The Tanzimat
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In Ottoman history, the term "Tanzimat" (literally 'the reforms') designates a period that began in 1839 and ended by 1876. Literary scholars speak of 'Tanzimat literature' produced long after 1876, arguing that the literature displays continuities that warrant such usage. Reform policy also displays continuities after 1876. Yet the answer to the critical question of 'who governs' changed. The death of the last dominant Tanzimat statesman, Mehmed Emin Ali Paşa (1871), and the accession of the last dominant Ottoman sultan, Abdülhamid II (1876), decisively changed the answer to that question.

Background

No disagreement surrounds the beginning of the Tanzimat, for several watershed events occurred in 1839, including a change in 'who governed'. However, Ottoman efforts at modernising reform had begun much earlier. The catastrophes that alerted Ottomans to the menace of European imperialism began with the Russo-Ottoman War of 1768–74, ending with the disastrous Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca. That treaty launched the series of crises known to Europeans as the 'Eastern Question', over how to dispose of the lands under Ottoman rule. Napoleon's invasion of Egypt (1798) was equally traumatic, although temporary in its effects compared to Küçük Kaynarca, as it showed that the imperialist threat was not localised in the European borderlands but could make itself felt anywhere. These crises stimulated demands in both Istanbul and the provinces – for example at Mosul – for an end to the political decentralisation of the preceding two centuries and a reassertion of sultanic authority.

1 This chapter is adapted from Carter Vaughn Findley, 'Turkey: Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity', ch. 2 (forthcoming).
Sultans Selim III (1789–1807) and Mahmud II (1808–39) responded with reform programmes that opened the Ottoman reform era (1789–1922).

Selim's 'New Order' (Nizam-ı Cedid) aimed first at military reform. As in other states, military reform required more revenue, and more revenue required more efficient government overall. Facing that fact, Ottoman statesmen came to realise that a governmental system previously guided by custom had to be reconsidered as the object of rational planning and systematisation. Lacking precedents to follow, the resulting new programmes required plans, regulations and laws to guide them. There would be no Nizam-ı Cedid without nizamnames (regulations, literally 'writings about order'). The plans and regulations that defined Selim's New Order mark the point at which the Enlightenment's systematising spirit (esprit de système) appeared in Ottoman policy; Selim's decision to inaugurate permanent diplomatic representation in Europe (1793) furthered this rapprochement between Ottoman and European modes of thought. In Weberian terms, the perception that the New Order required planning and regulation marks the beginnings of the transition from 'traditional' towards 'rational-legal' authority. In Ottoman terms, finally, it was the sultan's command that gave the new regulations the force of law. The warlords who had wielded power by default during the period of decentralisation could not wield power by right. The sultan could do so, if he possessed sufficient strength of will, and the reassertion of his right meant centralisation and an end to warlordism.

In attempting to create new institutions while unable to abolish old ones, Selim III left himself open to attack by vested interests threatened by his reforms. His overthrow resulted from this fact. To avoid repeating Selim's mistake, Mahmud II prepared carefully. He neutralised provincial warlords where he could, although the biggest of them, Egypt's Mehmed Ali, eluded him. By 1826 Mahmud was strong enough to abolish the Janissaries, the once-famous infantry corps that had become undisciplined and ineffective to the point of being a liability. The fact that Sultan Mahmud's forces performed poorly against the Greek revolutionaries, while Mehmed Ali Paşa's Egyptian troops performed well, heightened the sense of urgency in Istanbul. The abolition of the Janissaries, the most dangerous vested interest opposing reform, made it possible for Mahmud to revive Selim's programme and go beyond it. Beginning with a new army and reorganised support corps, Mahmud went on


What was the Tanzimat?

Between Mahmud's death (1839) and Abdülhamid's accession (1876), no sultan dominated policy consistently. Selim and Mahmud's new elites filled the gap. Because defence depended on diplomacy, it was not the military but rather the civil elite, especially the diplomats, who became most influential. The centre of power shifted from the palace to the civil bureaucratic headquarters at the Sublime Porte (Bab-ı Âli). During the Tanzimat, it became common for the foreign minister to go on to serve as grand vezir. Dominating this combination of posts, Mustafa Reşid (1800–58), Keçecizade Fuad (1815–69) and Mehmed Emin Ali Paşas (1815–71) shaped the period. Their associates formed a revolving interministerial elite, rotating among ministries and provincial governorships.

Tanzimat policy represents a continuation and intensification of reform. Both the name Tanzimat and the term nizam ('order') had entered Turkish as loanwords from Arabic; and both terms derive from the same Arabic root, which denotes 'ordering'. A causative or intensive form of this root, Tanzimat implies the expansion or intensification of ordering or reform, and that was
The period responded to emerging global modernity in both its Janus-like faces, the threatening aspect (separatist nationalism in the Balkans, imperialism in Asia and Africa) and the attractive aspect (the hope of overcoming Ottoman backwardness by emulating European progress). The Tanzimat was both a time of crises, which implied impending collapse, and of accelerating reforms, which signified renewal.

As greatly as government policy defined this period, the formation of new elites and the propagation of new ideas also slipped beyond government control. Here the most significant factor was the rise of the modern print media. As government policy moved further into realms not sanctioned by custom, critics found more to contest. Consequently, the rise of the print media was soon followed by that of a modern opposition intelligentsia, which used the media to appeal to the emergent reading public. Less conspicuously, a conservative current, appealing to propertied interests and grouped most noticeably around reformist religious movements, was also taking shape. The conservative trend gained momentum, particularly with the emergence from Ottoman Iraq of the Khalidiyya-Naqshbandiya, founded by Shaykh Khalid al-Naqshbandi (1777-1826), known as the 'renewer' (mujaddid) of his century. The remainder of this chapter examines the Tanzimat more fully.

Crisis and contraction

The period began and ended with the empire's survival more threatened than at any other time in the nineteenth century. When Mahmud II died in 1839, he and Mehmed Ali were at war. The latter controlled Crete and Syria as well as Egypt, and had just defeated the Ottoman army inside Anatolia; the Ottoman fleet had also defected to Egypt. The European powers found the imminent prospect of Ottoman collapse so destabilising that they intervened in Istanbul's favour. Mehmed Ali was pushed back, left as hereditary governor of Egypt, and deprived of his other territories. Egypt remained under nominal Ottoman sovereignty until 1914. Under Mehmed Ali's successors, Egypt became increasingly both autonomous from Istanbul and economically dependent on Europe. Both cotton exports and the Suez Canal (1869) increased European investment and strategic interest in the country, setting the course that led the British to occupy Egypt in 1882.

Following the Egyptian crisis of 1840-1, the Ottoman Empire endured a series of local crises that expressed the growing politicisation of religious and ethnic differences among its subject populations. Crete and Lebanon sank into crises of this type following their reversion from Egyptian to Ottoman rule. Cretan Christians wanted union with independent Greece, and the island's historical Christian-Muslim symbiosis dissipated into violence, leading to the revolt of 1866. In Lebanon, the old network of relationships that bridged differences of religion and class had already been destabilised under Egyptian rule in the 1830s. These relationships collapsed totally under restored Ottoman rule from the impact of both the Tanzimat reforms and the increased penetration by Europeans, especially missionaries, who created new religious differences and politicised old ones. Sectarian conflicts broke out in Lebanon in the 1840s, followed by class-based conflicts. Damascus lapsed into sectarian violence in the 1860s. The Lebanese crisis led the Ottomans, in agreement with major European powers, to introduce special regulations, under which Mount Lebanon would have a special administrative system, headed by a non-Lebanese Christian governor. This system brought security at the price of lastingely imprinting the new sectarianism on Lebanese politics. In Damascus, the Ottomans banished the old elites who had failed to restrain the violence of 1866, thus facilitating the rise of a new local elite with interests in landholding and office-holding.

In the Balkans, after Serbia won autonomy (1815) and Greece won independence (1830), separatist nationalism continued to spread. Bulgaria flourished economically under Ottoman rule, despite experiencing twelve minor insurrections between 1835 and 1876. At first, the most pressing Balkan issue concerned the Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Desiring unification, Romania became the only part of the Ottoman Empire to get caught up in the European revolutionary wave of 1848. Romanian nationalism was repressed then, but unification (1861) and independence (1878) were only questions of time. After 1848, the Ottomans also gave asylum to both Polish and Hungarian revolutionaries of 1848, whose contributions to Ottoman defence and culture proved significant, despite the resulting tensions in relations with Russia and Austria.

Balkan tensions did not produce a major war until 1877, but the same issues soon caused war over the Christian holy places. The crisis grew out of a dispute between Catholic and Orthodox clergy over the keys to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Such issues were not new; but the growing politicisation of religious difference made them less manageable than in the past, as did the European powers' competition to champion the interests of different religious communities. Claiming protectorship of Orthodoxy, Russia issued an ultimatum. In return for Ottoman promises of further egalitarian reforms, France and Britain declared war on Russia. The war was fought in the Balkans and the Crimea and became known as the Crimean War (1853-6). Further accelerating the Ottoman onrush into modernity, the war brought with it the huge casualties caused by new weapons, the improvements in medical care symbolised by Florence Nightingale's pioneering efforts to provide nursing care for the wounded and advanced communications in the form of both photograph and telegraph, which reached Istanbul during the war. At the war's end, the sultan issued his promised reform decree of 1856, discussed below; and the Treaty of Paris formally admitted the Ottoman Empire to the concert of Europe. The Ottoman Empire thus became the first non-Western state to conclude a treaty with the European powers on supposedly equal terms. However, the treaty contained contradictory clauses, disclaiming interference in Ottoman affairs in one, while neutralising the Black Sea, internationalising control of the Danube and introducing European controls in Romania and Serbia in others. The Ottoman Empire did not lose territory in the war, but its sovereignty was further breached.

The territorial loss averted in 1856 occurred in the 1870s. Revolt broke out in Herzegovina in 1874 and spread to Bosnia, Montenegro and Bulgaria by 1876. The Ottoman government, having just suspended payment on its foreign debt, had to face this crisis without European support. Ottoman efforts to contain the situation raised European outcries against massacres of Christians, even as counter-massacres in the Balkans began to flood Istanbul with Muslim refugees, whose plight Europeans ignored. In Istanbul, the political situation destabilised to the point that two sultans were deposed within three months, and Abdülhamid came to the throne as the third sultan to rule in 1876. At once it became possible to form a different view.

Major themes of reform

While reformist initiatives proliferated in this period to a degree that defies summary, they cohere around certain themes: legislation; education and elite formation; expansion of government; intercommunal relations; and the transformation of the political process. Late in the period, the reformist momentum grew, producing systematising measures of wide import. In 1867, Sultan Abdülaziz became the first sultan to tour Europe, with a large suite including foreign minister Fuad Paşa and Prince Abdülhamid. This trip may have helped to stimulate the far-reaching measures on provincial administration, education and the army that ensued between 1867 and 1871.

Legislation

If de facto civil bureaucratic hegemony demarcated the Tanzimat chronologically, the main instrument of change was legislation. In a sense, the Tanzimat was fundamentally a movement in legislation. In essays of the 1830s, for example, Sadık Rıfat Paşa, then serving as Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, elaborated the connection between external and internal public law, between securing the empire's admission into the European diplomatic system and maintaining a just internal order. European demands for internal reform in exchange for international support in 1839 and 1854 made the same point. Beginning

12 Georgeon, Abdülhamid II, pp. 31-5.
with the Nizam-i Cedid, the connection between reform and the drafting of instructions, regulations and laws had impressed itself on Ottoman statesmen's awareness. The fact that instructions and laws took effect through the sultan's powers of decree made centralisation, reform and legislation interdependent. Whenever a given reform required implementation all over the empire, the necessity for clear orders and regulations became especially obvious.

Although they were only crests on an ever-gathering wave of regulation, the most important legal acts of the Tanzimat were the Gülhane decree of 1839, the reform decree of 1856 and the constitution of 1876. Opening the period, the Gülhane decree proved less of a westernising measure than has commonly been assumed. It called for reforms in taxation, military recruitment and judicial procedure; and it extended guarantees for life, honour and property to all subjects, Muslim and non-Muslim. It promised new laws to implement these reforms—a promise from which a flood of new laws flowed. The decree reflects British Liberal thinking in its denunciation of tax-farming and monopolies and in several specific guarantees. Yet the repeated references to promulgating kavanin-i şer'iye, laws conformable to Islamic law (şeriat), to fulfil the decree's promises also reflected the Ottoman tradition of aligning state law (kanun, plural kavanin) with the şeriat. Although commonly so interpreted, the decree did not say that Muslim and non-Muslim are equal, which they are not under the şeriat. The decree did declare that the privileges it granted applied without exception to all subjects of the sultanate, both 'Muslims and members of other communities' ('ehl-i İslam ve milê-i saire'), as the state's law (kanun) could do. The provisions on taxation spoke of replacing old, exorbitant taxes with 'an appropriate tax' ('bir vergü-yi münasib'). The intention was to consolidate and reduce taxes; vergi was not a generic word for taxes, but the name of a specific new tax. The provisions on due judicial process, finally, had special significance for the ruling elites. Historically bearing the legal status of slaves to the sultan, they had been subject to his arbitrary punishment (siyaset) and reduce taxes; vergi, required of non-Muslims, and the fee replaced the tax that the şeriat required of non-Muslims. Court cases between parties from different communities were to be heard before mixed courts, although cases between co-religionists could still be heard in communal courts.

The third fundamental act of the period, the constitution of 1876, was a logical response both to the international situation and to the organic regulatory acts promulgated for various parts of the Ottoman polity. In the 1860s, in addition to those of the non-Muslim communities, organic statutes had defined special regimes for Lebanon and Crete; at the Ottoman peripheries, Tunisia had its constitution for a time in the 1860s, and Romania acquired one in 1866. With growing Ottoman awareness of European practice, organic regulation of parts of the imperial system heightened demands for a constitution for the whole. 17

Hastily drawn up by a commission including ulama, military officers and civil officials, the constitution contained compromises and imprecisions. Yet it showed the extent to which ideals such as rule of law, guaranteed rights and equality had permeated Ottoman thinking. The articles were grouped in sections pertaining to the empire's territorial integrity; the sultanate; the subjects' rights and obligations; the ministers; the officials; the parliament; the courts; the provinces; and a final miscellany. The articles included provisions pregnant with future consequences. Article 7 left the sultan's prerogatives undefined, although it mentioned many of them; these included appointing

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and dismissing ministers, who would consequently have no collective responsibility. Enforcement of şeriat and kanun formed part of the imperial prerogative. The constitution itself became law only by imperial decree; the sultan’s right to continue legislating by decree was nowhere restricted; and his freedom to veto laws passed in parliament, where the ministers retained most of the legislative initiative, was unchecked. Article 113, inserted at Abdülhamid’s insistence, acknowledged the sultan’s right under martial law to exile anyone on the basis of a police report identifying that person as a security risk. Although martial law was not in force at the time, constitutionalist hero Midhat Paşa went into exile in 1876 as a victim of this provision.

If the acts of 1839, 1866, and 1876 formed the crests on the wave of legislation, much of the wave’s mass consisted of new codes. An initial penal code (1840) was revised (1851) and replaced with a code of French origin (1858). Also French inspired were the codes of commerce (1850, 1863). When Ali Paşa proposed adapting the French civil code as well, the ulema resisted. Instead, a codification of şeriat law was undertaken under Ahmed Cevdet Paşa’s direction and published as the Mecelle (1870–7). Also significant was the land law (arazi kanunnamesi) of 1858, which codified and systematised the historical Ottoman principles of state ownership over agricultural lands (miri). The law attempted to protect small cultivators (successfully or not, depending on local conditions), clarify titles and identify the responsible taxpayers. Thousands more laws and regulations affected life in countless ways, adapting Ottoman to international practice in many cases, for example by prohibiting the slave trade.

New courts were created to apply the codes, starting with commercial courts (1840), presided over by panels of judges named by the government. By the 1860s, a network of nizami courts had evolved to try cases under the new codes. As in the case of the regular (nizami) army, the adjective nizami (deriving from nizam, ‘order’) identifies the new institutions as products of the reforms. The nizami courts were organised hierarchically, with two levels of appeal courts above the courts of first instance; in contrast, the şeriat courts lacked a formal appeals instance.

Many scholars have seen in the new codes and in the nizami courts many steps towards secularisation and breaches in the role of Islam in the Ottoman state. Yet this assessment overstates one issue and ignores another. In 1876, Abdülhamid’s decree of promulgation still echoed the Gülhane decree’s reference to ‘laws conformable to the sharia’ by affirming the constitution’s conformity to the provisions of the şeriat (akham-ı şer-i şerif). The Mecelle formed the clearest example of a major component of the new body of law derived from the şeriat. The land law of 1858 analogously provided the clearest case where traditional Ottoman kanun provided the source for new legislation. The fact that ulema continued to serve in the new courts, as in the new schools, moderated what might otherwise have been secularising reforms. However, as the empire gradually created the outlines of a modern, law-bound polity, which Turkish legists idealise as a ‘law state’ (hukuk devleti), compare the German ideal of the Rechtsstaat), another problem persisted. This consisted of the chasm between the ideal of a ‘law state’ and the authoritarianism that either deified the law without regard to its human consequences, or else used law and regulation instrumentally to extend the reach of a power that placed itself above the law.

Elite formation and education

The need for new elites can be gauged from the fact that the Ottomans created an entire new army after abolishing the Janissaries. The civil bureaucracy grew almost as dramatically, from roughly 2,000 scribes in service as of 1770–90 to the 35,000–70,000 civil officials serving at a time under Abdülhamid. The Ottoman Empire was still lightly administered compared to other states; yet this was rapid growth.

With growth, disparities appeared in the extent to which different branches of service benefited from reform, and these differences aggravated inter-service rivalries. The elite formation efforts primarily benefited military officers and civil officials. However, even in those services, gaps opened between groups

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21 Kili and Güzeltüyör, Türk anayasası, pp. 29–30.
23 Findley, Bureaucratic Reform, pp. 22–3, 212–18.
with different qualifications. Civil officials differed in their degree of westernisation, mastery of French serving as the distinguishing trait. Military officers differed in being either 'school men' (mektepli), trained in the new academies, or 'regimentals' (alaylı), who rose through the ranks and were often illiterate. These differences created significant tensions. Compared to the civil and military elites, the religious establishment lost influence. The ulama still carried weight as guardians of Islamic values, as masters of the old religious courts and schools, as part of the personnel for the analogous new state institutions, and as an interest group. Yet the reforms ended their historical dominance of justice and education and their control of the revenues from charitable foundations (evkaf). Here as throughout the Islamic world, the largest challenge to the ulama was that the intellectual impact of modernity was transforming Islam from the all-embracing cultural reality into one realm in the universe of knowledge.

Tanzimat educational policy was largely driven by goals of elite formation but gradually produced wider results. The ulama's educational vested interests made the elementary mektebs (Qur'anic primary schools) and the medreses (higher religious schools) virtually untouchable. The architects of the new state schools reacted to this situation by taking a top-down approach to elite formation. They founded ostensible institutions of higher learning first and added broader outlines of a general system of schools later, with the consequence that many years passed before the new elite schools could perform up to level. Military engineering schools were founded early for the navy (1772) and the army (1793). Mahmud II created the military Medical School (1827) and the Military Academy (1834). Students were sent to Europe, and an Ottoman school briefly existed in Paris (1857-64). Systematic efforts to train civil officials began with the founding of the Translation Office (Tercüme odası) of the Sublime Porte in 1821; it was to train Muslims to replace the Greek translators whom the Ottomans had employed until the Greek Revolution.

With time, founding schools to train elites became part of a larger effort to create a network of government schools. The first new schools for civil officials became the foundations of the rüşdiye schools (1839), which were upper elementary schools, intended to pick up where the Qur'anic mektebs left off and educate students to about the age of fourteen. Middle schools (ıdadiye) began to be founded in 1845, initially to prepare students for the military academy.

25 The first lycée (sultaniye) opened in 1868. The most important effort to systematise education was the public education regulations of 1869 (maaratfi amuniye nizamnamesi). New teaching methods (asul-i cedid), intended to achieve literacy more quickly than in the mektebs, were introduced as early as 1847 and came into general use around 1870, eventually spreading into Central Asia. There, these methods assumed such importance in the development of cultural modernism that the Central Asian modernists became known as jadud-chilâr ('new-ists') because they championed this 'new method' pedagogy. For the Ottomans, several of the new schools became particularly important in training civil officials, notably, the Galatasaray Lycée and the School of Civil Administration (Mülkiye Mektebi, founded in 1859, upgraded in 1876). Educating far more than the elites, the new schools propagated literacy and stimulated transformations in individual self-consciousness and bourgeois class formation among Ottoman Muslims by the 1870s. The schools' importance for elite formation also included one unintended consequence. For if Ottoman sultans sought to train new elites to serve them personally, the ideas these men discovered at school led them to transfer their loyalty from the sultan to their own ideal of the state, a fact with consequences enduring to the present.

Governmental expansion

The role of government expanded vastly during the Tanzimat. In Istanbul, the expansion was physically obvious. Moving to the new, oversized Dolmabahçe palace, the imperial household had its own secretariat (mabeyn) to communicate with the rest of the government. The civil, military and religious services had their respective headquarters at the Sublime Porte (Bab-ı Âli), Ministry of War (Bab-ı Seraskeri), and the office of the şeyhülislâm (Bab-ı Meşihat). By 1871, the Sublime Porte included the offices of the grand vezir and the council of ministers, the foreign and interior ministries, and the most important conciliar bodies. Outside the Sublime Porte the civil bureaucracy also staffed the ministries of finance, charitable foundations (evkaf), education, trade and agriculture, customs, and land registry.26

26 Ibid., pp. 89-107, 160-73.
28 Findley, Bureaucratic Reform, pp. 189-90; Çakır, Tanzimat dönmene Osmanlı maliyesi (İstanbul: Küre, 2005), pp. 35-79; Cadirci, Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu, pp. 185-90.
Along with the expansion of formal bureaucratic organisations, an unprece- 
dented proliferation of councils (meclis) occurred. These are often interpreted 
as steps towards the creation of representative government. In the provin-
cial administrative councils, the inclusion of elected members and local reli-
gious leaders supports that interpretation. However, comparison with other 
administrative systems also shows another dynamic at work. Historically, 
boards or councils served as ways either to expand the reach of an inade-
quately staffed bureaucracy or to meet needs for which there was not yet 
a permanent agency. In fact, the Ottoman Council on Trade and Agricul-
ture (1838) evolved into a ministry (1871), and the Council of Judicial Ordi-
nances evolved into the Ministry of Justice soon after, among many other 
examples.

With its expansion, government intruded increasingly into Ottomans' lives. 
For example, each stage in egalitarian reform produced effects throughout 
Ottoman society. The local councils brought together officials and local repre-
sentatives to implement policies about which they often disagreed. Taxation 
and financial administration were repeatedly reformed. Censuses and surveys 
of households and income sources were carried out. Istanbulites were exempt 
from both conscription and taxation; consequently provincials bore the tax 
burden, and provincial Muslim males bore that of military service. The regu-
lations of 1869 defined their military obligation as four years of active duty, six 
years of reserve service and eight years in the home guard. At that time, about 
210,000 men served in the regular (nizami) army, 190,000 in the reserves (redif) 
and 300,000 in the home guard (mustahfizan). The 1843 division of the empire 
into five military zones with an army based in each had created new sites of 
interaction between the populace and the military. New schools created puzz-
lng new educational choices. New courts appeared, and new laws affected 
matters as pervasively important as land tenure. Mailing letters (1840), sending 
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tax on non-Muslims (çizye), the consolidated tax (vergi) survived. For some years longer, this tax was not farmed out but was collected at the quarter or village level by the headman (muhtar) and the imam or priest. Dissatisfaction with the new tax led to a project in 1860 to systematise taxation of real property and income on a proportional basis. However, this endeavour required yet another survey and was consequently implemented only in places where that survey could be carried out.32

After the abolition of the new tax collectors (muhasil) in 1842, the provincial administration system began to assume the outlines that would be systematised in the regulations of 1864–71. In 1842, the government revised the hierarchy of administrative districts in regions where the Tanzimat had been introduced, and started to appoint civil officials to serve as chief administrative officers at three levels: province (eyalet), district (sancak), and sub-district (kaza).33 These officials had supporting staffs and, at least at the higher levels, administrative councils. In 1845, representatives from all the provinces were invited to Istanbul for a general council. After it dispersed, temporary 'development councils' (imar meclisleri) were set up in the different provinces. The expansion of civil officialdom into provincial administration did more than anything else to increase its numbers. Yet widespread complaints about abuses showed how inadequate the supply of qualified personnel was and how wide a gap opened between reformist ideals and realities on the ground. Separatist movements and foreign intervention expanded such gaps into threats to the unity and survival of the empire. While complaints about excessive taxation were common, Bulgarian evidence indicates that taxes were 'not oppressive by European standards of the day'.34 Likewise, under the special regime set up in Lebanon, taxes remained 'artificially low', even while the local road network was increased in length thirtyfold. One of the weaknesses of Tanzimat administration may have been that taxation was too lenient to finance the promised reforms.

In the early 1860s, contending with crises anywhere from Bosnia to the Hijaz, the government revised and generalised its provincial administrative system. Foreigners regarded the provincial administration laws of 1864 and 1871 as triumphs of French influence. Whatever the Ottoman reformers drew from France, they drew more from their own experience since 1842, not to speak of earlier precedents. In particular, Midhat Paşa had conducted an influential experiment in administrative improvement since 1861 as governor of Niş. The 1864 provincial administration law was intended for application in a specially created Danube province with Midhat as governor; his 1869 appointment as governor of Baghdad probably helped to spread the implementation of these policies.35 The law was revised in 1867 with a few modifications for application in a number of provinces, the Ottoman term for which was changed from eyalet to vilayet. Further revised, the law was published for general application in 1871 and remained in effect until 1913. By 1876, twenty-seven provinces had been organised under the 1871 law.

The 1871 provincial administration law divided the hierarchy of districts into four levels. In descending order, the levels (and their chief administrators) were the vilayet (vali), sancak or liva (mutasarrıf), kaza (kaymakam), and nahiyeh (müdür). The four levels were one reason why people who did not know much about Ottoman precedents might think that the law was imitative of the four-tiered French system of local administration. The law assigned the governors many functions and an enlarged staff, many of whom had specialised functions corresponding to those of specific ministries in Istanbul. There were to be administrative councils at each of the top three levels. The councils were to include elected members, Muslim and non-Muslim in equal numbers, as well as official members. In addition, a general council (medis-i umumi) was to bring together representatives of all the districts in the province once a year for a meeting to discuss development issues of province-wide interest. Other provisions concerned the nizami courts, as well as the municipal institutions for provincial cities. Special commissions might also be set up for purposes such as refugee settlement. Dissatisfactions with the 1871 law quickly appeared. Already in the short-lived Ottoman parliament of 1877–8, a new provincial administration passed the lower house but not the upper. However, the 1871 law survived until 1913.36

Intercommunal relations

Modernising the empire required holding it together and promoting cohesion among its peoples. The Tanzimat included seemingly contradictory attempts

32 Çakır, Tanzimat dönemi Osmanlı maliyeti, pp. 50–6, 130–40; Çadırcı, Tanzimat dönemi Anadolu, pp. 212–18, 243–8.
to achieve this goal. The Gülhane decree granted individual rights with implied equality. The Reform decree of 1856 affirmed religious equality while confirming non-Muslims' traditional communal privileges. The 1856 decree also proclaimed the goal of strengthening the 'heartfelt bonds of patriotism' ('revâbati-kalbiye-i vatandaşı') that united all the sultan's subjects.

Simultaneously optimising equality at the individual, communal and empire-wide levels would prove more difficult. Yet the struggle to reconcile the rights of the individual, the community and the totality has proven central to the development of modern polities around the world. The Tanzimat reformers faced their version of this problem at a time when identity and difference were becoming politicised in new ways. The concessions to non-Muslims offended conservative Muslims, who resented being deprived of the superior status that the şeriat assigned them. Some disturbances of the Tanzimat years, as in Syria and Lebanon, expressed such feelings. Nonetheless, the non-Muslim communities set about reorganising their affairs, and the intelligentsia set about promoting a new, inclusive concept of egalitarian Ottomanism (Osmanlılık) as an antidote to separatism.

The reorganisation of non-Muslim communal affairs responded to several important issues. One, continuing from preceding periods, was the lengthening list of non-Muslim religious communities seeking official recognition as millets. Another issue was the corruption and oppression that prevailed particularly inside the older millets. Both the Greek Orthodox and Armenian millets were 'corrupt machines of business and politics, manipulated for the advantage of the hierarchies'. At times, both issues interacted. In 1850, Armenian converts to Protestantism, still numbering only a few thousand, gained recognition as the Protestant millet. Governed by a bishop with both lay and religious councils, the Protestant organisation provided a model for other communities. The Protestant lay leaders' significant role was especially demanded elsewhere for autocephalous (independently headed, national Orthodox churches) in Bulgaria (1870) and Romania (1885).

Of the historically recognized millets, new regulations were approved for the Greek Orthodox (1860–2), Armenians (1863) and Jews (1864). An empire inside the empire, the Orthodox church combined ethnically diverse flocks with a heavily Greek hierarchy and was vulnerable to nationalism for the same reason that the Ottoman Empire was. The result was mounting demands for autocephalous (independently headed, national Orthodox churches) in Bulgaria (1870) and Romania (1885).

The Tanzimat

The reorganisation of the non-Muslim religious communities had several important consequences. The drafting of communal regulations (nizamname) — sometimes referred to as constitutions — for the non-Muslim communities helped to raise Ottoman constitutionalists' expectations. Progressive Armenians who contributed to their communal reform advocated a constitution for the empire, and one of them, Krikor Odian, served on the commission that drafted it. At the same time, while reinforcing Ottoman solidarity and creating conditions for specific communities to flourish were philosophically reconcilable, under Ottoman conditions communal reform could not be carried out without reinforcing separatism and thus undermining Ottomanism. Inasmuch as the religious differences basic to millet reform seldom matched the ethnic differences basic to modern nationalism, variable and unpredictable consequences ensued, as the Greek Orthodox and Armenian cases illustrate. Among Ottoman religious minorities, only to the Jews were ideas of nationalism or separatism still foreign in this period.

As the communal reforms progressed, the Tanzimat statesmen attempted to foster the new 'heartfelt patriotic bond' to hold all Ottoman subjects together. This formed part of a larger effort among Ottoman intellectuals to propagate new political concepts and explain them by redefining old terms. The word vatan, originally used to refer to one's 'country' in the localised sense of 'homeplace' or the like, had begun to be readapted to mean 'fatherland', so recapitulating the evolution of the French term pays and its counterparts in other languages. In official usage, the wording of the Gülhane decree connected military recruitment with the defence of the vatan. In 1850, the district governor (mutasarrıf) of Jerusalem appealed to non-Muslims to join Muslims in aiding the poor and old because all were 'brothers in the fatherland' (ikhwân fi'l-watan). The Arabic root from which the term millet derived also provided material for the new conceptual vocabulary. The Ottoman usage of the term millet to refer to a religious community is illustrated above: Rum milleti, the 'Orthodox millet', comprised all Greek Orthodox Christians, including native speakers of Arabic, Bulgarian or Romanian, as well as Greek. Yet as ethnicity gained in salience compared to religious identity, some Ottomans began to use the term millet to translate the French nation. With time, Ottomans adopted

37 Davison, Reform, p. 118.

38 Ibid., pp. 120–35; Devereux, First Ottoman Constitutional Period, p. 239.
the related terms millî to mean 'national' and milliyet to mean 'nationality'. The continual adaptive reuse of old terms to express new concepts provided one sign of a revolutionary transformation that was starting to occur in the way meanings were produced and conveyed.

The new 'patriotic bond' was intended to take the form of a redefined Ottomanism (Osmanlılık). Historically, the members of the sultan's ruling elite had been the only people referred to as Osmanlı. Equality meant extending that way meanings were produced and conveyed. The continual adaptive reuse of old terms to express new concepts provided the related terms milliyet milli to mean 'nationality'.

41 As well as the attempt to create an 'imperial nationalism' did in Austria-Hungary. Would become the task of a new form of Ottoman political opposition. Under (nizami) courts. The employment of non-Muslims in some civil administrative departments attests to the seriousness with which the elites took this policy. In addition, the reference to 'heartfelt patriotism' implicitly recognised the need to infuse the Ottoman ideal with emotional fire. That would become the task of a new form of Ottoman political opposition. Under different circumstances, the Ottoman attempt to reconcile individual, communal and all-inclusive rights and identities might have worked as well as the construction of British nationality had earlier. In its own day, it worked about as well as the attempt to create an 'imperial nationalism' did in Austria-Hungary.

Transformation of the political process

In 1839, political participation was still officially limited to the ruling elites – an interpretation that ignored a rich history of negotiation and resistance by the sultan's subjects. Moreover, while the empire clearly had administrative institutions, it had few or no organised political institutions distinct from them, in the way that modern states have parliaments distinct from their bureaucracies. The ruling elites and the Ottoman intelligentsia were also still virtually identical. What served as politics took the form of factional rivalries, which revolved around personalities more than policies. Great men formed household-based factions and patronage networks. Factional leaders then vied with one another to place their supporters in strategic positions, win the sultan's favour, and discredit their rivals in his eyes. The principle of official slavery made factional politics into a high-stakes game. The loser stood to lose life and fortune; his followers risked their offices, if not their necks.

The legal reforms of the late 1830s increased the security of high office-holding, enabling Mustafa Reşid, Fuad and Ali Paşas to remain at the top far longer than would have been possible before. At the same time, the political game was changing all around them. Innovative reform stimulated debate over policy alternatives, and politics started to revolve around ideas, not just personalities. For conservatives, the manipulation of the sultan's decree power to sanction policies crafted by his officials heightened the level of controversy, inasmuch as the power that civil bureaucrats wielded in fact belonged to the sultan by right. Under the circumstances, it was only a question of time until a new form of political opposition would emerge among the elites.

Cultural change contributed significantly to this development. Selim III had been a major figure in traditional forms of poetical and musical production, not only as patron but also as poet and composer. In contrast, his successors set standards in the westernisation of tastes. No subsequent sultan rated mention as a poet, the premier form of literary creativity. What connected poetry to politics was the essential role that literary production, especially poetry writing, played in the old factional politics. Historically, Ottoman intellectuals all identified as poets. Those who could not excel at poetry had to find some other way to make a living; employment in a government office was the usual solution. However talented the writer, the route to material reward was through patronage. Except for close relatives, the classic way to form a career-launching connection (intisab) to a great man was to display one's talent in verse, preferably in a praise poem. If praising the great man failed, the alternate route to material reward was satire, which might elicit a valuable gift from the victim as an inducement to desist.

While these patterns survived into the Tanzimat, seismic shifts occurred in the context surrounding them. The sultans had been the biggest patrons, and the decline of palace patronage struck a major blow to artists and writers. At the same time, new media of communication, new ideas about language and literary genres, and new forms of individual subjectivity and class formation implied opportunities for writers prepared to address a new audience. During the Tanzimat, Ottoman 'print capitalism' emerged – not just printing, but everything that accompanied the advent of the print media and the bourgeois reading public. The consequences proved revolutionary, both in the short term for Tanzimat politics and in the long term for late Ottoman and modern Turkish culture.

41 Nihat Sâmi Banarlı, Reşimli Türk edebiyatı tarihi (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim, 1987), vol. II, pp. 748-9, 770-1 and passim on Selim III; the index mentions no subsequent sultan.
43 Mahmud Kemal İnal, Son asır Türk şairler (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim, 1969), biographical encyclopedia about 'poets' and thus incidentally about bureaucrats.
This cultural transformation began obscurely. The first privately owned Ottoman-language newspaper, the Ceride-i Havadis (1840), had an English proprietor, William Churchill, but Turkish writers. The first Turkish-owned non-Ottoman-language newspaper, the Ceride-i Havadis (1840), had an English pro-
modern-style opposition movement among Ottoman intellectuals, the Young Ottomans (Yeni Osmanlılar), also emerged. Although they were young men who could have enjoyed the leading statesmen’s patronage, the Young Ottomans’ responsiveness to the new ideas and media emboldened them to defy authority in devotion to their ideals. They formed a ‘patriotic alliance’ (1865) to work for constitutional government. Fortune favoured them with a new kind of patron, Mustafa Fazıl Paşa. A rich, alienated member of Egypt’s Mehmed Ali dynasty, he invited them to Paris. There, he bankrolled their oppositional activities, including newspapers published beyond the Ottoman censors’ reach. The Young Ottomans thus became the first Ottoman intellectuals to go into foreign exile voluntarily rather than compromise their ideals.

Historians tend to view the Young Ottomans as a political movement and emphasise their political ideas. Yet they neither created a party, nor organised the masses, nor fomented a revolution; and their ideas ranged across the spectrum of nineteenth-century modernity. They used their knowledge to critique the Tanzimat and offer their readers a new vision of the world. Their writings overall identify them as cultural nationalists, who strove to create a new Ottoman culture that would be modern without losing its identity in westernisation. Their reputation as heroes of constitutionalism does, however, derive from their political contributions. Compared to the Tanzimat statesmen, the Young Ottomans had a deeper appreciation of not only European but also Islamic thought. In using Islamic terms to convey pivotal ideas of liberal political theory, they not only recycled old terms to convey new ideas, they also adapted the Islamic jurisprudential method of reasoning by analogy (kiyas) so as to gauge whether specific reforms were Islamically justifiable. The Young Ottomans’ most innovative literary talent, Namık Kemal, used reasoning by analogy to articulate numerous positions later common among Islamic modernists. He justified representative government by citing the Qur’anic injunction to ‘consult about affairs’ (wa shawirhum fi ‘1-amri”). He legitimised responsible government and popular sovereignty through a contractual interpretation of the biat (bay’a in Arabic) or oath of loyalty originally pledged at the accession of a new caliph. He identified the European ideal of rule of law with the şeriat in Islam. Discussion of some of his literary works will show more fully how his writings reflected the socio-cultural transformations of the times and extended beyond constitutionalism to a wider-ranging attempt to construct an Ottoman culture of modernity.

Socio-economic change

Although the Tanzimat ended with state bankruptcy, this was a period of significant socio-economic changes. Government revenues remained inadequate to support the reformist policies. Expenditures also lacked effective controls, especially at the palace. On the positive side, Mahmud II’s measures to reduce warlordism improved rural security and thus stimulated production. The 1844 coinage reform ended the worst period of monetary debasements in Ottoman history (1770–1840). The bimetallic standard of 1844 lasted with modifications until 1922, although revenue shortages led the government to issue paper money (kaime, 1840–62). It depreciated badly, and later issues met the same fate. During the Crimean War the government also began to contract foreign loans. Mismanagement of the foreign debt led to state bankruptcy by 1875. Modern banking institutions emerged in this period, most notably the Ottoman Imperial Bank (1863). Although owned by British and French interests, it served as a virtual state bank in Istanbul.

Despite the government’s difficulties, trade and agriculture expanded. The value of both exports and imports roughly quintupled during the Tanzimat. The Ottomans exported mostly agrarian products and carpets; they imported mostly industrial products and some colonial goods such as sugar and spices. The empire partially offset its negative trade balance with Great Britain by 1875. Modern banking institutions emerged in this period, most notably the Ottoman Imperial Bank (1863). Although owned by British and French interests, it served as a virtual state bank in Istanbul.

Ottoman agriculture also grew despite chronic inefficiencies. Abundant land but inadequate labour and capital characterised the agricultural sector.

46 Ortaylı, Imperatoroğlu, p. 178.
47 Çakır, Tanzimat dönemi Osmanlı maliyesi, pp. 55–76.
48 Edhem Eldem, A History of the Ottoman Imperial Bank (İstanbul: Ottoman Bank Historical Research Centre, 1999).
49 Pamuk, Monetary History, p. 320; Palairet, Balkan Economies, pp. 42–3.
50 Inalcik and Quataert (eds.), An Economic and Social History, pp. 834–41.
The high costs of land transport constrained production by making it unprofitable to ship crops very far for sale. With regional exceptions, the average size of landholdings therefore remained small. However, several factors stimulated agriculture: the end of warlordism; the abolition of fixed-price government purchases (miri mubayaa) under the free-trade treaties' anti-monopoly provisions; the clarification of titles under the 1858 land law; and the resettlement of Muslim refugees on vacant lands. As a result, while total government revenues nearly tripled from 1848 to 1876, the tithes on agricultural produce (dağur) nearly quadrupled. 39

Despite the impact of imported industrial goods on the Ottoman guilds, Ottoman manufacturing also adapted and grew. The Bulgarian upland towns achieved a rural industrial renaissance by producing woollens and other textiles for the Ottoman internal market. 'There was no question whether native cloth could compete against imports — it was so competitive on the Ottoman market that European goods were largely restricted to the fashion trade.' 50 By contrast, the Bulgarian economy would regress after independence (1878). Nablus in Palestine offers another example of growth, based on this case on growing olives and making soap from the oil. During the Tanzimat, the number of soap factories at Nablus tripled, and their production quadrupled. Thus, 'an ancient manufacturing sector in a small interior city managed to grow and prosper without the introduction of new technology, the development of new techniques, the opening of new markets, or dependence on foreign investment capital'. 51 Perhaps the most successful manufactured exports were carpets. Ottoman carpet exports increased seven- or eight-fold in value from 1850 to 1914. 52

Significant social development accompanied economic change. Systematic census data only exists for later periods. Estimates for 1872 suggest that the empire's population may have been as high as 40 million for all territories (including Egypt and semi-independent Balkan territories), or 23 million for the provinces directly ruled from Istanbul. Of those 23 million, nearly 9 million lived in Europe, and 14 million lived in Asia. Non-Muslims outnumbered Muslims by about five to four in the directly ruled European provinces; in the

Asian provinces, Muslims outnumbered non-Muslims by over four to one. 55 This was a population in flux in many ways. Ottoman cities experienced strong growth. Between 1840 and 1890, Istanbul grew in population from 400,000 to about 900,000; İzmir grew from 110,000 to 200,000; Beirut grew from about 10,000 to over 100,000. 56 Rural populations were also in flux. Each stage of Russian expansion into the Caucasus and Black Sea region sent waves of Muslim refugees into Ottoman territory, both Muslim Turks and non-Turkish Muslims (Circassians, Abkhazians, Chechens). Loss of Ottoman sovereignty in Balkan territories also led to similar flows. Annual numbers of migrants numbered in the hundreds of thousands from 1854 on, rising to 400,000 in 1864. 57

Qualitative social changes transformed individual subjectivity and class formation. Although they rightly felt themselves behind the non-Muslim minorities in forming a commercial middle class, Ottoman Muslims formed elements of a bourgeoisie. Its segments were endowed with capital that was either intellectual (civil officials, military officers, writers) or economic (merchants, landowners). With educational reform and expanding literacy, the modernist intelligentsia found its forum in the emerging print media. With the appearance of state schools for girls (1859) and women teachers (1870) and the first Ottoman women's magazine (Terakki, 1868) Ottoman Muslim women experienced the same changes. 58 In contrast, culturally conservative Ottoman Muslims, who generally included the merchants and landowners, found their major forum in religious movements. While such movements were many and diverse, the most influential of the era took the form of the reformist Khalidiyya-Naqshbandiyya movement. 59 The Naqshbandis' emphasis on political engagement won them adherents among the ulama. The Khalidiyya-Naqshbandiyya and its offshoots achieved exceptional influence, continuing to the present. In time, Ottoman Muslims also created an Islamic print culture, but that essentially occurred after the Tanzimat. Symbolised by the institutions, sociabilities and practices surrounding Ottoman print culture, on the one hand, and the Khalidiyya, on the other hand, two great currents of change were emerging to

51 Guuran, Osmanli tarihi, p. 58.
52 Palaiaret, Balkan Economies, p. 72.
53 Doumani, Rediscovering Palestine, pp. 188-232 (quotation from p. 222); Eugene L. Rogan, Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1870-1921 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 28-9, 37.
54 Donald Quataert, Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of the Industrial Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 134-60.
58 Serpi Çakar, Osmanlı kadın hareketi (Istanbul: Metis, 1994), pp. 22-5.
shape Ottoman approaches to modernity. The current associated with the 
print media and the bureaucratic intelligentsia included exponents of disruptive change and rapid modernisation. The current associated with propertyed Muslims and with the religious movements favoured an adaptive approach towards modernity. Most Ottoman Muslims probably sympathised with both movements, unless forced to choose. In later periods, the two trends differentiated more sharply but also interacted dialectically to shape the ‘Turks’ future.

Cultural horizons

Namık Kemal (1840–88) epitomises the widened cultural horizons that accompanied these social changes better than any other writer. He is commonly remembered for reinvesting old terms with new meanings to convey patriotic ideals, but his creativity enabled him to go far beyond changing the use of words. He also transformed old literary forms and pioneered new ones.

His best-known poem, on liberty, uses the conventional forms for a praise poem (kaside) in a new, electrifying way. Past poets had written kaside to flatter a patron and gain favours. Among several formulaic elements, a kaside had to include a medhiye praising the patron, a fahriye displaying the poet’s brilliance and a wish or prayer (dua). Usually, the poet includes his own name near the end of the medhiye. Unconventionally, Namık Kemal made liberty the subject throughout. In his medhiye, he spoke for all men of zeal (erhaba himmet), using plural, implicitly other-oriented terms; he does not mention his own name but rather that of ‘liberty’. In his fahriye, he spoke for himself, using mostly first-person, self-referential terms. The two sections summoned both poet and audience not to praise liberty but to defend it. Kemal’s wish was that God preserve liberty from adversity.

Realising that modern theatre could reach a broader audience than the reading public, Namık Kemal helped launch modern Turkish theatre with another work, Vatan yahud Silistre (‘Fatherland, or Silistria’, 1873). The play caused demonstrations, which provoked the government to exile the Young Ottomans, including Namık Kemal, and censor the theatre. The play also exposed a fundamental contradiction in the Tanzimat’s egalitarian Ottomanism, namely, that the primary motivator to sacrifice for the fatherland was Islam. The melodramatic plot combines mistaken identity with the theme of the heroine disguised as a soldier who follows her beloved into battle. After


Conclusion

Although Ottoman defensive modernisation had begun fifty years earlier, reform accelerated during the Tanzimat and affected society pervasively. Even as recurrent crises threatened the superstructure of multinational empire, at its core, state, economy, society and culture all displayed great dynamism in this period. The Tanzimat reforms produced new legislation, programmes, institutions and elites. Statesmen and intellectuals strove to hold Ottoman society together by redefining Ottoman identity and guaranteeing rights at the individual, communal and empire-wide levels. The forces of socio-cultural change proved greater than the government could contain in the case not only of Balkan separatists but also of the competing trends that emerged among Ottoman Muslims. The rise of print culture – and all that was associated with it – enabled the bureaucratic intelligentsia to develop into champions of rapid, disruptive change. More conservative Muslims, stimulated particularly by the Khalidiyya-Naqşbandiyya, favoured a guarded adaptation to changing times. Economic and demographic change supported the emergence and dialectical interaction of these trends. As of 1876, political revolution was still a generation away, but a cultural revolution had already started with the new media, and the brief shining moment of the First Constitutional Period (1876–8) was about to occur.
of the Tanzimat in equipping the new elites with a modern education cannot be overemphasized.

THE YOUNG OTTOMANS

The most resonant political voice of opposition to the Tanzimat policies was that of the Young Ottomans. This was a loose coalition of intellectuals and former bureaucrats who coalesced around a shared hostility toward the reforms and their exponents. They formed a secret society in 1865, and began to express dissent within the limits of official censorship in Istanbul. Young Ottoman publications in the Ottoman press caused a stir in public opinion, provoking an official backlash that ended in the closure of their newspapers and the banishment of their leading figures to remote corners of the realm. After 1867, the Young Ottomans in exile articulated their opposition with greater freedom. They acted under the financial sponsorship of Mustafa Fâzîl (Muşafâ Fâdîl) Pasha, the former Egyptian heir apparent who had lost his status to his brother, the Khedive Ismâ‘îl, in a deal brokered by Fu‘âd Pasha. Abroad, the Young Ottomans published the first uncensored Ottoman opposition journals in London, Geneva, Paris, Lyon, and Marseille. All but one of the most eminent Young Ottomans returned to the empire following the general amnesty declared after Âlî Pasha’s death in 1871.

Although they shared many ideas and a common cause, the Young Ottomans were hardly monolithic. While some marginal Young Ottoman journals promoted revolutionary ideas, the radical line was rejected by mainstream figures. Young Ottoman leaders strongly criticized the Tanzimat as a capitulation to European dictates. The adoption of European laws at the expense of the shari‘a, they contended, had resulted in “tyranny.” As to the economic reforms of the Tanzimat, they were ruinous acts of irresponsibility which could lead only to the destruction of Ottoman industry and the debilitating accumulation of debt. While their benefactor Mustafa Fâzîl Pasha appealed to the sultan in an open letter (authored in fact by a Polish intellectual) calling for the institution of liberal secular

115 [Namık Kemal], “Tanzimat,” İhret, no. 46 [November 17, 1872], p. 1.
116 “Mülâhazat,” Hürriyet, no. 23 (November 30, 1868), p. 4.
administration and representative government,\textsuperscript{119} the Young Ottomans espoused a form of constitutionalism based on such Islamic notions as \textit{al-amr bi’l ma’ruf wa’l nahi’ an al-munkar} (commanding right and forbidding wrong)\textsuperscript{120} and \textit{mashwarah} (consultation).\textsuperscript{121} Such principles, they believed, ought to replace the “enlightened” absolutism of Âlî and Fu’ad Pashas. The Young Ottomans attempted to reconcile Islamic concepts of government with the ideas of Montesquieu, Danton, Rousseau, and contemporary European scholars and statesmen, such as Constantin-François de Chasseboeuf Volney and Félix Esquirou de Parieu.\textsuperscript{122} Confessing that “[the Ottoman] position in comparison to France is like that of an uneducated child beside an accomplished scholar,” they nevertheless insisted that Ottoman importation from Europe be limited to “scientific and industrial progress,”\textsuperscript{123} and that Ottoman constitutionalism be based on Muslim fiqh, even as it mimicked the representative institutions of Europe.

Although Abdülhamid II found little of use in the Islamic constitutionalism of the Young Ottomans, as will be seen their ideas dominated Ottoman intellectual life for decades. Theirs was an original response to the challenges of Western modernity that was to inspire future Muslim constitutional movements, such as that of Iran. But subsequent generations of the secular intelligentsia tended to ignore the Islamic content of Young Ottoman thought, choosing to focus instead on the patriotic Ottomanism of Namık Kemal—who coined Turkish versions of key terms like “freedom” and “fatherland”—and on the courage and nascent Turkist sentiments of Ali Suâvî.

\section*{The Ambiguous Legacy of Reform}

The challenge of modernization coupled with the urge to preserve Ottoman and Islamic traditions reinforced a tense dualism evident in every field touched by the Tanzimat. The ideal of an overarching Ottoman identity clashed with the increasing autonomy of religious communities within the empire; bureaucratic centralization conflicted with political fragmentation;

\textsuperscript{119} “Lettre adressé à sa Majesté le Sultan par S.A. Le Prince Moustapha-Fazil Pacha,” \textit{La Liberté}, March 24, 1867.
\textsuperscript{120} “Şahsiyyat,” \textit{Muhbir}, no. 28 (March 23, 1868), pp. 1–2.
\textsuperscript{123} Reşad, “Frenklerde Bir Telaş,” \textit{İbret}, no. 10 [June 26, 1872], p. 1.
the ideal of participation came up against the principle of top-down reform; the conservative spirit that gave rise to the Majalla contradicted the progressive drive to emulate the French penal code; new civil courts coexisted uneasily side by side with the traditional shari’a courts; a modern university with old medreses; an academy of modern sciences with the ulema gatherings of the past; European theater with the time-honored shadow puppet show; and the novel with Divan poetry. Although the old persisted alongside the new, the Tanzimat backed the “new” in almost every field.

The major blind spot of the reformers consisted in their assumption that the “old,” being unable to compete with the “new,” would gradually disappear from the scene. But Tanzimat culture (as opposed to the more structural aspects of reform) did not penetrate very deeply. The differential pace of modernization broadened the gap between elite and mass cultures immeasurably. Mutual alienation was the inevitable result. While European music stars such as Parish Alvars, Leopold de Meyer, and Franz Liszt might perform to enthusiastic applause in Istanbul (and find appreciation in the European quarters of such cosmopolitan towns as Beirut or Salonica), the Ottoman masses, on the whole, not only disliked Western music but despised it. The people similarly tended to loathe the Tanzimat elite’s bizarre taste for the European avant-garde—exemplified in an extreme fashion by Ottoman diplomat Halil Şerif Pasha’s commissioning of an extraordinary work of nudism, the infamous *L’origine du Monde*, from Gustave Courbet in 1868.

The greatest impact of the Tanzimat was on the city. The foremost Ottoman historian of the late nineteenth century, for example, comments that in the capital “women-lovers proliferated while boy-lovers disappeared, as if the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had perished all over again.”

125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
Chapter Four

Cushions, couches substituted for divans, and tables took the place of the cloths hitherto spread on the floor for meals.\textsuperscript{127} The estates left by members of the askerî class attest to the vast change in the material culture of the empire. Items such as large sofas, tables, chairs, \textit{konsols} (from the French console, which became a generic term for all kinds of cupboards, chests, drawers, and chifonniers), heavy curtains, large mirrors, elaborate china sets, and enormous European-style mats became popular among the urban upper and middle classes. Suggestive of the social breadth of this cultural transformation is the fact that such objects are found not only in the estates of bureaucrats and palace officials who had regular contact with the West, but in those of many ulema as well.\textsuperscript{128} Askerî estates also attest a considerable increase in the number of personal effects in the possession of members of the lower-middle to upper-middle classes, and point to a decisive break with the utilitarian attitudes that had characterized the same classes in the pre-Tanzimat era. European products and their domestic imitations, such as English-style (\textit{İngilizkârî})\textsuperscript{129} or French-style (\textit{Fransızkârî})\textsuperscript{130} dress accessories, now flooded upper- and middle-class households, as did new gadgets such as field glasses.\textsuperscript{131}

The supranational ideology of Ottomanism, perhaps the Tanzimat’s most significant contribution to the empire presupposed a rapid embrace of rational ideas and the abandonment of religious obscurantism. The Tanzimat statesmen failed to understand that the major rivals of the Ottomanist orientation were no longer religious identities, but nationalist ones.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[127]{Ibid., p. 10.}
\footnotetext[128]{For interesting examples, see the estates of the chief tent maker of the sultan, Esseyid Mehmed Sâ’di Efendi ibn Esseyid Ibrahim (dated January 24, 1851), İstanbul Müftülük Arşivi, ŞS 1657, f. 57bff; a valet of the sultan, Mehmed Sabit ibn Mustafa (dated January 31, 1855), ibid., ŞS 1706 f. 53aff; the under-secretary of the Ottoman Foreign Office Esseyid Mustafa Nureeddin Bey ibn Hasan (dated January 20, 1859), ibid., ŞS 1735, f. 53bff; a control officer at the Tobacco Customs, Elhac Mehmed Emin Efendi ibn Osman (dated July 31, 1870), ibid., ŞS 1819, f. 79aff; a religious scholar, Esseyid Mehmed Faiz Efendi ibn Ibrahim (dated August 8, 1870), ibid., ŞS 1819 f. 18aff; and a musician, Elhac Mustafa Haydar Ağa ibn Elhac Abdullah (dated January 17, 1871), ibid., ŞS 1819, f. 95aff.}
\footnotetext[129]{See, for instance, the estate of a merchant, Elhac Mehmed Ağa ibn Yahya, dated August 12, 1859, ibid., ŞS 1743, f. 46b.}
\footnotetext[130]{See, for example, the estate of Mustafa Şakir Efendi ibn Elhac Mehmed, a clerk at the Pious Foundations Directorate, dated January 1, 1840, ibid., ŞS 1478, f. 1b.}
\footnotetext[131]{Some of these field glasses were “English-style” (see the estate of a medrese professor, Esseyid Mehmed Āşır Efendi ibn Halil Fevzi Efendi [dated December 26, 1854, ibid., ŞS 1706, f. 50b]), while many others were of unspecified designs. See, for example, the estates of Ahmed Ra’îf Bey ibn Esseyid Mehmed Şakir (dated June 3, 1853, ibid., ŞS 1677, f. 34b), the merchant Ömer Efendi ibn Hüseyin Ağa (dated May 2, 1854, ibid., ŞS 1698, f. 85b), and the former chief coffeemaker of the sultan, Elhac Mehmed Ağa ibn Abdullah (dated September 19, 1863, ibid., ŞS 1785 f. 20b).}
\end{footnotes}
The Tanzimat Era

The new-fangled official ideology fared well in social strata already benefiting from the Pax Ottomana. Greek Phanariots, members of the Armenian Amira class, Bulgarian merchants who imported garments from Manchester and sold them in Aleppo—these were the typical enthusiastic consumers of an ideology that promised to remove the social disabilities afflicting non-Muslims. Wider swaths of the Ottoman population, such as Bulgarian peasants who continued to chafe under their Gospodars, or Christian Bosnian and Herzegovinian peasants serving Muslim landowners, derived little benefit from the new ideology. This helps to explain why nationalist movements during and after the Tanzimat often carried strong socialist undertones, the best examples being the Bulgarian, Macedonian, and Armenian nationalist movements. The lack of a centralized primary school system that could socialize young children as Ottomans, the high rates of illiteracy which limited the effects of the trumpeting of the new ideology in the press, and finally the view from the periphery which saw Ottomanism and centralization as policies of Turkification—all these resulted in the very partial success of reform.

Paradoxically, the very reforms designed to create a more coherent society unified by a common ideology, and a more centralized polity founded on universal, standardized laws, had the effect of exposing and deepening the fissures within the Ottoman state and society. Local resistance to the center’s determined attempts to penetrate the periphery accentuated the fragmentation of identity throughout the empire. The unprecedented attempt to unify multiple religious, ethnic, and regional groups only served to strengthen their splintered identities in defiance of central policies. The ambition to universalize law and practice necessarily trampled on local traditions everywhere, thereby raising the consciousness of difference and instilling a group-based sense of grievance. Any innovation was bound to be seen by someone in the empire as offensive. Such was the dilemma of the reformer. Whereas in Istanbul (and in many of the Anatolian and European provinces) religious scholars piously presided over elaborate new ceremonies in which the sultan’s portrait was mounted in government offices, the same practice provoked a passionate outcry from ulema in the Arab provinces, who considered it an idolatrous, un-Islamic innovation.132 When, in 1855, the government decided to ban slavery in order to appease liberal public opinion in Europe (in reality the practice persisted in different forms until 1909),134 it faced no opposition from ulema or from the general public in the capital and central provinces. In Najd and the Hijaz, however, the measure prompted uprisings, while in the Caucasus many

133 Tarih-i Lûtfî, 5, pp. 51–2.
tribes that made a living from the slave trade severed their ties with Istanbul.\textsuperscript{135} Thus it was that the abandonment of the old order—with all its ir-rational nuances, messy compromises, and respect for local practice—in favor of a more modern, unitary system, ended up abetting the very process of fragmentation that the reforms were designed to reverse.

The Rose Chamber Edict and the Tanzimat era that followed it reflected the visions of the reforming statesmen for the future. Their ideal resembled a Rechtsstaat as later described by Rudolph von Gneist, which is why they placed a premium on legal reform. The reformers sincerely wished to promote both fiscal justice and equality before the law. Undoubtedly, they underestimated both the complications of implementation and the scale of opposition from social classes who stood to lose ground because of the reforms. In many areas, new laws remained valid on paper while old practices continued. Still, the codification of new thinking created a body of law that could no longer be ignored. In June 1908, a maltreated dissident was able to challenge the authorities in court on the grounds that “non-legal administrative decisions and torture had been prohibited by the Rose Chamber Edict, which [was] a document safeguarding the existence and well-being of the state.”\textsuperscript{136} As late as 1917, the Ministry of the Interior was reminding all prison authorities that “cruel treatment of inmates and torturing them” had been banned by the Rose Chamber Edict.\textsuperscript{137}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cevdet Paşa, \textit{Tezâkir}, 1, pp. 101–52.
\item BOA-BEO/ file 249177 [June 4, 1908].
\item DH. MB. HPS, 58/48 [March 1, 1917].
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The reign of Abdülhamid II

BENJAMIN C. FORTNA

Introduction

The place occupied by Sultan Abdülhamid II in late Ottoman and Turkish history is as important as it is controversial. As the only reign in the late Ottoman period to be known by the name of its sultan, the 'Hamidian' period (1876-1908) stands out among the other eras of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Turkish history. Opinions of Abdülhamid's legacy reveal a striking degree of contradiction; some authors have criticised the sultan for being 'undemocratic' and authoritarian, while others have lionised him as 'democratic' and a builder of consensus; he has been both vilified as the 'red sultan' and lauded as the 'last' or 'great sultan'. Debate over his place in history continues today, especially in Turkey where it has been the focus of a fascinating and ongoing re-evaluation. Even the subsequent fate of the sultan's library at Yıldız palace became a subject of controversy, with staunch Kemalists attempting to disperse its collections so as to remove 'an embarrassing monument to Abdülhamid's memory'.

Whether Abdülhamid is vilified as a reactionary despot or lauded as a key moderniser of the Ottoman Empire and the last defender of Islam from the encroachments of the West, his reign was crucial to many critical developments affecting Turkey and the modern Middle East.

Given the importance of Abdülhamid's reign, it is hardly surprising that a vast literature has developed around it. Beginning while he was still on the throne, the stream of writings has been joined by a number of other sources to produce a veritable flood. Much of the result, particularly that produced after his downfall, has been quite negative in its assessment. During the Second Constitutional or 'Young Turk' Period (1908-18), and especially the early decades of the Turkish Republic, historians tended to be extremely critical of his reign, an unsurprising stance given that the strident secularism of the era was antithetical to the perceived Hamidian posture. During the 1960s, scholars began to reconsider Abdülhamid's reign. The process of rehabilitation has in some cases veered into advocacy, as his legacy has been claimed by Islamists who nostalgically favour the return of a sultan-caliph in the Islamic world and by proponents of the Islamist political movement in Turkey. In the early 1990s when political Islamism was on the rise, the name of Abdülhamid II would sometimes appear on the walls of some conservative districts in Istanbul next to campaign posters for the Islamist Refah (Welfare) Party. The subsequent polemical appropriation of Abdülhamid underscores both his importance as a historical figure and his continued relevance to historical and ideological change in Turkey. In this chapter, I place Abdülhamid's reign in the context of both the historical development of the late Ottoman Empire and the subsequent historiographical turns, but focus mainly on the events and currents of the Hamidian era itself.

Abdülhamid and the preceding Tanzimat era: continuation or deviation?

Histories of the Tanzimat era (1839-76) have tended to emphasise the Western sources of emulation for Ottoman reforms and the passive reception of Western influence. Recently, historians have challenged this interpretation, focusing on the indigenous desiderata of Ottoman officials during the crucial period in which major attempts were launched to overhaul the Ottoman state and place it on a rational administrative footing. Recent scholarship has credited Abdülhamid with continuing and in many cases actually implementing reforms that had only been partially realised in the Tanzimat. Yet the Hamidian era nevertheless represented an important shift away from a more hopeful and trusting attitude towards Western interaction with the Ottoman state. As we shall see, given the European powers' shift in approach towards the empire and the changing demographic, economic and military circumstances of the Ottoman territories, it is not surprising that Hamidian policy differed from that pursued during the Tanzimat.

Abdülhamid's use of Islam and his attempts to raise the hopes of Ottoman Muslims have been received with hostility by Europeans and subsequent


Background and early influences

Abdülhamid was the product of a union typical of the Ottoman palace. His father was Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–61) and his mother was Tir-i Müjgan, the daughter of a Circassian chieftain. His birth in Çırağan palace on 22 September 1842 was announced with five volleys of artillery, alerting the population of Istanbul to the joyful news; seven days of celebration were held and the lights of the city’s mosques were festively illuminated. 4 Prince Abdülhamid’s mother’s death when he was eleven years old seems to have set him apart in the life of the palace, encouraging both introspection and the suspicion for which he was later to become infamous. He was subsequently entrusted to another of his father’s wives, the childless Perestû. Also a Circassian, she devoted herself to later to become infamous. He was subsequently entrusted to another of his father’s wives, the childless Perestû. Also a Circassian, she devoted herself to


5 Karpat, The Politicization of Islam, p. 156.
life of the empire. He also showed a sustained interest in modern farming and animal husbandry. As a prince he began the long-term project of developing a parcel of land given to him by his father into a model and profitable agricultural enterprise. Uninterested in romantic literature, he preferred detective stories, and had an employee of the palace translate them from foreign languages and read to him in the evenings from behind a screen as he fell asleep. The trip he made to Europe in 1869 with his uncle Sultan Abdülaziz seems to have made a very strong and generally positive impression on the young prince, bringing him face to face with signs of the modernity that he strove to institute in the empire during his long reign.

Abdülmecit II’s accession to power and the early years of his reign, 1876–8

The problems facing the young sultan on his accession were immense: a very dangerous situation existed in the Balkans, with a number of rebellions opportunistically watched, if not exacerbated or even instigated, by Russia; Britain, until recently the counterweight to Russia in Ottoman eyes, was essentially neutralised by the surge of popular opinion against ‘the terrible Turk’; the Ottoman treasury had effectively declared bankruptcy the previous year; and the circumstances of his own succession meant that Abdülhamid had every right to be wary of the senior officials of his own government. It was hardly a promising start, and few observers would have been able to predict that within five years the sultan would have gathered into his hands the instruments necessary for the longest reign of an Ottoman sultan since the seventeenth century.

Due to an extraordinary set of developments, Abdülhamid became the third sultan to reign during the year 1876. His uncle Sultan Abdülaziz, who had ruled since 1861, was forced to abdicate in May of that year by a coup d’état carried out by a constellation of high-ranking Ottoman officials, including Midhat Paşa (the chief advocate of constitutional and parliamentary checks on sultanic authority in this period), military officers, including Minister of War Hüseyin Avni Paşa, and the students of the religious schools, or softas. Abdülhamid was apparently appalled by the prospect of a sitting sultan being removed in this way; in future he would be suspicious of any potential signs of a repetition at his own expense, and wary of the involvement of the office of the şeyhülislâm in particular.

The leaders of the coup replaced Abdülaziz with Murad V, who had agreed to promulgate a constitution once installed as sultan. However, owing to his deteriorating nervous condition, which was not helped by the suicide in June of his predecessor, Murad lasted only three months on the throne. As Murad’s incapacity for rule became apparent, Midhat Paşa held confidential talks with Abdülhamid, who stood next in the Ottoman line of succession. Abdülhamid agreed to the constitution (and perhaps even left his interlocutor with the impression that the future sultan was a supporter of the liberal cause) but apparently rejected the idea that it be guaranteed by the European powers, as Midhat urged. The back-and-forth nature of these discussions between Abdülhamid and Midhat afforded the opportunity for the future sultan to change the draft constitution in ways that would prove decisive. Abdülhamid later sent Midhat himself into internal exile to the Hijaz (where he was later murdered) by invoking Article 113 on the grounds that Midhat was ‘recognized as dangerous to the safety of the state’.

The fragility of Sultan Abdülhamid’s position was further emphasised by two failed coups d’état that occurred during the first years of his reign. Many writers have accused Abdülhamid of paranoia, but he had real cause for worry. The first and most significant of the conspiracies against him was organised by the Üsküdar Society under the leadership of the so-called ‘turbaned revolutionary’ Ali Suavi. The society had organised a demonstration outside Çırağan palace aimed at restoring the deposed sultan, Murad, who was effectively imprisoned inside. The attempted coup failed and Ali Suavi was killed when forces loyal to Abdülhamid crushed the uprising. The second conspiracy, that of the Skaleri-Aziz Bey committee, also intended to restore Murad to the throne. The authorities detected the plot and apprehended most of its members before they could launch it. Regardless of the efficacy of these two conspiracies, they reinforced young Sultan Abdülhamid’s anxieties concerning the potential weakness of his position.

But a far greater danger to his reign came in the form of the war with Russia during the years 1877–8. Referred to in Ottoman history as the ‘93 War’ because it was fought during the year 1293 in the Islamic calendar, this conflict was devastating for the Ottoman Empire and instrumental in shaping the subsequent course of the Hamidian era. To fully appreciate both the causes and the subsequent impact of this war, it is necessary to understand the confluence of forces at work. The empire that Abdülhamid inherited upon his accession was effectively bankrupt. Unable to meet the full obligations of its foreign debt in 1875, the Ottoman treasury was in dire straits, leaving the state hostage to financial fortune. Thus when agricultural failings of various kinds occurred in the 1870s, the empire’s precarious fiscal solvency was directly threatened. Financial instability, together with the growing nationalist sentiments across the empire, helps explain the appearance of provincial unrest in the middle of the decade. While the proximate cause of most of these disturbances was fiscal, matters soon escalated, taking on broader national and international significance.

The crisis that eventually produced the ‘93 War began in such a way. When revolts broke out against Ottoman tax collectors in Bosnia, Serbia and Bulgaria in 1875 and 1876, they set in motion a series of actions and reactions that grew out of all proportion, due to the emotive nature of the revolts’ religious and nationalist implications, Ottoman public opinion and, crucially, the eventual intervention of the European powers. Unfortunately for the Ottomans, the international relations of the so-called Eastern Question – essentially, the issue of what to do with the Ottoman Empire as it shrank – were constantly changing. After the Crimean War and the Treaty of Paris (1856), the Ottoman state had been admitted into the European club and had received a guarantee that Ottoman territorial integrity would be upheld in future. That promise lasted only until the 1870s, when a new alignment of interests increasingly encouraged European powers to solve the problems created by their varying imperial agendas at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. For the Ottomans, the change became apparent with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the decisive defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Britain was now increasingly interested in pursuing her imperial ambitions via Egypt, which, although still officially a part of the Ottoman Empire, was in practice almost a separate entity since the rise of Mehmed Ali Paşa earlier in the century. The defeat of France signalled the arrival of Germany as an imperial power and induced a guarded rapprochement between Britain and Russia. This alignment of the Ottoman Empire’s erstwhile protector and the source of her most formidable threat meant that Russia was to enjoy a much freer hand to meddle in Ottoman affairs. Indeed, the Ottomans could see the hand of Russia at work, inflaming the already volatile situation in the Balkans.

As the crisis in the Balkans intensified a pattern emerged. The specific local issues, such as the collection of taxes, were quickly forgotten as Russian arms and agents encouraged fellow Slavs to rise up against the symbols of the Ottoman state – or in their absence, the local Muslim population. Local troops and irregulars soon returned the favour and a cycle of attack and counter-attack began, increasing the likelihood that small-scale violence would turn into something much more widespread and difficult to control. At this point, another dimension to the growing conflict – that of European public opinion – loomed into view. Perceptions of the ‘Eastern Question’ were quite volatile, especially when inflamed by the rhetoric of politicians such as William Ewart Gladstone, who used the occasion of the Bulgarian uprising of 1876 to attack his British political adversary Benjamin Disraeli. His pamphlet on ‘the Bulgarian horrors’, by which he meant only Muslim violence against Christians (conveniently ignoring the considerable Christian depredations against the Muslim population), sold 200,000 copies within a month and drastically reduced the British government’s room for manoeuvre.12

Both the imperial agendas of the European powers and the growing role of public opinion ensured that the Balkan crises of the mid-1870s quickly became, to the discomfiture of Istanbul, matters of international concern. For example, the Bosnian crisis occasioned the meeting of the ‘three Kaisers’ (that is, the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian monarchs) in Berlin and their production of the Andrassy note (December 1875), which demanded major changes in the way the Ottoman Empire governed its Balkan provinces. Although the sultan reluctantly agreed, the fighting in the region continued. Attention then shifted to Bulgaria, where the government moved quickly against the rebels, producing the aforementioned ‘Bulgarian horrors’ and another international attempt to force ‘reforms’ on Istanbul.

In the mean time, Abdülhamid II rose to the Ottoman throne and preparations for an Ottoman constitution began. While the unprecedented institution of constitutional rule stemmed from the changing internal dynamics of the Ottoman Empire, its announcement was timed with international objections in mind. The Constantinople conference had been scheduled for December of 1876 in order for the European powers to decide the fate of the Ottoman

Balkans. On the opening day the Ottoman delegate announced with some
fanfare the promulgation of the Ottoman constitution that, in Ottoman eyes,
would obviate the need for European involvement in Ottoman affairs, since
all Ottoman subjects were now equally protected under its provisions. This
announcement, of course, did not satisfy the European delegates, who were
in some instances quite hostile to the Ottoman Empire. The conference broke
up in early 1877, with Russia preparing for war in order to continue its south-
ward expansion and to reduce the Ottoman Empire’s influence over the tsarist
empire’s own Muslim minorities. Interestingly, Abdülhamid had argued for
an Ottoman strategy of appeasement and concession, but the constitutional-
ists ignored his views and adopted a decidedly uncompromising stance. The
resulting conflict was a disaster for the Ottoman state.

Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire in April 1877, having already
signed in mid-January an agreement with Austria-Hungary that would allow
Russia freedom of movement in the Balkans in exchange for Austro-Hungarian
rule over Bosnia and Herzegovina. The war was fought on two fronts, with the
Russians attacking through the Balkans in the west and into Anatolia from the
east. In the initial stages of the war the Russian armies met little resistance, and
their rapid advance was accompanied by a massive slaughter of the Muslim
population. Ottoman defences stiffened, especially at Plevna and the Sıpka pass
(both in modern-day Bulgaria), and to a lesser extent at Karatsu and Erzurum in
the east. But eventually the Ottoman resistance cracked and Russian troops
marched on the Ottoman capital, now swollen with Muslim refugees, reaching
its outskirts by the end of February 1878 and leaving in their wake what one
historian has referred to as ‘rivers of Muslim blood’.

Meanwhile, in a sign of what was to come, Abdülhamid had dismissed the parliament after some of
its members criticised his conduct of the war.

The results of the war were extremely dangerous for the Ottoman state.
Forced to sign a humiliating treaty at San Stefano, the Ottoman Empire agreed
inter alia to the creation of a very large and independent Bulgaria, which was
a key Russian aim; territorial gains for Montenegro, Serbia and Greece in the
Balkans and Russia in eastern Anatolia; independence for Serbia, Montenegro
and Romania; internal reforms in various Ottoman areas, including Armenia;
and a massive financial indemnity to Russia. Far worse in human terms was
the necessity of avoiding another such conflict. In this task, Abdülhamid
was largely successful throughout the rest of his reign, with the sole exception
of the war with Greece in 1897, which ended in a decisive Ottoman victory,
even though its benefits quickly evaporated due to the involvement of the
European powers in its aftermath.

Consolidation and rule, 1878–96

Coming hard on the heels of the chaotic year of Abdülhamid II’s accession, the
war with Russia exposed the alarming weaknesses of the empire. But in addi-
tion to highlighting the enormity of the task of rejuvenating the empire, the
first few years of Abdülhamid’s reign suggested some of the possible solutions.
His main objectives were preserving the peace; developing a strategic plan to
cope with the threats represented by the various interests of the Great Powers;
putting the empire’s financial and military house in order; restructuring the
administrative capabilities of the Ottoman government; and finding a means of
achieving ‘a sound and practical basis of social solidarity’ among the majority
of his subjects.14 The 93 War left Abdülhamid II with a more Asian and a more
Muslim empire, demographic realities that would affect the development of
his policy in the years to come. Not only were most of the empire’s European
provinces lost, but the influx of refugees ensured that the remaining areas had
a higher proportion of Muslims than had previously been the case. Beyond his
conviction that further warfare was to be avoided, Abdülhamid drew other
lessons from the conflict. First among them was an extreme wariness of the
motivations of the Great Powers. The empire’s Crimean War allies Britain and
France had abandoned their former policy of working to uphold its territori-

14 Engin D. Akarlı, ‘Abdülhamid’s attempt to integrate Arabs into the Ottoman system’,
in David Kushner (ed.), Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic
showing a more focused interest on the Eastern Mediterranean after the opening of the Suez Canal, took Cyprus as a result of the Berlin Treaty, and would soon use the pretext of the Urabi uprising to occupy Egypt in 1882; France, although considerably weakened after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, seized Tunisia in 1881. Abdülhamid saw this new turn of events as a betrayal. Britain's behaviour was a particularly bitter pill to swallow, as Abdülhamid had greatly admired the English. In his memoirs the sultan expressed his version of 'perfidious Albion': 'Of all the Great Powers, the most to be feared are the English. This is because giving their word has no value to them.' Only by playing the interests of one power against another could the young sultan hope to make headway in the international arena, and then only marginally, given the political, military and economic state of the empire.

Abdülhamid also sought to buy time in which to implement an ambitious raft of changes aimed at centralising and regularising the control of the central government, modernising the armed forces, educating sufficient numbers of the population to ensure a well-trained and loyal elite, and generally ensuring that the empire was as up to date as possible given the still-vast dimensions of its territory and the paucity of its financial resources. Additionally, Abdülhamid saw the attractiveness of pursuing a policy of Islamic unity in the face of European encroachment. Abdülhamid's Islamic policy, sometimes referred to as 'Pan-Islamism', was a two-sided phenomenon. On the one hand, it was a positive strategy aimed at the majority of his imperial subjects as it sought to take advantage of the new demographic situation and to strengthen the cohesiveness of the empire's Islamic base. On the other hand, it was also a negative or threatening policy intended to remind the European powers, France and Great Britain in particular, that the Ottoman sultan-caliph held considerable sway over many millions of their overseas imperial subjects.

Before Abdülhamid II could turn his attention to the enormous—and enormously expensive—task of reorganising and modernising his empire, he had to address its precarious fiscal situation. The empire had failed to meet the payments on its debt in 1875 and agreed to international oversight of its finances under the Public Debt Administration (PDA), established in 1881. The chief beneficiaries of this creation were the holders of the Ottoman debt, mostly foreigners who were represented on the council—whereas the Ottoman government only had observer status. Worse, the terms of the PDA's creation gave it the right to roughly 30 per cent of imperial tax revenues—so that the income from whole sectors and regions of the empire were dedicated to paying off the debt. Although the loss of sovereignty inherent in the PDA was galling, the new dispensation was not without some benefits for the Ottoman state. An agreement had been reached without the intervention of the European powers, and the arrangement ensured that the empire would continue to have access to foreign capital and on more favourable terms than had been available in the past. Without this access, Abdülhamid's ambitious plans for large, capital-hungry military and public works projects would have been impossible. In addition, the PDA hired and trained large numbers of Ottoman subjects, a boon both to the economy and to the accumulation of the latest financial knowledge available, and a fitting parallel to the Hamidian efforts to professionalise the civil bureaucracy.

Legislative and administrative changes

Abdülhamid began the process of asserting his authority over the bureaucracy by sending Midhat Paşa into internal exile during the crisis produced by the war with Russia. He also used this opportunity to prorogue parliament, to suspend the constitution, and to rid himself of other liberal opposition leaders and high-ranking military officers on whom his rise to power had depended.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Sublime Porte, the pyramidal governmental apparatus under the grand vezir, had accumulated considerable power at the expense of the sultan. Abdülhamid reversed this trend through two shrewd policies, both aimed at asserting the authority of the palace over the Porte. The first was the major enhancement of the bureaucratic structure of the palace itself. By gradually expanding the office of the Mabeyn, literally the 'in between', that part of the palace where the sultan traditionally received visitors and ministers to the point where it could virtually run the empire, the sultan pulled power back into his own hands. Abdülhamid II took the business of ruling extremely seriously; he delegated little and the clerks of the Mabeyn testify to the impressive work rate of the sultan who, fortified

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with numerous cups of coffee, would often work late into the night, especially during periods of crisis or when state business was most intense.\textsuperscript{19} The second plank of Abdülhamid's strategy was to extend the expanded authority of the palace over the workings of the Porte. He accomplished this task through careful attention to the question of ministerial responsibility, which provoked frequent clashes with his grand vezirs, conflicts that were invariably decided in the sultan's favour.\textsuperscript{20} During his reign Abdülhamid changed his grand vezir over twenty-five times, and it is clear that he frequently used these changes as a way of asserting his own authority over the bureaucratic establishment as well as a means of placating the various powers, especially Britain, a factor Abdülhamid confirmed in his memoirs.\textsuperscript{21} The two main incumbents of this office during this period were Küçük Said Paşa and Kâmil Paşa, who together served a total of ten times.\textsuperscript{22} Abdülhamid wrote, somewhat defensively, that all the fuss attributed to his changing the top civil servant was misplaced, but his subsequent statement illuminated the true locus of power in the Hamidian state: 'because whether it is Kâmil or Said, the real Grand Vizier is the one who resides in Yıldız and that is I'.\textsuperscript{23} This statement nicely captures the extent to which Hamidian rule combined personal, patrimonial authority alongside the mechanisms of a functioning, rational bureaucracy. In a similar vein, the text of the Ottoman constitution, suspended since the '93 War, continued to be published at the beginning of every official Ottoman state yearbook (salname).

Education: loyalty and manpower

Producing civil servants who were both capable and loyal was a major preoccupation of the Hamidian government. Although the government had made considerable efforts to create a state education system in the Tanzimat era, these plans had been considerably more advanced than the situation on the ground. After getting the empire's financial situation more or less under control by the early 1880s, Abdülhamid II turned his attention to implementing the plans for an empire-wide education system.\textsuperscript{24} Despite his promotion of his Islamic policy, he chose not to try to direct the new educational changes through the religious hierarchy. Partly as a result of his low opinion of the rank and file of the ulema — he thought of them as 'excessively conservative' and unfavourably compared them with those produced by al-Azhar in Cairo — he never tried to transform the madrese system into a modern education system.\textsuperscript{25} For that task he opted to continue along the lines of the educational reforms that he inherited from the Tanzimat era, establishing a parallel but separate system alongside that run by the religious establishment, although he did place many of the ulema in the educational hierarchy. He gave particular attention to following the Public Education Regulation of 1869, a French-inspired blueprint for creating a fully integrated imperial schooling system. The ambitious nature of this plan was matched by the keenness of the Hamidian government's approach to turning it into reality, especially beginning in the early 1880s. Photographs, governmental correspondence and statistics compiled in the Ottoman state yearbooks from this period all show that the words of the 1869 legislation were being converted into bricks and mortar during the Hamidian era.

But more interesting than the pace of Hamidian progress in building an imperial infrastructure for education was the overall conception of education, and the ways in which it was delivered in these new buildings. Abdülhamid II saw education as a crucial battleground for the empire's future — and one in which the Ottoman state — as in the military, commercial and cultural fields — was badly behind. The sultan believed that the aggressive presence of so many well-funded and well-organised minority and foreign schools, especially those run by the seemingly ever stronger missionary movement, represented a danger to the empire.\textsuperscript{26} In particular, Abdülhamid thought that these schools were turning young Ottoman boys — and, increasingly, girls — against their religion and their state.\textsuperscript{27} A spirit of competition thus shaped Hamidian education policy; in this respect it was similar to many contemporary education strategies around the world that sought to adapt to the rapid changes of the modern world by drawing on the religious and national sources of past success. In the Ottoman version, the imperial tradition and Islamic morality naturally played

\textsuperscript{21} Abdülhamit, \textit{Siyasi hatıratım}, p. 188.
\textsuperscript{23} Abdülhamit, \textit{Siyasi hatıratım}, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{24} Selçuk Aksin Somel, The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1819–1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Benjamin C. Fortna, \textit{Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State and Education in the late Ottoman Empire} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
\textsuperscript{25} Abdülhamit, \textit{Siyasi hatıratım}, p. 190.
\textsuperscript{26} Fortna, \textit{Imperial Classroom}, chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{27} Abdülhamit, \textit{Siyasi hatıratım}, p. 189.
a heavy role as the state attempted to use education to cement loyalty and affinity in its young subjects.28 In other words, while the original source for the educational system Abdülhamid inherited from the Tanzimat era was foreign in inspiration, his government took great strides to render it consonant with Ottoman and Islamic traditions. Although the schools were open to and attended by children of all confessional backgrounds, the Hamidian establishment thought of them, in contrast to their minority and foreign counterparts, as ‘Muslim’ schools. Members of the ulama were employed in a variety of roles in the ostensibly ‘secular’ Ottoman state system, and the curricula of these schools reflect considerable attention to Islamic subjects.

In many ways, the educational apparatus that emerged was rigid and at least as interested in controlling its students’ behaviour and discipline – their progress or lack thereof was monitored through the use of a sort of moral report card – as the contents of their textbooks, which were carefully inspected prior to publication. The rigidity and suspicion inherent in the Hamidian educational endeavour could produce unwanted consequences. We know little about the reception of the new schooling among the rank and file of its students, but among the particular group that emerged as the core of the Young Turk opposition movement, we can see the unintended fruits of the Hamidian project. Bridling against the sterility of the content of their school texts and increasingly enervated by the contrast between the rhetoric of the regime and the apparently unchecked decline in the power of the state they were being groomed to serve, some sought refuge in the radical thought of Western Europe, a factor that would contribute directly to the revolution of 1908.

In its virtues and its shortcomings, the educational endeavour of the Hamidian state was symptomatic of its larger agenda. Broadly speaking, Abdülhamid sought to extend the reach of the regime through various means, both tangible and ideological, into the wider society, and to draw into its orbit peoples and regions that had hitherto been treated with benign neglect. On the most obvious level this outreach was effected through the lines inherited from the preceding Tanzimat era: the bureaucratic structure of the state was greatly expanded. Thickening its administrative posture both in the capital and the provinces allowed the state to reach more than merely those who would become its bureaucrats. The Hamidian state also expanded in a variety of other areas, enhancing or in some cases creating outright the apparatus for transforming the relationship between the central government and its subjects – increasingly being treated like citizens29 – in the legal, medical, fiscal, military and census-taking fields, to name only a few. After the loss of so much Balkan land in the war with Russia, the exigencies of the state meant that new areas needed to be brought under more direct rule by Istanbul. During the Hamidan era we can witness the new attention being paid to areas such as Syria and Transjordan, which had previously received marginal attention from Istanbul.30 By building new schools, including a special school in Istanbul established for the sons of tribal rulers,31 by cultivating close ties with provincial notables and sufi shaykhs and by judicious disbursements from his private purse, Abdülhamid followed time-honoured means of political enticement. Interestingly, the ambitious nature of Hamidian reform meant that he and his governmental apparatus had to rely on local participation, initiative and, to a limited degree, autonomy, all of which had an ameliorating effect on the otherwise seemingly relentless centralisation strategy of the late Ottoman state.

Complementing this rather utilitarian approach was one that worked in the realm of symbolism and ideology and therefore was, theoretically at least, not limited to the practical mechanisms of power. By emphasising the religious dimension of his position as sultan-caliph, Abdülhamid intended to take advantage of the power of image and symbol through such means as ceremony, architecture, the act of bestowing medals and honours, visibly close relations with sufi orders, dedicatory inscriptions, the sultan’s monogram and the language of official pronouncements to his subjects, in as broad a manner as possible.32 These attempts at ‘image management’ may seem somewhat crude by today’s standards, but in a time when the media for public communication were few, they represented an efficient means of disseminating the official line and asserting the sultan’s virtual presence across the empire. Likewise in the international arena, the sultan was keen to have the empire represented at fairs, conferences and conventions.33 Meanwhile, he relied on photography and a widespread network of informants to collect information

30 Eugene L. Rogan, Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1851–1921 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Akarlı, ‘Abdülhamid’s attempt’.
The reign of Abdülhamid II

The reign of Abdülhamid II policy intended to catch the attention of the Western powers ultimately proved disastrous. Following the strategy of Bulgarian nationalists in the 1870s, the Armenian revolutionaries frequently incited violence calculated to draw Muslim reprisals and trigger international intervention. The Ottoman government responded to this campaign by forming the ‘Hamidiye’ regiments of irregular Kurdish troops. The period from 1890 to 1893 featured cycles of attack and counter-attack, but not the kind of major atrocity that would have galvanised overseas attention. A turning point came in 1894, when the Hamidiye units responded to a series of increasingly more desperate provocations with a large-scale slaughter of Armenians at Sasun. The sultan seems to have misjudged the ability of the Ottoman authorities to control the situation – and the extent of Muslim anxiety concerning the Armenian revolutionaries.35 Once events got out of hand it proved very difficult, if not impossible, for Istanbul to restore order. The unpredictable quality of the 1894–6 events in eastern Anatolia, during which large numbers of Armenians were slaughtered and many others left the empire against the sultan’s will,36 stemmed in part from the fact that the central government had effectively armed Kurdish tribesmen who were geographically remote from and almost completely impervious to the discipline of a modern army, and in part from the government’s policy of undermining the local notables so as to appear as the champion of the local Muslims.37 It was in the period of the Sasun incident that Abdülhamid II became known as the ‘red sultan’ and by other pejorative nicknames associated with the shedding of blood. Nevertheless, he was able to avoid a major international crisis, in part by convincing the powers that his provincial reforms required more time, and in part by agreeing to a new programme of reforms.

The Hunchaks then pursued an even more desperate strategy. Expanding the field of their activities to include the capital in 1896, they took over the Ottoman Bank, planting bombs and taking hostages. A raiding party set out for the Sublime Porte and an attacker threw a bomb at the sultan while he was on his way to Friday prayers, missing him but killing twenty of his guards. The Armenian activists produced a list of demands and, tellingly, presented them to the Western embassies in the capital. Among these demands were a tax amnesty for five years, following which their tax assessments were to be reduced to 20 per cent of their current value; the appointment of Christian governors in the eastern provinces; the establishment of a Christian gendarmerie;
and so forth. Abdülhamid II rejected the demands, but did appoint a number of Christian governors and granted a general amnesty. At this point the motives of the European powers became apparent. Britain attempted to gain Russian approval for the sending of a Royal Navy flotilla to Istanbul. Russia, fearing the rise in British influence that would result, refused; France added her objections. Meanwhile, the Armenian revolutionary organisations, having failed to gain the international backing they were seeking, began to quarrel among themselves and the issue effectively disappeared from the international agenda until it was tragically resurrected in a radically different form during the First World War. The crisis had passed, but both sides felt aggrieved. The numbers of Armenians who were killed or left the empire attests to their suffering. As for Abdülhamid, he had weathered the storm but remained bitter at what he perceived to be a double standard on the part of the Western powers. He wrote: The Great Powers do not want to know that the Armenians are rebels who attack with sword and dynamite; and that we are the owners of our own land; that they constantly upset us with the Capitulations and other demands. The rights they bestow on the Principality of Monaco they see as excessive for us.

Such was the combination of demography and nationalist agitation in the Ottoman Empire during this period that no sooner had the situation in eastern Anatolia reverted to calm than another area flared up. This time the issue was Greek nationalism and irredentism aimed at breaking areas with substantial Greek populations away from the empire and uniting them with Greece. Although several parts of the empire were targets for Greek nationalist agitation aimed at effecting the revival of the Great Idea (Megali Idea) of a Greek empire, it was the island of Crete where the conflict became concentrated in the mid-late 1890s. When new Greek revolts broke out during 1895, at the height of the Armenian crisis, Abdülhamid temporised, changing governors of the island. When he appointed an ethnic Greek there were protests from the Muslims, who comprised roughly 30 per cent of the island’s population. When he appointed a Muslim, his Greek subjects were up in arms, demanding union with mainland Greece. The task of maintaining Ottoman sovereignty over the island had become nearly impossible given the intensity of the Greek insurgents’ desire for union with Greece. During 1896 the cycle of violence reached an extremely volatile stage. In early 1897 the Cretan rebels announced that the island would be united with Greece and appealed for help from Athens, which duly obliged, sending an expeditionary force that landed on the island.

This act provoked a response from the European powers. Remarkably even-handed this time, they demanded a Greek withdrawal and autonomy for Crete that meant only the most symbolic of Ottoman rule. But the Greek government was swept up in the fervid nationalism that was being driven by an organisation called the National Society (Ethniki Hetairia), whose programme envisioned Crete as only one part of a larger plan that included Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia, all under Ottoman rule. The society’s volunteers, Greek army officers among them, massed along the Graeco-Ottoman border in Thessaly. The Athens government was forced to follow suit; by February of 1897 there were approximately 25,000 Greek troops awaiting the signal for war. After some cross-border raids by Greek volunteers in April, the Ottoman government declared war on 17 April. The Graeco-Ottoman war was over in barely more than a month. The superior Ottoman forces broke through the Greek lines and continued to march south as defences crumbled. Now the powers put pressure on both sides; the Greeks withdrew their forces from Crete and the Ottomans halted their advance before it reached even deeper into Greek territory. The Ottomans were prevented from keeping the territory they had won but were able to secure an indemnity from Athens. Abdülhamid, initially reluctant to fight, nevertheless saw the benefits of his position, despite the fact that his gains had been snatched away under Great Power pressure and Crete would now remain Ottoman in only nominal fashion. He had sent a stern message to the various Balkan national groups agitating to break away chunks of Ottoman territory. Domestically, the prestige of his victory provided important counter-propaganda against his domestic critics, in particular the emerging Young Turk movement, to which we return shortly.

The period from 1896 to roughly 1905 can be seen as the high water mark of Abdülhamid’s reign. Although he had failed in avoiding war altogether, the conflict with Greece was mercifully brief and the results, although greatly reduced by European pressure, were not without advantages for the sultan, who resurrected the title of gazi, or fighter for the faith, that he had asserted during the disastrous war of his earliest regnal years. The long period of peace after 1878 had allowed time for the implementation of the Hamidian reforms. This progress was especially evident in the costly but necessary military field, where the relationship that Abdülhamid cultivated with Wilhelmine Germany, an important counterbalance to British and French influence, was bearing fruit. Relations with provinces were largely under control, thanks to the extension

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38 Abdülhamit, Siyasi hatıratım, p. 131.
40 Ibid., p. 337.
of telegraph and rail lines. This use of technology had both a practical and a symbolic side. The Hijaz railway, funded entirely by Muslim capital, provided an important testimonial to Abdülhamid's commitment to the marriage of religion and modernity. In 1900, when the empire celebrated the sultan's jubilee with great fanfare, the state of the empire, in spite of daunting obstacles, seemed remarkably buoyant.

Away from the state, extremely important changes were at work in the Hamidian era. Everyday life was changing, often dramatically. This was especially true in the urban centres, with the empire's port cities displaying considerable economic expansion and a commensurate development in the social and cultural spheres. Advances in transport, mechanisation, the increase in numbers and visibility of imported goods, popular literacy and the participation of women in the economy and in public life all attest to the vibrancy of life in the Hamidian era as the empire adapted to the rapid pace of change associated globally with the late nineteenth century. The liveliness of the literary field alone, in which important works were being published and debates were being held on language, the role of women in society, and the degree to which Ottoman society should follow the West, all belie the attention that observers paid to the prominence of Hamidian censorship in the political field. In the realm of everyday life we can see the extent to which Ottoman individuals managed to accommodate the influences of the day, whether derived from East or West. Nevertheless the period was far from utopian; major economic, social and political problems persisted and extremely serious difficulties for the state lay ahead.

Dissent and revolution, 1902–8

Abdülhamid's reign was ultimately brought to an end by the convergence of two trends: the development of a growing opposition movement both inside and outside the empire; and the re-emergence of the Balkan problem, this time centring on the intractable situation in Macedonia. Actually, the first signs of opposition to Abdülhamid's reign were hardly menacing. The main instrument of the opposition movement became the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), although its name and composition changed several times along the way. A brief overview of several of the protagonists involved provides a sense of the diversity of the social backgrounds and intellectual currents represented. In many respects the chief ideologue of the CUP was Ahmed Rıza Bey. A graduate of the Franco-Ottoman secondary school of Galatasaray, Ahmed Rıza was sent to Paris to study agriculture. Heavily influenced by positivist, Darwinist and atheistic ideas in vogue in the French capital, he began to publish the journal Meşveret in both French and Turkish. The title drew on the concept of consultation derived from Islamic political history but was intended to convey the sense of the constitution that the opposition movement demanded; the subtitle bore the positivist credo of 'Order and Progress' ('intizam ve terakki'). Another major figure was 'Mizancı' Murad Bey, so named because he was the publisher of the journal Mizan (The Balance). Educated in the Caucasus and Russia, he came to Istanbul as a young man and worked for the PDA, taught at the School of Civil Administration, wrote both fiction and non-fiction, and espoused a combination of liberalism and Islamic solidarity. When his journal fell foul of the Hamidian regime he went into exile, first in Egypt and then in France, where he quarrelled with Ahmed Rıza. Charismatic and popular, Murad's return to official employment in Istanbul in 1897 in the aftermath of Abdülhamid's victory over Greece was a considerable blow to the opposition movement.

A third dimension of the opposition is represented by Sabahaddin, an Ottoman prince who espoused a liberal agenda rooted in decentralisation and private initiative and thus at odds with the dirigiste agenda of Ahmed Rıza and the dominant faction of the CUP. Interested in an alliance with Britain and more accommodating to the various Armenian groups favouring autonomy, Prince Sabahaddin's faction eventually lost out when the movement split during fractious meetings in Paris in 1902; it would return to play an important role in the Young Turk movement to note that all involved were non-Turkish Muslims – at the imperial medical school in 1889 must not have seemed especially portentous at the time. But the opposition movement that began there mushroomed into a network of individuals and groups who shared an antipathy to the Hamidian regime and sought to bring it down. The 'Young Turk' movement was in reality an umbrella category that included a vast spectrum of groups with very disparate agendas and origins. The main.

42 Kasaba, 'A time and a place for the nonstate', pp. 211 ff.
but again losing role in the politics of the Second Constitutional Period. The fate of the movement took a decisive turn when it was joined by a new type of opposition figure, the young Ottoman military and civilian officers serving in Macedonia. Witnesses to the tactics of the Macedonian gangs, these young officers espoused a more aggressive and hands-on style. Thereafter the CUP could no longer be accused of being merely a glorified debating society. Men such as Enver, Cemal and Mehemd Talât had their hands on the levers of power, in some cases literally – Talât was the chief Ottoman telegraph official in the important city of Salonica. In 1906 they sent representatives to Europe to liaise closely with Ahmed Rrza’s faction of the CUP and agreed to reestablish their own group, previously known as the Ottoman Freedom Society, as its domestic branch, and to establish a network of branches inside Ottoman territory, effectively taking over the CUP the following year.

Deposition, counterrevolution and internal exile, 1909–18

With this activist group taking control of the CUP organisation and the worsening situation in Macedonia, events moved swiftly. Discontent among the Ottoman army was already apparent, but the main source of concern was the escalating situation in Macedonia. In the mean time, Britain and Russia were moving towards a rapprochement inspired by their mutual anxieties over the rise of Germany. In June 1908 King Edward VII and Tsar Nicholas II met at Reval on the Baltic to resolve their differences, among them the situation in the Balkans. They discussed a plan for foreign control that would leave Abdülhamid with only nominal control over his most important Balkan territories. When word of this arrangement, accompanied by rumours of the planned dismemberment of the empire as a whole, reached Salonica, the CUP officers swung into action. Fearing that the sultan would bow to international pressure and perhaps aware that his agents were on the verge of discovering their organisation, Enver and others took to the hills demanding the restoration of the Ottoman constitution. Abdülhamid II responded by sending a delegation of officers and a contingent of Anatolian troops to restore order, but one of the key officers was killed and many of the troops refused to fight. Abdülhamid, seeing the weakness of his position, agreed to restore the constitution and to reconvene parliament after a period of thirty years of abeyance. The Constitutional Revolution had arrived, and with it a new era in Ottoman and Turkish politics. Abdülhamid remained on the throne but his power was now seriously curtailed. In the aftermath of a briefly successful counter-revolution in
The Second Constitutional Period, 1908–1918

M. ŞÜKRÜ HANİOĞLU

The Young Turk Revolution of July 1908 inaugurated the Second Constitutional Period, which lasted until the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1918. Today the Young Turk Revolution and the decade that followed it are typically regarded as if enclosed in historical brackets, as a sort of transition period from late Ottoman history to the Republican era. Yet to contemporaries, the revolution was a watershed. The revolutionaries themselves counted their achievement among the three great ‘July events’ of modern history: the French Revolution; the American Declaration of Independence; and the Great Ottoman Revolution. We need not accept this verdict, born of a contemporary’s exaggerated sense of self-importance, to recognise that in the interlude between 1908 and the subsequent upheavals in China (1911) and Russia (1917), revolutionaries the world over looked to the Ottomans for inspiration. A century later, we are now in a position to see that the events of 1908–18 had a profound effect on the emergence of the modern Middle East and Balkans. Not only did the repercussions of the revolution transform late Ottoman society, laying the foundations for the Republic of Turkey, they remade the political landscape in an area stretching from Basra on the Persian Gulf to Scutari in Albania not far from the Adriatic.

1 Strictly speaking, the period could be said to extend to the occupation of the Ottoman capital in March 1920, to the acceptance of a new constitution by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in January 1921, or even to the formal abolition of the sultanate in November 1922. For the purposes of this chapter, however, it ends with the Mudros armistice, concluded on 30 October 1918.

2 Address titled ‘Temmuz İnkılâbât ve İhtilâlâtı ve Osmanlı İnkılâb-ı Kebîri’ (July Revolutions and Radical Transformations and The Great Ottoman Revolution), read at the first post-revolutionary congress of the Committee of Union and Progress in October–November 1908: private papers of Dr Bahadıddın Şakir.

The Second Constitutional Period, 1908–1918

The legacy of the First Constitutional Period

The Second Constitutional Period emerged from the shadow of the first, and bore the burden of its ambiguous legacy. The Ottoman parliamentary order was inaugurated on 19 March 1877, amidst an international crisis that threatened the integrity of the empire. Born of a tenuous compromise between reformist statesmen and a new, ambitious sultan, it survived less than a year. The first constitution was a weak construction that hardly limited the supremacy of the sultan, to whom it granted sweeping powers, such as the authority to exile individuals without trial. It also omitted many fundamental rights, such as the right to assemble peacefully or form political parties. The constitution provided for a carefully selected chamber of ‘yes-men’, whose unswerving loyalty trumped any inclination to express something beyond pleasant advice to the sovereign. When the deputies attempted to move from acclamation to criticism, or perhaps even to legislate like their counterparts in France or Great Britain, their fate was sealed. It was not only the legislative and critical functions of the parliament that the sultan feared, but the more fundamental danger posed by the principle of representation in a multinational empire seething with religious strife and separatist discontent. On 13 February 1878, Abdülhamid II exercised his new constitutional prerogatives and prorogued the chamber of deputies indefinitely. Thereafter the constitutional façade was maintained, but retained little substance.

The constitution represented a novelty in a state with shallow traditions of the rule of law. Its chances of placing limitations on executive power were in any case slim. The real restraints on imperial power during the nineteenth century had come from the bureaucracy. And it was Abdülhamid II’s success in quashing the independence of the Sublime Porte that led to the centralisation of power in the court and inadvertently paved the way for the revolutionary rise of a new and more dangerous rival for power – the military.

The revolution

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 organisation – the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress.
(hereafter CUP) – whose leadership harboured quintessentially conservative aims: to seize control of the empire and save it from collapse.\(^4\) The long-term success of the conspirators depended upon latent opposition to the sultan’s rule among wide swaths of the population. But their immediate success rested on an alliance between three major elements: the expatriate opposition group the CUP; key officers in the Ottoman military; and several of the guerrilla organisations of Macedonia.

One of the important stepping stones on the path to revolution was the merger in 1907 between the Paris-based opposition group the Committee of Progress and Union (the title used by the committee from mid-1906 until the summer of 1908, hereafter CPU) and the Salonican association of Ottoman officers and bureaucrats known as the Ottoman Freedom Society. The merger enabled the CPU to expand its membership base enormously within the army and 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 of its propaganda and switch to Ottomanism, a platform better suited to the staging of a rebellion in the ethnic mêlée of Macedonia. The plan called for the conversion of Ottoman military units into large armed bands, similar to the nationalist guerrilla groups fighting each other in Macedonia at the time (including Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Kutzo-Vlach, Macedo-Bulgarian and Serbian groups), under officers loyal to the CPU. These bands, in conjunction with a CPU gendarmerie force of self-sacrificing volunteers, were to assassinate important Ottoman officials, seize control of key points in the province, and demand the reinstatement of the constitution. Although success hinged on an alliance with the Albanians – who 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 an all-Ottoman revolution and thereby forestall the threat of European intervention.

Two bits of news precipitated the CUP’s decision to act in July 1908. First, rumours of a new Anglo-Russian initiative for extensive reform in Macedonia, 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 for the rebellion. 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, when they ousted Sultan Mustafa IV and imposed the Deed of Agreement upon Mahmud II. Under the circumstances, the sultan yielded. On 23/24 July 1908 he issued an imperial decree for the convening of a new chamber of deputies.\(^5\) Incredibly, the revolution was so localised at the outset that news of it did not reach the public in Istanbul, the Asiatic provinces and 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 Ottomans 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 as they were soon to find out, this was a very different sort of revolution, if indeed it could be considered a revolution at all. In fact, official CUP communiqués issued during July 1908 labelled it an ‘implementation’ (icra’at), a ‘period of implementation and action’ (‘devre-i icra’at ve fa’aliyet’) and a ‘movement for radical transformation’ (harekat-ı inkılâbiye), refraining from using the word for revolution, ikrîlîl.\(^6\) After the fact, publications by leading CUP members employed the term inkılâb, meaning radical transformation.\(^7\)

**The aftermath of the revolution, 1908–14**

The Young Turk Revolution overthrew the Hamidian regime under the banner of ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Justice’. In its place, the revolutionaries

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\(^6\) See the undated CUP communiqué of this period: private papers of Dr Bahaeddin Şakir.

\(^7\) See, for example, Ahmed Niyazi, *Hattâ-rı Niyazi yazaları* (Istanbul: İkhlâs, 1997), and Ahmed Refik, *Inkılâb-ı aufelin* (Istanbul: n. p., 1324 [1908]).
promised a constitutional monarchy founded upon the rule of law. They envisaged 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 mediums 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 few of these things came to pass.

It was not that the revolution 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 not as destruction and creative reconstruction, but rather as conservation and survival. Somewhat hastily labelled ‘liberals’ by hopeful Europeans, the CUP leaders actually viewed themselves primarily as saviours of the empire. Second, their aim was not destructive but restorative. Unlike the French revolutionaries of 1789, the CUP did not destroy an ancien régime in order to build a new one in its stead; unlike the Iranian revolutionaries of 1905–6, 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 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 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 under tight control. In the palace, in the bureaucracy and within the military, it was the CUP that, working from behind the scenes but through the existing institutions of government, came to pull the strings of imperial power.

The first challenge confronting the CUP after the reinstatement of the constitution by force was the restoration of order in the empire. The spread of anarchy in the immediate aftermath of the revolution troubled these conservative revolutionaries, whose power was still limited to the European provinces. Accordingly, in conjunction with the Ottoman authorities, they did what they could to prevent the crowds from getting out of control. Still, the first months following the revolution were characterised by a considerable amount of chaos and some new freedoms. Most of the Hamidian bans on organisation and assembly were lifted overnight, leading to a proliferation of large-scale political demonstrations, economic boycotts, organised workers’ strikes and feminist gatherings, all on a scale and frequency unheard of in the Ottoman world up to that point. The spread of strikes, in particular, to small towns with significant worker populations threatened both disorder and economic paralysis. Shortly after the revolution, the CUP made an appeal for the crowds to disperse and return to their homes and places of work. Eventually, they turned to legislation and strict law enforcement as a means of preserving public order.

The preservation of the existing institutions of government was natural for the CUP. All the same, it was a remarkable aspect of the ‘revolution’. As there was no legal change in the status of the state, the problem of obtaining international recognition did not even arise. More importantly, the preservation of the old regime reduced the amount of internal opposition faced by the CUP at the outset, thereby simplifying immeasurably their task of asserting control over the machinery of government. Of course, the preservation of the state and its institutions was only one part of the CUP programme; another was the ‘restoration’ of parliamentary rule. To fulfil this pledge, the CUP immediately pressured the government to schedule the elections promised by the sultan in his capitulatory decree. A transitional government, composed of the paşas of the old regime and acting at the behest of the CUP central committee, decreed elections for November–December 1908.

The 1908 elections 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 elected a representative to an electoral college in a given district, out of 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. The number of deputies in the chamber fluctuated according to changes in the size of the population; the chamber of deputies of 1908 had 275 deputies, that of 1912, 278, and the one following the 1914 elections, 255.

The major bone of contention between the CUP and the various ethno-national communities was the method of representation. Many nationalist
organisations, with the Greeks in the forefront, vigorously protested against 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, and even threatened to boycott the elections. In the event, deputies of Turkish origin obtained half of the seats in the chamber of deputies, while other Ottoman communities received fair proportional representation despite the absence of quotas.

The elections themselves were celebrated in a carnival atmosphere; huge crowds escorted ballot boxes to the counting centres, bearing flags and placards. The CUP’s immense popularity in the wake of the revolution, and their 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 independently minded deputies, and they later formed the core of the opposition to the CUP – a lesson it never forgot.

Whatever liberal affinities the CUP leaders harboured 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 party that had carried out a revolution through the exercise of raw power should seek to dominate the post-revolutionary political playing field, as Gamal Abdul Nasser’s Free Officers were to rediscover 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 Kamîl Paşa, who still dreamed of a restoration 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 centralisation 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 vague and untouchable status at the pinnacle of power. The insistence of the Central Committee on wielding power from the shadows (see below) provoked fervent outcries both from opportunist opponents and from genuine proponents of liberalism. Specific complaints centred on the super-exclusive status of the committee as saviour of the fatherland and the many 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. A notable liberal critic of the CUP’s privileged status and authoritarian tendencies was Sabahaddin Bey, who had fought against the CUP in exile as leader of the League of Private Initiative and Decentralisation. A devout follower of Edmond Demolins, Sabahaddin Bey denounced the dictatorial étatisme of the CUP. Instead, he advocated private initiative and decentralisation as the twin remedies for the deep-seated maladies of Ottoman society. The popularity of this alternative among Turks suffered from its inherent appeal to non-Turkish separatists, many of whom made it a key plank of their opposition platform.

The emergence of opposition confronted the CUP with a dilemma for they could not quash 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 opposition to this conundrum, the CUP, soon after the revolution, attempted to absorb or co-opt rival organisations. Some, like the League of Private Initiative and Decentralisation, were falsely declared to have voluntarily merged with the CUP; professional associations, such as the merchants’ unions, were mobilised or subsumed under the CUP organisational framework; CUP divisions were created to cater to key interest groups such as women or the ulama; and various nationalist organisations were targeted for co-option.

But such measures could not completely stifle dissent. Many organisations, especially those representing various nationalist groups, refused to play along with the CUP. They sought to maintain their independence and contested CUP

12 One of the major Arab nationalist organisations of the period, for instance, named itself the Party of Decentralisation: Ahmad 'Izzat al-A‘zami, al-Qadiyya al-'Arabiyya: asbabuha muqaddamatruhu tatawwuratuha wa-nata'ijuha (Baghdad: Matba'at al-sha'b, 1930), P. 41. For Sabahaddin Bey’s denial of any intent to appeal to such groups, see Mehmed Sabahaddin, Teşebbüs-i şahb ve travâ‘ı mezanîyet hakkında bir zabit (İstanbul: Necm-i İstikbâl Matbaası, 1324 [1908]), pp. 6–7.
13 ‘Osmani İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti Merkezi’nden’, Şahâh, 23 August 1908.
14 İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin tarihnamesesi’, Şahâh, 4 September 1908.
15 'Irminie Semiye, 'İmzet Hakkı Hanumefendi'yle bir hasbihal', İkdam, 30 August 1908.
16 Zade ve Vekayî, 3577 (15 June 1919), P. 132.
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 organisations in the aftermath of the revolution met with rejection - to the existence of independent organisations, 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 centre-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 thus tended to coalesce into heterogeneous opposition blocs. The inescapable fact of one-party rule within an ostensibly multi-party 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, power was not once transferred peacefully. And for much of it, power was not really transferred at all.

In April 1909, elements of the opposition united in support of a military uprising in the capital. That a military coup was possible nearly nine months after the revolution requires explanation. Clearly, CUP rule was tenuous, its control over the armed forces incomplete. Immediately after coming to power, the CUP had attempted to expand its hold over the military by removing officers loyal to the sultan. They purged many of the unschooled officers who had risen through the ranks with the blessing of the sultan, who consistently placed loyalty above merit. They revoked certain promotions and decorations decreed by the sultan for his most loyal officers. And they replaced the untrustworthy imperial army in the capital with the so-called ‘hunter battalions’ from Rumelia. Such measures provoked considerable resentment among the injured parties, who, realising that their time would soon be up, sprang to action. The coup brought CUP domination to a temporary halt. But its leadership was quick to rally supporters in Ottoman Europe. Combining volunteers with the principal divisions of the Ottoman Second and Third Armies in Europe – the very same units upon which it had depended in 1908 – the CUP assembled an Action Army, and marched on Istanbul in force to crush the rebellion.

The open challenge mounted against the CUP in April 1909 prompted its leaders to crack down on political opposition as such. Prevailing upon a reluctant parliament, they drove through a series of controversial measures designed to curtail fundamental liberties that posed 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 labour unrest, they drafted the heavy-handed Law of Strikes, which banned strikes in all public services and dissolved the labour unions in this sector. To stifle dissent, they issued the Press Law, which restricted freedom of the press. A good example of the CUP’s evolving approach to public order was the ‘Law of Vagabonds’, passed in May 1909. This defined a vagabond as an individual who had not sought employment for two months. ‘Vagabonds’ were to be arrested, tried and either forced to work in public service or sent back to their birthplace. No appeals were possible.

The pattern of subordinating individual rights to the supreme interests of the state (as interpreted by the CUP) accorded with the ideological predilections of the CUP leadership, most of whom were deeply influenced by a mixture of eighteenth-century French materialism, mid-nineteenth-century German Vulgdrmaterialismus, late nineteenth-century French solidarism and positivism. As a leading CUP ideologue, Ziya Gökalp, summed it up in his famous poem, ‘Duty’:

I do not have rights, interests, and desires
I have my duty, and do not need anything else
I close my eyes
I perform my duty.

But opposition continued. In 1911, the same elements that had come together in 1909 to oppose the regime determined to strike once again. But this time their method of choice was political. In November 1911, they formed a new umbrella party, the Liberal Entente, which contained elements as diverse as ulama and non-Muslim liberals. The formation of the Liberal Entente was a watershed. Not only did it 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 the amazement of everyone, the Liberal Entente won a big victory in a by-election held in the capital. Many provincial representatives elected on the CUP ticket saw where the wind was blowing and submitted their resignations to the Committee. To stem the tide, the CUP engineered snap general elections between February and April 1912. Determined to avoid a repetition of the experience of 1908–12, they adopted new measures to control these elections (nicknamed, for this reason, 'the Elections with the Stick'), including 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 counting process. CUP intervention was almost certainly responsible for the crushing defeat of the opposition, which managed to retain a mere 6 seats in the 278-seat chamber of deputies.

Frustrated yet again by CUP control of the democratic process, the opposition resorted once more to force. In an echo of 1908, they capitalised 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 initial vote of confidence. A new government formed under the leadership of the decorated war hero Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, who was not a CUP sympathiser. Assuming it could obtain an easy vote of no-confidence from the chamber of deputies in the event of a clash with the government, the CUP did not at first react. But unknown to the Committee, a secret military organisation, the Group of Saviour Officers, had come into being with the encouragement of a number of high-ranking commanders sidelined by the CUP. On 25 July 1912 this group issued an ultimatum demanding the dismissal of the chamber of deputies. The new, independent grand vezir seized the opportunity to ask the senate, composed of officers and high-ranking officials appointed by the sultan for life, to dismiss the chamber of deputies. Although the senate had little more than ceremonial significance, among its functions was the issue of decrees dissolving the chamber of deputies and calling for new elections, pending approval by the sultan. More significantly, it was an unreformed appendage of the old regime, consisting of prominent Ottomans who owed their careers to the sultan and could therefore be expected to side with the opponents of the CUP if the latter faltered. That the CUP had not seen fit to control this body until 1912 was therefore a serious error. On this occasion, the senate, approving of this civil coup against the CUP, dismissed the chamber convened less than four months before.

In effect, the putsch of July 1912 marked the end of the Ottoman parliamentary experiment. Significantly, the CUP was not the organisation 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 mobilisation effort shifted power to the executive, the parliament lost much of its potency and met with decreasing frequency. During the decade-long Second Constitutional Period, the chamber was in session for only four-and-a-half years (with interruptions). Between December 1908 and July 1912 it held 473 sittings, whereas from 1915 to 1918 it held only 253 sittings.23

Shorn of its most effective 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. Once again, the force of the opposition revealed the fragility of CUP control, both civilian and military, four years after the revolution. One of the new factors that contributed to the strengthening of domestic opposition at this juncture was the accumulation of foreign policy failures (see below). Although the CUP attempted to capitalise on the heroic role played by CUP officers in the defence of Tripoli and Cyrenaica against the Italians in 1911–12, on balance the criticism of the CUP over the war strengthened the opposition immensely.

For a brief period, from August 1912 to January 1913, the CUP, beaten and humiliated, rejoined the ranks of the opposition. The government of Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, and the succeeding one under Mehmed Kâmil Paşa, worked hard to crush the Committee. The formation immediately after this episode of an ideological challenge in the form of the Nationalist Constitutional Party, a Turkist organisation critical of the CUP's lip service to Ottomanism, damaged the Committee's standing still further. But the state of emergency and panic surrounding the Balkan crisis of late 1912 provided an opportunity for the CUP. As the crisis reached a fever pitch, the Committee organised mass rallies in support of war, and launched a large-scale propaganda campaign designed to underscore the government's lack of determination in the face of the threat. Although they failed to realise their main ambition and topple the government, their vocal campaign contributed to the outbreak of the disastrous Balkan Wars, in the course of which enemy forces reached the final Ottoman defence line at Catalca.

The imminent threat of defeat in the war provided the occasion for the recovery of power by the CUP. On 23 January 1913, a CUP strike force raided
the grand vezir'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 1 July 1913, when a group of hired assassins murdered the grand vezir, Mahmud Şevket Paşa. 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 Paşas became minister of war and minister of the marine respectively, symbolising the final assertion of Committee control over the military. Single-party rule was solidified and CUP control remained effectively unchallenged until the empire surrendered.

Political life under the CUP
Initially, the Committee chose to rule from behind the scenes. The conspiratorial mindset 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 cadres to the risks of public scrutiny – all these considerations may have played a role in the decision to stay in the shadows. Whatever the reasoning behind it, the decision not to publicise 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. The Committee did not at first visibly take over the traditional institutions of power, the court and the Sublime Porte. But it did control their actions. Thus, if a governor seemed unreliable, the CUP would order the grand vezir 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 (Paşa) as minister of the interior and of Mehmed Cavid Bey as minister of finance in 1909, the CUP also gradually started to exercise direct control over important offices, a process that ended in its total domination of the bureaucracy in 1913.

Despite the secrecy, a few details about key individuals within the CUP leadership have become apparent. The crucial reorganisation of the CUP on the road to revolution was carried out by Dr Bahaeddin Şakir, a representative of the activist faction, in 1905–6. The shift to an activist platform marginalised 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 reorganisation, became the éminences grises of the organisation. Although they distanced themselves from intellectual debate, they also 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, following which Talât Bey (Paşa), organiser 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 (Paşas), later stood out and became the military leaders of the CUP. Though scholarship has spoken of a triumvirate of Enver, Cemal and Talât Beys (Paşas), in reality the situation 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 specialised policy as economics and societal mobilisation pushed men like Mehmed Cavid Bey, a financial expert, and Kara Kemal Bey, an organiser of societies and cooperatives, into the limelight. 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 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 practice continued.

The very nature of the CUP as an organisation remained somewhat 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 institutionalisation of one-party rule. The CUP never formally abolished or outlawed rival parties or non-party organisations in the empire. Ostensibly, all Ottoman political organisations were equal before the
law throughout the Second Constitutional Period. To maintain the pretence of a free, multi-party system, the CUP in 1909 resorted to the 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 organisation’s press organs. But by then, its control of the political system was assured.

The structure of the CUP in power exemplifies these ambiguities. In theory, the general congress of the CUP constituted the highest decision-making body of the organisation. The congress, which met annually, was made up of the members of the central committee, deputies and senators who were CUP members (between 1911 and 1913 only their representatives attended), representatives of the local organisations and clubs, general inspectors, and editors of the Committee’s official organs; it appointed the central committee members and revised organisational regulations. In practice, the supreme decision-making organ of the CUP was the central committee—a secretive board of between seven and twelve individuals (the number fluctuated), which issued directives to the formal institutions of state: the cabinet, the military and the bureaucracy. Beneath the central committee lay an elaborate structural hierarchy designed to inflate the organisation and create the illusion of mass participation, as well as promote the entrenchment of the CUP in society. But this structure, unlike the Communist Party of the USSR, did not rival or duplicate the executive branch of government. The central committee presided over a number of ‘Special Branches’, which dealt with organisational matters in various sectors, such as women, ulema, provincial centres, local and district centres, and military and civil clubs. In 1913, the organisation was restructured. The general congress was preserved and all deputies and senators were again allowed to attend annual meetings. But in addition, a general assembly was created to coordinate the activities of the organisation. In Istanbul, the annual congresses were also held, until 1912. This fact helps explain the tenuousness of the CUP’s position in the early post-revolutionary years and emphasises the extent to which the organisation was a Macedonian phenomenon. After the revolution, as the CUP transformed itself from a highly compartmentalised and conspiratorial organisation into something approaching a mass party, the composition of its membership changed, and its centre of gravity shifted eastwards. As the doors of access to the lower levels of the organisation were opened to mass membership, notables and merchants flocked to proliferating local branches of the CUP across the empire. Overwhelmed by a flood of applications for membership, the CUP centre tended to approve petitions for the establishment of local branches on the basis of superficial information concerning their members. To a certain extent, the chaotic formation of local branches only loosely controlled by the centre in Salonica followed the pre-revolutionary pattern of weak control from Paris over the parts of the organisation lying deep within the empire. In both cases, the initiative for new branches was mostly local. But there was a difference: whereas in the pre-revolutionary era, opposition to the status quo constituted the major incentive for CUP applicants, after the revolution prospective members viewed the organisation either as a means for political advancement or as a vehicle for the pursuit of local claims. Thus in Mosul in 1910, two rival CUP branches were formed at about the same time, each claiming exclusivity and vying for recognition by the CUP headquarters in Salonica. By 1910, the number of CUP branches across the empire had multiplied from 83 on the eve of the revolution (several of them just minor cells) to 360, while membership grew from roughly 2,250 to 850,000; although the CUP had clearly become a mass organisation, 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 centre. They were also institutionally detached from policy implementation, which was still in the hands of the traditional bureaucracy.

25 Governor Zeki Pasha to the grand vezir’s office, Mosul [10 October 1908]/no. 300, BOA- BEO/Sûfre Telgrafname, 693-28/4.
26 Governor Zeki Pasha to the grand vezir’s office, Mosul [10 October 1908]/no. 300, BOA- BEO/Sûfre Telgrafname, 693-28/3.
27 'Osmanlı İhtisâb ve Terakki Cemiyeti', Haftalık Şûra-ý Ümmet, 203 [13 January 1910].
Although the CUP grew and became increasingly institutionalised, it never became a true mass party within which power could be rendered legitimate and participatory in the Bolshevist 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 the attempts of its predecessors to establish a sound political basis for the 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 programme: first, it was essentially a conservative platform that held little potential for galvanising 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 shifting 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 upon 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 within the Ottoman political system brought about by the CUP. These affected the court, the Sublime Porte, the legislature and the military. The sultan, who had barely escaped deposition by 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 legitimising figurehead charged with rubberstamping 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 of the navy, in addition to the grand vezir 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 for the new government, and provided the minister of war with a list of key military appointments he was to make. But the obstructionism of the sultan had convinced the CUP leaders that Abdülhamid II had to go. The ‘counter-revolution’ of 1909 provided the CUP with an ideal pretext for deposing Abdülhamid II, which it arranged on 27 April 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); he 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 realise 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 (Vahdeddin, 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 Sublime 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 made report directly to the palace. 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 powerful legislature with a willingness to use it, within limits, to control the bureaucracy. Second, the very circumstances brought about by the restoration of a chamber of deputies, as Russia was...
ignoring the deputies was not an option. When Mehmed Kâmil Paşa (leader of the last effort of officialdom to restore responsible government in 1895) attempted to place the Sublime Porte above the parliament and the CUP, he received the first vote of no confidence in Ottoman history, on 23 February 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 became 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 crew that filled the chamber of deputies. More importantly, they came to share Abdülhamid II’s concern about the ability of a strong parliament to undermine the regime and aggravate ethno-religious conflict. Yet they could not afford to betray their revolution by abolishing the parliament; nor were they prepared to lose the parliament’s legitimising 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. CUP leader Enver Paşa is once said to have remarked: ‘If there is no law, make one.’

The cabinet began to issue so-called temporary laws confirmed by imperial decrees while the chamber of deputies 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 Arab leaders, passage of the controversial

Family Law of 1917 (see below) and above all the farcical dismissal of the chamber of deputies on the very day that the fateful German–Ottoman alliance was signed, 2 August 1914. As these examples demonstrate, the CUP was not prepared to tolerate any consequential role for the legislature in a debate on policy, let alone in its formulation. But if the CUP outmanoeuvred its new competitors and reduced the old nineteenth-century contenders for state power to subservience, it also brought back to the forefront a power broker absent from Ottoman politics for more than a century: the army. The role played by the armed forces in Ottoman politics, often in alliance with the ulama, 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 prominence for the first time since the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826. The CUP was a militarised political organisation even before the revolution. The overwhelming majority of CUP 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 military’s officer corps. Militarisation of the organisation, 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 organisation’s membership.

To the CUP, the army was in the first instance an indispensable tool against domestic and foreign opponents. The opposition’s attempts to sunder the deep-seated 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 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 Colmar von der Goltz’s idea of ‘a nation in arms’. The Committee assigned to the military a significant role in shaping a new, militarised Ottoman society. This was made explicit very

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32 Enver Bey (Paşa) to a German woman with whom he frequently corresponded, ‘Ayn al-Manṣūr, 2 September 1912, Ernst Jäch Papers, Yale University, MSS 446, Box 1, Folder 40.
33 Tuniya, *İktihat ve Terakk*, p. 386.
34 See the temporary law of 22 January 1912, which ratified the Da’în contract granted to Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din on 20 October 1911: BOA-DVN, 37/1. See also the temporary law of 10 September 1914, which ratified the contract granted to ‘Abd al-‘Azîz al-Sâ’îd on 18 May 1914: BOA-DH.SYS. 25/103.
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.' The establishment of what was in effect a one-party system in
1913 provided the CUP with an opportunity to realise its vision of a nation
in arms. One example of this policy was the mobilisation of youth within a
paramilitary framework; another was the establishment of a paramilitary
Special Organisation 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 legitimising forces 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 skilful 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 the sanction of the people was the single most
important factor behind the CUP's persistence down the constitutional path,
although 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 vezir to draft a letter of resignation
at gunpoint. The grand vezir accordingly wrote that he had been compelled
to resign 'at the instance of the armed forces'. But Enver Bey insisted that
he amend the letter to read: 'at the instance of the people and the armed
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The third force that the CUP leaders used in consolidating power was the
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The third force that the CUP leaders used in consolidating power was the
press. Here again, they were not creating something that had not existed under
the old regime. But as members of a conspiratorial organisation in exile, one
which had depended upon the clandestine dissemination of smuggled journals
and propaganda pamphlets to project their political message, the CUP leaders
were especially aware of the capacity of the press to form public opinion,
and highly skilled at its manipulation. Upon coming to power, they formed a
host of official and semi-official organs, and a series of other publications, to
help them broadcast their message, monopolise public space and consolidate
their hold on power. Following the precedent set by Abdülhamid II, they also
exercised a severe regime of censorship, beginning in 1913. The combination
of a skilful propaganda machine, a loyal press and effective restrictions on
freedom of speech ensured that CUP policy gained a favourable reception
among large 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 Second Constitutional Period 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 do away with existing tensions; on the contrary, it aggravated them.
Thus CUP policies only made things worse. The cancellation of all privileges
of non-Turkish Muslim groups, the launching of an aggressive centralisation
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 ever more 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 organisations 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. With
a centre 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
more established classes within many of the non-Turkish communities. Even
those who had opposed the Hamidian regime – such as the Armenian amira
class of rich artisans and bankers – continued to reject the nationalist call
for independence outside the Ottoman framework until 1915. Nevertheless,
referent consequences are evident in the political map of the post-Ottoman
Balkans and Middle East.

References
36 'Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Osmanlı ordusu', Şıra-31 Ommet, 18 October
1908.
37 Zafer Toprak, 'İttihat ve Terakki'nin paramiliter gençlik örgütleri', Boğaziçi Üniversitesi
38 BOA-A.AMD. 1349/1 (1311.5.14) [23 January 1913].
Diplomacy and war

The event that prompted the CUP to launch the revolution was the Anglo-Russian initiative for Macedonian reforms in the summer of 1908. But while the revolutionaries did in fact succeed in blocking the reform programme, they failed to satisfy soaring Ottoman expectations for an end to the European obsession with the Eastern Question. As long as it remained an opposition group in exile, the CUP could rail against the sultan’s alleged weakness in selling out the empire to its enemies without the need to offer a viable alternative. But with power came responsibility and the recognition of limited means. Along with the sultan’s powers, the CUP leaders inherited his weak hand in the face of European pressure. They could not hide it for long. When Austria-Hungary announced the unilateral annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (and brought Europe to the brink of war) in the first week of October 1908, the saviours of the empire could do little more than lodge an official protest and back an economic boycott of Austrian goods. And when Bulgaria defied Ottoman suzerainty by notifying the Sublime Porte of its independence in a telegram, the CUP was powerless to react.¹⁹ That the Great Powers showed more concern for Serbia’s reaction than for that of the Ottomans was an indication of the extent to which the balance of power in the Balkans had changed.

Like their predecessors in power, the leaders of the CUP faced the necessity of securing a Great Power alliance upon which they could depend for protection. However much they might claim to loathe ‘imperialism’ – Ottoman imperial practices did not qualify as such in their eyes – they had no choice but to align with an imperialist power; defence of the empire required it. To be sure, ideological convictions did hinder their pursuit of realpolitik in at least two ways. First, the CUP leaders continued to resist any attempt to intervene in Ottoman affairs, especially when it came to reforms favouring non-Muslims. Second, their habitual anti-imperialist rhetoric did not make for good public relations in Europe. But only pragmatic considerations explain why the CUP leaders, who, prior to the revolution, had reserved their harshest words for the British,⁴⁰ made Great Britain their natural first choice for an alliance as soon as they came to power.⁴¹ They were to be disappointed. When the new leaders proposed to Sir Edward Grey that Great Britain consider an alliance with ‘the Japan of the Near East’, he politely turned them down.⁴² Against the common threat of Russia, Germany was an obvious second choice. As early as August 1908, in a transparent bid to open the door for an alliance, the CUP relayed a message to the Germans, informing them that in the event of a ‘general European conflict, the Ottoman empire would take the German side’.⁴³ But Wilhelm II, who wished to preserve the benefits of the Ottoman-German partnership established under the old regime, and had high hopes for future Ottoman military capacity with German training,⁴⁴ was unable to deliver the sort of fundamental guarantees the CUP so desperately needed. With key German allies Austria-Hungary and Italy waiting in the wings to pounce upon the Ottoman periphery (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Tripoli of Barbary and Cyrenaica), the emperor was not yet in any position to guarantee Ottoman territorial integrity, let alone enlargement.

Both these failed attempts to secure a Great Power alliance underscored the extent to which the Ottoman strategic environment had deteriorated since the late nineteenth century. First and foremost was the transformation of British defence interests in the Middle East following the occupation of Egypt, formalised in 1896 by Lord Salisbury’s decision to base Great Britain’s defence of her interests in the Near East on Egypt. For the Ottomans, this meant the abandonment of a half-century of unspoken British commitment to upholding the status quo in the Ottoman core. A related factor was the gradual removal of British restraints on Russian expansionism. The Anglo-Russian détente of 1907, a catastrophe from the Ottoman perspective, completed the process of isolation by removing the enmity upon which the defence of the empire ultimately rested. The obvious German alternative was never as good as the British alignment had been, in particular because the German drang nach Osten


⁴⁰ See, for example, Bahaeddin Şakir, ‘Yirminci asırda Ehl-i Sali ve İngiliz diplomasisi’, Şûra-yı Ümmet 132 (1 April 1908), pp. 2-3.

⁴¹ See, for example, ‘Osmanlılar ve İngilizler,’ Şûra-yı Ümmet, 16 December 1908.

⁴² Grey to Lowther, 13 November 1908 (private), Sir (Viscount) Edward Grey’s private papers, Turkey, 1905-10, PRO/F.O. 800/79.

⁴³ Lanckenh von Bülow, Paris, 18 August 1908 (A-1132). Nachläß Fürsten von Bülow, Bundesarchiv (Berlin), nr. 82.

⁴⁴ See his minute on von Metternich’s memorandum dated 14 August 1908/no. 8906.
was as threatening as it was beneficial to the Ottomans. When the worsening situation in the Balkans is added to this gloomy picture, and in particular the emergence of Bulgaria as a regional power, one can begin to appreciate the strategic predicament bequeathed by Abdülhamid II.

Given the negative balance of forces, armed neutrality – the policy followed by Abdülhamid II over the previous two decades – no longer offered a viable alternative to commitment. But as no alliance materialised, there seemed to be no other choice but to continue Hamidian policy. Thus, when the Italians embarked upon a mission civilisatrice and attacked the last real Ottoman territory in Africa in September 1911, and the British Foreign Office once again turned down a desperate Ottoman plea for alliance and intervention, the Ottoman government was left to defend its honour alone.

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 (the Ottomans, after all, had proudly described their empire as a Sublime State sprawled across three continents). Italy’s long-standing designs on Tripoli stemmed from two motives: the wish to compete with France, which had established a protectorate over Tunis in 1881, in North Africa; 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 Italy had obtained permission from all her Great Power partners by 1909, the issue was reduced to one of timing. The CUP’s acerbic anti-imperialist rhetoric and resolute defensive measures – e.g. a ban on land purchases by the Banco di Roma in the province of Tripoli – provided ample excuses for the Italian administration. On 28 September 1911, Italy issued a twenty-four-hour ultimatum to the Ottoman government. Announcing imminent invasion of the province and demanding Ottoman non-intervention, the ultimatum was clearly meant to be rejected. The surprisingly conciliatory response from the Ottomans, which provided assurances for ‘the expansion of Italian economic interests in Tripoli and Cyrenaica’, was to no avail, as the decision to invade had already been taken.

45 PRO/FO 371/1263 file 48554 (31 October 1911).
46 ‘Ultimatum from Italy to Turkey regarding Tripoli’, American Journal of International Law 6, 4 (January 1912), pp. 11-12.
47 ‘The Turkish Reply to Italian Ultimatum regarding Tripoli’, ibid., pp. 12-14.

The defence 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, Palestine 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 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 Muhammad ‘Ali al-Idrisi, a local challenger to Ottoman authority who had established a small sufi state in parts of the sub-province of Asir. But the Ottomans held firm, yielding little ground in the Ottoman–Italian talks at Quichy in August and September 1912.

The sudden emergence of a new threat in the Balkans 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 18 October, 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 pretence of continued sovereignty. The Ottoman sultan appointed a viceroy and a kadi to enforce the şeriat, and announced the grant of autonomy to Tripoli of Barbary and Cyrenaica. 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 coastlines. 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. 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. They also determined to reach compromises with rebellious rulers in other far-flung regions of the Arab world – most notably, with Imam Yahya Hamid al-Din of Yemen, who,

like Muhammad 'Ali al-Idrisi, enjoyed Italian backing. 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 Romania 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 continued the sultan’s efforts when, in 1908, they made an unsuccessful bid to exploit the crisis over the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina to herd Serbia back into an alliance with Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire against Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary, but without success.

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 towards the Ottoman Empire was such that this was not possible. Moreover, the Balkan states smelled weakness in the Ottoman war effort against Italy, and they 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 great rivals over Macedonia, concluded an alliance, and 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.\(^{49}\) The circle of hostility was complete.

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 twenty-third article of the Berlin Congress of 1878, which called for Macedonian reform, the Balkan allies rushed towards 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 appease its Balkan predators. Great Power warnings against modifications to the status quo failed to stop the allies from launching hostilities. Montenegro took the lead on 8 October, followed by the three larger Balkan states on 18 October.

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, while the victorious Bulgarians were on the march against the final Ottoman defence line at Catalca, a mere 37 miles from Istanbul. Ottoman appeals for Great Power intervention proved unavailing. From the European perspective, the situation contained the dangerous potential for a Russo-Austrian conflagration, which could easily set the entire continent ablaze. The Great Powers, accordingly, focused on forcing a ceasefire and convening a conference to discuss the future of the Balkans. The armistice of 3 December 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, the ambassadors of the Great Powers debated a general settlement in the Balkans. The first set of negotiations broke down on 6 January 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, which had been the capital of the empire between 1365 and 1453, remained under siege. The CUP took advantage of the situation to carry out its coup and return to power under the slogan of ‘Free Edirne!’ In February, hostilities resumed but Ottoman efforts to relieve the siege of Edirne failed, and the city fell on 26 March 1913. Defeated on the battlefield, the CUP-led government had no choice but to sue for peace.

The Treaty of London of 30 May 1913 heralded the end of the Ottoman presence in Europe. It also signalled the beginning of a major conflict between the Balkan allies over the division of the spoils. The Bulgarian surprise attack on her erstwhile allies on 29/30 June backfired, as Greece, Romania and Serbia declared war on Bulgaria and scored decisive victories in the battles that ensued. But the dissolution of the Balkan alliance 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 22 July. 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 the empire of three continents to an

Asiatic state, it shattered Ottoman pride and self-confidence. On top of the humiliation, the Ottoman government had to deal with staggering losses of men, matériel and territory, as well as the difficulty of resettling hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring in from the lost regions. The relinquishment of territories rich in non-Turks, and the ensuing atrocities against Muslims in the occupied 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 provinces prompted a revision of the geographical image 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 almost appeared as part of the new heartland. Some influential politicians and pundits went so far as to propose the removal of the capital from Istanbul to a major town in central Anatolia or northern Syria.\textsuperscript{50}

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 regarded 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 pre-war European diplomatic note, which stated that the Great Powers would not tolerate any change in the status quo in the event of a war.\textsuperscript{51} Only a formal alliance based upon mutual interest would do. Third, the wars demonstrated to the Ottomans that they had to do all within 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 June 1913, the CUP leadership once again applied to Great Britain’s secretary of state, Sir Edward Grey, in the hope of negotiating an alliance. Once more they were rejected.\textsuperscript{52} In 1914, they extended similar proposals to Austria-Hungary in February, to Russia in May and to France in July; all turned them down. The Germans too refused Ottoman appeals in 1912–13. Only the July crisis of 1914 altered their calculations.\textsuperscript{53} But even then, it is important to understand that it was the Ottoman administration that was begging for an alliance, not vice versa. Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg and the top military commanders opposed the alliance, believing that the Ottoman Empire was militarily worthless and would prove to be a major burden in the event of war. Only the personal intervention of Wilhelm II – who calculated that an Ottoman–Bulgarian alliance would tip the scales in favour of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans and that the Ottoman caliph could incite a worldwide rebellion of Muslims against the Allies – secured Germany’s assent. At long last, on 2 August 1914, the Ottoman government succeeded in concluding a formal alliance with a Great Power of Europe, fully expecting that this would provide the sorely needed guarantee of territorial integrity that had eluded it in the past. The Germans would have cause to be thankful for this decision; the Ottomans would live to regret it.

To minimise frictions with the Great Powers and support the quest for an alliance, the Ottoman government also sought to liquidate major sources of conflict on their periphery. Of these, the most important concerned Great Britain, the new power of the Near East, whose interests clashed with those of the Ottomans all over the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. The Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1914 virtually divided the Arabian Peninsula between the two powers, and secured Ottoman recognition of the treaties concluded between Great Britain and local leaders on the Arabian coastline, accords which had hitherto been rejected as an infringement on Ottoman sovereignty.\textsuperscript{54} Britain’s role as protector of Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, together with its presence at nine points between Aden and the Ottoman province of Yemen, thereby acquired legal recognition from the only power in a position to challenge them. The major loser in this deal was ‘Abd al-Aziz Al-Sa’ud, who was forced by the British to recognise Ottoman suzerainty, although in practice his control of Najd and al-Hasa was not contested.

The second potentially explosive issue the Ottoman administration tried to settle was the decades-old Armenian Question, and the related fate of the Six Provinces of Eastern Anatolia. Ever since 1878, successive Ottoman administrations had managed to avoid the implementation of the pro-Armenian reform programme stipulated in the sixty-first article of the Berlin Treaty. In early 1914, under heavy Russian pressure, the Ottoman government finally gave in. According to the new reform scheme, which went against CUP principles, two large provinces would be carved out of Eastern Anatolia and each placed...

\textsuperscript{50} Tunaya, İttihat ve Terakki, pp. 481–3.
\textsuperscript{54} BOA-Muşashedenâme, 242/19; 242/14; 376/2; 369/2.
under a European governor-general. The CUP leaders, who had come to power bent on defying the Great Powers, establishing central control over the empire and halting the drift towards disintegration, had clearly yielded to the forceful logic of realpolitik. But with the major flashpoints seemingly under control by the summer of 1914, they seemed at least to have earned a breathing spell from war and foreign intervention.

The Great War

The outbreak of war caught the Ottoman Empire at a dreadful time. Fresh from defeat at the hands of former Balkan subjects, the imperial army was a sham. A crash programme of military reconstruction, launched in December 1913 with the help of German advisers under General Liman von Sanders, had achieved little by the summer of 1914. Since 1910, several developments — two wars, huge losses of territory, population and revenues, and the ongoing struggle against Albanian revolutionaries in Albania and rebel Arab leaders in the Arabian Peninsula — had aggravated the empire's already precarious financial position. Consequently, no European power felt enthusiastic about enlisting the Ottoman Empire as an ally in a war that practically everyone expected to be over in months, if not weeks. The German government, yielding to pressure from the Kaiser, cautiously drafted the Ottoman–German Alliance Treaty of 2 August 1914, making no promises for the post-war division of spoils. The Ottomans, for their part, refrained from making a specific commitment to enter the war.

The failure to accomplish the first objective of the Schlieffen plan — to knock out France within forty days of the outbreak of war — and Russian advances into East Prussia drastically altered German expectations from the Ottomans. Originally conceived as a deterrent that would tie down a number of Russian and British divisions in the Caucasus and in Egypt, the 'worthless ally' (a phrase coined by Helmuth von Moltke) became more valuable by the day. The German government increased its pressure on the Ottoman government to join the war effort and open new fronts, but a majority within the CUP and in the Ottoman cabinet wished to stay out of the war until the completion of mobilisation, the arrival of German financial aid, the adherence

of Bulgaria and Romania to the Entente, and signs of German victory on the Western Front. A confident minority, led by the minister of war (and leading CUP member) Enver Paşa, pushed to join the war sooner, so as to secure a significant share of the spoils. In particular, the CUP eyed territorial compensation in the Aegean and in the Caucasus, the re-establishment of full Ottoman sovereignty in the Arabian Peninsula and a renewal of some form of control in North Africa. When two German cruisers, the Goeben and Breslau, approached the Ottoman coast pursued by the Royal Navy on 10 August, Enver Paşa acceded to their request for safe haven in Ottoman territorial waters; the pro-German clique within the cabinet later engineered their fictitious purchase and incorporation into the Ottoman navy, a step that all but destroyed Ottoman neutrality. However, the Allies, fearing the spread of war to new fronts, restricted their reaction to a naval blockade. The arrival of these men-of-war and of German financial aid strengthened the hand of the pro-German faction within the Ottoman administration. In coordination with the German military, the pro-German faction of the CUP drew up a plan for a surprise naval attack on Russian Black Sea port cities. Unknown to the cabinet, elements of the Ottoman navy, under the command of its German admiral, Souchon, executed this plan on 29 October 1914. Against opposition from several ministers, including the grand vezir, both the central committee of the CUP and the majority of the government opted to defend the fait accompli. Thus, the empire found itself once again, and for the last time, at war.

In August 1914, the Ottoman army numbered some 600,000 soldiers and 38 combat divisions. In the life-and-death struggle that ensued, the Ottoman government drafted a total of 2.6 million men. Total Ottoman casualties over the course of the four-year war amounted to some 725,000 (including 325,000 dead and 400,000 wounded). No less than 202,000 Ottomans were taken prisoner, mainly by Great Britain and Russia. The scale of attrition and desertion was enormous: on the day of the armistice, only 323,000 men remained at their posts, 57 and more than a million marauding deserters were wreaking havoc throughout the empire. The war was ruinous from an economic perspective as well: in addition to the destruction wrought by war, the Ottoman government spent Lt 398.5 million (equivalent to 9.09 billion gold French francs) on the war effort. In 1918 the Ottoman Empire was not just defeated, it was bankrupt.

58 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 Maurice J. Larcher, La guerre turque dans la guerre mondiale (Paris: E. Chiron, 1928), p. 636.
If the Ottomans suffered crippling losses, they also exacted a heavy toll from the enemy. The primary Ottoman contribution to the Entente’s war effort must be considered the pinning down and attrition of large Russian and British forces on four fronts that would not otherwise have existed. The Ottoman armies fought against the Russians in the Caucasus, and against the British in the Dardanelles, Mesopotamia and the Suez Canal / Syria-Palestine. In two of these theatres, in the Caucasus and on the Suez Canal, Ottoman offensives ended in disaster. Ottoman defensive efforts on the other two fronts, however, proved far more effective; their greatest single achievement was undoubtedly the defeat they inflicted on the British and their allies in the Dardanelles between March 1915 and April 1916. They inflicted 40,000 casualties (including prisoners of war) on the British forces at Gallipoli, and forced them to withdraw in April 1916. Less dramatically, they succeeded in delaying the British advance up from the Persian Gulf through Mesopotamia. Although the British finally captured Baghdad in March 1917, they had not taken Mosul by the time of the armistice. The Ottomans also assisted the Entente forces on the Macedonian, Romanian and Galician fronts in Europe, and engaged in minor military operations in different parts of the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa and Iran.

The magnitude of the Ottoman contribution to the war effort is perhaps best appreciated by considering the size of the forces thrown against the empire. Over the course of the war, Great Britain deployed 2,550,000 troops on the Ottoman fronts, constituting 32 per cent of the total number of troops deployed; at one point, the British had 880,300 men fighting the Ottomans, or 24 per cent of the British armed forces. The Russians initially mobilised 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 to quell a rebellion of the local militia in Tripoli and Cyrenaica aided by the Ottoman government. Total casualties on the Ottoman fronts (both Ottoman and Allied) amounted to a staggering 1,400,000. Another way to evaluate the Ottoman contribution is to ask how the course of history might have been changed without it. Had the Ottoman Empire maintained its neutrality in the war, there is little doubt that the Allies would have won a quicker victory. Moreover, both the Bolshevik Revolution and US participation in the war might never have occurred.

60 ‘Cihad-i Ekber ilânı ve fetva-yı şerif, İslam Memâna 15 [9 November 1914], p. 440.
62 ‘The prime minister’, The Times, 10 November 1914.
Undermined by the principle of national self-determination, the multinational empire faced the certainty of extinction.

One of the most tragic events of the war was the deportation of much of Anatolia's Armenian population. On the grounds that the Armenian revolutionary committees were actively aiding the Russian enemy, the Ottoman government decided to deport all Armenians affiliated with the Armenian Apostolic Church from the war zone (on the Caucasian front) to Syria. In practice, many Armenian communities outside the war zone and many members of the Armenian intellectual and cultural elite were also uprooted. The deportations, accompanied by massacres and carried out with brutality under harsh conditions of climate and hunger, led to massive loss of life and the termination of the Armenian presence in Anatolia.

The economy

From an ideological standpoint, the CUP leadership stood for state control of the economy, and was committed to the abolition of the much-reviled capitulations and the dissolution of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (PDA), an international debt collection body established in 1881. But the responsibilities of power and the dire reality of the empire's economic condition forced the CUP to adopt a more pragmatic line. The most immediate concern was to maintain the confidence of foreign investors in the economic policy of the new regime. Although early Committee decisions reveal a certain tendency to support domestic producers (such as grape producers on the Aegean coast) against foreign companies, there was no attempt to bring about radical changes in the economic realm in the first five years of CUP rule. Mehmed Cavid, the Committee's leading economist, who ran the Ottoman economy as minister of finance and as a senior adviser on economic policy throughout much of the Second Constitutional Period, was a fervent advocate of liberal economics. Under his tenure, the number of Ottoman joint stock companies set up with foreign capital actually increased between the revolution of 1908 and 1913. Most of these were partnerships between Ottoman non-Muslims and foreign entrepreneurs. But the contradictions between liberal policies and the étatist, Turkist and anti-imperial elements of the CUP platform could not be sustained for long. The Balkan Wars may be regarded as a turning point in economic policy as well. Anti-Western, pro-Muslim and Turkist sentiments peaked, making it easier for the CUP to temper its liberal policies and promote the so-called 'National Economy'. This was a concept intellectually influenced by Friedrich List and the German historical school, which combined the principles of state control over the economy with favouritism towards the Muslim/Turkish bourgeoisie. The idea was to protect Muslim and Turkish entrepreneurs and producers by means of the imposition of high customs tariffs, the abolition of foreign legal and economic privileges and the creation of a new financial and transportation infrastructure in support of local manufacturing.

In 1913, the government sponsored the Temporary Law for the Encouragement of Industry, which sought to protect domestic industrialists by means of customs, tax and land privileges. In 1914, it took advantage of the European crisis to abolish the capitulations unilaterally. But it was the mobilisation of resources to wage the Great War, and the corresponding rise in nationalist fervour, that provided the impetus for the full implementation of the 'National Economy'. One component of this policy, as enunciated at the 1916 congress of the CUP, was the establishment of state control over all aspects of economic life. The government created new institutions to implement this vision, including the Special Trade Commission (in 1916), the Ministry of Provisioning (in 1918) and the Central Exchange Commission (in 1917). The second pillar of the 'National Economy' was a blend of protectionism, autarky and state-sponsored promotion of the role of Muslims and Turks in the economy. Ostensibly, state intervention in the economy favoured domestic companies in general. Some measures, such as the sharp rise in customs tariffs in 1915, undoubtedly benefited all domestic producers. But the 'National Economy', often cast as a policy of Ottoman self-reliance, in fact concealed losses from this policy were foreigners, non-Muslims and non-Turks. But in practice, it benefited mostly Turks, as most CUP and government support - both bureaucratic and financial - went to aid Turkish entrepreneurs in setting up 'national' companies and banks. The most ambitious new financial institution was a national central bank that was to replace the foreign-owned Ottoman Bank by 1925. Named Ottoman National Honour, the new bank...
was established in 1917, too late to make a difference to Ottoman economic prospects. The sultan, CUP members, deputies and state bureaucrats figured prominently in Ottoman National Honour’s list of shareholders; the Ministry of Finance purchased the unsold shares. The CUP created a myriad of other economic organisations, such as cooperatives for Muslim and Turkish manufacturers and artisan societies. Such groups supported the goal of ‘nationalising the economy’ while at the same time deepening organised political support for the CUP. At first, these efforts produced insignificant results; in 1915, Muslim and Turkish entrepreneurs combined owned only 42 companies in the empire, whereas 172 firms were listed under non-Muslim ownership. By 1918, Turkish Muslim industrialists formed an overwhelming majority.69

Financing a long, total war on four distant fronts was a daunting challenge. To meet it, the government initially obtained credit from its German ally and sold Ottoman war bonds at home. But as expenditure mounted, recourse was increasingly had to the printing-press. This was the third and final Ottoman attempt to introduce paper money. Over the course of the war, the Ministry of Finance issued Lt 161 million in banknotes. At first, these held their value reasonably well. But during the last two years of the war, the banknotes steadily lost value against gold. This was especially true the further away from the capital one was: in May 1917, a paper bill with the nominal value of Lt 1 traded for coinage at the exchange rates of 0.35, 0.30, 0.25, 0.10 and 0.08 in Istanbul, Konya, Aleppo, Mosul and Baghdad, respectively.70 Seven instalments of banknotes between 1915 and 1917 (the last one with no securities) produced enormous inflationary pressures, resulting in soaring price indices. In 1918, the Ottoman cost of living index reached 1,823 (1914 = 100). The equivalent figure was 203 in Great Britain, 293 in Germany and 1,163 in Austria-Hungary.71 Defeat brought not only political disintegration, but also economic collapse.

Ideas, culture and society

One of the hallmarks of the Hamidian regime was state repression of basic freedoms. A wide network of intelligence agents and informers provided the palace with reports on any suspicious activity. A modern apparatus of censorship, whose ever-expanding list of banned words ranged from Macedonia to ‘dissatisfaction’, effectively muzzled dissenting voices. Abetted by the spreading practice of self-censorship, it turned newspapers and journals into official mouthpieces, subsidised and directed by the palace. All this stunted intellectual growth. Under Abdülhamid II, a cultural, non-political form of Turkism was allowed to flourish in Istanbul.72 A benign form of scientism was likewise tolerated; it won many adherents among the intellectuals of the imperial capital, who enthusiastically adopted the theses of mid-nineteenth-century German Vulgârmaterialismus.73 But censorship dulled the political edge of the ideological debates in the capital, which, consequently, lost its intellectual pre-eminence to Beirut and Cairo. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Syria gained prominence as a centre of the Salafiyya movement. The Balkans witnessed the acceleration of nationalist and socialist debates among non-Muslims in towns such as Salonica and Monastir, while they lost their importance as centres of Ottoman culture. The most explosive political ideas came in the form of underground publications smuggled into the empire from Europe and Egypt, but their circulation was limited.

The brief burst of revolutionary freedom after 1908 awakened the capital from the thirty-year slumber imposed by the Hamidian censors. The revolution unleashed pent-up intellectual potential, spawning a renaissance in the capital and major towns of the empire. In the summer and fall of 1908, public debates flared up over issues ranging from Islamic modernism to socialism, and from materialism to feminism. The raucous debates of that moment of liberty are recorded in a score of newspapers and journals that mushroomed in the anarchic aftermath of the revolution, often publishing a single maiden issue, only to disappear by the time of the elections of November-December 1908.

As in so many other domains, the CUP found itself restoring elements of the very Hamidian regime against which it had railed in opposition. The CUP leaders in power turned out to have no more tolerance for free political debate than their predecessors. At first, they were not yet in a position to suppress it. But after the elections, successive governments, aided by the new Press Law, exercised more control over publications. Martial law, which became increasingly standard amidst war, counter-revolution and rebellion, reinforced the restrictions on freedom of expression. The CUP adopted a particularly harsh policy towards the opposition press. Though it has never been

69 Toprak, Millî İktisat, pp. 181 ff.
71 Ibid., pp. 162-3.
proven, it was widely believed at the time that CUP self-sacrificing volunteers were behind numerous assassinations of leading opposition journalists in 1909 and thereafter. Closure of newspapers and journals became standard practice once more. But many publishers were resourceful enough to respond to such closures by re-launching their journals under slightly different titles; the journal İctihad, for example, reappeared under the names İstihad, İshad, Çehd and Âlem-i Ticaret ve Sanayî', before finally closing in response to dire threats from the authorities. The opposition applied many of the same methods to the CUP during its brief stint in power in 1912. With the shoe temporarily on the other foot, CUP journalists and thinkers found themselves hounded into prison and exile by government agents.74 CUP publishers, in turn, copied the survival tactics of the opposition: the semi-official newspaper of the CUP, Tanin, appeared as Senin, Cenin, Renin and Hak in the space of six months.

When the CUP returned to power on the heels of the raid on the Sublime Porte in January 1913, it trampled on what remained of freedom of the press in the empire. Thereafter, the public exposition of any idea frowned upon by the CUP leadership, such as Arab nationalism or socialism, became virtually impossible. Official attitudes hardened still further in response to the stillborn coup d'état of June 1913 and the Ottoman entry into the war in November 1914. During the Great War, the few newspapers that remained relied on government supply of printing paper to issue two-page dailies made up largely of fulsome praise for the CUP's leadership of the war effort.

Officially, the battle of the printing presses prior to 1913 pitted the CUP's Turkist version of Ottomanism75 against Sabahaddin Bey's decentralisation thesis.76 But intellectuals of all ethnic and religious stripes were more concerned with nationalism. Thus the undercurrent of debate divided the Turkish press, where debate centred on the competing definitions of Ottoman identity and Ottomanism, from community journals in other languages, which tended to promote proto-nationalist or nationalist platforms at variance with CUP policy. Popular non-Turkish newspapers such as al-Muqtasab (Damascus), al-Mufid (Beirut), Amalshka (Izmir), Neologos (Istanbul), Lirija (Salonica) and Jamanak (Istanbul) adopted a critical position towards the CUP's Ottomanism. Several smaller community organs, such as al-İhadara (Istanbul), Azadamard (Istanbul), Foni (Istanbul), Narodna volja (Salonica), Tomorri (Elbasan) and Bashim'i Kombit (Monastir), spoke out more vociferously in favour of regional autonomy or even independence.

It is remarkable that the Turkist proclivities of the CUP leadership, which were at variance with the group's primary mission of saving the multinational empire, crept into the CUP-backed press in a political form at a relatively early stage.77 But the idea of Turkish separatism inevitably took a back seat to cultural Turkism, and was subsumed under the increasingly murky, but infinitely malleable notions of Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism, until the collapse of the empire became a distinct possibility in the latter stages of the Great War. Like Abdülhamid II before them, the CUP leaders were pragmatists first, and ideologues only when possible. Their ideas and policies did not always match.

The Turks' project consisted of three main stages. First, they aimed to foster a national consciousness among the Turks of the empire, similar to the process of awakening undergone by the South Slavs, through creation of a national history and language.78 Then, Ottoman Turks would extend a helping hand to their brethren in other parts of the world, particularly in Central Asia.79 Finally, in the distant future, they would realise the dream of Pan-Turkist political unity. Obviously, the existence of non-Turkish ethnic groups in the empire presented a stumbling block to the realisation of these purist ambitions. But the Turkists avoided confronting this reality, and instead chose to assault the very notion of an 'Ottoman' identity as promoted by the Tanzimat, which stood accused of robbing the Turks of their sense of self.80 The Balkan Wars fuelled the spread of such sentiments, as the Ottomanist dream was shattered in the clash between former masters and subjects, and the empire shed many of its nationalities to become more Muslim and more Turkish. The important precedent set by predominately Muslim Albania, which had resorted to arms against the CUP's version of Ottomanism and its centralising policies, and then declared independence in November 1912, proved that Muslims too could seek an independent destiny outside the confines of the Ottoman state. To be sure, the shrunken empire still contained sizeable non-Turkish ethnic groups - chief among them Arabs, Armenians, Kurds and Greeks81 - but a good portion of

74 See 'Feci' bir akıbet', Âlem, 29 November 1912.
75 See, for example, Hüseyin Cahit, 'Millet-i hakime', Tanin (7 November 1908).
76 See, for example, Ahmed Midhat, 'Adem-i merkezîyet', Takvimli Gazete, 12 December 1912.
77 Hanioğlu, Preparation for a Revolution, pp. 34-46 and 62 ff.
78 Köprülüzâde Mehmed Fu'ad, 'Türklük, İslâmîlık, Osmanlılık', Türk Yurdu 4 (1329 [1913]), p. 695.
79 Address of the president of Turkish Hearths, Hamdullah Subhi, in Türk Yurdu 4 (1329 [1914]), p. 1069.
80 Yûnus Nadi, 'Tanzimatçılığın iflası, Tanrı'ın Efeâr' (12 March 1913).
81 The total population of the empire in 1914 was 18.5 million, of whom 15 million were Muslims, 1.73 million were Greeks and 1.16 million were Armenians. Since Kurds and Arabs were lumped together with the Turks as Muslims, it is difficult to give estimates of their
the Ottoman Greek population was lost, as were almost all the Albanians, the Bulgarians, the Kutz-Vlachs and the Serbs. The Turkist solution to this vexing problem was to square the circle: a strong Turkish-dominated centre would champion not only the values of the Turks, it would stand for Arabs and Greeks as well. The contradictions inherent in this untenable arrangement escaped even the more far-sighted Turkists such as Ziya Gökalp, who avowed: 'He who does not say he is a Turk cannot become the ruler of the Turk.' Those who do not love the Turk cannot remain Ottoman.

The war against Russia in the East inevitably heightened Turkist interest in Turan, the mythical Turkic homeland stretching from Anatolia to Central Asia. Turkists defined Turan in two ways. One definition held that Great Turan included the land between the White Sea, on Russia's north-western Arctic coast, and Finland, as well as Central Asia, the Caucasus and parts of Iran, Afghanistan and Anatolia—an area of 11,700,000 square miles with 36 million inhabitants of Manchu, Turkic and Finnish origin. The second, more modest, definition designated an area from Kazan to Afghanistan and from Iranian Azerbaijan to the Balkans—covering 4,170,000 square miles with 43 million inhabitants of Turkic stock. Although the CUP leadership condoned the publication activities of the advocates of Turan, there is no evidence to support the contention that they were guided by an active Turkist or Turanian agenda prior to 1914. Turan was a dream, to be fulfilled only in the distant future in the wake of a momentous upheaval. But the war now provided the opportunity for just such an apocalypse, and the possibility of Russian collapse must have factored into CUP calculations concerning the war from an early stage. The most important effect of Turkist ideas on the CUP lay in the redefinition of the concept of Ottomanism. Over time, the CUP adapted Turkist principles to attribute a pivotal and dominant role to the Turks in the history and future of the empire. From the revolution onwards, and especially after 1914, Turkish values and symbols flooded the official notion of Ottomanism.

Debate on religion and modernisation came second to discussion of nationalism, Ottomanism and the role of Turks in the empire's administration. The relative share of the population. See Kemal H. Karpat, Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 170 ff. The Arab population was certainly the largest ethnic group after the Turks, and formed an overwhelming majority in the Arab provinces; the Kurdish population was much smaller, but geographically concentrated.

82 Köprülüzade Mehmed Paşad, Türklik, İslâmlık, Osmanlılık', p. 692.
83 Gökalp, Yeni hânet, p. 35.
84 Tekin, Turan (İstanbul: Türk Yurdu Kitabhanesi, 1330 [1914]), pp. 118-19.

Hamidian regime had sponsored Islamist publications to strengthen the legitimacy of the caliphate and galvanise Muslim populations within the empire. Both branches of the Islamist opposition—the Salafis in Syria and the modernists surrounding Muhammad 'Abduh and Muhammad Rashid Rida—had worked closely with the Young Turks. But they did not manage to penetrate the Ottoman heartland. Ironically, it was the secularist revolution of the Young Turks that marked the beginning of a strong Islamic modernist movement in the central regions of the empire. The leaders of this movement, such as Fırisi Ahmed Hilmi, Manastırli İsmail Hakki and Babanzade Ahmed Na'ım, took a strong pro-constitutionalist stand. They vigorously refuted arguments pointing to the irreconcilability of constitutional government with Islam. And they reinterpreted the Islamic concept of maskwarat (consultation), which classically referred to consultation between the ruler and his advisers, to mean representation of the people by means of a parliament. The modernists showed their progressive inclinations in numerous responses. When, for instance, a man from Central Asia inquired whether 'the imamate of a prayer leader who reads newspapers is perverse', their response was: 'A Muslim who reads daily newspapers should be preferred to others who do not as a candidate for the role of prayer leader.'

But the underlying contradiction between the CUP leaders, who had a use for religion only insomuch as it legitimised their rule, and the modernists, for whom life under a revived Islam was the paramount goal, meant that relations were quickly strained. Disillusioned, many Islamists joined the opposition. The most politically active of them formed the Union of Mohammedans, a party that spearheaded the counter-revolution of 1909. Although mainstream ulema avoided direct involvement, they continuously protested against the domination of the CUP and the secular proclivities of some of its leading members. The attempts of modernists to Islamicise the constitution and formulate a modern theory of Islamic government in many ways echoed the programme begun by the Young Ottomans half a century before. Their efforts bore some fruit in 1910, when a commission led by İsmail deputies amended many articles

85 See, for example, Nazif Sürüçi, Hildafl-i mu'azzama ı İslâmiye (İstanbul: Tahir Bey Matbaası, 1319 [1907]), pp. 6-21 and Yusuf b. Isma'il al-Nabîni, al-Ahadith al-Ab'a'in fi wujub tu'at amir al: mu minin (Beirut: al-Ma'âb a al-Ab'dîha, 1324 [1909]), passim.
86 Abdülaziz Kolçalı, Kor'an-i Kerim ve Kanuni Esâ'î rahîyet, mişavat, nasîf-i meşveret, hürriyet ve hududu (İstanbul: n. p., 1326 [1908]), passim.
87 'İslâmiyet ve Kanuni Esâ'î', İkdam, 26 July 1918; and 'Ulema-ya İslâm ve meşruiyet idare', İkdam, 2 August 1908.
88 Manastırli İsmail Hakki, 'Mevâiz', Sırat-ı Mustakım 8 (15 October 1908), p. 128.
89 İsmail Kara, İdamcilerin siyasî görevleri (İstanbul: İz Yayınıçılık, 1994), p. 82.
of the new constitution. But this victory on paper did not prevent the CUP from pushing mainstream Islamists and the *ulama* into the background.

Although the CUP approved the revised constitution, it also implemented a series of legal initiatives that followed a clear secularising agenda. One example is the limitation of the power of the *şeriat* courts, beginning in 1909; another is the Temporary Family Law of 1917, which granted Muslim women a partial right of divorce based upon a liberal interpretation of Hanbali law, and limited polygamy by allowing women to stipulate monogamy as a condition in their marriage contracts. These reforms were spearheaded by a faction of the CUP led by members and Ziya Gökalp. Labelled 'Turkist-Islamists' by their opponents, these thinkers promoted the notion of a modern Islam limited to private faith and ritual. They believed that many obsolete Islamic practices, such as polygamy, could be eliminated through liberal interpretation of traditional sources by the *ulu'lu'al-amr* (those vested with authority), and the supplementation of classical law with 'urf (custom). Despite vehement rejections from mainstream Islamists, CUP policy as a whole tended to follow this particular brand of Islamism, which carried the transformative potential to foster modern morals for a modern society.

In spite of the strong secularist tendencies of many of its leading members, the CUP opposed the new Westernisation movement that emerged as a by-product of late Ottoman materialism. The spread of a popularised version of mid-nineteenth-century German *Vulgärmaterialismus* among the Ottoman elites under the 'pious sultan' Abdülhamid II was an astonishing development. The Ottoman scientific discourse spread from Beirut and Cairo to the Ottoman capital. Other important journals were *Felsefe Mecmuası* (Journal of Philosophy), which promoted *Vulgärmaterialismus* as the philosophy of the future, and *Yirminci Asırda Zeka* (Intelligence in the Twentieth Century), a popular illustrated journal of science.

Late Ottoman materialists envisioned a modern, Europeanised society in which science reigned supreme. They inhabited a simplistic world, where progress, guided forward by the unerring light of scientific truth, would inevitably triumph. The movement split on two major issues. One was the future role of religion in society. Abdullah Cevdet, the editor of *İctihad*, along with his materialist friends Celâl Nuri and Kılıçzâde Hakkı, sought to forge a new moral basis for society based upon an improbable synthesis of Islam and *Vulgärmaterialismus*. Bahâ Tevfik and Ahmed Nebil, on the other hand, promoted a variant of monism, cleansed of religion, as the philosophy of the future. They agreed, however, that Westernisation (görüşçülük) was one of the necessary preconditions for the transformation of society. Accordingly, they promoted European customs and manners, even publishing books on good manners, while deriding Ottoman habits. Significantly, a blueprint for the Westernisation of society drafted by Kılıçzâde Hakkı in 1913 included almost all the reforms later implemented by Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the founder of modern Turkey.

A backlash against all things Western set in after the Balkan Wars. It inspired several key thinkers associated with the Westernisation movement to reconsider their positions. In 1914 Celâl Nuri wrote in an article entitled 'The Noble Quality of Emnity' ('Şime-i husumet') that Ottoman Westernisation should be achieved against Europe, much as the Japanese owed their success to their anti-Western antagonism. This approach, which appealed to many Turkists,
provided the foundation for the early Republican idea of an ambivalent love-hate relationship with Europe – admiration for Europe’s material progress, advanced science and way of life, mixed with disdain for its alleged anti-Turkish prejudice and neo-Crusader mentality. Dr Abdullah Cevdet rejected this thesis, and penned a pungent response entitled ‘The Noble Quality of Love’ (‘Şîme-i muhabbet’), which depicted the relationship between Europe and Ottoman society as that between a teacher and his ‘grateful pupil’, and asserted that there was no alternative to European civilisation, which must be accepted ‘with its roses and its thorns’. The ensuing debate resulted in a major schism within the Westernist movement between so-called ‘Total Westernisers’ and ‘Partial Westernisers’. But after the outbreak of the Great War, the authorities effectively muted the Westernist movement, whose message undermined the CUP’s propaganda of jihâd. Sharif Husayn ibn Ali’s citation of insults to Islam in lêthîhad among his reasons for revolt against the empire proved that CUP fears were not groundless.

Another ideological movement towards which the CUP adopted an ambivalent stance was the Ottoman women’s movement. Until the revolution, the palace had attempted to harness the voice of women primarily by means of a conservative mouthpiece, the Ladies’ Gazette. Women’s rights, like practically every other cause, benefited from the brief interlude of political freedom that followed the revolution. The hostility of the CUP leadership towards feminism did not prevent them from attempting to co-opt the power of women by sponsoring various women’s organisations, which included several Ottoman feminists. To a certain extent, their success may be gauged from the pro-CUP position adopted by the mainstream women’s movement, especially after 1913. The most important women’s journal in 1913-14 was Kadınlar Dünyası, sponsored by various women’s organisations, which included several Ottoman feminists. To a certain extent, their success may be gauged from the pro-CUP position adopted by the mainstream women’s movement, especially after 1913. The most important women’s journal in 1913-14 was Kadınlar Dünyası (World of Women). The journal promoted a de-politicised brand of feminism, centred on the demand for an end to discrimination against women in society. Typical grievances included the segregation of men and women on public transport, restrictions on women’s education and work, and legal disadvantages, especially polygamy.

Here again, it was the transformative experience of the Great War that served as a catalyst for change. The mobilisation effort provided a new basis for Ottoman feminism as the embodiment of the patriotic ideal as applied to women. Volunteering to serve as a nurse in a field hospital or as a labourer in the ranks of the women’s worker divisions became the new model of female virtue in time of war. The CUP consciously played on these themes to galvanise women to action and strengthen its control over the mainstream women’s movement. The National Defence Society, a Turkist organisation established in February 1913 to sponsor patriotic cultural activities, such as the collection of donations or patriotic gatherings for women, became very active during the war.

The National Defence Society was one of several semi-official ‘national’ organisations set up by the CUP and by means of which it gradually established its domination in the cultural field – a process hastened by the onset of war. The unfortunate consequence of increasing government control after 1913 was decreasing diversity in cultural life. In terms of cultural richness, the period of 1908-12 has not been rivaled since in most of the Ottoman successor states.

The rising pitch of nationalism had a profound impact on Ottoman literary output. Even before the revolution, exiled authors of Arab, Armenian, Albanian and, to a certain extent, Kurdish origin began to publish what may be termed nationalist literature. Literary activity among Greeks, Kutzovlachs and Macedo-Bulgarians was heavily influenced by literary movements in Greece, Romania and Bulgaria. Young Turk authors, whose main obsession was with politics, paid some attention to the purification of the Turkish language as a means to awaken a national consciousness. But such ideas were far from dominating literary circles, where work for the most part followed the vogue of l’art pour l’art.

The transformation of the millets into ethno-religious communities dominated by nationalists, coupled with the seizure of power by the CUP, produced a sea change in literature. Art lost its introspectiveness, and came to be associated with the promotion of nationalist goals. Among Turks, the new journal Genç Kalemler (Young Pens), to which many CUP members contributed, called for Turkish to be simplified, for Arabic and Persian grammatical rules to be abandoned and for literature to be harnessed in the service of Turkish nationalism. Puıı The place of Islam was, as we have seen, a matter of debate. While many Turkist literati tried to reconcile Islam with nationalism, others embraced social Darwinism and levelled thinly disguised criticism at Islam’s domination of Turkish culture. Mehmed Emin (nicknamed ‘the National Poet’) had

97 Abdullah Cevdet, ‘Şîme-i muhabbet’, İ Fetihad 89 [29 January 1914], pp. 79 ff-84.
102 Mehmed Emin, Türk sazı (İstanbul: Türk Yurdu Kitabları, [1942]), pp. 115-16.
written as far back as 1899, 'I am a Turk/My religion and race are sublime.' By 1914, he was already distancing himself from Islam, and praising the pre-Islamic religion of the Turks. He wrote of 'Turks worshipping the God of War in Mount Tanrı', a mountain in Eastern Türkistan mentioned in early Turkic mythology. Ömer Seyfeddin, the leading short-story writer of the era, identified the materialists Büchner and Haeckel as 'the thinkers who have granted humanity most of existing truth'.

104 Similar trends are observable in other Ottoman communities; parallels to Genç Kalemler are the Armenian journals Mehecan and Nawasari (Istanbul), the Albanian journal Koha (Korça), the underground Arab journal Lisân al- 'Arab al-Muntadâ al- 'Arabî (Istanbul) and the literary sections of the Kurdish journals Roj-i Kurd and Hetav-i Kurd (Istanbul).

Conclusion

The Mudros armistice of 30 October 1918 marked not only the end of the war but the end of an era. The surrender of the Ottoman government and the subsequent flight of the leading members of the CUP terminated the Second Constitutional Period and, more broadly, the Ottoman period as a whole. 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 recognised. 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 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 political pluralism itself 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 organisation. 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, Kurdish and Arab 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 elites 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. Mostly Turkish members of the CUP rose to positions of prominence in the army and the 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 amongst themselves as to who the ‘people’ really were – and 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 redrawing of the political map of the Balkans and Middle East, giving birth to fourteen 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 anti-colonial 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 socio-political 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 Ottoman project for building a nation in arms, the militarisation of society and politics became a common
feature of many of the Ottoman successor states, including Turkey. Along with the militarisation of politics, the Second Constitutional Period left another lasting imprint on post-Ottoman political geography: the creation of a hollow institutional façade legitimising 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 meaning. 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’th 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 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 urge to dominate and the lofty principles of the revolution. 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 legitimising asset and an independent-minded body that hindered the CUP’s freedom to implement their empire-saving programme. Eventually, the constitutional regime was emptied 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 an 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 scientistic platform. Perhaps a more uncompromising ideological attitude and the adoption of a supra-national 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 world view. In this respect,
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 nationalism 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. The very initiation of such contacts with the Germans, loathed for their support of the Hamidian régime, 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, 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), bid.
humiliated the proud leaders of the CUP, who had imagined themselves rulers of the “Japan of the Near East.”  

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. 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.
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 Muhammad ’Ali al-Idrīsī, a local challenger to Ottoman authority who had established a small Şūfī 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 qādi to enforce the sharīa 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.

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,

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

33 Tunaya, İttihat ve Terakki, pp. 480–83.
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. 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, and again in 1913, the Ottomans knocked on the door of the British Foreign Office, only to be rebuffed time and again by Sir Edward Grey.

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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. 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. 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. 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,

38 Die Große Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 38: Neue Gefahrenzonen im Orient, 1913–1914 (Berlin: Deutsche Veragsgesellschaft 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.
the British recognized Najd, a vast area under the rule of ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Saʿūd, 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. ʿAbd al-ʿAziz ibn Saʿūd, 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, Zaydi-populated parts of the province of Yemen. Muhammad ibn ‘Ali al-Idrīsī of ‘Asir, who received aid from the Italians, rejected a similar Ottoman offer; but, surrounded as he was by the then pro-Ottoman Sharif Husayn ibn ‘Ali in the Hijāz on the one hand, and by Imām Yahyā 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, 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

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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

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); 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. 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.” 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).

Chapter Six

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. 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. 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 Resmi'nin Yüzde On Beş İblâği, Ecnebi Postalar ve Kapitülasyon (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1917]), p. 6.
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.

54 This figure does not include 32,000 commissioned officers of different ranks, the Shammar Bedouin of Hā’il, the Zaydi militia in the Yemeni Highlands and Asīr, 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.
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 (İstanbul: Matbaa-i Âmire, 1334 [1916]), p. 1081.
To this extraordinary level of expenditure, once 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. 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. 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 Cihat-i Askeriyeye İttihaç Olunanak Tedâbir Hakkinda 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.