signatory was the head of the Turkish delegation. The entire document consisted of 143 articles; Article 28 enshrined the complete abolition of capitulations.

The Convention on Settlement and Jurisdiction and the Declaration on Judicial Administration, signed on the same date by the delegations of the Allied States and Turkey, provided guarantees for foreigners.

The Treaty of Lausanne completely erased Sèvres; moreover, Turkey, which existed only in practice, obtained legal recognition at international level.

1923 was a crucial year for Turkey. On October 29th, the *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti* (Republic of Turkey) was proclaimed and Kemal, elected president by the TBMM, appointed İsmet İnönü as prime minister.

Turkey emerged fully legitimized by the Lausanne Conference, as a sovereign state.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>50</sup> Text in *Trattati e Convenzioni* [Treaties and Conventions], Vol. XXX, p. 14, quoted in Prassi Italiana di Diritto Internazionale, ISGI Istituto di Studi Giuridici Internazionali – CNR.

Following the signing of the peace treaty, on the same date, the delegation signed, as an annex to Article 28, a Convention on Settlement and Jurisdiction, which defined the rights of foreigners in Turkey, and a Declaration on Judicial Administration.

These acts contained the reciprocity clause, recognizing the enjoyment of the same rights to Turkish citizens and those of allied countries.<sup>51</sup>

The Convention and the Declaration were valid for seven and five years respectively.

All guarantees in confessional matters were excluded, because they were already present in Articles 38 and 44 of the peace treaty, in the *Protection of Minorities* section. Turkey recognized freedom of ritual, both in private and public contexts, to all those who resided in its territory, therefore also to foreigners. The only exception to this provision was provided in the event that a certain religious practice was destabilizing public order.<sup>52</sup>

### **Capitulations' perceptions in historiography**

In the nineteenth century, especially in the “era of *tanzimat*”, the abolition of capitulations became a priority for the Ottoman government and the main objective of its foreign politics.

In society and public opinion there was the deep-rooted idea that, since these were unilateral concessions, the capitulations could have been revoked at any time by the Ottoman government.

This thesis was also shared by the republican historians in the years following the Lausanne Conference. Thus, the scholar Ismail Hami Danişmend, dealing with the matter of the abolition, defined the capitulations as a set of privileges granted to the European states' citizens as a title of favour that, over the centuries, had become a harmful element for the Ottoman Empire: they represented, in fact, a significant limitation to its sovereignty.

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<sup>51</sup> Fehmi, *Le capitolazioni ...*, p. 97.

<sup>52</sup> La Terza, *Abolizione delle capitolazioni ...*, pp. 34-35.



Such a perception of the capitular regime is due to the fact that traditionally for the Ottomans the capitulations were a decree or edict from the sultan, not a treaty, therefore a bilateral agreement in accordance with the principles of international law.

In fact, while in Europe these documents were called “capitulations”, in the Ottoman Empire was used the term “*İmtiyāzātı ecnebiye*” or just “*İmtiyāzāt*”, which means “privilege, grant, concession”.

This interpretation was shared by Mehmet Zeki Pakalin, who stated that, until the eighteenth century, the Sublime Porte had never signed any treaty that could not be freely revoked by the sultan.

Halil İnalcik agreed with this thesis, adding that during the modern age the sultans revoked such concessions when a European state had broken the promise of “friendship and sincere goodwill”.<sup>53</sup>

During the years following the abolition, these feelings represented also a fundamental aspect of Kemalist self-consciousness. Overcoming the capitulations was consistent with some of the principles that inspired the action of the Turkish National Movement. In fact, the Porte regime was in contrast with the long claimed principle of sovereignty by the unionist propaganda, especially in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire.

There is an anti-imperialist tradition that regards these treaties as a tool that favoured the penetration of European capital into the Ottoman economy, reducing the Empire to a semi-colonial condition.

In fact, it is deeply believed that, in the late Ottoman Empire, many European countries, in particular France, Great Britain and Germany, exploited the Ottoman political weakness to develop projects of economic, military and infrastructural concessions for exclusive European benefit.

Moreover, the abuses connected with the capitular regime have been indicated by many historians as one of the causes of the general decline of the Porte. Among these Ahmad Fuad Fanani’s important work,

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<sup>53</sup> Feroz, *Ottoman perceptions* ..., pp. 1-2.

“The Ottoman Empire: Its Rise, Decline and Collapse” can be recalled.<sup>54</sup>

The memory of the capitulations has certainly contributed to the fueling of the anti-Western feelings that still animates Turkish politics. President Erdoğan himself has repeatedly quoted the poet Necip Fazil Kısakürek, who rejected Atatürk’s policies of Westernization, hoping for a return to the “authenticity” of the East: Islamic values, embodied by the Ottoman Empire at its apogee.<sup>55</sup>

## **Conclusions**

This *excursus* certainly does not exhaustively resolve the question of an institution that had a central importance in regulating the condition of the citizens of the Western States present in the Ottoman Empire, but attempted to offer an analysis of its evolution between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It is above all in this period that the inadequacy of the capitular prerogatives with respect to the changed situation of the Sublime Porte and the new way of making pacts with other States was clearly manifested, which was moving towards a more modern type of agreement, in line with the nascent international law.

The economy, with its changed rules and needs, has been a decisive push in overcoming them, imposing the stipulation of specific and detailed commercial treaties, free from the regulation of the personal status of foreigners.

The perception of the inadequacy of the capitulations must also be read in correlation with the internal processes that were changing the administration, society, army, law and teaching. The Ottoman Empire had begun a phase of reforms in an attempt to put itself on the path of modernization, like other countries in the east, for example of the Tsarist Empire and Japan, the latter during the *Meiji* period.

Certainly, the capitulations were an instrument suited to the needs of the historical era in which they were born, becoming, however, in the following centuries a completely inadequate instrument with respect to the changed political, commercial and social needs.

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<sup>54</sup> Ahmad Fuad Fanani, *The Ottoman Empire: Its Rise, Decline and Collapse*, Jurnal Salam Pascasarjana Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, 2011, p. 101.

<sup>55</sup> Necip Fazil Kısakürek in 1943 began publishing the magazine “*Büyük Doğu*” [Great East], Istanbul, 1943-1978.

The events that led to the abolition of this system and the Ottoman perception of these treaties may be useful, from a historiographical point of view, to understand the reasons that led some personalities to commit themselves to the birth of the Republic of Turkey and led the protagonists of this phase to seek diplomatic instruments more suitable for integrating the country at a political and economic level.

Future developments in research on the subject could be directed precisely towards these reasons. It is not to be excluded, indeed it is likely, that these reasons are still present today in the Turkish political landscape and public opinion. Moreover, the same “Sèvres syndrome” continues to be a recurrent element and of a certain effectiveness in the Turkish political debate, object of attention not only of historiography, but also of other disciplines, such as sociology.

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