

# Political Turcophilia in Germany 1890-1933

**La Germania e l'Oriente**  
**Università degli studi della Campania**

**Germany and the political „turcophilia“ in the  
age of empire and the interwar period  
(1890-1933)**



Les Annales

mentalité

Georges Duby  
Roger Chartier

longue durée (long term attitudes)

but: not essential or unchangeable

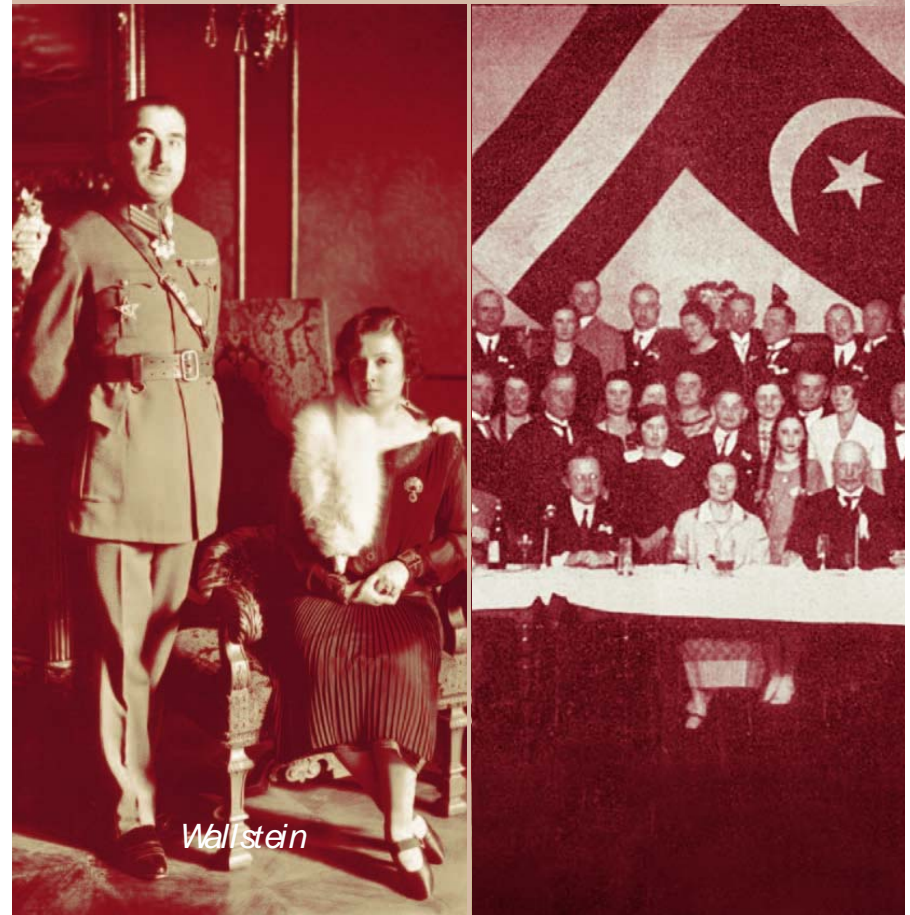
Turcophile milieu

Liberals, as well as Nazis  
advocating for  
close German-Turkish relations

Sabine Mangold-Wilf

# Begrenzte Freundschaft

*Deutschland und die Türkei | 1918–1933*



Turcophilia

Orientalism

„the good Turks“

„the Gentlemen of the East“

Turcophilia <->

Orientalism

„the good Turks“

„the Gentlemen of the East“

# I. The pro-Turkish political milieus in Germany during in the age of empire and their political interests

Ottoman Empire                      „Sick man upon the Bosphorus“

Eastern Question

- > majority in Germany (and Europe) believed in the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire

<-> political vision of Europe including the Turks as sort of political partners

**Liberal Imperialists**

# Ernst Jäckh

Württemberg  
Liberal Party

*Friedrich Naumann*  
(politician)

*Theodor Heuss* (after 1945  
president of the Federal  
Republic of Germany)

*Alfred von Kiderlen Wächter*  
(imperial secretary of foreign  
affairs)





not anti-imperialist, but quite often anti-colonial

not anti-monarchists, but against Bismarck (satisfied Germany) and the „personal regime“ of Wilhelm II.

-> Parliamentary Monarchy

-> „Greater Germany“

Pro-Turkish position was part of a critic of the inner and foreign policy of the German Kaiserreich; a strategy to change both



## Colmar von der Goltz

- impoverished
  - prussian
- noble-military
  - family

e | 05.03.2018

- militarization:

para-military education in school and Youth movement

**„Volk in Waffen“      „Nation in Arms“**

published in 1883

sketched a new society in which everybody was ready for war and part of a political nation of soldiers without any particular interest groups

Pioneer of „Völkisch“

1883 von Goltz was sent to the  
Ottoman Empire  
to reorganise the Ottoman Army

„As long as Sultan Abdulhamid and the present ruling classes remain in power, one may not speak of the rescue of Turkey“

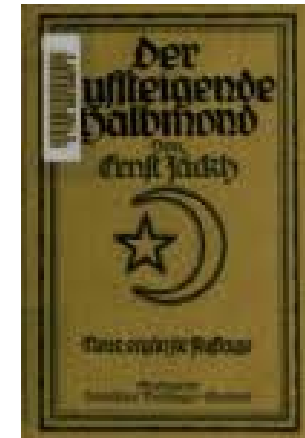
# „Goltz Generation“

Ottoman Officers, studied with Goltz, go to play prominent roles in Ottoman military and political life after 1908 (Young Turks)

- Goltz returns to Germany in 1895
- published several books on Turkey
- describes the Turks as noble nation of soldiers
- able to rescue their state
- if they would manage to dominate the non-Turkish communities in their country
- promoted close German-Turkish relations
- to help the Turks to rescue their state
- and to become a useful military ally for Germany

# 1908 The Young Turk's Revolution

- Re-Established the Ottoman Constitution; forced Sultan Abdulhamid II. to resign -> Constitutionalisation of the Ottoman Empire (aim of the Liberals)
- Ernst Jäckh „Der Aufsteigende Halbmond“
- “The rising crescent“
- Strong presence of officers (Goltz' Generation) in the Government -> militarization of the Turkish society (aim of the military Conservativs and Völkische)





## Common interests:

- Germany as a state of power
- strong enough to influence the new ***national*** Turkey
- and to challenge Great Britain in world politics

## II. Political „Turcophilia“ in Germany after World War I

- Germany and his ally, the Ottoman Empire, lost the War
- but why Turcophilia flourished after the War?

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- Germany and his ally, the Ottoman Empire, lost the War
- but why Turcophilia flourished after the War?
- > there were:
  - Soldiers and nurses (round about 22.000 men and woman) fighting and working at the Ottoman fronts
  - Ottoman Germans (round about 7000 men, women and children); were forced to left the Ottoman Empire
  - Common Germans and part of the German elite defending the old monarchist system and its values and politics

- The Turkish War of Liberation 1919-1923
- > revision of the Sèvres Peace Treaty
- > Lausanne Treaty 1923
  
- > Admiration in Germany for the only state that fought a war against the Paris Peace order

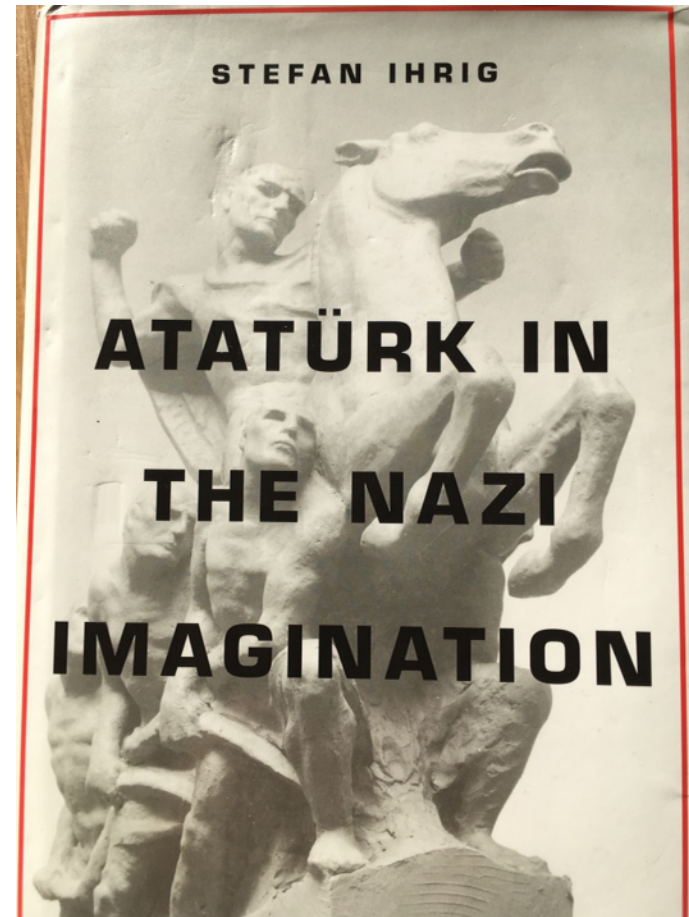
Turkey served as a *role model* for the **struggle against the Versailles Treaty and the whole political Peace Order**

Included the protest against the international relations as well as the political order of the democratic republic of Weimar

-> being pro-Turkish => nationalistic, anti-democratic  
=> part of larger debate on political and social modernism

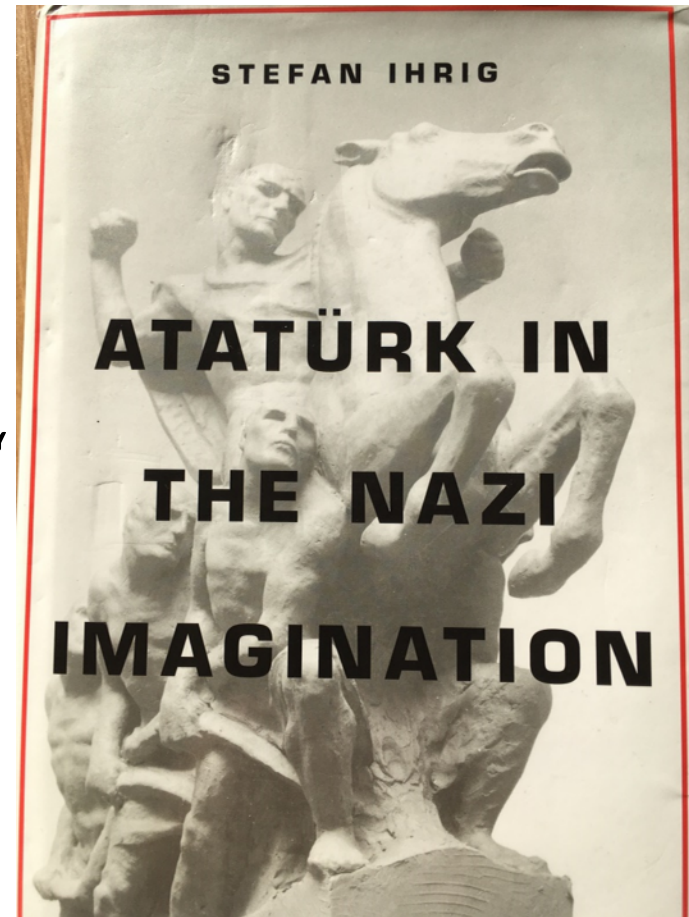
# Nazi „Turcophilia“

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„a Star in the Darkness“





# Turkey as the „Pioneer“ („Vorkämpfer“)

- „Völkischer Beobachter“ 6. February 1921
- „Today the Turks are the most youthful nation. The German nation will one day have no other choice but to apply Turkish methods as well.“

Heimatland  
27. October  
1923

Give Us an  
Ankara  
Government !

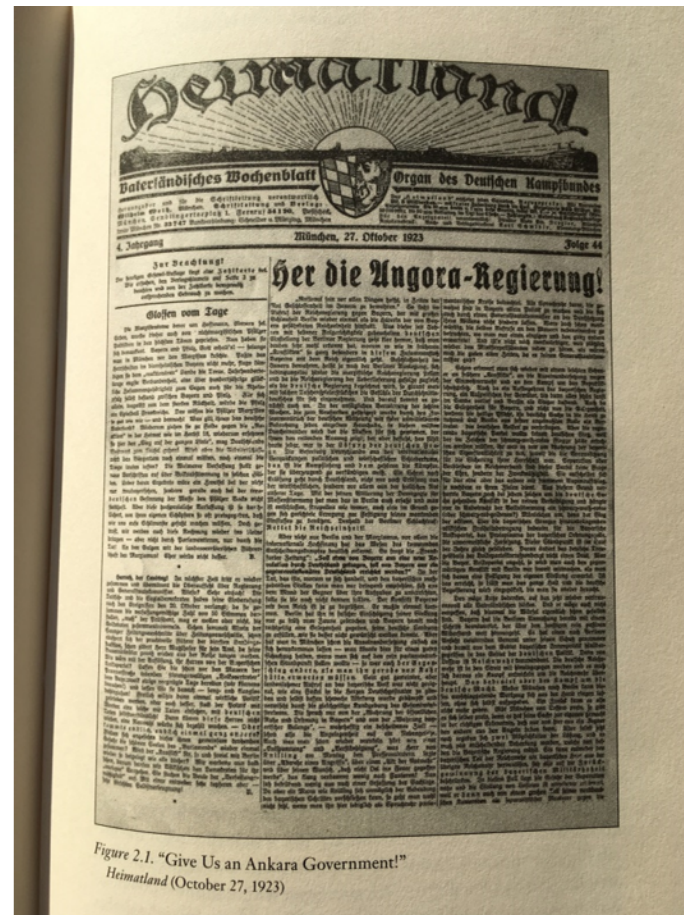


Figure 2.1. "Give Us an Ankara Government!"  
Heimatland (October 27, 1923)

## Atatürk as the first „Leader“ – „Führer“

Fritz Rössler 1934 “Mustafa Kemal“

We Germans can learn from the most recent Turkish history that a nation is not lost if it follows the Führer to freedom and honor in life and death, if it always keeps faith in him and only follows the law of honor, freedom and of the might of the nation.

### III. Stereotyps, narrations, images

Hans Barth „Türke, wehre Dich!“ - Turk, defend yourself!

Published in 1889

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Hans Barth

Born in Stuttgart (Württemberg), in 1862

Grown up in the Ottoman Empire

Working as a journalist for liberal Newspapers

Since 1886 in Italy as foreign correspondent for „Berliner Tageblatt“

- In reaction of the Hamidian Massacres against Armenians
- in reaction of Johannes Lepsius' first book on the Armenians
- Anti-religious (in liberal tradition)
- Anti-british (pro German World politics)

- *Gibt es irgend in der Welt, nicht bloss im Orient, ein Volk von Gentlemen, so ist dies das türkische. Jeder Kenner dieser braven, liebenswürdigen, grundehrlichen und dafür von aller Welt verlästerten und verleumdeten Nation, wird dies unterschreiben, auch wenn der Chorus der internationalen Langohren sein angelerntes Anathema schreit. Tatsächlich gibt es kaum eine Staats- und gesellschafterhaltende Tugend, die dem Türken — insbesondere dem anatolischen — nicht eigen wäre: Herzensgüte und Ehrlichkeit, Toleranz und Nächstenliebe, demokratischer Gleichheitssinn und unbedingte Loyalität gegen die Regierung, so drückend die staatliche Notwendigkeit auch auf ihm lasten möge, endlich natürlicher Anstand und Mässigkeit und eine von der Religiosität nicht in Banden gehaltenen Intelligenz. Bei seiner angeborenen Intelligenz, die nach Vambery und v. d. Goltz die des orientalischen Christen übertrifft (wenn auch nicht auf dem Gebiete des Handelns und Schacherns), ist der Türke der wahrhaft ideale, der gehorsamste und beste aller Staatsbürger der Welt.*

Se c'è al mondo e non solo in Oriente, un popolo di gentiluomini, allora si tratta del popolo turco. Ogni conoscitore di questa nazione onesta, gentile e sincera, e proprio per questo diffamata e calunniata sarà pronto a sottoscrivere ciò, anche se il coro internazionale dei vigliacchi continua ad urlare il suo anatema mandato a memoria. In verità non c'è una virtù volta a preservare lo stato o la società che non sia posseduta dai Turchi, specialmente quelli dell'Anatolia: bontà di cuore, sincerità, tolleranza e amore del prossimo, senso democratico dell'uguaglianza, assoluta lealtà nei confronti del governo, decoro e moderazione nonostante l'opprimente costrizione statale; e infine un'intelligenza non limitata dalla religiosità. Nella sua intelligenza congenita, che secondo Vambéry e von der Goltz supera quella dei cristiani orientali (per quanto non nel commercio e nei traffici), il turco è il cittadino ideale, il più ubbidiente e il migliore dei cittadini del mondo



# **„Im Übrigen ist die Türkenbegeisterung eine bekannte deutsche Krankheit“**

„Besides this, Turkophilia is a well known German political  
disease“

Wilhelm Padel, 1933

German diplomat, one of the rare German democratic  
republican in the Weimar republic