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The Twilight of the Tanzimat and The Hamidian Regime

THE ACCESSION to the throne of heir apparent Abdülaziz, after Sultan Abdülmecid's long-expected death in 1861, marked one of the smoothest successions in late Ottoman history. This owed much to the progressive seepage of power from the royal court to the Sublime Porte, which continued to predominate throughout the 1860s. But as Sultan Abdülaziz matured, he began to challenge the status quo. The contest for political power between the palace and the bureaucracy intensified after the death of Âli Pasha, the last great reforming statesman of the Tanzimat, in 1871. The Tanzimat reformers, who had labored to construct a Weberian administrative structure founded on rational-legal authority independent of the throne, now saw the realization of their ambition threatened. An uneasy equilibrium between court and Porte prevailed until the deposition of the sultan in 1876 and the accession of Abdülhamid II to the throne. This event, however, heralded a bitter struggle between the sultan and the Sublime Porte, which the former won decisively. In 1895, the Sublime Porte made its last gambit for power, demanding a return to responsible government and the rest to the bureaucracy. The failure of this attempt resulted in the absolute domination of the political system by the palace until the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.

The favored statesman of Sultan Abdülaziz, Mahmud Nedim Pasha, professed the belief that "happiness and peace in the affairs of state derive from loyalty."¹ Labeled "Old Turkey" by foreign diplomats, the statesmen loyal to Abdülaziz were not hostile to the reforms as such, but questioned the undue influence of British and French advice over Ottoman policy. This line of criticism had become fashionable even in the ranks of the bureaucracy, as the negative aspects of the Tanzimat policies became apparent. A particular source of grievance was the failure of the Great Powers to keep their

¹ [Mahmud Nedim], *Sadr-ı âzâm Mahmud Nedim Paşa'nın Âyine-i Devlete Dair Kitabı*, Fatih Millet Library Mss., no. Trh. 1022, p. 7.

promises (e.g., on keeping Wallachia and Moldavia separate) even as they stepped up the pressure for more extensive reforms (e.g., the French diplomatic note of 1867). Many felt that the reforms had exacerbated the economic crisis of the empire, fostered Ottoman dependency on European loans, failed to stifle ethnic and religious separatism encouraged by Great Britain and France, and provoked unrest among Muslims. These last perceived the reforms as a capitulation to European dictates that conferred benefits upon non-Muslims at their expense. In 1859, a group of ulema and low-ranking bureaucrats conspired to exploit Muslim resentment and launch a rebellion, but their movement was swiftly suppressed.² In a dramatic turn of events in 1871, the sultan backed a number of marginalized statesmen in a bid to undermine the independence of the Sublime Porte. The reforming statesman, Midhat Pasha, at the helm of the Young Turkey Party, fought back to preserve the Sublime Porte's political domination at home and the pro-British orientation abroad. The sultan, yielding to reformist pressure, appointed Midhat Pasha grand vizier, but then quickly dismissed him.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL MOMENT AND THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR OF 1877–1878

This internal struggle for power took place against the backdrop of the reopening of the Eastern question in Europe and the rise of separatist pressures in the Balkans. Since the end of the Crimean War, the Great Powers had sought to avert conflict among themselves by upholding formal Ottoman territorial integrity. They managed the challenge of change by allowing cosmetic alterations to the territorial status quo, in accordance with the principle that any degree of autonomy was acceptable, as long as the region in question remained *de jure* within the Ottoman fold. Several factors, however, served to alter both the balance of power in Europe and European strategic interests in the Near East. First, in 1871 the rising power of Germany took the place of Prussia in Central Europe. Second, in the same year Russia nullified the Black Sea clauses of the Paris Treaty of 1856, shaking off the restrictions imposed by the victors of the Crimean War. Third, the Suez Canal was inaugurated in 1869, creating a vital trade and military link between East and West.

However, it was the conjunction of the renewed threat from Russia with increasing instability in the Balkans that posed the gravest menace to the empire. Traditional Pan-Slavic sentiments represented by such thinkers as

² Uluğ İğdemir, *Kuleli Vakası Hakkında Bir Araştırma* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1937), p. 38.

František Palacký were being transformed into a Russian doctrine of Slav liberation from Ottoman and Austrian rule at the hands of such Russian pundits as Nikolai Danilevskii and Rostislav Fadeyev. This transformation inevitably linked Russian expansionism to Balkan nationalism. Even those Russian leaders who opposed an ideological foreign policy, such as Foreign Minister Prince Alexandr Mikhailovitch Gorchakov, found their hands tied by the new pro-Slav fervor in Russia. When Slav peasants revolted against their Muslim landowners in Herzegovina in July 1875, the post-Crimean status quo crumbled. The old mixture of cosmetic reform and enhanced self-government no longer supplied the formula for stability. Ottoman public opinion reacted strongly against the idea of granting further autonomy to a region heavily populated by Muslims; Russia, as the champion of Pan-Slavism, could no longer be satisfied with superficial change; and Serbia and Montenegro—ostensibly Ottoman territories with an enormous stake in any future Balkan settlement—refused to look on passively while Ottoman troops suppressed the rebellion. Count Gyula Andrásy, Austria-Hungary's foreign minister, spared no effort in the attempt to sketch out a compromise that would uphold the status quo. But the situation deteriorated nonetheless. A fresh rebellion broke out in Bulgaria in April 1876. It was put down with a heavy hand, prompting the notorious moral crusade of British Liberal Party leader William Gladstone against the "Turkish race," which he labeled "the one great anti-human specimen of humanity."³ The replacement, in the British imagination, of the post-1848 image of liberal Ottomans with one of bloodthirsty Muslim tyrants brutally oppressing defenseless Christians, made a repetition of Britain's earlier displays of support for her beleaguered Ottoman ally all but impossible.

The deteriorating situation in the Balkans and mounting disorder in the capital resulted in the dismissal of Mahmud Nedim Pasha, leader of the Old Turkey Party, in May 1876. The same month, pro-reform bureaucrats led a coup d'état and deposed Sultan Abdülaziz, who committed suicide or was murdered (accounts vary) within a few days of his dethronement. In July 1876, Serbia and Montenegro declared war on their supposed sovereign. The new sultan, Murad V, was known as a staunch supporter of the reformist party in the Sublime Porte, but his already weak mental condition worsened following the coup and the subsequent death of his uncle, and resulted in his deposition by fatwā after a reign of only three months. Murad V's younger brother, Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), came to power promising to promulgate a constitution.

The idea of a constitution first emerged in the Ottoman context in the political vacuum that opened up following the destruction of the Janissaries

³ W[illiam] E[wart] Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East* (London: John Murray, 1876), p. 13.

in 1826. The obliteration of the traditional balance of power within the Ottoman system made possible the rise of the bureaucracy to power, thereby enabling the reform movement as a whole to flourish. The centralizing enterprise of the bureaucrats necessarily weakened political participation at all levels of government. By the second decade of the Tanzimat, demands for a check on central power were being voiced throughout the empire, most coherently by the Young Ottomans. In 1868, the state responded to these concerns by forming the State Council, an appointed body charged with monitoring official conduct and its conformity with the law. The opposition, led by the Young Ottomans, found this measure insufficient, as this body was not founded on the representative principle and thus did not reflect popular opinion.⁴ Partly as a matter of principle, and partly in an attempt to subvert the hegemony of the Sublime Porte, they claimed that “the rule of law was preferable to the administration of talented bureaucrats” and that only the people could legislate on the basis of the real needs of society.⁵ Legislation “adapted from European laws and regulations, without taking national morals and traditions into consideration,” should be rejected.⁶

The proposed alternative to rule by officialdom was constitutional government, under which a constitution would restrict the arbitrary power of the bureaucrats,⁷ while an assembly would make the voice of the Muslim masses heard, making “public opinion in effect the sovereign [governing] through the people’s representatives.”⁸ While the constitutionalist movement was primarily a Muslim phenomenon, similar calls for greater representation issued from the non-Muslim elites of the empire. For, although the government-sponsored formation of assemblies of laymen in the three major non-Muslim religious communities between 1862 and 1865 dramatically increased political participation in these groups, these assemblies served mainly as a tool in the hands of the Tanzimat statesmen to weaken the clergy, and in any case empowered only a narrow secular elite that remained deaf to the appeals of the community at large. Reform of communitarian governance also gave rise to a widespread Muslim grievance against the state for having opened a gap between the level of political representation afforded to non-Muslims and Muslims. Thus, at the popular level, Ottoman constitutionalism was fundamentally a reaction to the dictatorship of the bureaucracy coupled with resentment against the preferential treatment granted to non-Muslims.

⁴ “Al-ḥaqq ya’lū wa lā yu’lā ‘alayh,” *Hürriyet*, no. 1, June 29, 1868, pp. 2–3.

⁵ “Efkâr-ı Âmmе ve Erbâb-ı Kabiliyet,” *Terakki*, no. 197 (August 7, 1869), pp. 3–4.

⁶ See “Acele Etmeyelim,” *Vakit*, June 6, 1876, and “Halimizi Bir Kere Düşünelim,” *İstikbâl*, August 9, 1875.

⁷ See “Me’murlar Mes’ul Olmalıdır,” *İstikbâl*, July 4, 1876.

⁸ “Efkâr-ı Âmmе ve Erbâb-ı Kabiliyet,” *Terakki*, no. 197, p. 4.

Significantly, the rhetorical basis for the constitutionalist critique of bureaucratic centralism in the Ottoman Empire was essentially conservative and Islamic, and became more so with time. This was not surprising, for the constitutionalists sought allies and legitimacy from among those elites that had lost most from the ascendancy of the Sublime Porte, elites of which the ulema formed a prominent component. The ulema viewed constitutionalism principally as a means of regaining political power. Symbolic of the growing influence of the ulema on the movement as a whole was the shift from the initial secular depiction of a *nizâm-ı serbestâne* (free order)⁹ to the more Islamic *usûl-i meşveret* (system of consultation), paying tribute to the Islamic concept of *mashwarah* (consultation). The idea of a representative assembly was at first referred to in the press as *Şûra-yı Ümmet*,¹⁰ again a reference to the Islamic value of consultation. The traditional duality of the Ottoman legal system (with sultan law coexisting alongside the sharī'a) made it easier for proponents to claim that constitutionalism was not a forbidden innovation and was in complete accordance with Islam. It was no coincidence that advocates of the movement referred to the proposed Ottoman Constitution as a *Kanun-i Esasî* (Basic Law), stressing the continuity of the new legislation with the sultan law of old.

At the same time, a constitution and a parliament continued to be regarded by the secular elite as symbols of modernization and progress, without which the Ottoman Empire risked extinction. A common line of thought ran like this: "Is there any absolutist government [left in Europe] except the Russian state? . . . Since European public opinion is like a tidal wave flooding in that [liberal] direction, and the Sublime State is regarded as a European state, it will be impossible for us to survive if we set ourselves against the entire [Western] world."¹¹ It was impossible to overlook the fact that constitutional regimes and representative bodies emerged in all the regions that gained autonomy or semi-independence from the empire in the nineteenth century: Serbia reintroduced its *Skupština* in 1805, Rumania formed a bicameral legislature in 1866, Mount Lebanon established a mixed assembly in 1864, and Crete was endowed with a General Assembly in 1866 by imperial edict. This pattern was not limited to the Christian-dominated regions of the periphery. Tunis, which formally remained an Ottoman province until 1881, proclaimed the first constitution in the Muslim world in 1861, while Khedive Ismā'il set up his *Majlis Shūrā al-Nuwwāb* in Egypt

⁹ Mustafa Fâzıl, *Paris'den Bir Mektub: Sultan Abdülaziz Han'a Cemiyet-i Ahrar Re'isi Mısırlı Mustafa Fâzıl Paşa Merhum Tarafından Gönderilen Mektubun Tercümesidir* (Istanbul: Artin Asadoryan Matbaası, 1326 [1908]), pp. 17–18.

¹⁰ See, for example, "Varaka: Birinci Fıkra," *Vakit*, June 15, 1876.

¹¹ [Abdülhamid Ziyaüddin], *Ziya Paşa'nın Rüyanâmesi*, IUL, İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal Mss., no. 2461, f. 2.

in 1866. Constitutionalists were often heard to argue: "Montenegro, Serbia, and Egypt each have [representative] councils . . . Are we at a lower level of culture than even the savages of Montenegro?"¹² Similarly: "Even Greece has a [constitution] and parliament."¹³ By comparison, it was argued, the Ottoman administration that had emerged since the early nineteenth century was a "Bedouin government in the heart of Europe, exercising a form of absolutism fit only for tribes."¹⁴

Although the constitutional movement originally grew out of opposition to the iron rule of the bureaucracy, the reassertion of sultanic power beginning in the 1870s prepared the way for the joining of forces between the bureaucrats and their erstwhile critics. The reemergence of the court as a center of power threatened the bureaucrats' position, driving them to make common cause with the constitutionalists against the possibility of a sultanic absolutism devoid of reformist content and uninhibited by legal restraints. As an Ottoman statesman later reflected, "the Constitution of 93 [1876] was in fact an undertaking by the very bureaucrats of the despotic regime, who intended to curtail the absolute dominance of the sultan and establish a counter-balancing jurisdiction to match his authority."¹⁵

A final consideration fueling the constitutionalist movement in the late Tanzimat era was the desire to stave off European pressures for pro-Christian reform. A constitutional regime, it was argued, would turn all Ottoman subjects into equal citizens, thereby ending all community-specific privileges within the empire and removing the logical basis for European criticism.

Thus, Ottoman constitutionalism emerged over a half-century out of a complex set of impulses, bringing together conservatives and liberals, ulema and secularists, Muslims and non-Muslims, bureaucrats and their opponents under the wing of one broad movement with the stated aim of instituting constitutional government in the Ottoman Empire. Not surprisingly, the first Ottoman experience with a constitution reflected these tensions and contradictions.

On the programmatic level, the proponents of a constitution faced two major dilemmas. One was the familiar conundrum of how to broaden representation without encouraging nationalist separatism; the other was the enormous doctrinal challenge of reconciling constitutional rule with the religion of Islam and the institution of the Caliphate. No amount of casuistry could gloss over the fundamental incompatibility between the doctrinal supremacy of the *sharīʿa* and the political conception of a man-made constitution embodying the supreme law in the land. A constitution could be defended from an Islamic viewpoint only insofar as it was ultimately

¹² "Wa-shāwirhum fi'l-amr," *Hürriyet*, no. 1, pp. 3–4; see also *Sabah*, May 28, 1876.

¹³ "Kavânin-i Esasiye," *Vakit*, June 8, 1876.

¹⁴ "Mütalâa," *Vakit*, June 5, 1876.

¹⁵ Saʿid Halim, *Buhranlarımız: Meşrutîyet* (Istanbul: Şems Matbaası, 1335 [1919]), p. 3.

subordinated to the *sharī'a* and did not contradict it. Fashioning a legal order in complete harmony with divine law was a tall order in any society, and one which neither the French constitutionalists nor their American counterparts had to face. In the context of a highly legalistic religion like Islam (which in this respect resembles Judaism), it was well-nigh impossible. The second challenge confronting the Ottoman constitutionalists was the set of problems likely to result from genuine representation in a polyethnic, multid denominational empire. For instance, bona fide representation would entail non-Muslim participation in the legislative process. To assuage Muslim concerns, the constitutionalists underscored the "consultative" character of the parliament¹⁶ and dismissed as alarmist claims that non-Muslims would attempt to draft laws (contrary to the *sharī'a*) or even request "the abandonment of the *sharī'a*."¹⁷ Similarly, they maintained that the parliament would not be in a position to issue a civil code, which only a council of ulema could prepare.¹⁸ As these examples indicate, Ottoman constitutionalists had limited room for doctrinal maneuver: on the one hand, they faced the danger of stripping the constitution of its meaning through surrender to the primacy of Islamic law; on the other, they risked the potentially devastating loss of conservative support for the constitutionalist project.

But Muslim scholars were not the only opponents of full constitutionalism. Even the most fervent supporters of a constitution from within the bureaucracy did not envision the sort of constitutional government that would seriously curtail their authority and transfer some of it to a body of elected representatives. That, they believed, would mean the end of top-down reform, which necessitated a strong government willing to implement change, if necessary against the will of the masses. Moreover, a genuinely liberal constitution and a truly representative government would promote separatism.

One school of thought within the bureaucracy carried such arguments to their logical conclusion, and rejected the very notion of a constitution. Instead, they suggested various measures of administrative reform to enhance local participation in politics and increase state supervision of government agents.¹⁹ A bolder proposal called for the establishment of a partly elected, partly appointed consultative body with quotas for the representation of the various religious communities.²⁰ Like the Slavophile revival of the *Zemsky Sobor*, the sixteenth-century Russian advisory council to the Tsar, many reformist statesmen supported the reestablishment of an adapted version of

¹⁶ "Şûra-yı Ümmet," *İstikbâl*, May 17, 1876.

¹⁷ See *Sabah*, May 29, 1876.

¹⁸ "Meşrutiyet İdare: Beyân-ı Haki[ka]t," *Vakit*, October 27, 1876.

¹⁹ See, for example, "Devlet-i Aliyye'nin Tamamiyet-i Mülkiyesi ve Ânın Medâr-ı Vikâyesi," *Terakki*, no. 149 (July 20, 1869), p. 3.

²⁰ "Tavassutun Reddi—Meclis-i Umumî'nin Te'sisi," *Vakit*, September 28, 1876.

the old Ottoman consultative assemblies that used to advise the sultan in times of crisis. They proposed the formation of a largely appointed council that would proffer advice to the sultan on behalf of the people and monitor the fair application of the law. Variants of this proposal continued to inspire opponents of an elected parliament, including prominent Young Turks, well into the 1890s.²¹

The dethronement of Abdülaziz paved the way for an open discussion of reform in the Ottoman press. In an edict marking his accession to the throne, Murad V accentuated the necessity for “basing the administration of the state upon a strong principle.”²² This was a reference to a constitution. A leading conservative statesman countered: “we should be glad that we have not adopted a constitution by way of imitation. What we need is not a constitution, but institutions.”²³ The ulema participated in the debate, maintaining that, although consultation was indeed enjoined in two Qur’anic verses, the reference was only to consultation *among Muslims*. Consequently, a constitutional regime that led to a parliament with non-Muslim deputies would violate Islamic principles.²⁴ The constitutionalists, headed by Midhat Pasha, rejected these views. They maintained that the only way to block the imposition of pro-Christian reforms by the Great Powers was to promulgate a constitution that would turn all subjects into citizens, equal before the law.²⁵ Rebuffing the Islamist critique, they asserted that both the constitution and the parliament would be in full accordance with Islam.²⁶

Having gained the upper hand, the pro-reform group assembled a constitutional commission made up of twenty-eight eminent statesmen and ulema, including Midhat Pasha and several Young Ottomans. Their attempt to draft a constitution triggered a major showdown between liberal constitutionalists and the assertive young sultan. The sultan insisted on protecting his sovereign rights, compelling the liberals to make significant concessions. The most important of which was a clause reminiscent of the French *lois des suspects* of 1793: it stipulated that the sultan could exile, without trial, individuals who endangered public safety. Many liberals believed that ceding such a whimsical power to the sultan would imperil

²¹ [Mehmed] Mourad, *Le palais de la Yildiz et la Sublime Porte: Le véritable mal d'Orient* (Paris: Imprimerie Centrale, 1895), pp. 43ff.

²² See *Sabah*, May 27, 1876 and “İstibşâr,” *Vakit*, June 4, 1876.

²³ İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadrazamlar*, 4 (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1940), p. 635.

²⁴ Ahmed Midhat, *Üss-i İnkılâb*, 2 (Istanbul: Takvim-i Vekayî Matbaası, 1295 [1878]), pp. 316ff.

²⁵ Mahmud Celâleddin, *Mir'at-ı Hakikat*, 1 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1326 [1908]), p. 190.

²⁶ See, for example, H., “Meşrutiyet İdare: Beyân-ı Haki[ka]t,” *Vakit*, October 27, 1876; and *Sabah*, May 29, 1876.

the successful implementation of the constitution. The exigencies of the international crisis, however, compelled them to concede. Its major deficiencies notwithstanding, the 119-article constitution represented a major step toward the limitation of the power of the sultan and his government. Moreover, it showed the potential for bridging the gap between constitutional government and Islamic law: although in subsequent years some ulema vehemently opposed the legislative rights granted to the parliament by the constitution,²⁷ many others approved them as compatible with Islam.²⁸ The constitution was modeled on the liberal Belgian Constitution of 1831,²⁹ which served as a basis for many constitutions adopted in former Ottoman dominions (e.g., Bulgaria, Serbia, and Egypt), but it was adapted to suit Ottoman conditions. For instance, the document recognized Islam as the religion of the state (art. 11) and underscored the sultan's duties as the "protector of the Muslim faith" (art. 4). But in the editorial process, the Belgian source was also stripped of much of its liberal content. As a consequence, the executive branch of government was heavily privileged over the legislative—legislative authority was limited to pre-defined areas of competence while the crucial principle of ministerial responsibility to the parliament was eliminated—and basic rights found no expression in the constitution, including the right to form political parties or assemble peacefully.

The international crisis reached its peak while work on the constitution was still under way. Although Ottoman armies won noteworthy military victories against the Serbians in August and September 1876, a Russian ultimatum prevented them from reaping the fruits of their battlefield accomplishments. The British, fearing Russian military intervention, proposed an international conference to discuss the Eastern Question. The Ottoman authorities accepted the proposal at gunpoint when Lord Derby informed them that the alternative was war with Russia with no prospect of British intervention. A few days before the conference convened in the Ottoman capital on December 23, 1876, the sultan, in a series of well-coordinated moves evidently intended to appease his European guests, appointed Midhat Pasha as grand vizier and then promulgated the constitution. Neither of these initiatives impressed the representatives of the Great Powers or the leaders of the anti-Ottoman campaign in Europe. In Britain, "public opinion was . . . formed and guided by men animated by a blind hatred of everything Turkish, who represented the new constitution as a

²⁷ See, for example, Mustafa Sabri, "Edeb-i Tahrir," *Beyan'ül-Hak*, no. 15 [January 11, 1909], pp. 326–8.

²⁸ Manastırlı İsmail Hakkı, "Kuvve-i Teşri'îye," *Beyan'ül-Hak*, no. 17 [January 25, 1909], pp. 381–2.

²⁹ Both the French constitution of 1848 and the Prussian one of 1851 were used in the preparation of the document, but the Belgian Constitution served as the main model.

sham or 'paper' constitution."³⁰ Gladstone made a sarcastic entry in his diary, which read: "Turkish Constitution!!!"³¹

The conference participants suggested exceptionally harsh terms for ending the crisis. They proposed to establish three large provinces—Eastern Bulgaria, Western Bulgaria, and Bosnia-Herzegovina—which would be administered by Christian governors, appointed to five-year terms with the consent of the Great Powers. Even Midhat Pasha, characterized by some as one who "always wished to follow English advice,"³² described these terms as the realization of the "Russian dream of establishing small autonomic States" on Ottoman territory.³³ European and Ottoman interpretations of the empire's territorial integrity had never been further apart. The Marquis of Salisbury remarked wryly that "earlier concessions on the part of Sultan Mahmoud would probably have preserved Greece as an integral part of the Turkish Empire."³⁴ Midhat Pasha responded that "he resigned himself to the will of God, if it was decreed that the Empire should fall, but no Turk would yield" to the terms being imposed by the Great Powers.³⁵ In a final, desperate move, he sent an Armenian confidant to Lord Derby with an offer to place implementation of the Ottoman Constitution under European supervision. The emissary returned empty-handed.³⁶ When, on January 18, 1877, an Ottoman Grand Council rejected the terms proposed by the conference, the stage was set for a new Russo-Ottoman war, which began on April 24, 1877.

Throughout this crisis a hurried election campaign—the first in the history of the empire—was under way to select deputies for the first Ottoman parliament. The elections, held between January and March 1877, were an imperfect affair. No elections were held in autonomous regions that had their own representative institutions. Thus, Egypt, Montenegro, Rumania, Samos, Serbia, and Tunisia were not represented in the Ottoman parliament; the local council in Mount Lebanon decided not to send deputies to Istanbul; while in Crete, the Muslim community elected one deputy, but the Greek Orthodox community, in an act of defiance, declined to send a representative. Instead of overcoming sectarian divisions through

³⁰ Henry Elliot, "The Death of Abdul Aziz and of Turkish Reform," *The Nineteenth Century and After* 23/132 (February 1888), p. 276.

³¹ *The Gladstone Diaries with Cabinet Minutes and Prime-Ministerial Correspondence*, 9 (January 1875–December 1880), ed. H.C.G. Matthew (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 183.

³² Elliot to Derby, Constantinople, December 19, 1876 (telegraphic), PRO/F.O. 424/46.

³³ Elliot to Derby, Pera, December 28, 1876 (telegraphic), PRO/F.O. 424/37.

³⁴ Salisbury to Derby, Pera, January 1, 1877/no. 78 (Confidential), PRO/F.O. 424/37.

³⁵ Salisbury to Derby, Pera, January 1, 1877/no. 78 (Confidential), PRO/F.O. 424/37.

³⁶ Bekir Sıtkı Baykal, "Midhat Paşa'nın Gizli Bir Siyasi Teşebbüsü," *III. Türk Tarih Kongresi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1948), pp. 473–4.

the institution of universal representation, the elections reinforced the communitarian basis of society by allotting quotas to the various religious communities based on projections of population figures derived from the census of 1844; Istanbul, for example, was to be represented by five Muslims and five non-Muslims (two Greeks, two Armenians, and a Jew). In order to appease the European powers, the Ottoman administration drafted an exceedingly uneven representational scheme that favored the European provinces by an average 2:1 ratio. As a result, the Asiatic provinces were represented in the first chamber by one deputy for every 162,148 male inhabitants (and Tripoli in Barbary was represented by one deputy for every 505,000 male inhabitants), while the European provinces as a whole were represented by one deputy for every 82,882 male inhabitants.³⁷

The electoral process envisioned in the constitution was implemented only in the Ottoman capital. The authorities divided the city into twenty election districts, and entrusted resident ulema and district headmen with the nomination of candidates for an electoral college composed of two electors from each district. Taxpaying males aged twenty-five or older were eligible to vote. The forty elected members of the electoral college then held a secret ballot to elect deputies to the parliament. Participation was extremely low and, with the exception of the educated elite, most people were indifferent.

Elections in the provinces were held under a set of temporary regulations issued before the promulgation of the constitution and to a certain extent in conflict with its provisions.³⁸ The elected members of the existing local councils wrote a set number of names of Muslim and non-Muslim residents eligible to become deputies on ballots. Then regional election committees, over which governors presided, counted these ballots and forwarded lists of those who had won the most votes to the State Council in Istanbul for approval. Since the governors held sway over the local councils, they managed to manipulate the elections throughout the empire. As a result, the Chamber of Deputies contained numerous former officials and tax collectors favored by various governors. Although the Chamber was to have 130 deputies, only 119 were elected for the first session and 113 for the second. Of these, 71 deputies (64 in the second session) were Muslim, 44 (43) were Christian, and 4 (6) were Jewish. A Muslim deputy represented 133,367 (147,953) male inhabitants, a Christian represented 107,557 (110,058), and a Jew 18,750 (12,500).³⁹ Thus, Christians were slightly overrepresented. As for the Jews, a truly proportional system would have meant almost no representation at all.

³⁷ Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), pp. 138–41.

³⁸ *Düstûr*, II/1 (Istanbul, 1329 [1911]), pp. 14–15.

³⁹ Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period*, p. 144.



FIGURE 10. Ottoman deputies 1877 (province/electoral district). a. Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Ahmed Vefik Efendi (later Pasha, Senator, and Grand Vizier); appointed on February 5, 1877. b. Hacı Mehmed Mes'ud Efendi (Diyar-ı Bekir/Diyar-ı Bekir). c. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Barzanjī (the Hejaz/Medina). d. Georgios Athinadoros (Edirne/Tekfurdağı). e. Ahmed Muhtar (Erzurum/Erzurum). f. Petraki Petrovitch (Bosnia/Sarajevo). [Wikipedia.org/wiki/image:Ahmed_Vefik](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Vefik); *Resimli Kitab*, 1/4 (December 1908), pp. 317, 320, 324–25, 332.

The first Ottoman parliament convened on March 19, 1877 on the brink of war. It survived less than a year, holding only two sessions: one from March 19 to June 28, 1877, and the other from December 13, 1877 to February 13, 1878. The sultan was quick to exercise the prerogatives granted him by the new constitution in order to dismiss Midhat Pasha and banish him from the empire soon after the failure of the Istanbul Conference. On February 13, 1878, once again relying on his constitutional rights, the sultan “temporarily prorogued” the parliament.⁴⁰ From this point on, the

⁴⁰ Hakkı Tarık Us, *Meclis-i Meb'usan, 1293–1877*, 2 (Istanbul: Vakıf Kütüphanesi, 1954), p. 407.

constitution remained confined to the pages of the official yearbooks, where it was published year after year, while the temporary prorogation of parliament lasted more than three decades. The first constitutional era (1876–78) can hardly be considered constitutional in the strict sense of the word. The sultan remained to a certain extent above the constitution, while the Ottoman parliament acquired real legislative powers only after 1909. Still, it served as an important precedent for the Second Constitutional Period (1908–18) and marks the starting point for the Turkish Republic's elongated journey toward democracy.

The Russo-Ottoman war of 1877–78 was a disaster for the Ottomans. Despite a heroic defensive battle at Plevne (Pleven) and sporadic successes on the Eastern front, their resistance was feeble. The Russians, free of the fear of British naval intervention, enjoyed their finest hour vis-à-vis the Ottomans, forcing them to sign one of the most severe peace treaties in history. The San Stefano Treaty of March 3, 1878 marked the high point of Russian expansion at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. Not only did the treaty award Russia certain territorial gains, it granted independence and additional territory to the ostensibly Ottoman states of Montenegro, Rumania, and Serbia. Moreover, the treaty stipulated the establishment of an autonomous Bulgarian principality on land stretching from the Danube to the Aegean. Finally, it committed the Ottoman government to the implementation of reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina which it had rejected at the Istanbul Conference. Luckily for the Ottomans, the other Great Powers, and especially Great Britain and Austria-Hungary, were not prepared to accept this extensive revision of the status quo by fait accompli. Russian territorial gains at the expense of the Ottomans were one thing; the wholesale transformation of the Balkans into a Slavic federation under Russian hegemony was another matter altogether.

The Berlin Congress of June 1878 was one of the last great conferences convened to settle a major international problem in the era before the First World War. The attempt to resolve the Eastern Question once and for all was an ambitious one, from which the Ottomans emerged very much the losers. From Iran to Montenegro, states gained territory at Ottoman expense. During the lead-up to the Congress, Great Britain secured Cyprus from the Ottoman Empire in return for a promise to defend the Asiatic provinces of the empire against any future Russian attack. Russia acquired parts of Bessarabia (ceded to Moldavia in 1856) and the provinces of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum. Austria-Hungary won the right to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina and establish military control over Yenipazar (Novibazar), which divides Montenegro from Serbia; Montenegro, Serbia, and Rumania gained formal independence from the Ottoman Empire as well as territory hitherto under direct Ottoman control. The terms were sweetened somewhat by the shrinking of the Bulgarian principality envisioned in the San Stefano



FIGURE 11. The settlement in the Balkans and the Near East after the Berlin Congress of 1878.

Treaty; the southern parts of Bulgaria were returned to the empire and became the autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia. The conference also agreed to restore Macedonia to the empire on condition that pro-Christian reforms would be implemented. In the Six Provinces of Eastern Anatolia, the empire was to enact reforms favoring the Armenians and take the measures necessary to protect them from Kurdish and Circassian encroachments.

Thus, although originally convoked to settle the Eastern Question by avoiding the mistakes of the past—that is, the creation of autonomous regions and demands for reforms favorable to certain ethnic or religious groups—the Berlin Congress ended up repeating them. Reformed Macedonia, in particular, was destined to saddle European diplomacy with a most burdensome problem in the decades to come, as it turned into a battleground for armed groups whose excesses were designed to provoke Ottoman retaliation, leading in turn to foreign intervention. Subsequent events in Macedonia played a significant role in the background to the Young Turk Revolution, the Balkan Wars, and the First World War.

THE HAMIDIAN REGIME

Following the effective dissolution of the parliamentary order, the sultan began to fashion new methods of administration that resulted in the longest-lasting regime in late Ottoman history. One of his confidants wrote a series of articles in which he described the new regime as one that granted freedoms within the strict boundaries of the law.⁴¹ Ironically, the sultan, like his predecessors, the Tanzimat statesmen, believed in the idea of a Rechtsstaat, but he interpreted it quite differently.⁴² In his view, the strict application of law could also provide the foundations for autocracy,⁴³ which should not be confused with the Islamic concept of despotism (*İstibdād/İstibdad*) or with modern dictatorships.⁴⁴ Superimposing the Islamic principle of justice on this notion of a legal autocracy, he created an authoritarian regime that he believed to be the antithesis of absolutism.⁴⁵

A key change brought about by the new sultan was the reduction of the Sublime Porte, which had grown over the preceding three decades into a powerful and independent branch of government, to its former role as a subservient administrative arm of the state. The bureaucrats of the Sublime Porte made their last bid for power in 1895 when, at the height of a crisis

⁴¹ "Hürriyet-i Kanuniye," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, July 4, 1878.

⁴² [Sidney] Whitman, "Abdul Hamid an Autocrat not a Despot," *New York Herald* (Paris), August 17, 1896.

⁴³ "Ahmed Midhat's Letter," *New York Herald* (Paris), September 4, 1896.

⁴⁴ "İstibdad," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, July 3, 1878.

⁴⁵ BOA-YEE, 5/1699/83/2; and "İstibdad," *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, July 3, 1878.



FIGURE 12. Sultan Abdülhamid II in the early days of his reign. George Grantham Bain Collection, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. en. [Wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Abdulhamid 21890.jpg](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Abdulhamid_21890.jpg).

provoked by Armenian political demonstrations and subsequent armed clashes in the capital, Mehmed Kâmil Pasha asked the sultan to restore responsible governing practices. He was promptly dismissed, thereby dashing any remaining hopes for a return to the golden age of Sublime Porte paramountcy.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ [Mehmed Kâmil], *Hâtırat-ı Sadr-ı Esbak Kâmil Paşa* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1329 [1911]), pp. 190–96.

Often derided as a simple reactionary, Abdülhamid II in fact envisioned efficient administration of the empire by a modern bureaucracy headed by a cadre of technocrats. Accordingly, bureaucratic reform picked up perceptible speed during his reign. At the sultan's behest, a host of new bureaucratic schools was established, including the Royal Academy of Administration, which became a college. These schools turned out bureaucrats and technocrats of different sorts, ranging from provincial governors to customs officials and veterinaries. In 1880, also at the sultan's urging, the statistical bureaus of the empire began to furnish information on a daily basis;⁴⁷ in 1897, Ottoman statisticians produced the first socioeconomic census of the realm.⁴⁸ Furthermore, in support of the vision of an efficient bureaucracy in control of the periphery,⁴⁹ Abdülhamid II linked the provinces to the center by means of a new invention, the telegraph.

The Hamidian regime reinstated an old Ottoman emphasis on personal loyalty. Whereas officialdom in the Tanzimat era had been bound by loyalty to the state, the bureaucrats of the Hamidian epoch owed their allegiance to their sovereign. The sultan viewed loyalty as an indispensable qualification for employment in the civil service. Abdülhamid II met with important appointees to emphasize that they owed their appointments to him and were responsible to him alone.⁵⁰ He granted extra ranks, decorations, and sometimes extravagant personal gifts, such as mansions, to high-ranking bureaucrats who proved exceptionally faithful⁵¹—often provoking storms of protest within officialdom and the military.⁵² The lower rungs of the bureaucracy, however, obeyed a strict hierarchy little different from that found in parallel European institutions.

Abdülhamid II's regime also exploited the power of a modern press to cement loyalty to the state and stifle dissent. The mechanism of censorship developed during this period was one of the strictest in modern times. Ottoman censorship was more capricious⁵³ than the repressive machinery assembled by Prince Metternich and placed under the oversight of Count Sedlnitzky between 1815 and 1848. Its apparatus was likewise considerably more arbitrary than the Russian *Tsenturnyi Ustav* of 1828,⁵⁴ and its severity

⁴⁷ *Düstûr*, I/4 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1295 [1880]), pp. 670–72.

⁴⁸ *Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniye'nin Bin Üç Yüz On Üç Senesine Mahsus İstatistik-i Umûmîsidir*, IUL, Turkish Mss., no. 9184.6.

⁴⁹ BOA-Divân-ı Hümayûn: Muharrerat-ı Umumiye, 83/no. 7 [November 1, 1893].

⁵⁰ Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit Yıldız Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitaphanesi, 1931), p. 6.

⁵¹ See, for example, BOA-YP, 13 R 1314/no. 6320.

⁵² BOA-YEE, 31/111-26/111/86, and BOA-Y.Mtv. 22 Ca 1314/no. 3885.

⁵³ Comte Am. de Persignac, "Les gâitês de la censure en Turquie," *La Revue*, 67/2 (1907), pp. 384–94, 521–37.

⁵⁴ Mikh[ail] Lemke, *Ocherki po istorii Russkoi tsenzuri i zhurnalistiki XIX stolietia* (St. Petersburg: Knigoizdatel'stvo M.V. Pirozhkova, 1904), p. 186.

surpassed even the particularly harsh wave of Russian repression that followed 1848. When exercised over a community of authors and journalists already adept at self-censorship, the Hamidian censorship produced a press entirely committed to the service of the regime. Journalists stuck to nonpolitical issues unless instructed to criticize foreign governments.

The creation of an all-encompassing personality cult around the Caliph-Sultan coincided with a broader trend that peaked during the Hamidian regime: the re-invention of tradition. It was almost inevitable that an age of transformative reform, wholesale abandonment of old practices, and centralization of a once-loose confederation, should spark a hurried, sometimes artificial process of forming new traditions to replace those lost. The sources of inspiration were varied: often Europe provided the model, but usually old traditions were restyled to render them suitable for use by the renovated state.

Many of the “new” traditions were invented long before Abdülhamid II’s ascension, but he reshaped them, broadened their use, and invested them with an imperial significance reminiscent of contemporary European courts. The imperial coat-of-arms, much refined and elaborated since the primitive designs in use under Mahmud II, began to appear on objects ranging from leather book binders and school maps to the backs of postcards and household silver decorations. Imperial yearbooks, which first appeared as slender handbooks in 1846, became copious volumes and a crucial medium through which new traditions were disseminated. Imperial orders, bestowed upon officials for outstanding service to the state, were created in 1832, and expanded in 1852 and 1861 with the introduction of the *Mecidi* and *Osmanî* orders. Under Abdülhamid II, a glittering array of special titles, medals, and decorations emerged (to be freely bestowed upon “vile men and scoundrels of the rabble,” as one contemporary bureaucrat notes),⁵⁵ including the new *Şefkat* (Compassion) order for women. Celebration of the anniversary of a living sultan’s ascension to the throne was also common practice in Ottoman history, but the twenty-fifth anniversary of Abdülhamid II’s rule in 1901 was marked in a way unmistakably reminiscent of the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887—down to the erection of clock towers in the main squares of a host of provincial towns.⁵⁶

Under the sultan’s aegis, Ottoman tradition underwent a concerted process of re-invention. Some ancient rituals, such as visits to the holy relics, became pompous ceremonies. Even Friday prayers “acquired additional ceremonial trappings inspired by European examples.”⁵⁷ The sultan’s duties

⁵⁵ İnal, *Osmanlı Devrinde Son Sadriazamlar*, 9, p. 1291.

⁵⁶ François Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II: Le sultan calife, 1876–1909* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2003), pp. 349ff.

⁵⁷ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), p. 22.

as Caliph were also stressed. Though the title Caliph had been used previously by many sultans, Abdülhamid II created new traditions around it, like his request that officials refer to him foremost as “The Shelter of the Caliphate (*Hilâfetpenâh*).” As part of an attempt to re-mythologize the establishment of the state, tombs of comrades of Ertuğrul Bey (the father of Osman I, founding father of the Ottoman dynasty) were uncovered, named, and lavishly renovated.⁵⁸ The 600th anniversary of the foundation of the state was celebrated with enormous pomp and ceremony, and a new tradition inaugurated, which even the sultan’s political rivals, the Young Turks, could not help but observe in exile.⁵⁹ In classrooms throughout the empire, new maps featuring the empire in its entirety broke an age-old Ottoman tradition of showing each continent separately and inspired youngsters to imagine an enormous transcontinental community.⁶⁰

A candid assessment of the regime of Abdülhamid II would not conclude that it constituted a simple reversion to the patrimonial, pre-Tanzimat style of government. To be sure, the sultan wielded paramount authority; he often made arbitrary decisions; he emphasized personal loyalty to the sovereign; and he reduced the Sublime Porte to subservience. But at the same time he clearly sought to be more than the uppermost link in an inefficient chain of patronage. His self-image, which we need not confuse with reality in order to accept its significance, was that of enlightened reformer; articles written at the sultan’s behest for publication in European journals emphasized Ottoman progress under the far-sighted leadership of Abdülhamid II, an Ottoman Peter the Great, who was taking the Tanzimat reforms to new horizons.⁶¹ But beyond the propaganda, the regime’s patrimonial façade was to a certain extent misleading. While the sultan himself would issue innumerable imperial decrees on issues ranging from decisions of life and death to the utterly trivial—he was, in other words, above the law—the actions of all other bureaucrats, including those of the grand vizier, were legally constrained. The sultan’s ultimate source of authority was the “imperial will,” but his civil servants were bound by the law.

Abdülhamid II was no simple-minded reactionary blindly presiding over the slow demise of a stagnant empire. He was a shrewd tactician. He lacked the imagination and courage needed for a wholesale transformation

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

⁵⁹ “İstiklâl-i Osmani,” *Türk*, no. 12 (January 20, 1904), p. 1; no. 66 (February 2, 1905), pp. 1–2; and no. 116 (February 1, 1906), p. 1.

⁶⁰ Benjamin J. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 186.

⁶¹ See, for example, Ibrahim Hakki, “Is Turkey Progressing?” *The Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review and Oriental and Colonial Record* 3/2 (April 1892), pp. 271–2.

of his anachronistic multinational state in the age of nationalism—not unlike his companions in this predicament, the Austrians. Instead he pursued an administrative solution to his problems at home, while maximizing the Ottoman Empire's weak potential abroad by staving off external threats to the empire through diplomacy. Indeed, it is often forgotten that Abdülhamid II's ambitious agenda of bureaucratic modernization at home ultimately depended on his ability to parry the external threats to the empire. With the military odds stacked heavily against the Ottoman state, and its enemies multiplying, shrewd diplomacy remained the only way to buy time.

OTTOMAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER ABDÜLHAMID II

Following the Congress of Berlin, Abdülhamid II pursued a pragmatic policy of noncommitment. Since the empire was militarily weak and domestically vulnerable, Ottoman leverage over the other Great Powers lay in exploiting their common fear of a disruption of the balance of power in Europe as a result of any one power gaining control or influence over the Ottoman territories. Accordingly, the sultan sought to stave off threats toward Ottoman territorial integrity and pressures for administrative reforms in favor of particular ethno-religious groups by playing off one Great Power against the other—without, however, committing the empire to an alliance with any one power or alignment of powers. To be sure, ideological considerations played a certain role as well. The sultan's opinion that the Western powers, with the exception of the United States and Brazil, formed a Union of Crusaders united against the Caliphate and bent on wresting its territory away from the believers (and even conniving to lure Shi'ite Iran into participation in this heinous scheme) was not wholly founded on real-politik, but neither was it completely divorced from reality.⁶² Ideology served to further the sultan's foreign policy goals, not the other way around. Above all, an acute consciousness of external constraints and internal limits guided Abdülhamid II's actions in the foreign arena.

After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, tension spread to new regions and posed greater difficulties than ever before. These were territories that included significant numbers of Muslims whom the Ottoman government could not simply abandon to their fate. Unlike his predecessors, Abdülhamid II had little inclination to implement reforms that might undermine the empire. In order to counter European pressure, the new sultan adopted a

⁶² BOA-YEE, 8/2625/77/3.

two-pronged policy of Pan-Islamism. The first prong entailed knitting together the Muslim elements of the empire into a cohesive new core of identity. Due to the loss of territory heavily populated by Christians and the influx of Muslim refugees, the Muslim proportion of the Ottoman population had grown to 73.3 percent, according to the general censuses of 1881/2–1893.⁶³ By such gestures as the employment of numerous Arabs and Albanians in his service, the conferral of privileges and decorations on Albanian, Arab, and Kurdish chieftains, and the placement of Arab provinces at the top of the list in official yearbooks, Abdülhamid II attempted to forge a polyethnic brotherhood of Muslims. The second prong of his Pan-Islamist strategy was the use of Pan-Islamic propaganda as a wild card directed against colonial powers who ruled over substantial Muslim populations.

Ironically, the most avid takers of Abdülhamid II's Pan-Islamic rhetoric abroad were not Muslims but Europeans. Pundits like Valentine Chirol and Gabriel Charmes strove to convince their readers of the grave dangers posed by Pan-Islamism. Such assessments often fell on attentive ears, especially after the much-publicized Dinshawāy incident of June 1906—in which Egyptian peasants killed one British officer and gravely wounded another while they were out pigeon-hunting. Kaiser Wilhelm II's support for the sultan as spiritual leader of Sunni Islam disquieted policy makers in Great Britain, France, and Russia. Abdülhamid II at one point even offered his services to the Americans as a mediator with the Philippine Muslims.⁶⁴ Underpinning all this posturing was the sultan's assumption that by securing the world's recognition of his status as spiritual leader of all Sunni Muslims, he would gain bargaining power denied to him by military weakness. The sultan, whose adroit manipulation of European fears of an imagined Pan-Islamic threat attested to a shrewd tactical mind, was otherwise powerless to deflect Great Power pressure.

Aware of the limitations of his position, Abdülhamid II carefully evaded direct confrontations with the Great Powers and studiously avoided taking risks for regions only nominally under Ottoman control. The establishment of a French protectorate in Tunisia in 1881, the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, and the Bulgarian annexation of Eastern Rumelia in 1885—all these drew no more than formal protests from the Ottoman government. And when, in 1897, the Ottomans defeated the Greeks in a war sparked by a rebellion on Crete, the Ottoman administration yielded swiftly to a Great Power scheme that enhanced the autonomy of the island's Christians.

⁶³ Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), pp. 148–50.

⁶⁴ Chargé d'affaires Spencer Eddy to the Secretary of State, John Milton Hay, Therapia, September 27, 1902 (Private and confidential telegram); Dispatches from U.S. Ministers to Turkey (1818–1906), 72 (July 1–December 29, 1902).

But the ability of Abdülhamid II to pursue his delicate balancing act was severely constrained by an indirect outcome of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78: the end of active British support for the Ottoman Empire. The British strategic commitment to Ottoman defense, like all its continental obligations, was inherently in tension with two strong currents in British tradition: an isolationist mentality that abhorred commitment unless British security was directly threatened; and a moralizing tendency that condemned policies of support for regimes considered less than liberal. The war and the events surrounding it inaugurated a new ascendancy of the moral component in British policy toward the Ottoman Empire, fueled especially by vocal criticism of Ottoman policy emanating from the liberal wing of British public opinion. The practical implications for Ottoman foreign policy were a diminished assurance of British intervention in time of crisis and heavier external pressure for reform. The liberal critique of the empire intensified during the Armenian crises of 1895 and 1896, in which Armenian revolutionaries stepped up acts of violence and sabotage in the hope of provoking European intervention. The heavy-handed suppression of these activities by the Ottoman authorities, and ensuing attacks by mobs on Armenian civilians, played a role in the subsequent formulation of contingency plans for the partition of the Ottoman Empire by the Marquis of Salisbury, who bluntly remarked that the British “sympathies with Turkey have completely changed and she would never again make great sacrifices for a government which she so thoroughly distrusts.”⁶⁵

The liberal assault on the British-Ottoman relationship coincided, unhappily for the Ottomans, with a reassessment of British defense policy which diminished the importance of Ottoman territorial integrity for the defense of the British Empire. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the British occupation of Egypt in 1882 were milestones on the road to an inevitable reevaluation of policy, culminating in Salisbury’s landmark decision of 1896 to base the defense of British interests in the Near East on Egypt rather than on efforts to preserve the status quo at the Straits.⁶⁶ Thus, the internal turmoil of 1895–97, which so negatively affected British public opinion toward the Ottomans, also marked a broader turning point in Ottoman-British relations, as a result of the drastic reduction of the importance of the Ottoman Empire in the eyes of British policy makers.

The opening of the Suez Canal also greatly enhanced the strategic importance of the Red Sea Coast, which became the object of Great Power rivalry. The British occupation of Egypt meant *de facto* British domination

⁶⁵ A report regarding the Marquis of Salisbury’s response to Graf Deym, dated January 23, 1897, Royal Archives, (M) H 39.

⁶⁶ M[atthew] S[mith] Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 261.

over the Sudan, which was recognized in the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium of 1899. The Italians mounted a bolder and more direct challenge to Ottoman control of Eritrea, landing troops at Massawa in 1885. Despite raucous Ottoman protests, they expanded the area under their occupation and, following the Treaty of Wichale of 1889 between the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II and the Italian government, proclaimed Eritrea an Italian colony in 1890. Great Power control of the African Red Sea coast posed a strategic threat to the Ottomans, rendering virtually impossible the defense of the coastlines of 'Asir, Yemen, and even the Hijāz.

The loss of a dependable British option led to a natural Ottoman gravitation toward Germany and even Russia. As the events of 1877–78 had shown, Britain could no longer be depended on to save the Ottomans from Russia; nor was the British navy of much use against increasingly land-based threats to the heart of the empire.⁶⁷ The Ottoman refusal during the Penjdeh crisis of 1885 to allow the British fleet to pass through the Straits in the event of an Anglo-Russian war strained relations and heightened suspicions on both sides still further. At the same time, Bismarck's disdain for the Ottomans—memorably captured in his assessment that their empire was not worth “the sound bones of a single Pomeranian Grenadier”—no longer fit in with Germany's *Drang nach Osten*. Whereas Bismarck had ignored the pleas of Ottoman diplomats at the Berlin Congress and saw utility mainly in promising their territory to rival European powers, Wilhelm II thought that German economic and political penetration of the Caliph's empire—with his cooperation—would prove to be an invaluable asset in Germany's quest for global power. Despite striving for friendly relations with Germany, Abdülhamid II did not wish to limit his options by establishing a formal alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Moreover, a necessary condition for such an alliance, from the Ottoman perspective, remained unfulfilled: the combined military strength of Germany and Austria-Hungary in Europe had to be sufficient to deter Russia from attacking the Ottomans in Asia.⁶⁸ Moreover, Russia had achieved as great a territorial expansion as was tolerable to the other European powers. As a result, the Russian option remained open alongside the German one. It is in this light that we must understand such developments as the granting of the Baghdad Railway concession to the Société Impériale Ottomane du Chemin de Fer de Baghdad (established by a convention between the Ottoman government and the Deutsche Bank in 1903), the Black Sea Agreement of 1900 (which promised Russia exclusivity with regard to railway concessions on the Ottoman side of the Russo-Ottoman border), and more generally, Ottoman

⁶⁷ F[eroz] A[bdullah] K[han] Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers, 1878–1888* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1996), p. 256.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

flirtation with the *Dreikaiserbund*. But noncommitment from a position of military weakness required constant appeasement of all the powers and proved unsustainable in the long run. When the Penjdeh crisis and the Mediterranean Agreement of 1887 thrust the Ottoman straits to the top of the international agenda, a non-negotiable Ottoman interest was affected. Faced with the prospect of a hostile takeover of the straits in the event of an Anglo-Russian war, the sultan felt compelled to abandon passive noncommitment, based as it was on the impossibility of securing the defense of the empire through an alliance with a single European power, and had to shift to a more assertive policy of armed neutrality. Inter alia, this entailed substantial outlays on fortifying the straits and supplying a large army to defend the empire against a Russian invasion.⁶⁹

The Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 significantly reduced the primary land-based threat to the Ottoman heartland. At the same time, Britain—the traditional guarantor of Ottoman security—now emerged as the principal threat to Ottoman territorial integrity. This was particularly true in the Near East, where Ottoman and British interests clashed most consistently, and where Ottoman territory was most vulnerable to the exercise of hostile sea power. To defuse this threat, Abdülhamid II authorized major concessions to the British in negotiations over a line of demarcation between Ottoman Yemen and the British protectorate in Aden.⁷⁰ The resulting Anglo-Ottoman agreement of 1905 was a substantial achievement that did much to relieve tensions between the two powers (and to ease the Ottoman policy of armed neutrality). But soon another dispute flared up over the Egyptian-Ottoman border in Sinai (the Ṭābā crisis of 1906), demonstrating that British and Ottoman interests in the Near East had become fundamentally incompatible. Leaks of British plans to force the straits in the event of war with the Ottoman Empire⁷¹ further underscored the new danger from Great Britain, hitherto associated mostly with benevolent aid in time of need. With its impotent navy, which had proven its worthlessness against the Greeks in 1897, the Ottoman Empire simply could not defend a coast that stretched from the Dardanelles in the north to al-Ḥudaydah in the south against the Royal Navy. Accordingly, Ottoman defense planners focused on the protection of the Dardanelles, which would deny Britain an easy victory, and compel her to contemplate the dispatch of a large expeditionary force to the Levant.

Another major foreign policy headache Ottoman statesmen acquired in the 1880s was the emergence of an autonomous Bulgarian entity in Rumelia. Neither Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece posed to serious military threat to

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 257.

⁷⁰ BOA-DUIT, 69, 3–45.

⁷¹ PRO/CAB. 38/11 (1906)/no. 27 (secret).

the empire, even in combination. But the establishment, in 1878, of an autonomous Bulgarian principality that was Ottoman in name only, and its unification with Eastern Rumelia in 1885, altered these calculations in an alarming way. As Abdülhamid II foresaw in 1886,⁷² an effective army deployed in the Bulgarian principality would threaten both Istanbul and Salonica, and be in a position to score a swift victory before Ottoman mobilization was complete and troops from the Anatolian and Arab provinces could be transferred westward. His prophecy was to be fulfilled in 1912–13. In the meantime Bulgarian meddling in Macedonia was a constant irritant. To reduce the menace, the sultan exerted considerable effort to forge an alliance with Greece, Serbia, and possibly Rumania to encircle Bulgaria and contain her. Concurrently, the Ottoman administration turned a blind eye to Greek band activity in Macedonia so long as it targeted the Macedonian Slavs. At the time of the Young Turk Revolution, Abdülhamid II was vigorously pursuing such a Balkan alliance,⁷³ but lost power before he could achieve it. With the exception of one stillborn attempt to achieve a Serbo-Ottoman alliance in 1908, his successors abandoned these efforts, with disastrous consequences.

Although Abdülhamid II consistently avoided a major conflict with the Great Powers over regions only nominally under Ottoman control—such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Eastern Rumelia—there was one notable exception to this policy of accommodation: the Arabian Peninsula. The sultan fiercely defended Ottoman rights in the birthplace of Islam with the limited means offered him by diplomacy without the backing of force. When, for instance, Germany attempted to establish a base in the Red Sea archipelago of Farasan in 1900 (ostensibly to supply her China-bound ships with coal), the Ottomans did not hesitate to bring the crisis with this friendly government to the brink of serious conflict. Only when Germany accepted the condition that she must unequivocally recognize Ottoman sovereignty did the Ottomans move to defuse the crisis by offering a rental contract for a coal depot on the islands.⁷⁴ The sultan responded with equal resolve to a British challenge to Ottoman sovereignty over Kuwait in the fall of 1901. In an attempt to nudge the Ottomans out of their precarious position of influence, British officials attempted to prevent an Ottoman frigate from anchoring in the harbor of Kuwait, and then recommended to the Kuwaiti sheikh that he replace the Ottoman banner with a black and white striped flag.

⁷² BOA-YEE, I/156-32/156/3.

⁷³ See Galip Kemali Söylemezoğlu, *Hariciye Hizmetinde Otuz Sene, 1892–1922*, 1 (Istanbul: Şaka Matbaası, 1950), pp. 131–2. See also Geshof to Kniaz Ferdinand, Tsarigrad, December 19, 1906 [January 1, 1907]; and a report prepared in Belgrade and submitted to the Prince on October 2[15] 1906, TsDA, fond. 3, op. 863, a.e. 863, pp. 71–4 and 20–21, respectively.

⁷⁴ BOA-HR.SYS 98/3 (1900–1901).

The sultan did not back down on either issue, continuing to protest until the British provided assurances of respect for Ottoman suzerainty.⁷⁵

Abdülhamid II's dexterous acrobatics in the field of foreign policy helped the empire adjust to major changes in the balance of power and stave off a large-scale conflict that might have gravely damaged its territorial integrity or even triggered its collapse. Given the impossibility of obtaining a significant European ally, this was a major achievement.

THE ECONOMY

Two-thirds of the lifespan of the Hamidian regime coincided with the Great Economic Depression of 1873–96, the greatest long-term price deflation in modern history. Despite rendering Ottoman manufacturing more competitive, this deflation caused a host of political and cultural problems in addition to widespread economic instability and serious damage to Ottoman foreign trade and foreign investment. Notwithstanding the turbulence of the times and the persistence of serious structural deficiencies, the Ottoman economic system under Abdülhamid II shed its peculiar dualism and became a modern economy.

In spite of the sultan's determined efforts to downsize the bureaucracy and balance the budget, the Ottoman debt ballooned after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, precipitating a grave financial crisis. In 1879, the government formed a special administration to manage the payment of interest and amortization on a loan of Lt 8.72 million borrowed from Galata bankers. This authority collected certain taxes and monopoly revenues to pay off the debt. In 1881, the sultan decreed a restructuring of the Ottoman debt. Consequently, the debt was reduced from 239.5 million to Lt 125.3 million, and yearly interest and amortization payments dropped from 13.2 million to 7.6 million. A new Public Debt Administration, formed in 1881 in fulfillment of one of the stipulations of the Berlin Congress, was to administer all Ottoman debt, including the payment of war indemnities to Russia. Its management consisted of a representative of the Galata bankers as well as representatives from the Netherlands and all the Great Powers but Russia. The Administration assumed collection duties for various Ottoman revenues, such as those accruing from the salt monopoly, the fisheries, and the tobacco tithe, and used them to pay off 5 percent of the Ottoman debt each year (consisting of 1 percent principal and 4 percent interest). Between 1881–82 and 1911–12, the income of this body rose from Lt 2.54 million to Lt 8.16 million, and its share in the total revenues of the state from

⁷⁵ *Kuveyt Meşalesi* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1917]), pp. 5ff.

17 percent to 27 percent.⁷⁶ Negative public reaction to the Public Debt Administration played a significant role in the emergence of Turkism and, later, of Turkish nationalism.

An additional major problem, which was not new, was the perennial trade deficit. The emergence of the United States as a major exporter of agricultural products and raw materials to Europe, and the consequent decline in the prices of goods that constituted a major portion of Ottoman exports, was one exacerbating factor. Another was the fact that the prices of Ottoman imports, primarily industrial goods and military hardware, did not decline to the same extent. However, the state managed to prevent trade imbalances from getting out of hand. As a result, the overall foreign trade deficit remained steady over this period (1.161 million gurushes in 1878–79, as compared with 1.299 million gurushes in 1908–9). Several factors account for this success. First, the state managed to maintain the parity of the Ottoman lira with major foreign currencies. Second, the period saw a considerable increase in European demand for Ottoman raw materials. The export of chromate, for instance, rose from 3.5 tons in 1885 to 17.7 tons in 1909; that of boracites, from 4.0 tons to 15.3 tons during the same period.⁷⁷ Third, the regime continued to employ an array of protectionist policies adopted during the last decade of the Tanzimat. These were designed to shield the empire from global competition, boost Ottoman industrial and agricultural production, and increase exports within the constraints imposed by the capitulations.

To promote agriculture, the state founded agricultural schools, established model farms, and provided tax relief to farmers who grew produce desired in foreign markets.⁷⁸ In 1888, the government established the Agricultural Bank (*Ziraat Bankası*), with a nominal capital of Lt 10 million, by consolidating all existing state-backed funds for public improvement.⁷⁹ The bank served two major purposes. First, it provided mainly agricultural credits; the value of total loans issued by the bank increased from Lt 162,832 in 1889 to Lt 1,097,469 in 1907. In this capacity, the bank served as the principal financier of agricultural reform.⁸⁰ Second, the Agricultural Bank became the state's embryonic, unofficial national bank in competition with the foreign-owned Ottoman Bank. By the end of the Hamidian period, the Agricultural Bank had provided 602 million gurushes in credit on the basis

⁷⁶ Vedat Eldem, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun İktisadi Şartları Hakkında Bir Tetkik* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1970), pp. 259–65.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 182–3.

⁷⁸ Donald Quataert, "Dilemma of Development: The Agricultural Bank and Agricultural Reform in Ottoman Turkey, 1888–1908," *IJMES* 6/2 (April 1975), p. 211.

⁷⁹ *Ceride-i Mahakim*, no. 750 [November 1, 1890], pp. 8245–9, and no. 751 [November 8, 1890], pp. 8257–61.

⁸⁰ Quataert, "Dilemma of Development," pp. 219ff.

of a mere 48 million gurushes in deposits, as compared to 1,587 million gurushes in credit on the basis of 1,772 million in deposits provided by the Ottoman Bank.⁸¹ The manufacturing sector also benefited from Hamidian economic policy. Despite the allocation of substantial portions of the gross national income to military expenditure⁸² and interest payments on debt, the state managed to launch major infrastructural investments, such as the Baghdad and Hijāz railways, a large irrigation project in the Konya Valley, and telegraph lines connecting the Ottoman provinces with the center. The development of a more advanced railroad network, in particular, facilitated the efficient delivery of goods to domestic markets or ports of export. Partly as a result, production levels of silk, carpets, tiles, glass, and other goods increased. Heavier industrial production, such that of as gas, minerals, and cigarettes, also rose. Nevertheless, these increases did not amount to a major boom in the development of Ottoman industry. Between 1881 and 1908, only forty-seven new joint-stock industrial companies were founded, with a total capital of Lt 11.9 million (almost a quarter of which belonged to the *Société de la Régie cointeressée des Tabacs de l'Empire ottomane*—the monopoly that exploited the Ottoman tobacco industry through its position as sole subcontractor for the Public Debt Administration).⁸³

Abdülhamid II's government made a second attempt to introduce banknotes to the empire. The decision to print money, taken prior to Abdülhamid II's accession to the throne, was implemented between 1876 and 1878, and helped finance the Russo-Ottoman War. The banknotes were intended for circulation throughout the empire, with the exception of the Hijāz, Yemen, and Tripoli of Barbary.⁸⁴ But once again, a rash of counterfeits, combined with popular mistrust of the innovation, especially in the provinces, caused rapid depreciation of the value of the notes on the market, leading to their withdrawal from circulation in March 1879. To compensate for the loss, the government raised certain taxes on consumption.⁸⁵ In 1881, the empire announced a switch from bimetalism to a loose gold standard (a full switch took place in April 1916), under which silver coins continued to circulate at a rate set by the state but linked to a gold reserve.⁸⁶ This move, which predated similar decisions by Russia (1893), Japan (1897), and the United States (1900), illustrates the intent to integrate the Ottoman Empire into the global economy. The scarcity of gold limited its

⁸¹ Eldem, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun İktisadi Şartları Hakkında Bir Tetkik*, p. 234.

⁸² [Mehmed] Rıza, *Hülâsa-i Hâtırat* (Istanbul: s.n., 1325 [1909]), appendices.

⁸³ Eldem, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun İktisadi Şartları Hakkında Bir Tetkik*, p. 122.

⁸⁴ Süleyman Sûdî, *Usûl-i Meskûkât-ı Osmaniye ve Ecnebiye* (Istanbul: A. Asadoryan, 1311 [1893]), p. 228.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 128–32.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 243–4.

use to the execution of foreign trade transactions, while silver remained the primary medium of domestic exchange.

INTELLECTUAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Among the many ironies of the Hamidian regime, one of the most striking is certainly the triumph of materialist ideas under the most pious sultan of late Ottoman history. For while Abdülhamid II was laboring to fashion Islamist modernity in opposition to the West, a large number of Ottoman intellectuals were increasingly being drawn to the European doctrine of scientific materialism. The penetration of German *Vulgärmaterialismus*—a peculiar mixture of materialism, scientism, and Social Darwinism—had already begun during the Tanzimat, and gained considerable traction in the 1870s and 1880s. Its proponents propagated these imported ideas through popular scientific journals that, being apolitical, were spared by the censor. Ludwig Büchner, whose *Kraft und Stoff* was regarded as a sacred text by many Ottoman intellectuals, became the idol of a generation of Ottoman recipients of Western-style education. Littréian Positivism seemed more influential only because of its prominence among the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, who had at one point made *ordre et progrès* their motto. Likewise Spinoza, once the target of criticism by traditional Ottoman scholars bent on exposing the evils of materialism,⁸⁷ became an object of lavish praise by the 1880s as “one of the foremost philosophers to adorn the history of philosophy.”⁸⁸ A bibliography of all Turkish books and translations published in Istanbul between 1876 and 1890 lists only 200 of roughly 4,000 titles as dealing with religious topics. By contrast, it features approximately 500 works on science, the majority of which promoted materialism in a more or less explicit fashion. Much of the remainder of the list is made up of legal and literary works.⁸⁹ The importance of the acceptance of a hybrid doctrine based on eighteenth-century French materialism and nineteenth-century German *Vulgärmaterialismus* by a large segment of the Ottoman intelligentsia should not be underestimated. This was one instance where ideas mattered a great deal: for the winds of materialism continued to blow long after the Young Turk Revolution and into Republican times, exerting a profound influence on the *Weltanschauung* of the founders of the Republic and on the ideology they fashioned to build modern Turkey.

Many members of the new intellectual elite expected the Darwinian triumph of science over religion in their time. One Ottoman statesman

⁸⁷ *Spinoza Mektebine Reddiye*, TPL, H. 372.

⁸⁸ Hüseyin Avni, “Spinoza—Hayat ve Mesleği,” *Güneş* 1/5 [1883], pp. 255ff.

⁸⁹ Server R. İskit, *Türkiyede Neşriyat Hareketleri Tarihine Bir Bakış* (Istanbul: Maarif Vekâleti, 1939), p. 102.

expressed these sentiments in a giddy poem entitled “The Nineteenth Century,” which he wrote in elation after the Paris Fair of 1878:

The light of comprehension has touched the summit of perfection;
Many impossibilities have become possibilities.

Elementary substances have become complex, complexity has become
elementary;
Many unknowns have become familiar through experience.

The truth has become figurative, that which was once figurative has
become true;
The foundations of old knowledge have collapsed.

Now the sciences are astronomy, geology, physics, and chemistry,
Not misconceptions of the mind, conjectures, and analogies.

...

Wise men have probed the depths of the earth,
Treasures of buried strata furnish the proofs of creation.

.....

Neither the belief in metamorphosis nor the fire of the Magians has
survived,
The Holy Trinity is not the Qibla of fulfillment for the intelligent.

.....

Atlas does not hold up the earth, nor is Aphrodite divine,
Plato’s wisdom cannot explain the principles of evolution.

.....

‘Amr is no slave of Zayd, nor is Zayd ‘Amr’s master,
Law depends upon the principle of equality.

....

Alas! The West has become the locus of rising knowledge,
Neither the fame of Anatolia and Arabia nor the glory of Cairo and Herat
remains.

This is the time for progress; the world is the world of sciences;
Is it possible to uphold society with ignorance?⁹⁰

As the materialist movement gained traction within the Ottoman elite,
it evolved into a peculiar form of scientism that rejected religion and

⁹⁰Sâdullah Paşa, “Ondokuzuncu Asır,” in Mehmed Kaplan (ed.), *Şiir Tahlilleri: Âkif Paşadan Yahya Kemal’e Kadar* (Istanbul: Anıl Yayınevi, 1958), pp. 59–60.

attributed European progress to the alleged adoption of materialist doctrine in Europe. The rejection of religion was perhaps more tempting for the non-Muslims of the empire, who embraced European ideas before their Muslim counterparts. While the adherents of materialism in the capital were mostly Muslim, in the Arab provinces they were most often Christians. It was from among the latter that a challenge to the ulema on the subject of Darwinism first emerged.⁹¹ But the initial assaults on religion were cautious. During the Tanzimat era, the scientific critique of religion was typically presented by drawing seemingly innocuous comparisons between modern science and traditional methods for the pursuit of knowledge, for example, by contrasting the usefulness of geology and history as tools for understanding the human past.⁹² Such articles delivered, between the lines, the same subversive message that was conveyed openly in Sir Charles Lyell's *Elements of Geology* and *The Geological Evidences of the Antiquity of Man*. Beginning in the 1870s, a popular scientific press emerged, which imitated European journals like *Science pour tous* and *Die Natur*, thus helping to spread the gospel among ever wider audiences. Not every disciple of scientism was as radical as Beşir Fu'ad who, as an experiment, cut his veins in a bathtub and continuing taking notes on his condition until losing consciousness—all to prove that human life was ephemeral and material;⁹³ or Dr. Şerafeddin Mağmumî, who proposed to destroy every work of traditional Ottoman poetry ever written on the grounds that these works were not scientific.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, a generation of secular materialists emerged in the capital of the Caliphate and, as self-assured bearers of the new truth, made an impact on Ottoman intellectual life quite disproportionate to their numbers.

Despite the pronounced Islamist flavor of the sultan's rhetoric, Islamist intellectuals suffered immensely under his reign. The sultan, who feared the potent capacity of the ulema to legitimize criticism of his regime, banished a large number of them. At the same time, the censor curtailed any serious religious debate. The Islamist opposition worked with the Young Turks abroad,⁹⁵ while the Salafî movement flourished in Syria.⁹⁶ It was only after the Young

⁹¹ See, for instance, Dr. Şibli Şumayyî's *Al-Ḥaḳīqah wa-hiya risālah tataḍamman rudūdan li-ithbāt madhhab Darwin fî'l-nushū' wa'l-irtiqā'* (Cairo: al-Muqtaṭaf, 1885); and *Rudūd al-'ulamā' 'alā madhhab Darwin fî'l-irtiqā'* (Beirut: Maṭba'at al-Mursalin al-Yasū'iyyin, 1886).

⁹² Münif, "Mukaddime-i İlm-i Jeoloji," *Mecmua-i Fünûn* 1/2 (July–August 1862), p. 65.

⁹³ M. Orhan Okay, *Beşir Fuad: İlk Türk Pozitivist ve Natüralisti* (Istanbul: Hareket Yayınları, 1969), p. 93.

⁹⁴ Şerafeddin Mağmumî, *Başlangıç* (Istanbul: İstevan Matbaası, 1307 [1888–1890]), pp. 22–3.

⁹⁵ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 49ff.

⁹⁶ David Dean Commings, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 49ff.

Turk Revolution of 1908 that Islamist intellectual activity began to thrive in the capital and the imperial heartland.

One of the intellectual realms from which the dualism of the Tanzimat all but disappeared was literature. Ottoman literary figures under Abdülhamid II engaged wholeheartedly in debates that mirrored those taking place in Europe. European literary forms, such as the sonnet, became standard, while classical forms were all but forgotten. Naturalist, Parnassian, Realist, and Symbolist influences abounded. The New Literature (*Edebiyat-ı Cedide*) movement, started in 1891 by the proponents of *l'art pour l'art*, and succeeded by the Impending Dawn (*Fecr-i Âtî*) current, dominated the scene during this period. By 1900, major Ottoman literary figures were presenting images of a new modernist vision informed by French literature. Works such as Tevfik Fikret's poem "Sis" (Fog, 1902) expressed the moral decay of late Ottoman Istanbul, where "a stubborn smoke has shrouded its horizons."⁹⁷ The Ottoman novel developed rapidly during the 1890s. One particularly appealing example was Halid Ziya (Uşaklıgil)'s "*Aşk-ı Memnu*" (Forbidden Love, 1900), a psychological study of adultery in a Bosphorus mansion. It constituted an allegory on the decline of the empire and a model in theme and structure for much Turkish literature of the twentieth century.

Attitudes toward European manners and mores, summed up in the phrase *Alla Franca*, continued to evolve under Abdülhamid II. Abdülhamid II's own attitude was ambivalent. While the "pious sultan" protested vigorously against the notion that he was an ardent admirer and blind emulator of "Frankish civilization,"⁹⁸ his lifestyle betrayed the internalization of many *Alla Franca* values. His secret passion for European classical music and theater, for example, brought many stars to perform privately at his palace. These included such famous opera singers as the Belgian soprano Blanche Arral and legendary actresses like French tragedienne Sarah Bernhardt. Following the Young Turk Revolution, fiercely nationalistic anti-Western sentiments replaced the Hamidian regime's official Islamic abhorrence of Western mores. Accordingly, the derisive attitudes toward the adoption of Western fashions and habits common in the late nineteenth century gave way to more severe ones, as *Alla Franca* came under attack as a moral pestilence to be exterminated.⁹⁹ By then, however, the habits it denoted had already become firmly ensconced among educated people and members of the upper and middle classes of the empire.

⁹⁷ Tevfik Fikret, *Rubab-ı Şikeste* (Istanbul: Tanin Matbaası, 1327 [1911]), p. 295.

⁹⁸ Ahmed Salâhi, *Osmanlı ve Avrupa Politikası ve Abdulhamid-i Sani'nin Siyaseti*, IUL, Turkish Mss., D. 2/9521 (1303 [1885]), p. 4.

⁹⁹ See, for example, M.S., *Alafranga Bir Hanım: Ahlâk-ı Nisvâniyeyi Musavvir Romandır* (Istanbul: Artin Asadoryan, 1329 [1911]), passim.

THE EMERGENCE OF NATIONALISM AMONG MUSLIMS

Turkism (to be discussed in the next section) was not the only proto-nationalist movement to flourish during the Hamidian era. It was merely one of the last in a series of similar movements to emerge among Muslim Ottoman groups, such as the Albanians, the Arabs, and the Kurds. Even small Muslim communities, like the Circassians, exhibited a rise in nationalist sentiment. The level of national consciousness varied considerably within each of these movements. The nationalisms of the Albanians and Arabs were the most developed. Both the Albanian *Rilindja* (Rebirth) and the Arab *Nahḍah* (Renaissance) movements focused on re-awakening the dormant “nation” with the aid of a new approach to history and literature centered on the recovery of a glorious past. The key role played by non-Muslim Arabs and Albanians in this effort contributed to the emergence of national identities apparently free of religious affiliation. The proto-nationalisms of the Kurds and Circassians, by contrast, were less developed and depended heavily on the Islamic heritage.

Abdülhamid II's efforts to redefine Ottomanism and give it a Muslim coloring, as well as his domestic use of Pan-Islamic ideology, were directed mainly at curbing nascent proto-nationalist activities among Muslim Ottomans. In a multinational empire, crumbling most dangerously on its Christian periphery, Islam potentially represented a last line of defense against the corrosive effects of nationalism. The state could theoretically survive the loss of parts of some provinces to Christian nationalist movements, but if the Muslims of the empire—who by 1900 accounted for three-quarters of the total population—were to split along ethnic lines, the Ottoman polity was doomed.

The sultan's Islamic policies certainly won over the hearts and minds of a large segment of the elite in various Muslim Ottoman communities which feared the likely alternatives to Ottoman rule: colonial administration by one of the Great Powers or minority status in small nation-states backed by these powers and dominated by Christian populations formerly under Ottoman rule (such as the Greeks, the Serbians, or the Armenians). But other members of these same elites, often disenfranchised or harboring long-standing grievances against the Ottoman administration, could envision more positive scenarios. Some thought of autonomous regions which would remain loosely attached to the empire; others were bolder still, dreaming of independent nation-states under their own control. From their ranks came the leaders of proto-nationalist activity in this period.

By the end of the Hamidian era, these movements—like the nascent Turkism that fed the ideological base of the major opposition organization, the CUP—had succeeded in converting ideological coherence into political

strength, dominating intellectual debate within their respective communities both in the press and on the street. One theoretical advantage they had over the sultan was that as nationalist movements, they could envision a community that included non-Muslim compatriots excluded by Abdülhamid II's Islamic Ottomanism. The redefining of the political community along linguistic or ethnic lines proved very important for the subsequent popularization of proto-nationalist ideas in the Arab communities of the empire, and especially among the Albanians. The center suffered from a further disadvantage in competition with these groups: its failure to create a *Homo Ottomanicus* in the wake of the Tanzimat, coupled with its pressure for ever more centralization, fostered grave tensions with the non-Turkish periphery, tensions which proto-nationalist intellectuals were only too ready to exploit. Although the extent to which these movements penetrated the masses was apparently limited, they were regarded within the various Muslim communities as serious alternatives in the event of an Ottoman collapse or a drastic deterioration in imperial policy toward them.

It was certainly no coincidence that the treaty of San Stefano and the Berlin Congress of 1878 marked the starting point of Albanian proto-nationalism. The casual award of what Albanians considered their territory to Balkan nation-states demonstrated to Muslim Albanians that Ottoman rule was slipping away, perhaps irretrievably, lending support to the nationalist thesis that the Albanians had to take their destiny into their own hands. This reasoning lay behind the formation of the Prizren League, which ruled Albania between 1878 and 1881. The scale of Armenian revolts in the last decade of the nineteenth century had a similar impact among the Anatolian Kurds, although their movement toward nationalism was more hesitant and gradual than that of their Albanian counterparts. Kurdish expatriates in Cairo launched the bilingual journal *Kurdistan* in 1898. Hedging their bets, they invoked the notion of a nation with a glorious past that transcended the Ottoman experience in time and space, while simultaneously defining the Kurds as "one of the most distinguished peoples composing the eternal Ottoman state," and describing them as a bulwark against Russian and Iranian encroachments.¹⁰⁰ Syrian intellectuals expressed a similar ambivalence. On the one hand, they highlighted Arab superiority over the Turks in administration and culture (repeating the familiar cliché that the Turks had lacked "language, poetry, science, and tradition" until they acquired them by force from the Arabs¹⁰¹). On the other, they often expressed their preference for continued Ottoman rule because, as one

¹⁰⁰ See "Kürdistan ve Kürdler," *Kürdistan*, no. 25 [24], [September 1, 1900], pp. 3–4; and [Mikdad Midhat Bedirhan], "Şevketlû, Utûfetlû Sultan Abdülhamid-i Sâni Hazretleri'ne Arz-ı Hâl-i Ubeydânemdir," *Kürdistan*, no. 4 [June 2, 1898], p. 1.

¹⁰¹ "Mawdû' ta'ammul ilâ ikhwāninā al-Sūriyyīn," *Turkiyyā al-fatāt*, no. 3 (January 10, 1896), p. [1].

writer put it, “Arabs would not be secure in their welfare and future if Istanbul” were not in the hands of the Turks.¹⁰² Circassian intellectuals, too, insisted on their duty to defend the integrity of the empire, despite Ottoman mistreatment, while vowing to persevere in their struggle for cultural autonomy.¹⁰³

As these examples illustrate, by and large proto-nationalist movements under the Hamidian regime exercised a great deal of caution. This prudence was one of several factors inhibiting their development into fully fledged nationalist movements. There were individual exceptions to this rule, such as Najīb ‘Azūrī, who passionately advocated an independent Arab nation free of the Ottoman yoke in his book *Le réveil de la Nation arabe dans l’Asie turque* (1904), and in his journal *L’Indépendance arabe* (1907–1908); another was Fan Stylian Noli, who called for an independent Albanian nation first in Egypt and then in the pulpit of the Albanian Orthodox Church in Boston. But such extremists—both, significantly, Christian—expressed extreme views shared only by a handful of followers. More mainstream proto-nationalist organizations, like the Albanian *Bas-kimi* (Union) Society, the *Comité Turco-Syrien*, the Kurdish *Azm-i Kavi* (Strong Will) Society, and the *Cemiyet-i İttihad-ı Çerâkise* (the Committee for Circassian Union), remained within the scope of Ottomanism, although they stretched the boundaries of this concept considerably. Yet over time, such groups laid the groundwork for the emergence of full nationalist movements during the Second Constitutional Period, as the twin threats of centralization by a Turkist-dominated state and conquest by foreign powers exposed the incoherence of the halfway position as untenable. Under such conditions, proto-nationalist groups that already enjoyed a degree of representation and publicity rapidly evolved into national separatist movements, turning the post-1908 period into a stark struggle between competing nationalisms.

OPPOSITION AND THE YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION

The various strands of opposition to the regime of Abdülhamid II are commonly, and wrongly, lumped together under the rubric of the Young Turks. In reality, opponents of the sultan were a motley array of ulema, bureaucrats, and nationalists who shared a common enemy, but not a common agenda. For example, there was resentment against the regime among members of the educated class who viewed the preference given to loyalty over merit as unfair. In this sense, a very large segment of the educated elite, even

¹⁰² Khālil Ghānim, “Al-qānūn al-asāsī,” *Kashf al-Niqāb*, no. 8 (January 10, 1895), pp. [1–2].

¹⁰³ “Kelimeteyn,” *İttihad Gazetesi*, no. 1 [October 15, 1899], pp. 2–4.

low-ranking bureaucrats serving in the first chamberlain's office, espoused what may loosely be termed "Young Turk" ideology.¹⁰⁴ However, not everyone who aspired to replace the sultan's "neo-patriarchy" with one based on merit was a political conspirator.

Although a significant number of individuals shared the general worldview of the Young Turks, the movement itself was more sharply defined. The politically active dissidents were members of secret committees, based in Europe and British-ruled Egypt, and dedicated to the overthrow of Abdülhamid II. Their modus operandi until shortly before the revolution consisted largely of the publication of journals and their clandestine dissemination throughout the empire. The major Young Turk organization was the Union of Ottomans, founded by a group of medical students at the Royal Medical Academy in 1889. Ahmed Rıza, a staunch positivist who intermittently led the Young Turk movement from 1895 to the revolution, gave the organization its more familiar name, the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress. This committee functioned as an umbrella organization under which various groups collaborated loosely in opposing Abdülhamid II. One major faction, led by Ahmed Rıza, advocated nonrevolutionary change; another supported revolutionary action to topple the Hamidian regime; a cluster of medical doctors, scientific disciples of German *Vulgärmaterialismus*, wanted to create a utopian society governed by the dictates of materialism; a number of ulema, who controlled the Egyptian branch of the Young Turk organization, challenged the sultan's regime on religious grounds; while a group of former statesmen with pro-British inclinations dreamed of restoring the dominance of the Sublime Porte in Ottoman politics. Leadership of the umbrella organization changed hands several times between 1895 and 1902.

Until 1902, non-Turkish Muslims played significant roles in the umbrella organization. Ironically, none of the original founders of the committee was of Turkish origin. However, all of the founders represented Muslim groups threatened by Christian communities who enjoyed European backing: Albanians, Circassians, and Kurds. It was, therefore, not surprising that the committee adopted a Muslim variant of Ottomanism quite similar to the ideology promoted by Abdülhamid II. The contest for leadership of the movement, and the debate over the strategy to be pursued against the sultan, reached a peak at the Congress of Ottoman Liberals in 1902. Convened with the purpose of uniting all opponents of the sultan, including the Armenian committees, the Congress ended in schism, as an argument over

¹⁰⁴ This did not escape the sultan's notice. In 1901, he issued an imperial decree which noted that "the Young Turks act as if they were members of a distinct social class." The designation "Young Turk," wrote the sultan, ought to be replaced with "conspirators" or "agitators." BOA-BEO/ Mahremâne Müsveddat, no. 129 [July 8, 1901]; and Münir Bey to Müfid Bey, July 17, 1901/no. 30, Archives of the Turkish Embassy in Paris, D. 244.



FIGURE 14. The Congress of Ottoman Liberals in Paris (February 1902).

the merits of soliciting European intervention exploded in discord. As a result, two major factions emerged along the fault line of the debate: the non-Turkish organizations joined the former statesmen in support of external intervention, while Ahmed Rıza took charge of the group championing independent action from within.

Members of the first group worked toward staging a coup with British assistance. They failed ignominiously. In 1905, Sabahaddin Bey, a nephew of the sultan, reconstituted this faction as the League of Private Initiative and Decentralization. Inspired by Edmond Demolins's ideas on private initiative and decentralization, and by the *Science sociale* movement, the League was largely ineffective. Sabahaddin Bey and his followers looked down on their Turkist rivals because they lacked a serious sociological theory, likening them to an "extinct animal species, eternal losers in the perpetual theater of the struggle for life."¹⁰⁵ In fact, Sabahaddin Bey's rivals had a firmer grasp of the realities of power; above all, they understood that no revolutionary movement could succeed without the support of army officers—many of whom had developed Turkist, anti-imperialist inclinations and viewed decentralization as a proxy for partition. Sabahaddin Bey's promotion of administrative decentralization as a scientific remedy for Ottoman illnesses thus attracted only a handful of dissidents among the Young Turks. But various other Ottoman political movements interested in regional autonomy accepted an expansive interpretation of the concept and supported him against the increasingly Turkist Committee of Union and Progress. Not surprisingly, the League's most important collaborators were

¹⁰⁵ M[ehmed] Sabri, "Anadolu Kiyamları," *Terakki*, no. 11 [July 1907], p. 3.

Armenian revolutionary organizations. The League did provide crucial assistance to local revolts in Anatolia in 1906 and 1907. But beyond that its influence was negligible.

The Turkist faction of the Young Turk movement, renamed the Ottoman Committee of Progress and Union (the title used by the committee from late 1905 until the summer of 1908, hereafter CPU), underwent substantial reorganization after the split. It emerged as an activist committee with a highly developed network of branches along the periphery of the empire. Its major activity was the dissemination of propaganda. Turkism was promoted not only by the CPU (and by a more radical intellectual faction of the Young Turks, which published the journal *Türk*¹⁰⁶), but also by many unaffiliated intellectuals throughout the empire. In 1904, a Young Turk intellectual of Tatar descent, Yusuf Akçura, asserted that there were three ideological paths open to the Ottoman administration: Pan-Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism, and Pan-Turkism. The best alternative, he thought, was “to pursue a Turkish nationalism based on race.”¹⁰⁷ Although no such thesis could yet be openly advocated in official circles, cultural Turkism flourished among intellectuals during this period.¹⁰⁸

A significant stepping stone on the path to revolution was the merger in 1907 between the CPU and a secret association of Ottoman officers and bureaucrats, established in Salonica in 1906 under the name of the Ottoman Freedom Society. The merger enabled the CPU to expand its membership base immensely within the army and to turn its focus to Macedonia, then undergoing civil war and in danger of European-sponsored partition. The new focus compelled the CPU to tone down the Turkist element in its propaganda and switch to Ottomanism, a platform better suited to staging in a rebellion in the ethnic *mélange* of Macedonia. The plan called for the conversion of Ottoman military units into sizeable armed bands, similar to the nationalist guerrilla groups fighting each other in Macedonia at the time (including Macedo-Slav, Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian, Kutzo-Vlach, and Albanian groups), and led by officers loyal to the CPU. These bands, in conjunction with a CPU gendarme force of self-sacrificing volunteers, were to assassinate high-ranking Ottoman officials, seize control of key points in major Macedonian towns, and demand the reinstatement of the constitution. Although success hinged on an alliance with the Albanians—who now formed a majority among the Muslims of European Turkey, and without whom victory was inconceivable—the CPU counted on at least tacit support from the non-Muslim bands of Macedonia, in order to portray the revolt as

¹⁰⁶ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 62–73.

¹⁰⁷ Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Cairo: Matbaa-i İctihad, 1907), pp. 4, 12.

¹⁰⁸ David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876–1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), pp. 20ff.



FIGURE 15. The Young Turk Revolution in Monastir, July 23, 1908. *Manastır' da İlân-ı Hürriyet, 1908–1909: The Proclamation of Freedom in Manastir* (Istanbul: Yapı ve Kredi Yayınları, 1997), picture no. 12.

an all-Ottoman revolution and thereby forestall the threat of European intervention.

As should be evident by now, the so-called Young Turk Revolution was not, as the name suggests, a large-scale popular uprising of young Turks throughout the empire; nor was it a liberal reform movement, as was assumed by many at the time. Rather, it was a well-planned military insurrection, conceived and executed in Macedonia by a conspiratorial organization whose leadership harbored a quintessentially conservative aim: to seize control of the empire and save it from collapse.¹⁰⁹ Two pieces of news precipitated the CPU's decision to act in July 1908. First, rumors reached the CPU leadership of a new Anglo-Russian initiative for ambitious, large-scale

¹⁰⁹ For more on the CPU and the background to the revolution, see my *Preparation for a Revolution*, *passim*.

reform in Macedonia, threatening to deprive the Ottoman Empire of its tenuous foothold in Europe. Second, intelligence of a preemptive strike planned by the sultan's security apparatus to crush the committee and nip the rebellion in the bud was received at CPU headquarters. Starting on July 3, 1908, the so-called National Battalions, which were Ottoman military units that defected under the command of CPU members, took to the mountains. Several of the local Macedonian bands joined the rebels, as did many Ottoman military units, including the crucial reserve divisions sent by the sultan from Anatolia to crush them. On the political front, the CPU, in conjunction with several Albanian committees, managed to stage a gathering of Albanians and portray it as a mass "Ottoman" demonstration demanding the reinstatement of the constitution. Other demonstrations followed throughout European Turkey, and all major military divisions in the area declared their sympathy with the rebels.

By mid-July, the movement had gained such strength that the CPU leaders were convinced they could lead the Second and Third Ottoman Armies in a march on the capital—just as the Rumelian notables had done exactly one hundred years earlier, ousting sultan Mustafa IV and imposing the Deed of Agreement on Mahmud II. The desperate sultan attempted to thwart the revolution by creating a state of war with Bulgaria, ostensibly an Ottoman principality. But on the Bulgarian prince's refusal to collude with this scheme, the sultan finally yielded.¹¹⁰ On July 23/24, 1908, he issued an imperial decree for the convening of a new chamber of deputies. Incredibly, the revolution was so localized at the outset that news of it did not reach the public in Istanbul, the Asiatic provinces, or Tripoli of Barbary until after the reinstatement of the constitution. It was only at this point that people began to pour out into the streets of towns all over the empire and that the rebellion in Macedonia began to take on the form of a Pan-Ottoman popular revolution. Ordinary citizens in various parts of the empire seized the opportunity to rid themselves of all vestiges of imperial authority, such as irksome officials and burdensome taxes. But they soon confronted the restored power of the state under a reclusive band of "revolutionaries" whose immediate preoccupation was the restoration of law and, more especially, order.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ See Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, pp. 275–7.

¹¹¹ CUP communiqués issued during July 1908 give some indication of official unease concerning the revolution's radical connotations. Labeling their action an "implementation" (*icra'at*), a "period of implementation and activity" (*devre-i icra'at ve fa'aliyet*), or a "Movement for Radical Transformation" (*harekât-ı inkılâbiye*), they deliberately refrained from using the word for revolution, *ihtilâl*. See an undated CPU communiqué of this period, Private Papers of Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir. After the fact, publications by leading CUP members employed the term "*inkılâb*," meaning radical transformation. See, for instance, Ahmed Niyazi, *Hâtırat-ı Niyazi yahud Tarihçe-i İnkılâb-ı Kebîr-i Osmaniden Bir Sahife* (Istanbul: Sabah Matbaası, 1324 [1908]); and Ahmed Refik, *İnkılâb-ı Azîm* (Istanbul: Asır Matbaası, 1324 [1908]).

6

From Revolution to Imperial Collapse: The Longest Decade of the Late Ottoman Empire

THE YOUNG TURK Revolution overthrew the Hamidian regime under the banner of “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice.” In its place, the revolutionaries promised a constitutional monarchy founded upon the rule of law. They envisioned a parliamentary democracy headed by a responsible government and administered by a meritocratic bureaucracy. They expected political parties to replace age-old institutions, such as notable houses and religious orders, as the principal medium of political participation. They stood for a new fraternal Ottoman identity, united against European intervention in the affairs of the empire. They spoke of a free press, and of virtually unlimited individual liberties. Very little of this came to pass.

It was not that the revolution *manqué* produced no change—it set in motion radical transformations in many fields—but rather that the changes it brought about, like those of most revolutions, differed markedly from the expectations of its true believers. The 1908 Revolution was unprecedented in three respects. For one, its heroes were conservatives, who viewed their essential task as conservation and survival. Somewhat hastily labeled “liberals” by sanguine Europeans, the CUP leaders viewed themselves primarily as saviors of the empire. Second, its aim was accordingly not destruction but restoration. Unlike the French revolutionaries of 1789, the CUP leaders did not destroy an *ancien régime* in order to build a new one in its stead; unlike the Iranian revolutionaries of 1905–1906, they did not replace an absolutist monarch with a novel constitutional regime; nor could they even take credit for inaugurating a brand new consultative body, such as the Russian Gosudarstvennaia Duma that emerged from the 1905 Revolution. Formally, the conservative leaders of the CUP brought about a *restoration* of the constitutional sultanate established in 1876 and subsequently



FIGURE 16. Elections of 1908. Crowds carrying ballot boxes to counting centers.
Resimli Kitab 1/4 (December 1908), p. 384.

suspended in practice. Third, the Young Turk Revolution resulted in the gradual emergence of a radically new type of regime that was to become frighteningly familiar in the twentieth century: one-party rule. The CUP retained the sultan, but reduced his stature. It reintroduced the parliament, but kept it under tight control. In the palace, in the bureaucracy, and within the military, it was the Committee that, working from behind the scenes through the existing institutions of government, came to pull the levers of imperial power.

To fulfill the revolutionary pledge to “restore” parliamentary rule, the CUP instructed the transitional government to schedule the elections promised by the sultan in his capitulatory decree. These elections, held in November–December 1908, were remarkably fair; indeed, they may be considered the first and last true elections of this period. In principle, all tax-paying males over the age of twenty-five were eligible to vote. A minimum age of thirty and knowledge of the Turkish language were required of deputies. Every 500 voters in a given district elected a representative to an electoral college, selecting him from a list of candidates drawn up by municipal administrators. Each 50,000 electors selected one of their own to be sent to the Chamber of Deputies.¹ The number of deputies in the chamber fluctuated according to changes in the size of the population; the parliament

¹ *Düstûr*, II/1 (Istanbul, 1329 [1911]), pp. 18ff.

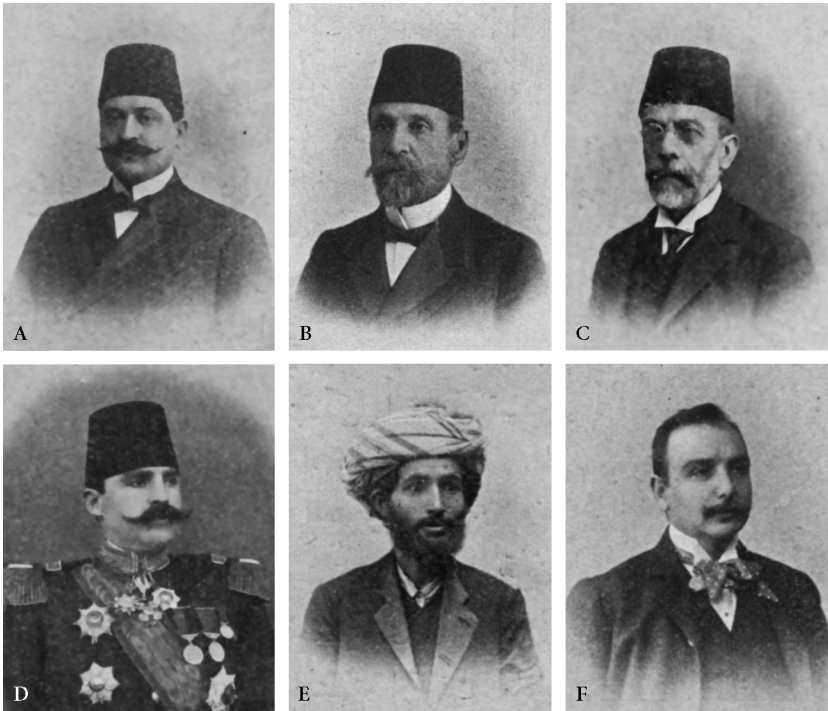


FIGURE 17. Ottoman deputies 1908 (province/electoral district). a. Deputy Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Mehmed Talât Bey (later Pasha, Grand Vizier) (Edirne/Edirne). b. Nesim Mazliyah (Aydın/İzmir). c. Sulaymân al-Bustânî (later Senator) (Beirut/Beirut). d. Es'ad Pasha Toptani (Scutari in Albania/Durazzo). e. Muḥammad Makḥafî (Yemen/Şan'â'). f. Grigor Zöhrab (Istanbul). *Resimli Kitab* 2/1 (July 23, 1909), pp. 984, 986–7, 992, 1002, 1007.

of 1908 had 275 deputies, that of 1912, 278, and the one following the 1914 elections, only 255.

The major bone of contention between the CUP and the various ethno-national communities was the method of representation. Many nationalist organizations, with the Greeks in the forefront, vigorously protested the system of universal representation, maintaining that it would work to the disadvantage of minorities and give Muslims, and especially Turks, disproportionate representation. They demanded quotas for ethno-religious groups,² and even threatened to boycott the elections. In the event, deputies of Turkish origin obtained half of the seats in the parliament, while other Ottoman communities received fair proportional representation despite the absence of quotas.

²“Rumların Programı,” *Sabah*, September 2, 1908.

Election day itself was celebrated in a carnival atmosphere; huge crowds escorted ballot boxes to the counting centers bearing flags and placards. The CUP's immense popularity in the wake of the revolution, and its untouchable position as a *comité de salut public*, virtually guaranteed a landslide victory. Still, the free nature of the elections introduced into the chamber many independent-minded deputies, who later formed the core of the opposition to the CUP. This was a lesson the CUP never forgot.

Whatever liberal affinities the CUP leaders harbored prior to and immediately following the revolution quickly gave way to authoritarian tendencies. Ensuring the survival of the empire in the face of internal and external predators, they felt, necessitated and therefore justified strong measures, including the restriction of fundamental liberties. In any case, it was perhaps inevitable that a conspiratorial committee that had carried out a revolution through the exercise of raw power should seek to dominate the post-revolutionary political playing field, as Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir's Free Officers showed almost half a century later in Egypt. If the anarchic aftermath of the revolution was one development that diminished the CUP's appetite for liberalism, concern over the outcome of the elections was another.

Although the CUP enjoyed a majority in the first Chamber of Deputies and successfully kept the government on a short leash, its hold on power was far from absolute. As the novelty of the revolution began to wear off, opposition emerged. There were liberals who complained of the CUP's heavy-handed rule; bureaucrats, led by Mehmed Kâmil Pasha, who still dreamed of restoring of the supremacy of the Sublime Porte; nationalist and proto-nationalist societies that took issue with the CUP's narrow definition of Ottomanism; local groups frustrated at the increasing centralization of power and the revocation of privileges granted under the old regime; Islamists critical of the secular attributes of the new regime; and socialists who took issue with its socioeconomic policies. From very early on, the CUP faced repeated demands by political opponents that it relinquish its elusive and untouchable status at the pinnacle of power. The insistence of the Central Committee on wielding power from the shadows provoked outcries both from opportunist opponents and from genuine proponents of liberalism. Specific complaints centered on the claims of the Committee to special status as savior of the fatherland and the numerous prerogatives it exercised, ranging from the right to send telegrams free of charge to its habit of bypassing official channels to offer guidance to central and local governments.

The emergence of opposition confronted the CUP with a dilemma, for they could not squash it without betraying the ideals of the revolution. But to accept opposition as a fact of life threatened to undermine their hold on power. As a solution to this conundrum, the CUP, soon after the revolution, attempted to absorb or co-opt rival organizations. Some, like Sabahaddin Bey's League of Private Initiative and Decentralization, were falsely declared

to have voluntarily merged with the CUP;³ professional associations, like the merchants' unions, were subsumed under the CUP organizational framework;⁴ CUP sections were created to cater to key interest groups like women⁵ or the ulema;⁶ and various nationalist organizations were targeted for co-option.⁷

But such measures could not completely stifle dissent. Many organizations, especially those representing various nationalist groups, refused to play along with the CUP. They sought to maintain their independence and contested CUP hegemony. Faced with the impossibility of eliminating opposition through persuasion, the CUP leaders resigned themselves—much like the sultan, whose efforts to dissolve the CUP and all political organizations in the aftermath of the revolution met with rejection⁸—to the existence of independent organizations, including rival political parties. New parties began to emerge soon after the revolution, covering the entire range of the political spectrum. Among these were the religious-conservative Mohammedan Union Party, the center-left Democratic Party, the Liberal Party, and the Moderate Freedom-Lovers' Party. However, none of these parties was strong enough to mount an independent challenge to the CUP, and they accordingly tended to coalesce in heterogeneous opposition blocs. The inescapable fact of one-party rule within an ostensibly multiparty system produced tensions that tore apart the fragile fabric of parliamentary democracy. Relations between the CUP and the opposition began to follow a pattern of oppression and conspiracy. In fact, during the entire Second Constitutional period, not once was power transferred peaceably. And for much of it, power was not really transferred at all.

In April 1909, an improbable combination of old regime supporters, Islamists, liberals, and non-Turkish nationalists, exploiting tensions in the armed forces provoked by CUP-led purges of the sultan's army, came together in support of a military uprising in the capital. The CUP reacted swiftly and decisively, organizing an "Action Army" composed of military units and volunteers to march on the capital from Macedonia and restore order.

The challenges mounted against the CUP between the Revolution and April 1909 prompted its leaders to crack down on political opposition as such. Prevailing upon a reluctant parliament, they pushed through a series of controversial measures designed to curtail fundamental liberties that posed

³"Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Merkezi'nden," *Sabah*, August 23, 1908.

⁴"İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin İtimadnâmesi," *Sabah*, September 4, 1908.

⁵Emine Semiye, "İsmet Hakkı Hanımefend'yle Bir Hasbihâl," *İkdam*, August 29, 1908.

⁶*Takvim-i Vekayi*, no. 3571 (June 10, 1335 [1919]), p. 133.

⁷[Ahmed Cemal], *Cemal Paşa Hâtıratı, 1913–1922* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı, 1339 [1922]), pp. 246–7.

⁸Grand vizier's office to the Inspector general in Salonica, [July 24, 1908]/no. 1012, BOA-BEO/Şifre Telgrafnâme, 981-61/15.



FIGURE 18. The Action Army in Istanbul, April 24, 1909. *Resimli Kitab* 2/9 (June 1909), p. 939.

a threat to CUP domination. To restore order and put a stop to political demonstrations, they imposed martial law, a tool used with increasing regularity in later years. To halt labor disobedience, they drafted the heavy-handed Law of Strikes, which banned strikes in all public services and dissolved the labor unions in this sector.⁹ To stifle dissent, they issued the Press Law, which restricted freedom of the press.

But opposition continued. In November 1911, elements as diverse as ulema and non-Muslim liberals came together to form a new umbrella party, the Liberal Entente. Its formation was a watershed. Not only did the party pose the first serious democratic challenge to CUP rule; from this point on politics became a bipolar struggle, as even parties and nationalist clubs that did not join the Liberal Entente backed it as the major political vehicle for opposition to the CUP. Within twenty days of its formation, to everyone's amazement, the Liberal Entente won a significant victory in a by-election held in the capital. Many provincial representatives elected on the CUP ticket saw which way the wind was blowing and submitted their resignations to the Committee. To stem the tide, the CUP engineered snap general elections, held between February and April 1912. Determined to avoid a repetition of the experience of 1908–1912, they adopted new

⁹ The ban on strikes began with a temporary law on September 8, 1908 and, after minor adaptations, became regular law on August 9, 1909. See *Düstûr*, II/1, pp. 88–90; and 433–6.

measures to control these elections (nicknamed, for this reason, “The Elections with the Stick”). These included direct intervention in the campaign process, arrest of political opponents, banning of opposition meetings, shutdown of opposition newspapers, use of government resources to support CUP candidates, and finally, corruption of the ballot-counting process. CUP intervention was almost certainly responsible for the crushing defeat of the opposition, which managed to retain a mere six seats in the 278-seat Chamber of Deputies.

Frustrated yet again by CUP control of the democratic process, the opposition, supported by a clandestine organization of army officers opposed to the CUP, resorted once more to force. In an echo of 1908, they capitalized on a nationalist uprising in Albania to induce various Albanian commanders in the Ottoman military to mutiny in July 1912. This provoked a major cabinet crisis, in the course of which first the recalcitrant Minister of War and then the entire CUP-backed government resigned only one day after receiving their inaugural vote of confidence. The opposition then formed a new government under the leadership of the decorated war hero Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, and proceeded to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies, thereby nullifying the election’s results.

In effect, the putsch of July 1912 marked the end of the Ottoman parliamentary experiment. Significantly, the CUP was not the organization responsible for its termination. The Chamber of Deputies would not meet again until after the elections of 1914, but by then the CUP had established a virtual one-party regime. Thereafter, as the dominant political organization shifted power from the legislative to the executive, the parliament lost much of its potency and met with decreasing frequency. This process was exacerbated following the Ottoman entry into the Great War. During the decade-long Second Constitutional Period, the chamber was in session for only four-and-a-half years, with several interruptions. Between December 1908 and July 1912, it held 473 sittings, whereas from May 1914 to December 1918, it held only 253 sittings.¹⁰

Shorn of its most efficacious political weapon—an obedient legislature, and faced with opposition from within its main power base—the army, the CUP had no choice but to capitulate. In 1912, the force of the opposition revealed the fragility of CUP control, both civilian and military, four years after the revolution. For a brief period, from August 1912 to January 1913, the CUP, defeated and humiliated, rejoined the ranks of the opposition. The government of Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, and its successor under Mehmed Kâmil Pasha, worked hard to crush the Committee. But the panic and state of emergency surrounding the Balkan crisis of late 1912 provided

¹⁰Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler*, 3: *İttihat ve Terakki, Bir Çağın, Bir Kuşağın, Bir Partinin Tarihi* (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1989), p. 170.

an opportunity for the CUP to launch a comeback. As the crisis reached a fever pitch, the Committee organized mass rallies in support of war and launched a massive propaganda campaign designed to underscore the government's lack of determination in the face of the threat. Although it failed to realize its main ambition and topple the government, its vocal campaign contributed to the outbreak of the disastrous Balkan Wars, in the course of which enemy forces penetrated far enough to threaten Istanbul.

It was the threat of imminent defeat in war that provided the occasion for the recovery of power by the CUP. On January 23, 1913, a CUP strike force raided the grand vizier's office, forced him to resign, and compelled the sultan to rubber-stamp the appointment of a new cabinet. The opposition struck back six months later, on July 13, 1913, when a group of hired assassins murdered the Grand Vizier Mahmud Şevket Pasha. This action, however, proved insufficient to dislodge the CUP, which launched a harsh campaign of repression in the course of which a large number of dissidents, ranging from ulema to socialists, were rounded up and sent into exile. A thorough purge of the armed forces followed, justified by the poor performance of the CUP's opponents in the first Balkan War. The CUP generals Enver and Cemal Pashas became minister of war and minister of the marine, respectively, symbolizing the final assertion of Committee control over the military. One-party rule was solidified and CUP control remained effectively unchallenged until the empire surrendered.

POLITICAL LIFE UNDER THE CUP

The Committee chose to rule initially from behind the scenes. The conspiratorial mind-set of the CUP leaders, their conservative predilections and reluctance to confront tradition, the protection afforded by the continuity of traditional institutions, and a reluctance to expose their young, unknown, and inexperienced cadre to the risks of public scrutiny—all these considerations may have played a role in their decision to stay in the shadows. Whatever the reasoning behind it, the decision not to publicize the names of the central committee members shrouded the CUP in mystery, laying the foundations for an institutional cult that would replace the personality cult that had surrounded Sultan Abdülhamid II. The Committee regarded itself—and wanted to be seen by others—as the sacred agent of imperial redemption and the guarantor of the empire's future security. The veil was lifted somewhat during the first open congress of the CUP in 1909, but the aura of secrecy remained till the end of the empire. In any event, the decision meant that the very fact of CUP power—its physical hold on the reins of government—was hidden from the public view at the outset. At first the Committee did not visibly take over the traditional institutions

of power—the court and the Porte. But it did control their actions. Thus, if a governor seemed unreliable, the CUP would order the grand vizier to fire him. If a military unit was suspected of disloyalty, the Committee had the minister of war carry out a purge. The capricious edicts of the sultan were thus replaced by equally whimsical decrees issued by the anonymous members of the Central Committee. In addition, starting with the appointment of Talât Bey (Pasha) as minister of the interior and of Mehmed Cavid Bey as minister of finance in 1909, the CUP gradually began to exercise direct control over important offices, a process which ended in its total domination of the bureaucracy in 1913.

Despite the secrecy, some details about key individuals within the CUP leadership have come to be known. The crucial reshaping of the CUP on the road to revolution was carried out by Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, the representative of the activist faction, in 1905–1906. The shift to an activist platform marginalized the hitherto predominant intellectuals within the Committee. Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, frequently described as the Stalin of the CUP, and Dr. Nâzım, another of the architects of the reshaping, became the *éménences grises* of the organization. Although they distanced themselves from intellectual debate, they represented the Turkist ideological strand within the Committee. The hand of the men of action was strengthened by the merger with the Ottoman Freedom Society in 1907, following which Talât Bey, organizer of dissident activity in Salonica, rose to prominence. The revolution itself naturally strengthened the position of military men within the Committee. Two officers in particular, Enver and Cemal Beys (later Pashas), stood out and became the military leaders of the CUP. Though scholarship has spoken of a triumvirate of Enver, Cemal, and Talât Beys (Pashas), the situation in reality was more complex. First, Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir and Dr. Nâzım continued to be very influential in decision-making in the early years following the revolution. Second, as the CUP came to control more areas of government and society, new leaders appeared. The need to deal with such fields of specialized policy making as economics and social mobilization pushed to the fore men like Mehmed Cavid Bey, a financial expert, and Kara Kemal Bey, an organizer of societies, guilds, and cooperatives. Finally, the renewed need for an ideological framework for action brought Ziya Gökalp to the fore. A self-taught sociologist and devout follower of Durkheim, he was awarded a seat on the Central Committee in 1912. There were few men of charisma among the senior leadership. The military hero Enver Bey was an exception, but he gained disproportionate power as an individual only during the Great War. As a rule, decisions were taken collectively and there was no deviation from the discipline required for the projection of the institutional cult. The shared interest in thwarting the rise of any one individual to a position of prominence ensured that this did not change.

The very nature of the Committee of Union and Progress as an organization remained rather murky in the aftermath of the revolution. On the one hand, it grew into something approaching a mass party. At the same time, it retained its conspiratorial qualities and avoided the full institutionalization of one-party rule. The CUP never formally abolished or outlawed rival parties or nonparty organizations in the empire. Ostensibly, all Ottoman political organizations were equal before the law throughout the Second Constitutional Period. To maintain the pretence of a free, multiparty system, the CUP in 1909 resorted to a fictitious distinction between the “committee” (*cemiyet*) and the parliamentary group supporting it, which was the “party” (*fırka*). There was little substance to this distinction, as the committee nominated all deputies and senators in its parliamentary faction. In 1913, the CUP expanded its definition of “the party” to include the committee itself as well as the organization’s press organs.¹¹ But by then, its control of the political system was assured.

Incredibly, the seat of the central committee of the CUP remained in Salonica until 1912, and the annual congresses were also held there. This fact helps to explain the tenuousness of the CUP’s position in the early post-revolutionary years and emphasizes the extent to which the organization was a Macedonian phenomenon. After the revolution, as the CUP transformed itself from a highly compartmentalized and conspiratorial organization into something approaching a mass party, the composition of its membership changed and its center of gravity shifted eastward. As the doors of access to the lower levels of the organization were thrown open to mass membership, notables and merchants flocked to join the proliferating local branches of the CUP across the empire. Overwhelmed by a flood of applications for membership, the CUP center tended to approve petitions for the establishment of local branches on the basis of superficial information concerning their members.¹² By late 1909, the number of CUP branches across the empire had multiplied from 83 on the eve of the revolution (several of them minor cells) to 360, while membership had grown roughly from 2,250 to 850,000.¹³ Although the CUP had clearly become a mass organization, the extent of central control over this unwieldy structure was debatable. In any case, the provincial appendages of the CUP were largely cut off from the process of policy formulation at the center. They were also

¹¹ Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Program ve Nizamnâmesidir: 1329 Senesi Umumi Kongresi’nde Tanzim ve Kabul Olunmuştur (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Hayriye ve Şürekâsı, 1329 [1913]), p. 14.

¹² “Osmanlı İnkılâb-ı Kebîri Nasıl Oldu?” *Musavver Salnâme-i Servet-i Fünûn*, 1 [1910], pp. 102–3.

¹³ “Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti,” *Haftalık Şûra-yı Ümmet*, no. 203 [January 23, 1909].

institutionally detached from its implementation, which was still in the hands of the traditional bureaucracy.

Although the CUP grew and became increasingly institutionalized, it never became a true mass party within which power could be rendered legitimate and participatory in the Bolshevik or Nazi sense. On the surface, this was due to the lack of charismatic leadership; the CUP never produced a Lenin or a Hitler. But just as significantly, this failure may be traced to the same combination of ideological deficiencies and structural barriers that had thwarted earlier attempts of predecessors to establish a sound political basis for a modern Ottoman state. The main task that the CUP leaders took upon themselves was the preservation of the multinational empire. There were two problems with this objective. For one, it was essentially a conservative platform that held little potential for galvanizing the masses into undertaking a vast effort of destruction and reconstruction. Second, the status quo held little appeal for large segments of the population. There was a fundamental incompatibility between the aims of the Turkist core of the CUP and those of the non-Turkish populations of the empire. Indeed, the main threat to the survival of the empire came from separatism on the periphery. To win over the separatists, the CUP adopted a prudent policy of inclusiveness. But the inclusion of diverse population groups with little in common within the ranks of a single party inevitably led to ideological incoherence. There was no class or ethnic basis for membership. There was only a vague and varying interpretation of Ottomanism. Not surprisingly, the political platforms of the various branches contradicted each other and that of the central committee, which controlled them only weakly. In this sense—as well as in the conservative agenda buried under the revolutionary rhetoric—the CUP resembled the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, which dominated Mexican politics for much of the twentieth century. Ultimately, the CUP's power depended on its control over the army and on the perception that it was the only force capable of defending the empire. Under the near constant threat of war from abroad and rebellion at home, this was a strong case.

The tugging and pulling between political parties masked a more fundamental set of changes in the traditional balance of forces brought about by the CUP within the Ottoman political system. These affected the court, the Porte, the legislature, and the military. Abdülhamid II, who had barely escaped deposition by belatedly making himself the father of the constitutional regime, prudently assumed a low profile immediately after the revolution. But this did not mean that he accepted its results. On the contrary, he resented his diminished stature in the new regime and his role as a legitimizing figurehead charged with rubber-stamping Central Committee decisions. A showdown was therefore inevitable, and it was not long in coming. In early August 1908, the sultan provoked an open confrontation

with the Committee by claiming the constitutional authority to nominate the ministers of war and navy, in addition to the grand vizier and Şeyhülislâm. The CUP, overruling him, forced the cabinet to resign. To make sure the message was understood, the Central Committee dispatched a delegation with detailed policy instructions to the new government,¹⁴ and provided the minister of war with a list of key military appointments he was to make.¹⁵ But the obstructionism of the sultan convinced the CUP leaders that Abdülhamid II had to go. The “counter-revolution” of 1909 provided them with an ideal pretext to depose Abdülhamid II, which they did on April 27, 1909. The final reduction of the court to insignificance was completed with the accession of Abdülhamid II’s weak successor, Mehmed V (Reşad, r. 1909–18), who displayed little inclination to intervene in affairs of state. Although the CUP leaders initially sought to limit the power of the sultan through constitutional amendments in 1909, they came to realize that a subservient sultan, empowered to act on their behalf, could be of great use in maintaining the façade of a constitutional monarchy. Further amendments, proposed in 1912 and approved in 1914, restored several of the sultan’s more convenient executive powers, such as the authority to prorogue a recalcitrant chamber of deputies. Mehmed V’s successor, Mehmed VI (Vahideddin, r. 1918–22), exploited the humiliation of the Mudros armistice in 1918 to try to reinstate the power of the court, but to no avail. The institution of the sultanate, for centuries at the heart of Ottoman might and identity, was effectively dead.

Similarly, the Sublime Porte, already cut down to size by Abdülhamid II, lost all hope of restoring the bureaucracy’s former stature in the aftermath of the revolution. At first, the CUP manipulated the traditional rivalry between the court and the Porte by taking away powers from the former, in accordance with its overall strategy of weakening the sultan, and giving them to the latter. But these were minor concessions, such as the restoration of official control over provincial governors, whom Abdülhamid II had required to report directly to the palace.¹⁶ The key to the weakening of the bureaucracy lay in the new restraining effects of representational politics. First, the CUP balanced its wariness of a robust legislature with a willingness to use it, within limits, to control the bureaucracy. Second, the very conditions brought about by the restoration of a Chamber of Deputies, turned the bureaucracy’s dreams of a return to unfettered rule into fantasy as Russia was discovering at about the same time. As bureaucrats soon found out, simply ignoring the deputies was not an option. When Mehmed Kâmil Pasha (who had led the last effort of officialdom to restore responsible

¹⁴ See the undated, twenty-article instructions given to Rahmi Bey, who led the CUP delegation, Private Papers of Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir.

¹⁵ BOA-A.AMD.MV 90/1 [August 9, 1908].

¹⁶ BOA/BEO, file 265634 [May 6, 1909].

government in 1895)¹⁷ attempted to place the Sublime Porte above the parliament and the CUP, he received the first vote of no confidence in Ottoman history, on February 13, 1909. A third factor that weakened the bureaucracy was its increasing subservience to the CUP. Although actual membership of the CUP—unlike membership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—never became a condition for service, loyalty to the Committee was now a key criterion for advancement. And while the CUP did not carry out any significant purge of officialdom during the Second Constitutional Period, it did finally assert its direct control in 1913, when leading Committee members took over virtually all important posts in the bureaucracy.

Likewise, the parliament, the prime institutional product of the constitution, soon withered away. Although it was the harbinger of constitutional revolution, the CUP, once in power, developed a distaste for strong legislatures. As adherents of Gustave Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules*, CUP leaders looked down on the motley crowd that filled the chamber of deputies.¹⁸ More important, they came to share Abdülhamid II's concern over the ability of a strong parliament to undermine the regime and aggravate ethno-religious conflict. Yet the CUP could not afford to betray their revolution by abolishing the parliament; nor were they prepared to sacrifice the parliament's legitimizing benefits, as the supposed voice of the people, by openly confronting it. Instead, the CUP managed to bypass the legislature by means of the cabinet. Enver Pasha is once said to have remarked: "If there is no law, make one."¹⁹ The cabinet began to issue so-called temporary laws confirmed by imperial decrees at times when the parliament was not in session. Over time, temporary laws overtook legislation in the parliament as the principal lawmaking mechanism of the state. Many important decisions were confirmed as temporary laws, without any discussion in the Chamber. Examples include the grant of autonomous fiefdoms to local Arabian leaders,²⁰ passage of the controversial Family Law of 1917 (discussed in the next section), and above all the farcical dismissal of parliament on the very day that the fateful German-Ottoman alliance was signed, August 2, 1914. As these examples demonstrate, the CUP was not prepared to tolerate any

¹⁷ [Mehmed Kâmil], *Hâtırat-ı Sadr-ı Esbak Kâmil Paşa* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1329 [1911]), pp. 190–96.

¹⁸ Enver Bey (Pasha) to a German woman with whom he frequently corresponded, 'Ayn al-Manşūr, September 2, 1912, Ernst Jäckh Papers, Yale University, MSS 466, Box 1, Folder 40.

¹⁹ Tunaya, *İttihat ve Terakki*, p. 386.

²⁰ See the temporary law of January 22, 1912, which ratified the Da'ʿān contract granted to Imām Yaḥyā on October 20, 1911. BOA-DVN 37/1. See also the temporary law of September 10, 1914, which ratified the contract granted to 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Sa'ūd on May 28, 1914. BOA-DH.SYS 25/103.

consequential role for the legislature in a debate on policy, let alone in its formulation.

But if the CUP outmaneuvered its new competitors and reduced the old nineteenth-century contenders for state power to subservience, it also restored to prominence a power broker not heard of in Ottoman politics for almost eighty years: the army. The role played by the armed forces in Ottoman politics, often in alliance with the ulema, had traditionally been a decisive one. It was to become so once again. Indeed, the very success of the CUP, first in mounting a revolutionary challenge to the ancien régime, and then in the struggle to remain in power, rested on its ability to penetrate the armed forces and stage the return of the military to politics for the first time since the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826. The CUP was a militarized political organization even before the revolution. The overwhelming majority of its members prior to July 1908 were army officers. When the sultan gave in to the CUP's ultimatum in July 1908, he surrendered not to a group of starry-eyed idealists in exile, but to the effective commanders of a substantial portion of the Ottoman officer corps. Militarization of the organization, in both structure and spirit, continued after the CUP seized power. Shortly after the revolution, the CUP converted the units of self-sacrificing volunteers into a paramilitary force that coexisted uneasily with the military and the constitutional regime. It also established a network of military clubs, through which thousands of new officers swelled the ranks of the organization's membership.

To the CUP, the army was above all an indispensable tool against domestic and foreign opponents. The opposition's attempts to sunder the strong ideological ties that bound the military to the CUP ultimately failed. Despite legislative measures sponsored by the opposition which prohibited the involvement of military personnel in politics, the CUP managed to maintain its dual political-military character up until the collapse of the empire. But the CUP leadership regarded the military as far more than just an instrument of power. For them, it embodied the institutional core of Baron Colmar von der Goltz's idea of "A Nation in Arms." The Committee assigned to the military a significant role in shaping a new, militarized Ottoman society.²¹ This was made explicit very early on. As one of the Committee leaders put it in 1908: "The two powers, the CUP and the Ottoman Armed Forces, which have been formed by the great majority of the Ottoman nation, can annihilate the supporters of tyranny at any time."²² The outbreak

²¹ See Ali Fu'ad, "Ordu ve Millet," *Asker* 1/1 [September 3, 1908], p. 16, and Ahmed Refik, "Von der Goltz: Hayat ve Âsârı," *Servet-i Fünûn* [July 15, 1909], pp. 138-9.

²² "Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Osmanlı Ordusu," *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, October 18, 1908.

of the Great War provided the CUP with an opportunity to realize its vision of a nation in arms. One example of this policy was the mobilization of youth within a paramilitary framework;²³ another was the establishment of a paramilitary Special Organization composed of CUP leaders and self-sacrificing volunteers directly attached to the Ministry of War.

Having displaced the traditional loci of power within the Ottoman political system, the CUP employed new legitimizing devices to buttress its rule. The military ethic was the first. The second was the concept of “the people.” The claim to rule on behalf of the people was no innovation, although the term employed, *hakimiyet-i milliye* (national sovereignty), was a new one coined by the CUP. But the Committee proved more skillful at giving substance to this fiction than the old regime had ever been, especially through the adroit manipulation of an elected legislative body. The need to bolster authoritarian rule with the appearance of popular sovereignty was the single most important factor behind the CUP’s persistence down the constitutional path, even though the parliament caused the CUP nearly as much grief as it had caused Abdülhamid II. The following anecdote is telling. When Lieutenant-Colonel Enver Bey stormed the Sublime Porte at the head of CUP volunteers in the coup d’état of 1913, he forced the grand vizier to draft a letter of resignation at gunpoint. The grand vizier accordingly wrote that he had been compelled to resign “at the demand of the armed forces.” But Enver Bey insisted that he amend the letter to read: “at the demand of *the people* and the armed forces [emphasis added].”²⁴ Elitism in the political thought of the CUP thus coexisted with an acute awareness of the symbolic power of the notion of the people.

The third device that the CUP leaders used in consolidating power was the press. Here again, they were not creating something unknown under the old regime. But as members of a conspiratorial organization in exile, dependent on the clandestine dissemination of smuggled journals and propaganda pamphlets to communicate their political message, the CUP leaders were especially aware of the capacity of the press to form public opinion, and exceedingly skilled at its manipulation. Upon coming to power, they launched a host of official and semi-official organs, and a series of other publications, to help them broadcast their message, monopolize public space, and consolidate their hold on power. Following the precedent set by Abdülhamid II, they also maintained strict regime of censorship, beginning in 1913. The combination of a skillful propaganda machine, a loyal press, and effective restrictions on freedom of speech ensured that CUP

²³ Zafer Toprak, “İttihat ve Terakki’nin Para-Militer Gençlik Örgütleri,” *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi* 7 (1979), pp. 93–113.

²⁴ BOA-A.AMD 1345/41 (1331.S.14) [January, 23, 1913].



FIGURE 20. Demonstrations before the Sublime Porte immediately after the CUP raid on January 23, 1913. *Resimli Kitab* 8/46 (December 1912–January 1913), p. 719.

policy gained a favorable reception among considerable parts of the literate population, while the opposition, which initially posed a fierce challenge to the CUP-sponsored press, was effectively silenced, particularly after 1913.

The post-revolutionary era also witnessed important changes in the way the central government interacted with the empire's various religious and ethnic communities. The relative freedom of the first few years after 1908 did not resolve existing tensions; on the contrary, it aggravated them. CUP policies only made things worse. The cancellation of all privileges of non-Turkish Muslim groups, the launching of an aggressive centralization campaign, and the demand that all citizens place their Ottoman identity above any other—all these were bound to provoke a strong reaction. As the CUP itself became increasingly penetrated by Turkist ideas, the difference between "Ottoman" and "Turkish" became increasingly blurred. And as the dominant culture emerged from the convenient ambiguity of Ottomanism, non-Turks began to feel less and less comfortable. Attitudes in the periphery hardened, and the appeal of the alternatives offered by various Christian and Muslim ethno-nationalist organizations grew accordingly. Greek, Bulgarian, and Armenian nationalisms were already strong at the time of the revolution. Under the CUP, Albanian and Arab nationalisms became significant movements, while Kurdish and Circassian proto-nationalist

sentiments gained momentum. Between a center predisposed to view all demands for the recognition of difference as evidence of separatism, and a periphery decreasingly inclined to compromise, all-out war was inevitable. A strongly Turkist version of Ottomanism faced off against increasingly intransigent nationalisms that at best sought to reduce Ottoman identity to an unimportant, secondary symbol. To be sure, this was primarily a struggle among overrepresented intelligentsias; it did not yet infect the more established classes within many of the non-Turkish communities. Even those who had opposed the Hamidian régime—like the Armenian *Amira* class of rich artisans and bankers—continued to reject the nationalist calls for independence outside the Ottoman framework up until 1915. Nevertheless, the consequences are evident in the political map of the post-Ottoman Balkans and Near East.

THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE CUP

The CUP leaders inherited Abdülhamid II's expensive policy of armed neutrality. They moved swiftly to replace it with an alliance with a major European power. Such a pact would not only better secure the territorial integrity of the empire; it would also make possible the diversion of scarce resources into economic development. As early as August 18, 1908, the CUP made its first overtures to the German and British monarchs.²⁵ The very initiation of such contacts with the Germans, loathed for their support of the Hamidian regime, and with the British, abhorred as a major imperialist supporter of Ottoman separatists, showed how swiftly pragmatic considerations of power trumped the ideological proclivities of these revolutionaries. But the CUP underestimated the weakness of its hand. Neither Britain nor Germany saw the value of extending guarantees to an economically unstable, militarily weak empire riven by Christian separatist forces. Moreover, the Ottoman offer of support for Germany in a future European war, in exchange for a guarantee of territorial integrity,²⁶ could scarcely be reconciled with the long-standing ambitions of the two key German allies, Italy and Austria-Hungary, to annex Ottoman territories in the Balkans and North Africa. As for Great Britain, its strategic decision to base the defense of the Near East on Egypt made the Ottoman Empire a nuisance at best. At the same time, the British aim of preserving and, if possible, expanding its foothold on the Arabian Peninsula did not sit well with recognition of Ottoman territorial inviolability. The inevitable rejection, particularly by the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, surprised and

²⁵ See Ahmed Rıza's letters to Edward VII and Wilhelm II in PRO/FO. 371/545, file 28993 and Abschrift zu A. 13323, Nachlaß Fürsten von Bülow, Bundesarchiv (Berlin), nr. 82.

²⁶ Lancken to Bülow, Paris, August 18, 1908 (A.13323), *ibid.*

humiliated the proud leaders of the CUP, who had imagined themselves rulers of the “Japan of the Near East.”²⁷

The attempts to reach out to these European powers did not mean that Ottoman anti-imperialism, one of the key ideological tenets of the revolution, was dead. Indeed, following the revolution, ideology joined fresh perceptions of the national interest to reinforce the CUP’s resolve to resist the accelerating fragmentation of the empire. In particular, the CUP consistently opposed European settlements based on carving out autonomous regions from the narrowing fringes of the empire. When the Bulgarian Principality declared its independence and Austria-Hungary announced the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina only forty-three days after the revolution, frustration in the ranks of the CUP knew no bounds. However, the anti-imperialist outlook of the CUP was swiftly tempered by recognition of the constraints imposed on the conduct of Ottoman policy by the reality of European supremacy. Like Abdülhamid II, the CUP leaders typically stood up to foreign pressure until further resistance became futile; they then strove to reach the best possible accommodation.

Yet at the outset, the CUP had exhibited a predilection for fighting against insuperable odds rather than accepting a European diktat that left a region only nominally under Ottoman sovereignty. Such was the case in Tripoli. In 1911, the Ottoman government turned a deaf ear to Italian offers of minor privileges in Tripoli of Barbary in return for recognition of the Italian administration.²⁸ As a consequence, between September 1911 and October 1912, the Ottomans fought a forlorn war against the Italians in Tripoli and Cyrenaica.

Tripoli of Barbary and Cyrenaica, which formed the Ottoman Province of Tripoli, were among the most underdeveloped regions of the empire. But as the last African territories still ruled from Istanbul, they possessed a sentimental value that far outweighed their strategic significance. Italy’s long-standing designs on Tripoli stemmed from two motives: the wish to compete in Africa with France, which had established a protectorate over Tunis in 1881, and the need to compensate for the ignominious defeat at the hands of Menilek II of Ethiopia in 1896. Over the course of almost two decades, the Italians managed to persuade one after another of the Great Powers of Europe to acquiesce in this disturbance of the balance of power. Once they had obtained agreement from all their Great Power partners by 1909, the issue was reduced to one of timing. The CUP’s acerbic anti-imperialist rhetoric and resolute defensive measures—for example, a ban on land purchases by

²⁷ Grey to Lowther, November 13, 1908 (private), PRO/F.O. 800/79.

²⁸ Mahmud Muhtar, *Maziye Bir Nazar: Berlin Mu’ahedesinden Harb-i Umumi’ye Kadar Avrupa ve Türkiye Münâsebâtı* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı, 1341 [1925]), pp. 118ff.



FIGURE 21. The Banco di Roma branch in Tripoli of Barbary (ca. 1909). *Resimli Kitap* 7/42 (July 1912), p. 433.

Banco di Roma in the province of Tripoli—provided ample excuses for the Italian government. On September 28, 1911, it issued a twenty-four-hour ultimatum to the Ottoman government. Announcing imminent invasion of the province and demanding Ottoman nonintervention, the ultimatum was clearly meant to be rejected.²⁹ The surprisingly conciliatory response from the Ottomans, which provided assurances for Italian “economic expansion of interests in Tripoli and Cyrenaica,” was to no avail, as the decision to invade had already been made.³⁰

The defense of distant Tripoli proved no easy matter for the Ottomans, whose performance was closely monitored by the restless new powers of the Balkans. Their principal problem was one of supply and reinforcement. North Africa could be reached by sea across the Mediterranean or by land via Syria and Egypt; the superior Italian navy blocked the first route, while the British in Egypt impeded the second. Incredibly, the small local garrison and an Ottoman-trained militia led by Ottoman officers smuggled into the region (including the military hero of the 1908 Revolution, Enver Bey) managed to put up an effective resistance, compelling the Italians to confine their operations to the coastal strip under naval cover. To break the military

²⁹ “Ultimatum from Italy to Turkey Regarding Tripoli,” *American Journal of International Law* 6/1 (January 1912), pp. 11–12.

³⁰ “The Turkish Reply to Italian Ultimatum Regarding Tripoli,” *ibid.*, pp. 12–14.

stalemate, the Italians opted to expand the war and put military pressure on Ottoman possessions elsewhere, occupying Rhodes and other islands of the Dodecanese, bombarding Ottoman towns on the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts (such as Beirut and al-Qunfudha), and increasing military aid to Muḥammad 'Alī al-Idrīsī, a local challenger to Ottoman authority who had established a small Šūfī state in parts of the subprovince of 'Asīr. But the Ottomans held firm, yielding little ground in the Ottoman-Italian talks at Ouchy in Switzerland in August and September 1912.

The sudden emergence of a new threat in the Balkans dramatically altered Ottoman calculations. The danger of a two-front war compelled Ottoman negotiators to liquidate the lesser conflict and come to terms with the Italians. A final agreement was concluded on October 18, the very day major hostilities began in the Balkans. The settlement squeezed out of the Italians allowed the Ottoman side to save face and maintain the pretense of continued sovereignty. The Ottoman sultan appointed a viceroy and a qāḍī to enforce the sharī'a and announced the grant of extensive autonomy to Tripoli of Barbary and Cyrenaica.³¹ But in reality, Tripoli became an Italian colony. The last of the Ottoman lands in Africa was lost.

The Italo-Ottoman war exposed the difficulty of defending the empire's long coast lines. That even a second-tier European power could occupy Ottoman islands, bombard coastal towns, and dispatch troops all around the Mediterranean and Red Sea at will pointed to a mortal weakness. One possible remedy was to build a modern navy; but to construct a fleet almost from scratch was a time-consuming and vastly expensive undertaking. Thus, Ottoman ruling circles concluded once again that it was absolutely vital to secure the protection of a Great Power, preferably one with a strong navy. The lessons learned in North Africa were reinforced by the course of events in the Balkans.

A Balkan alliance against the Ottoman Empire was one of the least expected developments of the early twentieth century. The mutual hostility of Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks and the irreconcilability of their aspirations in Ottoman Macedonia made a tripartite alliance all but inconceivable. Abdülhamid II had attempted to form a Balkan League with Greece, Serbia, and Rumania to check the rise of Bulgaria, which, thanks to extensive military reform, was on the road to becoming a major regional power. Serbian leaders, sensing the turning of the tide, frustrated Abdülhamid II's early plans and formed an alliance with Bulgaria in 1904. The CUP leaders continued the sultan's efforts when, in 1909, they attempted to exploit the crisis over the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina to entice Serbia back into an alliance with Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire against Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary, but without success.

³¹ See *Düstūr*, II/4 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1331 [1913]), pp. 690–91.

Meanwhile, Russia's growing involvement in the Balkans, stoked by rising fear of Germany, almost produced a broad Balkan alliance with Ottoman participation. But Balkan hostility toward the Ottoman Empire was such that this was not possible. Moreover, with the Ottomans embroiled in a hopeless attempt to ward off the Italians in North Africa, the Balkan states sensed weakness and decided to make the most of it. The negotiations sponsored by the Russians produced the worst possible result from the Ottoman perspective: a Serbo-Bulgarian accord, reached in March–April 1912. Then, in May 1912, Greece and Bulgaria, the two archrivals in the struggle for Macedonia, concluded an alliance, and the circle of hostility was complete. Subsequent Serbo-Montenegrin, Greco-Montenegrin, and Bulgarian-Montenegrin understandings rounded off the preparations for an assault on the remaining European domains of the Ottoman Empire with a view to their final partition.³²

It was clear from the start that this alliance of rivals would not last. Accordingly, pressure mounted for an immediate opening of hostilities. Seizing on the pretext of the Ottoman failure to comply with the 23rd article of the Berlin Congress of 1878, which called for Macedonian reform, the Balkan allies rushed toward war. The Ottoman government, caught unprepared and fearful of another military disaster, adopted a conciliatory attitude and promised reforms. But this merely worsened its position at home—where it was already under pressure from the CUP in opposition—and did nothing to propitiate its Balkan predators. Great Power warnings against modifications to the status quo failed to prevent the allies from launching hostilities. Montenegro took the lead on October 8, followed by the three larger Balkan states on October 18, 1912.

In the ensuing war, the Balkan allies inflicted the most humiliating defeats on the Ottoman armies. Within weeks, all of European Turkey was lost, with the exception of three besieged fortress cities, Scutari in Albania, Janina, and Edirne; and the victorious Bulgarians were on the march against the final Ottoman defense line at Çatalca, a mere thirty-seven miles from Istanbul. Ottoman appeals for Great Power intervention proved unavailing. From the European perspective, the situation had the dangerous potential for a Russo-Austrian conflagration, which could easily set the entire continent ablaze. The Great Powers, accordingly, focused on forcing a cease-fire and convening a conference to discuss the future of the Balkans.

The armistice of December 3 paved the way for two parallel conferences in London. At the first, Ottoman and Balkan delegates met to discuss the future of European Turkey and the Northern Aegean islands. At the second,

³² E[rnst] Christian Helmreich, *The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars, 1912–1913* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp. 87–9.



FIGURE 22. Partition of the European provinces of the empire after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.

the ambassadors of the Great Powers debated a general settlement in the Balkans. The first set of negotiations broke down on January 6, 1913. The second resulted in a note to the Ottoman government, warning it to sign a peace treaty or face the consequences alone. All the while, Edirne, a city that had served as the capital of the empire before the conquest of Constantinople, remained under siege. The CUP took advantage of the situation to carry out its coup and return to power under the banner "Free Edirne!" In February, hostilities resumed but Ottoman efforts to relieve the siege of Edirne failed, and the city fell on March 26, 1913. Defeated on the battlefield, the CUP-led government had no choice but to sue for peace. The Treaty of London of May 30, 1913 heralded the end of the Ottoman presence in Europe. It also signaled the beginning of a major conflict between the Balkan allies over the division of the spoils.

The Bulgarian surprise attack on its erstwhile allies on June 29/30 backfired, as Greece, Rumania, and Serbia declared war on Bulgaria and scored decisive victories in the battles that ensued. It also provided the Ottomans with the opportunity to recover some of their losses. Defying the warnings of the Great Powers, the Ottoman army marched on Edirne, recapturing the city on July 22. The Ottoman government signed peace treaties with Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia in September 1913, November 1913, and March 1914, respectively. No peace treaty was concluded with Montenegro.

Many historians consider the Balkan Wars an essential link in the causal chain leading to the Great War. They were certainly a major disaster for the Ottomans. A defeat of this magnitude at the hands of former subjects was a very difficult pill to swallow. Reducing an empire of three continents to an Asiatic state, it shattered Ottoman pride and self-confidence. In addition to the humiliation, the Ottoman government had to deal with an immense financial drain resulting from the losses of territory and materiel, and the difficulty of resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring in from the lost regions. The renunciation of territories with large non-Turkish populations, and the ensuing atrocities against Muslims in those lands, dealt the Ottomanist ideal a shattering blow, giving the upper hand to the Turkists in the internal debate over the basis of loyalty in the empire. Inevitably, the loss of the European lands prompted an innovative view of the geographical character of the empire among the Ottoman ruling elite. For centuries, the empire had rested on two central pillars, Rumelia and Anatolia, between which nested the imperial capital. Suddenly, the Arab periphery became the only significant extension of the empire outside its new Anatolian heartland. Some influential thinkers went so far as to propose the removal of the capital from Istanbul to a major town in central Anatolia or northern Syria.³³

³³Tunaya, *İttihat ve Terakki*, pp. 480–83.



FIGURE 23. Muslim refugees from the Balkans in the capital (December 1912).
Resimli Kitab 8/46 (December 1912–January 1913), p. 764.

Ottoman statesmen learned three principal lessons from the Balkan Wars. First, the wars underscored the fact that without a Great Power protector, the empire's days were numbered. The Ottoman-German alliance of the following year must be seen in this context. Second, the wars proved the futility of written assurances from the Great Powers as a group. Events made a mockery of the prewar European diplomatic note stating that the Great Powers would not tolerate any change in the status quo in the event of war.³⁴ Only a formal alliance based on mutual interest would do. Third, the wars demonstrated to the Ottomans that they had to do everything in their power to eliminate major sources of confrontation with the Great Powers of Europe, and come to terms with their foremost domestic rivals on the periphery, if they were to avoid further war and foreign intervention.

In 1911,³⁵ and again in 1913,³⁶ the Ottomans knocked on the door of the British Foreign Office, only to be rebuffed time and again by Sir Edward Grey.

³⁴ Poincaré à MM. les Ministres de France à Sofia, Belgrade, Athènes, Cettigné, October 7, 1912, *Documents diplomatiques: Les affaires balkaniques, 1912–1914*, 1 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1922), p. 99.

³⁵ Joseph Heller, *British Policy towards the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1983), p. 80.

³⁶ PRO/F.O. 371/1263, file 48554 (October 31, 1911).

Thereafter, up until the outbreak of the Great War, they approached all possible powers begging for an alliance. Austria-Hungary rejected Ottoman appeals in February 1914; Russia in May 1914; and France in July 1914. The crisis brought on by the Sarajevo incident gave impetus to Ottoman efforts to secure an alliance that would both protect Ottoman territorial integrity and enable the empire to recover a portion of the territories recently lost to Greece and Bulgaria. The universal expectation of a short war combined with the perception of Ottoman military weakness to preclude a positive response in London, Paris, or St. Petersburg. Although the Germans maintained a military mission in Istanbul, they, too, proved lukewarm regarding the prospect of an alliance with the Ottoman Empire. Having refused similar Ottoman *démarches* in late 1912 and early 1913, Germany began to reassess its traditional response to Ottoman overtures only after the onset of the crisis of July 1914.³⁷ In the end, the kaiser, under pressure from his Austrian allies, prevailed on the German government to accept the Ottoman offer. After negotiations hastened by the approaching war, the Ottoman government finally concluded a treaty with Germany on August 2, 1914. The German-Ottoman alliance, which is often erroneously portrayed as the result of German pressure on the Ottoman Empire, must be regarded in this larger context. Ottoman entreaties, not German designs, formed the essential background to the German-Ottoman partnership in the Great War.

The second major diplomatic initiative undertaken by the Ottomans in the aftermath of the Tripolitan and Balkan debacles was a proactive attempt to reduce tensions in trouble spots that might prompt fresh rounds of armed conflict. One such area was eastern Anatolia. In February 1914, after protracted diplomatic negotiations, and under intense Russian pressure, the Ottoman government accepted a settlement providing for a pro-Armenian reform program, to be implemented by two European inspector-generals (Dutch East Indies administrator Louis Constant Westenenk and Norwegian officer Nicolas Hoff) in the six Eastern provinces.³⁸ Another area in which the CUP sought to preempt conflict was Arabia. The Anglo-Turkish conventions of 1913 and 1914 formalized the division of the Arabian Peninsula between the British and the Ottomans.³⁹ In return for Ottoman recognition of agreements signed between the British and local tribal leaders, whereby British protectorates were created *de jure* in southern and eastern Arabia,

³⁷ Mustafa Aksakal, "Defending the Nation: The German Ottoman Alliance of 1914 and the Ottoman Decision for War," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University (2003), pp. 63ff.

³⁸ *Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette*, 38: *Neue Gefahrenzonen im Orient, 1913–1914* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1926), pp. 1–189; and BOA-DH. KMS 2/2-5 [April 28, 1914].

³⁹ BOA-Muahedenâme, 242/11; 242/14; 376/2; and 369/2.

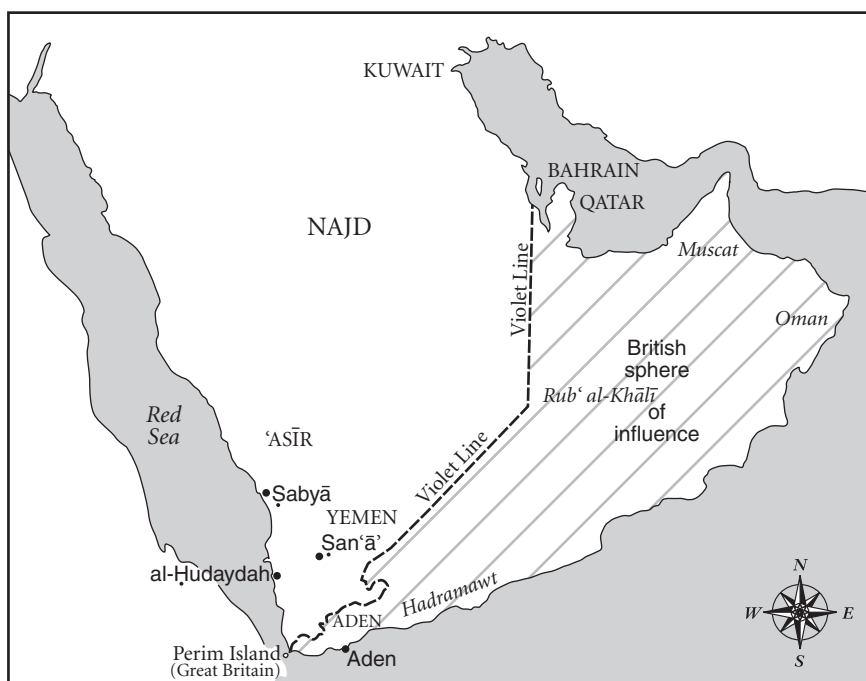


FIGURE 24. The violet line dividing the British and Ottoman spheres of influence according to the 1914 Anglo-Ottoman Convention.

the British recognized Najd, a vast area under the rule of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Sa‘ūd, as Ottoman territory. The violet line separating the Ottoman and British spheres of influence represented a settlement beneficial to both parties. The British obtained international legitimacy for their holdings in the Peninsula, something they had sought for decades, while the Ottoman government forced a strong and rebellious leader to accept Ottoman sovereignty. The demarcation of a border in Arabia was part of a larger Ottoman-British effort to liquidate all outstanding disputes between the two governments, including rights of navigation on the Tigris and the Euphrates, and Ottoman customs duties.⁴⁰

Caught between the Ottomans and the British, local rulers in Arabia were forced to come to terms with one or other dominant power. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Sa‘ūd, for example, was left high and dry by the British accommodation with the Ottomans, and signed a contract with the Ottoman government in May 1914 making him the hereditary governor of Najd.⁴¹ Imām Yahyā had already benefited from a similar arrangement, offered by

⁴⁰ BOA-A.AMD. MV 103/53.

⁴¹ BOA-DH.SYS 25/103.

the Ottoman administration in 1911, which made him autonomous ruler of the mountainous, Zaydī-populated parts of the province of Yemen.⁴² Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Idrīsī of ‘Asīr, who received aid from the Italians, rejected a similar Ottoman offer;⁴³ but, surrounded as he was by the then pro-Ottoman Sharif Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī in the Ḥijāz on the one hand, and by Imām Yaḥyā in the highlands of Yemen on the other, he did not pose a serious threat to Ottoman sovereignty.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN THE GREAT WAR

By June 1914, when the sultan ratified the Anglo-Turkish convention,⁴⁴ it seemed that the Ottoman Empire had at last secured a breathing space—with no major domestic or international conflict on the horizon—in which to heal the wounds of the Tripolitan and Balkan wars, reorganize the military, and prepare for another round against the Balkan powers who had seized so much of the empire’s territory. It was not to be.

The outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914 did not automatically entail Ottoman participation, for the carefully worded treaty with Germany did not make Ottoman entry into the war a definite obligation. Accordingly, on August 3, the Ottoman government merely declared armed neutrality and initiated a full military mobilization. The Ottomans aimed to mobilize within the thirty-nine days scheduled for the execution of the first phase of the Schlieffen plan against France, so that the Ottoman army would be ready to lend a helping hand to the Germans when they turned eastward against Russia. But as soon as the Germans ran into difficulties on the Western front, they began to apply heavy pressure on the Ottomans to enter the war, open up new fronts against Russia and Great Britain, and declare a global *jihād* against the Allies. The Ottomans, however, were disinclined to move until the mobilization process was complete, German success in the West was certain, and an overland route of communication with Germany (through Rumania and Bulgaria) was open.

Ottoman neutrality became more precarious with time, particularly after the cabinet authorized the passage of two German men-of-war, the Panzerkreuzer *Goeben* and the Kleiner Kreuzer *Breslau*, into Ottoman territorial waters on August 5. The cruisers, originally requested by Enver Pasha, Ottoman minister of war and leader of the pro-German faction within the CUP, had been pursued by the entire British Mediterranean fleet to the mouth of the Dardanelles. But now the Ottomans threatened either to take

⁴² BOA-A.DVN.NMH 371/1.

⁴³ BOA-MV 174/no. 928 [1913]; BOA-BEO/ file 309254 [December 15, 1913]; 333431 [December 23, 1916].

⁴⁴ BOA-Muahede ve Mukavelenâme, 369/2 (1914).

over the ships by force or to leave them to British mercy. The Germans, caught between Scylla and Charybdis, chose the lesser evil. To preserve the two cruisers, they granted the Ottoman government six valuable concessions, including incorporation of the ships into the Ottoman navy, support for the abrogation of the capitulations, a commitment not to conclude peace until all Ottoman territory that might be occupied in the current war had been liberated, and the guarantee of any territorial gains achieved by the Ottomans in the course of the war.⁴⁵ On August 10, the two cruisers entered the Sea of Marmara. On August 16, their fictitious purchase by the Ottoman government was announced. The German crews, donning fezes and flying Ottoman colors, surrendered the newly named Yavuz Sultan Selim and Midilli to nominal Ottoman control. The Entente powers opted to accept this bold *fait accompli* rather than declare war.

The *Goeben* and *Breslau* episode brought the Ottoman Empire tangible political benefits, and added to its obsolete navy two powerful men-of-war (worth 50 million German Marks, an amount twice the entire annual budget of the Ottoman Ministry of the Navy). But it also lost the empire any semblance of freedom of action. The acquisition of the cruisers considerably strengthened the German military mission in the capital and the hand of the pro-German faction within the government and CUP. The two men-of-war were the very vessels that spearheaded the surprise attack on Russia carried out by the German Admiral Wilhelm Souchon on October 29, 1914 despite the opposition of several key figures in the CUP. There was no turning back.

The expectations of the Ottoman leaders from the war were fourfold. First, they hoped to secure a more advantageous treaty of alliance from Germany, one that would provide them with protection against both European and Balkan powers. The renewable, five-year German-Ottoman defensive alliance of January 15, 1915 addressed this need, providing for German protection against an attack by Russia, France, or Great Britain, as well as “a coalition composed of at least two Balkan states.”⁴⁶ At the time, this seemed like a major diplomatic success for the Ottomans, though of course the eventual defeat of Germany was to expose it as a major strategic blunder.

The second expectation from the war was that full Ottoman control would be reestablished over the various autonomous regions of the empire. The Ottoman abolition of the self-governing status of Mount Lebanon in July 1915 provided a hint as to what lay in store for many such regions in the event of victory. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry conducted extensive

⁴⁵ Aksakal, “Defending the Nation,” pp. 117–18.

⁴⁶ *Recueil des traités, conventions, protocoles, arrangements et déclarations signés entre l'Empire ottoman et les Puissances étrangères, 1903–1922*, 1 (1903–1916), ed. Sinan Kuneralp (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), p. 314.

preparatory work on the history and legal circumstances of autonomous regions such as Kuwait, Qatar, Najd, Bahrein, and even Hadramawt and Oman, in anticipation of the extension of Ottoman central control over these areas. The disappearance of the British from the Arabian Peninsula, it was assumed, would make possible the fulfillment of the age-old Ottoman aspiration for full sovereignty while at the same time satisfying German strategic interests. The reestablishment of central control over Egypt and the Sudan was deemed unrealistic (the ambassadors who were commissioned to prepare a memorandum on this subject commented that Egypt and the Sudan could legally be restored to the empire, but that in the light of “almost one century of autonomous rule,” it would be preferable to maintain their current status);⁴⁷ but their attachment to the empire might be strengthened. Algeria and Tunis could also be drawn closer to the center. As for the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, either they would return to full Ottoman control, or the status quo that had existed between 1856 and 1871—providing for the neutralization of the Black Sea—would be restored.⁴⁸ Of course, none of this came to pass.

The third set of Ottoman expectations in 1914 related to the opportunity for territorial gains in the war. If Greece entered the war on the Allied side, the Ottomans hoped that the northern Aegean islands occupied during the First Balkan War could be recovered for the empire. They had similar designs on Cyprus, which had been administered by the British since 1878. The Italian entry into the war in 1915 raised additional hopes for the restoration of Tripoly of Barbary, Cyrenaica, and the Dodecanese, which had been either acquired or occupied by Italy in 1912. On the eastern front, the Ottomans sought the restoration of three Anatolian provinces lost to Russia in 1878, as well as expansion into the Caucasus. Tellingly, one of the Ottoman conditions for allowing the German cruisers into the Dardanelles was that “Germany must secure a small border change in Eastern Anatolia that would allow for direct contact with the Muslims of Russia.”⁴⁹ It seems plausible that the CUP leaders were thinking in terms of laying the groundwork for a “Great Turanian Empire” linking the Caucasus to Central Asia by means of direct Ottoman control or a chain of dependent states (like the Northern Caucasus Republic, declared upon the Ottoman conquest of Derbent in October 1918).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Rauf Ahmed and Ragıp Raif, *Mısır Meşalesi* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1918]), pp. 177–9.

⁴⁸ Rauf Ahmed and Ragıp Raif, *Boğazlar Meşalesi* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1334 [1918]), pp. 42–4.

⁴⁹ Aksakal, “Defending the Nation,” p. 118.

⁵⁰ Nâsir Yüceer, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Ordusu'nun Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan Harekâtı: Azerbaycan ve Dağıstan'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması, 1918* (Ankara: Genelkurmay ATASE Yayınları, 1996), pp. 127–8 and 147.

The final hope harbored by the Ottoman leadership at the outset of the war was that it would provide the opportunity to break the humiliating shackles of the foreign capitulations once and for all. They assumed that the removal of economic and legal constraints would free the state to establish state monopolies on materials such as petroleum and sugar and fix customs tariffs at will, thereby marshalling the resources required to launch an ambitious program of economic development that would foster the growth of an Ottoman industrial sector capable of holding its own against European competition.⁵¹ Of all their hopes and expectations, this was the only one that was to be fulfilled to any appreciable degree, although economic ruin and imperial collapse removed many of the potential benefits associated with the end of the capitulations.

In the war that ensued, Ottoman military performance wholly surpassed the expectations of European experts. Ottoman armies fought effectively on multiple fronts—in the Caucasus, Mesopotamia, and Palestine—in addition to fending off a major onslaught on their capital through the Dardanelles. At the request of the German High Command, the Ottoman IVth Army also launched two somewhat quixotic offensives against the Suez Canal in 1915 and 1916; both ended in utter failure.⁵² Minor operations were carried out in 'Asīr, the Yemen, Tripoli of Barbary and Cyrenaica, and Iran. The Ottomans also provided valuable help to the war effort in the European theater, with Ottoman units serving on fronts in Galicia, Rumania, and Macedonia. By contrast, the Ottoman declaration of jihād on November 11, 1914 did not result in any significant rebellions by the millions of Muslim subjects under Allied rule. Although the steady attrition of British power seemed the most crucial contribution of the Ottoman war effort at the time, its most radical impact on world history was in Russia. The unexpected Ottoman victory at the Dardanelles paved the way for the success of the Bolshevik Revolution and the subsequent collapse of the Eastern Front in 1917, as Russia bled to death for lack of the material support that its allies could have supplied through the Straits and the Black Sea. Over the course of the war, Great Britain deployed 2,550,000 troops on the Ottoman fronts, constituting 32 percent of the total number of British troops in the field; at one point, the British had 880,300 men fighting the Ottomans, or 24 percent of the British armed forces. The Russians initially mobilized 160,000 troops on the Caucasian front. By September 1916, they had 702,000 troops facing the Ottomans in Anatolia and Iran, out of a total force of 3.7 million. Additionally, 50,000 French troops fought the Ottomans, mainly at the Dardanelles. The Italians dispatched an expeditionary force of 70,000 soldiers

⁵¹ Mehmed Nâbi and Rumbeyoğlu Fahreddin, *Gümrük Resmî'nin Yüzde On Beşe İblâğı, Ecnebî Postaları ve Kapitülâsyon* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1917]), p. 6.

⁵² Kreß von Kressenstein, *Mit den Türken zum Suezkanal* (Berlin: Otto Schlegel, 1938), pp. 85ff.

to quell a rebellion of the local militia in Tripoli and Cyrenaica aided by the Ottoman government. Total Allied casualties on the Ottoman fronts amounted to a massive million 650,000.⁵³ In short, the Ottoman war effort imposed on the Allied powers a massive diversion of troops that could otherwise have been used on the major European fronts.

The cost of this achievement was nonetheless immense. Ottoman losses on all fronts wreaked havoc throughout the empire. During the Great War, the empire put 2,608,000 men in uniform.⁵⁴ Approximately 15 percent of the entire population, or almost one out of two adult males outside the civil service, was called to arms. By 1918, Ottoman casualties had reached the appalling figure of 725,000 (325,000 dead and 400,000 wounded). In addition, the Allies (mainly Great Britain and Russia) took 202,000 Ottoman prisoners of war on various fronts. More than a million deserters, constituting almost half of the total number of draftees, wreaked social havoc throughout the empire, especially in rural areas. On the day the Mudros armistice was signed, out of 2,608,000 men put into uniform, only 323,000 were still at their posts.⁵⁵ Of those who remained, a majority were noncombatants or fresh recruits not ready for combat. As early as 1916, draft regulations were stretched to the extent that the age of soldiers in the infantry regiments varied between sixteen and fifty. By 1918, almost all Ottoman divisions existed on paper only.⁵⁶

The war was also devastating from an economic perspective. The government spent an estimated total of Lt 389.5 million (equivalent to 9.09 billion gold French francs)⁵⁷ on expenses related to the war effort—or an average of Lt 97 million (2.3 billion gold French francs) per year. Given that the Ottoman budget for the fiscal year 1914 was Lt 34 million (or 1.5 billion gold French francs), out of which 44 percent went to the Internal Debt Organization,⁵⁸ the total additional burden of expenditure imposed by the war amounted to ten times the net annual budget after debt repayments.

⁵³ M[aurice] Larcher, *La guerre turque dans la guerre mondiale* (Paris: E. Chiron, 1926), pp. 617–34.

⁵⁴ This figure does not include 32,000 commissioned officers of different ranks, the Shammar Bedouin of Hā'il, the Zaydī militia in the Yemeni Highlands and 'Asir, the Kurdish tribal regiments, the irregular units set up by the Special Organization, 1,400 German naval personnel, 6,000 German soldiers, and 650 German officers, medical personnel, and officials of the Military Mission.

⁵⁵ Cemalettin Taşkıran, *Ana Ben Ölmedim: Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türk Esirleri* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001), pp. 47–8.

⁵⁶ Liman von Sanders, *Fünf Jahre Türkei* (Berlin: August Scherl, 1920), pp. 155–6.

⁵⁷ By comparison, Great Britain spent 235.7 billion gold French francs, Germany 243.1 billion, Belgium 5.9 billion, Bulgaria 3.6 billion, and Serbia 3.2 billion. See Larcher, *La guerre turque*, p. 636.

⁵⁸ *Düstûr*, II/6 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1916]), p. 1081.

To this extraordinary level of expenditure, one must add catastrophic losses in revenues. The strain of wartime finances was clearly staggering.

The Russian collapse on the eastern Anatolian front in the upheaval brought about by the Bolshevik Revolution prolonged Ottoman hopes of ultimate victory. But the ambitious Ottoman thrust into the Caucasus in the summer and fall of 1918, following the formal withdrawal of Russia from the war under the terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of March 1918, proved unsustainable. As the Anatolian heartland came under threat from British advances in the Near East, as the German offensives in Western Europe failed, and as a major Allied offensive resulted in the collapse of the entire Bulgarian front, it became clear that the empire could no longer depend on its Great Power ally. The combined impact of these developments resulted in the Ottoman capitulation to the Allies at Mudros on October 30, 1918. The surrender of the Ottoman government and the subsequent flight of the leading members of the CUP meant the end of the Second Constitutional Period and, more broadly, the Ottoman period as a whole.

One of the most tragic events of the war was the deportation of much of the Armenian population of Anatolia. Faced with the prospect of total collapse on the Ottoman eastern front early in the war the government apparently decided to deport all Armenians of the Armenian Apostolic Church living in and around the Ottoman-Russian war zone, on the grounds that the Armenian revolutionary committees were rebelling against the Ottoman Empire and providing crucial assistance to the advancing Russian armies.⁵⁹ However, the finer details of this decision were abandoned in practice, however, with the result that almost all Armenian populations affiliated with the Apostolic Church were deported, with the exception of those residing in Istanbul, İzmir, certain smaller cities such as Kütahya, and some Arab provinces. In addition, the government deported scores of leading members of the Armenian elite of the capital and other major cities, including numerous intellectuals and professionals, on the grounds that they were clandestinely serving the rebellious Armenian committees.⁶⁰ Many prominent politicians, including various Armenian members of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, later shared the same fate. The deportation of the Armenians (mainly to Dayr al-Zawr in Syria) was carried out with large-scale violence and under conditions of extreme weather and hunger, leading to massive loss of life. It effectively ended Armenian existence in much of Anatolia.

⁵⁹ See the temporary law “Vakt-i Seferde İcraat-ı Hükûmete Karşı Gelenler İçün Cihet-i Askeriyece İttihaz Olunacak Tedâbir Hakkında Kanun-i Muvakkat,” *Takvim-i Vekayi*, May 19, 1331 [June 1, 1915]. Deportations in fact began before this temporary law was issued.

⁶⁰ Minister of the Interior Talât Bey’s coded telegram dated April 11, 1331 [April 24, 1915], BOA-DH.EUM, 52/96–98.

INTELLECTUAL LIFE UNDER THE CUP

The post-revolutionary period witnessed the most far-ranging intellectual debate in late Ottoman history. During the early days of relative freedom under the CUP, pundits of all ideological hues—ranging from Islamic modernism to socialism—vied for attention in the public sphere. Intellectual life in the Ottoman capital, which under the old regime had lost its preeminence to Cairo and Beirut, once again flourished after the revolution. Other cities, such as Salonica, Damascus, and Baghdad, also witnessed a revitalization of intellectual life.

Nationalist literary movements dominated Turkish, Albanian, Arab, Armenian, and Greek intellectual circles. One such group, the Young Pens (Genc Kalemler), advocated literature that reflected social realities, focused on national problems, and employed simple language; this became the most popular approach to literature during this period. Similar approaches predominated in the nationalist literary journals of other Ottoman communities, such as the Armenian journals *Mehean* and *Nawasard* (Istanbul), the Albanian journal *Koha* (Korçë), the clandestinely circulated Arab journal *Lisân al-‘Arab/al-Muntadâ al-‘Arabî* (Istanbul), and the literary sections of the Kurdish journals *Rôj-i Kurd* and *Hetav-i Kurd* (Istanbul).

Publications devoted to the concerns of women also proliferated throughout the empire during this period. During the Tanzimat, women’s publications, such as the supplement to the journal *Terakki*, launched in 1869, centered on the narrow concerns of the Westernized elite. During the Hamidian era, the palace-sponsored *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (Ladies’ Gazette), in accordance with the innovative emphases of Ottomanism, promoted a new idealized image of a Muslim mother and wife, who shopped at Muslim stores and raised obedient, pious children. The new post-revolutionary women’s press, by contrast, gave vent to more liberal voices, and discussed a much broader range of issues, including sensitive ones like feminism, universal suffrage, and gender discrimination.⁶¹

Women’s organizations multiplied as well. Principal among them was the Society for the Defense of Women’s Rights. In 1913, its leader, Belkıs Şevket, a staunch defender of gender equality in all aspects of life, flew aboard a chartered military plane on behalf of Ottoman and Muslim women to demonstrate to her female compatriots that they need not be excluded from any human activity. Belkıs Şevket struck a defiant pose, insisting that “Oriental women will not accept a position that falls behind that of their Western sisters.”⁶² Although participation in women’s movements

⁶¹ Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994), pp. 120ff.

⁶² Belkıs Şevket, “Tayarân Ederken,” *Nevsâl-ı Millî*: 1330, ed. T. Z. (Istanbul: Artin Asado-ryan, 1330 [1914]), pp. 438–40.



FIGURE 25. Belkıs Şevket, a leading Ottoman feminist, aboard an Ottoman Bleriot XI/B with Captain Fethi Bey, before embarking on the first flight of a Muslim and Ottoman female (December 1, 1913). *Nevsâl-i Milli*, ed. T. Z. (Istanbul: Artin Asadoryan, 1330 [1914]), p. 450.

was significantly greater than in previous periods, it was still strictly an elite activity. As such, it cannot be compared to the scale of suffragette activity in the Western world. Though gender-based, the movement supported the larger Ottomanist cause, inviting women of different ethnic backgrounds and religious affiliations to participate; at the same time, it also benefited nationalist organizations, which came to dominate national women's clubs and organizations under the CUP.

Socialism never achieved the status of a mainstream movement in the Ottoman Empire. The socialist movement, popular among the Christian population of the empire, relied mainly on the support of a handful of intellectuals of Armenian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, or Serbian background. The Ottoman Socialist Party, established in 1910 to create a mainstream movement with the participation of Muslims, fell far short of making any impact on politics. Unique at the time in its attempt to reconcile Islam with socialism, the Ottoman Socialist Party did, however, set a precedent for modern Islamic socialist movements.⁶³

The one ideological component of socialist dogma that did make its way into mainstream Ottoman thought was materialism. The Ottoman materialist movement, which had begun under the Tanzimat and gained momentum during the Hamidian regime, came into its own under the CUP. Full translations of Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff* now appeared⁶⁴ as well as many works on Darwinism.⁶⁵ The first major Ottoman philosophical journal, *Felsefe Mecmuası*, promoted German *Vulgärmaterialismus* with a strong bias toward Ernst Haeckel's Monism. Various journals linked materialism to Westernization (*Garbıcılık*), portraying it as the driving force behind the material progress of the West. The most prominent of these, *İctihad*, also waged a war of ideas against Islam and ridiculed many Muslim practices.⁶⁶ Indeed, Sharif Husayn of Mecca listed the attacks on Islam published in the pages of *İctihad* among the factors that prompted his revolt against the Ottomans in 1916.⁶⁷ More important, the Westernization agenda vigorously advocated by this journal provided a blueprint for the radical reforms later implemented by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the first president of the Turkish Republic.⁶⁸ Following the Balkan Wars, a major schism took place within the Ottoman Westernization movement. One faction combined support for cultural Westernization with vigorous opposition to Western imperialism,⁶⁹ while another advocated wholesale acceptance of Western civilization, "with its roses and its thorns."⁷⁰

⁶³ Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye'de Sol Akımlar, 1908-1925*, 1 (Istanbul: BDS Yayınları, 1991), p. 33.

⁶⁴ Louis [Ludwig] Büchner, *Madde ve Kuvvet*, 1-3, tr. Baha Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil (Istanbul: Teceddüd-i İlmî ve Felsefî Kütüphanesi, [1911]).

⁶⁵ Subhi Edhem, *Darwinizm* (Monastir: Beyn'el-milel Ticaret Matbaası, 1327 [1911]).

⁶⁶ Abdullah Cevdet, "Softalığa Dair," *İctihad*, no. 60 [April 17 1913], p. 1304.

⁶⁷ Mehmed Selâhaddin, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin Maksad-ı Te'essüs ve Suret-i Teşekkülü ve Devlet-i Aliyye-i Osmaniye'nin Sebebi Felâket ve İnkisâmı* (Cairo: Emin Hindiye Matbaası, 1918), p. 106.

⁶⁸ [Kılıçzâde Hakkı], "Pek Uyanık Bir Uyku," *İctihad*, no. 55 [March 6, 1913], 1226-28; no. 57 [March 20, 1913], pp. 1261-4.

⁶⁹ Celâl Nuri, "Şime-i Husumet," *İctihad*, no. 88 [January 22, 1914], pp. 1949-51.

⁷⁰ Abdullah Cevdet, "Şime-i Muhabbet," *İctihad*, no. 89 [January 29, 1914], pp. 1979-84.

Islamist movements, which had suffered persecution at the hands of Abdülhamid II, enjoyed a period of relative growth and tranquility under the CUP. The most important of these was the one inspired by Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s ideas on the reconciliation of Islam with science and modernity. Supporters of ‘Abduh strongly defended constitutionalism, but criticized Turkism on the grounds that “Islam does not allow nationalism.”⁷¹ They denounced the Westernizers (*Garbîcılar*) for seeking to dupe Muslims into accepting a “new religion.”⁷² The ulema as a whole strove (without much success) to reclaim their former position in political and intellectual life. Initially, the religious establishment maintained cordial relations with the CUP, which for its part set up an ulema party branch to keep the mainstream religious figures under its control. But the relationship deteriorated over time, especially after the attempted counterrevolution of 1909, which the CUP abused to consolidate its hold on power and marginalize the ulema. As a substitute for public religion sanctioned by the ulema, the CUP pushed for the transformation of religion into a private affair; in 1909, for example, the government banned the hearing of private law cases by shari‘a courts in instances where a prior judgment from a civil court existed.⁷³ In 1917, it issued the “Temporary Family Law,” a cautious but significant step toward the adoption of a civil law code. The statute granted a limited right of divorce to Muslim women by means of a liberal interpretation of Ḥanbalī law; and it limited the practice of polygamy by allowing women to stipulate monogamy as a condition in their marriage contracts.⁷⁴ This legislation was the product of proposals put forth by a group of intellectuals, labeled the Turkist-Islamists, who published the journal *İslâm Mecmuası* (Islamic Review). These thinkers advocated the construction of a modern Islam that limited itself to matters of private faith and rituals. They believed it could be construed by entrusting the *ulu’l-amr* (those vested with authority) with extensive legislative authority, broadening the basis and applicability of ‘urf (custom), and liberally interpreting traditional Islamic sources.⁷⁵ In this manner, Islamic practices that could not be reconciled with modernity, such as polygamy, would be eliminated.⁷⁶ Especially during the Great War, such theses found an attentive ear in the corridors of power, as the CUP supported the use of a modernist Islam to rally religion to the national cause and project

⁷¹ Ahmed Na‘im, *İslâmda Da‘va-yı Kavmiyyet* (Istanbul: Tevsi‘-i Tiba‘at Matbaası, 1332 [1914]), pp. 5ff.

⁷² Ferid, “Tarih-i İstikbâl,” *Sebilür-Reşad*, 11/283 [February 12, 1914], p. 358.

⁷³ *Düstür*, II/1 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1329 [1911]), pp. 192–4.

⁷⁴ *Düstür*, II/9 (Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası, 1928), pp. 762–81.

⁷⁵ Ziya Gökalp, “Dinin İctima’î Hizmetleri,” *İslâm Mecmuası* 2/34 [August 26, 1915], pp. 741–3; no. 36 [September 23, 1915], pp. 772–6; no. 37 [October 7, 1915], pp. 791–6.

⁷⁶ See, for instance, Mansurizâde Sa‘id, “İslâm Kadını: Ta‘addüd-i Zevcât İslâmiyetde Men’Olunabilir,” *İslâm Mecmuası* 1/8 [1914], pp. 233–8.

a “Religion for a Turk.”⁷⁷ However, the mainstream ulema, as well as the more radical Islamists, rejected such views as unwelcome innovations.⁷⁸

Despite these tensions, the regime’s legitimacy deficit repeatedly forced the CUP to seek compromises with the liberal wing of the ulema whenever it felt challenged by conservatives, and, more generally, to fall back on the traditional legitimizing power of Islam. One example is the Islamization of the Ottoman Constitution following the counterrevolution.⁷⁹ An amendment to article 10 added “sharī’a” to a clause that originally read: “Except for the reasons and under the conditions prescribed by the law [*qānūn*], no one shall be arrested or punished on any pretext whatsoever.” A similar alteration in article 118 of the constitution made fiqh a major source for new legislation. Analogous political calculations led the State Council in 1909 to recommend a wholesale ban on the import of alcoholic beverages to the province of Yemen (so as to avoid a backlash from “the local population, which is inclined toward conspiracy,” ran the proposal).⁸⁰ Ironically, the implementation of this recommendation prompted an unforeseen backlash from Yemen’s non-Muslims, whose right to drink alcohol—recognized by the “reactionary” Abdülhamid II—was thus inadvertently annulled. In general, the CUP tended to appeal to Islam when it was convenient to do so, as when bureaucrats explained the shutdown of socialist organizations on the grounds that their regulations violated the sharī’a (in addition to “fundamental principles”).⁸¹

The Turkism that had flourished among Ottoman expatriates in Cairo, the capital cities of Europe, and other parts of the empire during the later years of Abdülhamid II went from strength to strength after the revolution. Once in power, the CUP everywhere backed Turkist organizations, such as the Turkish Hearths; and leading CUP members wrote for Turkist organs, such as *Genc Kalemler* and *Türk Yurdu*, thereby broadening their appeal. The Turkist attitude to Islam and Islamic reform was radically new. Epitomized by Ziya Gökalp’s motto, “to become Turkish, Muslim, and modern,” Turkism advocated reconciliation with both Islam and secularism.⁸²

⁷⁷ Ziya Gökalp, “Türk’e Göre: Din,” *İslâm Mecmuası* 2/22 [March 10, 1915], p. 552.

⁷⁸ See, for example, İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, “Fıkh ü Fetâvâ: Örfün Nazar-ı Şer’deki Mevki’i,” *Sebilür-Reşad*, 12/293 [April 23, 1914], pp. 129–32; and Ahmed Na’im, “Müdafa’at-ı Diniye,” *Sebilür-Reşad* 11[12]/ 298 [May 28, 1914], pp. 216–21 and 12/300 [June 11, 1914], pp. 248–50.

⁷⁹ *Mu’addel Kanun-i Esasî ve İntihab-ı Meb’usan Kanunu*, ed. Tevfik Tarık (Istanbul: İkbâl Kütübhanesi, 1327 [1912], pp. 3–11.

⁸⁰ BOA-ŞD, 2267/12 (1905–1909).

⁸¹ See the draft memorandum to be sent by the Ministry of the Interior to the acting governor of Istanbul, [January 29, 1913]/no. 624, BOA-DH.İD., 126/44.

⁸² Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslâmlaşmak, Mu’asırlaşmak* (Istanbul: Yeni Matbaa, 1918), pp. 3ff.

But perhaps the most important effect of the surge in Turkist thought was the reconstruction of the official ideology of Ottomanism. Much as Abdülhamid II's reinterpretation of Ottomanism had stressed the solidarity of the empire's Muslim subjects, the CUP's new Ottomanism now allocated a dominant role to its Turks. And just as Abdülhamid II's emphasis on Islam transcended the boundaries of the empire, so too did the new emphasis on the Turkish race. Thus Ottomanism, which originally envisioned an egalitarian supranational identity that would supersede other religious or ethnic affiliations and bind the empire together, ended up as the ideological foundation for a society dominated by Turks—not unlike Arkadii Prigozhin's vision of a *narod-patron*, in which a multinational Soviet community was in fact to be run by Russians. "Turks who had lived an unconscious life under the Ottoman flag" were called upon to acquire a "national awareness" and, as the dominant nation of the state, to reinvigorate the empire. At the same time, they were asked to extend a helping hand both to Turks living under foreign rule and to Muslims in other parts of the world.⁸³

Some Turkists took these notions one step further, advocating a Pan-Turkist union of Turkic peoples, most of whom were held to be chafing under Russian domination. The ideal future homeland of all Turks, "Turan," was, however, for the most part a fantasy entertained by a handful of intellectuals. In a poem on this theme composed in 1911, Ziya Gökalp wrote: "Neither Turkey nor Turkistan is a fatherland for the Turks / The fatherland is an enormous and eternal country: Turan."⁸⁴ Only during the war did it become fashionable to discuss the union of all Turks as a practical possibility to be realized on the ruins of the Russian Empire.

The intellectual ferment of the period found new modes of expression. Political demonstrations, workers' strikes, and economic boycotts directed at Western powers dotted the political landscape of this era. Debates such as that on Westernization raged on into the early months of the First World War, when the government finally put an end to freedom of speech, suspending *İctihad* and other controversial journals. As the war progressed, the administration placed increasing restrictions on political activities of all kinds, limiting demonstrations, outlawing political organizations, and manipulating anti-Western sentiments for its own purposes.

THE ECONOMY

The militant prerevolutionary rhetoric of the Turkist faction of the CUP gave no indication what economic policy could be expected after the revolution.

⁸³ Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fu'ad, "Türklük, İslâmlık, Osmanlılık," *Türk Yurdu* 4 (1329 [1913]), p. 695.

⁸⁴ Tevfik Sedat [Ziya Gökalp], "Turan," *Genc Kalemler*, no. 6 [March 1911], p. 167.

Talk of declaring an economic boycott against the treacherous Armenians,⁸⁵ of shunning the Public Debt Administration as an *imperium in imperio*,⁸⁶ of resisting aggressive European capitalists and exploiters who “go wild when they see money”⁸⁷ died down quickly as revolutionary extremism gave way to more realistic attitudes following the assumption of power by the CUP. Although early CUP decisions revealed a certain tendency to support domestic production, such as viticulture on the Aegean coast, against foreign companies,⁸⁸ fears of an immediate shift to extreme étatism favoring Muslims and Turks proved unfounded. Instead, the CUP surprised everyone by adopting a liberal policy conceived by one of its leading members, Mehmed Cavid, a scholarly champion of liberalism.⁸⁹ Between 1908 and 1913, the number of Ottoman joint stock companies established with foreign capital (and usually in partnership with European or non-Muslim Ottoman entrepreneurs) actually increased.⁹⁰ Still, economic liberalism clearly contradicted the *Weltanschauung* of the CUP; as such, it represented merely a temporary compromise with reality.

The surge of anti-Western sentiments under the impact of the Balkan Wars helped the CUP leaders readjust their economic policy and shift to a new agenda more in line with their beliefs. The new policy, labeled “National Economics,” was a blend of corporatism, protectionism, and strict state control over the economy. It had its intellectual roots in the thinking of Friedrich List and the German Historical School. The coming of war facilitated the adoption of such measures, and the 1916 General Congress of the CUP heralded the full adoption of this platform as official policy. It was significant that Mehmed Cavid, who abhorred the German Historical School, stayed on to preside over the implementation of these new policies as the CUP’s minister of finance or in other key positions within the financial establishment. Clearly, the Turkist and étatist party line overrode individual intellectual preferences.

The Ottoman government unilaterally abrogated the capitulations on September 11, 1914,⁹¹ much to the dismay of its German ally. This act,

⁸⁵ Uluğ, “Ermeniler,” *Türk*, no. 110 (December 21, 1905), p. 2.

⁸⁶ Ali Muzaffer, “Dünyân-i Umumiye-i Osmaniye Varidat-ı Muhassese İdaresi Yahud Hükûmet İçinde Hükûmet,” *Kanun-i Esasî*, no. 39 [May 30, 1899], pp. 4ff.

⁸⁷ “Dinleyiniz!” *Şûra-yı Ümmet*, no. 119 (July 30, 1907), p. 1.

⁸⁸ See the CUP Izmir Branch’s memorandum to the Central Committee, June 15, 1325 [June 28, 1909]/no. 379, and the CUP special commission’s report dated July 3, 1325 [July 16, 1909], Private Papers of Ahmed Rıza.

⁸⁹ Mehmed Cavid, *İlm-i İktisad*, 1 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1326 [1910]), p. 53.

⁹⁰ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de “Millî İktisat,” 1908–1918* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982), p. 86.

⁹¹ The imperial decree issued on September 11, 1914 was set to go into effect on October 1, 1914. *Düstûr*, II/6, p. 1273.

coupled with the virtually total economic isolation imposed by the war, produced a protectionist environment that favored domestic producers. The government further strengthened protectionism by increasing customs tariffs from 8 percent to 11 percent in October 1914,⁹² and then raising them again to 30 percent in May 1915.⁹³ Despite these measures, however, conscription of almost half of the adult male population prompted a drastic decrease in domestic production in both the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors; because of the military monopoly over the use of the railways, the main means of transportation, only a small portion of production could be brought to major markets. At the same time, wartime conditions sharply limited the available export market. Moreover, severe shortages of everything imaginable emerged, leading to rampant black-marketeering and the formation of a new class of war profiteers. But these circumstances did permit the CUP to alter the balance of economic forces within the empire in favor of Muslims, and especially Turks. As the war wore on, the goal of creating of a national Muslim/Turkish bourgeoisie, at the expense of foreign capital, non-Muslims, and non-Turks, became official policy. The CUP helped Turkish entrepreneurs establish companies and banks with the word “national” in their titles. They supported the launching of a grander project to replace the Ottoman Bank with a national central bank. The new institution, named “Ottoman National Honor,” was established in 1917,⁹⁴ but the collapse of the Ottoman war effort shattered hopes for its future. The CUP also created an array of other economic institutions in support of their policies, such as cooperatives for Muslim and Turkish manufacturers and societies of artisans. Such organizations supported the goal of “nationalizing the economy,” while at the same time deepening organized political support for the CUP. The Temporary Law for the Encouragement of Industry, issued in 1913, sought to provide advantages to local entrepreneurs through the selective award of customs, tax, and land privileges, with the unstated aim of fostering the emergence of a Muslim bourgeoisie.⁹⁵ Until the full switch to “National Economics,” the results of this legislation were meager; in 1915, Muslim and Turkish entrepreneurs owned only 42 companies in the empire, as compared with 172 firms listed under non-Muslim ownership. In March 1915, the government amended the law to reinforce its unwritten agenda, restricting privileges to “Ottomans,” which in practice meant Muslims, and to Ottoman joint stock companies.⁹⁶ As a consequence, by 1918 the picture had changed dramatically. A host of new companies and factories established by Muslims

⁹² Ibid., pp. 1276–77.

⁹³ *Düstûr*, II/7 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1336 [1918]), p. 610.

⁹⁴ *Düstûr*, II/9 (Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası, 1928), pp. 42–3; 184–5.

⁹⁵ *Düstûr*, II/6, pp. 108–14.

⁹⁶ *Düstûr*, II/7, pp. 535–6.

gave them the upper hand in the economy, though the defeat nullified this development.⁹⁷

It is not easy to put together an accurate economic picture of the CUP era because of the unstable conditions arising from successive wars. The upheaval caused by the First World War was particularly disruptive. For example, price indices of basic consumption in the wartime economy rose a record 1,953 percent.⁹⁸ To meet the extraordinary expenses of war, the government first obtained German credits and sold domestic bonds. But eventually, to resolve the shortage of cash, the government had no choice but to print money. In order to do so, it had to reintroduce banknotes for the third time in Ottoman history. From 1915 to the end of the war, the Ottoman Bank issued seven series of notes, amounting to Lt 161 million (more than three times the value of the metal currency circulating in the Ottoman economy), underwritten for the most part by German treasury bonds. In 1916, in an attempt to stabilize the Ottoman currency, the government issued the Temporary Law of Standardization of Metal Coins, which established a full gold standard and sought to put an end to the varying exchange rates of coins in the different regions of the empire.⁹⁹ To underscore the serious intent behind these reforms, the government made failure to accept paper notes a crime.¹⁰⁰ However, on the street nobody took them at face value or respected the stipulated 1:1 ratio against gold. As a result, two parallel money markets emerged. Resistance to giving change in coins for payments in notes compelled the government to authorize the practice of cutting Lt 1 and Lt 5 bills into two and using them as Lt 0.50 and Lt 2.5 notes, respectively.¹⁰¹ Eventually, it was forced to issue banknotes worth as little as 5 gurushes. For still smaller amounts, the government allowed the use of revenue stamps.¹⁰² In some towns, governors took matters into their own hands, issuing paper notes in small denominations.¹⁰³ The failure of the attempt to control the exchange rate between paper and metal is evidenced in the following statistic: in May 1917, a paper bill worth Lt 1 circulated at the rates of 0.35, 0.30, 0.25, 0.10, and 0.08 metal gurushes in Istanbul, Konya, Aleppo, Mosul, and Baghdad, respectively.¹⁰⁴ The farther one got from the capital, the less paper money was worth; by 1918, it was almost worthless in many areas. Despite the dire economic conditions, the

⁹⁷ Toprak, *Millî İktisat*, pp. 191ff.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 333.

⁹⁹ *Düstûr*, II/8 (Istanbul: Evkaf Matbaası, 1928), pp. 892–4.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 674.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 677.

¹⁰² *Düstûr*, II/9, p. 183.

¹⁰³ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de Ekonomi ve Toplum, 1908–1950: İttihat-Terakki ve Devletçilik* (Istanbul: Yurt Yayınları, 1995), p. 24.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

sale of Ottoman treasury bonds, purchase of which was declared a patriotic duty, turned out to be a success, as the government sold Lt 18 million worth of bonds in the last year of the war.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE EMPIRE

Ottoman defeat entailed the final dissolution of the empire. But the process of dismemberment had begun several years before. On November 3, 1914, Great Britain recognized Kuwait as an independent state under British protection. Two days later, it officially annexed Cyprus. In December, it declared Egypt a protectorate. Although these acts signified no more than the formal termination of Ottoman suzerainties over territories that had long before slipped away from central control, they were a signal of more serious things to come. From 1914 onward, the Allies coordinated a series of plans for the partition of the Ottoman Empire, each of which was rapidly overtaken by wartime developments. The Constantinople agreements of 1915 between Great Britain, France, and Russia, which awarded the Ottoman Straits to Russia (on the condition that Istanbul remain a free port), became a dead letter following the Bolshevik Revolution. Other wartime sketches of the possible fault lines of partition were the Treaty of London (1915), the Sykes-Picot agreement (1916), and the Treaty of St. Jean de Maurienne (1917). Woodrow Wilson's famous Fourteen Points of 1918 set three principles of partition: sovereignty for the Turkish portion of the empire; security of life and an unmolested opportunity for autonomous development for the non-Turkish nationalities; and the permanent opening of the Dardanelles under international guarantees as a free passageway for the ships and commerce of all nations.¹⁰⁵ Such lofty principles appeared easily applicable on paper; in practice, however, their implementation was no simple matter. Anglo-French conflict over some of the grey areas in these various plans, compounded by the subsequent American disengagement from the area, constituted the primary external obstacles to the smooth partition of the empire. Among the other factors that complicated its division were British commitments to Arab leaders in the Ḥijāz, Najd, and 'Asīr in 1915–16, separate reassurances given to Sharif Ḥusayn of Mecca in January 1918, promises made to seven other Arab leaders domiciled in Egypt in June 1918, the undertaking toward world Jewry embodied in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, and the territorial demands of Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds, not to mention fierce Turkish nationalist resistance.

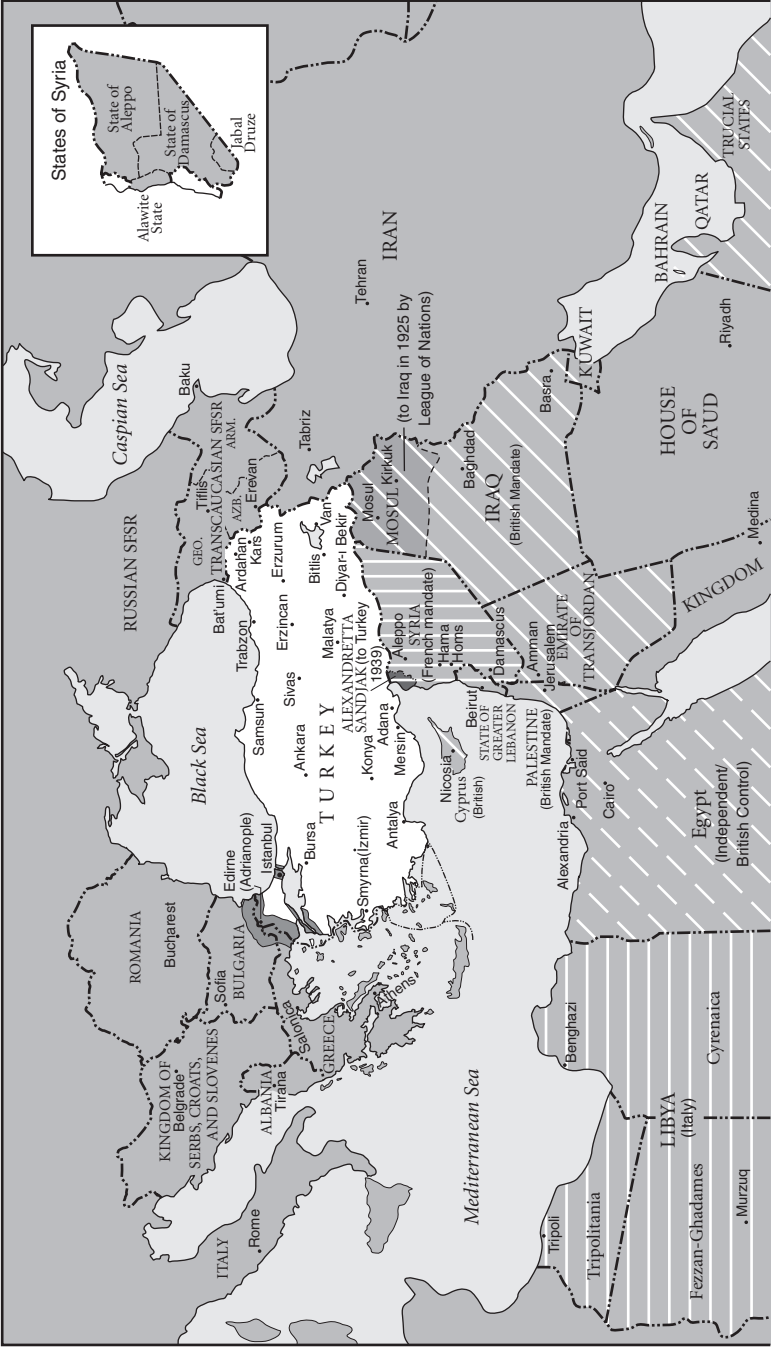
¹⁰⁵ [Woodrow Wilson], *Woodrow Wilson: The Essential Political Writings*, ed. Ronald J. Pestritto (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 259–64.

After the conclusion of the war, a new Near East arose from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, shaped and dominated by British and French power, but seething with underlying tensions of local origin. Recognizing the irretrievable loss of empire brought about by defeat in the Great War, Turkey's pragmatic leaders renounced all formal rights of empire outside of Anatolia, including all claims to Egypt, the Sudan, Libya, and Cyprus. Syria, the hotbed of Arab nationalist intellectual activity during the last years of the empire, came under French mandate in July 1920. Contrary to nationalist aspirations, some districts hitherto ruled from Damascus, as well as the northern parts of the Ottoman province of Beirut, were annexed to Mount Lebanon to form "Grand Liban," also under French mandate, in 1920. In 1921, over Turkey's strong objections, the British fused the province of Mosul with two other former Ottoman provinces, Baghdad and Basra, to form the mandate, and then state, of Iraq.¹⁰⁶ The British also controlled both banks of the Jordan River, the Holy Land destined to pose one of the most acute partition challenges in former Ottoman lands. In 1922, the British divided the Palestine Mandate into two artificial entities: on the East Bank, they created the Kingdom of Transjordan, which became the enduring refuge of the Hashemite family, driven out of Arabia by their rivals, the Saudis; and on the West Bank, they continued to administer the reduced mandate of Palestine, bitterly contested between Jews and Arabs ever since.

In the Arabian Peninsula, Imām Yaḥyā, who during the conflict had remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire, secured for himself an independent state in Yemen following the war. Another pro-Ottoman semi-independent leader, Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz, *amīr* of the House of Rashīd in Ḥā'il, was assassinated in 1920, following which the Rashīdī dominion was overrun by the Saudi ruler 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ūd. The latter then embarked on a bitter struggle for the domination of northern Arabia against his archrival, Sharif Ḥusayn; this ended in Saudi domination of the Ḥijāz by 1925, and the ouster of the Hashemite line from the Arabian Peninsula. The Idrīsī Ṣūfī state in 'Asīr suffered a similar fate at Saudi hands in 1930. Other beneficiaries of British protection under the 1914 Anglo-Ottoman convention shed their remaining ties to the Ottoman state at various stages of the war.

In Anatolia, the Turkish nationalists led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha ferociously resisted partition of the Anatolian core of the empire. Their success in overturning the peace settlement breezily imposed by the Allies at the end of the Great War is an astonishing episode in world history, and one which has received far less attention than it deserves. The defiance of the Turkish nationalists signified the first major challenge to the new world order and served as a harbinger of things to come.

¹⁰⁶ Mosul was officially awarded to Iraq by the League of Nations in December 1925.



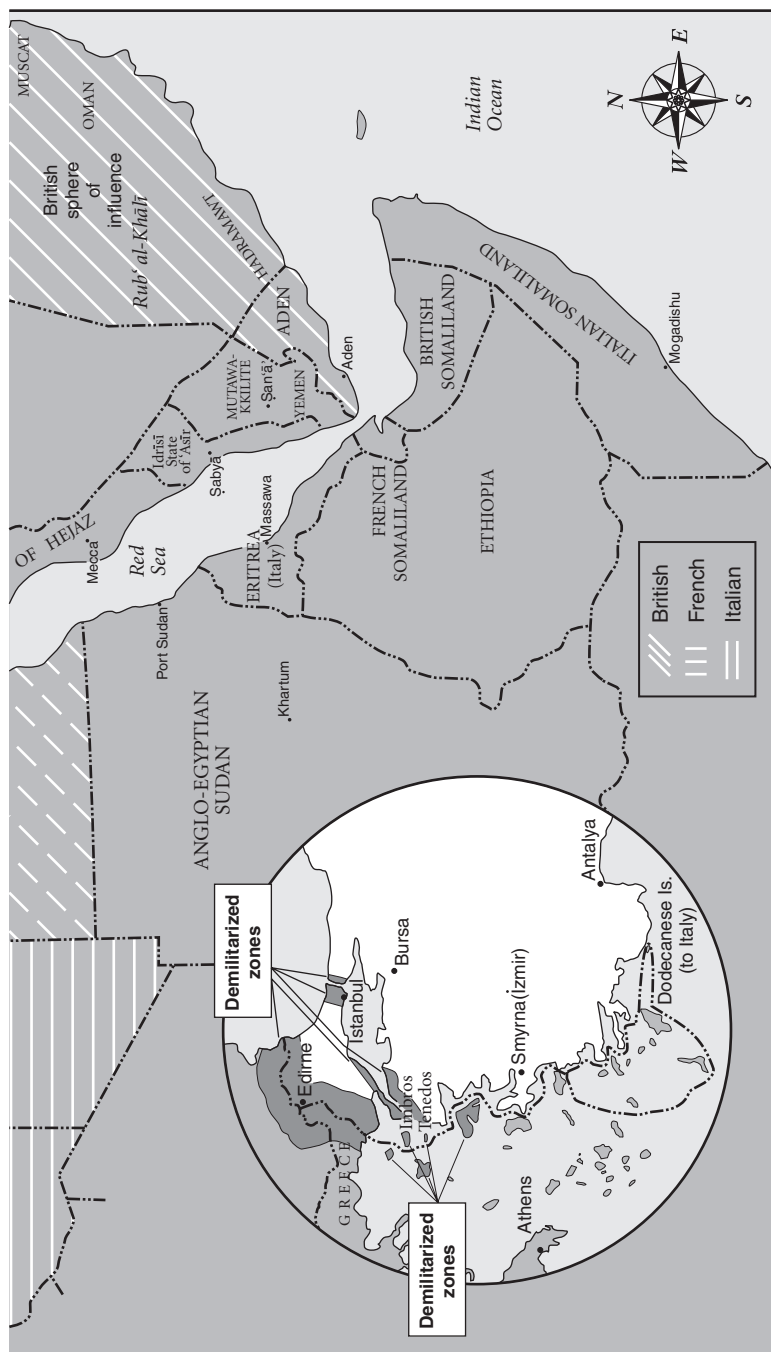


FIGURE 26. The partition of the Ottoman Empire according to the Sèvres Treaty of 1920

The harsh Treaty of Sèvres (August 1920), imposed upon the sultan's government by the victors, included provisions for the partition of Anatolia. The treaty foresaw the formation of French and Italian zones of occupation in the southeast and southwest, the cession of much of western Anatolia to Greece, and the establishment of two independent states, Armenia and Kurdistan, in the east and southeast. The residue of the territory was to remain Ottoman. Istanbul, while remaining the seat of the Ottoman government and Caliphate, was to become an international city, with free navigation through the Straits controlled by an international commission. The Ottoman state was to have a token army and navy without tanks, heavy artillery, airplanes, or battleships. The Ottoman budget was to be placed under the supervision of an Allied financial commission. Not surprisingly, Turkish nationalists, headed by the new Turkish Grand National Assembly and the nationalist government in Ankara, rejected these humiliating terms and resolved to fight to the bitter end to preclude their implementation.

In the ensuing Turkish War of Independence, the nationalist army defeated the Greeks and came to terms with the French and the Italians, thereby securing an independent Turkish state in Anatolia, and frustrating Armenian, Greek, and Kurdish aspirations. At the conclusion of the war, the Greek Orthodox population of Turkey was exchanged for the Muslim population of Greece (excluding the Greek Orthodox population of Istanbul and the Muslims of Western Thrace), thereby effectively ending Greek settlement in Anatolia. The borders set by the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) and the subsequent cession of Mosul to Iraq (1925) divided the Kurdish population of the empire between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, thereby overturning the 62nd article of the Sèvres Treaty and shattering Kurdish aspirations for self-determination. Under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, the Armenians lost all hope of reestablishing a significant presence in Eastern Anatolia (as stipulated in the 89th article of the Sèvres Treaty); their sole consolation was a small homeland in Soviet Armenia which was established in 1920 and became part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic in 1922.

Along with the myriad social problems bequeathed by the empire, the Ottoman successor states also inherited decades of imperial debt. The Treaty of Lausanne released Turkey from any obligations concerning Ottoman loans guaranteed on the basis of the Egyptian tribute, that is, the loans of 1855, 1891, and 1894. But the rest of the Ottoman debt was divided proportionally among the empire's heirs. An international referee later determined that, out of the debt of Lt 130 million (not including unpaid installments totaling Lt 30 million), Turkey would pay Lt 35 million, Greece, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and Syria-Lebanon would each pay Lt 11 million, and the other heirs would incur relatively smaller

amounts. 'Asir inherited the smallest amount, namely Lt 26,000.¹⁰⁷ Turkey made the last payment on the Ottoman debt in August 1948.

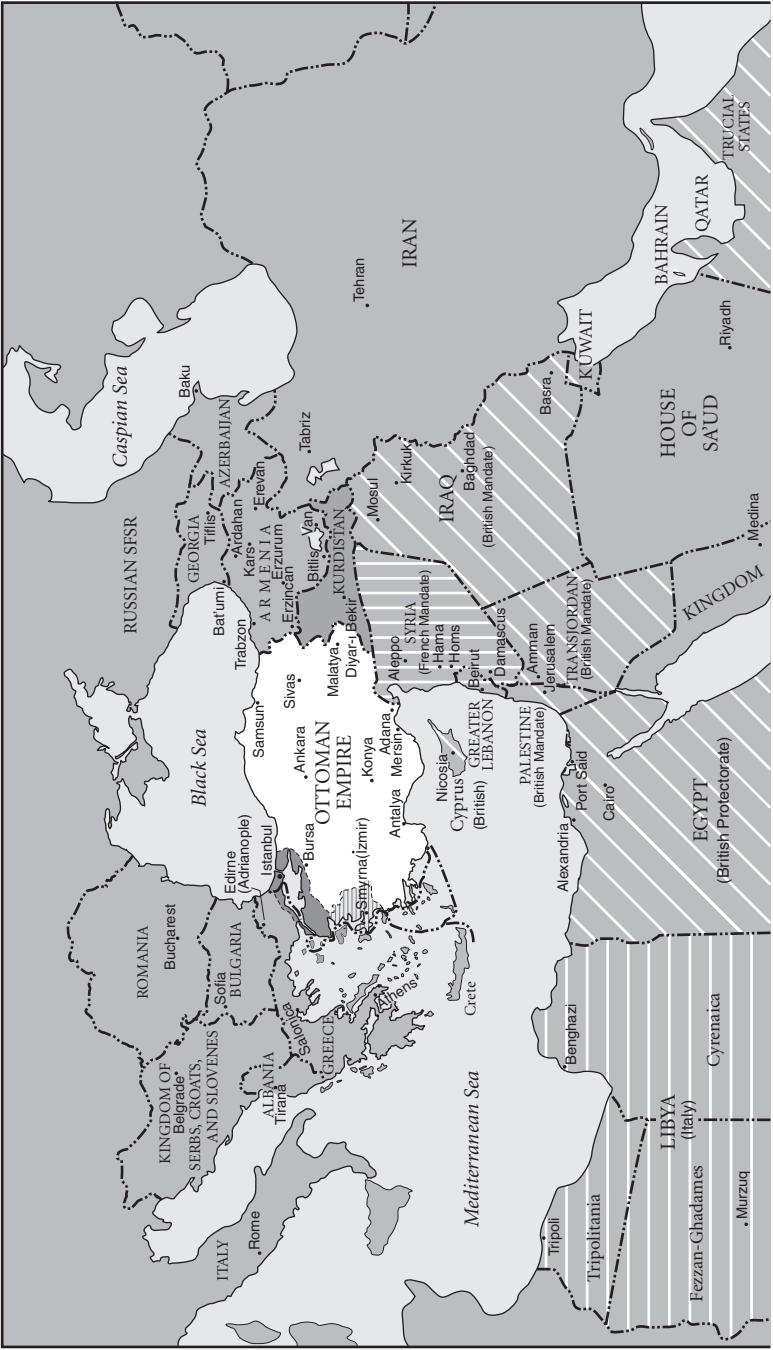
The abolition of the Ottoman sultanate on November 1/2, 1922 by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in Ankara dealt the *coup de grâce* to an empire that had long ceased to be one. The final institutional remnant of empire, the Caliphate, was abolished on March 3, 1924. To prevent any return to the Ottoman era, the government expelled all members of the royal family from Turkey.

The birth of numerous nation-states out of an old and vast empire, far from being a smooth natural evolution, was a messy, often painful process, which left many problems still unsolved in areas stretching from Sarajevo, Skopje, and Kosovo to Kirkuk, Nicosia, and Jerusalem. The emergence of new national boundaries left ethnic minorities stranded on either side; former communities of a multinational empire became majorities or minorities in ethnically defined nation-states with an unflinching desire for homogeneity. Social turmoil was often the result. The Bulgarian-Greek (1919–20) and the Turkish-Greek (1923–26) population exchanges, for example, involved the forced uprooting of more than two million individuals from their traditional homes and their transfer to so-called fatherlands. New borders also entailed radical changes to the socioeconomic structures of the new nation-states. For instance, the Armenian deportations and the Greek-Turkish population exchange produced an extreme scarcity in craftsmen and skilled industrial labor in Anatolia. Many important cities, such as Aleppo and Salonica, which lost their traditional hinterlands upon being detached from the empire, faced inevitable decline, and ultimately lost much of their significance. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire marked a sharp break with the past, producing an array of new structures that belong wholly to the post-Ottoman period. The problems underlying these new structures are nevertheless firmly rooted in the Ottoman legacy.

THE CUP ERA IN RETROSPECT

Although it is commonly assumed that the Young Turk Revolution produced drastic changes in Ottoman domestic and foreign policy, there was far more continuity with Hamidian patterns than is generally recognized. The 1908 Revolution marked a watershed not because of the introduction of new policies in its wake, but because it made possible a sea-change in the structure of the ruling elite. Although the CUP began in stark opposition to

¹⁰⁷ İ. Hakkı Yeniay, *Yeni Osmanlı Borçları Tarihi* (İstanbul: İktisat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1964), pp. 130–33.



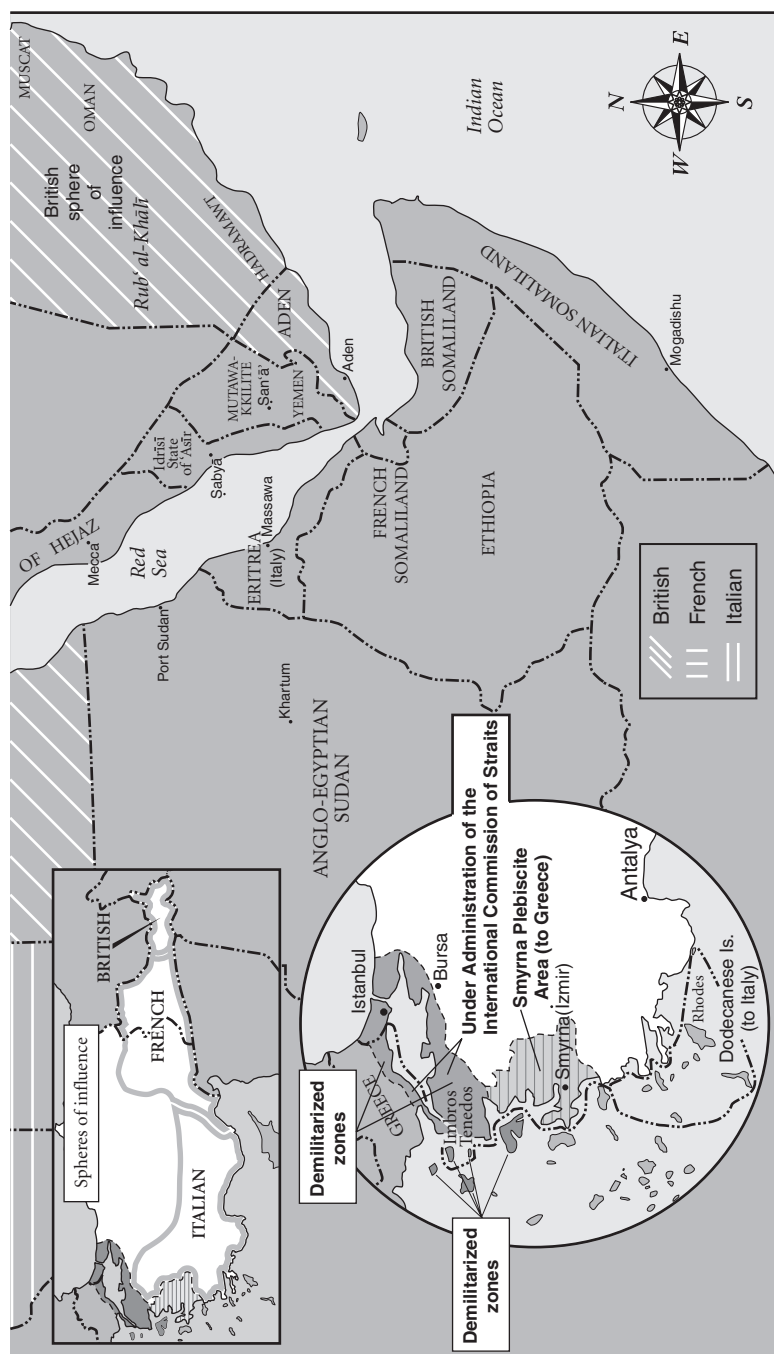


FIGURE 27. Turkey and other Successor States according to the Lausanne Treaty of 1923.

Abdülhamid II, the realities of power compelled it to follow his policies far more often than it would have liked. There is something symbolic in the famous picture taken at the state funeral of Abdülhamid II in 1918, in which the entire CUP leadership is seen following their opponent's casket in solemn procession.

Politically, the most significant change that took place in this period was the introduction, however incomplete, of representation through party politics. For the first time in the history of the empire, politics was the business of political parties sponsoring competing policies and visions of the future. Although this political pluralism was not long-lasting, it caused a far more enduring change in the nature and composition of the Ottoman ruling elite. The revolution marked a changing of the guard, as new elites were swept up into politics both in the machinery of central government and in communal organization. The old elites that worked within the framework of Hamidian Ottomanism, such as the Armenian *Amira* class of bankers and rich artisans allied to the clergy, or the Albanian, Arab, and Kurdish notables who traded their loyalty for imperial privileges and a free hand in communal administration, lost power under the new regime. So did the religious establishments. Muslim, Christian, and Jewish religious leaders lost so much ground to the nationalist élites in the Ottoman heartlands that only in the most distant and loosely held regions of the empire in Arabia did successor states defining themselves in religious terms emerge. Even Sharif Husayn of Mecca bowed to the slogans of the age, announcing his revolt on behalf of an imagined "Arab Nation." Members of the traditional elites who jumped on the nationalist bandwagon did so largely because they had no alternative.

The new elites empowered by the installation of a parliamentary system in a multinational empire were, for the most part, secular nationalists. It was mostly Turkish members of the CUP who rose to positions of prominence in the army and bureaucracy, while non-Turkish nationalists came to the fore as parliamentary deputies or regional leaders of separatist movements. Lacking the economic power and social status enjoyed by the traditional elites, the nationalist leaders exploited the new liberties of the post-revolutionary period to consolidate their power using newspapers, journals, and the ballot box. Through elections, they came to enjoy legitimacy as "the representatives of the people"—although they might disagree among themselves as to who "the people" really were—and they sought to assert the power conferred by this legitimacy in the struggle over the future of the empire.

Wars acted as a catalyst for the disintegration of the empire and the re-drawing of the political map of the Balkans and Near East, giving birth to a host of successor states dominated by the elites formed during the Second Constitutional Period. In Turkey, the overwhelming majority of the Republican leaders were former CUP members; in the other successor states,

nationalist elites speaking the anticolonial rhetoric pioneered by the CUP held a disproportionate share of power for many decades following the Ottoman collapse. Thus, the emergence of an intellectual, nationalist vanguard at the expense of the traditional religious and propertied elites stands out as the most significant sociopolitical legacy bequeathed by the Second Constitutional Period.

The revolution and its aftermath also saw the rise of the military in Ottoman society. Although defeat in war thwarted the late Ottoman project for building a nation in arms, the militarization of society and politics became a common feature of many of the Ottoman successor states, including Turkey. Along with the militarization of politics, the Second Constitutional Period left another lasting imprint on post-Ottoman polities: the creation of a hollow institutional façade legitimizing the ruling party. Once promoted and accepted, such fundamental tenets of a free society as elections, the right to representation, freedom of the press, and the right to assemble could not simply be suspended. But they could be largely emptied of content. In fact, the constitutional travesty that emerged during the Second Constitutional Period became the model for nearly all the nation-states that established themselves upon the ruins of the empire. One sees this pattern even in the most oppressive dictatorial regimes, such as Enver Hoxha's Albania, or the Ba'ath leaderships in Syria and Iraq, which still felt it necessary to hold sham elections, maintain the illusion of an elected parliament, and sponsor a robust press tightly controlled by the state.

Ironically, the CUP's triumph in 1908 in the end proved as much of a victory for its political opponents. For four critical years, the leaders of the Committee struggled to maintain their grip on power, in part because they could not resolve their dilemma in choosing between the lofty principles of the revolution and the urge to dominate. The CUP's entire revolutionary platform rested on the case for a constitution. Immediate retreat from this goal would have been tantamount to betrayal of the people, and might have resulted in the loss of power. The "people" turned out to be at once a considerable force of legitimacy and a serious threat to CUP control. The restoration of the constitution and the institution of freely contested elections soon proved a boon to the CUP's challengers. The parliament was at once a legitimizing asset and an independent-minded body that hindered the CUP's freedom to implement their empire-saving program. Eventually, the constitutional regime was stripped of substance, even though it retained its form.

The conflict between the CUP's Turkist agenda and the multinational reality of the empire was another of many dilemmas that were resolved in an unsatisfactorily pragmatic fashion, resulting in the attenuation of revolutionary principle and the formulation of ambiguous policy. Just as the CUP's "Ottomanism" was supposed to appeal to non-Turkish communities

while preserving the Turkist agenda, so too a secular interpretation of Islam was meant to pacify the ulema while maintaining the essentials of the scientific platform. Perhaps a more uncompromising ideological attitude and the adoption of a supranational platform like that of the Bolsheviks in Russia might have saved the empire from these contradictions. But the sort of social upheaval openly espoused by the Bolsheviks was alien to the CUP worldview. In this respect, the CUP leaders resembled the Tanzimat statesmen who, by promoting the new while preserving the old, fostered an ambiguous dualism. They kept the sultan, but introduced the Committee; maintained the Islamic identity of the regime, yet endorsed secularism; espoused Turkism, yet professed Ottomanism; advocated democracy, but practiced repression; attacked imperialism, but courted empires; and proclaimed *étatisme* while promoting liberal economics.

An uncharitable estimation of the CUP in power would attribute the ambivalence of their policies to a failure of imagination. A more generous evaluation would recognize that the CUP, like the leaders of the Tanzimat before them, and unlike the leaders of the Ottoman successor states that followed in their wake, had to come to terms with the fact that they ruled a multinational empire. They were not free to build a new state and society from scratch, primarily because they were not prepared to relinquish the empire. Ultimately, the revolutionaries of 1908 could not transcend the framework of the late Ottoman order bequeathed to them by the very Abdülhamid II they had come together to overthrow. It was up to a younger generation of revolutionaries, no longer burdened by the responsibilities of empire and the fissiparous challenge of nationalism, to abandon the Ottoman past and build something radically new.

Conclusion

THE HISTORY of the late Ottoman Empire exhibits several major dynamics that overlap and, at times, contradict each other. First among these is the struggle between center and periphery. Perhaps the principal theme of late Ottoman history is the attempt of the central government in the imperial capital to assert its control over a loosely held periphery which had gradually accumulated administrative, economic, and even diplomatic independence of the center. The seepage of power to the periphery peaked in 1808, when the center accorded brief legal recognition to this new balance of power. In its attempt to eradicate the old order, the center inevitably clashed with power brokers in the periphery who sought to preserve their autonomy and privileges. The crux of the center's problem with the outlying territories was not, as has often been suggested, ideological, but practical. The old order, under new circumstances, no longer afforded a cost-effective solution to the problem of ruling over a vast empire; it reduced the center to penury and powerlessness. Defense of the empire in the age of modern warfare demanded a large and professional army and navy equipped with advanced weaponry; the maintenance of such military focus depended on effective taxation; and effective taxation was not commensurate with the rule of local notables. Instead it required an effective, centralized bureaucracy—hence the centralizing, bureaucratizing impulse that runs as a common thread through late Ottoman history.

This common-sense reaction had little to do with any struggle between “modernizers” (or “Westernizers”) at the center and “reactionaries” in the periphery. In fact, in 1808 it was representatives of the periphery who attempted to impose modernization on the center. In 1839, the roles were reversed. Despite their varying ideological attitudes, *all* Ottoman administrations—from Selim III down to the CUP—strove to centralize the administration of the empire, while leaders in the periphery did their best to resist it. As the autonomous governors of Egypt and Baghdad in the early nineteenth century demonstrated, the periphery was quite capable of surpassing the center in applying European methods and technologies. For them, too, Westernization—the imitation of Europe—was not primarily an aim in and of itself, but rather an instrument for the improvement of government

and society. Mehmed Ali's successful drive for European-style modernization did not automatically make him an ally of the center, despite the fact that it strove to achieve similar goals. The Ottoman central government supported Egyptian modernization as long as it enjoyed its fruits—the crushing of the rebels in the Morea, the overthrow of the Saudi state in the Arabian Peninsula, or increasing imperial tax revenues. But once Egyptian troops moved against the imperial army, and Egyptian wealth was channeled into local growth, the rulers of the empire lost any stake in Mehmed Ali's modernization policies. Similarly, the nationalist movements that later redrew the struggle along ethnic lines were led by Westernized elites fighting against a Westernized center.

Nor was the struggle between center and periphery primarily related to the rise of nationalism, although nationalism certainly intensified it. For onething non-nationalist groups, like Zaydī insurgents in the highlands of Yemen or Šūfī rebels in 'Asir, made similar demands of the center on behalf of their regions. Images of captive nations engaged in a heroic struggle for freedom from Turkish domination only acquired relevance later. Clearly, nationalism served as a perfect ideological vehicle for mobilizing resistance in the periphery and articulating demands directed at the center and foreign powers. Adroit leaders mastered the new rhetoric to voice old, deep-rooted demands with greater vehemence and increasing success. It was tempting for historians of a nationalist orientation to recast an ambitious local ruler like Mehmed Ali as the founding hero who had forged a nation, with their very histories, in turn, contributing the foundation myths of nationhood. In reality, nationalism proved most effectual when other factors—particularly distance from the center—made its triumph feasible. Nationalist ideology enabled those seeking independence in the non-Turkish territories of the periphery to persevere in their struggle to the bitter end, while their counterparts in the Ottoman heartland—so thoroughly dominated by the hegemonic Turkish culture that they were unable to conceive of a viable entity independent of the revitalized center—quickly succumbed to force or the offer of minor concessions.

The second major feature of the late Ottoman period was the attempt to respond to the awe-inspiring challenges brought about by modernity. The Ottoman Empire was not unique in this respect. It began its journey later than most of its European counterparts, and hence initially had to rely more heavily on imitation and importation. But most of its problems were not peculiar to it; dealing with secularization, reconciling religion with scientific progress, confronting the traditional bases of society, coping with urbanization, responding to public opinion, digesting massive cultural transformation, incorporating technology into administration, adjusting to complex patterns of division of labor, defusing new tensions between center and periphery, staving off challenges to a supranational identity in the age

of nationalism—all these were issues with which European counterparts of the empire also had to grapple, not to mention other Asian states.

The initial Ottoman responses to modernity can be broadly categorized under the heading of “Europeanization” (often termed “Westernization”). However, by the late nineteenth century the forging of an Ottoman modernity through a process of acculturation was almost complete. Even Islamist movements of the post-1908 period had long shed the categorical rejection of any imitation of Europe which characterized the Islamist response in earlier times. They had shifted their focus from practical questions to such abstract to such issues as the reconcilability of Islam with modern science and philosophy. Not unlike their counterparts the so-called Westernizers, who openly based their philosophical positions on the theses of Le Bon or Büchner, the Islamists drew on an arsenal that included not only Muḥammad ‘Abduh, but also Paul Janet and Gabriel Séailles. Thus, for all the importance of the rise of a militant materialism among the Ottoman elite, the picture of a perennial struggle between modernizers and reactionaries in the late Ottoman period is inaccurate.¹

The third fundamental dynamic of late Ottoman history was the evolving relationship between the empire and the Great Powers of Europe. Writing in the wake of the tremendous growth in the power of the state in the twentieth century, it is difficult to overstress the extraordinary role played by old-fashioned diplomacy in mitigating foreign influence over domestic developments in a state as weak as the Ottoman Empire was in the nineteenth century. Still, Ottoman statesmen were able to deflect foreign demands only to a limited degree. Beyond that, they absorbed them as best they could. As a result, domestic policy in the late Ottoman Empire was related to foreign policy to an extent unparalleled before or since. In fact, it was the state’s relations with European powers that provided the initial and sustaining impetus for the reforms aiming at centralization and modernization of the Ottoman administration. The primary weakness of the old order, in the eyes of the reformers, was its inability to respond effectively to external challenges. The old local armies, once summoned to arms only in times of crisis, were no longer of much use against European powers with modern military forces. Instead they served mainly as weapons in the hands of local leaders with which to defy the center. And central control over the tax base and resources of the provinces was precisely what was needed to finance military reform.

While the Ottoman government was busy trying to adapt to meet the new threats from abroad, the Great Powers were seeking to alter the empire from within. They had a host of moral and political reasons for doing so.

¹ Ottoman scientism was not only modern like other contemporary ideologies, but sought to monopolize modernity. This product of the late nineteenth century was not foreseen by the reformist statesmen. Seemly “II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi ‘Garbcılığı’ nın Kavramsallaştırılmasındaki Üç Temel Sorun Üzerine Not,” *Doğu-Batı* 31 (February 2005), pp. 55–64.

The so-called Eastern Question was like a chameleon changing its colors with the environment. The moral argument for the liberation of oppressed Christians was not without links to domestic political considerations in the various European states that espoused it. It could also serve as a pretext for advancing expansionist ambitions, as was the case with Russia in the Balkans and the Caucasus, and with France and Italy in North Africa; or as a pretext for their deflection, as was most often the case with Austria in the Balkans. The British continually wavered between a moral perspective and a focus on the strategic dimensions need to block Russian expansion into the Near East by means of a strong Ottoman buffer. Every new crisis provided inspiration for the elaboration of new variations on these themes.

Much of the high-flown rhetoric in favor of reform emanating from the Great Powers was not genuine. By and large, European leaders opposed the wholesale transformation of the Ottoman Empire into an efficient, centralized state; they even feared the creation of a *Homo Ottomanicus*, equal to his fellow citizens and bound to them by a common identity that transcended religion, ethnicity, or tribe. Instead, they preferred a return to the administrative arrangements of the old order, in which a loose confederation—perhaps upheld by new humanistic principles and shorn of the traditional privileges accorded to Muslims—would guarantee them a continuation of the status quo. Preservation of the status quo was vital, in the eyes of European statesmen, because its collapse, whether through revolutionary change or otherwise, could trigger a serious European conflict. Moreover, the existing situation, in which favorable trade treaties guaranteed European industrial producers unrestricted access to the Ottoman market, was economically advantageous. The contradiction between strategic aims and moral rhetoric reflected the familiar tension between the demands of realpolitik and the pressure of public opinion. The artificial prolongation of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, for instance, was more the product of a desire for balance between Austria and Russia than the result of any Ottoman capabilities. Similarly, the preservation of the relative administrative unity of the Balkans under Ottoman rule owed much to the economic advantages it offered to European railroad companies eager to build extensive railways, and to other companies that sought the convenience of a single market with guaranteed low customs tariffs. At the same time, the fact that Ottoman rule in the Balkans allowed for an increasing measure of autonomy reflected European sensitivities to the issues of self-government and equal rights for non-Muslims.

Thus, the domestic opponents of Ottoman reform in the periphery shared their unease with powerful potential allies across the border. They looked upon every new measure of reform—including Ottoman constitutionalism—with the suspicion, if not the conviction, that it was insincere; in other

words, that it represented a carefully disguised step toward Turkification. So, for instance, in 1876, both the representatives of the Great Powers and those of the Ottoman Slavs agreed that the appointment of Christian governors to administer the European provinces was preferable to the Ottoman solution of a constitution that made everybody equal before the law.

Ottoman statesmen, for their part, struggled to capitalize on the contradictions between the various European protagonists and to manipulate the rules of the European balance of power to their advantage. But the prize of second-class membership in the European club—the ultimate dividend of which was the guarantee of survival—came with a price attached, in the form of ceaseless demands for pro-Christian reform. The attempt to minimize the impact of these demands, to stave off the pressure for such reform, to stall and twist, deflect and renege, is the story of late Ottoman diplomacy.

In 1789, the Ottoman Empire, however weakened, was still in control of much of southeastern Europe; as such it was very much a European power. Yet it remained the quintessential “Other” in the eyes of the average European, and the perennial outsider vis-à-vis the major players of the great game of continental diplomacy. Several factors combined to alter this situation fundamentally. First and foremost was the reaction to the rise and fall of the Napoleonic threat to the peace of Europe. The new rules of European diplomacy after 1815 placed a premium on stability and equilibrium. To be sure, the preservation of the status quo was not meant to apply in principle to the Ottoman Empire, which was neither a signatory of any of the major treaties concluded at the end of the Napoleonic era, nor a member of the coalition that defeated Napoleon. However, in practice there was no getting around the fact that the Ottoman Empire was *European*—at least insofar as what happened in or to the Ottoman domains mattered to the European powers. In terms of the balance of power in Europe, the Ottoman Empire had only negative significance: although the empire itself could no longer threaten any of the major European powers, the prospect of its capitulation to any one Great Power posed a dreadful menace to all the others. The most serious and persistent threat came from neighboring Russia. As Russia made inroads into Ottoman sovereignty and territory in the first half of the nineteenth century, the resulting danger to British, Austrian and, to a certain degree, French strategic interests gained the Ottomans significant allies in the defense of the empire. It also highlighted the importance of the Ottoman role in the European balance against Russia. The common fear of a destabilization of the European balance of power as a result of Ottoman collapse was the empire’s strongest diplomatic card in the last century of its existence. It provided Ottoman statesmen with an entry ticket into the European diplomatic arena, and gave them crucial leverage over foreign powers seeking territorial, strategic, or economic advantages at Ottoman expense.

At the same time, the French Revolution and the resultant sociopolitical changes in Europe, including the emergence of public opinion as an active force in the shaping of foreign policy, rendered obsolete the traditional view that Ottoman relations with the empire's Christian subjects was an internal Ottoman problem. Thus, a reformist interventionism crept into the dealings of many of the European powers with the empire. Additionally, European colonial powers inevitably developed an interest in the crumbling Ottoman periphery, especially in North Africa and at the strategic corners of the Arabian Peninsula. Like the Church of the pre-Reformation era, the Ottoman Empire was at once too rich (in strategic and economic terms) and too weak (in military terms) for its predators to leave it in peace. Moreover, the changes in production and transportation resulting from the industrial revolution dramatically increased the economic importance of the Ottoman market.

Thus, if the story of late Ottoman history is one of contraction in Europe and exposure to European encroachments in Asia and Africa, it is at the same time a tale of greater and more active Ottoman participation in the European concert, both politically and economically. That process continued into the twentieth century and proceeds even today.

These three major dynamics drove an astonishing transformation of the Ottoman state and society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: from a loose confederation to a relatively centralized state; from disparate administrative structures founded on ancient traditions and local arrangements to a reasonably standardized bureaucracy with a modern code of law; from a predominantly rural barter economy operating with pre-modern financial and fiscal arrangements to a monetary economy with modern budgets; from a formal organization of society along religious lines to exclusive recognition of a common Ottoman citizenship; from rule by the sultan and his court to constitutional government and ministerial responsibility; from a pre-modern army dependent on Janissaries and Timariot cavalry to a professional military based on conscription; from a pre-modern system of land tenure to private ownership of property; and from a state that played the role of an aloof outsider in international affairs to one that actively participated in the European balance of power. At the end of the eighteenth century the Ottoman Empire was well on its way to becoming an anachronism; by the turn of the twentieth it was weak, militarily and financially, but by most standards modern.

If the absolute achievements of the Ottoman reforms appear impressive, it is the *relative* accomplishment of the Ottoman transformation effort that seems truly remarkable. The greatest difference between the Ottoman Empire in 1789 and its European contemporaries lay not in the nature of the challenge they forced, which was roughly equivalent, but in the enormous contrast in the existing structures that had to be revamped if the challenge

were to be met. A heavy institutional inheritance stretching back to medieval times placed the Ottoman starting point perhaps several centuries behind Europe. Seen in this light, a comparison of late Ottoman history with the Japanese experience might be expected to yield more insight.² Yet there was a crucial difference: while Japan was free to develop its response to modernity in relatively insular security, the Ottoman state was in the middle of a predatory struggle for power on three continents.

No less daunting than the institutional deficit was the enormous gulf that separated the elite from the masses—a fissure that was far wider in the Ottoman case than in European societies, as literacy rates, for instance, suggest. This was especially true when it came to popular hostility toward many of the attributes of modernity, which in the Ottoman case was particularly closely linked to powerful aversions rooted in religion.

At the same time, a comparison of the Ottoman and European experiences in the modern age highlights the limits of the Ottoman transformation. Like the Austrians, the Ottomans ultimately failed to address the contradictions of a polyethnic empire in the age of nationalism. Clearly, a major failure of the Ottoman reform movement was the negligible progress it made toward the creation of a new political identity that could transcend traditional divisions by region, religion, or community, and thwart the rise of new ones founded on the idea of nationhood. Although Ottomanism made more headway than is commonly assumed, it failed to penetrate deeply into society and so proved ineffective in comparison with its rising competitor, nationalism. Additionally, while the administrative and economic aspects of the Ottoman transformation brought about substantial changes in Ottoman society, not least of which was a major reshuffling of the traditional social strata, the fact remains that the comparison with Europe underscores the weakness of industry, the consequent lack of an industrial working class, and the failure of a vital bourgeois class to emerge in the late Ottoman Empire. The haphazard, short-term, and often contradictory nature of Ottoman economic policy was partly to blame for this. Yet it should be remembered that Ottoman economic policies were implemented under conditions of near-constant turmoil caused by war, territorial loss, social upheaval, and heavy economic and political pressure from foreign powers. Moreover, the challenge of transforming the Ottoman economy was far greater than the equivalent challenges faced by the various Western European powers. Whereas the emergence of a bourgeoisie and industry in such European countries as Great Britain and Belgium was a

² This comparison was the subject of a major conference and a book published as its product. See *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, eds. Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

result of unplanned economic, social, legal, and intellectual developments, Ottoman administrations set out to create them—a breathtaking challenge.

Finally, a few words on the role of ideas in history. The triumph in modern Turkey of a hybrid ideology made up of eighteenth-century French materialism and its vulgarized nineteenth-century German derivative should not mislead us into viewing late Ottoman history as a train with state-sponsored scientism as its final destination. Late Ottoman history, in other words, is not reducible to a prelude to the history of modern Turkey.³ To be sure, the emergence of Republican ideology in the 1920s as a vehicle for mass-mobilization and state-building was not just an accident; but neither was it inevitable. The historical roots of the ideology of the republic may be traced back to the rise of Ottoman materialism—and its by-product, Westernist (*Garbıcı*) ideology—among the elites of the Second Constitutional period; but its victory over the alternatives available at the time was surprising. Just as the prospect of Bolshevik victory would have struck contemporaries as improbable as late as 1917, so too the rise of Ottoman materialism from a fetish of the elites to the cornerstone of the state did not seem likely as late as 1922. And just as no historian could convincingly portray the last decades of Russian imperial history as a struggle between Bolsheviks and Tsarists, so too it is impossible to describe late Ottoman history as a simple battle between secularists and their religious opponents. As it happened, the collapse of the empire gave rise to a score of successor states;⁴ only in one of them, the Republic of Turkey, did this particular ideology take root.

Scarcely less significant is the distinction between the enormous importance of this ideology, indeed of ideology in general, in the process of transformation initiated by the leaders of the Turkish Republic, and its far less salient role as an engine of historical change during the late Ottoman period. As this study has tried to demonstrate, the key processes of late Ottoman history can be explained above all, not by the logic of ideas, but by the structural constraints imposed on the leadership of the empire by geography, demography, institutions, and the examples set by European countries. This does not mean that one should approach late Ottoman history in a simple-mindedly historicist manner, seeing that the path of Ottoman history as predetermined. Rather, it means that one must begin with the recognition that the set of realistic choices that lay before the Ottoman leaders was not unlimited. One need not be a passionate Social

³Two edited volumes that appeared in the last decade of the twentieth century attempted to underscore this fact. See *Modernization in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire and its Afro-Asian Successors*, eds. Cyril E. Black and L. Carl Brown (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992) and *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. L. Carl Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

⁴There were, in fact, 27 successor states, if one begins the count in 1789.

Darwinist to recognize that modification of the old order became inescapable in the late eighteenth century, if the empire was to survive; or that the most logical source of inspiration for any new order was Europe. The vastness of the Ottoman state, the heterogeneous nature of its population, the magnitude and multiplicity of external threats, the relative weakness of its military institutions, and the patent inability of the old bureaucracy to marshal the financial means needed to wage modern war—all these made change imperative. At the same time, the gargantuan struggle that took place in Europe between 1789 and 1815 demonstrated the rising power of European ideas and institutions, and already hinted at the extent to which Europe would come to dominate the world economically, militarily, and politically. By and large, when Ottoman policy makers and intellectuals turned toward Europe, they did so not out of a clear, articulate ideological preference, as is often suggested by later scholars. Rather, they looked to Europe for answers because a return to the old order was thoroughly unattractive and because there was nowhere else to turn. Extreme reactionaries existed in late Ottoman society as elsewhere. But the sharp debate between them and the radical Westernizers distorts the historical reality of a consensus on the need for European-inspired change that was shared by a solid majority of the Ottoman elite from the nineteenth century onward.

A fundamental assumption underpinning this book has been that an enhanced understanding of late Ottoman history is indispensable not only to comprehend modern Turkey, or even the vast geographic area that was once ruled from Istanbul. It is also essential for the study of European and world history. The Ottoman experience provides a superb opportunity to examine the impact of modernity in a non-European setting. This brief account of this impact will have accomplished its goal if it succeeds in inspiring a new generation of scholars to take this endeavor further.

Further Reading in Major European Languages



THIS BOOK lays no claim to comprehensiveness. Readers who wish to read more on the topic of Ottoman history in general and late Ottoman history in particular should consult further studies. The selection given below will serve as a good starting point. For a more exhaustive list of virtually all important publications on all aspects of Ottoman history, readers are urged to consult Klaus Kreiser's meticulously compiled bibliography *Der osmanische Staat, 1300–1922* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2001). For late Ottoman history more specifically, see the critical bibliographic survey in Erik J. Zürcher's *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd edition (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004, pp. 359–80).

Late Ottoman history is most often treated as a background for understanding modern Turkey. Less often, it is dealt with in the context of a narrative stretching from the late thirteenth century to the late twentieth. In either case, authors typically take a retrospective approach to history, attributing a teleological mission to the late Ottoman Empire. Too often it is assumed that Westernization and secularization propelled Ottoman history inexorably forward toward its ultimate goal: the modern, secular republic of Turkey. Despite this shortcoming, many such studies are valuable in terms of both factual content and analytical approach. Stanford J. Shaw's two-volume *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976–7—the second volume was coauthored with Ezel Kural Shaw) contains numerous factual errors and a minimum of analysis, but offers a detailed description of Ottoman and Republican Turkish history until 1975. Among the books that bridge late Ottoman history and the early Republican era, Bernard Lewis's classic, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 3rd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), provides a powerful analysis within the "Westernization and Modernization" paradigm, emphasizing intellectual and political history. Zürcher's aforementioned *Turkey: A Modern History* offers a stronger focus on modern Turkey, bringing the narrative up to 1980. Feroz Ahmad's *The Making of*

Modern Turkey (London: Routledge, 1993) takes the story up to 1991 in the framework of a hard-line Kemalist interpretation of late Ottoman and Republican history; it reads at times like a work of Republican propaganda from the 1930s. Shorter, less analytical, but more balanced texts with a focus on modern Turkey include Geoffrey Lewis's *Modern Turkey*, 2nd edition (London: Ernest Benn, 1974) and Roderic Davison's *Turkey: A Short History*, 3rd edition (Huntingdon, UK: Eothen Press, 1998). A much shorter survey that begins with the pre-Islamic past of the Turks and ends with an epilogue on Republican Turkey up to 1974 is Robert Mantran's *Histoire de la Turquie* (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1975). A readable journalistic book on Turkey with some discussion of the late Ottoman legacy is Nicole and Hugh Pope's *Turkey Unveiled: Atatürk and After* (London: John Murray, 1997).

There are several exceptions to the teleological approach to late Ottoman history. A well-researched and eloquently written book is Caroline Finkel's *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923* (London: John Murray, 2005). A similarly erudite but stylistically uneven work is the edited volume *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, ed. Robert Mantran (Paris: Fayard, 1989). Donald Quataert's *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) offers a concise history emphasizing social and economic affairs.

Another approach to the study of late Ottoman history is to situate it within the broader history of the Near East, though the empire was, of course, much more than a Near Eastern state. Well-written studies of the empire with a very strong emphasis on the Arab provinces include M[alcolm] E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East, 1792–1923* (London: Longman, 1987) and William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 3rd edition (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004). A recent, more analytical work including translations of key texts is James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Yet another approach to the topic has been to examine late Ottoman history within the framework of the history of the Turks, though it is problematic to reduce the history of a polyethnic empire to that of one of its chief components. A recent study along these lines is Carter Vaughn Findley's *The Turks in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Those who wish to inquire further into major subfields of late Ottoman history should consult the following works. The second volume of *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), edited by Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert, covers social and economic history. Kemal H. Karpat's *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985) provides invaluable data on late Ottoman demographics. Donald Quataert's *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) is the standard reference on its subject. His edited volume, *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550–1922: An Introduction*, offers the beginnings of a treatment of the long ignored history of consumption in the empire. Şevket Pamuk's *A Monetary History of the Ottoman*

Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) is the most comprehensive work on Ottoman monetary history in a Western European language. As for the fiscal history of the late Ottoman Empire, it has been thoroughly examined and masterfully portrayed by eminent Turkish scholars such as Halil Sahillioğlu, Yavuz Cezar, Tevfik Güran, and Coşkun Çakır. Unfortunately, their major works are in Turkish, leaving Pamuk's work, despite its monetary focus, the most relevant source in English. Valuable information may also be gleaned from A. du Velay's now century-old work, *Essai sur l'histoire financière de la Turquie depuis le règne du Sultan Mahmoud II jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1903), which, for obvious reasons, omits the last two decades of the empire. Another useful source on Ottoman financial dealings with the West is Christopher Clay, *Gold for the Sultan: Western Bankers and Ottoman Finance 1856–1881: A Contribution to Ottoman and to International Financial History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000). As for intellectual history, Niyazi Berkes's *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964) provides detailed information about the main intellectual currents in the late imperial period, but its construction of late Ottoman history as a bipolar struggle between benevolent, well-informed "secularists" and malevolent, ignorant "religious fundamentalists" epitomizes the simplifications of the progressive school of history. *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), edited by Elisabeth Özdalga, is informative but not methodical or highly analytical. There is no comprehensive text in a major European language on late Ottoman diplomatic history. M. S. Anderson's *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1966) remains the best general source for understanding the European context of Ottoman foreign relations.

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