

# Shattering Empires

*The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and  
Russian Empires, 1908–1918*

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Kurdish cities, and even included Kurdish cities in its army.<sup>17</sup> Ignoring the demand for knowledge of the Kurds, Russian scholars by the middle of the nineteenth century were constructing multiple studies on them.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Russian military ethnographers began systematically gathering and analyzing information on the numbers and characteristics of the Kurds of Russian territories and Iraq. Russia's interest in ethnography was not in general, but was part of a post-European trend of categorizing and classifying ethnic population groups according to ethnicity in border regions and investigating their behavior during wars.<sup>19</sup> Ethnicity became a prism through which officers and politicians perceived the political world and organized power.<sup>20</sup>

The reform movement in the Congress of Berlin in 1878 coupled with the loss of influence over Macedonia and the Far East led to a rethinking in Russia as to what was to be the Ottoman Near East. Russia might feel long ago resigned that it is Ottoman and Iranian lands, and it had little to fear from them. Indeed, since Russian administration was Ottoman weakness as an opponent in capital, as the foreign interest and that of the Russian staff had brought in 1878 when they pushed the war with the Ottoman empire as an easy way to remove Russia in the East's region.

But if the rethinking no longer needed to be done about the Ottoman state as a power, it did mean about the expanding presence of the other European powers along its southern borders. British, German, and French diplomats, spies, businessmen, and missionaries in Anatolia and Iraq were opening consulates, laying railroads, building schools, trading, and providing other activities. An American scholar described the region as "heavily crowded" with European consulates.<sup>21</sup> In an effort to manage its rivalry with Britain, Russia in 1878 had agreed with Britain to divide Iraq into three zones and manage the northern part. Russia and British officials carefully provided recommendations that would suggest partition, but the war with which the Europeans agreed that will be Iraq was not lost in Anatolia.

Nor were the facts that Russia had added 400 more kilometers to its 450-km Caucasian border with the Ottoman empire and had even begun settling Slavs in northern Iran. Istanbul's

<sup>17</sup> *Imperial War*.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of Russian studies on Kurds, see A. A. Tuganov, A. A. Shakhmatov, and I. A. Shakhmatov, eds., *Современные исследования о курдах* (Moscow, 1997) and A. A. Shakhmatov, *Историческое значение*, 1997, pp. 25.

<sup>19</sup> Peter Hopkirk, "The Russian in Russia and in Transcaucasia: Expansion, Nationality and Regional Politics in Late Imperial and Soviet Russia," in A. A. Tuganov, *История и этнография Востока* (Moscow, 1997), pp. 11-12 and 13-14; Peter Hopkirk and David Hopkirk, *История Востока* (Moscow, 1997), pp. 11-12.

<sup>20</sup> Bruce M. Wilson, *Imperial Russia: The Near East, 1800-1914* (London, 1964), 101.

